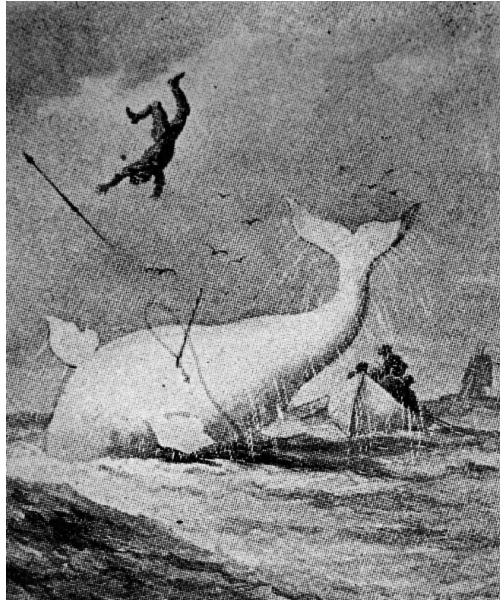


21 DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS OF THE WHITE WHALE



“For Melville, unlike most of his characters, the white whale was a whale, not a symbol; the whale was neither God nor nature nor the forces of evil, but was a neutral fact of nature.” (Loren Baritz)

“The white whale stands for the brute energies of existence, blind, fatal, overpowering, while Ahab is the spirit of man, small and feeble, but purposive.” (Lewis Mumford)

“The White Whale represents the mythological dragons of both Western and Eastern tradition.” (Dorothee Finklestein)

“Moby-Dick (the dragon) is a creation symbol.” (Robert Milder)

“The enormous sperm whale Moby-Dick [represents] absolute potency.” (Richard H. Brodhead)

“He is the deepest blood-being of the white race; he is our deepest blood-nature.” (D. H. Lawrence)

“The white whale is the ideology of race.” (Toni Morrison)

“[Moby-Dick is] the Evil principle in nature personified.” (Anonymous)

“[Moby-Dick] represents the good in Melville’s universe. [He] is a symbol by which Melville was not only able to express his growing horror of evil in the universe, but his positive affirmation of an indestructible good. It is a deeply tragic symbol.” (Marius Bewley)

“The whale is...a synecdoche for the whole world.” (Christopher W. Sten)

“Moby-Dick symbolizes the immense mystery of creation.” (W. E. Sedgwick)

“[Moby-Dick] is a comprehensive dynamic symbol for the whole immense, riddling, uncaring cosmos.” (John Parke)

[Moby-Dick symbolizes Nature] “Like nature the whale is paradoxically benign and malevolent, nourishing and destructive. It is massive, brutal, monolithic, but at the same time protean, erotically beautiful, infinitely variable. It appears to be unpredictable and mindless; yet it is controlled by certain laws.” (Richard Chase)

“Moby-Dick is the principle of Godhead in Nature... The inscrutable whale, titanic in power, lovely in motion, ubiquitous in space, immortal in time, is the ultimate demonstration...that there is a God beyond the powers of man to plumb.” (Daniel Hoffman)

“Few critics doubt that Moby-Dick is a god.” (Lawrence Buell)

“Moby-Dick is God.” (Lawrence Thompson)

“[Moby-Dick] suggests a God run amok.” (T. Walter Herbert, Jr.)

“Moby-Dick [is] a possible incarnation of a Calvinist God.” (Kathleen Verduin)

“Moby-Dick represents the utter blank horror of the universe if Godless.” (John Updike)

“I look, you look, he looks; we look, ye look, they look.” (Pip)

THE TRUTH

“It is the image of the ungraspable phantom of life; and this is the key to it all.” “For unless you own the whale, you are but a provincial and sentimentalist in Truth. But clear Truth is a thing for salamander giants only to encounter; how small the chances for the provincials then?”

Herman Melville

Moby-Dick (1851)

“Loomings,” I & “The Battering Ram,” LXXVI

Michael Hollister (2014)