

Tall-fins and tale-ends in Taiwan: cetacean exploitation, oil refineries, and *Moby-Dick*¹

Iris Ralph (Tamkang University)¹

Abstract

This article addresses the nineteenth-century novel Moby-Dick (1851) as a “cetacean text” and as a text that can be taught to question the animal/human binary that both separates and draws attention to bonds between humans and cetaceans. Herman Melville’s novel, belonging to the period of American literature that F. O. Matthiessen first famously distinguished as the “American Renaissance” in a study so-titled published in 1941, is being reevaluated today by ecocritics as well as posthumanism and animal studies scholars as a writing that is a cultural record of the North American whaling industry in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and raises questions about understandings of and assumptions about cetacean slaughter. I tie these concerns to an industry today that threatens cetaceans: the fossil fuel industry, the industry that largely replaced the whaling industry after the twentieth century. I focus mostly on environmental efforts in Taiwan to raise awareness about the fossil fuel industry in Taiwan, namely its petrochemical plants or so called naphtha cracker plants and the deleterious impact these plants have on coastal wetland areas that are home to many species of cetaceans including the endangered species of humpback whale or pink dolphin. Moby-Dick ties to ecocriticism in the eastern regions of the globe not the least by reason of the final scenes of the novel, set in the far western waters of the Pacific.

Up through the late decades of the last century it was thought naïve and even ludicrous for scholars in the arts and the humanities (which many scholars are asking to be renamed “the post-humanities”) to examine the issue of animal representation in literature for what it might say about nonhuman animals, distinctions between animals placing nonhuman animals in a lower moral category than human animals, and considerations of animals based on nonhuman kinds of agency, cognition, consciousness, knowledge, and subjectivity. The emergence since that time of at least three news areas in literary theory and criticism—ecocriticism, posthumanism, and animal studies—evidences that scholarly interest in animals and animal representation is no longer disparaged or cursorily or shockingly blithely dismissed. Scholars who work in and across one or more of the areas of animal studies, ecocriticism, and

¹ Iris Ralph (irisralph@mail.tku.edu.tw). Iris Ralph teaches in the English Department at Tamkang University.

posthumanism question the “proper” subject of study of “the human” and the privileged spaces within (as well as outside of) texts that the human gives to its species. Cary Wolfe, a leading figure in the areas of posthumanism and animal studies, comments on the second of these two areas, one that only began to take shape as a discipline in its own right in the 1990s: before 2000, the question faced by scholars was how “could [they] do” what is now called animal studies; after 2000, the question was how could they “avoid doing” it (2).

The questions that animal studies and posthumanism scholars ask that work to unsettle the belief that the human species can be distinguished from other species on incontrovertible metaphysical, scientific, and ethical grounds are engaged with here mainly in the contexts of a “cetacean text,” the nineteenth-century novel and so-called classic of American Literature, *Moby-Dick* (1851) by Herman Melville, and two industries that have been major contributors to the extirpation of cetaceans in the wild: the whaling industry, a central concern of Melville’s novel, and the fossil fuel industry, which supplanted the former industry in the early decades of the twentieth century and today vies only with the computer industry as the most economically profitable industry in the world (“Supermajordammerung” 22). My argument is literary and cultural studies scholars can offer and are offering worthwhile material for challenging the animal/human binary where this binary is being used or depended upon to rationalize ecocide. We do so by reading, studying, and teaching literature and other kinds of cultural production according to approaches—animals studies, ecocritical, and posthumanist approaches—that foreground the presence of the nonhuman animal in literature and culture and forge connections between the represented animal and the literal or so-called real animal. In making this argument, one that draws on the work of scholars who specialize in ecocriticism as well as animal studies and posthumanism, I comment on the ties between the subjects of whales and whaling in *Moby-Dick* and the subject of the modern oil industry. Specifically, I focus on cetaceans in the region of Taiwan, near where the final scenes of Melville’s novel take place, and the fossil-fuel oil industry that supplanted whaling as the major source of energy for lighting after the twentieth century. I discuss this industry as it is affecting Taiwan and as environmentalists in Taiwan are endeavoring to halt or slow plans by Taiwan’s petrochemical industry to build more so-called naphtha cracker industrial parks in coastal wetland areas that are critical to extant cetacean species. The industrial parks (also called science parks) have been particularly harmful to the coastal and marine environments bordering or belonging to the Taiwan Strait, between Taiwan and mainland China, and bordering or belonging to the waters (western Pacific) off the east coast of Taiwan. I focus on this region because I live in Taiwan, teach English language and literature, and belong to a small but growing community of East Asian and East Asian-based scholars who see environmental and ecocritical issues as a vital component of English literature and language teaching.

In the arts and humanities, literature and other cultural representation offer enormous and as yet still hardly tapped opportunities for reflecting on and understanding not only the animal/human binary but the many instances of evidence of collapse of this binary. The breaking down of the human/binary has taken and continues to take many different directions, some profoundly disturbing and others inspiring. The former include the increase in intensive industrial farming of animals and biomedical experimentation on animals. These directions effectively objectify and commodify animals in ways hardly imaginable even as little as a century ago. Other directions hold out the possibility of more balanced relations between the human species and other animal species. They include initiatives and movements by individuals, organizations, and institutions to introduce, transform, increase support for, or renew cultural and material practices that reflect very different understandings of animal species (including knowledge about the vast differences among animals even within a single species). A small but growing number of farmers are rejecting modern factory farming of animals in favor of older methods of raising animals for slaughter that are relatively more ethical; manufacturers of common

household and other domestic goods (for example, cosmetics, soaps, and household cleaners) are reducing or eliminating animal testing; consumers are boycotting pet stores, circuses, and aquatic animal entertainment parks, or those industries that trade in animals that show little or no evidence of ethical regard for the animals. Also animal studies, ecocriticism, and posthumanism scholars who work across the broad spectrum of the arts and humanities are interrogating the historical ideological frameworks that have supported the animal/human binary, one of the most formidable binaries in the history of human thought.

