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**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## Moby Dick: The Metaphysical Monster

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**ABSTRACT**

In this article, I will focus on an aspect that can be inferred from reading Moby Dick: the voyage of the Pequod as an attempt to exceed the human limit with the intention to punish the culprit of his expulsion from Eden, at the same time, Moby Dick is the monster at the gates of the limit, and whose purpose is to prevent this transgression.

**KEYWORDS**

Trías, ontology, metaphysics, monster, Moby Dick, Melville

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### 1. Introduction

Moby Dick is a novel that, like every great work, is an open work, and its configuration is multiform. It is impossible to exhaust the interpretations of a novel of the magnitude of Melville's masterpiece.

To carry out this analysis of the novel, I will start with the work of Eugenio Trías and the aesthetic and ontological categories<sup>1</sup> that underpin his philosophy of the limit. We are faced with a new perspective that shows us from the beginning that the journey undertaken by Captain Ahab is entirely inhuman since it is an ontological transgression of one's own being, in this case, of the being of the limit. But this rebellious attempt is the fruit of the very nature of an entity that has been expelled from a paradise for sin, whether it exists or not, and whose punishment has been pain, especially when giving birth to children, suffering to obtain food, and, finally, death.

In the Trías system, existence is the first given, but this existence is based on lack<sup>2</sup>. This lack, real or imaginary, implies that the subject is linked to the limit. A limit, rather a *limes*, that allow such a specific interaction between the ontotopology that Trías proposes: a fence of appearance, the sensible reality, the place where the bordering inhabitant lives, that is, the human being; and a hermetic border, which seems to press on the others fences, but does not allow us to glimpse its reality. From this intercommunication, breaks appear, caesuras such as death or illness or Evil (Trías CF II: 1266); this Evil of a metaphysical character accompanies us since the fall into sin; therefore, it is an innate evil, visible at the end of Chapter LXIX, p. 478. The border dweller is held down by an unknown cause that entails a foreseeable and known future: mortality and, with that journey that is life, ignorance of the ultimate meaning of that unfounded existence. The responses to this situation are varied: submission, rebellion, or asking for an account, as Job does with God, because if the Covenant is a contract, there has been a party that has not fulfilled (Trías CF II: 1267). In a very Platonic way, Trías defines this condition as a fall into exile: "in pure Sisyphean condemnation" (CF II: 1267).

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<sup>1</sup>These categories are "declarative propositions that deploy and develop the borderline concepts of borderline reason. And this deployment allows the pronunciation, or the manifestation, of what that cause in question, or thing, reveals about itself, or allows to be shown of its internal reality." (Trías CF II: 1303)

<sup>2</sup>A lack, a state of loss that brings Trías and Lacan closer together.

*La razón fronteriza* is the work of Trías, where he develops his theory of knowledge by determining some categories of thought. This categorial system had already been proposed, although in a symbolic key<sup>3</sup>, in the previous work *La Edad del Espíritu* <sup>4</sup>. The system of categories makes up the *organon* on which he bases his philosophical proposal: the being of the limit that is recreated. Therefore, we have the being that is discovered in its own existence, one thinks in border reason separating being and nothingness, later one knows itself as a limit, thus differentiating the same from the different, to end up recreating itself permanently, blocking unity and multiplicity (HV: 127-128). The limit does not allow us to fall into the idea of the absolute because it correlates different areas and, at the same time, «determines an otherness that, in a certain way, constitutes its own shadow» (HV: 98).

The Pequod's journey is an impossible expedition because its objective is to reach the edge of the world and, therefore, can only end with the death of the entire crew, with the only exception of the one heard by God, Ishmael. The *Pequod* becomes the death cart, so well exemplified in V. Sjöström's 1921 film. The ship becomes a liminal, interstitial space, which is between the sea and the sky, halfway between both. Its departure is narrated in Chapter XXII, and the title could not be more eloquent: Merry Christmas. An irony that the day of the Nativity of the Lord becomes the beginning of the end for the entire crew.

