

# Cartographic Sea-Changes in Melville's *Moby-Dick*: Ahab, Charles Wilkes, and the US Exploring Expedition

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Among the numerous meditative vignettes brought to life by Ishmael in Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* is an account of giant paths made by whales as they swim through "vast meadows of brit," or the fry of herring and sprat: "As morning mowers ... these monsters swam, making a strange, grassy, cutting sound; and leaving behind them endless swaths of blue upon the yellow sea."<sup>1</sup> Ishmael's description of this mutable, landlike feature on the surface of the ocean invites a multitude of readings, all of which point toward the novel's attention to shifting ground. In one direction, this ocean-meadow evokes a powerful image of geological time, of a millennia of changes that attain visibility through the fast-forward motion exhibited by the fluid movements of water. From Ishmael's post on the ship, the ancient past and the present lap over one another in the geological processes manifested by the "endless swaths of blue," the newly formed "swaths" always already dissolving in the wake of their creation. Looking in the same direction, Ishmael's vantage point, which emerges from a ship whose express purpose is to capture whales for commodity trading in a globalized economy, anticipates the rise of the Anthropocene and how human behavior shapes continental and oceanic environments alike. To look in this direction is to also acknowledge recent turns in scholarship that reconsider the temporal and geographical boundaries of the continent and nation-state, a challenge Wai-Chee Dimock addresses in her conceptualization of "deep time" as a metric to account for a complex "tangle of relations" that are so often occluded by the way modernity frames temporal and geopolitical boundaries as well as conventional classifications for literary study.<sup>2</sup> In reference to her title *Through Other Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time* (2006), Dimock emphasizes, "the preposition 'through' is especially

important,” as it opens American literary studies to “a crisscrossing set of pathways, open-ended and ever multiplying, weaving in and out of other geographies, other languages and cultures” that are capable of forming new “connective tissues binding America to the rest of the world.”<sup>3</sup>

Understandably, Dimock’s title assumes a continental vantage point consistent with models of transnational analysis, but her argument naturally welcomes approaches that move “through” other geographies, such as oceanic and archipelagic formations. In her remarks presenting “Oceanic Studies” as a new epistemological approach to examining literature, Hester Blum explains, “modes of oceanic thought are themselves predicated on relations whose unfixed, ungraspable contours are ever in multi-dimensional flux.”<sup>4</sup> The floating sea–meadow described by Ishmael embodies these “unfixed” and fluctuating characteristics and exemplifies how the novel, by transposing the terrestrial Earth on the fluid sea, challenges assumptions of geological permanence. Even more trenchant is the way the floating sea–meadow destabilizes the conventional relationship between continent and sea. As Ishmael describes the whales “mow[ing]” and “cutting” their way through the “vast meadows of brit,” he presents an image that fragments features of landlocked insularity that presumably characterize continental landmasses. Here, imagery of the Great Plains beyond the trans-Allegheny, which John J. Nichol argues Melville encountered in an overland journey to Galena, Illinois, in 1840 and inspired his allusions to the Midwestern prairie landscape in *Moby-Dick*, is flooded by “endless swaths of blue,” a descriptor that positions the sea as timeless and indomitable in its juxtaposition to land.<sup>5</sup> As the whales’ maneuvers cut across the sea–meadow, their paths bring the sea inland, fracturing the landscape and conjuring an apparition of the archipelagoes and islands strewn along the *Pequod*’s zigzag oceanic journey within the heart of the North American continent. In doing so, the novel unearths an unexpected “tangle of relations” connecting oceanic geographies to the continental United States, addressing in the process what Brian Russell Roberts and Michelle Ann Stephens describe as a problem of making the “archipelagic version of America” visible.<sup>6</sup> “The Americas’ dominant continental narrative,” they explain, “has precipitated a general relation to the archipelagic Americas that might be described as a collective negative hallucination, that is, a hallucination that does not involve perceiving something that is not present, but rather a hallucination that involves *the nonperception* of something (e.g., an immense archipelago, the archipelagic Americas) that is present.”<sup>7</sup>

Concerns about visibility and representation are especially relevant in historical approaches to literature that consider how shifting norms in geographic epistemology and representation have influenced literary texts. Following this line of inquiry, I suggest recent developments in scholarship on deep time, the Anthropocene, and archipelagic and oceanic studies bring new exigency to some important, though underappreciated, implications in Melville’s frequent allusions to land-at-sea, especially within the realm of nineteenth-century cartography. In recent years, scholars have advanced important research to elucidate the geographical inspiration

and imagination saturating the pages of *Moby-Dick*, and while I have certainly benefitted from and hope to extend these conversations, my primary objective in this article is to bring the novel's treatment of cartographical practices *at sea* into clearer focus.<sup>8</sup> Specifically, the continual movement and variability of the ocean underscored in this introduction emphasizes two problems plaguing attempts at cartographic representation: first, the way that land, like the ocean, also shifts and changes dramatically over the *longue durée* of geological time; and second, the challenge of acquiring the means, both in human execution and nonhuman instrumentation, to accurately depict the subjects of geographical and hydrographical surveys.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to wholly extricate the temporal and spatial entanglements of cartographic representation; thus, while I aim to acknowledge the rich potential that exists in examining issues of cartographic representation in *Moby-Dick* as it relates to theories of the Anthropocene, deep time, and geological time, my focus in this article attends to the novel's engagement with materially depicting the ocean and archipelagic landmasses in cartographic terms through a series of close readings and analysis of the extraordinary cartographic agenda carried out by the US Exploring Expedition (US Ex. Ex.) in the South Pacific and Antarctica from 1838 to 1842. The most prominent motives for the expedition included a shared recognition among politicians and investors that current navigational charts, especially of the South Pacific, insufficiently documented the hazardous rocks, reefs, shoals, and breakers that the American shipping and whaling industries sought to avoid. In fact, the prospect of traversing the perplexing constellation of reefs among the Fiji Islands (and evading the presumably cannibalistic inhabitants) was considered to be so dangerous that American ships could not obtain insurance to do business there.<sup>9</sup> Historian Jason W. Smith has convincingly argued the uncharted ocean in the early nineteenth century represented a kind of wilderness in the American imagination, one that evoked the same anxiety and desire for annexation, jurisdiction, and order as the frontier, and which could be remedied by "the controlled environment set down on the chart."<sup>10</sup> The expedition's effort to illuminate such hazards and bring order to the islands and archipelagoes of the South Pacific and Antarctic regions through processes of charting and naming, Smith explains, was ultimately "an act of control and appropriation."<sup>11</sup> D. Graham Burnett attributes a similar national and imperial agenda to the cartographic mission carried out by the US Ex. Ex., noting its role in a larger objective to establish an American Empire of commerce and science in the South Pacific.<sup>12</sup>