In an essay titled “Being Out of Time: Animal Gods in Contemporary Extinctions Fictions,” animal studies and posthumanism scholar Susan McHugh argues that animals in literature and art are not “empty vessels” for filling with human meaning but also figures that provide “options for nonhuman participation” (3).² In *Animal Places, Beastly Places: New Geographies of Human-Animal Relations*, animal studies scholars Chris Philo and Chris Wilbert argue that literary animals “destabilize, transgress or even resist our human orderings” (5). Matthew Calarco, an early important figure in animal studies, also points out that animals in representation act on and constitute human identities and cultures and as such have the power “to interrupt one’s existence and inaugurate ethical and political encounters” (106). Animal studies scholars as well as ecocritics who have addressed Melville’s novel *Moby-Dick* in terms such as those given here are carving out a new niche for the text, one that might be called a “cetacean text.” Their work is contributing to a growing body of literature that is asking and pressing the most powerful leaders and organizations of our species to extend moral and ethical considerations to many nonhuman animal species including cetacean species. Without this literature, the most persuasive scientific arguments for preserving species diversity are ineffective. Such literature was underestimated by both the general public and the scientific community in past decades. Today, it is recognized as vital to shaping public opinion and government policy about such critical problems as global warming and species loss. In a speech on global warming presented at the 4th biennial ASLEC-ANZ conference (in Melbourne, Australia) in 2012, Dave Griggs, Director of the Monash Sustainability Institute, commented on the value of the arts in changing longstanding dismissive attitudes about negative kinds of human tolls on the planet. As he emphasized, commitments within the arts and humanities as well as commitments within the sciences with respect to understanding and addressing environmental issues such as global warming and species loss are needed in order to persuade governments to implement effective policies to address these issues.

Paola Cavalieri, best known for the award-winning book *The Great Ape Project: Equality beyond Humanity* (1993), sums up some of the research on cetaceans as this is being conducted in the sciences and in other disciplines outside of the arts or literary and cultural studies. In a recent essay titled “Declaring Whale Rights” (2012), she comments on the work of legal scholars Anthony D’Amato and Sudhir Chopra and their argument to extend to whales “the most fundamental of all human rights—the right to life” (115). This argument is based on research by scientists including Lori Marino, a psychologist who found that the highly expanded brain size of cetaceans is “convergently” shared with humans and cetacean and primate brains share very similar cognitive “elements” (Cavalieri, “Declaring Whales Rights” 115, 120). Other animal scientists who specialize in the Critical Animal Studies areas of animal psychology, cognitive science research, and ethology (the study of animal behavior), are finding that the cetacean species is the “filling” in the genealogical gap between “chimps” and humans (Whitehead qtd. in Angier). Hal Whitehead, a marine biologist, an expert on whales, and the author of “the most complete” study of sperm whales (Cavalieri, “Declaring Whales Rights” 120), has found that whales possess forms of agency, consciousness, cognition, and social organization that are far more sophisticated than was once believed. For example some cetacean species possess what might be called “ethnic” and “cultural” identities that are expressed through “specific dialects” and these are

“exaggerated” when a particular group is “in proximity to another clan” (Whitehead qtd. in Angier). As White explains this particular finding: “It’s like if you’re Irish and you run across someone who is Scottish or Welsh...You’ll speak with an even stronger Irish accent to make it really clear whose group you belong to” (qtd. in Angier).

Animal studies scholars and ecocritics who have written on cetaceans as these animals are studied in the specific cultural and representational context of Melville’s novel include Lawrence Buell (“Global Commons as Resource and Icon: Imagining Oceans and Whales,” *Writing for an Endangered World: Literature, Culture, and Environment in the U.S. and Beyond*); Philip Armstrong (“Rendering the Whale,” *What Animals Mean in the Fiction of Modernity*, and “Cetaceans and Sentiment,” *Considering Animals: Contemporary Studies in Human–Animal Relations*); Elizabeth Schultz (“Melville’s Environmental Vision in *Moby-Dick*,” *ISLE*, and “Humanizing *Moby Dick*: Redeeming Anthropomorphism,” *The Future of Ecocriticism: New Horizons*); Diane P. Freedman, (“A Whale of a Different Color: Melville and the Movies,” *ISLE*); and Robert Zoellner (*The Salt-Sea Mastadon: A Reading of Moby-Dick*). Whilst they disagree about Melville’s intentions and even about the ethics of continuing to teach and read *Moby-Dick* in the undergraduate English Literature classroom, they concur with respect to the point that the novel foments debate about the bonds that are possible between cetaceans and humans. If the novel is still being read and taught in ways that render it viable as ecoporn, or the celebration of Hemingwayesque, masculine, speciesist, heroic animal slaughter—an argument that Armstrong makes (*What Animals Mean in the Fiction of Modernity* (150-7)—it is also being read as a text that serves to promote respect for cetaceans in the twenty-first century and the preservation of cetaceans as a species.³

