

The Editors of THE NEW ENGLAND QUARTERLY
are pleased to publish the winning essay
of the 2006
Herbert Ross Brown Prize in New England
Literary History, 1820–2000

The Alternative Taxonomies of Melville's "The Encantadas"

DENISE TANYOL

TWO years after the 1839 publication of Charles Darwin's *Journal and Remarks, 1832–1836*, popularly known as *The Voyage of the "Beagle,"* Herman Melville landed in the Galapagos Islands, where the crew of the Massachusetts whaler *Acushnet* gathered food and fuel and then proceeded on their way.¹ Melville's fictionalized account of the islands, titled "The Encantadas," appeared in 1854 in ten serialized sketches in *Putnam's Magazine*. In "The Encantadas," Melville describes a

¹*Journal and Remarks, 1832–1836* was Darwin's contribution to a four-volume account of the two surveying voyages of the *Beagle*, published collectively as Captain Robert FitzRoy's *Narrative of the Surveying Voyages of His Majesty's Ships "Adventure" and "Beagle," between the Years 1826 and 1836. Describing Their Examination of the Southern Shores of South America, and the "Beagle's" Circumnavigation of the Globe* (London: Henry Colburn, 1839). The volumes were: 1) an account by P. Parker King, captain of the first voyage, 1826–30; 2) the account of FitzRoy, captain of the second voyage, 1831–36; 3) Darwin's natural history of places visited during the second voyage; and 4) an appendix to FitzRoy's volume. Darwin's volume proved the most popular of the set and was reprinted later in 1839, singly, with a new title, *Journal of Researches into the Geology and Natural History of the Various Countries Visited by the H.M.S. "Beagle," under the Command of Captain Fitzroy, R.N., from 1832 to 1836*. In 1845, Darwin revised that text into the popular and widely reprinted second edition, *Journal of Researches into the Natural History and Geology of the Countries*

parched, desolate archipelago, a landscape that bears distinct similarities to the one Darwin observed—but not the one he made public in the *Voyage*.

By 1845, *The Voyage of the "Beagle"* had made Darwin world famous, not only among scientists but also among travelers, some of whom trekked the globe hunting for species named in his honor.² The book went through several editions, each selling quickly, and in July 1845 it was critiqued favorably, and at great length, in the *North American Review*.³ Melville

Visited During the Voyage of H.M.S. Beagle Round the World, under the Command of Capt. Fitz Roy, R.N.

William Howarth, in "Earth Islands: Darwin and Melville in the Galapagos" (*Iowa Review* 30 [2000]: 99, 102), says that Melville spent only a few days in the Galapagos in 1841, but Melville's editors report that the *Acushnet* cruised among the islands "for some three weeks in the fall of 1841 and returned in early January of 1842. Her abstract log records the first sight of Albemarle on October 30, 1841, and an anchoring at Chatham Island on November 19; the captain evidently sent a boat's crew ashore at Albemarle for tortoises, as Melville remembers in Sketch Second, and the sailors must have fished off Rock Rodondo, as he writes in Sketch Third, in late October, just before several whale-ships spoke the *Acushnet*" (see the editorial appendix to "The Piazza Tales" and Other Prose Pieces, 1839–1860, vol. 9 of *The Writings of Herman Melville*, ed. Harrison Hayford et al. [Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press and the Newberry Library, 1987], p. 602).

²Adrian Desmond and James Moore, *Darwin* (New York: Warner Books, 1991), p. 323.

³The first edition of the *Voyage* (the third volume of FitzRoy's *Narrative*) nearly sold out its 1,500-copy initial press run. Publisher Henry Colburn proposed to reprint it, an offer Darwin declined once he discovered that the terms were unfavorable (he complains that he did not see a penny from the sale of the 1839 *Voyage*). Later that year, Colburn reissued Darwin's volume singly, apparently without authorization, and other unauthorized reprints may have appeared as well. In 1845 John Murray proposed an authorized second edition, with 20 to 30 percent fewer pages, through his Colonial Home Library, an affordable subscription series aimed at a popular audience, and Darwin gladly accepted the offer, though he expressed anxiety about shortening the *Voyage* (the published edition was shorter by only 5 percent, or 11,000 words, although it had 22 percent fewer pages). Murray also purchased Darwin's rights to the *Voyage* for £150. Darwin was pleased with the sales of this edition (approximately 4,000 copies in its first year of publication), and throughout the 1850s he wrote Murray regularly (and expectantly) for updates on sales figures. The first American edition, published by Harper and Brothers in 1846, was identical to Murray's 1845 English edition. See, esp., Letters 621 (22 February 1842), 851 (5 April 1845), 856 (12 April 1845), 857 (17 April 1845), 1039 (30 December 1846), 1026 (17 November 1856/7[?]), and 1028 (20 November 1856/7[?]), in The Darwin Correspondence Online Database, <http://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/>, University of Cambridge. The designation 1856/7[?] for the last two letters reflects the archivists' best guesses as to the year of publication. See also the anonymous review of *Journal of Researches into the Geology and Natural History of the various countries visited by His Majesty's ship Beagle*, by Charles R.

purchased the 1846 first American edition of the *Voyage* in 1847.⁴ Despite the near certainty that he had read the *Voyage*, the models that Melville acknowledged for his version of the Galapagos were much older and, by most standards, less authoritative and accurate than Darwin's: firsthand accounts by a buccaneer, a whaling captain, and a captain of the U.S. Navy.⁵ If we compare Melville's sketches with *The Voyage of the "Beagle,"* a fascinating dynamic emerges. Although Melville was not privy to Darwin's original observations as he had recorded them on the spot—the diary containing those observations was not published until 1933—Melville's own experiences in the Galapagos would have revealed to him the underlying fictionality of the seemingly objective classifications of islands and living things that Darwin had publicized in the *Voyage*, and that other amateur and professional naturalists exploring strange lands had made and were making known.

In contrast to the precision of the revelations in Darwin's *Voyage*—his topographic maps of reefs and glaciers, his population tables, his authoritative classifications of lizards—a purposeful inexactness characterizes Melville's description of the Galapagos. In Melville's hands, the islands, only rarely the "Galipagos" (pp. 128–29, 137), assume their Spanish name—the Encantadas, the Enchanted Isles—and are at once charmed and cursed. They are miserably hot, indeed uninhabitable. Beset by capricious winds and "perplexing calm," the islands slip in and out of view, defy navigation, and fill those who encounter them with an indescribable and lifelong melancholy (pp. 126–29). At a time when readers were captivated by the new hierarchies that Darwin and other naturalists so convincingly disclosed, Melville's work wrests the Galapagos from the

Darwin, *North American Review*, July 1845, pp. 181–99, and Desmond and Moore, *Darwin*, p. 327.

⁴Merton M. Sealts Jr., *Melville's Reading: Revised and Enlarged Edition* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), p. 32.

⁵Herman Melville, "The Encantadas," in *The Piazza Tales*, ed. Harrison Hayford et al. (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1996), p. 143. Further references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

grasp of the naturalist, revealing that the marvels of the world are not to be easily mapped, counted, and classified.



Shortly after he graduated from Cambridge University in 1831, Charles Darwin signed on with the *H.M.S. Beagle*, a British vessel setting out to take a hydrographic survey of South America. Darwin was to serve as a dining companion to Captain Robert FitzRoy, R.N., and as the ship's naturalist. Before departing, Darwin, an enthusiastic collector of beetles and marine life since his mid-teens, threw himself into acquiring the hard skills necessary to perform his task, learning how to safeguard delicate plants, how to kill and preserve sea creatures, how to ship mammal skins. He visited zoos and museums, which were filled beyond capacity with animal specimens other naturalists had gathered in their travels. He pored over Alexander von Humboldt's *Personal Narrative*, the Prussian naturalist-explorer's seven-volume travelogue and the first comprehensive scientific treatment of Central and South America. In preparation for the voyage, Darwin packed his edition of Humboldt, the just-published first volume of Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology*, and some newly acquired instruments. He also packed eighteen pocket-sized notebooks in which he would record his impressions and that, all told, would make up his diary. On 27 December 1831, the *Beagle* left England, stopping briefly in the Cape Verde Islands before crossing the Atlantic to Brazil.⁶

While the ship's crew charted the coastline of South America, Darwin went ashore to explore and to collect samples of plant and animal life, including fossils, which he regularly posted to naturalist friends in England. As described in the *Voyage*, he visited coastal cities, traveled up rivers, and journeyed far inland, observing wild and domestic animals and

⁶Ronald W. Clark, *The Survival of Charles Darwin: A Biography of a Man and an Idea* (New York: Random House, 1984), pp. 7–8, 10–11, 20. See also Desmond and Moore, *Darwin*, pp. 37–38, 91, 95, 109–16. According to Desmond and Moore, Darwin found one natural history museum "a kleptomaniac's delight, with carcasses everywhere—600 mammals, 4000 birds, 1000 reptiles and fish, and 30,000 insects" (p. 109).

human populations, both European and native. He was the guest of General Juan Manuel de Rosas, former governor of Buenos Aires (and future dictator of Argentina), who guided him through the countryside—and whose genocide of the Indians Darwin describes in unsparing detail as an unbelievable atrocity perpetrated in “a Christian civilized country.” Over several days in the Falkland Islands, Darwin collected rocks as he camped and rode with gauchos herding thousands of cattle across the plains.⁷ In Tierra del Fuego, he encountered painted, grimacing Fuegians, about whom he reported in his diary, with evident surprise, that “if the world were searched, no lower grade of man could be found.”⁸ By the time the *Beagle* arrived in the Galapagos Islands on 15 September 1835, nearly four years into the voyage, the enthusiastic amateur had become an accomplished naturalist.⁹

For three centuries after they were discovered in 1535, the Galapagos lay unclaimed; then, in 1832, Ecuador, which had

⁷Charles Darwin, *The Voyage of the “Beagle”: Journal of Researches into the Natural History and Geology of the Countries Visited During the Voyage of H.M.S. “Beagle” Round the World* (2nd ed., 1845; reprinted, London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1906), pp. 96–98, 180–87. The second edition is the basis for nearly all editions after 1845, including the 1846 first American edition that Melville owned. Further references will be cited parenthetically within the text and, when needed to avoid confusion, will be labeled *Voyage*. At various times in his explorations, as described in the *Voyage*, Darwin encountered Englishmen living in South America. See, e.g., chap. 2: he journeys a hundred miles into the Brazilian jungle to visit the estate of an Englishman; chap. 4: one of his traveling companions is an Englishman residing at the southernmost tip of Argentina; chap. 6: he encounters several English merchants in Buenos Aires and stays with one of them; etc.

