Turner's Whaling Pictures

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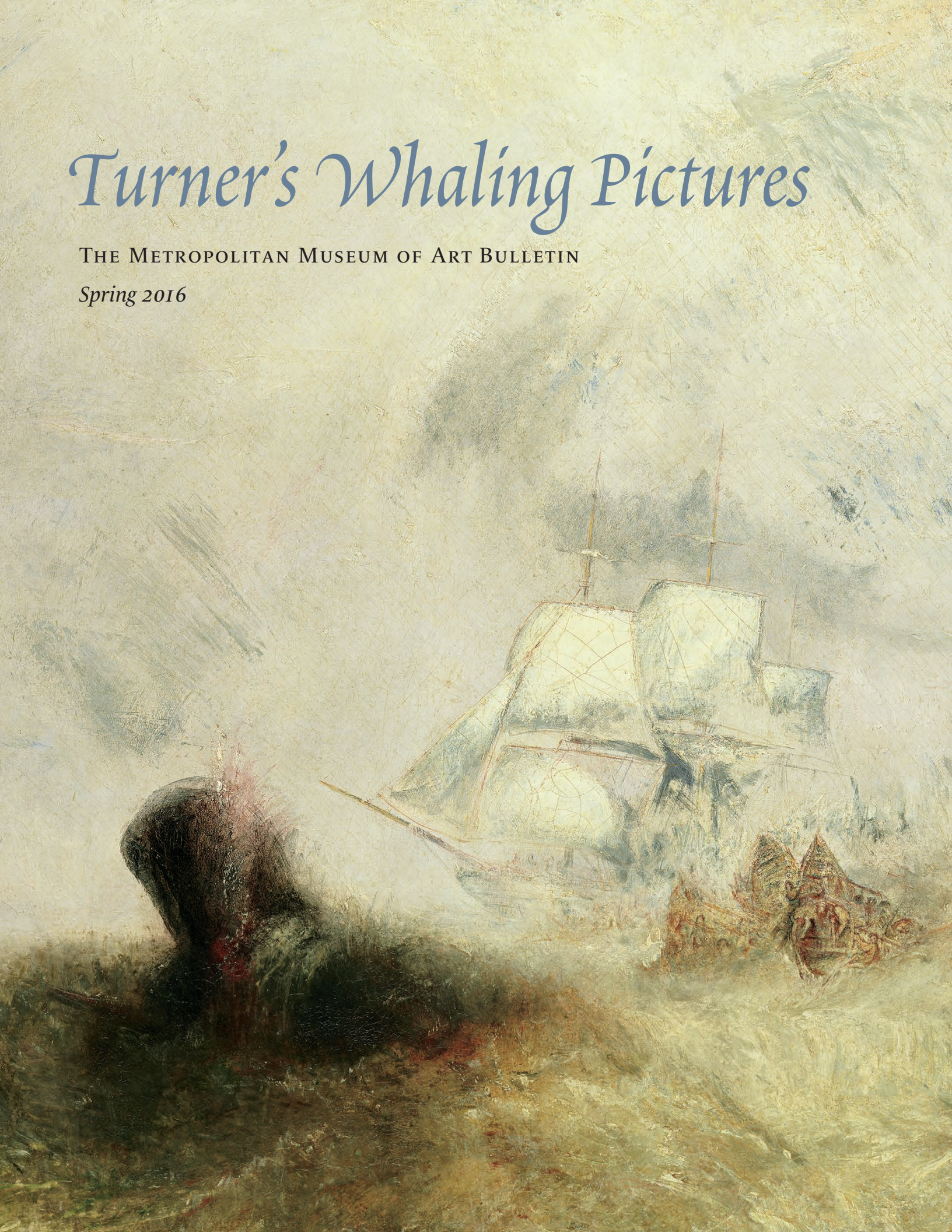


Turner's Whaling Pictures

Alison Hokanson

THE MET

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART · NEW YORK

Director's Note

Since The Metropolitan Museum of Art purchased Turner's *Whalers*, in 1896, the painting has held a key place in our collection, exemplifying the boldly inventive style of Turner's later years, when he sought to convey the drama of nature through extraordinarily free passages of color and brushwork. Although the painting stands on its own merits, it is actually the second in a quartet of whaling pictures that Turner exhibited at the Royal Academy, London, in 1845 and 1846. Created when the artist was in his seventies, they were some of his final exhibited seascapes, a genre that had defined his career. The whaling scenes astounded Turner's contemporaries, who struggled to come to terms with his sacrifice of clarity and precision for expressive effect—an experience perhaps not unfamiliar to many viewers today as they hunt for whales amid Turner's energetic dabs and swirls of paint.

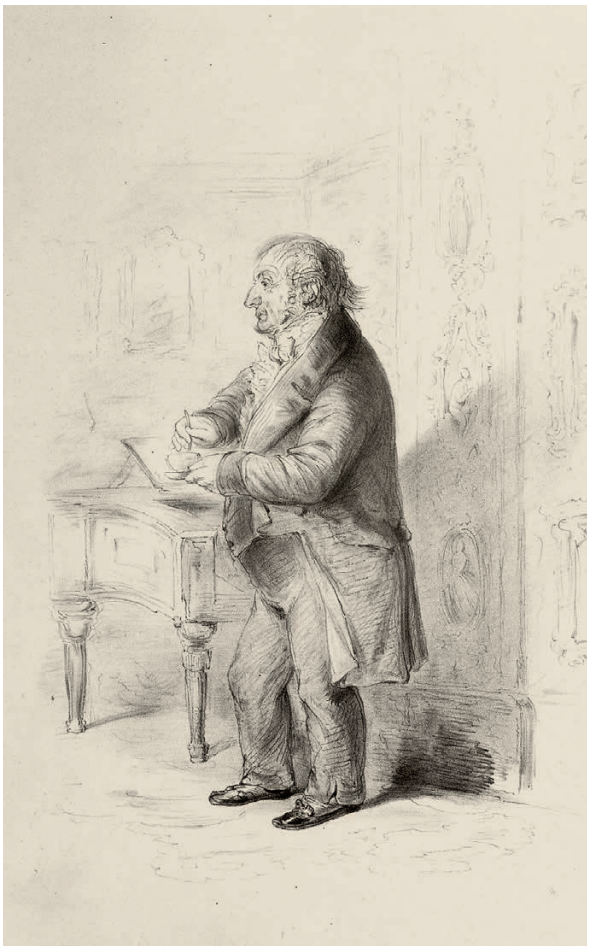
The exhibition "Turner's Whaling Pictures," organized 120 years after The Met's acquisition of *Whalers*, is the first to unite the Museum's canvas with its three companions, now in the Tate, London. At a time of fresh interest in Turner's marines and late work, the exhibition offers an opportunity to assess the whaling scenes as an ensemble; to explore the appeal that whaling held for Turner as a subject; and to reflect on the artist's enduring ability to challenge and stimulate our vision. The exhibition is also the first to consider the possible influence of the whaling series on Herman Melville's epic novel *Moby-Dick*, published shortly before Turner's death, in 1851. The question has intrigued scholars for decades; now viewers (and readers) may decide for themselves.

"Turner's Whaling Pictures" was conceived by Katharine Baetjer, Curator in the Department of European Paintings, and would not have been possible without the help of Nigel Llewellyn, formerly of the Tate. Asher E. Miller, Assistant Curator, offered vital contributions, and the project was brought to fruition by Alison Hokanson, Assistant Curator, both in the Department of European Paintings. The exhibition and this accompanying *Bulletin* are indebted to the collaboration of Tate, London; Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University; Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge; The Morgan Library and Museum, New York; South Street Seaport Museum, New York; Taft Museum of Art, Cincinnati; and the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven. We are grateful to the William S. Lieberman Fund for its generous suppport of the exhibition and publication. We would also like to express our appreciation to the Janice H. Levin Fund and the Lillian Goldman Charitable Trust for their commitment to this project.

Thomas P. Campbell
Director, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

In 1845 Joseph Mallord William Turner reached the age of seventy. Five decades into his artistic career, Turner was regarded as one of the most brilliant and controversial landscapists of his day—a singular man whose rough-edged demeanor was difficult to square with the transcendent qualities of his art. The critic John Ruskin, an early champion of Turner's, recalled that when he met the artist, in 1840, "Everybody had described him to me as coarse, boorish, unintellectual, vulgar. . . . I found in him a somewhat eccentric, keen-mannered, matter-of-fact, English-minded gentleman: good-natured evidently, bad-tempered evidently, hating humbug of all sorts, shrewd, perhaps a little selfish, highly intellectual, the powers of his mind not brought out with any delight in their manifestation, or intention of display, but flashing out occasionally in a word or a look."[1] A somewhat later portrait of Turner, reportedly made during a party at the estate of his patron Elhanan Bicknell, shows "a squat man dressed in a very ill-fitting kind of frockcoat" standing with his back to the wall, quietly stirring his cup with a mild expression on his face (fig. 1).[2]

Despite opinions that Turner was past his prime, he was in fact quite busy in 1845, acting as interim president of the Royal Academy and serving on the



1. Alfred Guillaume Gabriel, comte D'Orsay (French, 1801–1852). *The Fallacy of Hope*, 1851. Lithograph on paper, 12⅞ × 8⅞ in. (32.7 × 22.5 cm). Tate, London; Presented by Richard Godfrey in memory of Wilfred Yee Huie, 1988 (T05029)

2. Joseph Mallord William Turner (British, 1775–1851). *The Whale on Shore*, ca. 1837. Watercolor on paper, 4 × 5⅝ in. (10 × 14.3 cm). Taft Museum of Art, Cincinnati; Bequest of Charles Phelps and Anna Sinton Taft, Cincinnati, Ohio (1931.382)

hanging committee for its annual summer exhibition, at which he showed six of his own paintings. Four were Venetian scenes, a standard of Turner's repertoire. The other two canvases depicted a new subject for the artist: the hunt for sperm whales on the open ocean. This pair of pictures, today split between the Tate (fig. 4) and The Metropolitan Museum of Art (fig. 5), were the start of what would become a quartet of large-scale oil paintings that Turner devoted to whaling and were also some of the last seascapes he completed for exhibition.[3]

The two paintings, both titled *Whalers*, were not entirely without precedent in Turner's oeuvre. Whales appear in some of his small-scale watercolors, generally dated to the 1830s and probably intended as designs for book illustrations. The most developed of these vignettes is *The Whale on Shore*, which depicts an escapade from Sir Walter Scott's novel *The Pirate* (1822) involving a whale stranded on one of the islands of Orkney, off the northern coast of Scotland (fig. 2). Turner managed to cram an astonishing amount of narrative detail onto the tiny page. A host of islanders, some in kilts and plaids, are securing a beached right whale with cables and attempting to kill it; smoking guns are visible at far right. Their tormented prey, spouting furiously, throws its immense tail in the air, overturning a boat as it prepares to escape across the sandbar in the background. The scene was meant to be turned into an engraving to accompany excerpts from *The Pirate* in the second volume of Scott's collected works, *Landscape-Historical Illustrations of Scotland,*

3. *Wreckers—Coast of Northumberland, with a Steam-Boat Assisting a Ship off Shore*, 1833–34. Oil on canvas, 35⅝ × 47½ in. (90.5 × 120.7 cm). Yale Center for British Art, New Haven; Paul Mellon Collection (B1978.43.15)

and The Waverley Novels (1837). Although Turner contributed other illustrations to the book, this one was inexplicably replaced with a design by Harden Sidney Melville (1824–1894), of no relation to the famed American novelist Herman Melville.[4]

