
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Ishmael and Ahab, the Sinister Double at the Limit

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ABSTRACT

In this article, I will focus on a reading of Moby Dick based on the identification between the two key figures of the work: Ahab, the captain who tries to transgress the limits of the human, according to the terminology of the philosophy of Trias, and a narrator, Ishmael, who seems to know every thought of the Pequod's crew and whose entry into the narrative already raises a doubt as to his identity. To do this, I will use Eugenio Trias' philosophy of the limit as methodology.

KEYWORDS

Moby Dick, Melville, limit, Trias, ontology

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1. Introduction

To carry out the analysis of the novel, I will start from the categories of aesthetic and ontological aspects that Eugenio Trias expounded in his philosophical work. From this premise, Ahab's journey is an ontological violation of one's own being, in this case, the being of the limit, but this transgression is natural to a being that cannot help but listen to the sirens of transcendence. It is a journey that leads to inhumanity.

For Trias, existence as a first fact is based on lackⁱⁱ. This lack, real or imaginary, leads the subject to be subject to the limit and, therefore, to its caesura, a rupture, which allows illness or death, in short, Evil (Trias CF II: 1266). This metaphysical evil has accompanied us since the fall into sin, an evil that accompanies us, visible at the end of Chapter LXIX, p. 478. The subject, as a borderer, is subject to a cause that he does not know, which means mortality and ignorance of the ultimate meaning of that unfounded existence. The subject can simply assume it or rebel and ask for an account, as Job does with God (Trias CF II: 1267). In a very Platonic way, Trias defines this condition as a fall into exile "in pure Sisyphean condemnation" (CF II: 1267).

Trias, in his work *The Border Reason*, constitutes a theory of knowledge based on some categories of thought, two pairs and a seventh that would encompass them. This categorical system had already been presented, in a symbolic keyⁱⁱⁱ, in the previous *The Age of the Spirit*. For Trias, from this beginning, it constitutes the framework and the backbone of the living organism that, as he himself indicates, is called the philosophy of the limit^{iv}. The system of categories makes up the organon on which his philosophical proposal is based: the being of the limit that is recreated. The being that is discovered in existence is thought of in border reason, separating being and nothing; then, one knows the limit, differentiating sameness and otherness, to end up knowing that it is permanently recreated, perceiving unity and multiplicity (HV: 127-128). The limit avoids the idea of the absolute because it correlates different areas and, at the same time, "determines an alterity that, in a certain way, constitutes its own shadow" (HV: 98). On the other hand, Trias proposes an onto-topography: 2 fences that intersect. The first fence is that of reality, what he calls the fence of appearing; The second is the hermetic fence, where the mystery lives; and finally, that area of intersection called the border fence, the place where the subject lives, rather fragmented, called the border. With our eyes set between the real and the possible/the desired/the transcendent, that is always forbidden, although, as I will point out, it allows us to perceive something,

but like a voice, it seems to remind us that the essence of the border inhabitant is to assume that condition, which is what Trías defines as a border imperative^v.

Ishmael begins his narrative by introducing himself, but under a name that does not have to be yours. He only says that he can be called Ishmael^{vi}. It is the narrator, but he is not completely^{vii}. That game of perspectives had already been used by Melville in *Benito Cereno* or *Bartleby*. It is about focalization, a trick in which "a know-it-all narrator hides from us the little ball of his omniscience in the limited mind of one of the characters, thereby condemning us to his incomplete vision of things and that we must guess in each Who is explaining it to us? (Díez, in AAVV 2013 40). It may be that following Dennett's theses, the entire narrative is intended to create a self-conscious "I", but it may also be that the self that is shown to us is a social self-integrated into its environment. Ishmael narrates to get to know himself and, at the same time, to integrate, as Conde Borrego points out: "There is no narrative without a narrator, nor a narrator without narration" (Conde Borrego 157)^{viii}.

Ishmael is not the orphan of the new American society, as Tanner indicates; he is the orphan of the new capitalist society and of a man who has lost his limits (Tanner 69). To do this, North American literature will create new gods or a new imaginary, like A. Blackwood's *Wendigo* or, in this case, Melville's *Moby Dick*. An "amorphous force that is the true essence of life" (Burillo 45).

The novel, in some of its interpretations, has been seen as a *bildungsroman* or better as the narration of a rite of initiation, which would guarantee "social clarity," as Turner indicates, citing Van Gennep (Ritual 94-95). Therefore, *Moby Dick* is the construction of a myth. A myth in which we want to be immersed to encounter the most intimate part of our being, the attempt to connect with the uncontrollable: God, the unknown that is beyond the real or the innermost part of our being. Therefore, what we seek is an encounter with the Triasian limit.

