



The Geopolitical Imaginaries in *Moby-Dick*; or, The Whale and *Hakugei: Legend of the Moby Dick*

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Abstract

This paper explores the geopolitical imaginaries in Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*; or, *The Whale* (1851) and in the Japanese science fiction animation titled *Hakugei: Legend of the Moby Dick* (1997-1999) by the Japanese animation artist Osamu Dezaki. Although it is an adaptation of *Moby-Dick*, the setting of *Hakugei* has been creatively changed from the sea to space. In the mid-nineteenth century, when Melville chose the sea as the setting of his quest novel, the sea was inextricably intertwined with the nineteenth-century myth of U.S. expansionism. Melville presents a double vision of imaginary islands in the South Sea and the actual geopolitical relationships between existing transatlantic countries. Yet in the second half of the twentieth century, especially in the wake of Transpacific tensions, the sea as a place of quest among Japanese writers could not be delineated in the same kind of prefigurative language used by Melville, such as by drawing on symbolism. Instead, the animation reflects a Cold War psychology that was prevalent among Japanese after the defeat of World War II. As this paper suggests, *Hakugei* displays both fear and hope for the geopolitical transformation of the Pacific Rim countries and their future safety by choosing outer space as a site for the fable. It is in this way that the Japanese animator Dezaki draws on Melville's *Moby-Dick* as a source text by engaging geopolitics, anti-war psychology, and uneasiness toward expansionism. Melville's pacifism can be argued for as major transcultural influence, at the very least, driving *Hakugei*'s anime characterization. In fact, going beyond drawing on certain characters, including Ahab, Dezaki retains Melville's anxiety over the proximity of creation and destruction in yet another era of increasing concern for world peace.

Keywords: Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*, Japanese Animation, Geopolitics, Adaptation

Introduction

Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*; or, *The Whale* (1851) has remained one of the most popular foreign novels among Japanese scholars and readers since the first Japanese translation was published by novelist and scholar Tomoji Abe in 1941. Abe's early enthusiasm for *Moby-Dick* has continued to grow in Japan with the publication of nine different translations. With the growing recognition of the importance of Japanese anime in the field of popular culture, the cultural trope of *Moby-Dick* as a continuous resource for adaptation has expanded in a variety of media, including TV programs and cinema. In 1997, the Japanese science fiction animation *Hakugei: Legend of the Moby Dick* (hereafter referred to as *Hakugei*) premiered on Japanese broadcast TV. Creatively drawing on *Moby-Dick*, the director Osamu Desaki transformed story elements from Melville's novel into a space adventure, set not across several oceans but in outer space. In 2015, Mamoru Hosoda, a leading animation director in Japan, produced an animated film featuring *Moby Dick* soaring the sky. These adaptations illustrate *Moby Dick*'s richness as a symbol of wonder and aspiration.

This shift from the open sea to outer space in audiovisual representations of the White Whale in the Japanese imagination marks a significant geopolitical decision on the part of directors. Having suffered the cataclysmic experience of the Pacific War (1941-45), which is understood as a Japanese war of invasion in the Pacific, Japanese authors and artists subsequently did not allow themselves to depict the sea as a place of quest. The Pacific was a place of conflict, tragedy, and expansionist anxieties. In fact, in 1941, Japanese Zero fighter planes made a surprise raid on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, which instigated the Pacific War between the United States and Japan. Consequently, two atomic bombs were dropped on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. Defeat in World War II led to the end of military government in Japan, one reminiscent of the regime change from militancy to diplomacy in Melville's era a century earlier. Postwar Japanese authors and artists seem to seek alternative quest locations to envisage their own culturally specific simulacra.

According to Julie Sanders, adaptation is "to take a text from one genre and deliver it into a new modality and potentially to different or additional audiences." She adds that adaptations contain "further layers of transposition, relocating their sources texts not just generically but in cultural, geographical, and temporal terms" (Sanders, 2016, p. 25). *Hakugei* should be seen as a postmodern recreation of the nineteenth-century novel. Along with having postmodern aspects, it indicates the postwar psychology and pacifism prevalent among Japanese after the defeat of World War II. Thus, I suggest that it mirrors Melville's original *Moby-Dick* in terms of anti-war psychology and uneasiness toward U.S. expansionism in the nineteenth century. Focusing on their geopolitical imaginings, this paper delves into the dialogic relations between *Moby-Dick* and its adaptation *Hakugei*.

