Whaling Wives, Life Writing, and Sentimental Extraction in the 19th Century Pacific

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Introduction

After waiting almost four years for the return of her captain husband to Stonington, Connecticut, Mary Brewster had had enough. She decided to join him on his next years-long voyage. In December of 1845, she embarked on the whaleship *Tiger*. Along with her husband and thirty male crew members, Mary Brewster circumnavigated Cape Horn and made her way into the Pacific, landing on the Sandwich Islands (today called Hawai'i) and then sailing on to the whaling grounds off the Northwest Coast and Baja California. When William Brewster decided to try his luck in the Arctic over the summer of 1847, Mary Brewster spent a season among American missionaries on Maui, exploring the Hawaiian Islands on horseback and encountering "Yankees," missionaries, and Kānaka Maoli (Indigenous Hawaiians). In 1849, she would even accompany her husband to the Arctic. Throughout her travels, she kept extensive journals. While Brewster was not the first or the only captain's wife on a whaler, her journals are some of the earliest and most comprehensive of their kind. They testify to 19th century Euro-American women's maritime mobility—and they provide a unique female take on one of the largest extractive enterprises of the United States in the first half of the 19th century.

This article brings together theories from postcolonial ecocriticism, the energy humanities as well as gender and affect studies to explore how Mary Brewster represented the Pacific Ocean and the extractive business of whaling. It considers her journals a distinctly gendered, classed, racialized, and speciated contribution to a large body of 19th century cultural representations that negotiated the early United States' dependence on raw materials and energy extracted from whales, along with its imperialist tendencies. Among others,

whale oil was needed for illumination and as a lubricant for machines (Burnett 374). Substituting for tallow, which had been extracted on a small, domestic scale, whale oil radically broadened "energy's social, spatial, end ecological relations" (Wenzel 7; Shannon).[1] As whale populations on the Atlantic seaboard were exhausted, whalers ventured ever-further into the Pacific, where they became "an advance maritime guard for U.S. imperial goals" (Igler 103–4).[2] Ecological exhaustion also facilitated specific formal features of American whaling literature, such as plots revolving around long maritime voyages and adventures in distant places. These narrative structures usually helped evoke a notion of heroic national masculinity that presented a maritime complement to the ideal of "American husbandmen and craftsmen who produced valuable goods for the consumption of their fellow citizens" on land (Schell 12, 15). Women often remained invisible in these maritime "producerist phantasies" (Schell 16). Mary Brewster's writings, this article argues, expose how whaling's extractive and imperialist logics were built around White feminine consumption and domestic sentimentality.

Focusing in particular on the journals of her first voyage, I suggest that her writings slightly revised the gender norms of the era at the same time as they helped impose an extractive view onto the Pacific, including its human and non-human inhabitants as well as whalers laboring aboard the *Tiger*. This view "sees territories as commodities, rendering land [and sea life] as for the taking, while also devaluing the hidden worlds that form the nexus of human and nonhuman multiplicity" (Gómez-Barris 5). By doing so, it "facilitates the re-organization of territories, populations, and plant and animal life into extractible data and natural resources for material and immaterial accumulation" (ibid.). In other words, I contend that Brewster's journals helped erase and devalue a wide range of entanglements between human and non-human Pacific worlds in order to make them imaginatively compatible with logics of accumulation steered from and toward the Eastern seaboard. Her narrative, addressed

1 Whale oil only lost relevance with the watershed discovery of liquid fossil fuels, aka petroleum, which is said to have saved whales from extinction (Jones 193–94).

2 The Hawaiian Islands became highly frequented stop-over points for whalers in the first half of the 19th century. Whaleships also brought missionaries and other Euro-American settlers, who pushed the erosion of Kānaka Maoli culture and drove the appropriation of Indigenous land by non-Indigenous land holders. This restructuring of Hawaiian economies and land ownership, in turn, facilitated the expansion of extractive monocrop agriculture. In other words, whaling was instrumental in bringing colonial capitalism to the Pacific.

to an intimate audience back home, thus helped fuel an imagination of the Pacific as a vast reservoir of resources waiting to be exploited. Along with images of the North American continent as "virgin land," such representations helped sustain the "fantasy of unlimited resources" that drove the expansion of U.S. extractive capitalism (cf. Paul 159, in this volume).

To do so, Brewster adapted narrative strategies that activated deeply gendered, classed, racialized, and speciated structures of feeling (cf. Hendler 10–11). Strategically integrating a whaleship in the Pacific into the sentimental language of domesticity, she imagined the Pacific as a place where White women belonged. The notion that she is "feel[ing] right," as Harriet Beecher Stowe put it (385), is central to Brewster's endeavor. Feeling right in this sense means highlighting certain attachments while imaginatively severing others, producing figurations that regulate who can and should be cared for and who will not. Brewster's intense emphasis on the sanctity of heteropatriarchal marriage, the bourgeois home, and women's moral and emotional superiority, I suggest, coheres with a pronounced detachment from the suffering of laborers, whales, and Pacific Islanders, whose bodies are needed to sustain the bourgeois home but whose lives and attachments have no value *per se*. Extractive violence is thus justified through and for White feminine consumption. Disaffection emerges as a necessary strategy to legitimize large-scale resource extraction.[3]