As I will insist, one of the elements that instigate Ishmael to embark is an existential experience, a hiccup that pushes him, for which he never explains the reason; perhaps it is the need to belong to a community like the one that exists aboard the *Pequod*^{ix}, a depression or even a death drive, it must be noted that the alternative that is proposed is suicide as indicated with the phrase: "This is my alternative to the gun and the bullet" (MD: 79). In the case of Ishmael-Ahab, they seem locked in their horizontal hell of permanent repetition that, following Carrasco-Conde or Kristeva, warns that if that nostalgia, that emptiness, is retained, it can become "the centre of our life," which is what which he calls the crypt of consciousness. (Carrasco Conde 219). Recio speaks of melancholy^x that traps you in that loss (AAVV 2023 166) and that entails "the curse of the melancholic. Carrying nothingness inside and, therefore, living dying and in fear" (Carrasco Conde 349)^{xi}, are the carriers of *póthos*, the pain of loss that dismembers the soul (Carrasco Conde 272) like Ahab is inside and out. Even Father Mapple's sermon seems directed at Ishmael, warning him, like a prophet, that disobedience to God carries a punishment (Yothers, in Yothers 175).

Ishmael, in his journey, is permanently in liminality, on the threshold, and as such, he is pure potentiality. He is the only one who has never been on a whale ship. We understand Ishmael's presence in the *Pequod* as an attempt to be part of a community^{xii}; that is, once the rite of passage has passed, he rejoins the group, or rather religates himself to it, as seen in chapter LXXII.^{xiii}; or existentially, looking for a way out of that emptiness, anguish or vertigo. Ishmael is a border inhabitant at the very limit of the hermetic fence, which is not metaphorically the sea but rather the sea itself as such. Ishmael flies over as an observer, above all. For Buell, narrative architecture is a variant of the bipolar observer/hero narrative model; that is, the novel is structured around Ahab and Ishmael (Buell 365). It is important to note that in no chapter of the book do Ishmael and Ahab interact together with a third character. Sometimes, it acts as a testimony, as in chapter CXXXII or in chapter CXVIII, when Ahab despairs of being guided by reason, materialized by the quadrant, the technical apparatus. In these cases, Ishmael is always a privileged witness of Ahab's most private affections.

Trías, in a detailed analysis of the sinister, in his work *The Beautiful and the Sinister* (1982) and also in an essay on the film *Vertigo* (1958), analyses the character played by James Stewart from different angles: obsession as mania destructive, which ends up becoming a search for something that can only occur as a simulation; duality and that obfuscation to know how to delimit the real from the fantastic; the anguish, which will be vertigo^{xiv} in Trías, given the condition of a person in exile^{xv} and exodus; and all of this as a desperate attempt to reconstruct reality, an imaginary specifically. It is a film where doubles multiply, setting up and dismantling identities. As can be seen, the figure of the double and identity as creation are themes that Trías addresses recurrently in his work.

In his thematic inventory of sinister motives, where the importance of the double is emphasized (CF I, 110-112), the following appears:

1. A sinister individual who carries misfortune with him, for example, madness^{xvi}, and is a bearer of bad omens. Ahab fits the portrait perfectly.
2. That sinister individual may have a double of him (or of a family member, such as the father). Here, the Ahab-Ishmael couple appears. The double appears as a defence against death (A. Massias 268), but that opportunity to see yourself

internally can end up seeing you as a different other (Cesarotto, cited by A. Massias 267), so much so that it can even survive you, which would be the case. of Ishmael regarding his more demonic self.

3. The doubt between the organic and the inorganic, or the human and the inhuman. We can mention the whale whose intelligence gives it almost immortality or the madness of Ahab, who seeks to go beyond the possible, which leads to the inhuman. Although, in the case of the whale, the final representation of Moby Dick would dismantle its sinister category, an affectation that has accompanied the characters during their search.
4. The repetition of a situation in the same original conditions. In the work, the whaling, the encounters with ships, and Pip's falling into the sea are repeated, as well as the entire story of Ahab every time Ishmael repeats it in his narration.
5. Images that allude to amputations or dismemberment. Ahab's amputated leg is the most palpable example, but we could also cite that illness of emptiness, of lack, that drags Ishmael to embark. A fault that is double in the case of the captain: he is missing a leg, and in the face of the disrespect that he throws against the divine, he lacks the response, even if it is angry, from God.
6. When the fantastic enters the real. The white whale is both a natural and supernatural entity, at least in the imagination of the captain of the Pequod.

As I have pointed out, they all appear in the work. But the most notable issue, as I have indicated, is that of the double. The question is whether the account of someone "named" Ishmael is not the account of his own *dopplegänger* Ahab.^{xvii} Ishmael is the biblical exile, descended from royalty and expelled doubly: from paradise^{xviii}, as a human, and from his own community, out of jealousy of his father's first wife, Sara. Perhaps the fact that he is banished both times by his own creator further legitimizes the option of revenge on the father, but that attempt, which he knows is impossible, becomes the quest to murder the mother, which is a death drive own, of that impossible return to the origin, biological and ontological, reversing that hatred of the absent father towards the mother who does not allow him to return to her^{xix}. Without forgetting that Ishmael is an orphan of his mother, as indicated in chapter IV, p. 110. Trías traces her suicidal passion until she is murdered, creating an "(...) impure double that from that moment on acquires an independent life. Meanwhile, the young man distances himself and flees." (CF I:442). That is to say: «First, the monster itself has been created, then the poet has sung in its memory.» Producing a double unfolding.