⁸Charles Darwin's *Diary of the Voyage of H.M.S. “Beagle”* [1933], ed. Nora Barlow (New York: Macmillan Co., 1934), p. 120. Further references to Darwin's diary will be cited parenthetically in the text and, when needed to avoid confusion, will be labeled *Diary*.

⁹Clark, *The Survival of Charles Darwin*, pp. 11–12, 17–19. Clark notes that a lengthy sea voyage was a traditional rite of passage for naturalists: “Thus Darwin had become set on a course previously followed by Antonio Pigafetta, the naturalist who had sailed with Magellan on his first circumnavigation of the world; by Sir Joseph Banks, later president of the Royal Society, who had accompanied Captain Cook on his first voyage to the South Seas; by François Péron, who had gone with Jean-François de Galaup, Comte de La Pérouse, on his Far Eastern voyages; and by the naturalist Robert Brown, librarian to the Linnean Society of London, who had been naturalist to Captain Matthew Flinders's Australian expedition. Darwin's greatest supporters in the evolution controversy, Joseph Dalton Hooker and Thomas Henry Huxley, were similarly to win their naturalists' spurs on lengthy adventurous voyages” (p. 19).

achieved independence from Spain ten years before, took possession of them. In the centuries between discovery and annexation, the Galapagos were a refueling and resting place for buccaneers and, from around 1780, American and British whalers, though the islands remained nearly uninhabited until annexation. To cement its claim, Ecuador immediately populated Floreana (Charles Island) with a colony of political exiles that Darwin remarks upon in his diary and in *The Voyage of the “Beagle.”* Nicholas Lawson, an Englishman employed by the Ecuadorian government, was second in command to the governor of the Galapagos, General José de Villamil, one of the founders of Ecuadorian independence.¹⁰

The evening after the *Beagle* arrived in the Galapagos, the vessel began surveying the area. Darwin spent an hour on Chatham Island, located at the archipelago's southeast corner. If he collected any samples that evening, his diary does not say; rather, what impresses him is the scorched lifelessness of the place:

[T]he whole black Lava, *completely* covered by small leafless brushwood & low trees. The fragments of Lava where most porous, are reddish like cinders; the stunted trees show little signs of life. The black rocks heated by the rays of the Vertical sun, like a stove, give to the air a close & sultry feeling. The plants also smell unpleasantly. The country was compared to what we might imagine the cultivated parts of the Infernal regions to be. [Pp. 333–34]

The rest of the Galapagos are, for the most part, likewise sere and uninviting. According to the record of his thirty-four-day stay, the islands are, Darwin reports, covered with conical hills composed of cinders (p. 338) or, alternatively, rings of cinders, which demarcate the boundaries of craters (p. 335). Immense “Cauldron like Craters” of new lava pock the slopes of

¹⁰For the history of the islands before Darwin's arrival, see chap. 2 of John Kricher, *Galápagos* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002). That Lawson should be the vice governor of the Galapagos was not particularly unusual; Villamil, the first governor of the Galapagos, was himself born in Louisiana of a French Creole mother and an Asturian (Spanish) father. See chap. 10, vol. 3, of Charles Gayarré's *History of Louisiana* (New York: Redfield, 1866), and Jacob P. Lundh, “The Villamil Period,” in *Galapagos: A Brief History*, <http://www.galapagos.to/texts/index.htm#lundh>.

Albemarle Island (p. 343), from which a surprising jet of steam bursts forth (p. 338). The days are "glowing hot" (p. 336); the black sand nearly melts the crewmen's boots, which, Darwin emphasizes, are *thick* (p. 342). In ten pages of diary entries on the Galapagos, the word *lava* appears fourteen times and *volcano* or *volcanic* twelve. Overall, the landscape, blanketed in craters and "ancient chimneys for the subterranean melted fluids," resembles "the iron furnaces near Wolverhampton" (p. 335).

Only the description of James Island presents any measure of relief. Heat-blasted like its neighbors, James nonetheless provides a rare source of fresh water in a relatively green oasis (p. 340). A few optimistic souls have built a clutch of hovels near the spot. Even the most inhabited island, Charles, with its settlement of two to three hundred "far from contented" Ecuadorian political exiles, offers at best a "dry Volcanic soil affording a congenial habitation only to the Lizard tribe" (p. 336). Although Darwin's overall tone is detached, we can detect a hint of pity for the inhabitants' "Robinson Crusoe life" (p. 337). The giant native tortoises, though barely palatable, sustain them, but as Mr. Lawson, whom Darwin presents as the governor of the settlement,¹¹ predicts, the tortoises will likely be extinct within twenty years, because whalers and other ships have carried them off by the thousands.

Nora Barlow, Darwin's granddaughter, who prepared his diary for its first publication in 1933, characterizes it as the raw musings of an apprentice naturalist, a very young man who, five months into the voyage, still considered himself a gentleman adventurer with a future as a country parson—indeed, he was a staunch creationist, believing in the immutability of species (p. xiii). Darwin did not imagine pursuing a career in science, because science was hardly a viable career choice in the 1830s (p. x). Although the diary is an impressionistic document,

¹¹Darwin makes a slight correction in the *Voyage*, where he refers to Lawson as "an Englishman" and "vice-governor of the colony" (p. 367), although it is uncertain to which colony he refers. In the *Voyage* he does not identify the Galapagos as a colony of Ecuador.

filled with personal reminders of things experienced, seen, and eaten, its observations become more descriptively precise as the months pass. Not until he started working on the *Voyage* in 1837, however, did Darwin begin to distill scientific meaning from his diary entries. By the 1845 second edition, a revision of *Journal and Remarks, 1832–1836*, Darwin's chapter on the Galapagos Islands, especially its discussion of birds, was already considering the ways in which the islands' creatures offered evidence of natural selection.

Given the forbidding aspect of the Galapagos as portrayed in Darwin's private diary, it is surprising to discover that in his published rewriting of it, the islands are a wellspring of lush vegetation and abundant wildlife. While heat and lava dominate the diary's ten pages concerning the Galapagos, their presence is quite muted in the *Voyage*. Only three of the nineteen subject headings that preface chapter 17, "Galapagos Archipelago," treat the geology of the islands ("The whole group volcanic," "Number of craters," and "Salt-lake in Crater"). The other sixteen subject headings vibrate with the promise of life, among them "Colony at Charles Island," "Ornithology, curious Finches," "Reptiles," "Great Tortoises, habits of," and "Terrestrial Lizard, burrowing habits, herbivorous" (*Voyage*, p. 357). The chapter brims with fishes, rats, mice, lizards, wild pigs and goats, hawks, owls, swallows, thrushes, thirteen species of finches, and the ubiquitous giant tortoise. Whereas the lizards of the diary are "most disgusting, clumsy . . . imps of darkness" that "assuredly well become the land they inhabit" (*Diary*, p. 334), upon publication they are transformed into "remarkable" animals that "[swim] with perfect ease and quickness." To be sure, they are "hideous-looking," but they are also "quite active" and "admirably adapted" to their environment (*Voyage*, pp. 370–71). As for the human inhabitants, the "far from contented" Ecuadorian exiles of the diary, whose "Robinson Crusoe life" is a constant struggle (*Diary*, pp. 336–37), become, in the *Voyage*, a population whose complaint of poverty Darwin questions, given that they "obtain, without much trouble, the means of subsistence" (*Voyage*, p. 361).

Throughout chapter 17, Darwin presents various highly detailed taxonomies of birds, tortoises, and lizards, complete with genus and species as well as helpful diagrams. His famous classification of finches, for example, includes thirteen species, which he organizes according to their placement along a spectrum of beak size:

The largest beak in the genus *Geospiza* is shown in Fig. 1, and the smallest in Fig. 3; but instead of there being only one intermediate species, with a beak of the size shown in Fig. 2, there are no less than six species with insensibly graduated beaks. The beak of the sub-group *Certhidea*, is shown in Fig. 4. The beak of *Cactornis* is somewhat like that of a starling; and that of the fourth sub-group, *Camarhynchus*, is slightly parrot-shaped. [Pp. 364–65]

Although he comments that “one might really fancy that from an original paucity of birds in this archipelago, one species had been taken and modified for different ends,” with various birds performing different functions according to the needs of the islands’ ecosystem (p. 365)—a statement that presages his theory of natural selection—Darwin does not conclude his taxonomy with an overall theory of the biological development of the islands’ birds but rather with a three-page disquisition on their tameness:

This [extreme tameness] is common to all the terrestrial species; namely, to the mocking-thrushes, the finches, wrens, tyrant-flycatchers, the dove, and carrion-buzzard. All of them often approached sufficiently near to be killed with a switch, and sometimes, as I myself tried, with a cap or hat. A gun is here almost superfluous; for with the muzzle I pushed a hawk off the branch of a tree. . . . I often tried, and very nearly succeeded, in catching these birds by their legs. . . . Dampier [in 1684] says that a man in a morning’s walk might kill six or seven dozen of these doves. [Pp. 383–84]

Darwin notes that on the mainland the same species are much wilder and do not allow themselves to be killed. The distinction between the two populations puzzles him, because for many years the birds of the Galapagos have also been exposed to predation by sailors, pirates, and other visitors and, therefore, have as much reason as mainland birds to be wary of humans.