Turner's two *Whalers* were thus his first paintings of the animals intended for major public display. The most immediate impetus for the artist's concerted engagement with the subject was probably commercial. It is likely that he made the paintings with an eye toward selling them to Bicknell (1788–1861), a wealthy partner in a firm that specialized in refining spermaceti, the highly prized waxy substance found in the heads of sperm whales. His company had considerable interests in the Pacific sperm-whale fishery.[5]

A committed patron of modern British art, Bicknell befriended a number of painters and watercolorists as well as John Ruskin and his father, John James Ruskin, who were his neighbors at Herne Hill, in south London, until 1842. Although never close with Turner, from 1838 Bicknell enthusiastically acquired the artist's work in a variety of media. In 1844, the year before the whaling scenes were exhibited, Bicknell went on a spree, buying eight oils by Turner, six of them in one day. Among his prizes were several of the artist's most important seascapes, including *Wreckers—Coast of Northumberland, with a Steam-Boat Assisting a Ship off Shore* (fig. 3).[6] There is no evidence that Bicknell commissioned the whaling paintings, but in a note of January 31, 1845, Turner asked his patron to visit his joint residence,

4. *Whalers*, ca. 1845. Oil on canvas, 35⅞ × 48 in. (91.1 × 121.9 cm). Tate, London; Accepted by the nation as part of the Turner Bequest, 1856 (N00545)

5. *Whalers*, ca. 1845. Oil on canvas, 36⅛ × 48¼ in. (91.8 × 122.6 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Catharine Lorillard Wolfe Collection, Wolfe Fund, 1896 (96.29)

6. *Fishermen at Sea*, ca. 1796. Oil on canvas, 36 × 48⅛ in. (91.4 × 122.2 cm). Tate, London; Purchased, 1972 (T01585)

7. Dominic Serres (French, 1722–1793, active England). *The Capture of the "Comte de St. Florentine" by H.M.S. "Achilles", 4 April 1759*, ca. 1770. Oil on canvas, 25 × 40 in. (63.5 × 101.6 cm). National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London; Greenwich Hospital Collection (BHC0390)

studio, and gallery on London's Queen Anne Street "at your earliest convenience for I have a whale or two on the canvas," indicating that he hoped to interest Bicknell in his work-in-progress.[7]

Yet Turner's motivations for undertaking the whaling pictures were not market driven alone. From the outset of his career he had invested great energy and ambition in marine painting.[8] His first exhibited oil, shown at the Royal Academy in 1796, was *Fishermen at Sea* (fig. 6), portraying men working at night off the south coast of England, then under threat of invasion by Revolutionary France. The choice of subject was a canny move given the appeal of seafaring scenes to the island nation, whose political, military, and commercial prowess was intimately tied to the ocean. *Fishermen at Sea* also established the twenty-something Turner as a stylistic force to be reckoned with, demonstrating his mastery of the traditions of British and Continental sea painting and asserting his status as a fresh talent with the potential to rival predecessors such as Dominic Serres (fig. 7). One reviewer, impressed by the descriptive power and technical flair of Turner's picture, deemed it "one of the

8. *Staffa, Fingal's Cave*, 1831–32. Oil on canvas, 35¾ × 47¾ in. (90.8 × 121.3 cm).
Yale Center for British Art, New Haven; Paul Mellon Collection (B1978.43.14)

greatest proofs of an original mind, in the present pictorial display."[9]

Following the success of this seascape, the genre became a creative mainstay for Turner, one that was also vital to his reputation and affluence. He spent countless hours making studies in watercolor and oil of the English coasts and Channel. These provided raw material for scenes exploring the myriad associations of the ocean—history, war, industry, sport, travel, and entertainment—while capturing its natural beauty, depicted in all sorts of weather and at different times of day. Nearly one-third of his extant paintings are marines.

Seascapes were also a laboratory for the development of Turner's style. From early on, his depictions of waves and sky were seen as pushing boundaries. Praised by some commentators as spirited and compelling evocations of nature, they were regarded by others as self-indulgent exercises that sacrificed detail and finish for sensational effect. In the 1830s and 1840s, when Turner painted the two *Whalers*, he seems to have felt a particularly keen attraction to the ocean. The sea prompted some of his most vibrant studies, which capture water and light effects with just a few strokes of color, and it inspired some of his most audacious paintings, such as *Staffa, Fingal's Cave* (fig. 8) and *Snow Storm—Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth* (fig. 9), where he

9. *Snow Storm—Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth*, ca. 1842. Oil on canvas, 36 × 48 in. (91.4 × 121.9 cm).
Tate, London; Accepted by the nation as part of the Turner Bequest, 1856 (N00530)

gave free rein to the dynamic brushwork and elaborate color harmonies that were his trademarks.

Whaling offered a new outlet for Turner's passion for the sea, as it resonated with themes that had long piqued the artist's interest. Himself a sailor and devoted angler, he was repeatedly drawn to depict maritime labor, especially coastal fishing; pursuing the leviathan was modern marine industry on the grandest scale. The nineteenth-century British whaling fleet sailed to the Arctic and Antarctic, South America, Japan, and Australia in search of its quarry, encountering new territories, cultures, natural phenomena, and forms of marine life. Their voyages were ones of exploration as well as for profit, part of a global enterprise closely linked to the fortunes of the British Empire.[10]

By the 1840s government policies and foreign competition had decimated British whaling (Bicknell's wealth was derived from prudent investments in better years), but this downturn did not detract from the perceived exoticism and excitement of the industry. The open ocean in Turner's day was akin to deep space today: a vast and mostly uncharted realm that was often the stuff of fantasy. Whales, and particularly sperm whales, were quasimythological creatures. Most people had never seen one of the animals, and existing images and descriptions, even scientific ones, were generally inaccurate. The public imagination focused on their grandiosity and power (as we now know, sperm whales grow up to sixty feet long and weigh up to sixty-five tons), and on the human ingenuity, courage, and

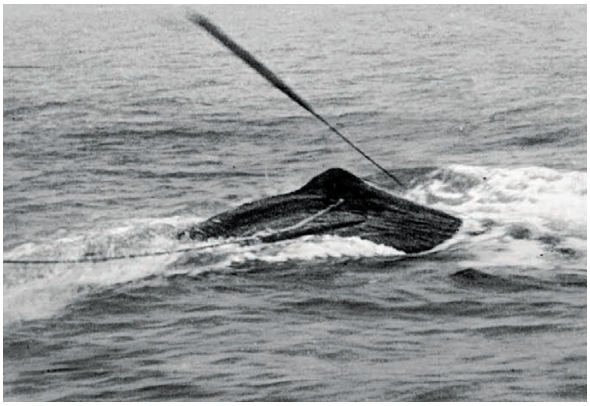
10. John Ward of Hull (British, 1798–1849). *The Northern Whale Fishery: The "Swan" and "Isabella,"* ca. 1840. Oil on canvas, 19¼ × 28¼ in. (48.8 × 71.8 cm). National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; The Lee and Juliet Folger Fund (2007.114.1)

11. Frédéric Martens (German, 1806–1885, active France) after Louis Garneray (French, 1783–1857). *Pêche du Cachalot—Cachalot Fishery*, 1834. Aquatint on paper, 24½ × 32½ in. (62.2 × 82.6 cm). New Bedford Whaling Museum, Massachusetts (1957.8.1)

ferocity necessary to pursue and kill them. Hunting whales is a hazardous, gruesome business, and even in Turner's time some saw it as shockingly cruel. Nonetheless, a certain romance still attached to it.

The epic connotations of whaling dovetailed with some of Turner's favorite concepts: ambition and failure, fortitude and fragility, the fate of empire, and the awe-inspiring power of nature that eighteenth- and nineteenth-century thinkers termed the Sublime. He was constantly on the lookout for contemporary subject matter with the potential to express profound meanings; whaling was a natural, if not necessarily obvious, focus for his creative energies.

While whaling was a relatively new topic for Turner in the 1840s, it was not new to the British art world. Paintings and prints of whaling ships were circulating in Britain by the eighteenth century, coincident with the rise of the whale-oil trade. During the mid-nineteenth century the whaling scene was a thriving, if stylistically unadventurous and narrowly patronized, genre, centered in the maritime town of Hull, a hub of the Northern fleet (fig. 10).[11] Images of this type, along with travelogues and stories, fed the public's interest in the colorful world of whaling, although many representations, such as the popular aquatint *Cachalot Fishery* (fig. 11), based on an oil by the French sailor-



12. Robert Cushman Murphy (American, 1887–1973). *Harpooning a Whale*, ca. 1913. Hand-colored lantern slide, 3¼ × 4 in. (8.3 × 10.2 cm). Mystic Seaport, Connecticut (1973.189.34)

13. Murphy. *Nantucket Sleigh Ride*, ca. 1913. Hand-colored lantern slide, 3¼ × 4 in. (8.3 × 10.2 cm). Mystic Seaport, Connecticut (1973.189.33)

turned-painter Louis Garneray, were distinguished more by theatricality than accuracy.

Turner's forays into the depiction of whaling were characteristically idiosyncratic and provoking. The Tate's *Whalers* drops the viewer smack into the middle of a whale hunt. A group of whaleboats, launched from the ship in the background, is closing in on its prey; the massive curve of the whale's hump is just visible above the water at far right. The pink tinge to the spray issuing from its blowhole indicates that it has been injured. A white-clad man in the foremost boat cocks his arm to attack again, either by hurling a harpoon (a wooden shaft with a detachable barbed metal head, designed to pierce a whale's blubber) or by striking with a lance (a metal pole typically employed at close quarters to gore a whale's organs).[12] Figures in the bows of the other boats echo the man's stance, but none holds a weapon, suggesting that they have already let fly.

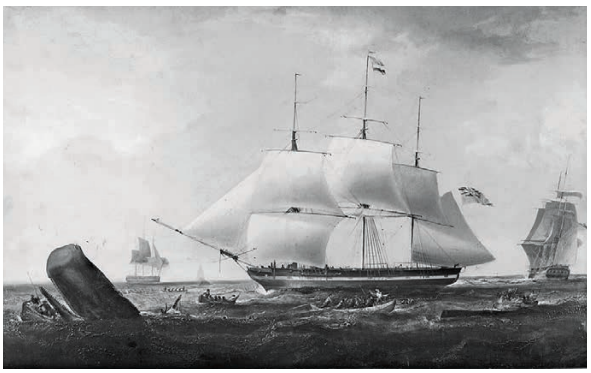
This phase of a whale hunt was pregnant with anticipation and danger. A successfully thrown harpoon did not kill a whale but merely attached it with a long coil of rope to the roughly thirty-foot-long whaleboat (fig. 12). The six-man crew would then attempt to stay in their craft and keep it upright as the panicked whale thrashed in pain, dived deep below the surface (a behavior called "sounding"), or fled across the ocean, sometimes at speeds of more than twenty miles per hour (fig. 13). When the animal eventually tired, the crew would move in and dart the fatal blows with lances while trying to evade the convulsions of their victim.