There is a manifest intimacy between Ishmael and Ahab, for example, at the beginning of chapter XLI, when Ishmael expresses that Ahab's revenge is his own revenge, although he knows it is a mistake. Although he seems to be carried away by the pathos of the crew, Ishmael is not moved by the doubloon, the initial bait that traps the crew, but by the magic of Ahab's words that they instill in the crew, of which he is a part. The beginning of the chapter makes it very clear: "I, Ishmael," is now one of the inhabitants of the Pequod and, therefore, makes revenge his own in identification with Ahab's interests, but he clarifies that it escapes him as best he can triumph over this unreason and how he perceives that the end of the journey is going to be death^{xx}. Ahab is crazy, and he knows it; however, Ishmael analyses madness from the outside, and we are faced with the two perspectives of the anthropologist, the emic and the etic.

In the beginning, Ishmael already presents himself as someone who can be called by that name, one like any other. The presentation of him is a mask, a person in its Greek tragic meaning, and the story of him is the narrative of a death and a rebirth, condemned in advance to one's own death, cradle, and coffin united at the end, collected by the ship named Rachel. We are facing a vein second chance for Ishmael, who has not been expelled again but who, like Ahab, will once again embark on the Pequod after missing a leg or a meaning in life, which will take him on a journey to the end where inhabits the monster that will devour him and regurgitate him, again and again.

If Ishmael-Ahab seeks redemption, their only possibility is "by descending again into contact with the elemental origin, the elemental behaviour or feeling of life itself." (Ruiz de Samaniego in AAVV 2023 46). The unfounded foundation of Trías is "the very happening in the world (...) is the effect of a wound that refers to an unresolved tragic split" (Ruiz de Samaniego AAVV 2023 47) and manifested in the cutting of the umbilical cord that unites Creator and creature. That is the ontological condition of man, a double split: "axiological (good/evil) and ontic (being/nothing)" (Sucasas in AAVV 2023: 148).

According to Susan Yi, the motif of the *dopplelgänger* is clearly masculine (Yi 32), and the author derives it from the creative fantasy of a man faced with the reality of the pregnant woman and, therefore, the only one who can carry within herself a double of her. This situation represents a paradox that calls into question both equality and difference. The pregnant woman changes her own limits, citing Braidoti (Yi 33), but also causes an internal change, so much so that we can say that we can talk about a new identity (Yi 33), following Stern. In the novel, the female figure never appears except as an object of desire or memory; instead, there is a masculine intimacy that, in the case of Moby Dick, seems to be encouraged, for example, in the scene where Ishmael and Queequeg meet.^{xxi} or when Ahab, advancing to his end, already notices that he leaves a widow (Chap. CXXXII: 781). We must not leave aside the fact that homosexuality was harshly punished, and with the figure of the double, one can lead a double life, a case very evident in the Jekyll-Hyde binomial. Trías points out, analysing the work of Thomas Mann, that the "infernal relationship of the persecutor-

persecuted and the executioner-victim seems possible, through the triangular rite." (CF I:586), in this case between Ishmael-Ahab-Moby Dick (androgynous figure).

In the male case, the new identity arises from his inner self: Hyde, in his case, with pain like childbirth or Dorian Gray. It is always the man who unfolds or creates, like Frankenstein, when faced with the real impossibility of pregnancy. In addition to the longing for the search for a return to the maternal lap, a theme very present in Trías's work and which returns us to that impossible return to Eden or Goethe's Land of Mothers. This return to the amniotic fluid can be read in Ishmael's journey towards a rebirth in the sea, Freud's oceanic unity. The intertwined birth and death, for example, in Poe's stories, where the dead come back to life, at least in the minds of its protagonists, but also in Frankenstein's own monster that is born from the remains of corpses (Yi 34).

Susan Yi analyses the story Conrad's *The Secret Sharer* (1909), but if we compare the protagonist with the character of Ishmael, we perceive two anonymous people who act like children in the face of reality (Yi 34). In both stories, the figure of the mother and childbirth is recurrent, as we have already mentioned. In Conrad's story, the double ends up taking control when he notices his own transformation; something similar happens in Stevenson's novel. Here, the case of Ishmael diverges, as he seems trapped in an eternal return, as he seems to indicate in chapter CXIV: "Where is the final port, when we no longer disembark? (...) Where is the foundling's father hidden? Our souls are like those orphans whose single mothers die when they give birth to them. The secret of our paternity is in his tomb, and we must discover it there." (MD: 711). The narrator does not know where his own boundary begins and ends. But this game of masks between characters leads us to the impossibility of univocal interpretation in a game in which Melville fully enters. The final meaning does not matter in the face of the present signifier, extending the allegory to the end; Melville plays with symbols, often supported by biblical names, but which are never complete translations, only open readings. If Conrad or Stevenson, not to mention Wilde's *Dorian Gray*, choose to highlight the broken unity, the solution to the fragmented subject prior to the great revolution that brought about advances in the field of psychology, they opt to play the presence of an external double, from Hoffmann's *The Sandman* to Poe's *William Wilson*. With Freud's *The Uncanny*, the double will imply a second life, thus removing the fear of death (Yi 41), but that guarantee of immortality will be the mark of repressed death that will end up assuming its role.