Darwin then ends his report of his sojourn in the islands on a curious note:

[Many individual animals] have been pursued and injured by man, but yet have not learned a salutary dread of him. We may infer from these facts, what havoc the introduction of any new beast of prey must cause in a country, before the instincts of the indigenous inhabitants have become adapted to the stranger’s craft or power. [P. 386]

Whereas on one level Darwin’s conclusion seems to situate man as one among many predators within the animal kingdom, the notion of “the stranger’s craft or power” seems out of place in a natural history. Here, in this natural history, it is as if man has bewitched the fauna of the islands.

This odd moment, this impulse to focus on man in the midst of a riot of exotic species, suggests an underlying and unacknowledged organizing principle of Darwin’s literary project: his attempt to make the Galapagos—more so than the other exotic places he visits—familiar, desirable, approachable, and capable of being possessed by his reader. Although Darwin often remarks on the uniqueness, even bizarreness, of some of the species he finds, he undercuts nearly every mention of a particular oddity with a comment on its similarity to some recognizable American species. This strategy of equation returns like a refrain throughout chapter 17: “this archipelago, though standing in the Pacific Ocean, is zoologically part of America” (p. 378); “the [animal] inhabitants of the Galapagos Archipelago are stamped with [the impress] of America” (p. 378); a certain unique bird fulfills “the office of the carrion-feeding *Polybori* of the American continent” (p. 365); “the Flora has an undoubted Western American character” (p. 378); and, despite differences, all species “show a marked relationship with those of America” (p. 363). In short, “the archipelago is a little world within itself, or rather a satellite attached to America, whence it has derived a few stray colonists, and has received the general character of its indigenous productions” (p. 363).

Darwin extends this process of equating the strange with the familiar to the islands’ natural features as well. Despite its equatorial location, and in plain contradiction to the oppressive

heat presented in the 1835 diary entries, Darwin asserts that the archipelago's "climate is far from being excessively hot," and some areas "possess a damp climate and a tolerably luxuriant vegetation" (pp. 358–59). Chatham Island, he remarks, "vividly reminded me of those parts of Staffordshire, where the great iron-foundries are most numerous" (p. 360). Whereas in the 1835 journal entry the island's blasted, lava-blackened landscape recalls the district of soot-spewing iron furnaces near Wolverhampton (*Diary*, p. 335), the same allusion in the *Voyage* has been softened, made homely, as the center of attention shifts from the islands to England, from the scientist recording his observations to the first-person narrator seeking to engage his readers. By making these equations between the unfamiliar and the familiar, Darwin encourages English readers to claim these far-off islands as their own, as an extension of the British empire. With their unnaturally docile creatures who practically offer themselves up to the mercy of humans, the Galapagos Islands are transformed from a forbidding, hostile environment into a bountiful paradise where Europeans can, with a little effort, imagine locating not only their persons but their industries as well.

If in the *Voyage* Darwin constructs the Galapagos as a potential colonial site, he does not neglect a factor crucial to the success of the enterprise: a ready supply of labor. In the single paragraph devoted to Charles Island, readers learn about a "small colony [of] between two and three hundred" inhabitants, "nearly all people of colour" (p. 360), the same colony of Robinson Crusoes, political exiles all, mentioned in the diary (p. 337). Although we should not overanalyze Darwin's use of the word *colony*, it is noteworthy that the inhabitants of Charles Island are not only nonwhite but also de facto prisoners, a dual identity that makes them doubly suitable, if only in the minds of Europeans, for servitude. Moreover, these brown people have lost their protector, the English governor, Mr. Lawson.¹² In the

¹² Lawson appears four times in the 9.5 printed pages of the diary and always in association with the penal colony (he seems to act almost as Darwin's guide to the archipelago), whereas in the 1845 edition of the *Voyage*, he appears only in passing

diary, Lawson presides over the colony, but in the *Voyage*, he is mentioned only in passing. The near-removal of Lawson and the suppression of the Robinson Crusoe reference render the population both masterless (and thus available for mastering) and less "English" (and more like a native population).

As he noted in the preface to the 1845 edition of the *Voyage*, Darwin was eager to widen his audience beyond the scientific community. To capitalize further on the success of his 1839 work, he had "condensed and corrected some parts, and . . . added a little to others, in order to render the volume more fitted for popular reading." He urged naturalists seeking additional scientific details to refer to his other publications, including the 1839 edition, which was 11,000 words longer, and the *Zoology of the Voyage of the "Beagle"* (pp. ix–x). Darwin was evidently concerned that his text be understood not solely as scientific information but also as a form of travel literature through which the popular reader could gain an understanding of, and therefore a sort of dominion over, exotic lands. Both editions, however, end similarly. In the Retrospect to the 1845 edition, Darwin marvels at the immensity of the world beyond Europe, but he "look[s] forward with high expectations to the future progress of nearly an entire hemisphere" through the introduction of Christianity—and Englishness. Citing Australia and the islands of the South Seas, Darwin writes that great changes "have now been effected by the philanthropic spirit of the British nation. . . . It is impossible for an Englishman to behold these distant colonies, without a high pride and satisfaction. To hoist the British flag, seems to draw with it as a certain consequence, wealth, prosperity, and civilization" (p. 486).

In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson maintains that as the world entered the age of mechanical reproduction, the colonial state increasingly used the census, the map, and the museum to determine "the nature of the human beings it ruled, the geography of its domain, and the legitimacy of its

twice in 29 pages (pp. 367 and 379), both times in reference to the Galapagos tortoise. Only one of these instances refers to a crew of laborers.

ancestry.”¹³ Anderson’s insights are useful for our appreciation of *The Voyage of the “Beagle.”* The neatly plotted map that introduces the Galapagos chapter, Darwin’s accounting of the islands’ populations, and his careful taxonomies serve, if only imaginatively, to set the stage for the colonial project. Whereas the other chapters of the *Voyage* reveal a South America that has been thoroughly dominated and populated by Europeans (in fact, most chapters open in the towns and cities where Darwin begins his explorations), chapter 17 reveals the Galapagos Islands to be nearly empty of people; the chapter is nearly all natural history. Precisely because he presents the islands as unclaimed, then, couched within Darwin’s scientific and ostensibly neutral taxonomies of birds and tortoises and land features seems to lurk a powerful desire to take control of them. That the Galapagos, having been annexed by Ecuador, were not available for colonization is immaterial. Indeed, Darwin’s reformulation of the islands in imperialistic terms was more than likely not the product of an overt intention but, rather, of the author’s wish to heighten his colonialist readers’ interest in a new, unconquered—but eminently conquerable—frontier.



If—like the census, map, and museum—Darwin’s taxonomies allow him to describe, make familiar, and thus take control of the life forms and geographical features he observes, Melville takes a fundamentally different approach in “The Encantadas,” resorting to an imprecision that defamiliarizes the islands, rendering them magical, unclassifiable, and ultimately unattainable. Whereas Melville’s descriptions of the islands are in certain ways encyclopedic, they are in others amorphous. Readers may derive some pleasure from knowing that Albemarle Island resembles a wolf’s mouth and Narborough Island the wolf’s tongue or that Barrington Island is visible from Albemarle Island, although in which direction is unclear—but

¹³Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (1983; rev. ed., London: Verso, 1991), p. 164.

how much more helpful it would be to have a map (pp. 140, 145). From the outset, “The Encantadas” plays with, questions, mocks, and ultimately reveals the arbitrariness of taxonomies as it provocatively revises categories of biology, race, class, and time. The islands, in Melville’s account, thus defy the sort of classification-as-preparation-for-occupation that texts like Darwin’s promote.

In “The Truth of the Thing: Nonfiction in *Moby-Dick*,” Betsy Hilbert considers the novel’s cetological passages. She explains that proponents of what she refers to as the “ballast theory” interpret the extended descriptions of whales as slaves to the fiction: “lending verisimilitude to the story”; “functioning as Ishmael’s education”; digressions that point “toward some higher fictional purpose.” For Hilbert, on the other hand, the cetological passages signal that *Moby-Dick* defies easy categorization, that it is a generic puzzle. The work is simultaneously, she asserts, “a massive conglomerate of fable and textbook, epic, allegory, zoologic treatise, philosophic exploration, essay, romance, and guidebook.” The novel opens with an etymology and references that “begin to tell the reader about human experience with and attitudes toward whales,” a narrative choice that reflects the author’s insinuation that “the methods of telling fact and fiction are interlocked from the start.”¹⁴ In “The Encantadas,” Melville pursues a similar approach: in the sketches fact and fiction collapse into one another, with fiction masquerading as fact and fact taking on the character of fiction. We can read in this knitting together of two realms normally considered separate Melville’s perception that natural history, despite its seeming objectivity, necessarily depends on a subjective narrative.