Such readings are in agreement with historical cartographers and literary scholars who argue that maps have long been essential tools for shaping national identity and encouraging imperial expansion, though maps of land (rather than oceanic charts) have understandably been the focal point of most scholarship of this genre.<sup>13</sup> And yet, as recent work in oceanic studies brings to light, the physical properties of the sea are not governed by the same characteristics as land-based subjects in maps. The point at which the ocean gives way to the contour of land changes with the tide over the course of the day, or even in the shorter interval of the

ebb and flow of waves. Smith also emphasizes this distinction, observing that “unlike terrestrial environments, where topographical maps might trace relatively static lines of territory or property, the paths of turnpikes, railroads, or canals, or the features of mountains [sic] peaks and passes, watery littoral environments lacked much semblance of linearity. Ocean waters were in constant flux, always changing the depth of water over reefs and sand bars even if by small degrees. Violent storms might substantially change coasts.”<sup>14</sup> This attention to the fluid realities of mapping the South Pacific reiterates the “ungraspable contours” of the littoral islands and reefs Wilkes was charged with mapping during his command of the US Exploring Expedition.<sup>15</sup> My point here is not to argue whether such fluctuations meaningfully disrupt the degree of accuracy required for cartographic representations to be useful, but rather to recognize how the unprecedented “ideal of precision” ingrained in the expedition’s cartographic mission was bound to be frustrated by the physical properties of the oceanic environment, which posed considerable challenges in contrast to surveys undertaken of the mainland.<sup>16</sup>

Given Ishmael’s critiques of the “monstrous” and “less erroneous” (but nonetheless faulty) visual representations of whales, it is not surprising that *Moby-Dick* would also take to task the representational failures of cartography.<sup>17</sup> Not only are whales in the novel frequently and unambiguously compared to land, but, as I go on to demonstrate, Ahab’s attempts to dominate whales and the members of his crew also replicate the processes of—and problems embedded in—cartographical surveying. Thus, the primary argumentative current in this article is to show how the novel’s depictions of conquering and rendering the “island bulk” of whales among the “wild and distant seas” draws on the cartographic agenda of the US Ex. Ex. to reveal the shortcomings of nineteenth-century cartographic processes, which are more pronounced in the ocean and therefore more visible than they are on the mainland.<sup>18</sup> The expedition’s controversies were prominently displayed to the American public in August of 1842 when simmering indictments erupted into scandal shortly following the expedition’s return. As Burnett explains, “with all eyes trained on what was by far the largest single federal expenditure on scientific affairs in the nation’s history, it had taken less than a month for accusations, recriminations, and countercharges to land the expedition’s officers in the dock. Weeks of acrimonious testimony followed: first Wilkes against half a dozen of his subordinates, then, later, they against him.”<sup>19</sup> The focal point of the trial revolved around two discrepant maps of Upolu, which in their scaled representations “differed by more than 10 percent in their linear dimensions.”<sup>20</sup> While the numerous challenges officers described in testimonies—poor visibility, weather, illness, and defaulting to less accurate means of measurement in order to meet deadlines—generally pointed toward the “messy realities of surveying,” Wilkes’s countercharges alleged that Lieutenant Robert F. Pinkney, who directed the first survey of Upolu, had generated representational errors through a “scandalous” failure to follow orders.<sup>21</sup> Wilkes’s prosecution presumed that inaccuracies within any of the charts could be traced back to insubordination or negligence in the chain of command

and that disobedience was subsequently responsible for breaking the “chain of cartographic information.”<sup>22</sup> Ultimately, what Burnett’s extensive archival research reveals is Wilkes’s incorrigible belief that the challenges posed by the undulating sea could be mastered by a matrix of disciplined men armed with state-of-the-art scientific instrumentation.

Though many critics have enumerated the similarities between Wilkes and Ahab, the novel’s commentary on nineteenth-century cartographic practices remains insufficiently examined.<sup>23</sup> Anne Baker offers an excellent reading of the novel’s attention to the US Ex. Ex. by observing the predilection Ahab and Wilkes share for mapping and measuring to offer a reading of the novel’s biblical allusions. By contrast, I seek to emphasize how the novel engages issues of cartographic representation through the whale and whale hunt, respective metaphors for land and the process of taking land surveys, in order to erode trust in the implicit claims to accuracy ingrained in the charts and maps produced. To briefly illustrate, like the islands and archipelagoes Wilkes was tasked with mapping, the whales captured in the novel evade precise quantification: Rendering is revealed to be a messy business in which spermaceti is unavoidably lost, and the casks used to transport what is captured acquire considerable leaks during the oceanic journey. Similarly, Ishmael’s attention to the “not unvexed subject” of determining how to identify the edge of a whale’s skin from its layers of blubber shares a similar acknowledgement of the arbitrary nature of determining an island’s fluctuating boundaries in cartographic depictions.<sup>24</sup> And so, as the novel reorients the subject of mapping to the whale, it brings the “multi-dimensional flux” of the ocean into the practice of cartography.<sup>25</sup> As a metaphor for the imperial objectives of mapping faraway lands to draw them in to the orbit of American Empire, the “leaky” rendered whale poses a critique to aspirations of cartographic precision embedded within the US Ex. Ex., emphasizing in the process the various leaks that spring from the “messy realities of surveying,” but which are minimized or denied outright by the authoritative rhetoric imputed by cartographic images.<sup>26</sup>

With the general contours and historical background of this argument in place, my analysis proceeds in two parts. First, I complete a more thorough examination of the cartographical processes Wilkes employed to map the Antarctic and South Pacific and identify their analogues in the novel. As I demonstrate, the novel’s references to the cartographic agenda of the US Exploring Expedition reveal a contradictory imperative to both represent and shape the cartographic subject, though the surveys are ultimately shown to lack the power to dispel unseen forces of subversion and dissent. This lays the groundwork for the second part, in which the repressed and unrepresented in cartographic depictions unsettles the surveyed subject. In the novel’s treatment of cartography in imperial relations, this uncertainty within the survey exposes the cartographer to the gaze of the irreducible subject, who reverses the survey in a cartographical counterattack. Thus, the novel capitalizes on the difficulty of organizing the sea into charted order to issue an ominous warning for the

nation, unsettling its geography and expanding borders by envisaging latent threats within representations conveying geopolitical visibility and order.

### **Historical Loomings: Ahab, Charles Wilkes, and the US Ex. Ex.**

When Ishmael measures the skeletal whale-temple and tattoos the measurements on his body in “A Bower in the Arsacides,” he addresses the same problem of accuracy in representation that surfaced in the trials from the US Ex. Ex.: “But as I was crowded for space ... I did not trouble myself with the odd inches; nor, indeed, should inches at all enter into a congenial admeasurement of the whale.”<sup>27</sup> In addition to alluding to the processes by which penciled-in surveys become inked and copper plates are engraved from drafted surveys to finalized print maps and charts, Ishmael’s justification for his abridged tattoo is remarkable for revealing his leniency for exactitude, and I would suggest the discarded “odd inches” point toward the discrepancies in the Upolu charts at the center of the court-martial hearings on the expedition’s return. The charts in question were alternately scaled one mile to the inch and two miles to the inch; and so, given the two-and-a-half mile discrepancy at stake, the hearing was quite literally a spectacle concerning “odd inches.”<sup>28</sup> In his testimony on the matter, Lieutenant Perry, who carried out the first survey of the island under Pinkney’s command, echoes Ishmael’s sentiments by “explain[ing] that he had never been concerned by the two versions of Upolu: ‘I never measured the charts,’ he explained, ‘and to the eye the only difference appeared to be in the sketching ... I considered them as corresponding.’”<sup>29</sup> Of course, in their respective assertions that accuracy can be achieved within a reasonable degree of error, both Ishmael and Perry admit some degree of arbitrariness embedded within claims of exactitude.