Of all of the records, both fictional and nonfictional, that reference the cetacean history of attrition, *Moby-Dick* is one of the most enduring and horrifying. In the first pages of the novel, Ishmael, an ordinary seaman, boards the whale ship the *Pequod* at Nantucket, a small island off the coast of the state of Massachusetts, a tiny “ant-hill in the sea” (Melville 62), one of the first sites of the whaling industry in North America in addition to New Bedford (Massachusetts) and Sag Harbor (New York) on the north-eastern seaboard (Marr 145). In the final pages, he recounts the ship’s final fatal encounter with the whale “*Moby-Dick*.” The sole survivor of the final violent and ugly confrontation with the whale, Ishmael, describes the sinking of the *Pequod* and its human crew in the far western waters of the Pacific Ocean near Taiwan. As Melville tells us through the character of Ishmael (the first person-narrator of *Moby-Dick*), “no commerce but colonial, scarcely any intercourse but colonial, was carried on between Europe and the long line of the opulent Spanish provinces on the Pacific coast” before the eighteenth century (100). This form of commerce included non-human beings as well as human beings and it escalated in the nineteenth century (and twentieth century), as Ishmael reflects:

And thus have these naked Nantucketers, these sea hermits, issuing from their ant-hill in the sea, overrun and conquered the watery world like so many Alexanders; parcelling out among them the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian oceans. . . . Let America add Mexico to Texas, and pile Cuba upon Canada; let the English overswarm all India, and hang out their blazing banners from the sun; two thirds of this terraqueous globe are the Nantucketer’s. For the sea is his; he owns it, as Emperors own empires; other seamen having but a right of way through it. Merchant ships are but extension bridges; armed ones but floating forts; even pirates and privateers, through following the sea as highwaymen the road, they but plunder other ships, other fragments of the land like themselves, without seeking to draw their living from the bottomless deep itself. The Nantucketer, he alone resides and riots on the sea. (Melville 62-3)

Americanist scholar Timothy Marr notes that the whale vessels that crossed the Pacific between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries constituted the first regular transpacific traffic (145).⁴ He also remarks that the whale vessel traffic was the sole exception to the colonial traffic between the east and west in this period (ibid.). Ecocritics point out that whaling is an integral part of this colonial traffic, or hauling of commodified non-human as well as human subjects between the east and west and north and south of the globe.⁵

Known as the “sperm whale fishery” in Melville’s time (Melville 176, 198), the traffic in whale flesh reflects the name of the whale species most sought after by the whaling industry in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The scale on which it was conducted in the Atlantic ultimately was unsupportable and it collapsed in the middle of the nineteenth century (Armstrong, *What Animals Mean in the Fiction of Modernity* 100).⁶ By this time, when whale population “stocks” in the Atlantic had been depleted, whaling ships were making longer voyages. At their peak, these expeditions extended far south and east across the globe, to Australia, Japan, China, Korea, and Taiwan (ibid., 100). This direction in human-cetacean relations is not the only one that humans have taken in their contacts with cetaceans but it has been the predominant one and it rests on linear, so-called creational and productive understandings of progress rather than on circular, recursive, or re-creational and re-productive understandings of progress. When Ishmael exclaims, “What wonder, then, that these Nantucketeers, born on a beach, should take to the sea for a livelihood!” (52), readers, awaiting what follows, learn that the “livelihood” of the Anglo-European human populations that migrated to North America and settled on the northeastern seaboard of what is now the United States mainly took the first direction:

They first caught crabs and quohogs in the sand; grown bolder, they waded out with nets for mackerel; more experienced, they pushed off in boats and captured cod; and at last, launching a navy of great ships on the sea, explored this watery world; put an incessant belt of circumnavigations round it; peeped in at Behring’s Straits; and in all seasons and all oceans declared everlasting war with the mightiest animated mass that has survived the flood; most monstrous and most mountainous! (Melville 62)

In Melville’s nineteenth century, cetaceans were mostly exploited for their flesh, a source of food for humans, and for their bones, used in the manufacture of “canes,” “umbrella-stocks,” “handles for riding whips,” and “farthingales” (supports for women’s underskirts) (Melville 281). Above all, however, they were exploited for their body fat, a common source of fuel for lighting. Boiled down in huge iron try-pots works aboard whale vessels, whale fat was “burned to light the night for the citizens of Europe and its settlements overseas” (Crosby 235). Especially coveted was the “pure, limpid, odiferous” spermaceti oil of the Sperm whale, the “most precious of all his oily vintages” (Melville 286), a substance found in the casing of the heads of Sperm whales:

In New Bedford [Massachusetts], fathers, they say, sire whales for dowers to their daughters, and portion off their nieces with a few porpoises a-piece. You must go to New Bedford to see a brilliant wedding; for, they say, they have reservoirs of oil in every house, and every night recklessly burn their lengths in spermaceti candles. (Melville 38)

The subject of the decline of the whaling industry as a result of uncontrolled slaughter of cetaceans thematically informs the last pages of Melville’s novel, where we read that all of the whaling crew of the Pequod except Ishmael drown in the far western waters of the Pacific. A closely related subject, or one that can be closely tied to the first subject, is the rise of the fossil-based oil industry. After whale fat production and refining became “more expensive and less remunerative—and thus, in the end,

financially non-viable" (Armstrong, *What Animals Mean in the Fiction of Modernity* 100), the fossil-fuel based industry replaced whaling as the major industry for finding and producing oil for lighting.⁷