Ahab can be defined as a monster because of his inhumanity. Monsters can be formally anthropomorphic, zoomorphic, or teramorphic<sup>5</sup>, and in terms of their function, they can be threatening, protective, or liberating. Ahab seduces the crew by highlighting the threat of the whale, which undoubtedly represents a danger *per se* because of its albino attribute<sup>6</sup>. Ahab creates a monster for his crew, although he does so by transferring all his own evil to the whale, and in exchange, Ahab offers them liberation from Evil. But everything is a mirage: the monster guards the limit, and the Pequod, upon reaching it, only manages to reach its own limit, in this case death of everyone. Therefore, the work presents us with a double monstrous typology: the one defined externally by its anomaly, such as the whale's white colour<sup>7</sup>, clearly set out in chapter XLII, and that of the monstrous behaviour, therefore ethical, of Captain Ahab, who does not hesitate to sacrifice everything for revenge against God <sup>8</sup>, thus crossing all the limits of his condition as a border dweller that he is. Ahab spends the novel blaspheming in a vain attempt to break God's silence. God does not listen to Ahab.

Moby Dick can never be God since God is beyond the physical world, and the whale is right on the edge, on the translucent, white *limes*, that colour which, as Sloterdijk indicates, is a non-colour, is ungraspable, which leads him to suggest horror (Sloterdijk 20-21). In chapter CV, Melville writes: "In view of the fact because this leviathan has come to us from eternity, (...)" (MD: 669). Moby Dick, as a monster that protects the confines of the fence of appearance, emerges from the mist that surrounds the beginning and the end of everything, but that cannot be crossed, although it can send symbols, those signals that Trías defends.

Moby Dick as a fantastic monster cannot be interpreted solely from symbolic or allegorical perspectives. As Sucasas indicates: "it would neutralize the inalienable value of the emphasis on presence." (AAVV 2023 142). Moby Dick is the whale, as the original title of the novel indicated. Therefore, it is not an intangible, one platonic idea, but instead, we are dealing with an actual entity, an existing monster.

Ahab and his obsession are the result of his limits and his determination to go beyond them to reach God, although he must settle for the castrating mother. Ahab has already lost a leg. God is absent or indifferent, so all he can do is punish his creation, and what better example than the whale, the most remarkable creature in this cosmogony<sup>9</sup>? In any case, this attack is suicide since, by killing

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<sup>3</sup> The symbol in Trías is a fundamental concept. Symbol, in its etymology, is the part of a complete message. The man only receives a part of that message, of that password, in his enclosure. The symbol sends towards the past or the future, but it always remains in the unreachable horizons, or in the best situations it would be given to us as an event horizon. Trías attempts, from the caesura between both enclosures, the possibility of the symbol, a connection. The monster can be that message, but it can also be the border inhabitant of the other part of the hermetic enclosure, and therefore, the monster is part of the mystery, like the sphinx and its deadly riddles. Ahab compares the whale with a sphinx in the chapter of the same name, chapter LXX or the beginning of LXXX. There is a third possible monster: the border inhabitant who refuses to accept his condition, what Trías calls the border imperative.

<sup>4</sup>In this work, he defines seven categories grouped, the first six in pairs and the seventh being the one that unifies the rest.

<sup>5</sup>Glockner, cited by C. Pimentel, categorizes monsters as natural, which in turn can be physical, moral, and imaginary (Piñol 2015b 104) and adds later: "when dealing with monsters, to the principle that establishes the act of seeing to believe, the principle of believing to see must be added," cited by C. Pimentel (Piñol 2015b 114).

<sup>6</sup>Albinism is a problem for many people, there have been many cases of murders in sub-Saharan Africa, but also among animal species, for example, the case of a newborn white chimpanzee killed for its difference understood as a threatening otherness, in Monsó 157-158. Melville mentions human albinism and the fear it produces in humans on page 325.

<sup>7</sup>White is the color of the shroud and is therefore closely related to death. For Isoğlu, the key to the novel is in this whiteness, which has different meanings for the different characters, in Isoğlu 117.

<sup>8</sup>A struggle that, following Deleuze, is always destructive, in C. Grave, p. 37