Brewster thus articulated a specific oceanic variant of what Amy Kaplan calls manifest domesticity. This variant throws into relief the intimate connection between the ideology of separate spheres, the trajectory of national expansion, and extractive capitalism in the 19th century Pacific. It complements an approach that Alice Te Punga Somerville links with the term "Pacific" used by so-called Western "discoverers." To them, this ocean "was only sea, only water, only liquid, only empty space over which people would travel in order to get to real places he imagined might be sitting at its edges." Somerville contrasts this view with Epeli Hau'ofa's Indigenous notion of "Oceania," which "is a gigantic, connected, ever-traversed space through, in, and across which islanders have lived and moved for millennia" (Somerville 26; Hau'ofa). As Mary Brewster imagined the Pacific for her peers back on the Eastern seaboard, she

3 This article explores the patterns of disaffection built into dominant structures of feeling. For the ways in which unfeeling can serve as a "survival tactic for marginalized subjects," see Xine Yao's recent theorization of disaffection as "the unfeeling rupture that enables new structures of feeling to arise" (Yao, blurb, 6).

followed in the footsteps of the earlier "discoverers" who called the same ocean the "Pacific" or "El Mar del Sur" (cf. Braun).

Gender, Life Writing, and Whaling Wives' Intimate Publics

Mary Brewster was one of a number of women who defied the maritime gender norms of their time. The ship was widely considered a men's world, and all the more a whaler (Creighton/Norling ix–x). Jennifer Schell argues that writers and politicians of the early Republic appropriated the figure of the (male) whaler for nationalistic purposes, portraying him as a heroic and hard-working model of American masculinity (2–3). Women, in turn, have played a rather marginal role in the cultural imagination of whaling to this day. Lisa Norling points out that women's "substantive absence […] from maritime culture then and from most maritime history now" belies their "symbolic importance" as a foil for maritime masculinities (1).[4]

When captains' wives did begin to join their husbands in increasing numbers from the mid-19th century onwards, they at the same time resisted and reinforced dominant gender norms. Entering the masculine sphere of the ship, they usually occupied a narrowly defined and strictly gendered position on board. Far removed from their domestic networks and duties, they were neither engaged in the business of whaling nor responsible for other domestic duties such as cooking and cleaning. Living in the better part of the ship, they usually remained isolated from the crew (Schell 140). Margaret Creighton argues that common sailors feared that the captain's family affairs would take precedent over the demands of the whaling business and that women would undermine the sense of collectivity among the crew, often described as a "brotherhood" of sailors. Moreover, captains' wives represented feminine attributes, including "delicacy, sentimentality, and tenderness" that sailor culture forbade its members, as sailors' masculinity was usually tied to the ability to suppress or sublimate sentimentality and emotion (Creighton 164–68). Instead, male crew members often indulged in alcohol consumption and sexual encounters that seemed incompatible with normative White feminine

4 Norling also highlights the substantial interconnections between women's supposedly domestic lives on land and the maritime world. On the domestic importance of the oceanic in 19th century women's writing, see Melissa Gniadek's *Oceans at Home: Maritime and Domestic Fictions in Nineteenth-Century American Women's Writing* (2021).

sensibilities (Druett 1991, 11). Norling contends that, as captains' wives often had less agency over their own lives at sea than they had when they stayed at home, going to sea was "the more daring—but ultimately more conservative" choice (261). They were "essentially opting for sensibility over sense," as they strove to live up to the ideals of the dominant culture of domesticity that were so utterly incompatible with the inherent mobility of the whaling business (261).

Whaling wives left few officially published documents. Yet a number of them were prolific journal writers, among them Mary Brewster.[5] Brewster's journals were only published in 1992, in the context of a feminist revision of maritime history. To this day, they represent some of the most extensive documents of their kind. The fact that they were not officially published does not necessarily mean that they were not read by anyone besides Brewster herself. Even unpublished, 19th century women's travel journals were often circulated in the semi-public sphere of family, friends, or certain intellectual circles (Thompson 134, 141; Kinsley). Brewster explicitly describes her intended audience in the first paragraph of her journal, when she writes that the goal of her writing is that "my friends […] by reading this form some correct ideas as regards my feelings while absent" (12). While the journals of later voyages are more fragmentary and unfiltered with regard to conflicts and tensions on board, those of her first voyage seem to have been written with much care, staying neatly within the frames of New England femininity on both the formal and the rhetorical level. It seems likely that the journals of her first voyages were presented to and read by family and friends in Stonington, Connecticut, and beyond after her return, shaping other New Englanders' ideas of the Pacific. In a certain sense, these readers may have constituted what Lauren Berlant calls an "intimate public," which is organized around "an expectation that the consumers of its particular stuff already share a world-view and emotional knowledge that they have derived from a broadly common historical experience" (viii).