Hart Crane's epitaphic poem "At Melville's Tomb," published in 1926 when literary scholars were just beginning to rediscover—re-excavate—Melville's literary remains, is similar to *Moby-Dick* in that it evokes histories of neglect, loss, defilement, and obscurity that cross species lines. In the final fourth stanza, composed (as the first three stanzas are) in an austere, dignified, slow, checked meter and powerful toppling, descending trochees, breaking one after the other in prosodic recapitulation of a heaving and magisterial sea, Crane imagines as a fitting place for Melville's remains the seas that Melville spent so much of his life writing about. These seas, as Crane imagines them, differ markedly from the place where Melville spent much of his working life, a drab New York customs house (Chase 4), and the place where Melville's remains were interred, a New York suburban cemetery that the American "Jeremiah" Edward Dahlberg described as "palled with bitter macadam [bitumen] and the orchidaceous fumes of automobile gasoline" (45). Crane's description of the sea and what he evokes as a more fitting shrine for Melville than an ordinary nineteenth-century cemetery steadily encroached upon by urbanization and an ordinary nineteenth-century customs house, includes these lines:

Compass, quadrant, and sextant contrive

No farther tides . . . [sic] High in the azure steeps

Monody shall not wake the mariner.

This fabulous shadow only the sea keeps. ("At Melville's Tomb" 2239)

The description of "the sea" as something capacious, infinite, and untrammelled, or hardly affected by the presence of the human corresponds to the literal global sea as recently as the first quarter of the twentieth century. Today, the global sea contains or manifests far more of the human presence than the bones of drowned seafarers—the human presence that Crane's poem alludes to in the image of "drowned men" transfigured into insignificant "dice" by "the action of the sea" ("At Melville's Tomb" 2238, 2n). As Shakespeare scholar and ecocritic Dan Brayton comments, a vast area of the Pacific today now contains "millions of square miles of sea surface covered with human refuse produced on land" and this "Eastern Garbage Patch," as the area is known, traces to "the massive expansion of European navigation in the early modern period" (176). Also, microplastics, a byproduct of oil refineries, have "anthropomorphized" the sea since this same period of time: "Invisible to the naked eye, [they] now float over the entire surface of the global ocean" (ibid.) Cetaceans and other mega fauna are among hundreds of thousands of nonhuman species facing extinction in the oceans because of a different oil industry than the one Melville records in *Moby-Dick*.⁸

The first barrels of fossil-based oil brought up from the earth in the 1850s were used to make kerosene, also a source of fuel for lighting after "overfishing" of whales "led to a shortage of whale blubber" ("Yesterday's fuel"). With the development of the internal-combustion engine a few years later, oil demand exploded. Three-fifths of it now "ends up in fuel tanks" ("Yesterday's fuel"). The oil company Exxon Mobil is now "the world's most valuable listed company" ("Supermajordammerung" 22). In the 1950s, the original "seven sister" oil companies—British Petroleum (BP), ESSO, Gulf Oil, Mobil, Royal Dutch Shell, SoCal, and Texaco—controlled 85% of the oil in the earth's body (ibid.). This control is predicted to lesson because national oil companies (NOCs)—companies that now partially or fully own the governments "sitting on the oil in question" (ibid.)—are are now taking over and producing, refining, and selling "their own" oil as well as "sitting" on it (ibid.). However, what is not

predicted to lesson is the demand for the oil. In his review of *Private Empire: ExxonMobil and American Power* by Steve Coll, Adam Hochschild comments that several centuries from now, the historians “sweltering away on an overheated planet” will “surely see” today’s multinational oil companies in the same light as historians today see The United Company of Merchants of England, the East India Company, and the Dutch East India Company. In their “great reach” for colonies, these colonialist institutions “fielded their own warships and armies,” “coined money,” and “ruled [great swathes of] territory....” (Hochschild). Today, in the so-called post-colonial world, we still confront colonialism but in the expanded form of eco-colonialism. The relentless search today for oil and natural gas in both “ever more risky” places and in places that are the last vestiges of a world not yet over-determined by the presence of the human (ibid.), is one of these kinds of eco-colonialism. It is in effect extending the reach for oil “beneath oceans,” “in Canadian tar sands,” “in underground rock formations that require ‘fracking,’” and “in the environmentally fragile Arctic water newly accessible as the polar ice cap shrinks...” (ibid.).

In Taiwan, more than two decades of loosely or inconsistently regulated policies and procedures for dealing with toxic emissions from oil refineries, or “naphtha cracker industrial plants,” have been disastrous to Taiwan’s diverse wetland ecology including six species of dolphins that make their home in the Pacific Ocean where this body of water meets Taiwan’s east coast.⁹ On the heavily industrialised west coast of Taiwan, the rare pink or white dolphin, a sub-species of the Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin, is almost extinct. They swim in waters crammed with naphtha cracker plants. As few as a hundred individuals survive in the waters of the Taiwan Strait between Taiwan and Xiamen, China. Seventy-five remain in the coastal waters of Hong Kong (“Threatened Chinese white dolphin gets DNA bank”).¹⁰ Despite the odds of their successfully preventing the continued expansion of the petrochemical industry, people are engaged in this effort including one of Taiwan’s most critically acclaimed writers, the poet Sheng Wu, known affectionately as the “local poet” of Changhua County. In 2010, Wu’s and others’ protests against the naphtha cracker industry drew support from many people outside as well as within Taiwan including environmentalists who were covering a concurrent campaign in the United States against Formosa Plastics Oil refineries, a petrochemical company operating off of the Gulf Coast of the United States (Loa, “Group calls for purchase to scupper refineries plan”).¹¹ Chang-hung Chou is another prominent Taiwanese environmentalist who has been engaged in the effort to protect Taiwan’s cetacean species from the fossil fuel industry “Nantucketters” (Ishmael’s epithet for whalers [Melville 62]).

