

THE PECULIAR LITERARY DEVICE OF BOAT-SWALLOWING WHALES (OR OTHER GARAGANTUAN SEACREATURES)

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This Thesis is as the title suggest an investigation into the peculiar occurrence of boat swallowing whales in western literature. The occurrence of a gargantuan beast looming far beneath the sea has captured the imaginations of authors for millennia, from the Old Testament to the 19. Century, these cetaceous beings has always been a danger to any literary character at sea.

I will methodically work through the four texts: *Jonah and the Whale* from the Old Testament, *A True Story* by Lucian, *Pinocchio* by Carlo Collodi, and *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville. These four chosen for their relevant scenes involving whales, their place in literary history and the differences in the representation of the episodes involving whales depicted in each. These four, read with the four different meanings as described by Dante, will give me in total twelve different interpretations of the whaled. Only with a substantial amount of interpretations and readings is it possible to gather a complete picture of the whale as a literary device.

After this thorough dissection I will find the common uses of this literary device in the text in the four different readings and why this is so effective as a literary device that it has been in use for at least fifteen centuries.

When dissecting the occurrences which this bachelor thesis is based on, there is a need for a method, a similar process of thinking and explaining each of the four examples, and their four different meanings. To the reader of this thesis it will be clear that not all of these examples are as literal, or by the letter, as the title might suggest, like in the case of for example *Moby Dick* the inclusion will be explained and justified by its necessity in any literary discourse of whales, whaling or obsession of whales, something I will return to later.

Firstly, I shall talk about the method. In talking about a literary device, we are also talking about scenes, figures and symbols. So, as I have mentioned in the introduction, I shall use an excerpt of Dante's *Letter to Can Grande*, his guidance for the reader.

He says about his own work, the *Comedia*, that it is not limited to only one meaning, it is Polysemos, or ambiguous, it has multiple meanings. He defines four meanings in which he wants the reader to use as a lens to the work. (Aarseth, 2007, s. 104)

- The Literary meaning: What the letter says, is what is happening
- The Mystical meaning: The event is paralleled with another. This Meaning is often called the Allegorical, as it is the closest to the traditional allegory, but since the Mystical, Moral and Anagogical all are allegorical, Dante chooses to give it the name Mystical.
- The Moral meaning: Showing a change to the values and attitudes.
- The Anagogical meaning: the hidden, the exalted meaning.

The last three are all called allegorical, they are different from a literal and historical meaning. (Aarseth, 2007, s. 104)

When we now start dissecting these stories and in particular the literary device, it is these four meanings that will be the main source of understanding the peculiar notion of whales that swallows boats, and even offer a life within themselves that is more than just a fatal end.

THE LITERAL MEANING

In *A True Story* the literal meaning is that the journey from the city Cloudcuckoobury is interrupted after two days sailing on calm seas by a school of whales, one of which swallows man, crew and ship. They find a Hellenistic settlement built by two other similarly shipwrecked humans, and a full microcosm of the outside world.

"We had scarcely gone half a mile before we came across a temple, with an inscription saying it was dedicated to Poseidon. A little farther on we saw some graves, complete with tombstones, (...)" (Lucian, 2017, s. 33)

After conquering the island in the whale's stomach, defeating or driving off all the non-human, non-Greek inhabitants, they stay for twenty-one months. Before they one day get a glimpse of the outside world and what they are missing through the whale's open mouth. Set fire to the forest on the island so that the fire and smoke can kill the whale. Then with the whale dead they set sail and leave.

In *Pinocchio* the literal meaning is that Pinocchio is swallowed by the shark that swallowed his father, and upon finding him still alive finally shows his bravery and acts unselfishly as he saves his father from a certain death when he carries him on his shoulders of the sleeping shark's gaping maw.

In *Jonah and the Whale* Jonah is swallowed by a whale after disobeying God, whose stomach he spends three days in repenting, for then to be spat out again after promising to obey "(...) What I have vowed I will make good. (...) Jonah 2:9

In *Moby Dick* a whaling expedition with the explicit target of killing the White Whale, Moby Dick goes fatally wrong, as the whale kills all but one of the crew on the ship Pequod, the main character and narrator, Ishmael.