<sup>9</sup>This consideration already appears in the Extracts section, in a quote from Goldsmith's Natural History (MD: 67). But it is worth quoting *Avodah Zarah* 3b: "Rav Yehuda says, there are twelve hours in a day. In the first three hours God sits and learns Torah, in the second three hours He sits

the mother, Ahab must die. Although Ahab does not know it, or so he wants to believe, he is still umbilically connected to creation itself; only death can consciously separate him. For Hagen, Ahab intends to kill the mother to reaffirm the masculine, underlining his independence from the abject that the feminine supposes in its maternal form (Hagen 38). The issue of motherhood is a central theme in the work and can be seen in multiple chapters: in XXXII, LVIII or XCII, the relationship between mothers and whale calves is described; in LXXXVII where the protection of these calves by the entire herd is emphasized; in chapter XCIV, the parallelism between the motherhood of cetaceans and that of humans is described; and, a clear example of the centrality of motherhood can be perceived in the rebirth from the belly of the whale of the harpooner Tashtego who had been trapped, like a new Jonah or Pinocchio, in chapter LXXXVIII: "Now, if Tashtego had perished in that head, it would have been a beautiful way to perish: drowned in the whitest and most refined of fragrant sperm oils, and having for coffin, carriage, and tomb, the secret inner chamber, the sanctum sanctorum of the cetacean." Motherhood<sup>10</sup> is the central axis of this novel, and its darkest shadow pivots on that centre: sterility (Trías CF I:593).

As I have already indicated, Ahab, in his attempt to break the bond that unites him with his nature as a creature, only perceives it from the primordial murder in the primordial place: the sea. It is an attempt at chaos. But returning to the origin is forbidden<sup>11</sup>. The fence of the beyond, the hermetic, can be perceived, as I have already indicated, by what we do not see<sup>12</sup>. Even for some symbols that we perceive from the beyond, more like riddles than answers, what we cannot do is cross that limit, much less reverse it. Ahab, in an act of pure *hybris*, intends to do so, but as the son of the absent Father, he will die crucified to his mother. Although his death is what allows Ishmael to be reborn<sup>13</sup>.

This journey is a trip to the land of mothers that Goethe<sup>14</sup> had described in his *Faust*. In the first act of the second part, the following dialogue appears:

«MEPHISTOPHELES: The pagans are alien to me; they live in their hell, but there is a way.

FAUST: Speak without delay!

M: I don't like to reveal such a high mystery. There are goddesses who reign, sitting alone on their thrones. There is no space around them, much less time. Talking about them is very difficult. They are the Mothers.

F: (Scared.) The Mothers!

M: Are you afraid?

F: Mothers! Mothers! It sounds so strange!

M: And so, it is. They are goddesses unknown to you mortals, and we do not like to name them. To reach their abode, you will have to dig deep. It is your fault that we must resort to them.

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and judges the world. The third three hours God feeds the entire world and in the fourth three-hour period God plays with the Leviathan." Leviathan is God's favourite animal (fish have been created before), in [Avodah Zarah 3b:8 \(sefaria.org\)](#)

<sup>10</sup>Socrates defined his epistemology as maieutic, the method used by midwives. McDonough points out that Melville writes a poetic novel, since, as Heidegger indicates, he opens a clearing, a truth (McDonough 223-224).

<sup>11</sup>From a Lacanian perspective, we could interpret the castrated child's attempt to rebel against the father's law to become a father in turn. Ahab is castrated; his leg is a good example, but he attempts to return to the mother's womb. Rather than confronting the father who shows him that he is absent in the face of so many invocations, Ahab seeks the Mother who also abandoned him.

<sup>12</sup>If we take a more symbolist idea, as R. Álvarez does in his study of the film *Alien* (1nine7nine), Moby Dick is the attempt to see the invisible and hear the inaudible in the words of Rimbaud (Álvarez, in AAVV 2022: 50).

<sup>13</sup>As I have indicated, the Pequod sets sail on December 25th, Christmas Day, and the final confrontation with the whale takes place in September, the ninth month. Although it is difficult to calculate the length of the journey, we can state that from December to September there are nine months, the same amount of time it takes to gestate an embryo. Coincidentally, it seems that the *Pequod* catches a dozen whales, although the number does not appear, it could be nine. So, after nine dead whales, a human is reborn. There are more details linked to that number nine: the *Pequod comes across nine ships, each one with a symbolism clearly related to death or the Bible, all of them appear as warnings and signs of bad omen: the Albatross as in Coleridge's The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, the one-handed captain of *Samuel Enderby*, the *Jeroboam*, or the *Virgin (Jungfrau)*; when the whale's skeleton is measured, everything seems to come down to nine (MD: 661-662); and St. Elmo's fire, which appears in chapter CXIX, causes nine flames (MD: 731-732) which Ahab interprets as a positive sign from the Spirit of Fire that leads them to Moby Dick. I cannot stress enough that motherhood is the crucial theme of Moby Dick.