Melville's Geopolitical Imaginings: The Pacific, Expansion, and War

Erik Rangno argues that "*Moby-Dick* imagines Japan to be the geopolitical analogue to the White Whale an inscrutable and unalterable racialized presence forever at the horizon-line of American empire in the Pacific" (Rangno 2008, p. 468). As observed above, when

Melville mentions Japan, he emphasizes its mystery and aloofness. In Chapter 111, which is titled “The Pacific,” Ishmael locates in “the serene Pacific” “milky-ways of coral isles, and low-lying, endless, unknown Archipelagoes, and impenetrable Japan. Thus, this mysterious, divine Pacific zones the world’s whole bulk about; makes all coasts one bay to it; seems the tide-beating heart of earth” (Melville, 1851, pp. 482-83). The word “impenetrable” exposes the colonialist rhetoric of territorial ambition. The United States of that time could open Japan by military presence but did not seek subjugation. Also in “The Pacific,” Ishmael mentions California in relation to the Pacific: “It rolls the midmost waters of the world, the Indian ocean and Atlantic being but its arms. The same waves wash the moles of the new-built Californian towns, but yesterday planted by the recentest race of men, and lave the faded but still gorgeous skirts of Asiatic lands, older than Abraham” (Melville, 1851, p.482). Melville was fully aware that California became part of the United States due to the Mexican-American War. He anticipated that the time would come when the United States would advance its sphere to the Pacific Islands despite American foreign policy having undergone the restrictions of the Monroe Doctrine. The turn in American policy foreshadowed Melville’s depiction of the Pacific.

As Harrison Hayford et al. have noted, “[m]any of the unamendable textual problems of *Moby-Dick* arose from Melville’s shifting, expanding, and not altogether seamlessly blending conceptions of the work during the course of its year-and-a-half composition in varying circumstances at four domiciles in New York City and Pittsfield” (Melville, 1851, p. 583). Melville’s realization of a fuller work stemmed from his revision of a nautical semi-documentary fiction into a grand-scale romance. However, it should be noted that the time of revision from 1850 to 1851 was also the postbellum era following the Mexican-American War. We should also have in mind that Melville’s previous publication of the sea romance *Mardi: and a Voyage Thither* (1849) presents a double vision of imaginary islands in the South Sea and the actual geopolitical relationships between existing transatlantic countries. The various islands in *Mardi* stand for England, France, and the United States, with the European countries receiving implicit critiques of their colonialism.

The era of expansion defined by John O’Sullivan as “Manifest Destiny” (1845) witnessed the United States’ enlargement of its territory into the far West with the Mexican-American War. Melville wrote a satirical article on the Mexican-American War hero Zachary Taylor. Although this article was published with the help of New York democratic literati known as Young America (Melville, 1851, p. 593), Melville’s thoughts regarding Young America and its expansionism are ambiguous. As a rising author, his geopolitics might have been influenced by New York literati such as Evert Duyckinck. (Widmer, 1999, p. 112). However, Melville was forced to revise his first novel *Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life* (1846) by cutting his explicit criticisms of American missionaries, which were deemed unacceptable by his American publisher, from the manuscript. Indeed, as a young writer and a witness of colonization, Melville sensed the iniquities of American expansionism, on this issue standing apart from his literary group. As suggested by the internal dissonances of the enlarged *Moby-Dick*, Melville resisted the cacophony of opinions among New York journalists. Yet Melville’s apparent criticisms of American imperialism were not fully understood by readers and critics of his time.

Carolyn L. Karcher and Michael Paul Rogin provocatively present Melville as possessing a greater political consciousness than critics have previously perceived. Karcher argues that Melville “devoted himself to combating throughout his antebellum literary career” the racist beliefs he “recognized as underlaying his fellow Americans’ failure to resolve the dilemma of slavery” (1980, p. 27). Examining the Melville family and local

attitudes, both Karcher and Rogin unearth the writer's psychological struggles and his keen awareness of the injustices of slavery and racial prejudice.