Indebted to extensive scholarship on women's life writing, I approach these journals not to gain access to Mary Brewster's presumably authentic self. Rather, I consider them as performative acts that "constitute […] interiority" (Smith 109). Such "expressions of interiority are effects produced through the action of public discourses" (Smith 109). As verbal constructs shaped by conscious and unconscious processes of selection and arrangement of detail,

5 For an overview and introduction to these writings, see Joan Druett's *Petticoat Whalers*.

they warrant a more "literary" line of inquiry (Culley 217). Kathryn Carter highlights that women's diaries have routinely been subjected to external editing and censorship, undermining their trustworthiness as sources of female experience. More subtly, and more importantly for my analysis, "the exigencies of imagined audiences exerted a compelling internal effect" on women's diaries (Carter 42). Taking seriously Brewster's implied audience and its impact on "what is said and how it is said" (Culley 218), I ask how Brewster fashions her maritime female subjectivity for a New England audience that, on the one hand, expected women to be domestic, pious, and submissive and that, on the other, depended on the resources extracted from the Pacific while habitually erasing the violence of extraction.

I argue that women's journals offered formal and rhetorical possibilities that squared well with both demands. In contrast to the logbook, which registers external factors such as the weather and the ship's location, the journal format allowed Brewster to evoke a distinct sense of interiority revolving around conventional sentimental tropes and themes, most notably the "idealized intimate bond […]" between husband and wife and the "emphasis on women's virtue and their capacity to feel" that is so central to domestic ideology (De Jong 2–3). Spatially and socially far removed from her home on the U.S. East coast, Brewster used sentimental rhetoric to inscribe whaling wives into domestic modes of belonging. Brewster's journals thus extend and slightly revise the intimate connection between sentimentalism, the ideology of separate spheres, and the "cult of true womanhood" in the 19th century (Gerund/Paul 18) into the Pacific and toward the extractive business of whaling. Within this logic, the exploitation of both laborers and whales is sublimated as it provides the necessary material basis for the production of domesticity. If classic sentimental novels, such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), evoked a "fantasy of experiential equivalence" between their readers and oppressed subjects (Hendler 7), Brewster's sentimental language first and foremost was to make readers empathize with herself and captain's wives in general. Sentimental appeals to the ideal of domesticity provided a sense of legitimacy without fundamentally challenging dominant gender norms, thereby offering a variant of 19th century women's "pragmatic feminism" (Baym 18).

Therefore, I suggest that Brewster's journals can be read as an extractivist variant of Amy Kaplan's manifest domesticity within a logic of expansionism. She uses the double meaning of "domestic," denoting both the familial household and the nation, to carve out how "the representation of domesticity and female subjectivity simultaneously contributed to and were enabled by narra-

tives of nation and empire-building" in the 1830s and to the 1850s (2002, 19). While the ideology of separate spheres suggested a clear separation between the gendered separate spheres of the (feminine) private home and the (masculine) public, the ideology of domesticity was profoundly entangled with the U.S.'s supposed project of "Manifest Destiny," i.e., imperial expansion. Kaplan focuses her chapter on the territories "from the Rio Grande to Africa" (2002, 19). Brewster's journals demonstrate that this manifest domesticity extended far into the Pacific already in the 1840s, where it subjected both humans and nonhumans to an extractive logic whose emotional center is the bourgeois home (only seemingly displaced in a cabin on a ship) and White women's right to consumption.[6]

As Brewster's journals refrain from explicitly questioning the connections between the exploitation of nature and of women's bodies and labor, they present a contrast to the 19th century women's writing analyzed in notable ecofeminist scholarship of the last decade. For instance, many of the writers analyzed in Karen Kilcup's *Fallen Forests: Emotion, Embodiment, and Ethics in American Women's Environmental Writing, 1781–1924*, harnessed affective approaches and a putatively feminine sentimental rhetoric in order to further environmentalist concerns (4). Like Mary Brewster's journals, these writings, such as Caroline Kirkland's *A New Home, Who'll Follow*, provide a case in point for 19th century women's mobility and their complicity in the erasure of Indigenous dispossession and genocide (Ganser 470). Yet, unlike Brewster, Kirkland highlights the interconnections between presumably masculine values and extraction. And while Kirkland's *A New Home* blends the genre of the migration narrative and the travelogue (Ganser 470), Brewster's story firmly remains anchored in the genre of the travel account, whose ultimate telos always remains the return to the point of departure, i.e., the New England home.

6 Anita Duneer makes a related argument in her analysis of published journals by two other captain's wives, Abby Jane Morrell and Mary Wallis. Duneer argues that their writings both reinforced and resisted domestic ideals. Their language of domesticity feeds into popular imperialist tropes of their day at the same time as it "also indicates that these voyaging women grappled with issues of race, class, and gender in ways they could not have imagined had they stayed home" (195). Duneer's emphasis, however, is less on the ecological and extractivist dimensions of imperialism than on its cultural implications.

"I feel quite at home": Maritime Femininity in Brewster's Journals

Aiming to convince her readers of the rightness of her feelings, Mary Brewster makes regular recourse to a sentimentalized language of domesticity. Commonly, 19th century maritime literature highlighted adventure and exploration. Brewster's journals, in contrast, imagine the whaleship as a place of home and containment for a White middle class woman that remains imaginatively tied to her landed home in New England. In her first journal entry, she explains how her decision to go to sea all but uprooted her link to the domestic sphere, along with its emotional bonds. As friends and even her stepmother tried to dissuade her from embarking on the voyage, she writes that "few had to say one encouraging word" (12). Her stepmother even tells her that "[h]er house would never be a home for me again if I persisted in coming" (12). This initial framing might have suited a story of female rebellion against landed domestic norms. And it seems that Brewster's experience would have offered ample material for a female adventure tale. However, her narrative choices take her into a somewhat different direction. Brewster assures herself and her readers that, while going to sea may seem like a rejection of domestic norms, it is eventually a truer form of devotion to the sentimental norms of domestic life, as it allows her to be with the person she truly belongs with: "Well thank Heaven it is all past and I am on board of the good ship Tiger and with my dear Husband" (12). Although she has been suffering seasickness for weeks, she asserts, "I feel quite at home and think I shall never regret this voyage" (12). As the presence of her husband renders the ship her home, Brewster sets out to rewrite the ship in ways that align it with the ideology of domesticity.