The head of the Life Sciences Division at Academia Sinica, Taiwan’s most prestigious research institute, and a member of the Scientific Committee on Problems of the Environment (SCOPE) under the International Council for Science, Chang-hung Chou stood in the past on the other side of the debate over petrochemical plants (“Academia Sinica opposes planned plant on wetland”). In 1999 he served on the committee that voted in favor of the building of Taiwan’s sixth naphtha cracker plant in Mailiao, Yunlin County (ibid.), when environmentalists successfully opposed the committee’s recommendation that the plant be built in Yilan County (Chan). (Today, Yilan County is famous for Kavalan whiskey, a product that might not be what it is had a naphtha cracker plant been built in the area where grain is grown.) In 2010, Chou and a team of seventeen other research fellows from Academia Sinica submitted a proposal to Taiwan’s Ministry of Economic Affairs and Environmental Protection Administration objecting to the plans of Kuokuang Petrochemical Technology Company (KPTC) to industrially develop wetlands in Changhua County.¹² KPTC planned to build the country’s seventh petrochemical plant in the town of Dacheng, Changhua County, near the mouth of the Jhuoshuei River.¹³ Chou’s team pointed out that the plant not only would produce greenhouse gas emissions that would hinder Taiwan from meeting carbon-reduction goals under the Kyoto Protocol agreement but also would be dumping toxic

waste in the Jhuoshuei River, one of Taiwan's major tributaries.¹⁴ It also specifically pointed to environmental problems caused by the naphtha cracker industrial plant in Yunlin County (ibid.).

As a result of the efforts of Chou's Academia Sinica team other environmental thinkers and activists in Taiwan (including ASLE-Taiwan members Shih-huah Chou, Assistant Professor of English, National Sun Yat-Sen University, and I-min Huang, Associate Professor of English, Tamkang University), KPTC's plans in 2010 to extend the life of an older naphtha cracker plant in Kaohsiung County, Taiwan's fifth naphtha cracker plant, were stalled. However, KPTC is planning to continue the operations at the existing plant site or else to relocate the plant to another county ("Future of 5th Naphtha Cracker will be decided in 2013"). Also, as part of the opposition to KPTC's plans to expand its operations in Changhua County, the Taiwan Environmental Protection Union Changhua Division (TEPUCD), Changhau, established an "endangered pink dolphin public trust fund." Donations to this fund were used to purchase public wetlands that industrial developers were eyeing. (TEPUCD offered to the government 119NTD [about 3USD] per square meter for wetlands targeted by naphtha cracker industrial developers. The developers were offering 100NTD per square meter [Loa, "Activists apply for wetlands purchase"].)

Today, in the coastal waters of Taiwan, near where, in Melville's novel, the Pequod and its human crew end their days, it is no longer legal to kill whales and other cetacean species for their bones, flesh, and fat; however, they continue to be critically threatened by the petrochemical companies that dot the island's eastern coast and heavily line the western coast. Awareness of this issue is being generated by and reflected in the projects of ecocritics who teach and research literature in universities and other postsecondary education institutes in East Asia. In Taiwan and mainland China, scholars who specialize in one or more of the areas of animal studies, ecocriticism, and posthumanism, are teaching canonical texts of English Literature such as *Moby-Dick* according to the concern of ongoing cetacean slaughter and the decrease in cetacean populations in the wild. In the late decades of the last century, *Moby-Dick* was enthusiastically rediscovered as a text that implicitly comments on injustices committed by humans on members of their own species under such institutions as industrial capitalism and slavery (Buell 207). To continue to read it in these terms is important but to continue to read it only in these kinds of terms, as if the cetaceans represented in the novel are there as mere adjunct, fill, furniture, or prop, is to deny environmental and species crisis in the twenty-first century.

A short prose piece by Antonio Tabucchi, "A Whale Sights Men," forms the coda to a late twentieth-century collection of essays on Melville. Tabucchi represents an imagined cetacean's sighting of humans: "Always so frantic, with long, frequently waving appendages. And not round enough . . . with a tiny, motile head, in which all of their strange life appears concentrated." Up through the last two hundred years or so, our "strange life" was in a sense relatively "concentrated" in our "tiny motile head" or had relatively negligible and more or less reversible physical impact on the larger body or head of the planet. Since that time, our "strange life" as a species has become concentrated also outside of our "tiny motile head[s]." We have profoundly physically altered our planet in arguably beneficial and harmful ways. Giorgio Agamben, an early figure in animal studies, cites this sentence from Walter Benjamin's essay "One-Way Street": "[I]t is true that men as a species completed their evolution thousands of years ago; but humanity as a species is just beginning" (Benjamin qtd. in Agamben 83). For many animal studies scholars, ecocritics, and posthumanism scholars, Benjamin's "beginning" asks us as members of "humanity" to rethink our place in the world as one not divided from other species but as infinitely connected to them.

Endnotes

¹The two portmanteau words “tall-fins” and “tale-ends” in the title of my paper are respectively a pun (admittedly a somewhat feeble one) on “dolphin” and a reference to the ending of Melville’s novel. The first portmanteau refers to the two spelling systems in Taiwan, the Wade-Giles and Hanyu Pinyin spelling systems, which are used to translate into English the /d/ and /t/ sounds occurring in the languages of Mandarin, Hakka, and Taiwanese [Hokla], or one or more of the languages of Taiwan’s fourteen aboriginal tribes. The word “dolphins” could be spelled as “tall-fins,” which I use here as a pun on both the words “tall tales” and “tail ends.”