In romanticism, the self is the individual genius, but that idealized self subsumes its own shadows in another double. The idea of shadow or reflection as the essence of the subject can be traced back to the work of *The wonderful story of Peter Schlemihl* (1814) by Von Chamisso or in the seminal work of German expressionism, *The Student of Prague* (1913) by P. Wegener. In *Moby Dick*, as a work that navigates now in Kant now in Locke, as stated in chapter LXXIII (MD: 500), the shadow has its importance: in chapters LXXI, CXXXIII, and CXXXIV, the whale is compared to a white shadow. Or the ghostly character of Fedallah compared to an immaterial shadow, at one point overlapping Ahab's shadow as if it were an ethereal personification of his blasphemous madness, in chapter CXXX, page. 774 and in LXXIII, p. 501. And Ishmael, in chapter VII, defines himself as a shadow: «I think we have completely misunderstood this question of Life and Death. I think that what they call my shadow on earth is my true substance. (MD: 124). Ahab identifies himself with his shadow in chapter CXXXII. «Ahab leaned on the rail and watched his shadow sink deeper into the water before his gaze the more he forced himself to penetrate the depth. But the lovely aromas in that intoxicating air finally seemed to dispel, for a moment, cancer in his soul.^{xxii} Shadow as madness, shadow as essence. The only characters who are said to have shadows in the work are: Ahab, Fedallah, and Ishmael, not counting the shadows that Pip saw, a character I will focus on later, and which drove him crazy. That shadow is also the sinister double that must be conjured, even recognizing oneself in that Other, because that double is the beginning of identity, but also of fratricidal struggle; only one survives, which leads us to a God jealous who seeks the exclusivity of his creature, even if he does not understand what is asked of him because everything is asked of him (Trías CF I:558-561).

The megalomaniacal ego, in this case of Ahab, grows with his excessive desire, an excess that will lead to his destruction (Yi 41) because the satanic is freed from his own arrogance (Trías CF I:572-573). Everything will be a product of the narcissism of an ego that does not accept its limits, a border dweller who wants to transgress its being of the limit. Thus, the ego recreates itself in substitute figures that take the form of an infantile self; an Ishmael astonished as a child.^{xxiii} A way to break the chain that links one to the birth of a mother (Yi 42). According to Rank, this double ends up confronting his initial self since both are confused and unfinished because they belong in part to another, who is himself (Yi 42). Death is the end of one or both when a suicide occurs, although, in the case of Frankenstein, the monster immolates himself after killing his creator.^{xxiv} Ishmael survives the death of Ahab and all the sailors of the Pequod. This happens because before death, they have once again seen the face of the mother, *Moby Dick* (Yi 43), as the primal and creative nature that she is, but also destructive. And both in Conrad's story and in *Moby Dick*, they must make a human sacrifice.^{xxv} (Yi 44). Man wants to return to his undifferentiated beginnings, to return to himself, says Conrad's protagonist.^{xxvi} Ahab's death is the moment in which the narrator can live. Until then, Ishmael and Ahab have not interacted directly, as I have noted. Ishmael is the narrator of the dialogue with oneself, without witnesses. The boundaries between Ahab and the whale are broken by aggression and the presence of the whalebone leg, a marker of the original leg lessness. The boundaries between Ahab and his crew are based on the hierarchy that marks obedience and functions.^{xxvii}; and, also for the contract with the famous gold doubloon, the price of all sailors, but there are loopholes: the humour of the second officer, Stubb,

who does not forget the economic importance of whaling, for example in chapter XCII with Pip's fall into the sea; Starbuck's attempts to make the captain understand the illogical uselessness, economically above all, of the pursuit of an animal^{xxviii}, which ultimately makes him an abnormal, quoting Foucault, a monster, because he violates social laws and those of nature, by pursuing an irrational animal; or the figure, already mentioned, of Pippin, called Pip^{xxix}, who has seen the face of death, guardian of the ultimate limit, a point, which Trias calls space-light, where the ontological intersects with the topological, and that confluence has made him go crazy:

"The sea, to his derision, had kept his finite body afloat, but had drowned the infinity of his soul. (...) It took him to unknown depths, where strange shadows of the still formless primordial world slipped before his passive eyes; and wisdom, that wretched newt, revealed the heaping piles of him; (...) Pip saw the innumerable coral insects, omnipresent like God, who raised their colossal worlds from the firmament of the waters. He saw the foot of God on the pedal of the loom, and he said it and that's why his comrades called him crazy. Thus, the madness of man is the sanity of heaven; (...) And for better or worse, he then feels detached and indifferent like his God." (Chap. XCIII, p. 616)

Susan Yi brings us back to Lacan and his mirror stage^{xxx}, of the reflection-simulacrum, that paradox between the other who is not you/and the other who is yourself, a moment of split with the Symbolic. Therefore, there is a double split, with the exterior being a subject and with its own interior, which sometimes does not want to disconnect from the maternal pre-Oedipal (Yi 36). As the author points out, the radical other of man is a woman, and, citing Braidotti, she establishes, erroneously in her strict statement, that there is no god in mythology who is born of a woman (Yi 37). Susan Yi, mentioning Rich, points out that a man's fear of ceasing to be a man takes shape in matrophobia and to avoid it:

"The masculine double curbs his matrophobia through his patrophilia, establishing a surrogate mother: by conferring the procreative function on a father who engenders himself, the replica of the son thus avoids a disturbing gender displacement, alleviates his fear of a death identified maternally, and thus anticipates the promise of eternal life, (...)" (Yi 37)

Melville's god seems more like the Spinozian god than Emerson's transcendental one. But that divinity, a unique substance, allows the ineffable to be perceptible, as indicated in chapter LXXX: "The whale, like all things that are powerful, shows a false face to the common world" (MD: 529). The hidden is what is dangerous, but it is what is valuable. The whale as a symbol, given its difficulty in apprehending it, allows us to master the ineffable since it helps us formalize it; until we reach the whiteness of the void of Moby Dick. What cannot be conceived as a symbol remains outside human experience, although its presence can be felt. Faced with Emersonian optimism, Melville sees more of the shadow that hangs over man, that centaur, who can fall into nihilism due to the lack of meaning in the world and of his own existence.

Moby Dick, in his identification as the biblical Leviathan, is above all a creature created by God, and, therefore, his existence and power are subordinate to the divine will, as in the book of Job, and as can be understood in this work: Moby Dick is the border monster who prevents Ahab's transgression. He can also point to it as a display of the greatness of God and his creation, which is why he is targeted by Ahab. But it can also be seen as an evil force, a symbol of chaos and evil. Therefore, it would be closer to those dark and destructive primal forces of the world, identifying with one of the monsters of the Apocalypse (21, 1-2) and opposed to the will of God or prior to his action, as happens with the original ocean from which the earth arises, an idea with which Ahab wants to justify his revenge, which oscillates against God and against Evil, Melville undoubtedly linked them to the point of ID. Since Hobbes, the Leviathan is a metaphor for political or state power, specifically authoritarian power; in this case, the Leviathan is the product of Ahab's political action over his crew, a will to power that brings us closer to Nietzsche (Anderson 2015 171). In this way, all the meanings of Leviathan would be included in the work. But the last bastion prevails against the ontological transgression of Ahab and his seduced crew, as deduced from Triasian philosophy:

"The monster embodies the negative condition that the being-of-the-limit has to face (...). He marks the border from which the domains of man disappear. fateful guardian of a no man's land. A space of absolute negativity, without possibility, without return or possible agency. Only the outside, a gloomy and abyssal element, that opens to another unimaginable existence. (...) matrix of an unclean universe." (Ruiz de Samaniego in AAVV 2023 49).

The fact that Ishmael is both the one who receives the teachings and the one who offers them to us as a wise man further links us to the figure between Ishmael and Ahab. That link of Ishmael as Ahab reborn is perceived in chapter CXXVIII, "The Pequod meets the Rachel." In this chapter, Ahab refuses to look for the son of the captain of the ship Rachel. The chapter ends with the phrase: "It was Rachel, crying for her children, because they were not there." Vessel and mother are identified as a single entity. This time Rachel, Jacob's favourite woman, recovers her lost son Joseph, sold by his half-brothers.^{xxxi}

Ishmael dies like Ahab to rejoin a whaling ship. Following the structural-functional theory of ritual, we can affirm that the structure is reinforced and favoured by the final cathartic effect of the ritual, as Aristotle pointed out. And what is the end of the Pequod, if

not a cathartic ending that teaches us that our place in the world is the fine line of the border fence and does so through anti-structural values, such as Ahab's hubris or Ishmael's anguish, which They reinforce social ties. The subject, or person in Triasian terms, returns to a community. But after the journey, which should be transformative, we observe that the book ends and begins with Ishmael calling and calling, just when what he intends with his name is to be heard, since the Hebrew etymology of Ishmael, אֱלֹהִים שָׁמַע, means "God has heard", that is, it has been heard by God^{xxxii}. But Ahab/Ishmael despite the invocations, blasphemies or not, are always cries launched towards the fence of mystery.

Chapter LXXXVII is basic to understanding the whale not as a monster but as a mother: «Some of the most subtle secrets of the seas seemed to be revealed to us in that enchanted pond. We saw young leviathanic loves in the depths. (MD: 581) Ishmael seems amazed by everything; he appears to us as if he were a newborn fascinated by what he sees; after all, Ishmael is the only one who has never participated in whaling. Despite the narrator's admiration for what he sees and that, for the classics, philosophy is born from astonishment^{xxxiii}, but amazement means going towards the shadow (Carrasco Conde 14), and Ishmael begins his journey, clearly doubtful, and we can affirm that before wonder there is strangeness, the question. Ishmael begins the novel with two doubts: his name and why he is going to embark.

Symbols weave a fabric of experience through which members of a culture participate with each other. Ishmael, who is the pilgrim, is looking for something in the sea, as he tells us in Chapter I; the conclusion is that Ahab is obviously looking for the White Whale to kill it and, with its death, destroy the fiction, or not, of a silent God and deaf. In chapter XLI, Moby Dick, Ishmael tells the story of Ahab's obsession and does so in great detail.