<sup>14</sup>Goethe is quoted several times in the work, for example, in the initial chapter, unnumbered, entitled "Etymologies", in chapter LXXXVI, or when Ahab paraphrases the German author when he says that he prefers to see a human eye than the sea or the sky or even God. Goethe in his theory of colour makes a similar statement, citing Plotinus and Meister Eckart, but without the blasphemy added by Ahab, in Martínez Gallardo.

F: Where is the path to take?

M: There is no path! You are going where no one has ever trodden or can tread; you are going to what has not been accessed and remains inaccessible. Are you ready? There are no locks or bolts to be removed; you will be plunged into solitude. Have you come to conceive what desert and isolation are?

F: You might want to spare me those words, for these smells to me like a witch's kitchen of a time long past. Have I not had to meet the world? Have I not had to learn what emptiness is and teach emptiness? When I thought I was speaking reasonably, the contradiction resounded with redoubled force; so, faced with so much contradiction, I had to flee into solitude, into the untraveled, and in order not to be completely alone, I had to give myself over to the devil.

M: Even if you were to swim across the ocean and investigate it, you would at least see wave after wave coming. Even if you were afraid of succumbing and sinking to the bottom, you would see something. You would surely see dolphins gliding in the gentleness of the calm sea. You would see the clouds, the sun, the moon, and the stars. But you will see nothing in the eternally empty distance, you will not hear your footsteps, and you will not find anything firm to rest on.

F: You speak like the first mystagogue who has ever deceived the faithful neophytes, only in reverse. You send me into the void so that I may increase my art and my strength. You treat me like that cat to see if I can pull the chestnuts out of the fire for you. But come on, let's go deeper, in the void I hope to find everything.

M: I praise you now, before you leave me. I see that you know the devil well. Take this key.<sup>15</sup>

Goethe is an author well-known to Melville<sup>16</sup>. These mothers described in *Faust* are a source of contemplation and admiration for Goethe, but all of this, as Reyes indicates, is accompanied by silence and fearful respect (Reyes 188). A paradox is produced between this unattainable distance, which at the same time is perceived as an intimate dependence:

«FAUST (Magnificently.) In your name, Mothers who reign over the boundless, alone always, but with company! Around your head float the images of life, moving but lifeless! What once was, moves there with splendour and brilliance, for it aspires to become eternal. And you, almighty forces, send it to the pavilion of the day, to the vault of the nights. Some are caught by the gentle flow of life, others are sought by the bold sorcerer; lavish and full of confidence he reveals what everyone desires and is worthy of a miracle» (Act 1, Part 2)

And Goethe, in a conversation with Eckermann, warns him: "It is not good for us to meddle in the secrets of God." (Kings 188). Goethe recreates a myth from a text by Plutarch in which it is explained that the Greeks worshipped mothers as divinities (Kings 387).

In Trías' philosophy, this land of mothers is an important space. The first category that Trías defines, in the deployment that he presents, is that of matter, but he does so in its most original meaning: *mater*, that is, mother and matrix, but in Greek, ὕλη, it is also forest or wood of the forest (CF II, 55). Matter is the "neutral realm" (CF II, 56), but no less important for that since it is the most necessary for the spatial and temporal deployment of the *logos*, the second category in the Trías system.

Trías cannot help but look towards a certain Gnosticism because, in matter, the primordial traces of creation can be seen, and, therefore, Trías defines the nature of what he understands as a symbol. "Matrix and mystery are, in fact, the same, only in two ways of presenting themselves to the borderline reason" (Trías (CF, II, 1294). It is worth noting that Moby Dick's spine is entire of marks, of harpoon wounds, of scars that form a hieroglyphic message for all to see, in contrast to the tattoos that Queequeg exhibits.

Trías dedicated an essay to Goethe, *Goethe and his work* (1980), where he describes the Mephistophelian *daimon* as: "(...) spirit of negation, doubt, contradiction that makes action possible, mediates and nuances it, removes the roughness of the formless, makes

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<sup>15</sup> That country also has its different interpretations, for example, according to Juan Manuel de Faramiñán Fernández-Figares: «the three loves of Faust: Margaret, Helen and the Mater Gloriosa, are in reality a symbolic representation of the three fundamental aspects of the soul (physical, psychological and spiritual) (...) its connection with the Neoplatonic tradition» It can also be interpreted that this place would be where single mothers or infanticides would go, as happens after Margaret's madness and the murder of her illegitimate son. It would therefore be a symbol of exclusion and marginalization associated with women who socially had abnormal behaviour. Goethe could be criticizing his society and its practices regarding the normativity of the woman-wife-mother, the roles that female figures accused of being witches usually did not have.