By contrast, the hydrographic surveys Wilkes directed on the US Ex. Ex. aspired to an “ideal of precision and comprehensiveness that, among other things, marked its departure from earlier American exploratory efforts at sea.”<sup>30</sup> And, as previously discussed in his prosecution of Pinkney, for Wilkes the high ideal of precision was contingent on the obedience of those down the entire chain of command: Because Pinkney had allegedly “not followed orders, the chart [of Upolu] was wrong. Where the land itself lay did not, from this perspective, even really matter ... insubordination amounted to cartographic error.”<sup>31</sup> Smith makes a similar observation in asserting that the attempt to cartographically master the South Pacific demanded unusual deference to those in command of the mission. “The surveying process,” Smith explains, “was itself an act of control over nature, over the surveyors’ own bodies, and over others—both American and indigenous.”<sup>32</sup> Thanks to one surviving copy of an instructional pamphlet composed by Wilkes and to Burnett’s thorough examination of this document and its remarkable diagrams, the process by which the US Ex. Ex. took its hydrographic surveys is preserved in impressive detail. A diagram by Wilkes illustrates the fundamental moves of the survey, in which four main vessels at anchor on the periphery of the island or reef to be surveyed document their position by azimuth

bearings to the sun (upper left-hand corner). From there, triangulation is used to record the relative positions of the vessels to one another, and further lines document fixed points between each vessel and the land or subject of the survey (see Figure 1). Once this stage is accomplished, “junior officers ... sight the secondary triangles” from smaller whaleboats, indicated by small circles inside the reef, “and take lines of soundings while also sketching the coast,” represented by the small x’s closer to shore.<sup>33</sup> The dotted lines toward new points on the periphery illustrate how, once completed, the exterior vessels lift anchor and circumnavigate the subject, repeating the process until the survey is complete. If any single vessel or boat were out of position or recorded careless readings, the discrepancies could amount to distortion within the final chart.

The orchestration of such an operation required every vessel to adhere to precise instructions for taking measurements, and to this end Wilkes preserved a rigid hierarchy of command and an “elaborate system of flag signals” capable of

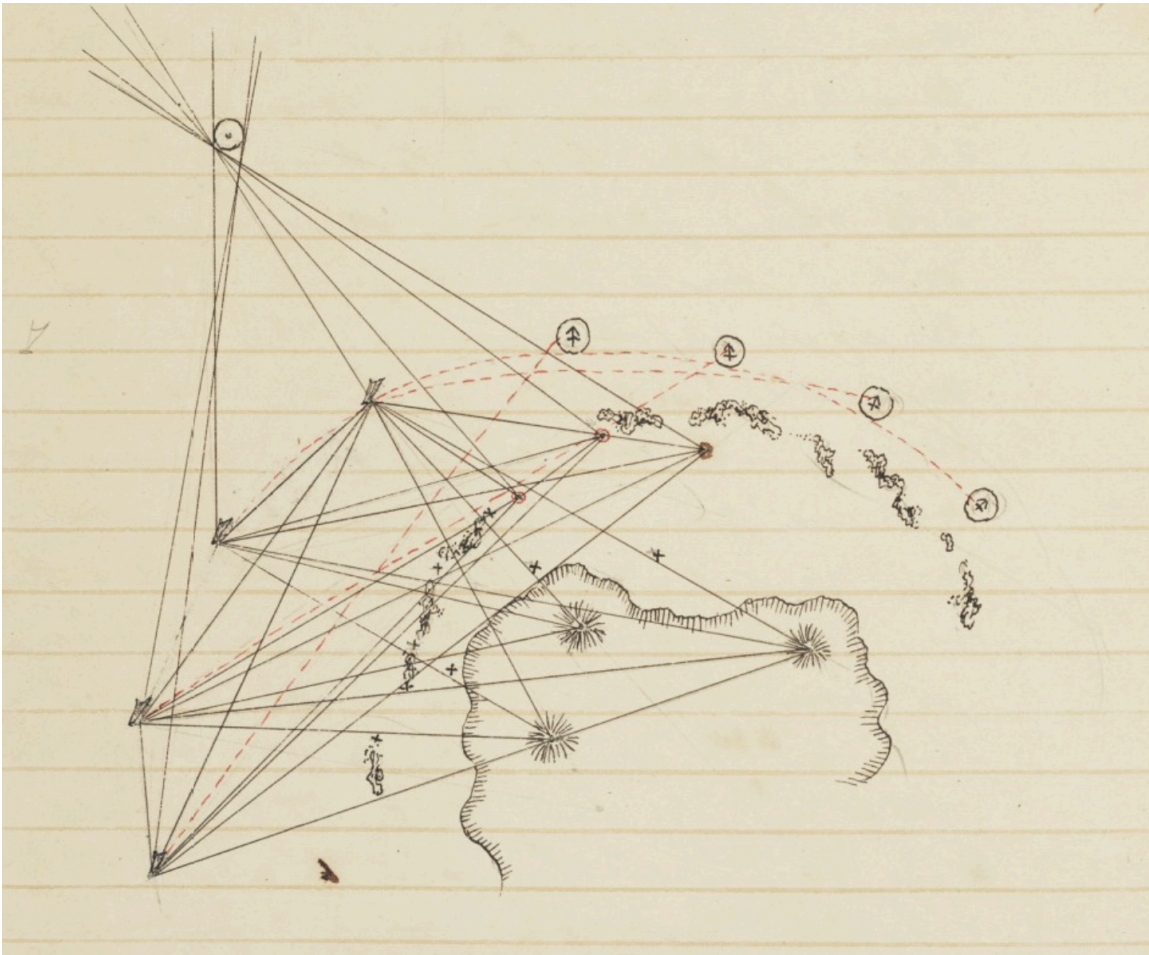


Figure 1. Large vessels work on the outer perimeter and smaller whaleboats work within the reef before lifting anchor and moving to the next perimeter location. From Charles Wilkes's *Notes on Surveying for Officers of the US Exploring Expedition*.<sup>34</sup>

“direct[ing] the vessels to assume any position [he] might select for [the expedition’s] purpose.”<sup>35</sup> As this section goes on to demonstrate, the attributes that Wilkes exercised as a leader and commandant of the intricate procedures necessary to direct the surveys generated by the US Exploring Expedition are mirrored to a hitherto unrecognized degree in the novel. The whales in the novel, for example, embody many of the characteristics of the reefs, islands, and archipelagoes Wilkes was charged with surveying in the South Pacific, and their mobile nature reflects the expedition’s intention to “fix” their incomprehensible configurations into charted order: Like reefs and shoals, whales reflect the hidden dangers just under the surface that the crew is ever trying to sight; they surface and are spotted in the same manner that occurs when lookouts announce the approach of an island; and in chapters such as “The Grand Armada,” they move in byzantine masses reminiscent of the South Pacific’s configurations of archipelagoes, which remained unfixed and bewildering to foreign interlopers. Moreover, recent scholarship has established good reason to believe that Melville would have had both the knowledge and the inclination to comment on the US Ex. Ex.’s undertaking to map the South Pacific. We know Melville studied the five-volume *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition* authored by Wilkes, the fifth volume of which features a chapter on whaling grounds and ocean currents, and the expedition itself is referenced in *Moby-Dick* with the purpose of elevating whaling captains to the same celebrated status of the cartographically inclined—specifically, “the heroes of the Exploring Expeditions, your Cooks, your Krusensterns; but I will say that scores of anonymous Captains have sailed out of Nantucket, that were as great, and greater, than your Cook and your Krusenstern.”<sup>36</sup> (Notably, the omission of Wilkes’s name in this list underscores the same contradictory nature he shares with Captain Ahab, suggesting a combination of unparalleled greatness—“greater ... than your Cook and your Krusenstern”—alongside fatally flawed ambition). Similarly, Meredith Farmer’s biographical recovery of Melville’s education at the Albany Academy emphasizes the author’s serious interest in and affinity for what we know today as “STEM” fields, which appears to have been deliberately repressed by early Melville scholars. Farmer notes that Melville, in addition to obtaining a degree in surveying in 1838, may have also studied “Navigation and Surveying” under Prof. Joseph Henry at the Albany Academy in 1831, introducing the possibility that he would have been familiar with the general features of hydrographic surveying employed by the expedition.<sup>37</sup>