² See also McHugh, *Animal Stories: Narrating Across Species Lines*.

³ Other similarly identified texts are: *The Hungry Tide* (2006) by Bengali-American writer Amitav Ghosh, about endangered species of river dolphins in a coastal mangrove region of India (and also about a controversial tiger conservation program); *Whale Caller* (2006) by the South African writer Zakes Mda, about a man who yearns for relations with a whale named Sharisha; *The Whale Rider* (2002), a film based on the novel by Witi Ihimaera, about a young Maori girl who becomes the leader of her community, a position traditionally held by males; *He-lien-mo-mo the Humpback Whale* (1993) by Taiwanese writer Liu Ka-shiang, about a humpback whale (also known as the pink dolphin in Taiwan); *Free Willy* (1993), a film about a bond formed between a captive orca and a homeless youth who helps free the animal from a sea aquarium; *Arctic Dreams: Imagination and Desire in a Northern Landscape* (1985) by North American writer Barry Lopez, about the animals of the narwhal as well as musk ox and polar bear; and the children’s fiction *Opo the Gay Dolphin* (1956) by the New Zealand writer Avis Acres, about a lonely young girl who forms a friendship with a dolphin. For an animal studies discussion of Liu Ka-shiang’s novel, see Liang. For an animal studies reading of the extensive retellings of the story of a New Zealand dolphin (“Opo”) including the children’s book *Opo the Gay Dolphin*, see Armstrong, “Cetaceans and Sentiment.” (Armstrong reads these retellings according to Philip Fisher’s identification and analysis of the nineteenth century sentimental narrative genre in a study titled *Hard Facts*.) Jonathan Steinwand’s “What the Whales Would Tell Us: Cetacean Communication in Novels by Witi Ihimaera, Linda Hogan, Zakes Mda, and Amitav Ghosh” makes a postcolonial ecocritical argument.

⁴ See Creighton for a full history of the North American whaling industry.

⁵ Crosby comments on whaling in the area of the Pacific Ocean near New Zealand in the period between 1814 and 1840, when missionaries and large numbers of whalers arrived in New Zealand (227, 235-6). He cites both *Moby-Dick* and another writing by Melville, *Omoo, a Narrative of Adventures in the South Seas*, which describes the early contact between whalers (mostly AngloEuropeans) and Maori (the Polynesian aboriginal people of New Zealand) (226). For a postcolonial ecocritical discussion of *Moby-Dick*, see Huggan and Tiffin 60, 63, 198, 200.

⁶ Two other contributing factors were the increase in the flow of oil out of Pennsylvanian oil wells after 1859 and impact on “local” whaling during the Civil War (1860-1865), when “whaling vessels proved easy targets” (Armstrong, *What Animals Mean in the Fiction of Modernity* 100).

⁷ Of the whale populations that survive today, the largest populations of sperm whales now swim only in the seas near Alaska, Siberia, and Korean peninsula. Right whales, Eastern and Western Pacific Gray whales (classified under the taxonomic suborder Mysticeti or Baleen whale), and Orcas (also called killer whales and falling under the same suborder, Odontoceti, as sperm whales and the same family, Delphinidae, as dolphins and porpoises) also have precipitously declined in numbers. The Eastern Pacific Gray whale was twice brought close to extinction after the eighteenth century, once by whalers in the birthing lagoons in Baja, Mexico in the 1850s and again in the 1900s by “floating whale factories” (Hogan and Peterson 16). It is now the least endangered because of legislation enacted to protect it (ibid. 16). About three hundred Western Pacific Grays, also known as Korean Grays, survive today in the far western waters of the Pacific (ibid. 16). The group of Grays that used to populate both sides of the Atlantic is now extinct. The North Atlantic herd was driven to extinction as early as the seventeenth century. The last individuals of the second Atlantic group were killed in 1750 (ibid. 16).

⁸ The two countries that still continue to engage in highly controversial whale killing are Russia—“the world’s largest killer of gray whales” (Hogan and Peterson 241)—and Japan, which hunt whales for what it calls “scientific research.” See Russell’s essay “Japanese Whaling and the Language of Science,” for a comprehensive survey of the

most recent Japanese scientific whale research literature. See Cavalieri's essay "Declaring Whales' Rights" for a discussion of environmentalist and animal advocacy efforts to attribute on legal grounds the right to life to cetaceans. Both Russell's and Cavalieri's essays appear in the *Tamkang Review* journal under the subheading "Cetacean Nations."

⁹ There are 75 designated "National Important Wetlands" in Taiwan. Two are designated as wetlands of "International" importance, 41 of "National" importance, and 32 of "Local" importance. In November 2012, another wetland area was added to this list and opened to the public, the "Aogu" wetlands in Chiayi County. All of these are recognized as globally important habitats (Lee, "Unique wildlife park set to open in Chiayi").

¹⁰ These dolphins were only recently discovered, in 2007. Taiwan's humpback dolphin is called the pink dolphin because as it matures its skin turns from a dark grey to a light pink. Though it is closely related to the white humpback dolphin found in mainland China waters, both groups swim in shallow coastal waters and so the groups have become separate. The Taiwanese pink dolphin is also known as "Matsu's fish" because it is often sighted at the time of the local fishermen's goddess Matsu's birthday between March and April.