Although the figures appear summarily painted, Turner's portrayal of them is generally accurate. Certain gestures are rendered with an eye for detail: the pose of the steersman straining backward in the rear of the first boat; the oarsmen crouching to hold it steady with their long paddles; and the way the key figure in front straddles the bow to keep his balance. The sailors' attire, which now reads as brownish, may have once been more vivid, both in this picture and in its partner. Critics at the time remarked on the brightness of the seamen's "red" and "orange" clothing amid a palette of silvery whites.[13]

Turner's staging of the attack derives its verve not only from the actions of the men but also from his treatment of the setting. Swooping brushwork in the sky suggests eddies of wind and spray buffeting the boats; scumbling may have originally softened the contrast between the dark gray passages

14. Detail of page 33 from *The Natural History of the Sperm Whale: To Which Is Added, A Sketch of a South-Sea Whaling Voyage*, by Thomas Beale (London: John Van Voorst, 1839 [2nd ed.]). Science, Industry, and Business Library, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations

15. William John Huggins (British, 1781–1845). *A Whaler in the South Sea Fishery*, ca. 1835. Oil on canvas, 33⅛ × 50 in. (84 × 127 cm). Private collection, United Kingdom



and the lighter surrounding areas.[14] The sense of movement carries over into the ocean, which Turner painted with assurance and freedom, layering his colors and using vigorous and varied strokes of white to depict the ruffled sea. At far right, a thicket of dabs and dashes evokes water churning around the whale's body. Although only part of the hump emerges, the frothing surf conveys the animal's immense bulk and strength.

Turner was intimately familiar with the waters around Britain and the Continent, but the deep ocean was unknown to him. In order to paint such a scene, he made up for his lack of personal experience by turning to other sources. The entry for the Tate's *Whalers* in the Royal Academy exhibition catalogue of 1845 captions the painting "*Beale's Voyage*, p. 163," a shorthand reference to Thomas Beale's *The Natural History of the Sperm Whale: To Which Is Added, A Sketch of a South-Sea Whaling Voyage* (1839). The author, who had served as a whale-ship surgeon, presented his book as an attempt at scientific truth in a field clouded with ignorance and error, and his text quickly came to be regarded as authoritative.[15] Turner's patron Bicknell, who subscribed for four copies, may have made one available to the artist.[16]

The passage referred to in the catalogue entry pertains to a hunt in the North Pacific off Japan, then one of the newer and most productive whaling grounds. Turner seems to have combined several elements of Beale's account, which begins tranquilly ("every thing around solemnly still, with the sun pouring its intense rays with dazzling brightness") and reaches a crescendo when a whale is attacked, sounds, resurfaces, and is fatally hit. At one point the whale is spotted with "his large 'hump' projecting three feet out of the water . . . the spout is seen rushing from the fore-part of his enormous head." The whale then "spouts again, but slowly, the water is again seen agitated around him . . . the glistening harpoon is seen above the head of the harpooneer."[17] Beale's book includes a diagram of a whale floating just below the water's surface as it spouts, in a manner quite similar to that of the animal in *Whalers* (fig. 14).

The Tate's painting also recalls an episode later in Beale's treatise in which sailors stand in the bows of their whaleboats "with their harpoons held above their heads ready for the dart . . . the boats gained upon [the whale] every moment, when the

16. *Vessel at Sea*, ca. 1844–45. Chalk and watercolor on paper, 8¾ × 12⅞ in. (22.1 × 32.8 cm). Tate, London; Accepted by the nation as part of the Turner Bequest, 1856 (D35248; Turner Bequest CCCLIII 9)

agitation of all parties became intense, and a general cry of 'dart! dart!' broke from the hindermost boats."[18] In composing his picture, Turner apparently felt free to conflate some of the more visually exciting parts of Beale's narrative. Such literary citations were not unusual for Turner, who regularly drew upon, and quoted from, a wide variety of material. In the case of the Tate's *Whalers*, the reference to Beale gave the painting the imprimatur of firsthand experience and guaranteed its veracity. However, Turner's paintings are rarely straightforward "illustrations." He combined literature with many other forms of inspiration—including poetry, myth, religion, contemporary events, the work of fellow artists, and his own experience and imagination—to create something related, but not identical, to any cited work.

Turner did not have to rely solely on books for information about whaling and the deep ocean. In addition to Bicknell, several of his friends and acquaintances could offer insights: the American sea captain Elisha Ely Morgan; Captain George Manby, who traveled to Greenland with famed Arctic explorer William Scoresby to test a new harpoon gun; and the zoologist Sir Richard Owen, a founder of London's Natural History Museum and an advocate for the study of sperm whales.[19] In addition, Bicknell's firm owned a portrait of its whaling ships, commissioned from the marine painter William Huggins, which features a whale hunt in the foreground (fig. 15). The resemblance to certain aspects of *Whalers* indicates that Turner may well have used it as a source.[20]

As is the case with many of Turner's paintings,

17. *Whalers at Sea*, ca. 1844–45. Chalk and watercolor on paper, 8¾ × 13 in. (22.2 × 33 cm). Tate, London; Accepted by the nation as part of the Turner Bequest, 1856 (D35251; Turner Bequest CCCLIII 12)

the precise evolution of the whaling pictures from initial conception to finished oils is undocumented. Numerous sheets from his 1844–45 sketchbooks have, however, been related to the project. Although the sketches are difficult to date securely and often bear only a vague connection to Turner's final compositions, they are nonetheless illuminating. They suggest how the whaling series was shaped by the artist's creative process, which was itself informed by decades spent depicting the sea and the people who made their living on it.

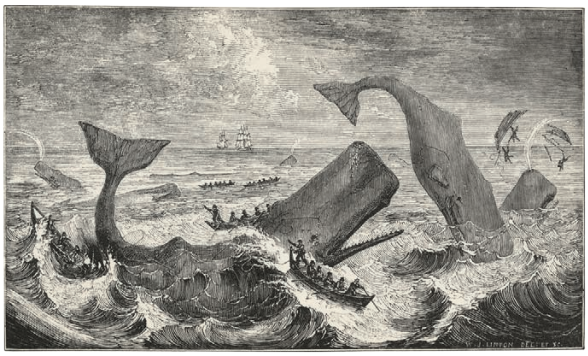
Turner was an inveterate and perpetual sketcher, frequently employing portable books that he kept in his pockets. He worked from life, memory, and imagination, sometimes producing summary images that suggest a form of artistic brainstorming. He titled and numbered his sketchbooks, thus creating a repository of material for future use.[21] The majority of sheets associated with the whaling paintings are found in the sketchbook titled *Whalers*, probably used on one or more of Turner's trips to the Kent coast in 1844 and 1845. The eight pages of interest are generally agreed to have sprung from the mind's eye rather than from life. In some, such as *Vessel at Sea* and *Whalers at Sea* (figs. 16, 17), brief notations designate essential elements—ships, boats, and perhaps whales—while the sky and water are indicated by rapid watercolor washes and rich passages of black chalk. In this restricted color scheme, red plays multiple roles, suggesting light, blood, and action. The sketches offer a glimpse into how Turner may have generated ideas for his whaling scenes, experimenting with formal relationships on a small scale and in a simplified format.

18. *Dark Clouds over the Sea, possibly near Boulogne*, 1845. Watercolor on paper, 9 3/8 × 13 1/4 in. (23.8 × 33.6 cm). Tate, London; Accepted by the nation as part of the Turner Bequest, 1856 (D35399; Turner Bequest CCCLVII 12)

The companion to the Tate's painting at the 1845 exhibition, the Metropolitan's *Whalers*, complements its partner visually and thematically. For this scene, Turner employed a similar palette, playing up the contrast of the gray-black whale with the white sails of the ship and the pale background. But the whalers' conquest has turned into a moment of calamity. The severely injured whale writhes in pain, jaws gaping, blood-tinged spray cascading from its head into the sea. Its violent flailing has upset and partially destroyed the whaleboats; some of the men attempt to right their sinking craft while others cling to the sides. The heads of an unlucky few bob in the water at left. The vulnerability of the sailors in their teetering boats is amplified by Turner's evocation of the surging sea. At right, dynamic brush marks heading every which way indicate rolling swells, while at left choppy strokes of color suggest a seething whirlpool around the frenzied whale. The water appears to be in constant but unpredictable motion.

Like its partner, the Metropolitan's painting was exhibited with a caption: "*Vide Beale's Voyage*, p. 175." The whale hunt described in this passage occurred on June 18, 1832, off Japan, on a bright calm day. After being harpooned and lanced, a whale retreats underwater, but then:

> *He again rose to the surface with great velocity, and striking the boat with the front part of his head threw it high into the air with the men and everything contained therein, fracturing it to atoms and scattering its crew widely about. While the men were endeavouring to save themselves from drowning by*



19. William James Linton (British, 1812–1897). *Boats Attacking Whales*, frontispiece to *The Natural History of the Sperm Whale*

20. Detail of page 173 from *The Natural History of the Sperm Whale*

21. Reproduction of William Huggins's *South Sea Whale Fishery*, detail of page 154 from *The Natural History of the Sperm Whale*

> *clinging to their oars and pieces of the wreck of the boat, the enormous animal was seen swimming round and round them, appearing as if meditating an attack with his flukes. . . . They had now nothing to hope for but the arrival of the other boats to relieve them from their dangerous situation, rendered more so by the appearance of several large sharks . . . and also from the inability of one of the boats' crew to swim.*[22]

The men are eventually rescued, but the danger of their situation is acute.

Turner probably drew on Beale not only for the action of this *Whalers* but also for his portrayal of the sperm whale; this is the only time in the whaling series that the animal is clearly visible. Whales were sighted along British coasts and rivers in Turner's day—in October 1842 a finback was killed and displayed at Deptford in East London, near Wapping, where the artist owned property—and specimens of dead whales were available for viewing. There is no conclusive proof, however, that Turner ever saw such a creature, alive or dead, although whale-like forms do appear in his sketchbooks (fig. 18).[23] Sperm whales, in particular, were a matter of mystery in Britain in the 1840s.

Beale's book features several illustrations of sperm whales to which Turner could easily have referred. The frontispiece by William James Linton, *Boats Attacking Whales*, shows at right a spouting whale tossing boats and sailors heavenward (fig. 19; see also details on the inside front and back covers). The same motif appears in a close-up view, with some details modified, just prior to the passage that Turner cited for the Metropolitan's *Whalers* (fig. 20). The book also includes a reproduction based on William Huggins's widely circulated aquatint *South Sea Whale Fishery* (1834), showing a whale attempting to escape from a harpoon while its pursuers struggle to stay afloat (fig. 21). In addition to these images, the painting of whaling ships by Huggins that was owned by Bicknell's firm probably provided guidance for Turner's depiction of the whale and other elements.[24]

22. *A Harpooned Whale*, 1845. Graphite and watercolor on paper, 9⅜ × 13¼ in. (23.8 × 33.6 cm). Tate, London; Accepted by the nation as part of the Turner Bequest, 1856 (D35391; Turner Bequest CCCLVII 6)

23. *The Whaler*, 1845. Watercolor over traces of graphite on paper, 9 × 12¾ in. (22.7 × 32.5 cm). The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge University (P.D.116–1950)

24. Page 81 from the *Channel* sketchbook, ca. 1845. Watercolor on paper, 3¾ × 6¼ in. (9.5 × 15.9 cm). Yale Center for British Art, New Haven; Paul Mellon Collection (B1993.30.118 [81])

Several of Turner's watercolor studies offer insight into his approach to composing the Metropolitan's painting. Among them is *Whalers at Sea* (see fig. 17). In the foreground at left is a black form, perhaps indicating a whale, spurting blood. Hard upon it is a boat with figures enveloped in red mist; a ship appears in the distance. Freely applied passages of wash suggest wind and clouds, while more assertive strokes of chalk demarcate the action on the water. The same basic arrangement forms the backbone of *Whalers*.