One of the most prominent allusions to Wilkes’s cartography in the South Pacific occurs when Ahab directs his crew in “The First Lowering.”<sup>38</sup> Like *Figure 1*’s illustration of the meticulous arrangement of vessels around an island or reef to be surveyed, Ahab guides officers in command of smaller whaleboats to arrange themselves around the pursued whales, their targets and also metaphors for land to be surveyed: “‘Spread yourselves,’ cried Ahab; ‘give way, all four boats. Thou, Flask, pull out more to leeward!’”<sup>39</sup> From this point on, a hierarchy of command materializes among the whaleboats as Starbuck, Stubb, and Flask exert authority over their rowers

to arrange the boats according to their captain's orders, and Ahab adjusts their positioning through nonverbal cues, similar to those that Wilkes relied on to direct his vessels from afar: "In obedience to a sign from Ahab, Starbuck was now pulling obliquely across Stubb's bow."<sup>40</sup> When it comes time to fix a line to their target with the harpoon, Starbuck commands Queequeg to "stand up," which Ishmael describes in language that resembles the triangular configurations that Wilkes's hydrographical surveys manifested: "Nimbly springing up on the *triangular* raised box in the bow, the savage stood erect there, and with intensely eager eyes gazed off towards the spot where the chase had last been described. Likewise upon the extreme stern of the boat where it was also *triangularly* platformed level with the gunwale, Starbuck himself was seen coolly and adroitly balancing himself to the jerking tossings of his chip of a craft."<sup>41</sup> Not only is the procedure of cartographic triangulation alluded to in this description (albeit on the boat itself, suggesting the very processes of surveying are being enacted in reverse—a subject addressed in greater detail in the next section), but the passage also registers the challenges of attaining such coordination and marking the land in the unstable ocean environment. The description resonates with Smith's observation that "the ocean was no ideal laboratory for the practice of American science. [Lieutenant William] Reynolds found himself, his boat crew, and his measurements continually undermined by the very environment he hoped to capture on the chart. 'It was difficult in the extreme to make the observations,' he grouched, 'the compass whirled like a top from the jumping motion of the boat ... We could scarce preserve our equilibrium on our seats—it is damnable.'"<sup>42</sup> And yet, despite the obedience to Ahab in the chain of command, and despite Starbuck's composure amid the "jerking tossings" of his craft within the ocean, the pursued whales elude capture. Thus, when Burnett observes that Wilkes's command of the US Ex. Ex. exemplified "the role played by military order in the construction of cartographic precision" in which "naval discipline authenticates and ratifies the precision itself,"<sup>43</sup> the novel provides a subtle counterpoint, suggesting that the ocean is far too powerful to yield neat and consistent charts of protruding islands and archipelagoes in even the most dutifully executed surveys.

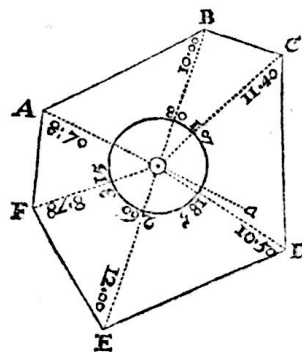
I also want to emphasize the role of the individual in the larger picture of achieving accurate cartographic depictions through "naval discipline." As previously indicated, Wilkes's methodological instructions for how to take a survey in his *Notes on Surveying for Officers of the US Exploring Expedition* were meant to ensure precision through a uniform set of procedures, but homogenizing the surveying process necessarily mandates, as Smith puts it, "an act of control ... over the surveyors' own bodies."<sup>44</sup> The US Ex. Ex. was not unique in supposing that a uniform network of surveyors was necessary to properly encode knowledge of distant lands for the purposes of bolstering national influence over the area surveyed. In British manuals like John Love's *Geodaesia; or, The Art of Surveying and Measuring Land, Made Easie* (1688), Love criticizes "Young men, in America" for lacking appropriate structure in surveying, offering his text as an answer to systematize land surveys alongside

national identity.<sup>45</sup> In his commentary on Love's *Geodaesia*, Martin Brückner observes the methodology of surveying presented a "serious concern," for "without the proper textbook the British surveyor could easily subvert the [British] empire's mapping enterprise."<sup>46</sup> The implication in both examples is that inadequate surveys, which are themselves suggestive of inaccuracies, were even worse than blank absence in the imperial archive. An insufficient survey may distort the subject, or occlude important information, perpetuating the unknown within a document that appears to discern and illuminate. Scholars like Amy Kaplan have emphasized the disruption that the unfamiliar can pose when incorporating territories in projects of imperial expansion; defusing foreignness through the project of gathering reliable information ameliorates the "peril of [an empire] becoming foreign and unrecognizable to itself."<sup>47</sup> Implicit in the provision to making a foreign land recognizable, however, is the expectation that surveys (and other colonial apparatuses) will also be successful in dispelling foreignness through imposed assimilation.

## C H A P. VI.

*How to take the Plot of a Field at one Station in any place thereof, from whence you may see all the Angles by the Semicircle.*

**A**Dmit ABCDEF to be a Field, of which you are to take the Plot: First set your Semicircle upon the Staff in any convenient place thereof, as at O, and cause Marks to be set up in every Angle: Direct your Instrument, the *Flower de Luce* from you to any one Angle: As for Example, to A, and spying the Mark at A through the fixed Sights, there screw fast the Instrument; then turn the move-



able

Figure 2: "How to Take the Plot of a Field ..." from *Geodaesia: or, The Art of Surveying and Measuring Land, Made Easie* (1688) by John Love.

The shaping influence of the survey is featured in the novel when Ahab imposes the oath to pursue Moby Dick on his crew in “The Quarter Deck” chapter. Although the language in this chapter aligns Ahab with the act of surveying a plot of land, in performing this function he also endeavors to systematize the crew in the same way Wilkes demanded his officers and subordinates adhere to his own surveying methodology. Standing alongside his harpooners, “the rest of the ship’s company formed a circle around the group,” placing Ahab at the center of his crew, just as the surveyor is instructed in Love’s manual to stand at the center of a field or piece of land he wishes to survey (see Figure 2). Ahab then calls for “[t]he measure! The measure!,” a pewter vessel of rum, which he demands his crew to “[d]rink and pass!”<sup>48</sup> The rum is passed around to the men, who comprise the various points of a field survey—points A, B, C, etc., as indicated by Figure 2—and each man is “measured” in turn as they follow Ahab’s instructions: “The crew alone now drink. Round with it, round!”<sup>49</sup> As the “measure” is passed and consumed, each man—thus “measured”—comprises a point in the periphery of Ahab’s domain, and his men—thus surveyed—are incorporated into his monomaniacal task: “Death to Moby Dick! God hunt us all, if we do not hunt Moby Dick to his death!”<sup>50</sup> By conflating the procedure of surveying with Ahab’s revealed purpose for the *Pequod*’s journey, the novel situates the cartographer as more than a passive observer of a survey’s subject; instead, the survey is revealed as a means to shape and impose the surveyor’s objectives onto the subject in the guise of mathematical description. Smith observes the same in his account of the cartographic agenda of the US Ex. Ex., in which “charts and accompanying texts sought to impose control over places and people” through “the transformative power of cartography to ‘fix’ or ‘fix-in,’ as the Americans often put it, a chaotic, dynamic, and largely unknown wilderness.”<sup>51</sup>