<sup>16</sup> For example, Delbanco speaks of the fascination that Mephistopheles had caused in Melville, on p. 65, as did Werther in his early work, p. nine5, or Dettlaff, p. 212. Arvin perceives it as a return to Hellenism, mediated by the Germanic classics, for example (Arvin 13). Other authors, such as Herder, Schiller or Schelling, will also underline the figure of a creative Mother Nature.

it a hybrid of light and shadow, inscribes it in the universe of the real by tearing it away from the subjectivism of the possible." (CF I:436)

But Trías, following Goethe, goes deeper into his figure, pointing out the existence of another, more archaic Mephistopheles, "(...) earthbound, more apathetic, congenial like no other to the feminine soul of nature, at its lunar side." (CF I:436). For Trías, that is what is most original:

« Goethe's *Urphänomen*, which in his *Faust* gives rise to a restless and passionate search by his character, the famous episode of the journey to the kingdom of mothers, constitutes a plural plot of living archetypes that in their condition of original paradigms of natural phenomena constitute the reason or the a priori foundation, of a noumenal character, of their phenomenal appearance» (CF II:515)

In Trías, the sacred alludes to a "dark background" that never appears; it always remains forbidden and hidden. We would be faced with a splitting of Mephistopheles himself and, by extension, of hell itself: one that incites you to act and another to remain self-absorbed and unproductive (CF I:438), and good examples of this splitting are the active Ahab, who does not mind invoking the devil<sup>17</sup>, and the simpler and more passive narrator Ishmael. Although for Trías, matter is the original determination, man has always sought to encounter that which is impossible to deal with, with the primary, the past, and with the future, the future. The white whale and its attempt to hunt it is a purpose of communication with the hermetic, but also like the ghostly passion since "it is not a real object that is pursued but a product of fantasy." (Trías CF I:590). "What is a ghost? "A terrible event doomed to repeat itself over and over again," as it appears in the prologue to Guillermo del Toro's film *The Devil's Backbone* (2001) (A, Messiah 530).

When the maternal womb opens, in this case, the sea, the first thing that appears is chaos, *Χάος*, which means, precisely, space that opens, so there is an identification between chaos and motherhood. Trías points out that in this first instant, some of the great universal symbols appear: the tree, the mountain, and sunlight (CF II, 60). These are identified by Trías with the Kantian ideas of reason: God, man, and world (CF II, 60), which brings us back to the figure of the whale, which was often taken by sailors as an island. A mountain is emerging from the sea, as recorded in such famous tales as those related to Sinbad, Pinocchio, or the voyage of Saint Brendan<sup>18</sup>.

For Trías, the symbol is a sensible and, therefore, material manifestation of the sacred, revealing its ambivalence between the holy and the cursed (CF II, 61), following in the footsteps of R. Otto. But Trías separates the symbol from the sign because the latter only designates by defining its substratum, whereas the emblem "can never abstract from that substratum" (Trías CFII 59). Derrida would remain with his method in that substratum, but he would never be able to abstract a substantiated symbol.

The sea becomes a representation of the "country of mothers" because it is the origin of the earth that emerges from it. It is not necessary to cite the infinite number of cosmologies and mythologies in which water is seen as the origin of life<sup>19</sup> and the world. The sea represents that primordial and fertile force that gives rise to creation, but it is also the irrational part, contrary to the mountain, that would be the rational part (Trías CF I:588). Therefore, reason and unreason arise together and are intertwined. Trías points out that the "metaphysical foundation of all things. Foundation that has in the sea its sensitive and incarnated symbol" (CF I:532). In the beginning was the sea, as Homer taught us in the *Odyssey*: "the field of truth where destiny is manifested, and the fiercest will is tested." (Savater in AAVV 2013 p. 102).