In other sheets Turner honed in on the contest between the whale and its hunters. *A Harpooned Whale* emphasizes the savagery of the encounter (fig. 22). Blood is everywhere; crimson streams from the broad head of the animal at left, forming a cloud that extends to the tail, raised high in the air at right. Turner inscribed the drawing, "I shall [use?] this." *The Whaler* accentuates the disparity between the stupendous power of the whale, heaving its vast bulk skyward and roiling the water, and the slight figures of the whalers, accented in red (fig. 23). For the moment the animal has gotten the better of the men; the annotation in Turner's hand reads, "He breaks away." Brimming with color and vigor, the two sheets express the turmoil of a whale hunt.

These two watercolors were likely made after Turner painted his pair of *Whalers*. Both sheets are identified with the *Ambleteuse and Wimereux* sketchbook, named for coastal villages near Boulogne. The book was used by the convalescent Turner on a trip to northern France at the beginning of May 1845, about the time that the whaling paintings went on view at the Royal Academy. Coming on the heels of the oils, the sketches suggest that the topic was still very much on Turner's mind. Indeed, whales surface again in the *Channel* sketchbook, which Turner may have used along the southeastern coast of England and at Boulogne in the summer of 1845. Several of its loosely worked pages have been related to whaling; the most convincing example is a watercolor on page 81 (fig. 24).[25] Here the killing

25. Sir Augustus Wall Callcott (British, 1779–1844). *Dead Calm: Boats off Cowes Castle*, ca. 1827. Oil on canvas, 35 × 46⅞ in. (89 × 119 cm). National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London (BHC1154)

of a whale is concentrated into a compact, visceral image. The smooth, gray body of the animal towers over the ocean, surrounded by crashing spray and waves rendered with short, forceful movements of the brush; spiky strokes of red on either side may indicate boats, caught in the tumult, or water reddened by the whale's injuries. Despite being approximately the size of an index card, the sheet conveys a sense of titanic conflict.

Because Turner was away from London for part of May 1845, he may have missed some of the lively commentary incited by his whaling paintings. Most critics were ambivalent. On the one hand, they were confounded by Turner's style. On the other hand, at this point in his career they were inclined to give him the benefit of the doubt, admitting that he was in a class by himself and could not be judged by the usual standards. The objections to style centered on one common complaint: Turner's paint handling was so vague and extravagant that his motifs were indiscernible. His palette was "one mass of white spray," his forms lacked definition, and his compositions seemed slapdash.[26] The artist was charged with "subliming truth," that is, sacrificing naturalism for expressive impact.[27]

Faced with Turner's concoctions, some writers recalled with longing the work of the recently deceased Sir Augustus Wall Callcott, Turner's comrade and a principal rival who made his name with more conventionally conceived seascapes in the manner of the seventeenth-century Dutch masters (fig. 25).[28] The critics' favorite foil for Turner's work, however, was a painting by his friend Clarkson Stanfield, *The Mole at Ancona with Trajan's Arch*, which hung between the two *Whalers* at the Royal Academy. Although that painting is now lost, Stanfield's 1851 version of the subject gives a good sense of his approach (fig. 26).[29] Commentators pronounced Stanfield "the very opposite of Turner"—precise, lucid, cool, illusionistic, and superbly

26. Clarkson Stanfield (British, 1793–1867). *Ancona and the Arch of Trajan*, 1851. Oil on canvas, 35½ × 61½ in. (90.2 × 156.2 cm). Victoria and Albert Museum, London; Bequeathed by John Forster (F.34)

finished, if at times prosaic.[30] One reviewer pondered the difference between the two artists' techniques: "Turning from the rough, smudgy canvas of the one, to the smooth carefully coloured surface of the other, and admiring both for two things in common—their sky and their sea—one wonders how they both could achieve them, by means so dissimilar. The secret perhaps is this: Turner throws in the materials out of which the eye may produce the effects contemplated; Stanfield paints, and with wonderful accuracy, the effects themselves as they occur to the eye."[31]

As this remark reveals, critics tried to discern the method in Turner's eccentric manner of painting. A number of them found that, when viewed at sufficient distance and with an open mind, his colors and brushwork produced a thrilling overall impression. The *Literary Gazette* pronounced the Metropolitan's *Whalers* "a vision and unreality; but the handling of the tints, and their harmony, allowing for the exalted pitch of their prismatic brightness, are astonishing. Splintered rainbows thrown against the canvass … atmospheric effects of magical talent." The London *Times* praised Turner's "free, vigorous, fearless embodiment of the effect of a moment," while the *Spectator* called the pictures "tumultuous surges: Whalers—all light, spray, and clouds; beautiful as harmonies of colour; depicting the peril and excitement of Whale-fishing, in a vague, imaginative manner." The *Morning Chronicle* summed up the general sentiment: "Though we by no means allow the legitimacy of the means which he adopts, we cannot deny that they are capable of producing extraordinary and gratifying effects."[32]

There were naysayers. The satirical magazine *Punch* skewered the "effects" mentioned approvingly by many reviewers, stating that the Metropolitan's *Whalers* "embodies one of those singular

effects which are only met with in lobster salads, and in this artist's pictures. Whether he calls his picture *Whalers*, or *Venice*, or *Morning*, or *Noon*, or *Night*, it is all the same; for it is quite as easy to fancy it one thing as another."[33] Ruskin, who heartily disliked the work Turner made after 1845, found the whaling subjects "altogether unworthy" of his idol.[34]

Yet the critics generally endeavored to set aside their standards for "good painting" and to look at Turner's pictures in a new way, in which clear narrative, organization, and detail took a backseat to color, light, and feeling, and seemingly random brushstrokes mysteriously merged into a comprehensible image. William Makepeace Thackeray, writing as Michael Angelo Titmarsh in *Fraser's Magazine*, captured this experience:

> [*Turner*] *is as great as usual, vibrating between the absurd and the sublime, until the eye grows dazzled in watching him, and can't really tell in what region he is. . . . Look at the* [*painting*] *for a little time, and it begins to affect you too,—to mesmerise you . . . so the magician, Joseph Mallard* [sic]*, makes you see what he likes on a board, that to the first view is merely dabbed over with occasionally* [sic] *streaks of yellow, and flicked here and there with vermilion. The vermilion blotches become little boats full of harpooners and gondolas. . . . That is not a smear of purple you see yonder, but a beautiful whale, whose tail has just slapped a half-dozen whale-boats into perdition; and as for what you fancied to be a few zig-zag lines spattered on the canvass at hap-hazard, look! they turn out to be a ship with all her sails.*[35]

Whatever the drift of critical sentiment, the Metropolitan's *Whalers* seems to have appealed to Bicknell, who acquired it in 1845. The exact date on which he took ownership is unknown, but both painter and patron clearly had whales, and each other, at the forefront of their minds at the start of the summer. On June 23 Bicknell wrote to the engraver John Pye apropos the difficulty of getting delivery of another acquisition, Turner's *The Bright-Stone of Honour (Ehrenbreitstein) and Tomb of Marceau, from Byron's "Childe Harold"* (ca. 1835; private collection): "Pray fasten your strongest hook into [Turner] before he fairly takes water again or he may get so far and so deep down that even a harpoon will not reach him."[36] Bicknell's daughter-in-law Christine noted in her journal that Turner had turned up (slightly tipsy) at a dinner party hosted on July 4 by the painter David Roberts (1796–1864). "Upon his health being given," her recollection continued, "he amused them with a very funny speech (& funnier grimaces filling up the pauses) about his whalers, mixing up Mr. Bicknell & fish & ending by proposing his health."[37]

Two months later, the relationship soured. On September 19, John James Ruskin wrote to his son, then returning from Italy, that Bicknell was quarreling with Turner over the engraving of *The Fighting Temeraire* (1839; The National Gallery, London) and, what's more, "he found Water Colour in Whalers & rubbed out some with Handky. He went to Turner who looked Daggers & refused to do anything, but at last he has taken it back to alter . . . all say it is not finished. They account for his hurry & disregard for future fame by putting Water Colours by his stronger passion, love of money. I am sorry he sacrifices his great fame to present effect & object."[38] The disagreement was not permanent; the two men still saw each other socially, and Bicknell went on to buy other works by Turner, including the Metropolitan's *Saltash with the Water Ferry, Cornwall* (fig. 27). However, it is unclear if the Museum's *Whalers* made it back to Bicknell. Nor is there any indication that he (or anyone else) attempted to acquire the Tate picture.

27. *Saltash with the Water Ferry, Cornwall*, 1811. Oil on canvas, 35⅜ × 47½ in. (89.9 × 120.7 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Marquand Collection, Gift of Henry G. Marquand, 1889 (89.15.9)

Whaling nonetheless continued to attract Turner's artistic interest. At the Royal Academy the following year, he exhibited a scene drawn from legend, *Undine Giving the Ring to Massaniello, Fisherman of Naples,* and a religious subject, *The Angel Standing in the Sun* (both ca. 1846; Tate, London); two Venetian views; and two more whaling paintings: *'Hurrah! for the Whaler Erebus! Another Fish!'* (fig. 28) and *Whalers (Boiling Blubber) Entangled in Flaw Ice, Endeavouring to Extricate Themselves* (fig. 29). The latter two pictures are linked to the 1845 *Whalers* by similar basic compositions, in which the action unfolds in a shallow scrim across the foreground, demarcated by a low horizon line, with the ships jutting into the vast sky. Yet the 1846 paintings are quite different in their narrative thrust. The agitation of the chase, amplified by whirling wind and waves, gives way to the more orderly, if still eventful, aftermath of a whale hunt, with the ships floating in quieter waters. The setting also moves from the seas off Japan to the polar whaling grounds.[39] Turner adapted his palette accordingly, switching from bright white tints to rich yellows and blues and transforming the even illumination of the *Whalers* into glowing sunlight and firelight. As a result, the 1845 and 1846 whaling scenes form two distinct yet related pairs of pictures: the earlier starkly dramatic, the latter more lyrical in tone.

'Hurrah! for the Whaler Erebus! Another Fish!' is the third painting in the whaling quartet, as indicated

28. *'Hurrah! for the Whaler Erebus! Another Fish!'*, ca. 1846. Oil on canvas, 35½ × 47½ in. (90.2 × 120.6 cm). Tate, London; Accepted by the nation as part of the Turner Bequest, 1856 (N00546)

29. *Whalers* (*Boiling Blubber*) *Entangled in Flaw Ice, Endeavouring to Extricate Themselves*, ca. 1846. Oil on canvas, 35⅜ × 47¼ in. (89.9 × 120 cm). Tate, London; Accepted by the nation as part of the Turner Bequest, 1856 (N00547)

30. *Sea Piece, with Figures in Foreground*, ca. 1844–45. Chalk and watercolor on paper, 8¾ × 13⅛ in. (22.1 × 33.1 cm). Tate, London; Accepted by the nation as part of the Turner Bequest, 1856 (D35252; Turner Bequest CCCLIII 13)

by the stage reached by the whalers in capturing and processing their prey. Like the Tate's *Whalers*, this picture depicts a moment of success. At left is a cluster of whaleboats (a whale ship typically carried a complement of three to five boats and two spares), surrounded by marine objects: an anchor, a chain, buoys, and flotsam. At the back of the flotilla is a pair of sails, which boats used when winds permitted them to approach whales stealthily. The vessel on the far left flies a banner with the name "Erebus."