THE MYSTICAL MEANING

The mystical meaning, which is the truest to the word allegory is a reading in which a comfortable lie is better than the harsh reality, confined in the whale the occupants get unsure of what is reality and what is fake. They are for example no longer sure if they are alive, or if they died when their boat was eaten by the whale.

"By presenting his story as an *ainigma*, a riddle or a series of veiled references which hint at something else, Lucian invites the reader to interpret every detail in it as a sign which points to other text." (ni Mheallaigh, 2014, s 207.) For example, when Lucian and his men land on an island they find footprints after Heracles and Dionysus, to which Lucian remarks "Presumably Heracles has somewhat larger feet than Dionysus" (Lucian, 2018, s. 16)

This allegory is to Aristophanes' comedy *The Frogs* in which Dionysus, dressed as Heracles goes to the underworld. The theme here being that in *The Frogs* where Dionysus – much unlike his target of imitation, his *mimesis* – is somewhat cowardly, and not Heracles equal, just a slightly worse imitation, hence the smaller stature and feet.

ni Mheallaigh says about the whale "Here, through an intertextual rewriting of Plato's cave-allegory in the *Republic*. The story about Lucian's ingestion by the whale, imprisonment within the beast's belly, and subsequent escape becomes a story about the reader's pleasurable but ultimately claustrophobic absorption in the artificial world of Lucian's fiction" ni Mheallaigh, 2014, s. 227)

I included this statement in its entirety, because this reading of the inside of the whale as a rewriting, or application of Plato's cave-allegory is one which forms the basis of one of the main uses of this literary device.

In Plato's cave we are chained – unable to escape – and it is first through learning and understanding that we can free ourselves and climb the stairs and escape into the light of reality. We fulfill an epistemological journey.

The interesting addition to this allegory is the ingestion, whilst in the cave we are chained from birth and have never know anything different. We are born in the reality, and it is in the swallowing of the whale that the character(s) are ripped out of the real world and put into this fake reality, which gives us the addition of the phase were the character(s) slowly accepts their new reality.

This means that the allegory follows a three-act structure and in itself tells a fulfilling story. – The characters start high (reality) – falls and reach a low point (false reality) – before they earn the way back up (escaping back to reality)

The first epistemological journey is then reversed compared to the norm, ni Mheallaigh

explains:

“Lucian follows the characters first on the opposite trajectory, from the light of the outer world down into immersion in their cetaceous prison where their eyes adjust to the darkness of false belief, instead of the light of truth.” (ni Mheallaigh, 2014, s. 228)

She then says that Lucian's narrative is a dramatization of the reader's submission to the false belief of fiction, followed by an attempt to escape. (ni Mheallaigh, 2014, s. 228)

Whilst I shall not argue the truth of this reading in the case of *A True Story*, my thesis is not about Lucian's story specifically, but the literary device generally. And rather than it being a specific false belief and submission in literary fiction, it is the story of someone consumed and lost in a lie they themselves believes.

In *A True Story* the lie is of this replica of a Hellenistic settlement, and the perfect life there, free of all worries of the real world. This image is as ni Mheallaigh says a warning about the dangers in the comfort of escapism and the allure of fiction. It is however futile to attempt an escape, as the world they escape to prove to be no more real than the mimetic world they left behind.

'If the world beyond the whale is, in fact, even more incredible than the mimetic world within, then this raises the unsettling possibility that the real world outside Lucian's text could be just as fictional. “(ni Mheallaigh, 2014, s. 230)

In the story about Jonah and the Whale, He is disagreeing with the word of god, and his three-act story starts with him disagreeing. It is not because he is scared the people of Nineveh won't listen that he disobeys, it is because he believes they will, but thinks they deserves the wrath of God. In Jonah 3 and Jonah 4 we see an angry Jonah that wants to die rather than live when those who do not deserve it does. “When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened.” Jonah 3:10 “But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry.” Jonah 4:1 “Now, Lord take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live.” Jonah 4:3

Jonah repented and praised God from inside the whale, praying to be set free from his cetaceous prison, and after three days he is thrown out on the shore outside of Nineveh, where he fulfills his mission. The whale then, facilitates his escape from his false belief.