Ahab’s attempt to impose order on his crew, however, fails to secure deference and commitment from all men under his command. As Ahab prepares to measure his men in “The Quarter-Deck,” Starbuck appeals to “God” to “keep me!—keep us all!”—a “foreboding invocation” that “Ahab did not hear,” and one that symbolizes a rooted inaccuracy.<sup>52</sup> In the perimeter points constituted by the men in the compulsory oath to pursue Moby Dick, Starbuck’s resistance evokes the same issue of “insubordination amount[ing] to cartographic error”<sup>53</sup> that plagued Wilkes, and his survey does not expose the miscalculation. Starbuck later considers murder to escape the imposed task. Standing outside of the berth where Ahab unsuspectingly sleeps with the captain’s musket in hand, Starbuck articulates the motivation behind his mutinous impulse: “‘Flat obedience to thy own flat commands, this is all thou breathest. Aye, and say’st the men have vow’d thy vow; say’st all of us are Ahabs. Great God forbid!’”<sup>54</sup> In addition to exposing the way maps and charts “flatten” their subjects, removing visual convolution to obtain a panoptic perspective that insinuates godlike omniscience, Starbuck’s repudiation of Ahab’s claim that his men are “all ... Ahabs” reinforces the danger of inaccuracies within imperial maps and charts. The illusion of

comprehensive knowledge in a chart that has overlooked reefs or other navigational hazards, for instance, could prove fatal to a ship and crew.

Even more consequential, though, is the suggestion that the cartographically “‘fixed’ or ‘fixed-in’” landscape translates to authority over the people within. In the case of the US Ex. Ex., the Fiji Islands provoked terror both for their numerous navigational hazards and rumors of cannibalism, though Wilkes expressed his belief that the latter could be overcome by “a thorough knowledge” of the people.<sup>55</sup> In what appears to be an extension of the same logic Wilkes used to survey the geography of the South Pacific, he endeavored to effect a cultural survey that might transform the Fijians. This objective was ultimately thwarted, however, when the islanders killed two officers, one of which happened to be Wilkes’s nephew.<sup>56</sup> If cartography was invested with the promise of delivering the commercial and scientific objectives of the US Ex. Ex., this reprisal from the Fijians amounted to a fatal flaw in the mission’s imperial map, manifesting the anxiety Kaplan registers of an empire “becoming foreign and unrecognizable to itself.”<sup>57</sup> Notably, the cartographic flaw was not corrected on the drafting table, but through the brute force of military power, as Wilkes retaliated by leveling three Fijian villages with over one hundred islander casualties.<sup>58</sup> Starbuck’s presence in *Moby-Dick* serves to reveal a latent and insane logic within the expedition’s extension of the cartographic survey as a tool to control Indigenous peoples, and in doing so, the same “unfixed” properties of the sea that the novel presents as challenges to precision in cartographic representation enter into the domain of imperial human relations as well.

### **The Whale as Surface and Subject: Or, the Empire Maps Back**

As the previous section indicates, attending to the novel’s commentary on cartographic limitations, especially as they manifested in the US Ex. Ex. under Lieutenant Charles Wilkes, unsettles the coherent and methodological structures promised by the chart: Discipline fails to ensure precision in watery, littoral environments; aspirations for accuracy cannot escape some degree of arbitrariness; and surveys are not entirely successful in the dual task of revealing and transforming their subjects. In his research on American Renaissance literature, Robert E. Abrams identifies a turn in Melville’s oeuvre following *Moby-Dick*, arguing that he, along with authors like Hawthorne and Thoreau, becomes attentive to a “negative geography or space which constitutes the dark, alien aspect of all positively conceived landscapes and spectacles, subtly altering everything encountered and known.”<sup>59</sup> The shift, according to Abrams, unsettles the poles separating the utterly unmapped, obscure emptiness of terra incognita and spaces of ordered colonial settlement. If the frontier, the wilderness, and the unknown triggered anxiety in the colonial imagination, then Melville’s fiction in the years following *Moby-Dick*, Abrams contends, is concerned with the frailty of “humanly structured, interpretive space,” where masquerading pretensions of transparency and stability in society give way to inscrutability and the

unforeseen.<sup>60</sup> Even the “lens of cartography remains latently vulnerable and frail” in promising unmediated visibility, whereas, by contrast, the “Melvillian ocean” in *Moby-Dick* is characterized by a “thickly mapped, charted space ... of predictable static constants that can be summed up in tables and charts and registered in exact geometric imagery.”<sup>61</sup> As my analysis in the previous section has demonstrated, however, Melville’s epic novel may be more at home with Abrams’s conception of negative geography than has been recognized. Derek John Woods makes a similar observation in his appraisal of Melville’s response to reading Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *Mosses from an Old Manse*, for in “Hawthorne and His Mosses” (1850), published just before *Moby-Dick* (1851), Melville observes the impossibility of exhaustive description when he writes that “[t]he trillionth part has not yet been said, and all that has been said, but multiplies the avenues to what remains to be said.”<sup>62</sup> As Woods poignantly remarks, in this “counter-Occamian formulation, all mapping/writing ‘multiplies the avenues’ of possible expression: the production of knowledge itself yields uncertainty” and often results in “disorientation.”<sup>63</sup>

To this point, my attention has been focused on examples that exemplify, but also critique, processes of cartographic surveying in the novel, especially as they relate to the US Ex. Ex. and its efforts to chart the Pacific Ocean with a degree of accuracy and precision that would dispel the foreign and the unforeseen. And while some examples, like Starbuck’s subversive resistance to Ahab or the deaths of Wilkes’s officers at the hands of the Fijians, begin to discern the unseen that is capable of unsettling the cartographic survey, this section focuses on the “uncertainty” and “disorientation” produced by negative geography. In addition to examining “The Chart,” the chapter most explicitly engaged with mapping in the novel, I approach “The Blanket” and “The Counterpane” as two thematically conjoined chapters modeling the process of incorporating terra incognita into a map or chart.

In “The Blanket,” which addresses the whale’s natural and unprocessed outer covering as a metaphor for unsurveyed land, the whale’s exterior is “stript from him in long pieces, called blanket-pieces” that are subsequently processed by the crew.<sup>64</sup> This imagery offers new relevance to the “odd little parti-colored squares and triangles” that Ishmael describes in “The Counterpane” chapter as they are, literally, small “blanket-pieces” arranged and stitched together in a pattern determined by the quilter.<sup>65</sup> Assuming, as I have argued, that whales in *Moby-Dick* are metaphors for land in cartographical surveys, the ordering and organizing of the whale’s “blanket-pieces” into a counterpane exemplifies the process of settling unknown landscapes into surveyed order. The mapmaker thus plays a role similar to the quilter by cutting odd shapes from a dissected whole and formatting them into coherent cartographic representation. Ultimately, and most extraordinarily for the purposes of my argument, the novel illustrates how the demand for visibility and attempts to dominate the ocean through cartographic representation results in the contradictory and annihilative act of succumbing to the effects of mapping itself.