The crew of the large ship at right is engaged in the arduous and unappealing task of "cutting in," or stripping off blubber, the thick layer of fat underneath a whale's skin. The body of the animal is just discernible as a striated mass suspended next to the hull. Its blubber has been carefully cut and pierced with sharp tools and is now being removed as the carcass is rotated with a windlass; the boat by the ship's side is likely fending off sharks attracted by the blood. The whale's head, containing precious spermaceti, sperm oil, and jaws and teeth (used for decorative scrimshaw carvings), has been separated from the body and hung just to the left of the mainmast. The most eye-catching feature of the painting is not, however, the minuscule whalers or the hulking carcass but the light radiating over the sky and water at center, a motif that Turner frequently employed to stunning effect. The London *Times* wrote of this picture, "The spectator looks full against the sun, and the treatment of this blaze of light, with the delicate etherial [*sic*] indications of the clouds in the 'cirrus' region, is most magnificent."[40]

Two sheets from the *Whalers* sketchbook indicate how Turner might have developed his compo-

31. *Whalers*, ca. 1844–45. Chalk and watercolor on paper, 8¾ × 13 in. (22.1 × 32.9 cm). Tate, London; Accepted by the nation as part of the Turner Bequest, 1856 (D35253; Turner Bequest CCCLIII 14)

sition.[41] *Sea Piece, with Figures in Foreground* may be an early version of the scene, with figures in the bottom right-hand corner celebrating the catch (fig. 30). On the next page of the sketchbook, the positions of the whaleboats, roughed in with black chalk, and the ship, indicated in red, are nearer their final arrangement (fig. 31). In both images, white chalk at the horizon and on the water evokes the glowing sun, suggesting how important this element was for Turner.

'Hurrah! for the Whaler Erebus! Another Fish!' was the only one of the whaling quartet to be reproduced as a print (fig. 32), appearing after the artist's death in *The Turner Gallery* (first published 1859–61). The engraver, Robert Brandard, did his best with the light effects, but he replaced the whale's head with a flapping sail (or possibly a sheet of drying blubber) and, as is often the case in prints of Turner's paintings, gave the scene greater precision and detail than the original possessed. The description accompanying the engraving deemed the painting "very slight and careless in execution, but good in composition and color."

Even with the aid of Brandard's engraving, the narrative of *'Hurrah! for the Whaler Erebus! Another Fish!'* is difficult to pin down. The Royal Academy's 1846 catalogue cites "*Beale's Voyage*," but with no page reference, and there is no obvious corollary in the text. The action on the right could be drawn from Beale's description of "cutting in" from chapter 14. The scene on the left, in conjunction with the painting's title, calls to mind two episodes in the book, both set in the North Pacific. In the first, nine boats from three whaling ships race to a

32. Robert Brandard (British, 1805–1862) after Turner. *Whalers*, from *The Turner Gallery* (1859–61; New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1879–80). Steel engraving on paper; image, 7⅛ × 10 in. (18.1 × 25.4 cm); sheet, 10¾ × 14⅞ in. (27.3 × 37.7 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Gift of Mrs. C. E. Colahan, 1936 (36.33[10–1])

whale; as the mates urge on their crews, one of them calls out the name of his vessel. In the second, resounding cheers greet the capture of the whale that will complete a ship's cargo.[42]

Turner's sources of inspiration for this painting almost certainly extend beyond Beale. There is no record of a whaler called the *Erebus*, but there was a military vessel of this name. Among its other exploits, it sailed along with the ship *Terror* to the Antarctic between 1839 and 1843, charting the continent and studying marine life, including whales (sometimes called "fish" by seamen). The expedition's captain, Sir James Clark Ross, belonged to the Athenaeum Club, a meeting place for scientists, artists, and politicians of which Turner was a longtime member, and which he frequented with some regularity in the 1840s. In addition, the *Erebus*'s assistant surgeon was Joseph Dalton Hooker, nephew of Turner's good friend Dawson Turner. Hooker's "Summary of the Voyage" was published in 1844–45 in the first installment of *The Zoology of the Voyage of H.M.S. Erebus and Terror*, of which Turner owned part v, "Fishes," which appeared in 1845.[43]

Turner may also have meant to evoke a subsequent voyage of the *Erebus* and *Terror*. On May 19, 1845, shortly after the first pair of whaling pictures went on display, the ships departed under the command of Sir John Franklin in search of the Northwest Passage. The undertaking generated considerable excitement. Equipped with the latest technology (including steam engines, which fascinated Turner), the expedition was expected to conclude the search for a sea route from the Atlantic to the Pacific across the top of the American continent, which had stymied explorers for centuries. If it was Turner's intent to refer to this Arctic expedition, it had inadvertent significance: the mission became infamous after it failed to return at the appointed time. More than thirty search parties were sent out, but beyond the fact that all one hundred twenty-nine crewmembers died, the exact fate of the venture is a still a mystery.[44] Although the precise

33. *Keelmen Heaving in Coals by Moonlight*, 1835. Oil on canvas, 36 3/8 × 48 3/8 in. (92.3 × 122.8 cm). National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Widener Collection (1942.9.86)

meaning of Turner's reference to the *Erebus* remains unclear, the allusion suggests that the artist's attention was shifting to the icy waters of the poles, a change of venue borne out in the last of his whaling paintings.

Whalers (*Boiling Blubber*) *Entangled in Flaw Ice, Endeavouring to Extricate Themselves* brings the whaling quartet to a close, as the sailors near the final steps in securing their cargo. Turner related the painting to its partner by employing a similar formal arrangement, with the vessels and men at the edges of the canvas and a corona of light at center. But as with the 1845 paintings, the situation of the whalers has progressed from triumph to potential tragedy. The celebration of a good catch on a radiant day gives way to difficulty and peril under a wan polar sun.[45] At left a ship is moored in the ice; a chain and anchors are visible in the foreground. The orange-red fire and the black smoke wafting around the masts indicate that the crew is engaged in the penultimate phase of processing the whale: "trying out," or heating the blubber to extract its oil—a fiery, reeking business that sailors compared to being in hell.[46] The men have stripped the carcass, cut the blubber into pieces with razor-sharp spades (apt to amputate the toes or feet of careless seamen), and removed the skin before setting the pieces to boil in the tryworks, a brick furnace just behind the foremast. The only remaining task is to store the rendered oil in casks.

The contrast between the vivid blaze of the tryworks and the pallid sun is a variation on a motif that Turner often employed when depicting contemporary industry (fig. 33). Juxtaposing man-made fire and the natural light of the sun, moon, or stars was a common Romantic trope and, in scenes like this one, enriched the subject of grueling manual labor with a sense of grandeur. Turner's longstanding fascination with the complementary oppositions of light and dark and of fire and water is revealed in five vigorously worked sheets in the *Whalers* sketchbook featuring sunsets and maritime

34. *Burning Blubber*, ca. 1845. Chalk and watercolor on paper prepared with gray wash, 8¾ × 13⅛ in. (22.1 × 33.2 cm). Tate, London; Accepted by the nation as part of the Turner Bequest, 1856 (D35246; Turner Bequest CCCLIII 7)

35. *Whalers Boiling Blubber*, ca. 1845. Chalk and watercolor on paper, 8¾ × 13 in. (22.1 × 33 cm). Tate, London; Accepted by the nation as part of the Turner Bequest, 1856 (D35245; Turner Bequest CCCLIII 6)

36. John Wilson Carmichael (British, 1799–1868). *"Erebus" and "Terror" in the Antarctic*, 1847. Oil on canvas, 48½ × 72½ in. (123.2 × 184.2 cm). National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London; Caird Fund (BHC1215)

conflagrations (figs. 34, 35). Playing with the relation of bright color, drifting smoke, and the black hulk of the ship, Turner produced images even more intensely eye-catching than the final painting, completed a year or so later.

While the boiling of blubber proceeds on the left, at right whalers try to free a second ship. The "flaw ice" of Turner's title refers to the jumbled pieces that can fill a narrow channel between areas of more solid ice, making it impassable. Vessels caught in this zone could be driven off course or crushed.[47] In the middle ground of the painting men stand on the ice, using a large-toothed saw to hew a passage for their craft.[48] Such perils were current in the public imagination at midcentury, fueled by written accounts of stranded or lost ships. In addition, artists of Turner's era found the notion of a remote, frozen expanse, inhospitable to man, irresistible as a subject (fig. 36). Turner himself was well aware of the dangers; verses drafted in his *Greenwich* sketchbook of about 1808 commemorate the explorer Sir Hugh Willoughby, who "braved the rugged northern skies" in search of a sea route from England to China and, wintering in 1554 in the Arctic Ocean off Russia, "in frozen regions died."[49]

Given his preoccupation with nature's overwhelming power, it is not surprising that Turner depicted whalers in a life-threatening quandary. Many of his most highly regarded seascapes present ships in distress, with the attendant implications of human frailty and insignificance. The melancholy associations that shipwrecks held for the artist when he was painting the whaling series are explicit in a pair of watercolors from the mid-1840s, intended as private exercises, that Turner annotated with verses related to *Fallacies of Hope*, his career-long unfinished poetic endeavor.[50]

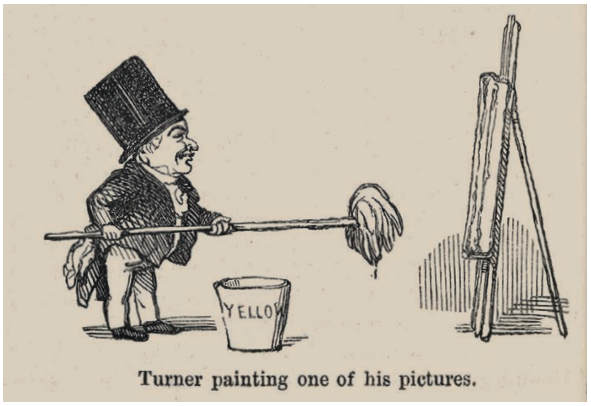
In *Lost to All Hope the Brig*, possibly made at Margate, on the Kent coast, the rosy colors that permeate the sea and sky belie the piteous state of the ship listing on the horizon (fig. 37). Turner's inscription amplifies the mood: "Lost to all Hope she lies / each sea breaks over a derelict / on an unknown shore the sea folk only sharing the triumph." Its companion depicts the Goodwin Sands, a stretch of coast not far from Margate notorious for ensnaring ships in quicksand (fig. 38). In contrast to the resplendent sunsets and sunrises of Turner's other

37. *Lost to All Hope the Brig*, ca. 1845–50. Watercolor and graphite on paper, 9 × 12¾ in. (22.9 × 32.4 cm). Yale Center for British Art, New Haven; Paul Mellon Collection (B1977.14.5378)

38. *Wreck on the Goodwin Sands: Sunset*, ca. 1845. Watercolor and graphite, with black chalk, on paper, 9⅛ × 13⅛ in. (23 × 33.2 cm). The Morgan Library and Museum, New York; Bequest of Miss Alice Tully (1996.67)

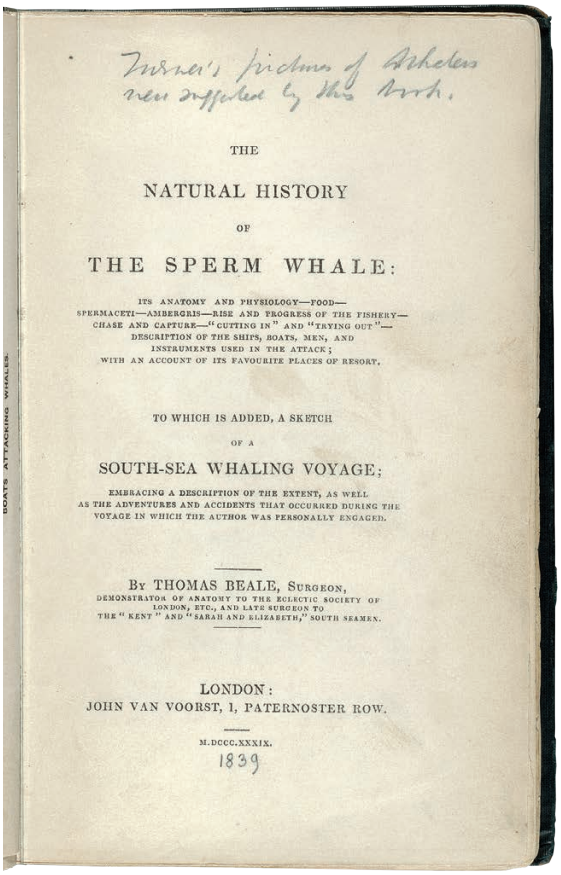
watercolors of this period, this scene is somber. Soft washes evoke the murky boundary between shore and water; the shipwreck is merely suggested by a band of dark color with a few red accents. Indeed, this passage of gray and brown would be difficult to identify as a ship were it not for Turner's caption: "And [dolphins?] play around the wreck / The men's [hope?] holding all that hoped / admits [mark?] of the almighty's hand fallacy Hope [illegible] for sail / Wreck on the Goodwins." The men in *Whalers* (*Boiling Blubber*) *Entangled in Flaw Ice, Endeavouring to Extricate Themselves* are not yet stranded, but they could well meet a similar fate.