There is a third character in this triadic relationship: Pip, a link between Ishmael and Ahab. The only character Ahab trusts. Pip, after the fall accident, seems gone, attacked by madness. This reminds him of Ahab, but also of a messenger, since he has seen the face behind the veil because nature is the mysterious Truth that cannot, nor should, be known.^{xxxiv} and she doesn't want to see him again. Her connection to madness is expressed in chapter CXXV.^{xxxv} Otto's ominous god takes his body in the eyes of a Pip who has travelled to the heart of darkness and from whom he cannot return without losing something, in this case, his sanity. But he still has enough left to know that all who live in the Pequod, if they follow the path of Ahab, will end up defeated by the impossibility of transgression. At times, Pip and Ahab are the two faces of the same madness: one has seen the face of the unspeakable, and the other is crazy to reveal it, sometimes with the deluded intention of demonstrating that there is nothing behind the mask of God, although I fear that Ahab's anger is directed toward a God who refuses to show himself. Ahab believes that by killing Moby Dick, they will both be saved from his obsession, and there will be no impediments to being able to speak with God without intermediaries, a radical Lutheranism or an atheism that would reveal the non-existence of God, freeing man.

2. Conclusion

The white whale is unknown until its final appearance^{xxxvi} and in that context, it could be interpreted as a manifestation of the divine, a hypostasis where the divine and the demonic come together, which would bring us closer to the Saint of Rudolf Otto. But God will always be forbidden; he can only be glimpsed, barely distinguished, and a shadow that slips away.

There are no lasting answers, but that connection with Jonah brings us back to the idea of repetition. The quote from the epilogue of the novel quotes Job (1,15): "I alone escaped to give you the news," returns us to the beginning of the narrative. Therefore, we find a story that will begin again, replicating the eternal repetitions of life, and here we would see a Melville who approaches Nietzsche and what Trías calls "ritual art" that "promotes a descent into hell, a journey to the imaginary and horror, but that journey leads back again." to the everyday, so that the subject remains, through the journey, transformed" (CF I:146). And in that repetition, we could wish that it were not the same, and thus it would take us to the principle of variation of Trias, an eternal return, but, following the musical simile, never the same, always with some modulated or tonal change. But when Ishmael compares himself to Ixion, he returns us to repetitive and endless punishment (MD: 823). Melville is much more pessimistic regarding this transformed character^{xxxvii}, although it makes Ishmael sacred, it is better to also make his meaning sacred because he has been forgiven by the Sea and Moby Dick, and it is clear in the phrase: "The harmless sharks slid past me as if they were wearing a padlock." in the mouth; The fierce sea falcons sailed with sheathed beaks. (MD:823)^{xxxviii}.

Ishmael always seems to understand them all and, often, under the cover of amazement. Ishmael moves in the liminality of what is natural and the supernatural, between the spiritual that Carlyle imbues in his heroes and a Goethe in which the action is at the beginning. Ishmael and Ahab are the perfect pairing, so much so that we can see a single character in them. Both are marginal, one because of the senselessness of her awareness of her life that sends him to enlist Ishmael, and the other for giving her a greater senselessness, Ahab in her unhealthy obsession. Both are linked to the end, although unlike other doppelgängers, such as Hyde and Jekyll or Frankenstein and his creature, one of them survives. Ishmael has a possible name, but like Ahab, he also tends to distance himself from men to withdraw into his own narrative, of which he is the author.^{xxxix} This identification can be ontic or, perhaps, more of an integration of the symbol, united in its two parts, as Trías would say: "mature way of repeating, not in the imaginary universe, but in the symbolic one." (CF I:575). A broken Ishmael-Ahab who always retells the story, perhaps a lie or a

twist on them.^{xl}, of a daring doomed to failure, but it is in the journey itself where human nature itself is discovered: ductile and aware of that quality, plural, pure becoming, even when it chooses to fight against a single and morbid objective.

For all these reasons, *Moby Dick* is *Genesis* and *Apocalypse* united by a thin thread; it is the eternal return of Nietzsche and the complete works of Freud^{xli}. It is the ontology and theology (or metaphysics) of an author who turns into an adventure novel, anodyne by current canons.^{xlii}, all the feelings of a man who, having touched the horizon, ends up living in an inappropriate world.

The novel remains open since what Melville is interested in is "more to identify the mystery than to solve it," as Hernández Arias indicates (MD: 33)^{xliii}.

In the end, Ishmael is left alone and in that situation of helplessness: "«Solitude, where all originality, all surprising and daring beauty, in a word, all poetry, matures in turn everything that is perverse, monstrous, guilty and absurd." (CF I:584).

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ⁱThese are “declarative propositions that deploy and develop the border concepts of border reason. “This deployment allows the enunciation, or the manifestation, of what that cause in question, or thing, reveals about itself, or lets its internal reality be shown.” (Triás CF II: 1303)

ⁱⁱA lack, a state of loss that brings Triás and Lacan closer.