When Ishmael approaches the whale in “Cutting In,” the chapter preceding “The Blanket,” he alludes to an age-old problem in cartographic depictions of the Earth: how to make a round thing flat. In his discussion of map projections, Peter Turchi explains “introductory [geographic] texts refer to this as ‘The Orange Peel Problem.’ If you were to remove the entire peel from an orange in a single piece—and so, by analogy, remove the surface of the earth—there would be no way to lay it flat without cutting it in several places and/or pressing and pulling it.”<sup>66</sup> The most common solution to “The Orange Peel Problem” is to cut the peel into a series of connected lenses, the same shape used to transfer a map onto the surface of a globe. Though the process is somewhat different for the whale, the idea remains the same. As Ishmael explains, “as the blubber envelopes the whale precisely as the rind does an orange, so is it stripped from the body precisely as an orange is sometimes stripped by spiralizing it,”<sup>67</sup> a shape that better accounts for the circumnavigational courses that whaling vessels take around the globe in their typically years-long voyages. The blanket-pieces that comprise the whale’s outer covering, Ishmael continues, reinforce that “the whale is indeed wrapt up in his blubber as in a real blanket our counterpane; or, still better, an Indian poncho slipt over his head.”<sup>68</sup> Ishmael’s pivot away from the “counterpane” description, suggesting that the “Indian poncho” is more appropriate, registers the problems encountered by Wilkes and other cartographers operating in the service of exerting national and imperial influence over foreign land through the processes of surveying. The whale’s blanket-pieces at this point in the rendering process remain unmarked and defy fixed or charted order. Ishmael models this distinction when his dismay on being assigned a shared bed with Queequeg, whom he assumes to be an “infernal ... cannibal,”<sup>69</sup> gives way to comfort and acceptance shortly after meeting his new companion. Before the harpooner arrives, Ishmael identifies a “large door mat” belonging to his bedmate with “a hole or slit in the middle ... the same as in South American ponchos.” Upon donning the mat and glimpsing his reflection in the mirror, Ishmael responds with horror: “I never saw such a sight in my life” and “tore myself out of it.”<sup>70</sup> The source of Ishmael’s discomfort remains unspoken, but comparing his appearance in Queequeg’s poncho to the whale’s unprocessed “Indian poncho” brings his response within the domain of unassimilated indigeneity. Like the feared Fijians, whom Wilkes imagined he could bring to order through an acquisition of cartographic knowledge, Ishmael’s confrontation with this peculiar covering brings his body within the dangerous realm of the unknown. This interpretation is reinforced by the security Ishmael conveys after awakening with his bedfellow the following morning, for unlike the unmarked material comprising the “mat” or “poncho,” Queequeg’s tattooed body is indistinguishable from the “patchwork quilt” of the counterpane: “this same arm of his, I say, looked for all the world like a strip of that same patchwork quilt. Indeed ... I could hardly tell it from the quilt, they so blended their hues together.”<sup>71</sup> In contrast to the discomfort provoked by the poncho or the whale’s unprocessed outer covering, Queequeg’s skin dispels the anxiety Ishmael

registers from his bedmate's South Pacific origins by bringing his body within the realm of charted, cartographic order among the surveyed and mapped "world."

And yet, there remains in the counterpane example a "dark, alien aspect" that persists in the "positively conceived landscapes" Abrams identifies in Melville's later fiction and that might equally be located in the aforementioned "messy realities," "leaks," and false conclusions embedded within cartographic surveys and their accompanying representations.<sup>72</sup> In his recollection of a childhood memory, Ishmael describes awakening to the presence of a phantom hand reaching out of a counterpane, itself a symbolic map, that covers him while he sleeps: "[N]othing was to be seen, and nothing was to be heard ... [but] a supernatural hand seemed placed in mine. My arm hung over the counterpane" while "the nameless, unimaginable, silent form or phantom, to which the hand belonged, seemed closely seated by my bedside."<sup>73</sup> If cartography is used as a vehicle to order the natural world in a manner that allows the observer to understand it at a glance, then the "supernatural" hand over the counterpane registers a dimension of nature that, in its "dark, alien aspect," evades this process, subsequently rendering it invisible within the scientific and imperial logic of the cartographical survey. That Queequeg's inked and tanned arm, for example, becomes "so blended" with the counterpane so as to make it nearly identical to the metaphorical map reveals a dual threat to the cartographer's efforts to bring order to the Indigenous landscape: The surveyed people within are unwittingly issued cover to invisibly step out of the presumed authority of the cartographer's frame, subjecting the mapmaker himself to the countercartographic gaze of the irreducible subject. As Ishmael recalls, "I lay there, frozen ... yet ever thinking that if I could but stir [my hand] one single inch, the horrid spell would be broken."<sup>74</sup> Following the US Ex. Ex.'s imperative to "fix" the reefs, islands, and archipelagoes of the South Pacific on the navigational chart, Ishmael's arm becomes the subject of cartographic counterattack, itself "fixed" on a scaled representational matrix where to move an "inch" amounts to untold miles. Thus, Ishmael's imperative to "model thyself after the whale!"<sup>75</sup> in "The Blanket" chapter produces an unexpected mirror to the mapmaker, who finds himself the paradoxical architect and object of his own cartographic endeavors.

It is the eponymous chapter "The Chart," however, that most directly confronts the processes of charting (and countercharting) in the novel. Ishmael sets the scene by envisioning Ahab at work with his "large wrinkled roll of yellowish sea-charts" in what appears to be a nightly ritual: "Almost every night they were brought out; almost every night some pencil marks were effaced, and others were substituted. For with the charts of all four oceans before him, Ahab was threading a maze of currents and eddies."<sup>76</sup> The charts in development are, as the chapter reveals, designed to collate information from various logbooks to leverage the statistical probabilities of replicating a confrontation with Moby Dick.<sup>77</sup> Indeed, when Ishmael explains "that attempts have been made to construct elaborate migratory charts of the sperm whale," his statement recognizes both Wilkes, who attempted to create just such a chart



Figure 3: Charles Wilkes's chart of oceanic currents and whaling grounds from the *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition*, vol. 5: 457.

(see Figure 3), as well as Lieutenant Matthew Fontaine Maury of the US Naval Observatory and Hydrography Office, whom Melville acknowledges in a footnote.<sup>78</sup> But even more revealing in this image is the figure of Ahab, surrounded by a proliferation of charts, none of which are singularly capable of revealing the ocean's enigmatic mysteries. Like the maker of the counterpane, Ahab endeavors to “thread” together this “maze” of information, illuminating the elusive patterns of the unfixed ocean in order to guide himself toward his prey. In doing so, the juxtapositions of the sea charts call for newly “effaced” markings and revisions of previous information, similar to the manner in which the careful side-by-side examination of the two Upolu charts produced by the US Ex. Ex. revealed discrepancies that evaded the casual observer's eye and required emendation.

In this grand scheme, the charts themselves begin to reflect the characteristics of the White Whale, but the chapter also indicates a mutual attempt between whale and captain to map the other. *Moby Dick* is known for his characteristic “wrinkled brow,”<sup>79</sup> and as Ahab conducts this ongoing survey of the ocean to capture his subject, his enemy begins to take shape in the “wrinkled ... charts” themselves, unsettling the “thickly mapped, charted space” that Ahab tries to “fix” on his charts through the

“predictable static constants that can be summed up in tables and charts and registered in exact geometric imagery.”<sup>80</sup> And it is through this unsettled image of the ocean that we can see that Ahab’s deeper subject, the White Whale, is staging his own cartographic counterattack: “While thus employed, the heavy pewter lamp suspended in chains over [Ahab’s] head, continually rocked with the motion of the ship, and for ever threw shifting gleams and shadows of lines upon his wrinkled brow, till it almost seemed that while he himself was marking out lines and courses on the wrinkled charts, some invisible pencil was also tracing lines and courses upon the deeply marked chart of his forehead.”<sup>81</sup> Like the invisible hand that Ishmael encounters reaching out of the counterpane, the scene suggests that *Moby Dick* is simultaneously calculating Ahab’s moves, charting the captain’s mind with an “invisible pencil” that might similarly lead to a final, decisive encounter.