Differently from *A True Story* the fall into false belief happens before he is swallowed, and it is first therein Jonah is able to see the falseness of his beliefs and can repent.

“You hurled me into the depths, into the very heart of the seas, and the currents swirled about me; all your waves and breakers swept over me. I said, ‘I have been banished from your sight; yet I will look again toward your holy temple.’” Jonah 2:3-5'

He still does not fully agree, and this is the final part of his epistemological journey to

understand God's reasoning. Jonah sits atop a rock, wanting to die, when a flower grows and gives him shade from the sun. It then withers and dies, leaving Jonah angry.

"But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?" "It is," he said. "And I'm so angry I wish I were dead." But the Lord said, "You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?" Jonah 3:9-11. These words complete Jonah's epistemological journey. From his false belief, to understanding.

In *Pinocchio* of Carlo Collodi the sea creature is a shark, but the role this creature serves is the same as the whale in the others. Pinocchio jumps to sea to escape a fate as firewood, he then meets a tuna, and his father Geppetto. Because in *Pinocchio* it isn't the main character who has gotten trapped in the allure of the false reality. Geppetto has gotten use to his life inside the shark, he explains that he cannot swim, and that he has given up on surviving, and is now just waiting to die. (Collodi, 2002, s.154)

Geppetto is hiding from the reality of losing his son, he saw him on the shore before being swallowed, but was not able to make contact. Geppetto like Lucian in *A True Story* finds a livable place and resources to keep living. Different from Lucian, these resources are not renewable, but he is still comfortable in his situation, waiting for his inevitable death. It is only a glimpse of the outside world, the reality that lets him escape. Pinocchio here serving as a vessel for his escape from the false belief into the truth. We will examine Pinocchio's role further in the Anagogical meaning

In *Moby Dick* this epistemological journey is not inside the whale, but about the whale. This does however not mean that the journey or the entrapment is any less relevant than the other examples. Because unlike the other stories, the whale is not the thing holding him back from understanding. The whale is the very thing he is trying to understand. Something he tries in chapter upon chapter, breaking down every element of the beast, describing it, trying to understand the unknowable beast. This is an aspect which also is very important to the Anagogical meaning

Different from the others then is the whale a symbol of human's desperate climb for understanding. If we are to see the entirety of *Moby Dick* as an allegory for Plato's cave, it does not like the three others have an ingestion into the false reality, he already understands that he is trapped in his limited understanding. It begins with Ishmael complaining about how mundane his life has become.

"Some years ago – never mind how long precisely - having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me on shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the

watery part of the world” (Melville, 2017, s.19)

This casual line from Ishmael, which comes right after his famous “Call me Ishmael” is him recognizing that he has a need to gain greater knowledge, for as he shows through his metaphors and descriptions, he has a great knowledge of the land, and now he is searching for more. He has understood that he is trapped in the cave, but wants to escape

So impossible to comprehend for his mind is however the White Whale, that he is forced to break each part of it down, the color, the tail, the head etc. As the entirety of it is too incomprehensible to understand for Ishmaels mind, this description of the whale an integral part of the story, and of the eventual understanding and escape from the cave.

THE MORAL MEANING

Let us now move on to the Moral meaning of the story. As this is another of the allegories which Dante has invited us to read into. Dante in the *Letter to Can Grande* (Aarseth, 2007, s. 104) exemplifies the Moral meaning with the biblical verse of Moses leading the Jews out of Egypt, by saying that in the Moral meaning of this verse we manifest the soul's turn from sin and misery to the realm of god.

In the case of the whale it is the change from someone who has settled, has given up, or is somehow held back. To their realized state where they uproot themselves, gain new hope, new understanding of their own wrongdoings, or finds the means to escape whatever holds them back. The whale their prison, but also their place of contemplation.