The whale has always been a symbol of those creative waters and, therefore, of rebirth, its belly being interpreted as the grave and, at the same time, its exit, following Platonism, allowing the initiation into a new life, although in Christianity the symbol is more ambivalent since the fish is as much a symbol of Christ as the whale is also linked to the apocalyptic leviathan whose jaws are the gateway to hell (Cooper, 31-32)<sup>20</sup>. Cirlot, in his *Dictionary of Symbols*, in addition to symbolizing the occult, adds «that it includes the opposites of cosmic existence because it is found at the intersection of the circles of heaven and earth» (Cirlot 106). Whale and Pequod are both borders, but while the boat tries to cross that liquid border that is the sea, Moby Dick must punish the daring who seek knowledge that cannot be given to them.

Pequod's voyage is uncommon from a logical point of view: its purpose is not economic because it does not seek profit. Therefore, it is heretical from the Calvinist perspective, and its destination is also unknown. In that territory of the usual strange, the *unheimlich*, we would enter dealing with a whaling ship, a priori normal, but which hides something alien; they are going to hunt a whale, that is to say their objective is the familiar, the close, the known, but it is not just any whale, but a very specific one, a diabolical whale, from the Trías interpretation of *dyabolos* as the negative that comes out of the caesura that the hermetic enclosure

<sup>17</sup>In chapter CXIII p. 708

<sup>18</sup>There it is said: "This beast was created by the divine king, in the first place, before the other fish of the sea." (Chapter XIII: 18)

<sup>19</sup>From Thales of Miletus to Egyptian cosmogony.

<sup>20</sup>In any case, the whale always remains, as with Satan in the Book of Job, a servant, however fearsome, of divine orders.

makes in the enclosure of appearance, the physical world. But that whale, the usual purpose of a whaling ship, becomes a strange objective in its concretion as a white whale of unnatural intelligence.

Following Bataille, <sup>21</sup>we can distinguish in work the two extremes that exert their attraction in human societies: the pole of the homogeneous, the social, the tolerable, and the productive, that is, the usual task of a whaling ship, and, on the other hand, the heterogeneous pole, where Ahab is, and where the sacred, the social excremental, madness arise, is the pole in which the captain of *Pequod* lives. This pole cannot be symbolized or assumed by the homogeneous. We would be in another ontological condition. Here we again perceive the figure of the border dweller who responds to the border imperative: be a limit, but Ahab does not accept that ontological condition that is proper to them and tries to cross the veil of the hidden, a white veil that hides everything, and of what is impossible in an attempt to return to the lost Eden of the Mother, because "the imaginary construction transforms, in this case, the death drive into a terrified abomination against the mother's body" (Ruiz de Samaniego in AAVV 2023 57). "Only Death would allow the veil of Maya to be drawn back and offer the very essence and foundation of all things and the object of all longing and passion." (CF I:535).

Ahab is an example of how the degeneration of the human being leads us towards the monstrous. Even if Moby Dick were an ordinary whale, and losing a leg would be a regular part of hunting, Ahab's blind fury against an animal shows us the irrationality of his entire behaviour, his inhumanity. To avoid his anomalous behaviour, he must redirect his anger towards something: God, Mother, Nature, Whale.

Chapter XLII, one of the most important parts of the work, as Arana points out, speaks above all about the whiteness that provokes an ecstasy, which is a representation of a tragic desire projected as a white shadow. As Arana points out, following Lacan, white is the colour of emptiness; it is an impure hybrid. I have already pointed out Sloterdijk and his description of white as a non-colour; still, he also defines it, following the diogenic cynicism of counterfeiting currency, *paracharettein to nomisma*, as a resignification of divine white to diabolical white (Sloterdijk 19-21):

«But we have not yet solved the spell of this whiteness, nor learned why it exercises such a strong power over the soul; and something stranger and far more portentous: why, as we have seen, it is the most significant symbol of spiritual things, nay, rather, the veil par excellence of the Christian deity, and yet be what it is, the intensifying instrument in things most frightful to humanity.