The ten sketches published in *Putnam’s Magazine* in March, April, and May of 1854 appeared under the pseudonym “Salvator R. Tarnmoor,” a name Melville biographer Hershel Parker identifies, with no compelling explanation, as “a flourish

¹⁴Betsy Hilbert, “The Truth of the Thing: Nonfiction in *Moby-Dick*,” *College English* 48 (1986): 824–31; quotations pp. 824–27, 829. For an explanation of the ballast theory, see esp. p. 825.

simultaneously reminding readers of Salvator Rosa's wild Calabrian scenes and Poe's gothic tarns and woodlands."¹⁵ Eric Wertheimer captures the simultaneity of disparate images more effectively when he glosses Tarnmoor as "the nominal reposit of the Moorish conquest of Spain . . . and, ultimately, Black Legend conquests of the New World," which recall "the cultural and racial mixtures that survive in Spanish, New World history."¹⁶ But in choosing Salvator R. Tarnmoor as his pseudonymous narrator, Melville ranges even more broadly: the Latinate name Salvator prefaces a surname, Tarnmoor, that conjures up not only the mountain tarns or lakes of Scandinavia (with their light-skinned people) but also the dark wasteland of the English heath and the dark skin of the Moors. It seems no coincidence that "The Encantadas" was published at a time when the United States was actively engaged in a scientifically justified, race-based reclassification of people. The seemingly simple but already highly problematic dichotomy between black and white had been joined by new taxonomies of race that had become ever more arcanelly detailed as each new group of immigrants landed on America's shores.¹⁷ Salvator R.

¹⁵Hershel Parker, *Herman Melville: A Biography*, vol. 2, 1851–1891 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), p. 211. Michel Imbert suggests more convincingly that Melville invokes Salvator Rosa not for his wild countrysides but for his "wild shores that feature wreckers or bandits" ("Melville's Galapagos: Darwinism Revisited," *Literature d'America* 22 [2002]: 72).

¹⁶Eric Wertheimer, *Imagined Empires: Incas, Aztecs, and the New World of American Literature, 1771–1876* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 149.

¹⁷By the time Melville wrote "The Encantadas," scientific racism was well established in the United States. In the 1830s and 1840s, Samuel George Morton, a Philadelphia physician and naturalist, and the most prominent American anthropologist of the time, used cranial volume to argue the relative quality, in descending order, of what he considered the five human races—Caucasians, Mongolians, Malays, Native Americans, and Negroes—the differences among which were not only physical but also intellectual, moral, and behavioral. Again using cranial volume, he ranked subgroups within the races, with Germans, the English, and Anglo-Americans superior among Caucasians and American-born Negroes, Hottentots, and aboriginal Australians lowest among Negroes. Morton objected to polygenetic theory, which argued that the races arose from different origins, on the grounds that it contradicted the biblical story of creation, but advocates of polygenesis pointed toward his work to support their beliefs. By 1854, polygenetic theory had swept the United States in support of any number of racist agendas. Two of Morton's followers, Josiah Clark Nott, an Alabama physician and surgeon, and George Robins Gliddon, a British-American Egyptologist, authored one of the most popular works on polygenesis, *Types of Mankind, or Ethnological*

Tarnmoor—hailing perhaps from Spain, perhaps from Italy, or North Africa, or Scandinavia, or England, perhaps from all or none of these places—presents an enigma to those committed to establishing categories and hierarchies among people.

Racial classifications are further complicated in Melville's treatment of the islands' giant tortoises, which are regularly portrayed as captive black bodies. Tarnmoor's crewmates chain the creatures, like slaves on the Middle Passage, to the ship's deck, a living herd to be eaten as needed (p. 132), and Hunilla, the marooned widow, a Chola or Peruvian of half-Spanish, half-Indian descent (p. 152), holds them hostage, to be bartered for her own passage home. But, the narrator explains, although we cannot "deny the black" of the tortoises, they are "both black and bright," the "calapee or breast-plate being sometimes of a faint yellowish or golden tinge" (p. 130).¹⁸ In "The Encantadas," we discover the sympathy for the imprisoned animal—whether walking on two legs or four—that Darwin's published account lacks, for Melville's tortoises are consumed by a "penal hopelessness" (p. 129) and condemned to "hopeless toil," as if they were under the spell of a "penal" enchanter (p. 132). Moreover,

Research (1854), which attempted to reconcile polygenesis with creationism. The book, which offered scientific justifications for slavery, had particular currency in the South. Two years later, Nott translated Arthur Gobineau's *An Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races* (1853) from French into English. Gobineau identified the "ten great races" of human history, all of which, he argued, traced their origins to whites. His work, for example, helped to popularize the idea that the ancient Egyptians were not black. Swiss-born Louis Agassiz, zoologist, geologist, and, from the 1840s, one of the giants of American science (for his work demonstrating the existence of prehistoric ice ages), also argued for polygenesis. He posited eight human races that were differentiated on the basis of climatic zone of origin. At the same time, Darwin and his supporters argued for monogenesis: the theory that humankind has a single origin. *On the Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871) are grounded in monogenesis. Despite their opposition on matters of evolution, Darwin and Agassiz nonetheless maintained a mutual respect. That said, Agassiz marked his copy of *On the Origin of Species* thus: "This is truly monstrous!" See Louis Menand, "Morton, Agassiz, and the Origins of Scientific Racism in the United States," *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* 34 (2001–2): 110–13; Janet Browne, *Charles Darwin, The Power of Place: Volume 2 of a Biography* (New York: Knopf, 2002), pp. 51–52, 216–17; Desmond and Moore, *Darwin*, pp. 442–43; Clark, *The Survival of Charles Darwin*, pp. 159–60.

¹⁸Edward H. Rosenberry explains that "the Galapagos tortoise does not in fact have a bright side" ("Melville's Comedy and Tragedy," in *A Companion to Melville Studies*, ed. John Bryant [New York: Greenwood Press, 1986], p. 616).

the tortoises' bodies blur not only racial lines but also borders between life and death and between past and present: the animals are living ghosts as well as living gateways to the ancient Roman world and a pre-flood Christianity (p. 131). Even as they evoke the Roman Coliseum, the tortoises are also the mythical turtles that hold up the Hindu sky (p. 132).

Sketch Third, "Rock Rodondo," represents Melville's most overt nod to—and deconstruction of—Darwinian taxonomies. The rock, "[s]ome two hundred and fifty feet high, rising straight from the sea ten miles from land" (p. 133), is at first glance a perfect laboratory in which to observe Galapagos bird hierarchies. As Tarnmoor describes the rock, "the tower rose in entablatures of strata to a shaven summit. These uniform layers which compose the mass form its most peculiar feature. For at their lines of junction they project flatly into encircling shelves, from top to bottom, rising one above another in graduated series" (p. 134). Thus, with its strata, its uniformity, and its shelves arranged in graduated tiers, Rock Rodondo resembles the naturalist's display case or the collector's curio cabinet.

But Melville reveals that any naturalist attempting to make Rock Rodondo into a site of scientific inquiry will have a difficult time of it. The rock, like the rest of the Encantadas, is highly mutable. From different vantage points, it appears to be, alternately, a bell tower, an abbey, a barn, a living creature. At a distance of thirty miles, it "invariably is mistaken for a sail," an error Tarnmoor ascribes to the enchantment that pervades the islands. Closer, the rock "seems some Spanish Admiral's ship," an "enchanted frigate," perhaps the same frigate by which earlier sailors, now transformed into tortoises, first arrived in the islands. Closer still, Rock Rodondo at last discloses itself to be not a natural tower of stone but the "craggy keep" of a castle. Even that impression, however, is second-guessed, for the rock's appearance is critically affected by time and circumstance: "The wind was light; the waves languid; the stars twinkled with a faint effulgence; all nature seemed supine with the long night watch, and half-suspended in jaded expectation of the sun. This was the critical hour to catch Rodondo in his perfect mood." Likewise, the rock's likeness to a Spanish

admiral's ship occurs at one specific point in space and time: at a distance of "[f]our leagues away, of a golden, hazy noon" (p. 134).

Having established the unpredictability and the unreliability of his "laboratory," Melville proceeds to construct within it an equally unstable bird taxonomy, a taxonomy that both reflects human class hierarchies and overturns them. At the bottom of the rock, on its most capacious shelf, reside the penguins. A sort of lumpenproletariat of the bird world, the penguins are a taxonomical conundrum, for their identity as fish, fowl, or flesh is uncertain. Outlandish and grotesque, they are "the most ambiguous and least lovely creature yet discovered by man" (p. 135). On the shelf above sit the pelicans, a lugubrious order of pensive friars. "Penitential," the pelicans are, like the tortoises, doomed to haunt the isles. Still higher up the tower is the gray albatross, an "unpoetic bird" whose redeeming quality is its relation to the fabled snow-white albatross. Near the top of the rock is a mass of high-ranking birds: gannets, hagglets, jays, sea-hens, sperm-whale-birds, "gulls of all varieties," in short a collection of "thrones, prinedoms, powers, dominating one above another in senatorial array." At the rock's summit roosts the stormy petrel, or Mother Cary's chicken. One more bird remains, flying high above the rock, almost outside the taxonomy, "a snow-white angelic thing," the boatswain's mate (pp. 135–36).