It is not altogether surprising that both Ahab and the White Whale would venture to complete “charts” of one another, as their initial encounter can be read as an incomplete survey taken on both ends. In the chapter “Leg and Arm,” the captain of the British *Samuel Enderby* affirms the presence of harpoons “sticking in near [Moby Dick’s] starboard fin” when they had recently encountered the whale, and Ahab responds by insisting, “Aye aye—they were mine—my irons.”<sup>82</sup> If, as I have argued, the lowering for whales is a metaphor in the novel for the cartographic methods employed by the US Ex. Ex., then Ahab’s harpoons are the product of his incomplete survey of the White Whale, which represents the unconquered and the unmapped in imperial relations. At the same time, Moby Dick achieves a partially successful countersurvey when he dismembers Ahab’s leg, itself a metonymic limb interpolating the US Exploring Expedition’s imperial cartographic agenda. Just as the Fijians succeeded in killing two of the expedition’s officers without wholly destroying the mission, Ahab emerges from the fray wounded but mortally intact.<sup>83</sup> And so it is in their final encounter that Ahab tethers himself to Moby Dick in order to complete his self-destructive task, and the two enact a final survey of the *Pequod* itself, as the whale’s “concentric circles seized the lone boat itself, and all its crew, ... spinning, animate and inanimate, all round and round” until the surveyed subject disappears into the great vortex.<sup>84</sup>

In the wake of this disaster, Ishmael emerges with a text that is not wholly unlike a chart. Situated “on the margin” of the ensuing disaster, but also “in full sight of it,” Ishmael witnesses Moby Dick’s circumnavigational survey of the *Pequod* as it becomes part and possession of the sea.<sup>85</sup> Unlike maps of land, which portend to represent the landscape as it is, charts are working documents meant to ward sea vessels away from navigational dangers, and so it bears considering what the novel’s attention to cartographical practices *at sea* presages of the nation. In 1839, the year following Wilkes’s departure with the US Ex. Ex., and just over a decade before *Moby-Dick* was published, John O’Sullivan anticipated his later articulation of manifest destiny when he declared the United States was “destined to be *the great nation* of futurity” by virtue of the Declaration of Independence’s professed commitment to

human equality, “because the principle upon which a nation is organized fixes its destiny, and that of equality is perfect, is universal.”<sup>86</sup> But the novel’s attention to Indigenous bodies and the coercive features of cartographic enterprises applies a skeptical pressure on this view, as it obscures the same “oppressions, ... cruelties, and injustice” O’Sullivan attributes to “the monarchies and aristocracies of antiquity.”<sup>87</sup> Thus, the novel’s suspicion of cartography unsettles the dictates of manifest destiny, warning readers to veer the nation away from the unseen hazards of national and imperial expansion.

The newly orphaned Ishmael’s imminent return to shore closes a circle begun at the novel’s outset, where he describes a “small scattered congregation of sailors, and sailors’ wives and widows” in a state of mourning: “Each silent worshipper seemed purposely sitting apart from the other, as if each silent grief were insular and incommunicable. The chaplain had not yet arrived; and there these silent islands of men and women sat.”<sup>88</sup> The scene underscores the trauma that surfaces when news of a death at sea or shipwreck makes its way back to the mainland of a broader archipelagic cartography of the Americas, so transforming those affected at home that they take on the features of the baffling, uncharted oceanic space the US Ex. Ex. sought to bring to order. The handful of “islands of men and women” offer a preview of what expansionist policies may yield, unsettling the thickly mapped space of the continental nation.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002), 223.

<sup>2</sup> Wai-Chee Dimock, *Through Other Continents: American Literature across Deep Time* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 3.

<sup>3</sup> Dimock, *Through Other Continents*, 3.

<sup>4</sup> Hester Blum, “Introduction: Oceanic Studies,” *Atlantic Studies* 10, no. 2 (2013): 151. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14788810.2013.785186>. See also Hester Blum, “The Prospect of Oceanic Studies,” *Modern Language Association* 125, no. 3 (May 2010): 670–77. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25704464>.

<sup>5</sup> John W. Nichol, “Melville and the Midwest,” *PMLA* 66, no. 5 (1951): 613–25. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/459527>; Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 223, emphasis mine.

<sup>6</sup> Dimock, *Through Other Continents*, 3; Brian Russell Roberts and Michelle Ann Stephens, “Archipelagic American Studies: Decontinentalizing the Study of American Culture,” in

*Archipelagic American Studies*, edited by Brian Russell Roberts and Michelle Ann Stephens (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 1.

<sup>7</sup> Roberts and Stephens, “Archipelagic American Studies,” 9.

<sup>8</sup> See especially Anne Baker, “Mapping and Measurement in *Moby-Dick*,” in *Ungraspable Phantom: Essays on Moby-Dick*, edited by John Bryant, Mary K. Bercaw Edwards, and Timothy Marr (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2006), 182–96; Robert Tally Jr., *Melville, Mapping and Globalization: Literary Cartography in the American Baroque Writer* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2009); Eric Bulson, “Melville’s Zig-Zag World-Circle,” in *Novels, Maps, Modernity: The Spatial Imagination, 1850–2000* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 43–64; and Zbigniew Bialas, “Pondering Over the Chart of Kokovoko: Herman Melville and the Critique of Cartological Inscription” (*Melville ‘Among the Nations’: Proceedings of an International Conference*, edited by Sanford E. Marovitz and A. C. Christodoulou (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2001), 345–54. Other scholarship referencing Melville’s engagement with mapping and geographical thinking in *Moby-Dick* includes Hsuan L. Hsu, *Geography and the Production of Space* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), specifically 132–34; and Antonio Barrenechea, “Conquistadors, Monsters, and Maps: *Moby-Dick* in a New World Context,” *Comparative American Studies* 7, no. 1 (March 2009): 18–33.

<sup>9</sup> Jason W. Smith, *To Master the Boundless Sea: The U.S. Navy, the Marine Environment, and the Cartography of Empire* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 60.

<sup>10</sup> Smith, *To Master the Boundless Sea*, 39.

<sup>11</sup> Smith, *To Master the Boundless Sea*, 71.

<sup>12</sup> D. Graham Burnett, “Hydrographic Discipline among the Navigators: Charting an ‘Empire of Commerce and Science’ in the Nineteenth-Century Pacific,” in *The Imperial Map: Cartography and the Mastery of Empire*, edited by James R. Akerman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 185–259.

<sup>13</sup> See Martin Brückner, *The Geographic Revolution in Early America: Maps, Literacy, and National Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); J. B. Harley, *The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography*, ed. by Paul Laxton (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001); and Felix Driver, *Geography Militant: Cultures of Exploration and Empire* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001).

<sup>14</sup> Smith, *To Master the Boundless Sea*, 65.

<sup>15</sup> Blum, “Introduction,” 151.