The setting of this last whaling scene is almost certainly the Antarctic, as Arctic whalers did not boil blubber aboard their ships, but the geographic scope of Turner's sources was likely wider. Unlike the other paintings in the series, this picture was exhibited without a citation to Beale, whose book contains no episodes involving ice. It seems reasonable to suppose that Turner relied at least partially on the author's description of "trying out" in chapter 14, but his inspirations are otherwise unknown. One possibility is Frederick Debell Bennett's *Narrative of a Whaling Voyage round the Globe* (1840), which portrays the spectacle of smoke and fire created when boiling blubber at night in the South Seas. Another is Hooker's "Summary of the Voyage" of the *Erebus* and *Terror*, which mentions that the ships were "entangled" in and then "extricated" from Antarctic pack ice. Or Turner may be referring to other episodes in the history of these two ships: an aborted attempt to rescue vessels trapped in the Arctic in 1835–36 (commemorated in a painting by John Ward of Hull at the Royal Academy in 1840; see fig. 10), or the voyage in search of the Northwest Passage in 1845.[51] Then again, imagery of vessels trapped in ice was popular enough that Turner might not have needed to draw on any sources other than his own memory and fertile imagination.



39. *Turner Painting One of His Pictures*, from *The Almanack of the Month* (June 1846), page 350. General Research Division, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations

The response to the 1846 paintings turned on the same key issue as the reaction to the previous year's pair: critics' willingness to discern an exhilarating evocation of nature in Turner's freewheeling style. For some, the compositions were unintelligible. The *Almanack of the Month* quipped, "The subject is, 'Hurrah for the whaler *Erebus*—another fish;' but it should be called 'Hallo there!—the oil and Vinegar,—another lobster salad.'" Along with this review, the magazine printed a caricature of Turner at work with a mop and a bucket marked "yellow" (fig. 39). For others, Turner was worth defending. The *Times* of London proclaimed, "But surely the 'Hurrah for the Whaler' should check all those who regard the pictures of this great colourist as mere themes for mirth.... It is all very well to treat Turner's pictures as jests; but things like these are too magnificent for jokes." The *Athenaeum* admitted, "*Whalers* (*boiling blubber*), *entangled in flaw ice, endeavouring to extricate themselves,* presents, it is true, something ... tangible. As we heard a gentleman say, '*That's* reasonable;' one *can* make forms out of those masses of beautiful, though almost chaotic, colours. The sea-green hue of the ice, the flicker of the sun-



40. Inscribed title page from Herman Melville's copy of *The Natural History of the Sperm Whale*. From the library of Herman Melville, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge; AC85.M4977.Zz839b, Gift of Albert C. Berol, 1960

beam on the waves, the boiling of the blubber, and the tall forms of the ice-bound vessels, make up an interesting picture, dressed in Turner's magic glow."[52]

The *Literary Gazette* echoed the commentators of 1845 in its opinion of Turner's radical approach to painting, conceding, "Grant the style, and there are certainly amazing things in these paintings to call forth encomium.... So entirely is the eye carried away by a sort of indistinct and harmonious magic, that we seem to consent to the abandonment of solid truth and real nature altogether, and allow dark ships to be chrome-yellow, whales glittering pink, human beings sun or moon-beams, and little thick dabs of paint ethereal clouds. Like the pseudo-doctor in the farce, we forget the actual appearance of things, and confess that Mr. Turner has 'changed all that' in a most extraordinary way."[53] The paintings may have failed to sell, but they certainly had an impact on viewers.

Today the whaling suite immediately brings to mind another nineteenth-century work of visionary ambition: Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale*, published in America and Britain in 1851, just months before Turner's death. Many connections can be made between Turner's paintings and the American writer's magnum opus.[54] Both men were clearly attracted to the challenge of elevating the dirty labor of whaling into a heroic undertaking. As Melville (1819–1891) confided to his friend and fellow writer, the lawyer Richard Henry Dana, Jr., in a letter of May 1, 1850, "Blubber is blubber you know; tho' you may get oil out of it, the poetry runs as hard as sap from a frozen maple tree;—and to work the thing up, one must needs throw in a little fancy, which from the nature of the thing, must be as ungainly as the gambols of the whales themselves. Yet I mean to give the truth of the thing, spite of this."[55]

Turner and Melville both mined the subject of whaling for similar themes: an epic confrontation between humankind and the natural world; humanity's hubris, which leads to both victory and tragedy; and the manifold moods and vistas of the sea. Artist and writer also saw whales and their deep ocean habitat as manifestations of the Sublime. Some of the tropes they employed to evoke the awesome spectacle of nature were commonplace: dramatic water and light effects, ominous weather, and ships in distress. Other motifs were more exceptional: pervasive whiteness (the dominant color of Turner's two *Whalers* and of the eponymous whale in *Moby-Dick*); swirling seas and skies; and a reliance on vagueness and incompleteness to convey nature's ineffable power. Critics of Melville

even occasionally compared his style to Turner's.[56]

That Turner and Melville shared a sensibility is not surprising given that they were both artists of the Romantic era. It is nonetheless tantalizing to wonder if their creative and philosophical kinship was deeper and more conscious. Here one enters into the world of speculation, but there is evidence, albeit inconclusive, to suggest that the parallels in Turner's and Melville's works are not simply fortuitous.

In October 1849, Melville, an ex-whaleman and sailor with a budding career as an author of marine tales, embarked on his first visit to London and the Continent. The primary purpose of the trip was to find a British publisher for *White-Jacket*, his book about the United States Navy. Melville was intensely interested in the visual arts and aesthetic theory, and while abroad he took the opportunity to tour a number of museums and galleries. This was his first in-depth exposure to the Old Masters and to contemporary European art.[57]

The writer arrived back in New York in February 1850. That April he withdrew two books on whaling by William Scoresby from the New York Society Library and asked his publisher to order Beale's 1839 text. It arrived that summer, as Melville formulated the first draft of what would become *Moby-Dick*. On one of the opening pages of Beale's book, Melville wrote the date, July 10, 1850. Probably at the same time, he inscribed the title page "Turner's pictures of Whalers were suggested by this book" (fig. 40). This is among the first of many annotations that Melville made in his copy of *The Natural History of the Sperm Whale*, which was a critical reference for *Moby-Dick*. It confirms that Melville was aware of Turner's whaling scenes, that he knew they were inspired by Beale's account, and that he considered the fact important enough to jot down.

The effect that this knowledge had on *Moby-Dick* is open to debate.[58] The book's most compelling affinity with the whaling paintings is a key passage in chapter 3 that foreshadows the plot as well as Melville's challenging style, full of digressions, ruminations, and perplexing episodes. The passage also emphasizes a central point of the novel: the impossibility of fully comprehending the nature of the sperm whale.[59] The narrator, Ishmael, is searching for a place to stay in New Bedford, Massachusetts, and stumbles upon the Spouter-Inn:

> *You found yourself in a wide, low, straggling entry with old-fashioned wainscots, reminding one of the bulwarks of some condemned old craft. On one side hung a very large oil painting so thoroughly besmoked, and every way defaced, that in the unequal crosslights by which you viewed it, it was only by diligent study and a series of systematic visits to it, and careful inquiry of the neighbors, that you could any way arrive at an understanding of its purpose. Such unaccountable masses of shades and shadows, that at first you almost thought some ambitious young artist, in the time of the New England hags, had endeavored to delineate chaos bewitched. But by dint of much and earnest contemplation, and oft repeated ponderings, and especially by throwing open the little window towards the back of the entry, you at last come to the conclusion that such an idea, however wild, might not be altogether unwarranted.*
>
> *But what most puzzled and confounded you was a long, limber, portentous, black mass of something hovering in the centre of the picture over three blue, dim, perpendicular lines floating in a nameless yeast. A boggy, soggy, squitchy picture truly, enough to drive a nervous man distracted. Yet was there a sort of indefinite, half-attained, unimaginable sublimity about it that fairly froze you to it, till you involuntarily took an oath with yourself to find out what that marvellous painting meant. Ever and anon a bright,*

41. *The Prince of Orange, William III, Embarked from Holland, and Landed at Torbay, November 4th, 1688, after a Stormy Passage*, ca. 1832. Oil on canvas, 35½ × 47½ in. (90.2 × 120 cm). Tate, London; Presented by Robert Vernon, 1847 (N00369)

> *but, alas, deceptive idea would dart you through.—It's the Black Sea in a midnight gale.—It's the unnatural combat of the four primal elements.—It's a blasted heath.—It's a Hyperborean winter scene.—It's the breaking-up of the icebound stream of Time. But at last all these fancies yielded to that one portentous something in the picture's midst.* That *once found out, and all the rest were plain. But stop; does it not bear a faint resemblance to a gigantic fish? even the great leviathan himself?*
>
> *In fact, the artist's design seemed this: a final theory of my own, partly based upon the aggregated opinions of many aged persons with whom I conversed upon the subject. The picture represents a Cape-Horner in a great hurricane; the half-foundered ship weltering there with its three dismantled masts alone visible; and an exasperated whale, purposing to spring clean over the craft, is in the enormous act of impaling himself upon the three mast-heads.*[60]

The painting on the Spouter-Inn wall most likely had a real-world referent, as they have been identified for many of the other pictorial allusions in *Moby-Dick*.[61] If Melville's precise source remains unknown, Turner's work is the most obvious candidate. Several of his late seascapes, but particularly the Metropolitan's *Whalers* and its companions, could fit Ishmael's description, and no other marine artist of the day painted in such a nebulous style.

Nevertheless, the case is not straightforward. To begin with, it is unclear what Melville knew of Turner's paintings in 1850–51, when he was writing *Moby-Dick*, even if later in life he clearly grew to esteem the British artist. He admired Turner's paintings on a visit to London in 1857, dedicated a poem to *The Fighting Temeraire*, bought books about Turner, and collected engravings of Turner's paintings, including that of *'Hurrah! for the Whaler Erebus! Another Fish!'*[62] Yet Melville's only documented reference to Turner before the publication of *Moby-Dick* is his inscription in Beale. Nor does the novel explicitly mention Turner, although it does cite a number of works by other artists.