Melville seems to employ two taxonomical logics—as detailed as any of the cetological passages in *Moby-Dick*—in his classification of the birds of Rock Rodondo. The first serves to question the practice of assigning value based on hierarchical position. As we might expect, the lowliest birds occupy the lowest stratum on the rock, and each succeeding rank occupies its matching station as the rock rises into the air. In describing the bird hierarchies, however, the narrator surprisingly devotes considerably more attention to the lower orders of birds than to the higher. By putting the penguins first in order and by devoting the most text (14 lines) to delineating their mystery and ambiguity, even as he simultaneously describes their abasement, the narrator seems to value the penguins even

in, or perhaps precisely for, their lowliness.¹⁹ As we move up the rock, the pelicans receive 9 lines of text, the gray albatross 3 lines of text, and the high-ranking gannets, haglets, jays, sea-hens, sperm-whale-birds, and gulls the least of all: 0.57 lines of text each. To this last set of raucous birds, the narrator ascribes rights and territories—"thrones, princedoms, powers, dominating one above another in senatorial array"—over which they compete. Within this flock, each member squawking for its due, the narrator makes no distinction among forms of government, implying that wherever titles and social hierarchies hold sway, a senator is no less tyrannical than a prince. Such ill-cloaked scorn becomes most evident in the narrative's description of the stormy petrel, who sits at the rock's apex. Although 8 lines are devoted to this bird, disrupting the correspondence between the amount of text and the seeming worth of the creature, the need for length is compelling: to expose the rock's highest-ranking bird as simultaneously ridiculous and despotic. "[L]ike an ever-repeated fly in a great piece of broidery," the stormy petrel is nonetheless as "ominous to mariners as to the peasant the death-tick sounding from behind the chimney jam" (pp. 135–36). But the boatswain's mate, hanging above the din like an angelic descant, escapes the narrator's contempt.

The second logic that shapes the taxonomy at Rock Rodondo serves to disrupt the practice of classification itself. At the end of Sketch Third appears an unclassified mass of fish that inhabit the caves below Rock Rodondo and thus seem to be aligned along the same continuum of classification as the birds. They are fairy fish, strange, novelties, never-before-represented beauties. As lovely as they are, however, they are also an enslaved group, for no sooner does Tarnmoor place his hook in the water than a hundred fish vie in "victimized confidence" to be caught on it (p. 136). But, although the fish are physically beneath the lowly penguins on the rock, they fall at the end of the entire list, thus logically above even the highest of birds,

and so the innocent fish, "victimized" as they are, are both at the bottom and the top of the hierarchy. The impossibility of the fairy fish occupying both ends of the classification scheme, especially one that effaces the seemingly ironclad biological differences between birds and fish, reveals the process of categorizing to be a harmless travesty at best and a dangerous falsification at worst.

The relationship between the creation of biological taxonomies and the colonial project is most evident at the end of Sketch Third. Tarnmoor concludes his taxonomy with the arrival of dawn, the hour at which the birds fly away in search of their breakfast. Rock Rodondo is now bare, its taxonomical shelves empty of wildlife. Left solitary in the light of sunrise, Rock Rodondo changes form again: "Its birdlime gleams in the golden rays like the whitewash of a tall light-house, or the lofty sails of a cruiser. This moment, doubtless, while we know it to be a dead desert rock, other voyagers are taking oaths it is a glad populous ship" (pp. 136–37). The assumption that the rock is being mistaken for a ship's sail recalls the sketch's opening lines, when Tarnmoor and his shipmates are thirty miles off the islands (p. 134), and the "glad populous ship" presages the rock's next identity, from yet a closer vantage point, as the "enchanted frigate" visible from four leagues away. Thus the round of discovery and taxonomy begins all over again, as those who follow in Tarnmoor's wake reproduce the stages of conquest: discover, admire from afar, draw close, create systems of classification, exploit the members of those classes, then repeat, repeat, and repeat.

Although we might argue that taxonomizing and exploiting occur in no particular order, Melville's text seems to argue otherwise, for only after Tarnmoor completes his taxonomy of Rock Rodondo do he and his shipmates begin to capture the fish he has observed, abusing their "confidence" and "trust" even as he laments, "Poor fish of Rodondo!" (p. 136). But if Rock Rodondo is a microcosm of colonial exploitation, Melville suggests that the fish and birds are not its only captives. The birds, after all, fly off easily enough in pursuit of their breakfast. Rather, the rock's gleaming birdlime lures would-be discoverers

¹⁹Numbers of lines are keyed to the 1996 Northwestern edition of *The Piazza Tales*.

with its mysterious apparitions, only to ensnare them in a cycle of conquest that begins with their urge to describe what they think they see.



Whereas Melville warps common systems of taxonomy in Sketch Third, elsewhere in "The Encantadas" he proposes new, imaginative approaches to the task of classification. For example, Hunilla, the Chola widow, measures time in unorthodox ways, not in seven-day weeks but in ten-day increments, or by the number of eggs she eats, or by the number of fish or tortoises she catches for food, or by the number of sunny or cloudy days (p. 157). But these reorderings are no hedge against unhappiness, the narrator notes; instead, her "busy numbering, misery's mathematics," keeps her awake at night, and just six months into her years-long exile on Norfolk Island, she stops keeping track of days, as if to expose the uselessness of accountings made outside the bounds of human society.²⁰

Just as Melville infuses time with a corporal dimension (even locating in the body of the giant tortoise the gateway to the ancient world), he does likewise with the volcanic accretions that constitute his main subject. In Sketch Fourth, "A Pisgah View from the Rock," the narrator classifies various Pacific island groups, including the Encantadas, as if they were organisms. The islands named after saints, St. Felix and St. Ambrose, are quickly dismissed in three lines (p. 138). In contrast, the island off the coast of Chile named after the intrepid pilot Juan Fernandez, who defied the prevailing wisdom and found that the best way to navigate the South American coast was to sail out of sight of it, takes up a full paragraph (p. 139). Neighboring Massafuero merits eleven lines. Although its name ("lies more without") implies a lack of identity, or separateness, the

²⁰Robert Sattelmeyer and James Barbour suggest that she stops counting in the wake of a rape by passing sailors, the "ultimate violation of Hunilla's body and spirit" ("The Sources and Genesis of Melville's 'Norfolk Isle and the Chola Widow,'" *American Literature* 50 [November 1978]: 405).

narrator pays it considerable respect and imbues it with personality. For example, the island is "a vast iceberg drifting in tremendous poise," both dignified and threatening. And as if to underline the individuality of each island, the narrator states that Barrington Isle "would hardly seem of kin" to the other Encantadas (p. 145).

By dislocating seemingly authoritative ideas of relatedness, by making fish the cousins of birds and by raising the possibility that islands can be blood relations of one another, Melville does not engage in mere metaphor making but in a larger project to reveal the subjectivity—and ultimately the self-interest—underlying any ostensibly objective scientific system of classification. Melville's alternative taxonomies thread their way through the text of "The Encantadas," dismantling strict categories of animals, and of people, at every turn. Tortoises can be both golden and black. A fish can occupy a space in the society of birds that is simultaneously exalted and degraded (p. 136). Pirates can be romantics who commune with nature when they are not slitting throats and plundering (p. 145). The "Riotocracy" on Charles Island can be anarchic and dangerous but also a "universal nation" and a welcoming haven for the "oppressed of all navies" (p. 149). The hermit Oberlus, a white man burnt dark, can be Caliban at the same time that he is "Lord Anaconda," and he can be outwitted by a black smuggler whose cowardice is not integral to his race but is perfectly understandable at a particular moment and thus is only momentary (pp. 165–66).

In creating his alternative classifications, Melville is careful not to suggest that a willingness to blur lines of taxonomy confers moral value. In presenting the Dog-King in Sketch Seventh, he demonstrates that liminal figures are as easily debased—rendered cruel and rapacious—by territorial acquisition as any marauding European. The Dog-King, before he becomes the Dog-King, is a "Creole adventurer from Cuba" (p. 146), a man of uncertain race who helps to liberate Peru from Spanish rule. Having through "bravery and good fortune" achieved a high rank in the Peruvian army (p. 147), the Cuban accepts the unpopulated Charles Island as payment

for his service but only if he retains full sovereignty over it.²¹ Self-proclaimed Supreme Lord of the Island, the Cuban recruits a band of eighty settlers to cultivate the land. But the colonists are a rough bunch, and so he surrounds himself with a regiment of ferocious guard dogs, whose "terrific bayings prove quite as serviceable as bayonets in keeping down the surgings of revolt" (p. 148). Having killed many of his subjects, the Dog-King is forced to recruit new colonists from passing ships, but soon these men organize a mutiny, banish him to Peru, and establish a "permanent *Riotocracy*." Tarnmoor's final, wry admonition against "colonizing barren islands with unprincipled pilgrims" (p. 149) extends beyond the specifics of the Dog-King's benighted project to encompass the imperialist agenda in general.

Michel Imbert has called "The Encantadas" a sequel to *The Voyage of the "Beagle"* wherein Melville "introduces specimens of fallen men into the artificial paradise disclosed by Darwin." Although both Darwin and Melville portray the Galapagos as a laboratory, the naturalist indicates that we will observe there the perfection of animal species, whereas the artist imagines that we will watch with fascinated horror as they, including

²¹ At no point were the islands under the control of Peru. Melville may be conflating Ecuadorian history with Galapagos history. Ecuador was a Spanish territory ruled from the colonial government in Lima until 1739, at which point Spain transferred its administration from the Vice-Royalty of Peru to the Vice-Royalty of Colombia. By the time it claimed sovereignty over the Galapagos in 1832, Ecuador had not been governed by Peru for close to a century. Peru itself achieved independence from Spain in 1821, so the story of the Dog-King and his wild colony on Charles Island seems to be situated between 1821 and 1832, when the Ecuadorian penal colony was established, although there is no evidence that any colony existed on the island prior to 1832. Despite the historical inconsistencies, I. Newbery believes that the story of the Dog-King tells of the establishment of the penal colony. Newbery argues that Sketch Seventh "narrates the history of the private monarchy of José [de] Villamil, one-time general in Ecuador's war of independence, who had taken over the island as agent of Ecuador. Melville either did not know this fact or he changed it to suit his theme" ("The Encantadas: Melville's *Inferno*," *American Literature* 38 [1966]: 62). The claim is plausible, given that the Dog-King is a "Creole adventurer from Cuba," who by his "bravery and good fortune" helps to free Peru of Spanish rule ("The Encantadas," pp. 146-47), whereas Villamil was of Creole and Spanish descent and helped to release Ecuador from Spain. If indeed Villamil is the Dog-King, then Melville's relocation of his birthplace from Louisiana to Cuba fits a general pattern in "The Encantadas," whereby Melville offers Europeans as object lessons in the damage wrought by empire.