ⁱⁱⁱThe symbol in Triás is fundamental. Going to the etymological origin of the concept, σύμβολον, it is the part of a message that reaches us incomplete. The man only receives in his physical surroundings a part of that message, that password. The symbol is an arrow that sends you towards the past or the future, but that always remains in horizons that are unattainable, or in the best of situations it would be given to us as an event horizon. Triás attempts from the caesura, from that torn curtain, a possibility of real connection between the immanent and the transcendent, that of physical reality and that of the undecidable. The monster can be that message filtered through the caesura, but it can also be the border inhabitant of the other part of the hermetic fence, and therefore the monster is part of the mystery, like the sphinx and its deadly riddles. Ahab compares the inside of the whale to a sphinx in the chapter of the same name, chap. LXX or the beginning of LXXX.

^{iv}Do not confuse these categories with the categories used in cultural studies where they are flexible and tend to be assimilated, which in the case of the monster would mean its domestication, in Smits 501.

^vFor Triás, the limit is more of a *limes*, where an encounter can occur, it is not an insurmountable wall, it is more of a mixed zone, in the style of the Zone that appears in Tarkovsky's film *Stalker* (1979). There is a supplement of mystery that the *limes* projects to the outside (Triás CF II: 1289). In chapter VII, Ishmael compares human beings to oysters that look at the sun through the water; we cannot be sure of what we see (MD: 124). Triás perceives the limit as a translucent space whose true value is prohibited, since both sides are needed to have the complete message. The defining example of him in art would be Duchamp's work, *The Great Glass* (1923). The oyster that Ishmael describes to us can be understood as the uterus; “the creative force of the feminine principle; initiation, justice and the law of cosmic life” (Cooper 135). Motherhood is undoubtedly the central theme of *Moby Dick*, and of course, accompanied by its shadow: sterility or the impossibility of conceiving.

^{vi}Arana points out that this presentation already points us to “who are you?”

^{vii}There are many purely descriptive chapters and others in which the narrator strangely knows dialogues in which he is not present.

^{viii}For Popa, the work plays with what Lyotard will call “small narratives” and with the ambiguity, for example, of whiteness appearing as positive or negative, a way of demonstrating man's inability to understand nature, in Popa 250-251.

^{ix}A true Noah's Ark, where different races coexist. Where that Other is part of oneself. In the whaling there is a brotherhood that can be interpreted as a defence of the diversity of humanity or even of the newborn United States itself.

^xA melancholy that can be understood from Lacan as a state of loss.

^{xi}Defoe in his work *Adventures of Captain Singleton* (1720) describes a very similar sentence: “to think of death is to die; and to always be thinking about it is to be dying all your life” (Chapter XIX, page 301) in [The life, adventures, and piracies of the famous Captain Singleton \(archive.org\)](#)

^{xii}In his first novel *Redburn*, at the end of chapter

^{xiii}“So, for better or worse, the two of us, for that period of time, were married.”

^{xiv}J. Tébar talks about the vertigo installed in the *Pequod* and sees its origin in Poe's stories, in AAVV 2013 p. 98. As Triás himself points out: “vertigo is, together with amazement, and love-passion, the emotion that guides me towards the concept of Limit” (Alemán and Larriera 19). Vertigo is that struggle “between the nothingness that summons it and the fear of plunging into the void.” (V. Brazil at AAVV 2023: 22)

^{xv}Very clear on page 752, chapter CXXV. Although as C. Malabou indicates, what is rejected is the vertigo of the different other (Malabou. 70). In the case of the whaler, Melville eliminates from the equation the other human being other than the civilized white, now the Other is the whale, nature.

^{xvi}Following Deleuze, “Life can only be thought by resorting to negative characters such as the formless, (...) the in-human, characters that open up the unlimited as a power that overflows all cosmos or world” in C. Grave, p. 3. 4.

^{xvii}Rosenthal points out that, if Fedallah is the satanic part of Ahab, Ishmael becomes Ahab's other “alter ego,” in Rosenthal.

^{xviii}Something the crew is aware of, sin brings death since the expulsion from Eden, in Popa 255.

^{xxix}As I have already pointed out, motherhood is the key issue of the work. Ahab does not want to kill the father, he wants to kill the mother, in this case the creation and, specifically, the most enormous of them: the whale. His impossibility of returning to his mother's womb, to the primordial Eden, leads him to try to cross the limit.

^{xxx}He perceives it because, as Derrida indicates, the future can only be known in the form of absolute danger, in Agüero Ávila, p, 74.