Throughout her journal, Brewster regularly highlights the supposedly right forms of attachment to home and husband. All while she is voyaging the deep blue sea amid over two dozen men who were slaughtering countless whales, Brewster imagines the whaleship as the place where she can perform her womanly duties.[7] She offers regular excursions to the state of her inner life that af-

7 All in all, Mary and William shared the *Tiger* with 30 mariners, consisting of four mates, four boatsteerers, a cook, a steward, a carpenter, a cooper, a "boy," four seamen, and twelve greenhands (Druett 1992b, 9). As was customary in the whaling business, the sailors hailed from diverse backgrounds, including a number of Anglo-American New Englanders from whaling families, two young men from rather privileged backgrounds who hoped to improve their physical constitution at sea, two African Americans, and a steward described by Brewster as a "pleasant looking" "Mullato" (13). As Nancy Shoemaker has demonstrated in her work on Native American whalemen, racial categoriza-

firm her conformity to the emotional norms of femininity as she is traversing the Pacific. The holiness of home and matrimony and the moral superiority of women are cornerstones of this performance of respectable feminine maritime mobility. In a prominent passage, Brewster recommends lines from a book called *Woman's Mission*, which is attributed to Sarah Lewis.[8] It states that "All woman had a mission to perform and in all circumstances in life it should be their aim to establish peace and love and unselfishness, to be achieved by any means and at any cost to themselves, in the cultivation first of themselves then in all over whom they have influence" (108). Her journal leaves little doubt that she seeks to put these ideals into practice as a devoted wife to her husband. Her marriage, her husband's well-being, and her responsibilities as a wife are the narrative and emotional centerpiece of her journal. She presents herself, in her own words, as "a soother of woes, a calmer of troubles and a friend in need, a sharer of his sorrows as well as of his joys" (79, punctuation as in the original). Brewster fulfills her feminine duties by serving as her husband's moral and emotional compass, imagining herself as a much-needed feminine influence on the masculine order of the ship.

Brewster thus aligns herself with a rather moderate position in the era's debates about the role of women in society. The author of *Woman's Mission* rejected other feminists' calls for women's political rights, countering demands for a reconsideration of the separate spheres' ideology, along with the inequality built into marriage law. In the absence of "mental and *physical*" equality between the sexes, she argued, only men belonged in the public sphere, which she calls the sphere of "power." Women, in contrast, belonged in the sphere of "influence," i.e., the private sphere (Lewis 45–46). From there, they could be "moral agents" (51), wielding influence on men, by which they would ultimately shape a better political and social order. Women and men were to function as "coadjutors" in this endeavor (45). While this contribution to the debate hardly furthered women's social and political self-determination, Lewis's take on gender roles provided a compelling argument for a woman's presence on a whaler and for

tions proved somewhat contingent at sea, as rank often trumped landed racial hierarchies—until, of course, it didn't (Shoemaker 5).

8 The volume *Woman's Mission* was based on a translation of a book by the Rousseauist thinker Louis-Aimé Martin, "in which he presented a view of woman as man's spiritual guide. Men, he averred, were sensual by nature, naturally profligate, and the baseness of the male character could only be moderated by the moral example of women." Sarah Lewis shortened the book, sharpening its focus on "the all-important maternal role, making it […] much more of interest to [English] women" (Druett in Brewster 109).

women's maritime mobility in general: Making a home at sea, they could significantly expand their moral influence.

On the formal level, the regularity of Brewster's entries in the journals of her first voyage affirms her performance of a reliable, constant return to the modes of feeling and thinking interpellated by the genre and its imagined audience. Brewster's daily entries assure her readers that she, unlike countless deserters, maroons, and beachcombers, remains committed to her New England home. When entries are missing, she justifies these absences, for instance by mentioning illnesses (12). Yet, the violence that it takes to extract the resources that make this life possible from the Pacific barely registers in her account. As the remaining paragraphs in this section will show, Brewster's intimacy with her husband stands in a striking contrast with her detachment from the crew of the ship and from Indigenous islanders. Her perceived moral mission, it seems, included only minor degrees of care for workers, racialized subjects, or animals.