we ourselves, steadily degenerate. Imbert argues that Melville recognizes the troubling end toward which Darwin leads us: the repackaging of European (and American) cultural practices as natural law "in the name of normalization for dubious purposes." Melville populates the Encantadas with derelicts engaged in singularly pathetic life-and-death struggles so that he may reveal Darwin's "unacknowledged debt to underlying ideological assumptions," including the possibility that Darwin has, unthinkingly or not, transferred the human competition for social and economic survival from the metropolis to the undomesticated fringes of the animal world.²²

Although Imbert's insights are intriguing, Melville's interests in "The Encantadas" seem to extend beyond the individual's struggle for survival, as Carolyn Karcher has recognized. She sees in Melville's rendering of Charles Island a "nightmare evoking the dark side of America's colonization: the introduction of slavery, the Indian wars, the feuds among unprincipled fortune seekers in colonies like Virginia, Mexico, and Peru."²³ But none of the unfortunate souls with whom Melville has peopled the Galapagos are American; they are castoffs from Europe's imperial adventures in the Pacific. Some are Spanish; some, like the hermit Oberlus, are of unspecified but pointedly "European" lineage; and some, like Hunilla and the Dog-King, are of mixed European and other heritages.

Melville's exclusion of Americans from this sorry mix may serve as his warning: that even intrepid, righteous souls are fated to descend into chaos and revert to beasts once they exercise the prerogatives of empire. The exclusion also offers hope. If Europe has fallen victim to its depredations at the margins of the known world, America can take note of those failures and plot its own course. Isolationism is not the answer, for whalers

²² Imbert, "Melville's Galapagos," pp. 77, 81, 79. The transfer goes both ways, Imbert suggests: long before the emergence of the concept of "social Darwinism," he argues, Melville has already intuited the ways in which Darwin's findings could be used to justify strong-arm tactics back home, such as the institutionalization of persons deemed economically unfit to survive among society at large (pp. 81-82).

²³ Carolyn Karcher, *Shadow Over the Promised Land: Slavery, Race, and Violence in Melville's America* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), p. 111.

and pirate ships and even naval vessels weave in and out of the Encantadas, emerging safely, even improved, on the far side, just as Melville himself emerged safely—and much improved—from his weeks among the Typees and in Tahiti. What debases is not contact with alien worlds but rather the attempt to possess and alter them. In this context we may understand why Melville transformed the brown-skinned Ecuadorian exiles of the Galapagos into the Dog-King and his presumably Spanish colonists. As these white men degrade themselves and one another, they demonstrate that the humiliations of colonialism are not visited on the colonized alone but also affect the colonizer. That the first colonists in the Galapagos were prisoners (as shown in the *Voyage*, but not in Melville's acknowledged sources, which predate the penal colony) may have suggested to Melville, if indeed he read the volume, an equation between colonialism and imprisonment, which he then altered to demonstrate that colonialism leads to *self*-imprisonment. The beauty of a far-off paradise may be nothing less than the gleam of birdlime.



Melville does not mention Darwin among his sources for "The Encantadas," and scholars have not been able to confirm beyond a shadow of a doubt that Melville read *The Voyage of the "Beagle"* prior to writing his sketches. A copy of the 1839 edition of the *Voyage* was present in the collections of the frigate *United States*, which had carried Melville on his circuitous 1842–43 return home, and he apparently had access to the shipboard library.²⁴ Moreover, in 1847, he bought

²⁴Melville took an indirect route home after jumping ship in the Marquesas in July 1842. There he lived among the Typees for about four weeks, then enlisted on the *Lucy Ann*, an Australian whaler, from which he soon jumped ship in Tahiti. Signing on to another Massachusetts whaler, the *Charles and Henry*, in November, Melville arrived in Maui in May 1843, where he was discharged from service. In August he joined the Navy as an ordinary seaman on the *United States* and sailed home. See chaps. 11–14 of Hershel Parker, *Herman Melville: A Biography*, vol. 1, 1819–1851 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), esp. pp. 268–70. Howarth locates a first edition of Darwin's *Voyage of the "Beagle"* in the library of the *United States* ("Earth Islands,"

a large quantity of books in New York, including the 1846 first American edition of Darwin's *Voyage*.²⁵ H. Bruce Franklin, Merton M. Sealts Jr., and Mark Dunphy have discovered Darwin's footprints in Sketch Fourth, and Imbert triangulates Darwin's presence in "The Encantadas" via the inclusion, in the Extracts section that prefaces *Moby-Dick*, of a quotation relating to whales from chapter 10 of the *Voyage*.²⁶ Although the direct and indirect evidence is compelling, we cannot claim with certainty that Melville wrote specifically against Darwin, but we can convincingly trace his attempts to discredit the kind of project that the *Voyage* represents.

Not until Sketch Fifth, "The Frigate, and Ship Flyaway," does Salvator Tarnmoor cite what he considers to be the only reliable accounts of the Encantadas:

Here be it said that you have but three eye-witness authorities worth mentioning touching the Enchanted Isles:—Cowley, the buccaneer (1684); Colnett, the whaling-ground explorer (1793); Porter, the post captain (1813). Other than these you have but barren, bootless allusions from some few passing voyagers or compilers. [P. 143]

Whether or not Melville read the *Voyage*, because he had purchased the book, he would have been aware that it was the most recent and widely circulated text on the Galapagos. By

p. 102). Parker notes that a four-volume set of Darwin's writings traveled on the *United States* for ten months of Melville's fourteen-month trip home, although it is likely that the books actually were Captain FitzRoy's four-volume *Narrative of the Surveying Voyages of His Majesty's Ships "Adventure" and "Beagle," between the Years 1826 and 1836*, the third volume of which is the first edition of the *Voyage*, Darwin's *Journal and Remarks*, 1832–1836 (1:267).

²⁵Sealts, *Melville's Reading*, pp. 32, 171.

²⁶See Sealts, *Melville's Reading*, pp. 90, 122, and 171, and Mark Dunphy, "Melville's Turning of the Darwinian Table in 'The Encantadas,'" *Melville Society Extracts* 79 (November 1989): 14. Like Dunphy, H. Bruce Franklin analyzes the table of animal populations in Sketch Fourth (as evidence of how "Melville challenges and parodies Darwin," specifically the table of Galapagos species that concludes chap. 17 of the *Voyage*), but he argues that other sketches, particularly Sketch Ninth, also contain jabs at Darwin. Specifically, the hermit Oberlus of Sketch Ninth exists "to turn Darwinian order into a tool with which to shatter the very notion of ordered scales of being," in that the "sole superiority" of the European Oberlus over the tortoises is a greater propensity, and even a taste, for degradation ("The Island Worlds of Darwin and Melville," *Centennial Review* 11 [Summer 1967]: 353–70). Imbert, "Melville's Galapagos," p. 71.

having Tarnmoor lump Darwin among a few worthless compilers, then, Melville strips the *Voyage* of its authority.

In a more overt parody of the naturalist's art, Melville's narrator tallies the animal population of the Encantadas in a statistical table (p. 140). Tarnmoor estimates lizards and snakes at a round half a million apiece and spiders at ten million; and, as if to boost the credibility of his statistics, he acknowledges what he cannot assess by assigning a value of "unknown" to the populations of "ant-eaters," "man-haters," and salamanders. But Tarnmoor's neatly compiled, scientific-looking table, similar to one on Galapagos species in chapter 17 of the *Voyage* (p. 381), is highly suspect because it concludes with a "clean total" of eleven million creatures, "the most reliable estimates made upon the spot."²⁷ Tarnmoor has accounted for the lizards, snakes, and spiders, but he has disregarded the birds and tortoises he has already described in great detail. Moreover, in a practice common to European colonizers, Tarnmoor dismisses as nothing that which he has not counted, factoring such "unknown" values into the total as zeroes. That which cannot be understood, in other words, lacks worth. In this small table, then, Melville discloses the inadequacy and arbitrariness of strict taxonomies, and he shows as well that the objectivity of a census, which assumes that those who have been counted have value, falls prey to the subjectivity of the census taker.

Melville critiques the naturalist's program much more quietly, but also more pointedly, at the end of Sketch Fourth. Describing his crewmates' attempts to catch the large fish that swim deep below Rock Rodondo, Tarnmoor notes that their efforts will fail because the smaller fish closer to the sea's surface swarm after the hook:

No sooner did the hook touch the sea, than a hundred infatuates contended for the honor of capture. Poor fish of Rodondo! in your

²⁷Mark Dunphy sees in Melville's chart a parody that "lampoons both Darwin's table and his comments on it—and thus the whole scientific method of inquiry based on quantitative analysis—because Melville feels that it is ludicrous to reduce the mystery of the Galapagos Islands . . . to a mere numbers game of addition and subtraction" ("Melville's Turning of the Darwinian Table in 'The Encantadas,'" p. 14).

victimized confidence, you are of the number of those who inconsiderately trust, while they do not understand, human nature. [P. 136]

This scene recalls Darwin's experience with the extraordinarily tame Galapagos birds, the descriptions of which teem with violence. At various times, Darwin pushes hawks off tree branches with the muzzle of a gun, swats smaller birds with his cap, and lures others with water so that he can catch them by their legs (*Voyage*, p. 383). When he is not himself hunting birds, apparently for specimens, he recounts how sailors "always take cruel delight in knocking down the little birds" while hunting for tortoises and how he once saw a little boy waiting to kill the birds as they alighted to drink at a well (p. 384). Just as Darwin likens the islands' flora and fauna to American plants and animals elsewhere in the chapter, he connects this practice of killing birds to the larger world as well, citing how various weapons are used to kill birds on the mainland (Tierra del Fuego), in other English colonies (the Falkland Islands), in France, and finally in England itself. Darwin concludes that European birds, "even nestlings," quickly come to fear man, but in the Falklands and the Galapagos, birds have not yet "learned a salutary dread of him" (p. 386).