^{xxxi}We must not forget the first chapters of Moby Dick when Ishmael and Queequeg meet, chap. IV, where sleeping with a man leads him to a nightmare with his stepmother or when he compares the savage to "a creature in a state of transition: neither caterpillar nor butterfly" (MD: 112)

^{xxxii}For SE Swanson we would be looking at an example of narcissism. Every time a character sees his reflection in the water, he can observe different aspects of himself, in Swanson 28

^{xxxiii}If at first the double tries to ensure immortality, later the double detaches itself and proceeds to self-observation and self-criticism. Until psychoanalysis we will not be able to talk about the hidden repressed that takes the form of the double (A. Serrano Raurell, in Piñol 2015, pp. 173-174)

^{xxxiv}Triguero Moreno points out that both are the same character, in Piñol 2015 p, 161 and 163

^{xxxv}We must not forget that Ahab dies almost crucified between the harpoons and ropes of Moby Dick's back. And he does it after 3 days of persecution. A Passion inverse to that of Christ. Although Ishmael stays afloat after 1 night, 1 day and, as he says, in the epilogue, he is rescued on the second day. We would be almost facing the 2 nights that pass between the death of Jesus and his resurrection, Friday nightfall, just at the time when Ahab dies, and Sunday dawn.

^{xxxvi}As Corona indicates, Moby Dick's own name begins with the feminine M, with the masculine Dick, 36-39. Foy points out that, following Turner's theory of multivocality, a sign carries a whole range of meanings arranged in a semantic field (Foy 11), therefore, the whale as such has a wide range of meanings. On the other hand, the monster as a concept is polysemous (Moraña 84).

^{xxxvii}A hierarchy that compares the micro with the macro, there is a transposition between the order of the ship and that of the cosmos (MD: 82-83). I do not agree with Coughlan-Wills' thesis regarding the difference between Ishmael's rhizomatic concept and Ahab's patriarchal structure regarding relationships within the ship. Ahab is the captain and that is assumed by the entire crew. The more horizontal perspective of relationships is naturally between equals, but, for example, there is an unequal status between the harpooners and the rest of the sailors on the ship. Therefore, there is a class micro-society within the Pequod. There is also no interrelation between species, the whale is always seen as another. This does not imply that Melville was very critical of the brutality of the command structure in the navy, the reason for this was the desertion he made during his career as a sailor.

^{xxxviii}"Dementia", Starbuck will affirm in chapter XXXVI, p. 286.

^{xxxix}For CLR James, Pip is the crucial figure of the work from the perspective of the study of slavery, the basis of the American economy, cited in Sawyer 362-363.

^{xxx}"Every day I see death at work in the mirror" Jean Cocteau, in R. Bermúdez Dini (Piñol 2015 101). Sometimes the mirror, like Nietzsche's abyss, looks back at us and what we see is the monster that we ourselves are, an idea highlighted in Anderson 2015 p. 244, our particular Mr. Hyde that nests inside and often seeks to come to the surface. Ahab lets out all the repressed execrable things. That rejected is the possibility of the worst (Malabou p. 71).

^{xxxi}Trias speaks of the sons of Cain, condemned to err for neglecting their obligations to God: Ishmael, Esau or the 11 brothers of Joseph. (CF I 545)

^{xxxii}Chapter XLIII is titled: Listen! And he tells how one of the crew believes he hears a noise in the hold, later it will be revealed that the harpooners hired by Ahab to put an end to Moby Dick are hiding.

^{xxxiii}For Mooney, the novel begins and ends in wonder (Mooney 5).

^{xxxiv}Bhuvaneshwari et al, pp. 2, outlining that Ahab has transgressed the limits and linking the fish with Christ, that is, the slaughter of whales is identified with the dismemberment of Christ. In this case, a dismembered person is in turn the dismemberer, which could be understood as a mockery of God. An idea that appears clearly in chapter XXXVII, 292.

^{xxxv}As Deleuze and Guattari indicate, regarding artists: "They often have precarious and too fragile health, but not because of their illnesses or their neuroses, but because they have seen in life something too big for anyone, too big for them, and that he has discreetly marked them with the seal of death" (p. 174).

^{xxxvi}That hiatus, following Nancy, will be the representation of the invisible and opens a space where mystery and the hermetic can live; while, for Derrida, it will be the monstrous as unfigurable, denying the other his closeness, in Agüero Águila, p.65. Presence, in Nancy, will be access, in the same way that when the signifier becomes sacred, it loses meaning, in Agüero Águila, p.69.

^{xxxvii}For Popa, we would be looking at a sample of the philosophy of shipwreck, who's antecedent in the work is chapter LII, The Albatross, where, following Coleridge, death is announced to us. The man is a castaway under the stars (Popa 259-260). Sawyer also speaks of shipwreck as rebirth, in Sawyer 371

^{xxxviii}Rosenthal sees in this scene the divine presence, the *shekhiná* שכינה, in Rosenthal. In the first British edition the epilogue was omitted, so everyone died at the end of the novel, in Anderson 2015 344.

^{xxxix}"In the end, there is only the writing of a life that is accepted before the insurmountable wall of memory destroyed by recreating it," in C. Grave, p. 42.

^{xl}In Dryden 105 et seq., where he points out the evolution of Ishmael from a narrator absorbed in life, to a narrator of the epic of Ahab.

^{xli}For a psychoanalytic criticism of the work, in H. Ísaoçlu

^{xlii}https://elpais.com/cultura/2017/12/12/babelia/1513073168_414520.html

^{xliii}For Anderson, the entire work is a story of redemption (Anderson 2015, 30). In his Platonic interpretation of the novel, he observes the cycles of death and resurrection especially after Father Mapple's sermon, p. 22