In Brewster's journals, the ship seems to have two strictly separate spheres. One belongs to men and is dedicated to whaling, the other belongs to Mary and stays clear from business. In contrast to other crew members, who usually only had a filthy bunk to themselves, Brewster has two cabins, one "to sleep in the other to sit in" (13). For meals, she shares a table with her husband and the four officers (Druett 1992b, 6). She has a cabin boy who is employed to wait on her and for whom she sews clothing (13). Otherwise, she mentions hardly any significant interaction with the crew. Even her daily routines are out of step with her laboring shipmates, at least as long as they are on whaling grounds. "The others have breakfast at 5 and half past 4," she writes on May 14, 1846, "which gives them time to whale it when light, but I do not wish to have so long a day, therefore rise at 7, and eat my meal alone" (81). Both her gender and her elevated social position set her apart from the crew. This detachment plays out spatially and emotionally, and most strikingly when it comes to labor.

In *The View from the Masthead*, Hester Blum argues that sailors in their journals often theorized the ship and the sea as a place of labor, making a connection between manual labor and the life of the mind. Mark Kelley, in his dissertation, analyzes the affective dimensions of such representations of maritime labor. Kelley's "sentimental seamen" are emotionally invested in "sailors' embodied unity" in ways that channel their energies toward productive and cohesive labor (2018, 11). Like Brewster, sentimental seamen narrate certain normative forms of sentimental attachment in order to "secure their respective claims to domestic interiority in a watery expanse" (Kelley 2018, 3). They articulate a "ter-

raqueous domesticity" that integrates the ship into the imagined community of the (continental) nation (Kelley 2018, 2).

Yet, unlike Kelley's sentimental seamen, Mary Brewster is exempt from the harsh discipline and labor of whaling. Instead, she affirms dominant binary gender logics by assuming the position of the observer and consumer. As Lori Merish argues in *Sentimental Materialism*, female consumption became the 19th century complement to male production (18, 1). Accordingly, Brewster is spared the tactile interactions and physical dangers of manual laborers. On Wednesday, June 17, 1846, she notes: "After [the whale] was secured alongside I went to see it. The idea I had was good, I found, which from what I had heard I was not disappointed save as to the head which is the most singular part. When they began to cut it I seated myself in the boat and spent the whole afternoon in looking on" (93). In other words, what was often a deadly encounter for whales and hard, dangerous work for whalers constituted an entertaining spectacle consumed from a distance for the whaling wife. Whereas she found the cutting of the whale visually pleasing, the soil and grease of whaling were hardly compatible with Brewster's notion of domesticity. On Monday February 8, 1847, she wrote: "The oil is all coopered and tomorrow they clean ship which I shall be glad to have in better condition, for when whaling business is carried on I keep below as the decks are oily and I like to keep my apartments clean" (188). While both Brewster and Kelley's sentimental seamen thus created sentimental visions of productive labor and extraction by erasing the violence and contradictions of extractive capitalism and imperialism, Brewster sets the bourgeois, domestic White feminine subject apart from the sailors' embodied unity. White feminine visual and material consumption emerges as the telos of mariners' labor.

Another journal of the same voyage, kept by the foremast hand John Perkins, put into question Mary Brewster's representation of a harmonious maritime home. It rather confirms what maritime historians have written about life and work aboard 19th century whaleships. Multiethnic crews may have offered opportunity for some. Yet for most, they also meant harsh living and working conditions, filthy bunks, unsavory food, hard labor, strict discipline, high risks, and usually low, unreliable pay.[9] Many were disillusioned and driven onto whaleboats by dire need and a lack of other options (Busch). As

9 On the working conditions of whalers and the so-called lay system, which granted whalers a certain share of the profits of the journey, from which many other expenses were deducted, see Dolin 313–15.

Perkins put it succinctly, "[m]ost all wish themselves out of the ship" (134). On May 2, 1846, the day Mary Brewster wrote elatedly about her ability to be with her husband, Perkins, a common sailor, noted: "We weighed anchor without a song all feeling to [sic] bad at departing from summer islands to the cold Norwest sure of hard labor, absolute suffering & danger" (148). In his journal, crewmates scrabble over food and many other items of daily life (126–27, 143). Perkins's melancholy outlook foreshadows his own fate. Having gone to sea to improve his eyesight and having repeatedly complained about his inability to see enough to go whaling (Perkins 128), he dies in a whaling accident on June 15, 1846.

Perkins's death presents one of the few moments in which the violence of extraction becomes visible in Brewster's journals. Brewster reports:

> Early this morning the boats put off for whale, after clearing sometime the bow boat got fast when the whale struck the boat and stove it, also hit a young man by the name of John Perkins and killed him instantly, supposed to have been hit by the flukes of the whale. One of his companions kept him up till the boat filled and to save himself from drowning was obliged to relinquish his grasp when he sank, the waves closing over him forever concealing his form from our view. (90)

This intrusion of death into Brewster's shipboard home somewhat changes her course as she takes up, as she puts it, "the office of the ship's nurse. The lame the sick and bruised all come to me. Doctoring done free of all expense" (98). She extends feminine services to the crewmembers, expanding, somewhat, the circle of her domestic care, but does not presume that workers have the same rights to women's unpaid reproductive labor as the male head of the middle class heteropatriarchal family.