It is clear when considering early works, such as *Typee*, that Melville, having seen the miserable treatment of colonized native people in the South Seas, aimed to reveal the harsher realities of colonialism. And it is in this light that Ahab's obsession with enacting vengeance on *Moby Dick* may best be considered. In Chapter 36, "The Quarter-Deck," Ahab's echoes the discourse of expansionism as he explains at length to Starbuck and the crew his desire for vengeance. Both the ambitions of the enslaved and the state of the colonized find expression in Ahab's question: "How can the prisoner reach outside except by thrusting through the wall?" (Melville, 1851, p. 164) With his experience of the colonized Pacific islands and their "prisoners" in mind, Melville further implies the energy required by the probably futile but justified revolt against the colonialist.

In Chapter 42 of *Moby-Dick*, "The Whiteness of the Whale," Ishmael attempts to explain what the White Whale means to him as well as to Ahab. He gives many examples of white animals, and analyzes their sacred, uncanny, even holy qualities: "why, as we have seen, it [whiteness] is at once the most meaning symbol of spiritual things, nay, the very veil of the Christian's Deity; and yet should be as it is, the intensifying agent in things the most appalling to mankind" (Melville, 1851, p.195). This highly ambivalent reflection on whiteness further infers a profound moral relativism: that the matter of the world cannot be easily classified as good or bad. Witnessing the miserable states of the colonized and of Christian converts in the South Seas, Melville gained alternative perspectives on and perceptions of Western hegemony. He was justified in his premonitions of the Americanization of the world, with its demands for the acceptance of its own mores and customs, employing its power far into the Pacific islands in the name of Manifest Destiny.

The symbolic application of the terms "white" and "whiteness" becomes inevitably inseparable from racial connotations in America, from the initial conquering of native populations through subsequent centuries. As Geoffrey Sanborn has pointed out, Melville's critique of racism sheds light on how institutions reinforce racism by employing symbolism, exemplified by the use of the term 'savage,' which is frequently associated with indigenous peoples (Sanborn, 1998, p.129). Melville's social awareness and proleptic radicalism were ahead of his time, as was his criticism of racism, slavery, and militarism, which placed him outside the understanding of his contemporaries.

As I suggest, the form of disillusion Melville experienced in the South Seas was to happen much later for most Americans, generally throughout the later Cold War period. Fredric Jameson describes the ideological context of the 1970s in his comments on Stanley Kubrick's 1980 film adaptation of Stephen King's 1977 novel *The Shining*. Jameson analyzes a tendency in the 1970s to express "nostalgia for a system in which Good and Evil are absolute black and white categories," which he interprets as "the longing and the regret for a Cold War period in which things were still simple, not so much belief in Manichaeic forces as the nagging suspicion that everything would be so much easier if we could believe in them" (Jameson, 1992, p. 132). The American Cold War ethos was grounded in the traditional moral psychology that Good and Evil are absolutes, thus offering a nation security in the belief that it is on the side of good. However, this optimistic certainty was shattered by the Vietnam War, which might be similar to the situation among some American writers after the Mexican-American War.

Writing in the aftermath of the Mexican-American War, Melville warned of the imperilment that will come with continued expansionism. An undertone of *Moby-Dick*

expresses Melville's antiwar sentiments. Delving into the pacifism inherent in his radical warnings, Joyce Sparer Adler argues that "Melville's passion against war was a great dynamic in his imagination and a main shaping force in his arts." At the end of the novel, the Pequod sinks but Ishmael is saved. Adler points out that "Moby-Dick seems prophetic of ours, foreseeing the possibility of total destruction resulting from unrestrained war," but she emphasizes the rising canoe-coffin and the sharks and sea-hawks that do not harm Ishmael as he is buoyed by the coffin: "with this memorable surrealistic image to pictorialize the idea of a transformed and peaceful world, Melville ends his, and world literature's, great symbolic poem of war and peace" (1981, pp. 75-76). Melville's pacifism can be argued for as a major cultural influence, at the very least inspiring Dezaki and driving his anime adaptation.

Melville's experience as a sailor in the South Seas inspired but differed from the itinerary of the Pequod's voyage: none of the Pacific Islands are depicted in *Moby-Dick*. Rather, the main stage of *Moby-Dick* is the ocean itself, with Ahab's obsession based on the water-bound sighting of the leviathan. Just as the whale was mysterious and indomitable for Ahab, so Japan was hidden and unapproachable for the United States. The Pequod's fate, assaulted and finally sunk by the object of her quest, is countermanded in Melville's prediction for Japan in Chapter 24, "The Advocate": "If that double-bolted land, Japan, is ever to become hospitable, it is the whale-ship alone to whom the credit will be due; for already she is on the threshold" (Melville, 1851, p. 110). Melville's prophecy about the opening of Japanese ports, which triggered a transformation of Japanese politics, would prove true.