¹¹ Prominent Taiwanese ecocritic I-min Huang has written about Wu's activism. See his most recent publication, "Corporate Globalization and the Resistance to It in Linda Hogan's *People of the Whale* and Sheng Wu's Poetry."

¹² KPTC is a subsidiary of CPC Taiwan Corp and Formosa Plastics Group.

¹³ Liu Ka-Shiang, a prominent environmental writer and activist in Taiwan, is most known to western environmental literature scholars for his nonfictional writing, *A Posthouse of Migratory Birds*. The mainland Chinese ecocritics Wei Qingqi (Nanjing Normal University, China) and Lu Shuyuan (Suchow University, China) single this writing out as one China's best environmental writings ("Booklist of International Environmental Literature"). A recent scholarly essay on Liu's novel *He-lien-mo-mo the Humpback Whale*, by Sun-chieh Liang, Professor of English, National Taiwan Normal University, and a recent English translation Liu's of poem "After the Eighth Naphtha Cracker Industrial Park," by Taiwanese-American scholar Professor Chia-ju Chang, Assistant Professor of Chinese, Brooklyn College, The City College of New York, undoubtedly will generate more interest in Liu from western-based ecocritics and animal studies scholars. Chang's translation of Liu's poem "After the Eighth Naphtha Cracker Industrial Park" appears in the prestigious North American journal of environmental literature and literary criticism, *ISLE*. The poem obliquely refers to company KPTC and the pernicious grip that the petrochemical industry as a whole has on Taiwan. In a meeting that I had with him, arranged by Chia-ju Chang, Liu called the halting of the Dacheng plant in Changhua County a landmark in the history of environmentalism in Taiwan (Liu, Personal interview).

¹⁴ The Jhuoshuei River may continue to be polluted because of recent plans by an industrial science park company in Changhua County to dump wastewater directly into it. This will environmentally compromise adjacent wetlands as well as the river. When science park management officials were asked to compare the options of discharging park waste water into the Jhuoshuei and recycling this water, their "conclusion" was the former was "the best option" (Lee, "River 'likely' to be polluted by park: NSC").

Works Cited

- "Academia Sinica opposes planned plant on wetland." Staff writer, with CNA. *Taipei Times*. 15 July 2010. 11. Print.
- Acres, Avis. *Opo the Gay Dolphin*. Auckland: Reed, 1956. Print.
- Agamben, Giorgio. *The Open: Man and Animal*. Trans. Kevin Attell. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2004. Print.
- Angier, Natalie. "Save a Whale, Save a Soul, Goes the Cry." *The New York Times*. Web. 26 June, 2010. Print.
- Armstrong, Philip. "Cetaceans and Sentiment." *Considering Animals: Contemporary Studies in Human-Animal Relations*. Eds. Carol Freeman, Elizabeth Leane, and Yvette Watt. Surrey, England, Burlington VT Ashgate, 2011. 169-182. Print.
- . "Rendering the Whale." *What Animals Mean in the Fiction of Modernity*. Routledge: London and New York, 2008. 99-133. Print.