When Mary Brewster arrives on the Hawaiian Islands, her ideals of domesticity are easily compatible with established imperial tropes. Relations between American missionaries and whalers were often fraught with tensions (Dolin 339–40), but Brewster, as a pious New England wife, gets along well with the missionaries. In her portrayals of the Kānaka, she describes Indigenous lifeways as "savage" and "backward" in comparison to Western civilization and domesticity, writing that she "had expected to see them much farther advanced" (57). She expresses dismay when Kānaka Maoli do not seem to live up to her standards of diligence, industry, and cleanliness, especially when they cross the boundaries of Brewster's speciesist sensibilities: "They are very filthy and the places I saw was [sic] better fitted for their dogs than for human beings and

it is quite usual for them to dip in their finger in the Poi Calabashes and hold it for their dogs to lick and then the same for their own palate" (60). Emphasizing the presumed lack of hygiene in the context of interspecies contact, Brewster resorts to the strategy of "animal-linked racialisation," which uses other cultures' different treatment of animals to marginalize subordinate groups (Elder/Wolch/Emel qtd. in Huggan/Tiffin 153–54). Amy Kaplan theorized the domestic as "related to the imperial project of civilizing" when "the conditions of domesticity […] become markers that distinguish civilization from savagery" (1998, 582). Brewster's journals speak to the important role of speciesism in the imperialist notion of domesticity. In this context, it seems particularly ironic when one considers that the dangerous germs and diseases that had killed Kānaka Maoli by the thousands did not come from close interspecies contact but from human Euro-American travelers.[10]

Unsurprisingly, Brewster is much more contented when she visits a school that instills what she describes as "order" and "neatness" in Kānaka children (58). Her narrative foreshadows what this form of discipline would lead to. Right after the school, she visits a sugar factory (59), a foreboding of the extractive monocrop plantation economy that would soon take hold of Hawai'i, enriching the children of American missionaries, among others, and exploiting uprooted and disowned Kānaka Maoli as wage laborers (Silva 48–51). Brewster's journals thus speak to the tensions between the empire's desire to absorb new territories, subjects, and resources and its perceived need "to control and manage their disruptive potential" (Kaplan 2002, 11–12). As Brewster imagines the ship as a domestic sphere, she is forced to manage and contain the contradictions between her vision of harmony and belonging and the exploitative, extractive realities of shipboard life and U.S. imperialism in Hawai'i. She ensures her fiction of harmony through erasure, both on the narrative and the material level.

10 "Conservative estimates of Hawai'i's population in 1778 range from 400,000 to 1,000,000; just forty-five years later that number was reduced to about 135,000" (Silva 24). For a more comprehensive account of the devastating impact of diseases on Kānaka health and society, see Seth Archer's *Sharks Upon the Land: Colonialism, Indigenous Health, and Culture in Hawai'i* (2018).

"I long to count thousands": Brewster's Extractive View

While Brewster's journals lend a certain value to living sailor and Kānaka bodies as long as they labor for extractive economies, whales only hold affective value as a material resource. After all, turning living whales into tons of blubber and whale bone to be sold in the market was the goal of the *Tiger*'s journey. Eventually, it was a ship's hold filled with blubber that would allow Brewster to return home and to lead a bourgeois domestic life in New England.

The basic logic of extraction, Elizabeth Miller argues, "presumes the ability to withdraw one component from the 'receptacle' of nature" without tending to the ecologies in which it is embedded (4). After the resource has been withdrawn and, likely, exhausted, the extractivist subject moves on. On an affective level, extraction thus is incompatible with long-term attachments to certain places and beings. It also involves the erasure of other, pre-existing forms of care or kinship.[11] In Brewster's case, imposing an extractive view onto whales in the Pacific required the material and discursive work of extricating them from the wide range of biological and cultural ecologies they had been embedded in. Among these "submerged perspectives" erased by the extractive view (Gómez-Barris 1) are vibrant human-non-human networks of interdependence.

Contrary to the ideology that shaped Brewster's worldview, many Indigenous cultures in the Pacific and the Arctic, including the *Māori*, the Makah, and the Iñupiat, have traditionally asserted a sense of kinship between humans and whales. This interspecies kinship is based on the belief in a common past, present, and future, which entails a sense of interdependence, reciprocity, and mutuality between humans and non-humans (Steinwand 185–86). Chie Sakakibara relates how the Iñupiat of Arctic Alaska foster "an emotional kinship among the people, the land, and the whales," which is founded, among others, on a shared myth of origin (1005). Joshua Reid, in turn, documents how the Makah in the Pacific Northwest successfully adapted a 2000-year-old whaling tradition in order to cope with settler-colonialism. And yet, commercial non-Native overhunting so depleted Northwestern whale populations that the Makah determined "[i]n 1928, nineteen years before non-Natives decided to suspend the hunt of gray whales […] to suspend the active practice of whaling until populations had rebounded." "Makahs," Reid argues, "took their responsibilities to nonhuman kin such as whales seriously, and this tough decision

11 On kinship as a critical idiom in oceanic studies see Fackler and Schultermandl.

made sense" (167–68, 175–76).[12] In other words, they displayed less the "non-reciprocal, dominance-based relationship with the earth, one purely of taking" that defines extractivism but quite the opposite, a relation of "stewardship, which involves taking but also taking care that regeneration and future life continue" (Klein 169).