Dezaki's Adaptation and Cultural Contextualization: The Making of Hakugei: Legend of the White Whale

Melville's references to Japan may well have inspired Japanese artists such as Dezaki, who were presumably still struggling to understand the history of modern Japan, as well as its postwar relationship with the United States. The United States expanded its hegemony within the North American continent as well as across the Pacific Ocean in the nineteenth century. Japan, although it had shut the doors to foreign countries, may also be defined as technically one such Pacific island. In 1853, two years after the publication of *Moby-Dick*, American steam ships appeared at the shores of Japan, aiming to force the opening of seaports for the whaling ship trade. This incident was an omen of the collapse of the medieval regime. In 1868, after numerous political disturbances, Japan would have a modern government (Benedict 1946, pp. 76-80). The United States played a significant role in Japanese history by triggering a revolution that changed its polity from medieval despotism driven by the shogunate to the modern parliamentary government led by the Emperor.

Although it took almost one hundred years, American leadership vis-à-vis the Pacific has infiltrated Japan, albeit in various forms of military protection. The meaning of Pacific geopolitics for both American and Japanese interests was transformed from economic opportunism to security by the turn of the twentieth century. In his analysis of Japanese postwar popular music, Michael Bourdaghs argues that in the Cold War period, the United States tried to "transform the image of Japan from that of a treacherous enemy to a benevolent Asian ally" (2012, p. 7). While postwar consumerism vigorously entered the

Japanese market, American democratic popular culture poured into the nation's cultural scene and began affecting the creativity of writers and artists whose activities had been restricted by the Japanese military government before and during World War II. However, as Bourdaghs explains, "with the flaring up of the Cold War, the United States now showed less interest in democratizing Japan and more instead in building up a strategic ally to bolster its security policies across Asia" (2012, p. 15). Japan therefore experienced the double bind of freedom and the new requirements that came with American occupation. The postwar generation was nurtured and educated in the context of Cold War politics, and animation creators were no exception.

Dezaki, director and writer of *Hakugei*, was born in 1943 (Sonobe, 2018, p. 250). He grew up in the postwar generation, which was strongly influenced by the American "soft power" strategy (Kida 2012, p. 380), and his geopolitical reflections on Japan and the United States were shaped by Cold War politics in the Pacific Rim. This cultural and political context helps to explain why Dezaki draws on the American novel *Moby-Dick* while creatively transforming and transplanting its storyline into a Japanese context as a form of science fiction anime. Melville's *Moby-Dick* and Dezaki's *Hakugei*, its adaptation, mark an interesting confluence of geopolitical imaginaries.

Despite transforming the narrative context and setting the story in the distant future, Dezaki maintains the quest narrative of the White Whale, named as *Hakugei*, hunted by a monomaniacal captain overwhelmed by an enmity against the White Whale, now an enormous android; a whale-shaped weapon. Permanent space exploration is conducted by the Earth Federal Government (the Empire). Ahab is now an outlaw captain who hunts abandoned spaceships and resells their arms and valuables to those who now live on other planets. While hunting, Ahab breaks the law of the Empire. Sent to seize Ahab by the Empire, the White Whale as a police force eventually causes Ahab to lose his left leg and eye. Since then, Ahab has held a strong grudge against and fear of the White Whale.

Dezaki adds a new story line involving Ahab's commission to save the planet Mohad. Anticipating attacks from aliens, the Empire plans to test a new bomb loaded on the White Whale and selects the allied planet Mohad as its target. Regarding the bomb, Dezaki's production notes point out that the Empire expects an encounter with unknown aliens, and that they hope to implement a peace treaty to overcome the crisis. In case this fails, however, and confrontation with the aliens becomes a necessity, the Empire has developed the ultimate preemptive weapon, a bomb capable of destroying an entire planet. Dezaki tactfully and advisedly does not define the bomb as an atomic bomb, but *Hakugei* can clearly be examined as a Cold War interpretation of such a lethal planetarian attack. Although this storyline might evoke memories of the atomic bomb for a certain generation of Japanese audiences, Dezaki takes it in a different direction. The residents of Mohad refuse to relocate to avoid the bombing and declare their independence. Mohad, destined to be destroyed by the Empire, is guided by a spiritual leader named Shiro. Shiro's sister asks Ahab to help them, and as Mohad is threatened with destruction, Ahab is enlisted to fight against the White Whale, although he does so as much to exact his own revenge.