<sup>16</sup> Smith, *To Master the Boundless Sea*, 49.

<sup>17</sup> See Ch. 55, “Monstrous Pictures of Whales,” and Ch. 56, “Less Erroneous Pictures of Whales,” in Melville, *Moby-Dick*.

<sup>18</sup> Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 22.

<sup>19</sup> Burnett, “Hydrographic Discipline,” 186.

<sup>20</sup> Burnett, “Hydrographic Discipline,” 186, 251. Upolu is part of the archipelago we know today as Samoa, though at the time it was known as belonging to the Sandwich Islands.

<sup>21</sup> Burnett, “Hydrographic Discipline,” 251, 249.

<sup>22</sup> Burnett, “Hydrographic Discipline,” 253.

<sup>23</sup> Kathleen E. Kier and Robert L. Gale are among those who have established connections between Ahab and Wilkes, though several others have noted broader connections between the novel and the US Ex. Ex. Regarding the similarities between Ahab and Wilkes, Gale argues that both “may be described as dangerous, eccentric, and mysterious, and both as dauntless, flawed by insolence and pride, persistent, seawise and soul-sick, and wrathful,” and “their voyages were parallel at times and included similar gams” (6). See Kathleen E. Kier, Vol. 2 of *A Melville Encyclopedia: The Novels* (Troy: The Whitston Publishing Company, 1990): 1103; and Robert L. Gale, *A Herman Melville Encyclopedia* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995).

<sup>24</sup> Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 245.

<sup>25</sup> Blum, “Introduction,” 3.

<sup>26</sup> Burnett, “Hydrographic Discipline,” 251. Burnett provides two incisive examples of maritime surveyors expressing uneasiness at completed charts, suggesting a false degree of accuracy attained in the surveys that generated them (247–48), one of which came from George Sinclair, who aided Lt. Pinkney’s defense at his court-martial: “I hope and trust that Capt. Wilkes will not claim too much for the chart, which I have no doubt will be a very handsome one. If he publishes the chart as completed and as one of perfect accuracy, he will claim for it more than it is entitled to, and if the ground should ever be reexamined by future navigators, with more time to devote to the work than we had, we will lose the credit to which we are most justly entitled” (“Hydrographic Discipline,” 248).

<sup>27</sup> Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 346–47.

<sup>28</sup> Burnett, “Hydrographic Discipline,” 186.

<sup>29</sup> Burnett, “Hydrographic Discipline,” 250–51.

<sup>30</sup> Smith, *To Master the Boundless Sea*, 50.

<sup>31</sup> Burnett, "Hydrographic Discipline," 253, 258.

<sup>32</sup> Smith, *To Master the Boundless Sea*, 50.

<sup>33</sup> Burnett, "Hydrographic Discipline," 223.

<sup>34</sup> The full text of Wilkes's *Notes on Surveying for Officers of the US Exploring Expedition* is archived in the US Library of Congress, Washington, DC, Wilkes Papers, box 20, file "Exploring Expedition File, 1838–1842." At the time of publication, this image was available on the US Capitol Visitor Center website, courtesy of the Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

<sup>35</sup> Burnett, "Hydrographic Discipline," 229.

<sup>36</sup> Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 99.

<sup>37</sup> Meredith Farmer, "Herman Melville and Joseph Henry at the Albany Academy; or, Melville's Education in Mathematics and Science," *Leviathan* 18, no. 2 (June 2016): 13.

<sup>38</sup> Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 181–88.

<sup>39</sup> Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 181.

<sup>40</sup> Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 182.

<sup>41</sup> Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 184; emphasis mine.

<sup>42</sup> Smith, *To Master*, 66.

<sup>43</sup> Burnett, "Naval Discipline," 242.

<sup>44</sup> Smith, *To Master the Boundless Sea*, 50.

<sup>45</sup> Qtd. in Brückner, *The Geographic Revolution*, 28.

<sup>46</sup> Brückner, *The Geographic Revolution*, 28.

<sup>47</sup> Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in The Making of U.S. Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 11.

<sup>48</sup> Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 141.

<sup>49</sup> Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 141.

<sup>50</sup> Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 142.

<sup>51</sup> Smith, *To Master the Boundless Sea*, 42, 49.

<sup>52</sup> Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 140.

<sup>53</sup> Burnett, "Hydrographic Discipline," 258.

<sup>54</sup> Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 387.

<sup>55</sup> Smith, *To Master the Boundless Sea*, 61.

<sup>56</sup> Smith, *To Master the Boundless Sea*, 43.

<sup>57</sup> Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire*, 11.

<sup>58</sup> Smith, *To Master the Boundless Sea*, 43.

<sup>59</sup> Robert E. Abrams, *Landscape and Ideology in American Renaissance Literature: Topographies of Skepticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 2, emphasis original.

<sup>60</sup> Abrams, *Landscape and Ideology*, 11.

<sup>61</sup> Abrams, *Landscape and Ideology*, 11, 56.

<sup>62</sup> Qtd. in Derek John Woods, "Knowing When You're in Terra Incognita: Mapping, Vision, and Orientation in Ishmael's Anatomies," *Leviathan: A Journal of Melville Studies* 14, no. 3 (October 2012): 25.

<sup>63</sup> Woods, "Knowing," 25.

<sup>64</sup> Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 246.

<sup>65</sup> Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 37.

<sup>66</sup> Peter Turchi, *Maps of the Imagination: The Writer as Cartographer* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 2004), 74.

<sup>67</sup> Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 244.

<sup>68</sup> Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 246.

<sup>69</sup> Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 36.

<sup>70</sup> Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 33.

<sup>71</sup> Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 37.

<sup>72</sup> Abrams, *Landscape and Ideology*, 2.

<sup>73</sup> Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 37.

<sup>74</sup> Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 37.

<sup>75</sup> Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 247.

<sup>76</sup> Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 166, 166–67.

<sup>77</sup> Ahab's intent to calculate Moby Dick's whereabouts through logbook data and charted information is well documented by critics. See, for example, Anne Baker, "Mapping and Measurement in *Moby-Dick*," 192–94; Eric Bulson, *Novels, Maps, Modernity*, 52–58; and Howard P. Vincent, *The Trying-out of Moby-Dick* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1949), 181–86.

<sup>78</sup> Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 167. With the addition of the footnote, Melville recognizes Maury's audacious work to demystify oceanic currents, weather patterns, and the migration of whales by collating logbook data from commercial, whaling, and naval vessels. Melville writes, "Since the above was written, the statement is happily borne out by an official circular, issued by Lieutenant Maury, of the National Observatory, Washington, April 16, 1851. By that circular, it appears that precisely such a chart is in course of completion" (167).

<sup>79</sup> Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 138, 169.

<sup>80</sup> Abrams, *Landscape and Ideology*, 56.

<sup>81</sup> Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 166–67.

<sup>82</sup> Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 337.

<sup>83</sup> It should also be noted that the captain of the *Samuel Enderby*, who has lost his arm in his encounter with Moby Dick, brings Ishmael's terrifying dream of countercartographic attack to fruition, while his decision to relinquish the hunt of the White Whale subtly differentiates the US from the British in their imperial ambitions.

<sup>84</sup> Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 427.

<sup>85</sup> Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 427.

<sup>86</sup> "The Great Nation of Futurity," *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, 6, no. 23 (November 1839): 426, emphasis original. Although the original essay was published anonymously, it is widely agreed to be authored by John O'Sullivan, editor of the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*.

<sup>87</sup> "The Great Nation," 426.

<sup>88</sup> Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 43.

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