When Mary Brewster and the *Tiger*, along with thousands of other U.S. whaling ships sailed into the Pacific, they imposed extractivist logics that erased and violently ruptured such forms of kinship, along with the existing ecological balance in the region. Brewster's journals expose how domesticity and sentimentality sometimes bolstered such extractivist logics at the expense of other attachments. Her writings display an emotional distance from whales as living beings and an intense desire for blubber that add a significant extractivist dimension to her maritime manifest domesticity. Brewster places whales at the bottom of what Mel Chen calls "animacy hierarchy, which conceptually arranges human life, disabled life, animal life, plant life, and forms of nonliving material in orders of value and priority" (13). While Brewster recognizes whales as living bodies with certain attachments among their own kind, their death and suffering are validated as necessary for the production of Brewster's own domesticity. Whales remain firmly located on the other side of the great divide between animal and human, between nature and culture that has characterized Western thought.

It is the desire for whale oil that aligns Brewster's feelings most prominently with those of the *Tiger*'s crew. Tempers on board are frayed when they cannot seem to find a whale. On Saturday 25 [of July] 1846, Brewster writes: "For my part I am glad with anything in the shape of a whale, let it be small it will add something. I long to count thousands knowing that we must before we go home" (108). When they finally kill a whale, she asserts to her readers: "I saw the whole transaction from the ship and think this is the first time I could willingly see blood shed so freely" (93). Spirits on board rise even more when

12 Importantly, Reid points out that this decision was not only necessitated by environmental factors, i.e., the depletion of whale stocks, but also by federal policies and assimilationist agents who were too intent on transforming the Makah into farmers to provide them with modern equipment for off-shore whaling (176–77). When the Makah decided to resume whaling, renewing their traditional hunting rights, in the 1990s, they faced the "overt racism" built into certain "environmental discourses" (Roos/Hunt 12; Russell 162).

they approach 1000 barrels: "Men all singing and bawling […] as this will certainly make us 1000 bbls" (108). With the reference to bloodshed, Brewster, to a certain extent, acknowledges the livingness and the suffering of whales. She also seems to imply a certain incompatibility of the slaughtering of living beings with feminine sensibilities. Yet, these are overruled by the yearning for a domesticity that is materially and ideologically sustained by extraction. While she does not condone violence *per se*, the slaughter and suffering of whales is legitimated for the production of domesticity. This domesticity is organized through a quantifying capitalist logic that values whales as numbers, in barrels of blubber and whalebone. Accordingly, the plot structure of the journal of her first voyage evokes the linearity of accumulation: Every barrel of whale oil brings her closer to her actual home on the Eastern seaboard.

Brewster's tone remains matter of fact even when she describes a particularly gruesome method of hunting whales which uses whale calves as bait to attract and kill their mothers:

> A plenty of boats stove every day and they all say these are the worst whale to strike they ever saw. The only way they can get fast is to chase the calf till it gets tired out then they fasten to it and the whale will remain by its side and is then fastened too. Brother James has been in the boats a few times. he [sic] said he saw a calf fastened to and the whale came up to it and tried to get the iron out with her fin and when she could not she took it on her back and endeavored to get it away. frequently [sic] the iron will kill them. when [sic] this is the case the whale when finding her young one dead will turn and fight the boats. (181)

David Igler describes Brewster's report as one characterized by "cool detachment" (101–2). Not even the smallest and most conventional unit of sentimental attachment, mother and child, compelled Brewster to frame this interspecies encounter in explicitly sentimental terms.

Brewster's detachment, I contend, stands out more from a present-day than from an early 19th century perspective and reveals the contingency of sentimental attachments. As Lawrence Buell argues, whales now are sentimental icons of an endangered Earth (201–3). Owing to their size, their intelligence and sociability, their "fascinating alterity" as well as their "increasing scarcity" (Buell 203), they emerged as "endangered charismatic megafauna of the sea" in environmentalist portrayals since the 1960s (Steinwand 183). This became possible, according to Buell, because they were no longer needed as resources to fuel modernization (203). This was not the case in the first half of the 19th

century, when whale oil lighted many homes and lubricated the industrial machinery that, for instance, was needed to process the large amounts of cotton produced on slave plantations in the U.S. South. At this point, whales found themselves among many other animals whose slaughtering was considered a "non-criminal putting to death" in a Western anthropocentric world view.[13] This world view "relies on the tacit acceptance that the full transcendence to the human requires the sacrifice of the animal and the animalistic" (Derrida qtd. in Huggan/Tiffin 5). It strictly separated the human from the non-human, routinely failing to acknowledge the entanglement of humans' and non-humans' wellbeing and existence. Unsurprisingly, whaling narratives of the day stressed "the daring, risks, dangers, and excitement of whaling far more than the suffering of the whales" (Buell 208), though some of them did.

As more recent scholarship highlights, common sailors, too, displayed complex emotional relationships with whales. Some compared their own exploitative working conditions with the fate of the animals they were to slaughter. Kyla Schuller argues that Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* explores "the deeply affective relationship that pre-industrial whaling ironically nurtured between whales and whalers through the very intimacy of the hunt" (4). "By animating the feeling animal," Melville represents both whales and whalers as "deserving of empathy from the emerging middle classes who had voracious appetites for sperm whale oil" (4). Jeffrey Bolster demonstrates that common fishermen were often the most perceptive to the impact of overfishing on animal populations (130, 140). Moreover, Ayasha Guerin even goes so far as to discern a kinship between whales and minoritized 19th century sailors who together became fugitives from extractive capitalism. As whales adapted their migration routes in order to avoid areas of intense commercial fishing, they also opened up new routes of escape for Black and Indigenous sailors who joined the whaling industry in order to flee slavery and dispossession in the continental United States. Thousands found refuge in the Kingdom of Hawai'i, which "was not organized on the basis of race" (Guerin 54). Drawing on Katherine McKittrick's work, Guerin advocates "methodologies of care" that spotlight the "intimacies of survival at sea in the whaling industry" (46).