Opportunities to see Turner's paintings were few in mid-nineteenth-century America. Not until 1845 did the New York bibliophile and philanthropist James Lenox acquire *Staffa, Fingal's Cave* (see fig. 8), the first oil by the artist to cross the Atlantic. *Fort Vimieux* (ca. 1831; private collection), another example of Turner's atmospheric style, joined Lenox's collection in 1850. But access to his private gallery at 53 Fifth Avenue was limited, and Turner's

paintings remained a rarity in the States. Instead, most people knew his work through reproductions, which could give only a partial sense of his inventive technique, and through Ruskin's lengthy praise in *Modern Painters*, which was widely discussed upon its publication in America, in 1847. Melville may have read the first two volumes before his initial trip to Europe.[63]

It is tempting to conclude that Melville must have seen the whaling pictures (or similar works) during his time in London, but there is no evidence that he visited Turner's gallery on Queen Anne Street, where at least three out of the four whaling scenes were kept. The whereabouts of the Metropolitan's *Whalers* between 1846 and 1851 are uncertain—it was possibly with the print publisher Joseph Hogarth, who sold it in 1851—but if Melville saw the picture, he did not mention it in his journals or correspondence.[64] Indeed, Turner's name never comes up.

Melville did make the rounds of the National Gallery, Vernon Gallery (showcasing Robert Vernon's collection of British art, given to the nation in 1847), Hampton Court, the British Museum, Dulwich Picture Gallery, and the Painted Hall at Greenwich Hospital. This tour offered him the opportunity to see several Turners, but only one, *The Prince of Orange, William III, Embarked from Holland, and Landed at Torbay, November 4th, 1688, after a Stormy Passage* (fig. 41), exemplifies Turner's approach to capturing the form and motion of the sea, and none is painted in the tumultuous manner evoked in *Moby-Dick*.[65]

Melville also met people in Turner's circle, among them several good comrades. He breakfasted twice with the painter's fast friend and patron, the poet Samuel Rogers, and saw his collection of "superb paintings," which included one Turner, *Seapiece, with Fishing Boats off a Wooden Pier, a Gale Coming On* (date and present location unknown). Rogers also owned a fine collection of Turner prints. In addition, Melville dined twice with the genre and portrait painter Charles Robert Leslie (1794–1859), another loyal friend of Turner's who acted as intermediary for Lenox's acquisition of *Staffa, Fingal's Cave*.[66]

42. Rockwell Kent (American, 1882–1971). *The White Whale*, page 273, volume 1, from *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville (Chicago: Lakeside Press, 1930). Reproduction of drawing, 7⅞ × 5½ in. (20 × 14 cm) overall. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Anonymous Gift, 1932 (32.111[1])

Despite these contacts, it seems that Melville left London without any firsthand knowledge of Turner's newest marine paintings. If the Spouter-Inn passage really refers to Turner's work, where did Melville get his information? Possibly he relied on descriptions heard from people in the know, such as Rogers and Leslie, and augmented those accounts with his own imagination. As Melville scholar Robert K. Wallace argues, he may also have

43. Jackson Pollock (American, 1912–1956). *Pasiphaë* (formerly titled *Moby Dick*), 1943. Oil on canvas, 56⅛ × 96 in. (142.6 × 243.8 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Purchase, Rogers, Fletcher, and Harris Brisbane Dick Funds and Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1982 (1982.20)

undertaken some diligent reading of recent commentary on Turner's art. Melville's description of the sea in the Spouter-Inn painting as "nameless yeast," for example, recalls Ruskin's turn of phrase in *Modern Painters*, when he compares the foamy water in *Snow Storm—Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth* (see fig. 9) to "masses of accumulated yeast." There are also intriguing parallels between the Spouter-Inn passage and Thackeray's 1845 review of Turner's whaling paintings, which Melville could have obtained from the library of his friends, the writers and publishers George and Evert Duyckinck. Where Thackeray sees "a smear of purple" that resolves into "a beautiful whale," Ishmael sees a "long, limber, portentous black mass of something" that transforms into "an exasperated whale." For Thackeray, "a few zig-zag lines spattered on the canvass at haphazard … turn out to be a ship with all her sails"; for Ishmael, "three blue, dim, perpendicular lines floating in a nameless yeast" turn out to be a "half-foundered ship weltering … with its three dismantled masts alone visible." While this type of resemblance is hardly a smoking gun, it does raise the possibility that Melville arrived at an understanding of Turner's style through the writings of others.[67]

If Melville did intend to evoke Turner's work, what point did he hope to make? He might simply have intended to pay homage to an artist who shared similar ideals and preoccupations, but it is possible that Melville had something more in mind. Ishmael's foray into connoisseurship encapsulates the experience of critics grappling with Turner's whaling scenes in 1845 and 1846. Commentators were compelled to come to terms with paintings that defied all expectations for clarity, straightforward narrative, and verisimilitude, but nonetheless conveyed a powerful sense of their subject; in Thackeray's words, they "vibrated between the absurd and the sublime." The same might be said of *Moby-Dick*.

In the end, while much has been discovered about what Melville *could* have seen, heard, read, and meant regarding Turner, there is little hard evidence to establish what he actually knew and how it shaped his novel. The relationship between *Moby-Dick* and Turner's work, including the whaling pictures, remains a puzzle to be decided by reader and viewer alike.

Moby-Dick was not a resounding success. It sank into relative obscurity, as did Melville, who ended up supporting himself and his family as a customs inspector. When he died, in 1891, the *New York Times* ran only a seven-line obituary. Turner's reputation was more resilient. On his death, in 1851, the

London *Times* pronounced him a genius and the most remarkable man that the British arts had ever produced.[68] The works in his Queen Anne Street gallery, including three of the whaling scenes, were bequeathed to the nation and made their way to the National Gallery in London, which eventually split the bequest with the Tate. The Metropolitan's *Whalers* passed through a number of distinguished hands in Britain after Joseph Hogarth sold it at Christie's, London, in 1851. It was owned by Frederick R. Leyland, an important Old Master collector and major patron of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and James McNeill Whistler; the Pre-Raphaelite sculptor Thomas Woolner; and Sir Francis Seymour Haden, a surgeon, etcher, and collector now best known for his association with Whistler. Haden sold the painting to the Metropolitan in 1896. It became the Museum's second Turner, following the gift of *Saltash with the Water Ferry, Cornwall* by Henry G. Marquand in 1889, and was among the first works by the artist to enter an American public collection. The *New York Times* piece on the acquisition of *Whalers* expressed some reservations about its imprecision but otherwise admired its "originality of conception . . . fearlessness of execution, and brilliancy of technique," calling it "the vague, dreamy fancy of a genuine poet."[69]

It was not until the centenary of Melville's birth, in 1919, that the author's work was granted a similar degree of appreciation. From that point on, however, *Moby-Dick* has been recognized as one of the defining achievements of American literature. It is fitting that a book which itself drew inspiration from the visual arts has given rise to a multitude of works of art, from Rockwell Kent's illustrations (fig. 42) to Jackson Pollock's painting *Pasiphaë*, originally titled *Moby Dick* (fig. 43); from Frank Stella's series of prints, paintings, and sculptures (fig. 44) to Véréna Paravel and Lucien Castaing-Taylor's 2012 film *Leviathan*, shot at the New England fishing grounds; and many more.

44. Frank Stella (American, born 1936). *The Whale-Watch*, from *Moby Dick Deckle Edges*, 1993. Lithograph, etching, aquatint, relief on paper, 72½ × 73 in. (184.2 × 185.4 cm) overall. Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Tyler Graphics Archive, 1994 (1994.211.1–.2)

Melville's musings offer a fitting testament to the enduring artistic appeal of whales and whaling since Turner's day and to the challenges posed by the subject, which he and Turner met with innovation and daring:

> *The great Leviathan is that one creature in the world which must remain unpainted to the last. True, one portrait may hit the mark much nearer than another, but none can hit it with any very considerable degree of exactness. So there is no earthly way of finding out precisely what the whale really looks like. And the only mode in which you can derive even a tolerable idea of his living contour, is by going a whaling yourself; but by so doing, you run no small risk of being eternally stove and sunk by him. Wherefore, it seems to me you had best not be too fastidious in your curiosity touching this Leviathan.*[70]