- Benjamin, Walter. "One-Way Street." Trans. Edmund Jephcott. *Selected Writings. Vol. 1, 1913-1926*. Ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings. Cambridge: Harvard UP, Belknap Press, 1996. 487. Print.
- Brayton, Dan. "Shakespeare and the Global Ocean." *Ecocritical Shakespeare*. Ed. Lynne Bruckner and Dan Brayton. Vermont, USA: Ashgate, 2011. Print. 173-90.
- Buell, Lawrence. "Global Commons as Resource and as Icon: Imagining Oceans and Whales." *Writing for an Endangered World: Literature, Culture, and Environment in the U.S. and Beyond*. Harvard UP, 2001. 196-223. Print.
- Calarco, Matthew. *Zoographies: The Question of the Animal from Heidegger to Derrida*. New York: Columbia UP, 2008. Print.
- Cavalieri, Paola. "The Animal Debate: A Reexamination." *In Defense of Animals: The Second Wave*. Ed. Peter Singer. Carlton, Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 2006: 54-68. Print.
- . "Declaring Whales' Rights." *Tamkang Review* 42. 2 (June 2010): 111-135. Print.
- . *The Great Ape Project: Equality beyond Humanity*. Fourth Estate: London, 1993. Print.
- Chan, Chang-Chuan. "Naphtha plant must be relocated." *Taipei Times*. 31 Oct. 2010. 8. Print.
- Chase, Richard. Introduction. *Melville. A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Chase. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962. Print.
- Coll, Steve. *Exxon Mobile and American Power*. New York: The Penguin Press; UK: Allen Lane, 2012. Print.
- Crane, Hart. "At Melville's Tomb." *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*. Gen. ed. Nina Baym. Shorter 7th ed. New York: W. W. Norton: 2009. 2238-9. Print.
- Creighton, Margaret S. *Rites and Passages: The Experience of American Whaling, 1830-1870*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1995. Print.
- Crosby, Alfred W. *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1986. Print.
- Dahlberg, Edward. *Can These Bones Live*. 1941. Rev. ed. New York: New Directions, 1960. Print.
- Fisher, Philip. *Hard Facts: Setting and Form in the American Novel*. Oxford, Oxford UP, 1984. Print.
- Freedman, Diane P. "A Whale of a Different Color: Melville and the Movies." *ISLE* 4.2 (1997): 86-96. Print.
- Free Willy*. Dir. Simon Wincer. Story by Keith A. Walker. Warner Brothers, 1993.
- "Future of 5th Naphtha Cracker will be decided in 2013." Staff reporter. *The China Post*. 4 2011. 16. Print.
- Ghosh, Amitav. *The Hungry Tide*. New York: Mifflin Harcourt, 2006. Print.
- Griggs, Dave. Introduction to "Regarding the Earth." *Regarding the Earth: Ecological vision in Word and Image: ASLEC-ANZ Biennial Conference*. RMIT and Monash Universities, Melbourne. 1 Sept 2012.
- Hochschild, Adam. "A stupendously well-oiled profit machine." *International Herald Tribune*. 12 June, 2012. Print.
- Hogan, Linda and Brenda Peterson. *Sightings. The Gray Whales' Mysterious Journey*. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 2002. Print.
- Huggan, Graham and Helen Tiffin. *Postcolonial, Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals Environment*. Routledge: London and New York, 2010. Print.
- Huang, I-min. "Corporate Globalization and the Resistance to It in Linda Hogan's *People of the Whale* and Sheng Wu's Poetry." *East Asian Ecocriticisms*. Ed. Simon C. Estok and Won-chung Kim. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. 125-43. Print.
- Huggan, Graham and Helen Tiffin. *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment*. London and New York: Routledge, 2010. Print.
- Ihimaera, Witi. *Whale Rider*. Dir. Niki Caro. Pandora Film (Germany); Newmarket Films (United States), 2002.
- Lee, I-chia, Staff Reporter. "River 'likely' to be polluted by park: NSC." *Taipei Times*. 20 Dec. 2012. 2. Print.
- . "Unique wildlife park set to open in Chiayi." *Taipei Times*. 21 Nov. 2012. 2. Print.
- Liang, Sun-chieh "Animal Contact in Liu Ka-Shiang's *He-lien-mo-mo the Humpback Whale*." *Tamkang Review* 42.2 (June 2012): 32-57. Print.
- Liu, Ka-shiang. "After the Eighth Naphtha Cracker Industrial Park." *The Best Taiwanese Poetry 2010*. Ed. Shao Shao. Taipei, Taiwan: Two Fishes, 2011. 74-75. Trans. Chia-ju Chang. *ISLE* 18.2 (Spring 2011): 463-464. Print.
- . *He-lien-mo-mo the Humpback Whale*. Taipei: Yuan-liu Press, 1993. Print.
- . Personal interview. 10 August 2011.
- Loa, lok-sin. "Activists apply for wetlands purchase." *Taipei Times*. 8 July 2010. p. 1. Print.
- . "Group Calls for purchases to scupper refineries plan." *Taipei Times*. 25 June 2010. 2. Print.

- Lopez, Barry. *Arctic Dreams: Imagination and Desire in a Northern Landscape*. Print.
- Marr, Timothy. "Without the Pale: Melville and Ethnic Cosmopolitanism." *A Historical Guide to Herman Melville*. Ed. Giles Gunn. Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 2005. 133-165. Print.
- Matthiessen, F. O. *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman*. New York: Oxford UP, 1941. Print.
- McHugh, Susan. *Animal Stories: Narrating Across Species Lines*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2010. Print.
- "Being Out of Time: Animal Gods in Contemporary Extinctions Fictions." *Australia Literary Studies* 25.2 (June 2010): 1-16. Print.
- Mda, Zakes. *Whale Caller*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005. Print.
- Melville, Herman. *Moby-Dick* (1851). Ed. Harrison Hayford and Hershel Parker. New York: W. W. Norton, 1967. Print.
- Philo, Chris and Chris Wilbert. *Animal Places, Beastly Places: New Geographies of Human-Animal Relations*. New York: Routledge, 2000. Print.
- Russell, Denise. "Japanese Whaling and the Language of Science." *Tamkang Review* 42.2 (June 212): 59-84. Print.
- Schultz, Elizabeth. "Humanizing *Moby Dick*: Redeeming Anthropomorphism." *The Future of Ecocriticism: New Horizons*. Eds. Serpil Oppermann, Ufuk Ozdag, Nevin Ozkan, and Scott Slovic. New Castle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011. 100-115. Print.
- . "Melville's Environmental Vision in *Moby-Dick*." *ISLE* 7.1 (2000): 96-113. Print.
- Jonathan Steinwand, "What the Whales Would Tell Us: Cetacean Communication in Novels by Witi Ihimaera, Linda Hogan, Zakes Mda, and Amitav Ghosh." *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment*. Ed. Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley. Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 2011. Print.
- "Supermajordammerung." *The Economist*. 3 Aug. 2013. 22-4. Print.
- Tabucchi, Antonio. "Post-scriptum: A Whale Sights Men." 1983. *Herman Melville: A Collectio Of Critical Essays*. Ed. Myra Jehlen. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1994. 249. Print.
- "Threatened Chinese white dolphin gets DNA bank." AFP. Hong Kong. *Taipei Times*. 19 Jan 2012. 5. Print.
- Wolfe, Cary. "Moving forward, kicking back: The animal turn." *Postmedieval: A Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies* 2 (2011): 1-12. Print.
- Wei, Qingqi and Lu, Shuyuan. "Booklist of International Environmental Literature." Compiled by Scott Slovic. *World Literature Today*. *WLT* 83:1 (Jan-Feb 2009): 53-55. Print.
- "Yesterday's fuel." *The Economist*. 3 Aug. 2013. 11. Print.
- Zoellner, Robert. *The Salt-Sea Mastadon: A Reading of Moby-Dick*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1973. Print.