In *A True Story* Lucian and his crew become settled in the whale, they are content with the state of affairs, even though it is not ideal for them. He likens themselves to prisoners in a very comfortable prison (Lucian, 2017, s. 208) this then is an allegory to a life led in a comfortable but confined space, where nothing challenges you, or gives you grief in any way.

However, as he later explains, after witnessing just a glimpse of what he is missing, that he became bored of life inside the comfort zone. The cetaceous prison then is comfortable only as long as you are blinded and are limited to perceive only what you already know. At once the mind again is challenged with something new, a hint of something different, the prison walls become ever so present, and an escape is necessary.

In *Jonah and The Whale* Jonah has forsaken God in his disobedience, Jonah 1:12 he already has understood the error of his ways “Pick me up and throw me into the sea,” he replied, “and it will become calm. I know that it is my fault that this great storm has come upon you.” His time in the whale then is him trying to convince God of his penance, a task he must spend three days on, before he is released to fulfill his purpose.

His moral journey is to understand God, and learn of his morals, much like many of the biblical stories. The whale then the place where he understands that God is merciful, and that God's plan is not to be questioned. It is then rewarded with him turning away from misery and gaining but a taste of Gods sublime knowledge.

In *Pinocchio* Geppetto has lit the last candle which he had, and has survived through Gods help until that day, but he has given up, and is prepared to die. He is the one who has given up and has succumbed to his cetaceous prison, ready to let it also be his tomb. Pinocchio then symbolizes hope, or joy, or family. Something that makes fighting worth it, for even if it doesn't work, and if they die, they will at least die in each other arms, in the attempt to free themselves. (Collodi, 2002, s. 154)

In *Moby Dick* again this entrapment is more allegorical than literal. Captain Ahab is not literally entombed in the whale's gut, but he is trapped in his obsession, and is constantly in the attempt to escape this mental prison of his, not by walking away or escaping, but by killing the target of his obsession

It is at the end, when he is killed by being caught by the line and dragged under, that he finally is freed, because he cannot live on after his obsession, so life consuming has it been that the only way for him to end his mental prison fixated around this White Whale is by dying.

THE ANAGOGICAL MEANING

The Anagogical meaning is according to Dante the exalted or hidden meaning. "If we are to take into account the Anagogical meaning, manifested becomes the holy soul's freedom from this perishable slavery to the eternal freedom of the sublime (Heaven)" (Aarseth, 2007, s. 104) he says in reference to the story of Moses freeing and then subsequently leading the slaves out of Egypt

The Anagogical meaning can be applied to the stories about the Whale, where the whale represents the underworld, purgatory, chainlaiden slavery or distance and denial of God, a hindrance and a prison keeping the main characters from reaching the sublime. Different from Dante is however again the addition of this three-act structure, where the character in the allegory starts in the sublime (or at least neutral) then falls into the darkness before he must escape through to the sublime again.

In *A True Story* this journey into the allegorical underworld represented by the whale is a *Katabasis*, a staple of the Greek epic of which Lucian parodies in his writing.

The katabasis is with the purpose of gaining something, most commonly knowledge. In the *Odyssey* the katabasis comes through the ritual of *nekyia*, a ritual where the participant contacts the underworld, Odysseus questions Theiresias about the means to travel back to Ithaca without further

hindrance from Poseidon, to which he is answered that he has to spread the word of Poseidon where they have never heard of him, and to not slay any of Helios' oxen. (Homer, 2017. s158)

Lucian does not perform a nekylia, but he does fend off the shades of the other "dead" until "Theiresias" appeared, like Circe warns Odysseus about in the *Odyssey*. The other dead here the inhabitants on the island where they land, and Theiresias the battle of the islands which gives him the motivations to continue his journey.

In *Jonah and the Whale*, the allegory of the whale is as the purgatory, where Jonah has to repent, pray and praise God until his sin of disobeying the direct command of God is forgiven. Whilst he is in purgatory he not only repents, but he decides to listen to the command and follow it, and through this he is given ethical knowledge directly from God, a taste of the sublime.