Notes

1. Quoted in Anthony Bailey, *Standing in the Sun: A Life of J. M. W. Turner* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1997), p. 347.
2. Edgar Browne, *Phiz and Dickens as They Appeared to Edgar Browne* (1913; New York: Dodd, Mead, 1914), p. 58. The portrait's title, *The Fallacy of Hope*, is a joke upon Turner's unpublished poem *Fallacies of Hope*, which he often quoted in his exhibition captions.
3. My discussion of the whaling quartet relies on Martin Butlin and Evelyn Joll, *The Paintings of J. M. W. Turner*, rev. ed., 2 vols. (1977; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984), vol. 1, pp. 260–63, 267–68, 270–71, nos. 414, 415, 423, 426; Katharine Baetjer, *British Paintings in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1575–1875* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2009), pp. 233–37, no. 114.
4. On *The Whale on Shore*, see Kenneth Paul Bendiner, "Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century English Paintings," in *The Taft Museum*, [vol. 1B], *European and American Paintings*, edited by Edward J. Sullivan (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1995), pp. 209–10. There are three other vignettes in private collections associated with whales. See Andrew Wilton, *J. M. W. Turner: His Art and Life* (New York: Rizzoli International, 1979), p. 457, nos. 1308–10; Robert K. Wallace, *Melville & Turner: Spheres of Love and Fright* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1992), pp. 368–70.
5. On Bicknell, see Peter Bicknell and Helen Guiterman, "The Turner Collector: Elhanan Bicknell," *Turner Studies* 7, no. 1 (Summer 1987), pp. 34–44; Evelyn Joll, Martin Butlin, and Luke Hermann, eds., *The Oxford Companion to J. M. W. Turner* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 24–25.
6. Other Turner seascapes owned by Bicknell were *Port Ruysdael* (1826–27; Yale Center for British Art, New Haven), *Helvoetsluys; the City of Utrecht, 64, Going to Sea* (ca. 1832; Tokyo Fuji Art Museum), and *Antwerp: Van Goyen Looking Out for a Subject* (1833; The Frick Collection, New York).
7. Turner to Elhanan Bicknell, January 31, 1845, in *Collected Correspondence of J. M. W. Turner, With an Early Diary and a Memoir by George Jones*, edited by John Gage (1979; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 205, no. 279. John Burnet states that all four whaling scenes were "painted for Mr. Bicknell," but there is no documentation of a commission; see John Burnet et al., *Turner and His Works Illustrated with Examples from His Pictures, and Critical Remarks on His Principles of Painting* (London: David Bogue, 1852), p. 120.
8. On Turner as a marine painter, see Luke Hermann, "Turner and the Sea," *Turner Studies* 1, no. 1 ([1981]), pp. 4–18, James Hamilton, *Turner: The Late Seascapes*, exh. cat. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); Christine Riding and Richard Johns, *Turner & the Sea*, exh. cat. (London: Thames & Hudson, 2013).
9. Anthony Pasquin [John Williams], *A Critical Guide to the Exhibition of the Royal Academy, for 1796* (London: H. D. Symonds, 1796), pp. 14–15.
10. On British whaling, see Gordon Jackson, *The British Whaling Trade* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1978), esp. chaps. 5–7; Granville Allen Mawer, *Ahab's Trade: The Saga of South Seas Whaling* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999).
11. See Barry Venning, "Turner's Whaling Subjects," *The Burlington Magazine* 127, no. 983 (February 1985), p. 76; Elizabeth Ingalls, *Whaling Prints in the Francis B. Lothrop Collection* (Salem, Mass.: Peabody Museum of Salem, 1987).
12. Information on whaling cited throughout this essay is drawn from Mawer, *Ahab's Trade*; "Vessels and Terminology" and "Whales and Hunting," in "Overview of North American Whaling," *New Bedford Whaling Museum*, http://www.whalingmuseum.org/learn/research-topics/overview-of-north-american-whaling, accessed December 2, 2015.
13. "Royal Academy Exhibition," *The Morning Chronicle*, May 7, 1845; "Fine Arts. Third Notice of the Royal Academy Exhibition. Landscape and Sea Pieces," *The Spectator*, May 24, 1845.
14. Baetjer, *British Paintings*, p. 236.
15. Howard P. Vincent, *The Trying-Out of Moby-Dick* (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1949), pp. 128–29. A much shorter version of Beale's text appeared in 1835 as *A Few Observations on the Natural History of the Sperm Whale* (London: Effingham Wilson, 1835).
16. Baetjer, *British Paintings*, p. 234.
17. Thomas Beale, *The Natural History of the Sperm Whale: To Which Is Added, A Sketch of a South-Sea Whaling Voyage* (London: John Van Voorst, 1839), pp. 162–63.
18. Ibid., p. 180.
19. James Hamilton, *Turner and the Scientists*, exh. cat. (London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 1998), pp. 108–10; Hamilton, *Turner: The Late Seascapes*, pp. 90–92, 99. Captain Manby's account of his journey was published as *Journal of a Voyage to Greenland, in the Year 1821* (London: G. and W. B. Whittaker, 1822).
20. Peter Bicknell, "Turner's *The Whale Ship*: A Missing Link?" *Turner Studies* 5, no. 2 (Winter 1985), pp. 20–23; Baetjer, *British Paintings*, pp. 234–36.
21. Ian Warrell, *Turner's Sketchbooks* (London: Tate Publishing, 2014), pp. 9–16.
22. Beale, *Natural History*, pp. 174–75.
23. Robert K. Wallace, "The Antarctic Sources for Turner's 1846 Whaling Oils," *Turner Studies* 8, no. 1 (Summer 1988), pp. 25–26; Hamilton, *Turner: The Late Seascapes*, pp. 99–100. The sketches the authors cite are part of the *Ambleteuse and Wimereux* sketchbook, which was likely used after the 1845 whaling paintings were completed.
24. The lithograph *A Spermaceti Whale, in the Agonies of Death*, has also been suggested as a source for the whale. A proof of the lithograph was owned by a friend of Turner's, the print collector Charles Stokes. Stokes presented the proof to the geologist William Buckland, another associate of the artist. Hamilton, *Turner: The Late Seascapes*, pp. 103–4.
25. Andrew Wilton, "A Rediscovered Turner Sketchbook," *Turner Studies* 6, no. 2 (Winter 1986), p. 9; Wallace, *Melville & Turner*, pp. 577–78.
26. Quotation from "Royal Academy," *The Times* (London), May 6, 1845. See also "Royal Academy Exhibition," *The Morning Chronicle*, May 7, 1845; "Royal Academy. [Second Notice]," *The Morning Post*, May 7, 1845.
27. "Fine Arts. Royal Academy," *The Literary Gazette*, May 17, 1845, p. 314.
28. "Royal Academy. [Second Notice]," *The Morning Post,* May 7, 1845; "Royal Academy," *The Athenaeum*, May 17, 1845, p. 496.
29. Period criticism and a calotype in the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, thought to reproduce Stanfield's 1845 painting, indicate that the two compositions were similar. See "The Mole at Ancona with Trajan's Arch," in *Royal Museums Greenwich*, http://collections.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/372280.html, accessed December 2, 2015; Ronald Parkinson, "Ancona and the Arch of Trajan," in *Victoria and Albert Museum: Search the Collections*; http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O81373/ancona-and-the-arch-of-oil-painting-stanfield-clarkson/, accessed December 2, 2015.
30. "Royal Academy," *The Times* (London), May 6, 1845. See also "Fine Arts. Royal Academy Exhibition," *The Spectator,* May 10, 1845; "Fine Arts. Third Notice of the Royal Academy Exhibition. Landscape and Sea

Pieces," *The Spectator*, May 24, 1845; Michael Angelo Titmarsh [William Makepeace Thackeray], "Picture Gossip," *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country* 31 (June 1845), pp. 720–21.

31. "Royal Academy Exhibition," *The Morning Chronicle*, May 7, 1845.
32. "Royal Academy," *The Times* (London), May 6, 1845; "Royal Academy Exhibition," *The Morning Chronicle*, May 7, 1845; "Fine Arts. Royal Academy Exhibition," *The Spectator*, May 10, 1845; "Fine Arts. Royal Academy," *The Literary Gazette*, May 17, 1845, p. 314.
33. "A Scamper through the Exhibition of the Royal Academy," *Punch*, May 31, 1845, p. 233.
34. John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, 3rd ed., vol. 1 (1843; London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1846), pp. 135–36.
35. Titmarsh, "Picture Gossip," pp. 720–21.
36. Quoted in Bicknell and Guiterman, "The Turner Collector," p. 38.
37. Quoted in Bailey, *Standing in the Sun*, p. 358.
38. Quoted in Baetjer, *British Paintings*, pp. 233–34. As Baetjer states, Bicknell must be referring to the Metropolitan's *Whalers*, as it was the only work in the series that left the studio during Turner's lifetime.
39. Scholars have debated whether the 1846 whaling scenes are set in the Arctic or the Antarctic. See Venning, "Turner's Whaling Subjects," pp. 75–83, and Wallace, "Antarctic Sources," pp. 20–31. Given Turner's liberal approach to his source material, it is not impossible that he drew on exploits from both polar regions when composing the pictures.
40. "Royal Academy," *The Times* (London), May 6, 1846.
41. Another watercolor, *The Whaler: 'Hurrah boys'*, is now untraced. See Wilton, *J. M. W. Turner*, p. 469, no. 1412.
42. Beale, *Natural History*, pp. 179, 358.
43. See Wallace, *Melville & Turner*, pp. 348–49, for a fuller discussion of possible connections between the 1846 paintings and the Antarctic voyage of the *Erebus* and *Terror*.
44. See Scott Cookman, *Ice Blink: The Tragic Fate of Sir John Franklin's Lost Polar Expedition* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2000). On the recent discovery of the wreck of the *Erebus* in the waters of Victoria Strait, just off King William Island, see John Geiger and Alanna Mitchell, *Franklin's Lost Ship: The Historic Discovery of HMS Erebus* (Toronto: HarperCollins Publishers, 2015). See also "The Franklin Expedition," in *Parks Canada*; http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/culture/franklin/index.aspx, accessed February 11, 2016.
45. The second picture probably depicts the sun, not the moon, as whalers sailed the poles in their respective summer seasons, when the sun never sets.
46. Mawer, *Ahab's Trade*, p. 73.
47. On flaw ice, see Bernard O'Reilly, *Greenland, the Adjacent Seas, and the North-West Passage to the Pacific Ocean …* (New York: James Eastburn & Co., 1818), p. 147; Robert L. Bates and Julia A. Jackson, eds., *Glossary of Geology*, 3rd ed. (1972; Alexandria, Va.: American Geological Institute, 1987), s.v. "flaw [ice]," "fast ice," and "pack ice."
48. It has been stated that the men are sawing up a whale carcass, but this seems unlikely, given that in the nineteenth century whales were cut up on ship. Once the body was stripped it was simply dropped overboard. Thanks to Michael P. Dyer, Senior Maritime Historian, New Bedford Whaling Museum, for his insights.
49. Quoted in Hamilton, *Turner: The Late Seascapes*, p. 97. The verses mention Willoughby's pursuit "in icy seas" of the Greenland whale.
50. Andrew Wilton, *Turner and the Sublime*, exh. cat. (London: British Museum Publications, 1980), p. 153, no. 68; David Blayney Brown et al., *J. M. W. Turner: Painting Set Free*, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2014), p. 206, no. 135.
51. For a discussion of these and other possible sources, see Butlin and Joll, *Paintings*, vol. 1, pp. 267–68, 271; Wallace, *Melville & Turner*, p. 349.
52. "Royal Academy," *The Times* (London), May 6, 1846; "Fine Arts. Royal Academy," *The Athenaeum*, May 9, 1846, p. 480; Gilbert Abbott à Beckett, "The Exhibition of the Month. The Royal Academy," *The Almanack of the Month* (June 1846), p. 351
53. "Fine Arts. Royal Academy," *The Literary Gazette*, May 9, 1846, p. 432. The "pseudo-doctor" is probably a reference to the character of Sganarelle in Molière's comic plays.
54. See, in particular, Wallace, *Melville & Turner*.
55. Quoted in Vincent, *Trying-Out*, p. 23. My discussion of the relationship between *Moby-Dick* and Turner's paintings is indebted to the scholarship of Robert K. Wallace.
56. Robert K. Wallace, "The 'sultry creator of Captain Ahab': Herman Melville and J. M. W. Turner," *Turner Studies* 5, no. 2 (Winter 1985), p. 16; Wallace, *Melville & Turner*, chap. 10, esp. pp. 492–501, 513–25, 566–73.
57. On this trip, see Wallace, *Melville & Turner*, chap. 6, esp. pp. 250–51, 262–73.
58. Wallace's argument for Turner's profound impact on the novel is not universally accepted. See James A. W. Heffernan, review of *Melville & Turner: Spheres of Love and Fright*, by Robert K. Wallace, *Studies in Romanticism* 33, no. 4 (Winter 1994), pp. 652–58.
59. Wallace, *Melville & Turner*, pp. 323–30.
60. Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick* (1851; reprint, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 9–10.
61. Stuart M. Frank, *Herman Melville's Picture Gallery: Sources and Types of the "Pictorial" Chapters of Moby-Dick* (Fairhaven, N.J.: E. J. Lefkowicz, 1986).
62. Wallace, *Melville & Turner*, pp. 23, 54–55, 586–87, 613–14.
63. On Melville's access to Turner's paintings in the United States, see ibid., pp. 120, 362–63, 372 (Lenox's collection); pp. 127–30 (*Modern Painters*); pp. 133–34, 140–48, 331–32 (prints).
64. A visitor to Queen Anne Street in 1848 reported seeing "2 whaling pictures (all white)," suggesting that both *Whalers* may have been with Turner at that date, but whether he retained the Metropolitan's picture is unknown. Hogarth had numerous ties with Bicknell (he was partners with Bicknell's son, Elhanan, in a print and publishing shop at 5 Haymarket until 1854), and it is possible that Bicknell sold him the painting for the purpose of reproduction. See Wallace, "The 'sultry creator,'" p. 15; Baetjer, *British Paintings*, p. 234. Asher E. Miller drew my attention to the connection between Hogarth and the younger Bicknell.
65. The other Turners that Melville may have seen are *The Battle of Trafalgar, 21 October 1805* (1822–24; now National Maritime Museum, Greenwich), *Bridge of Sighs, Ducal Palace and Custom-House, Venice: Canaletti Painting* (ca. 1833; now Tate, London), *The Golden Bough* (ca. 1834; now Tate, London), and *The Dogano, San Giorgio, Citella, from the Steps of the Europa* (ca. 1842; now Tate, London).
66. Wallace, *Melville & Turner*, pp. 284–306, discusses in depth the acquaintances who could have given Melville insight into Turner's work.
67. Ibid., pp. 325–30.
68. "Death of Mr. J. M. W. Turner, Esq., R. A.," *The Times* (London), December 23, 1851.
69. "Metropolitan Museum of Art. New Purchases and Loans," *The New York Times*, May 4, 1896.
70. Melville, *Moby-Dick*, p. 240.

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