13 In this, their position differs significantly from those of shipboard animals, such as hens, which became the objects of sentimental attachments in the journals of other captain's wives, helping to reinforce these women's imaginative hold over the ship as a domestic sphere (Kelley 2021).

I suggest that Brewster's detached description of whales adds to this tableau of differently gendered, classed, and racialized 19th century perspectives. It asserts that, while 19th century women are conventionally associated with sentimentality and while Brewster herself certainly uses sentimental rhetoric when it comes to home and marriage, this does not have to be the case when it comes to animals or the natural world at large. While sailors who closely interacted with whales in the realm of production sometimes resorted to sentimental language, some captain's wives, who stayed clear from the realm of production, did not. Brewster's journals thus demonstrate that the language of sentimental domesticity not only linked up with U.S. imperialism but also with extractivist capitalism in the Pacific of the 1840s. Explicit affection for whales had no place in Brewster's performance of maritime femininity. When it comes to fellow feelings, the Pacific, along with all its inhabitants, needed to remain a site of detachment, not *terra nullius* but *aqua nullius*.

At the same time, I suggest that, from a narratological point of view, there is more to this scene. As Brewster could have erased this brutal hunting scene, just like the tensions between her husband and his crew, the fact that she *did* consider it worth telling is significant. While interspecies attachments had no place in her narrative, she did use language that acknowledges social bonds among whale mothers and their offspring and that renders mother whales' attacks on whalers in terms that were certainly emotionally comprehensible to her 19th century audience.[14] Whales thus acquire a degree of agency and sentience that gestures beyond their mere bodily existence as raw material. By doing so, I suggest, Brewster's journal provides set pieces that might potentially facilitate more affectively charged and more ambivalent readings in the future.[15]

14 Today, biologists assert that whales not only live in kin-based social units but they appear to have large networks of communication that, for instance, helped them exchange information about whalers and thus avoid lethal dangers (Whitehead/Smith/Rendell).

15 See, for instance, the journals of Eliza Williams, which chronicle Williams's time as a whaling wife ten years after Brewster, between 1858 and 1861. She writes that "[i]t was a pleasant sight to see" whales "playing about, so happy in their native element, all unconscious, it seemed, of danger" (138). She continues that "it made me feel very bad" to see the whales "tumbling and rolling about in the water, dying. I could not bear the sight, but it was soon over" (ibid.).

Conclusion

This article has examined how Mary Brewster's journals of her first voyage on board a whaleship in the late 1840s imagined the Pacific and female maritime mobility for a readership based on the Eastern seaboard. It has shown how Brewster legitimates her maritime mobility through the language of sentimental domesticity. She re-imagines the ship as a home, the place where she, as a wife, belongs and can further what she perceives as moral feeling, civilization, and order. By doing so, Brewster also articulates an oceanic and extractivist variant of what Kaplan calls "manifest domesticity." Different but related narrative strategies imaginatively prepare laborers, whales, and Kānaka Maoli for subjection to an extractive view. This view routinely erases the violence of labor exploitation, resource extraction, and imperialism. It partakes in dominant imperial and extractivist tropes that deny, albeit in different and unequal ways, the histories and entanglements of both humans and animals in Pacific ecologies. In other words, Brewster frames her own breaking out of gender conventions in and through the logics of empire and extraction. Her journal presents a case in point for the ways in which sentimentality revolves around a White, bourgeois, and heteropatriarchal center whose language of domesticity helps erase its own conditions of possibility.

As historian Joan Druett asserts, the material traces of Brewster's sentimental domesticity are visible to this very day. The wealth that the *Tiger* extracted from the Pacific, along with the gains of other voyages, allowed the Brewsters to eventually build a "large and commodious" home in Stonington, Connecticut, and to "retire […] to a life of leisure" (Druett 1992a, 407). This mansion is still standing, providing a monument to the early entanglements between New England notions of domesticity and the "domestication" and violent appropriation of humans and animals in the Pacific. Along with this material trace, the extractivist imagination that Brewster helped create lingers on. As whale oil was substituted by petroleum, whales increasingly escaped the intense focus of extractive capitalism. Yet, the climate warming effects of contemporary petrocultures disproportionately affect Pacific Islanders. Recent research in biology, in turn, has begun to explore how whales contribute to the mitigation of climate change, as both their bodies and their excrements can trap large quantities of carbon dioxide (Pearson et al. 238). Whereas such research advises the further protection of whales and marine ecologies, resource-hungry nations are still vying to claim and extract submarine resources (DeLoughrey). As corporations have recently made considerable

advances in their quest for permissions to start deep-sea mining, with unforeseeable effects for the current climate and biodiversity crises, the struggle over extractivist imaginations of the Pacific is bound to continue (Lyons).

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