In *Pinocchio*. The motif of hell or the underworld is particularly strong and is one that Collodi uses multiple times. Morrissey and Wunderlich writes about this fact in their *Death and Rebirth in Pinocchio*.

"Searching for food, he gets his first taste of hell. He goes out into the "infernal night" (p. 35) to wander alone in what appears to be the "land of the dead" (p. 31). A man douses him with a chamber pot, and he returns home "a wet chicken" (p. 32), thus resembling his fugitive breakfast, surely a humbling experience. In the morning he awakens to find that the offending feet which have caused such mischief have burned in Geppetto's purgatorial brazier." (Morrissey, Wunderlich, 1983 s.67)

Pinocchio is not just filled with images of hell, he also performs a symbolic katabasis, a journey into the underworld, as this symbolism of death and rebirth, every time accompanied by some character growth or change. Pinocchio performs three such katabasis. The first, his hanging and miraculous survival, after which he shows an understanding of the perils of death, something he hadn't done before. The second his drowning in the ocean as a donkey and metamorphosis back into a marionette, and a third into the belly of the shark, saving his father. It is through the second of these journeys that he gains the will and bravery to again descend into the underworld a third and final time to save the one who hasn't gotten his newfound bravery, his father.

"Entering the fish's cavernous mouth is yet another ritual descent, but it is no accident. The Tunny and Geppetto languish hopelessly in the fish's belly; it is Pinocchio who gives them the hope and will to escape." (Morrissey, Wunderlich, 1983 s. 73)

Although this journey does not involve a physical metamorphosis like his second katabasis, something changes in the character of Pinocchio, and he is able to shed the darkness and sin of his character and take place again in the sublime and pure, of which he has not been since he was a piece of wood, he becomes a real boy, and he is no longer tempted by the sins that so easily allured him in the past.

"To be reborn is not just to live again; it is to change and to grow as the Fairy does. Thus, Pinocchio's picaresque journey leads him to a new status: boyhood." (Morrissey, Wunderlich, 1983 s.74)

In *Moby Dick* Ishmael and Ahab each fulfill a journey from the underworld (sin) out to the sublime (redemption), But since their journey does not contain an actual literal swallowing, their entombment a mental one. It is more correct to liken their journey to the sublime with a pilgrimage. A literary pilgrimage that is, as defined by Linda Kay Davidson and David M. Gitlitz in *Pilgrimage: From the Ganges to Graceland*, a journey "of the soul from unworthiness to worthiness" and "from a state of sin to one of redemption"

The whale then, is not the underworld as such, but the altar to which Ahab and Ishmael must reach to escape their sin and fulfill their pilgrimage to earn their redemption. The Whale is rather a symbol of the gate keeping one in the underworld, than hell itself.

To heighten the goal, and to correctly perform the pilgrimage to the sublime. "Ishmael considers the idea of the whale from different angles, different disciplines. Ishmael circumambulates around the White Whale attempting to describe the ineffable. In this reading, the very act of circumambulation elevates its object to the divine." (Gentile, S.408) "The act of encircling the sacred goal, ritually defines a sacred space as well as marking the fact that the pilgrim has arrived there" (Coleman and Elsner, 1995, s. 32)

This circumambulation that Ishmael does in describing their foe and ultimate goal in chapters like the "Whiteness of the Whale" does not therefore fulfill the pilgrimage, they have not yet reached the sublime, they are merely marking the sacred, the target of their journey. To fulfill the target of their journey they must understand fully the unknowable.