In Darwin's scientific construction, the birds' lack of fear signals their failure to recognize and adapt to a new predator. The islands become a laboratory wherein Darwin can examine adaptation to predation without holding accountable predators who kill for sport rather than for food, for the "cruel delight" to be had in smashing a bird off its perch. Melville, on the other hand, considers his self-sacrificing fish in quite different terms. He removes the fish of Rock Rodondo from the realm of predation and adaptation and places them squarely in a moral universe in which humans are revealed not as typical, and thus blameless, predators but rather as uniquely merciless sportsmen: "Poor fish of Rodondo! in your victimized confidence, you are of the number of those who inconsiderately trust, while they do not understand, human nature" (p. 136). Having thus exposed the hardheartedness of man, Melville suggests that in the naturalist's laboratory, scientific relativism and objectivity can mask a

multitude of crimes, as the villain becomes a detached observer and the victim a mere object of observation.

Having examined the source, or at least the kind of source, that Melville both dismissed and railed against, we should consider those he thought worthy of mention. David Porter, captain of the U.S. frigate *Essex*, issued his account, *Journal of a Cruise Made to the Pacific Ocean*, in 1815. In Melville's Sketch Fifth, "The Frigate, and Ship Flyaway," we learn that the *Essex* "came near leaving her bones" in the Encantadas in 1813 after a strange encounter with what might, or might not, have been an English, and thus an enemy, whaling ship (p. 142). Nearly dashed to pieces in its pursuit of the ship, but then rescued by a lucky breeze, the *Essex* "now made use of that salvation to destroy the other vessel" (p. 143), whereupon the supposed enemy ship suddenly hoisted American flags. Still suspecting that he was dealing with a foe, Porter sent out boats to intercept the adversary, whereupon the strange ship hoisted English flags and, taking advantage of yet another fortuitous breeze, slipped from the grasp of the *Essex*, never to be seen again. In Melville's construction, this encounter with a slippery vessel transforms the *Essex*, untethers it from the government in Washington and imbues it with an aura of enchantment. Although the *Essex* continues to fight on in the War of 1812, Melville portrays the frigate as a sort of free agent plying the seas. Even its sinking in 1815 vibrates with the supernatural:

She captured the furthest wandering vessels; visited the remotest seas and isles; long hovered in the charmed vicinity of the enchanted group; and finally valiantly gave up the ghost fighting two English frigates in the harbor of Valparaiso. Mention is made of her here for the same reason that the buccaneers will likewise receive record; because, like them, by long cruising among the isles, tortoise-hunting upon their shores, and generally exploring them; for these and other reasons, the *Essex* is peculiarly associated with the Encantadas. [P. 143]

There is something disingenuous in the narrator's claim that the *Essex* deserves mention because of its cruising among the

271
isles, its exploring them, and its crew's tortoise-hunting, for the *Beagle* has done likewise in the Galapagos, and other naturalists have performed similar rites elsewhere. Rather, David Porter's trustworthiness seems to spring from those mysterious "other reasons" that the narrator declines to specify, reasons that can only include his encounter with, and subjection to, the islands' enchantment, an enchantment that renders their territory unmappable and intangible.

Porter is a particularly odd source for Melville to champion as an authority, for he is the individual Melville had earlier portrayed in *Typee* (1846) as the intruder whose men overrun the valley of the Typees on Nukuheva Island thirty years before Tommo arrives in the Marquesas:

I have been told that a considerable detachment of sailors and marines from the frigate *Essex*, accompanied by at least two thousand warriors of Happar and Nukuheva, landed in boats and canoes at the head of the bay. . . . Valiantly, although with much loss, the Typees disputed every inch of ground, and after some hard fighting obliged their assailants to retreat and abandon their design of conquest.

The invaders, on their march back to the sea, consoled themselves for their repulse by setting fire to every house and temple in their route; and a long line of smoking ruins defaced the once-smiling bosom of the valley, and proclaimed to its pagan inhabitants the spirit that reigned in the breasts of Christian soldiers. Who can wonder at the deadly hatred of the Typees to all foreigners after such unprovoked atrocities?²⁸

Although Melville's narrator suggests that it is the heroism of the Typees that preserves the sovereignty of the Marquesas, the reality is somewhat less romantic. In what is often considered to be America's first act of imperialism, Porter did claim the islands for the United States in 1813, enthusiastically naming various landmarks "Madison's Island," "Madisonville," "Fort Madison," and "Massachusetts Bay." But when he sent letters to President James Madison and Secretary of State James Monroe announcing his victory, they, being overwhelmed with the

²⁸Herman Melville, *Typee*, ed. Ruth Blair (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 38.

British siege of Washington, neglected to respond, and Porter's triumphal campaign collapsed.²⁹

Despite the fact that Porter's near-piracy laid waste to Nukuheva Island and despite the fact that his Massachusetts sponsors were appalled that he had claimed "Massachusetts Bay" for them in such brutal fashion,³⁰ Melville apparently still viewed Porter as a more credible authority on the Galapagos than a scientist like Darwin. Perhaps Porter's experience as a *failed* imperialist had somehow chastened him—freed and redeemed him. Indeed, following his debacle in the Marquesas, Porter put aside his imperialist pretensions and traveled the seas, fighting his own battles rather than Washington's, a newly loose fish that let other loose fish be.

The credibility of the English whaling ship captain James Colnett may lie less in his own experiences than in what he represented to Melville. Russell Thomas has demonstrated that Melville must have referred to Colnett's journals and maps, published in 1798, because the E shape that Melville invokes to indicate the relationship of Narborough and Albemarle Islands, as wolf's tongue in mouth (p. 140), is clearly visible in Porter's and Colnett's maps, but only Colnett's plots the location of Jervis Isle, Duncan Isle, Crossman's Isle, Brattle Isle, and other smaller islands that appear (on p. 142) in "The Encantadas."³¹ It is arguable, however, that Colnett was less useful to Melville as a mapmaker than as an individual who, like Melville, happened upon the Encantadas while hunting for whales.

As James Farr has shown, there was no better place to escape the taxonomies of race and class in nineteenth-century America than a whaling vessel. The make-up of the industry, based in Nantucket and New Bedford, Massachusetts, shifted over time, but it was always racially diverse. Seventeenth- and

eighteenth-century crews tended to be composed of whites and Indians but became increasingly black and less Indian. By the mid-nineteenth century, whaling crews were composed primarily of blacks and whites, filled out with South Pacific islanders and other minorities. Farr notes that "[d]iscrimination did exist, of course," but working and living in close proximity almost ensured that "[m]en at sea knew their bunkmates as individuals as well as members of a racial or ethnic group." At sea, work ethic trumped race; "men measured their shipmates by their abilities; how well a man could pull an oar and furl a sail in a high wind counted for more than skin color." Whaling ships were also sites of transformation. Because "whaling agents and merchants preferred inexperienced hands to the worldly mariner," exploited greenhorns, black and white, were remade into experienced sailors through the rigors of life at sea. By the time Melville wrote "The Encantadas," black sailors could become harpooners and mates, and some even captained their own ships.³²

The transformative power of the whaling ship could, however, effect metamorphoses more dramatic than converting novices into skilled hands. Crispus Attucks, remembered now as a Revolutionary hero, is a case in point. A runaway slave, he joined a whaling ship that plied the waters off the Atlantic coast. "On shore leave from a Nantucket whaleship, then in Boston harbor," Farr writes, "Attucks led an angry mob of Americans in a confrontation with British Redcoats in 1770. Fearing for their lives, the British opened fire, killing Attucks and four others. The black whaleman and runaway slave had become a hero and martyr of the Boston Massacre."³³ If a runaway slave could step onto a whaler and reemerge a Revolutionary hero (his death notwithstanding), if one could in effect emerge a different person with different possibilities for movement within society, then it is likely that Melville conceived of a whaling ship as a powerful, even magical, vessel, and its captain—even

²⁹See chap. 4 of John Carlos Rowe, *Literary Culture and U.S. Imperialism: From the Revolution to World War II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), esp. pp. 83–86.

³⁰Greg Denning, *Islands and Beaches: Discourse on a Silent Land: Marquesas, 1774–1880* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1980), p. 29.

³¹Russell Thomas, "Melville's Use of Some Sources in *The Encantadas*," *American Literature* 3 (January 1932): 453.

³²James Farr, "A Slow Boat to Nowhere: The Multi-Racial Crews of the American Whaling Industry," *Journal of Negro History* 68 (Spring 1983): 159–60, 165.

³³Farr, "A Slow Boat to Nowhere," p. 160.

the British Colnett, say—a man who would willingly surrender himself to the mystery of the Encantadas.