In the anime science fiction universe, the White Whale acquires a greater interiority than it does in Melville's *Moby-Dick* when Dezaki introduces the young warrior Dew, who joins Ahab in helping Mohad. In the last confrontation with Ahab, the White Whale reveals an alternate narrative in which the explosion could have been prevented, although it confesses that it is not programmed to halt the detonation. The White Whale is actually composed of two entities: one being the whale-shaped android known as the White Whale,

and the other being the human-shaped android named Dew. Ironically, both of these androids are originated by the scientist's brain that designed the ultimate weapon. Their roboticised-yet-living egos contradict each other in the course of the story. Yet intriguingly, Dezaki explains the White Whale as a mirror to reflect people's emotions and reiterates the mystical atmosphere of the original biological creature, Moby Dick (Dezaki and Sugino, 1994, p.15): the android super weapon possesses a paradoxical whiteness, as Ishmael depicts in Chapter 42, "The Whiteness of the Whale," and a beauty that inspires awe from the other characters.

Dezaki's Ahab follows his literary counterpart in his quarrel with God. In response to a speech by the spiritual leader Shiro, however, Dezaki's Ahab also echoes the moral convictions of Melville's novel, claiming—as he faces battle against the Empire—that there is no just war, that all military conflict is merely killing and destruction, and that the planet Mohad's survival will be a victory for which it is worth fighting against the Empire. He continues by denying belief in any God or supernatural existence: "There is no war for God," in which he means that if we should fight, we will fight for ourselves. As a contrast within Moby-Dick, these lines could serve as a reminder of Ahab's confession when confronted by Starbuck in Chapter 132, "The Symphony": "Is Ahab, Ahab? . . . how then can this small heart beat; this one small brain think thoughts; unless God does that beating, does that thinking, does that living, and not I" (Melville, 1851, p. 545). Ahab's words here underscore the notion of a divine presence, but they do so in a way that might allow Ahab to attribute his war on Moby Dick to God's design. Through his Ahab's credo, in contrast, Dezaki attempts to refute the possibility of a "war for God."

However, Dezaki's story ends in victory for Ahab, who helps save Mohad from destruction by preventing the deployment of the bomb in the White Whale. The story enacts the sacrifice of Dew, the computer-programmed android who shares the White Whale's futuristic and technological status. Ahab and Dew cultivate a comradeship during their space journey and this bond plays a crucial role in Dew's ultimate decision to defy the Empire's destructive orders, leading to his freedom and, paradoxically, his eventual annihilation.

The above storyline of Desaki's adaptation mirrors Japan's complex trajectory of becoming a democratic nation in both postwar and Cold War contexts. In her analysis of adaptations of Opera Carmen by George Bizet, Linda Hutcheon argues that "[d]ifferent cultures at different moments have indigenized this traveling story in their own ways. The adaptation could historicize/dehistoricize an original story" (2013, p.158). In so doing, the adaptation enables the creator to transcend the boundaries caused by binary oppositions such as historicizing/dehistoricizing, racializing/deracializing, and embodying/desembodying. In Dezaki's case, he dehistoricizes Melville's Moby-Dick and rehistoricizes it as a Japanese form of transculturation. Ahab's anime characterization is predictably envisaged as a conflicted but liberal contemporary individual, containing the contemporary Japanese (though imported) ideology of the pursuit of personal freedom while also drawing on the tension between liberty and imperialism in Melville's Moby-Dick. As the previous analysis of Melville's geopolitical engagement with the sea seeks to demonstrate, the source text contains a number of narrative elements engaging with these tensions, thus paving the way for a similar geopolitical engagement in Hakugei's epic anime set in space.