The end to this pilgrimage is one of tragedy and fortune, the former for Captain Ahab who never let's go of his anger and sin, and remains defiant to the end, refusing to turn back and save himself. "Heed them not! Those teeth but give new rowlocks to your oars," (Melville, 2017, S.594) He yells to his crew, as they chase the whale in a rowboat surrounded by sharks. 'But at every bite sir, the thin blades grow smaller and smaller!', 'They will last long enough! Pull on! But who can tell!' he muttered 'Whether these sharks swim to feast on the whale or on Ahab? But pull on! (...)' (Melville, 2017, S.594)

In his desperate chase in ship is destroyed, and as the last act of Captain Ahab's life he performs a last speech, before plunging the Spear into the whale, hitting, for then to be caught by the line and dragged under by the White Whale, consumed by his anger, paying for his sins with his life

Ishmael however, survives, and is the only crewmember on the Pequod who does so, "Ishmael embarked on his pilgrimage by "waking up to a desire, to a calling, to become more

conscious, to enter a path of greater and deeper awareness of myself and the invisible worlds that I knew existed, the world of spirit, of soul, as well as the visible landscape of nature” (3). Spiritually, Ishmael is born again." (Gentile, 2009, S. 412)

He is then reborn into the sublime, fulfilling his journey, his pilgrimage, now with newfound purpose in life. "His sense of the wonder of life is restored by his encounter with the sacred, and he brings back the boon of the journey; his story." (Gentile, 2009, S. 412)

These are the four meanings that Dante proposed, but before I will collect these threads and conclude this thesis, there are a couple of points I would like to add some thoughts to, and that is the importance of the whale as a symbol of another world. And why exactly this literary device has managed to capture imaginations for so long.

THE WHALE AS AN SYMBOL OF A DIFFERENT WORLD

The literary device of the boat-swallowing whale has been used to effect in the examples above, through dissecting and reading into their meanings I have found some common uses of this device, what it represents and the symbolic power of the whale, this gargantuan creature hidden beneath the depths of the ocean.

The whale is an image of, symbol of, or sometimes a literal representation of a different world. If it is our entombment in it like in *A True Story* or *Jonah and the Whale*, or if it is this world we must find and conquer to fulfill our journey, like in *Pinocchio* or *Moby Dick*. The whale is still a destination, a world unknown.

In *A True Story*, we learn that this world is much like our own, it's likeness as such that we are comfortable staying in this fiction where we know the borders, and all which inhabits it, and not wanting to engage with the real world.

In *Jonah and the Whale*, he spends three days in a cetaceous purgatory, saved by his God, even in his disobedience, it is a prison, from which he can only escape to fulfill his purpose, and not before understanding this himself is he let go. "But I, with shouts of grateful praise, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. I will say, 'Salvation comes from the Lord.' And the Lord commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land." Jonah 2:9-10

In *Pinocchio* the journey into the whale is the last of his journeys into the underworld, it is the one holding his father, and it is with great bravery he goes forth on his mission, finally making him worthy of boyhood. But when he embarks on this journey, he is terrified, for it is not yet known to him what he will meet. All he understands is that it is the same shark that eat his father. (Collodi, 2002, S. 146)

In *Moby Dick* it is an unknown, a destination held firmly at a distance, which Ahab wants to destroy, and Ishmael wants to understand. The world representing another world as much as the others. To Ahab a world freed from his hatred, the fire in his belly finally stoked. For Ishmael understanding, and freeing from his "Drizzly November Self" "When I find myself growing grim about the mouth; whenever it is a damp, drizzly November in my soul; (...) then, I account it high time to get to sea as soon as I can. This is my substitute for pistol and ball." (Melville, 2017, S.19)

WHY THIS IS SO EFFECTIVE AS A LITERARY DEVICE

Humankind has always been fascinated by the sea, and the great creatures dwelling in the depths, the unknown has not escaped our imagination. It is not by mistake that it is on the ocean God exacts his punishment over Jonah, the fierceness of the ocean only stilled by the sacrifice of the sinner.

The stories about what lies beneath is many, Herodotus claim the island of Atlantis is still to be found somewhere of the coast of Greece, something is sinking ships in the Bermuda triangle, and somewhere the great Kraken sleeps, waiting for his purpose when the apocalypse comes.

These stories created by the fear of the great unknown. The land of men laden with myth, disproven by exploration. There are no trolls living in Jotunheimen, we have canvased it all. But the sea, we have no idea what most of it contains, even today.