Is it because of its indefiniteness that it suggests to us the pitiless voids and immensities of the universe and so stabs us in the back with the thought of annihilation when we gaze into the white depths of the Milky Way? Or is it instead because whiteness, in its essence, is not so much a colour as the visible absence of colour, and at the same time, the most concrete of all colours? Is it for these reasons that there is such a mute, meaningful emptiness in a vast snowy landscape: a colourless colouring of atheism from which we shrink? And when we consider that other theory of the natural philosophers, that all the different colours on this earth--all sublime and lovely ornament--the sweet hues of twilight skies and forests, ay, and the golden velvets of butterflies, and the butterfly cheeks of young girls, All these things are but subtle deceptions, not inherent in the material substance, but only applied from without, so that all deified Nature is really painted as the prostitute is painted, whose charms cover nothing but the grave beneath; and when we go on, and consider that the mystical cosmetics which produce each of its colours, the great principle of light, remains forever white or colourless in itself, and that if it operated without any means on matter, it would touch all objects, even tulips and roses, with its own empty dye; weighing all this, the paralysed universe would lie before us like a leper; and like obstinate travellers in Lapland, who refuse to wear coloured or colouring glasses in their eyes, so the unbelieving wretch stares blindly at the monumental white shroud which envelops everything around him. And of all these things, the albino whale was a symbol. "Are you now surprised at the fierce hunt?" (XLII, p. 330-331)

Moby Dick is not the monster of the work, or at least not the only monster. Deduced from an idea of Shelley's *Frankenstein*, a work almost pre-Nietzschean, Ahab is the creature who wants to kill his creator, or rather his creator, a creator with an irrational component who cannot take care of her creatures who can only rebel against this abandonment. Moby Dick is the absolute Other: animal, woman, and mother <sup>22</sup>; for this reason, Ahab identifies her with absolute Evil <sup>23</sup>. Ahab does not perceive the ominous, in R. Otto's terms, of the divine.

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<sup>21</sup>Quoted by Jose Cueli

<sup>22</sup> Curiously, the computer in the film *Alien* (1nine7nine) is called Mother. In his next film, *Blade Runner* (1nine82), Riddley Scott focuses on the figure of the superman killing his creator.

<sup>23</sup>Almost an utterly fleshless monster, as Alvarado Vega 29 indicates

This aspect is what brings Moby Dick back to the ontological plane of metaphysics. The problem of evil and the lack of response produces rebellion in Ahab. This enigma unhinges him and drives him mad. And just because he is unhinged, he cannot perceive the hinges that close the doors of answers. Moby Dick, like a sphinx, is the monster that watches over what is veiled. He is the guardian of the secret, as happened with dragons in the Middle Ages. Maya's veil is white, but by killing the whale, which is impossible since it emerges from a caesura of the limit, like a scar, Ahab would not achieve his objective either. White is silence and horror. Poe also described it so in his work *The Adventures of Arthur Gordon Pym* (1838).

The final battle is a reunion between the son and his mother-sister since, in addition to being a creator, she is created, unlike Ahab, who is only a product. From this collision, a new life will be born in the person of Ishmael, the exile, because he has assumed his human condition.

Moby Dick has usually been understood as an allegory or metaphor or even as a symbol, especially of the transcendental and vengeful God, the Father of American Puritanism. But if the sea is the original abyss, Moby Dick inhabits it as what it is: an ancient mother. Ahab's transgression is the attempt at completeness underlined by his lack of well-formalized Lacanian psychoanalysis of a leg<sup>24</sup>. Ahab is a fractured subject, in body and soul, because the subject is passionate, is effect and not cause, as Trías warns (CF I:177). His first transgressive sin is contagious, as is the original sin, to the rest of the crew, who are guilty of selling themselves for a doubloon. As Z. Marco indicates, the crew of the *Pequod* would be an example of this fracture of the subject; their identities are floating identities, suspended in time and space (AAVV 2023 96), but we can also understand that this doubloon, a metaphor for capitalism, homogenizes, territorializes, in Deleuzian terms, this heterogeneous crew<sup>25</sup>. That previously had no unity, and tAhab gives it to them, like a father of that family that constitutes the sailors, through a warm morality.

## 2. Conclusion

The whale becomes all the transcendent qualities of that deranged subject that is Ahab. Moby Dick is the mask of the ineffable; his presence is the only way to approach infinity, the ultimate place where Truth is found, but also Evil, as Ahab indicates in chapter CXXXII (MD: 781-783). Following Trías and Schelling: «The beautiful is the beginning of the terrible that humans can still bear. The sinister is that which, having to remain hidden, has been revealed, has become present before our eyes.» (CF I:144). Moby Dick is while which must remain hidden, with its colourless whiteness, and that which watches over that no transgression of the limits that define the human being can occur.

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<sup>24</sup>CS Lewis, in his work dedicated to the loss of his wife, will speak of the feeling he is suffering and will compare it to having a part of his body torn off, a leg. At Carrasco-Conde 217

<sup>25</sup>Idea indicated in Rodríguez Herrera.

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