The third source Melville credits in "The Encantadas" is the 1684 account of William Cowley, who Alec McEwen suggests was a "perhaps reluctant buccaneer."³⁴ Russell Thomas notes that Melville barely used Cowley's 1684 account, especially since "the map which accompanies Cowley's edition is a very poor one, and could not have been of much assistance to Melville."³⁵ But Cowley's inaccuracy may have been precisely the quality that captivated Melville, for he was responsible, in part, for the islands' reputation for wonderful slipperiness. Cowley had named most of the islands after British royalty, gentry, and himself, but the inexactness of his map caused subsequent mapmakers, Colnett among them, to misname and rename various islands.³⁶ Even though he thought he was following Cowley's map, Colnett labeled what he thought was an undiscovered island "Chatham," not realizing that Cowley had dubbed it "Dassigney's Island" a century earlier. And each called a different isle "Charles Island." More to the point, it is "Cowley's Enchanted Isle" that surfaces in Tarnmoor's description as a winking, mirage-like formation even more supernatural than the archipelago as a whole, as "the spell within a spell":

The name was bestowed by that excellent Buccaneer himself, on his first visit here. . . . That Cowley linked his name with this self-transforming and bemocking isle, suggests the possibility that it conveyed to him some meditative image of himself. At least, as is not impossible, if he were any relative of the mildly thoughtful, and self-upbraiding poet Cowley, who lived about his time, the conceit might seem not unwarranted; for that sort of thing evinced in the naming of this isle runs in the blood, and may be seen in pirates as in poets. [P. 142]

Cowley's membership in a pirate community must have attracted Melville's attention as well, given that buccaneer crews,

³⁴Alec McEwen, "The English Place-Names of the Galapagos," *Geographical Journal* 154 (1988): 234.

³⁵Thomas, "Melville's Use of Some Sources," p. 444.

³⁶McEwen, "The English Place-Names of the Galapagos," p. 236.

like whaling crews, were typically egalitarian and racially and ethnically mixed. But the pirate ship clearly differed from a whaler, which, despite the diversity of its crew, was a well-oiled, closed system. Pirates, on the other hand, were masterless, rootless, without ties to society. Anna Neill writes that pirates were particularly loathed for their ambiguous national origins, ethnic mixing, and rejection of national ties. Their random attacks struck at the heart of the popular imagination not only because of their murderousness but also because they represented "unlicensed, nonstate violence."³⁷ The pirates' liminality, their ability to stand outside the bounds of society and its classifications, must have appealed to Melville. We see this admiration in Sketch Sixth, "Barrington Isle and the Buccaneers," in which Tarnmoor recounts a story he has heard from a "sentimental voyager." "That the buccaneers perpetrated the greatest outrages is very true," the sentimental voyager opines;

that some of them were mere cut-throats is not to be denied; but we know that here and there among their host was a Dampier, a Wafer, and a Cowley, and likewise other men, whose worst reproach was their desperate fortunes; whom persecution, or adversity, or secret and unavenged wrongs, had driven from Christian society to seek the melancholy solitude or the guilty adventures of the sea. [P. 145]

The role of the pirate in "The Encantadas" is a conflicted one, but the conflict does not arise between the buccaneer's murderousness and his humaneness but between his status as outlaw and as tool of empire. Neill explains that pirates were essential to stretching the boundaries not only of imperial influence on the high seas but also of scientific knowledge. For example, England tried to limit the buccaneers' power to operate outside national boundaries in the seventeenth century by hiring them as privateers, state-sanctioned maritime plunderers a portion of whose booty, presumably, went to the state. Out-and-out pirates, who enjoyed no such state sanction, were "gradually more firmly disciplined," but it was difficult to police the boundaries

³⁷Anna Neill, "Buccaneer Ethnography: Nature, Culture, and Nation in the Journals of William Dampier," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 33 (2000): 169, 171.

between unlicensed piracy and state-sanctioned privateering, and individual buccaneers alternately "served the colonial administrations of the Caribbean and at other times . . . teamed up with buccaneer gangs of other national origins." What Neill refers to as the "domestication of the buccaneers" was a national project to convert them from lawless highwaymen into state employees.³⁸

Some buccaneers also served the state as naturalists. Neill demonstrates how William Dampier, toward whom Melville nods in Sketch Sixth, purposefully transformed himself from a pirate into an authority on natural history. His journals, "which brought him to the attention of the Royal Society, attempt to cleanse the criminal past of their author by downplaying his acts of violence and presenting him instead as an explorer and scientific journalist." Although Dampier was not the only buccaneer-turned-naturalist who brought home accounts of foreign climates, peoples, plants, and animals, he seems to have been a particularly astute self-promoter, fashioning himself into an exemplary subject of England. "In his efforts to reassume English identity and to distance himself from the pirate fraternities," Neill comments, "Dampier emphasizes his cultural and, in some instances, racial difference from the indigenous peoples he encounters and implicitly situates his cultural difference and distance within the terms of natural law." The more Dampier wrote about other peoples, the more he "reframed contact with the members of these tribes in the language of scientific discovery."

Dampier's own piracy and plundering, then, became subsumed within the crucial cause of scientific exploration. More important, his ostensibly objective scientific writings increasingly served the purposes of empire; reporting on the Mosquito Indians of the island of Juan Fernandez, Dampier writes, almost fawningly, "They have no form of government among them, but acknowledge the King of England for their sovereign [*sic*]." With his numerous publications portraying the world

³⁸ Neill, "Buccaneer Ethnography," pp. 169, 166.

as England's garden, Dampier firmly established his reputation as a man of science in lieu of his previous notoriety as a pirate.³⁹ Dampier and Cowley were members of the same buccaneering expedition that arrived in the Galapagos in 1684, and both published their experiences. Melville was probably familiar with both accounts. However, Dampier became a tool of English imperialism, whereas Cowley did not. And Melville seems to have preferred the honest life of an openly declared pirate to the more covert piracy of the honest naturalist.



Melville has often been read as a critic of Western attempts to cross the boundaries between "civilized" and "savage" cultures, especially in *Typee* (1846) and *Omoo* (1847), but not as a critic of imperialism per se.⁴⁰ His concerns, in other words, have been seen to focus less on the depredations of territorial conquest than on what cultural crossings signify for intruding Westerners and intruded-upon natives as individuals. For example, T. Walter Herbert argues that, without repudiating civilization altogether, Melville values humanity above it, as "a standard of conduct and a community of moral sentiment which lie beyond what those who call themselves 'civilizers' display."⁴¹ Although he also considers Melville ambivalent about the positive and negative aspects of civilization, Rod Edmond posits that the white protagonist Tommo's quest for an island paradise must fail because the islanders are not adaptable enough to survive contact with the

³⁹ Neill, "Buccaneer Ethnography," pp. 168, 171, 172, 175, 177.

⁴⁰ John Carlos Rowe is an exception. He sees in Melville's *Typee* the "first major literary resistance to an emerging imperial imagination in the United States by calling attention to U.S. involvement in various European colonial ventures in the South Pacific" and argues that "Melville's interpretations of incipient U.S. colonialism in the South Pacific leads him to make specific connections between extraterritorial colonialism and the racial, gender, and class hierarchies within the United States." See Rowe, *Literary Culture and U.S. Imperialism*, p. 17.

⁴¹ T. Walter Herbert Jr., *Marquesan Encounters: Melville and the Meaning of Civilization* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 154.

West.⁴² Chapter 26 of *Typee* reveals the mechanism of this extinction, where Melville excoriates the "Anglo-Saxon hive," whose civilizing efforts on the North American continent have wiped out not only paganism but also the pagans and who have enslaved the Hawaiians in the process of Christianizing them.⁴³

If Melville sees contact as the harbinger of the inexorable destruction of native culture, it seems reasonable to suggest that he would have also had concerns about empire building, insofar as imperialism begins with contact long before it escalates into colonialism. Such a conjecture seems less tenuous when we consider "The Encantadas," for we cannot misrecognize its critique of colonialism for a critique of civilizing, because the Galapagos have no natives to civilize. Indeed, the islands are populated, in Melville's construction, only by travelers who, lured by what they thought was Eden, find themselves trapped in hell. The attempts by these stranded dreamers to carve out little paradises, each in his or her own image, cannot be separated from the colonial impulse. In the absence of a native population, these strays enslave whom they can: each other, tortoises. By revealing the degree to which the effort to transform a miserable desert island into a home-away-from-home damages these wayfarers, Melville critiques the kind of transformation Charles Darwin effects in *The Voyage of the "Beagle,"* where he recasts the oppressive, nearly uninhabitable Galapagos Islands he had observed into a lush garden for the delectation of his metropolitan readers. Melville, having seen the islands firsthand, not only exposes such literary sleight of hand but also makes clear the dangers that await anyone who would idealize such quests.

In "Earth Islands: Darwin and Melville in the Galapagos," William Howarth remarks that the *H.M.S. Beagle* was not only "outfitted for research but also secretly inspecting Spanish

colonial defenses."⁴⁴ It is an aside Howarth never examines or even revisits. A close reading of "The Encantadas" suggests that Howarth's "but" is misplaced, for Melville's imaginative effort to disrupt the naturalist's taxonomies indicates his awareness that scientific research does not operate in opposition to empire, or in innocent juxtaposition to it, but willingly in its service. Unlike Darwin, whose taxonomies aim to make the Galapagos knowable (and, by extension, conquerable, inhabitable, perhaps commodifiable), Melville keeps the Encantadas mystical, uninhabited except by liminal and outcast figures, indeed unfit for human habitation. In short, he has returned the islands—and all the nonhuman species that live among them—to their proper state in nature.

⁴⁴Howarth, "Earth Islands," p. 99.

Denise Tanyol is a doctoral candidate in English at the University of Pennsylvania. Her dissertation examines American writers' responses to changes in photographic technique and practice after 1888.

⁴²Rod Edmond, *Representing the South Pacific: Colonial Discourse from Cook to Gauguin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 97.

⁴³Melville, *Typee*, pp. 232–37.