Of course, then the idea of a whale, or another great leviathan, capable to swallow an entire ship is not so easily disproven. And this thalassophobia can give way for stories like *Moby Dick* or give Lucian inspiration for a great cetaceous prison. The hunt for this monster in the depths. The image of this great whale gaping over and swallowing the entirety of a ship haunting to the primal mind. Who has not, whilst swimming, or at least whilst being in a boat where you can stare down in the sea and never see the bottom not fear the visage of a shark emerging and chasing you as you desperately swim for your life like Pinocchio does.

I have before in this thesis talked about the literary device as an allegory for Plato's cave, being confined by what you find comfortable, or as a katabasis/nekylia. But this is readings made with a mind of a comparative literature student and cannot explain why these stories has captured the imagination of so many. The effectiveness then is in playing on the most primal instinct a human, or indeed any animal has, Fear. The readers fear of the sea, fear of the whale, fear of containment and entrapment.

The last thing Lucian and his crew does before being swallowed by the gargantuan whale, - he says in the passage preceding this quote, that it is a hundred-and-seventy miles long – is accepting death. "We kissed one another goodbye and waited for the inevitable." (Lucian, 2017, s. 32)

"You can probably imagine how scared the poor Pinocchio became when he saw the great beast. (Dere kan vel tenke dere hvor redd den stakkars Pinocchio ble da han fikk se uhyret. (Org.))" Writes Collodi. (Collodi, 2002, s. 146)

And *Moby Dick* is nothing if not chapters on chapters convincing the reader how much this beast should be feared. Every ship they meet who has heard or seen the whale is terrified and are only interested in its location to steer clear. After asking the captain of the *Delight* in chapter 131 if he has seen the White Whale, the captain points to his wreck of a ship. Later after Ahab proudly displays the harpoon he has forged to kill Moby Dick, the captain of the *Delight* says. 'Then God keep thee, old man – see'st thoust that. (...) I bury but one of five stout men, who were alive only yesterday; but were dead ere night.' (Melville, 2017. s.565) He is here talking about their encounter with the whale, on which he with no shame is fleeing from.

Jonah would not have repented if he had not feared God. Although the passage in the Bible does not include prosaic passages of Jonah fearing for his life whilst drowning, we can imagine it. We can experience the horror of drowning to then look into the open maw of a larger threat as well in our head as on the paper. The punishment is just as terrible and scary, even if it is only described like this "Now the Lord provided a huge fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights." Jonah 1:17. It is written to give example of God's great power, and why you should follow his command, and does so to effect.

If something is to survive the millennia of cultural, religious and historical changes it must appeal universally, that's why we are still writing stories about love, about heartbreak, war, revenge etc. These things are universal to us, in the same way, the fear instilled by the thought of being eaten by a gargantuan sea creature, and the fear of being trapped therein is just as universal.

CONCLUSION

The Literal meanings of the stories, if we are to give it no further allegorical meaning, is to provoke fear in the reader, it plays on the fear that the sea is something unknown and scary, and all manner of monsters can be found in the depths.

Allegorically speaking, and applying a Mystical meaning to the works, we find an allegory of Plato's cave, where we are sitting in the dark, and are only able to perceive the shadows, the copies of the real on the outside.

In the Moral meaning, we become comfortable with our prison, a prison where the boundaries are clearly defined and we can control and understand the world we live in entirely, it is however a damaging notion, and something we have to escape to not be trapped in fiction. We need only a glimpse of the outside life, a thought about how the ocean might look, and we are on our way

to escaping. The moral then to never settle for what you already know or are comfortable with, never give up on further understanding, but keep broadening your horizons, as more knowledge and better understanding is always to be accomplished.

In the Anagogical meaning, the whale is the underworld. And the characters in the story must perform a Nekyia or katabasis or pilgrimage, they have to change and develop. Even if the attempt kills them, like Ahab does at the end of his pilgrimage to save himself.

The Literary Device of Boats Swallowed by Whales is one that has survived for over a thousand years. Much because of its deep allegorical meanings, but also because of its ability to provoke fear, playing on one of the most primal of human fears. The unknown and the darkness deep beneath the glistening blue sea, and what horrifying gargantuan leviathans it might hold.

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