Hakugei's animation has been critically acclaimed for its minimalist style of character drawings, which enables nuanced expression with voices. As Nozomi Nagata suggests, Dezaki was also fascinated with oceanic romance and wrote numerous stories for anime with sea settings (Sonobe, 2018, p. 206). He had originally planned to make a more conventional anime of Moby-Dick in Japanese translation. However, his original desire to

create an animation of Moby-Dick could not be realized as no company would accept the specifics of his plan. Dezaki continued working over his idea for twenty years and even published a book to explain the process of animating an adaptation of Hakugei in order to promote its potential for a film or television series. Therefore, instead of its translation, Dezaki decided to create Hakugei by adapting Melville's novel and changing the place and the time from a nineteenth-century seascape to a mythical outer space in the distant future (Dezaki and Sugino, 1994). In due course, Dezaki succeeded in getting an offer for the adaptation of Moby-Dick into a TV animation series from NHK, Japan's chief national broadcasting organization.

Linda Constanzo Cahir's definition allows us to see Dezaki's adaptation as a (self-consciously) radical translation, "which reshapes the book in extreme and revolutionary ways both as a means of interpreting the literature and marking the film a more fully independent work" (2006, p17). Hakugei may certainly be celebrated as a postmodern recreation of a nineteenth-century novel, incorporating multiple contemporary Japanese forms of translation, publication, animation, and compilation for the TV series, all of which were destined for the practical market purposes of popular culture. Moby-Dick's narrative style of fluctuating motion and stillness became an appropriate fit for Dezaki. The shift from sea to space released Dezaki from having to directly confront issues of ethnicity, which often happens in the translation of foreign works into the Japanese context. Space travel in principle relieves the protagonist and all other characters of specific racial and cultural identity, while maintaining Japanese historical context. Ahab's personal refusal of a holy war for God should represent Dezaki's own faith, while the credo of living for himself is in turn a cultural reflection of the Japanese antiwar mentality of the postwar generation, who adhered to the pursuit of life's private necessities.

The narrative complexities of Hakugei encapsulate the difficulties of conveying Japan's new democratic postwar vision for writers and artists as well as for ordinary people. As Naoki Sakai argues, the meaning of loss has not been fully discussed nor considered nationally, as Japan fell into a willed oblivion for decades, not wanting to consider the meaning of defeat or to confront issues surrounding colonialism (Sakai 2007, p. 18). Reconstructing Japanese identity in the absence of a shared understanding of defeat and colonialism was a difficult task for ordinary people. Consequently, popular culture tends to address the major crisis of defeat from a personal perspective rather than a national one.

Conclusion: Adapting and Appropriating Moby-Dick

Robert Stam, referring to Deleuze's notion of "becoming Indian," explains the concept of adaptation in terms of American identity politics. He argues that "[i]ndividual and collective self-shaping is arguably at the very kernel of world history generally, but especially of the history of the Americans with its power-laden mixing of indigenous peoples and shape-shifting Europeans, Africans, and Asians" (Stam, 2023, p. 160). In the visionary transcultural adaptation of Hakugei, Dezaki's dialogic relationship with Melville becomes evident as a relocated act of "shape-shifting" in the modern Japanese context. The change from colonizer to occupied status forced the Japanese to confront the need for new identity construction in order to become a member of the democratic countries led by the postwar United States. As John Dower recounts, "Japan remained under the control of fundamentally military regimes

from the early 1930s straight through to 1952” (Dower, 1999, p. 27). Defeat in World War II brought many radical changes to Japan. Melville’s identity construction in the nineteenth century, during a period of expansionism, is subsequently reinterpreted through Dezaki’s postmodern identity politics, which emerged in the aftermath of military expansionism in global mapping of the Pacific region.

In the case of *Moby-Dick*, the culminating destruction of the *Pequod* in the Pacific Ocean with the sea rolling on “as it rolled five thousand years ago” (Melville, 1851, p. 572) spectacularly accords with Melville’s fear and anti-imperialist anger. A century later, inspired by *Moby-Dick*, Dezaki expresses his fear and hope for the geopolitical transformation of the Pacific Rim countries and their future safety. Continuing the hope that the Pacific should remain a site of peace for all future generations, Dezaki nonetheless retains Melville’s anxiety over the proximity of creation and destruction in times of geopolitical fragility. By relocating the narrative to the enigmatic expanse of outer space instead of the problematic open sea, Dezaki’s adaptation of *Moby-Dick* maintains its inherent anti-war belief, reinforcing the significance of the rising coffin carrying Ishmael—a simulacrum of rebirth—into another, ultimately more peaceful realm.

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