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*To Worship and Sacrifice the Whale*

People often assuage themselves in their spiritual belief that provides them hope, power, and security to prove that their existence is not in vain. *Moby Dick* exposes the ways in which humanity is very dependent on the symbol of the whale to conduct and generate their societal industries, ideologies, and infrastructure back in the mainland from sea. It all starts with using an “immaculate”, untouched concept, almost like a sacrificial lamb, in order to develop universal language that is tested throughout time. As of the white whale, the animal now becomes a commercial product that transforms human productivity, and in this transformation, the novel shows humans as primitive savages; forging and taking scraps of carcass and what remains to preserve our dignity and legacies. The act of worship in the temple becomes a phallic craft in itself, as we try to take something and make it natural and organic for us. Melville often displaces us readers into these spaces that are often overlooked because it exposes our way of understanding the world with needing language and light of what is going on. With this deconstruction, religion and the temple in this passage transforms into a social commentary about our human nature to manipulate and embody a righteous character within the motions of ‘sacrificing’. The temple’s function adheres to a polarizing presence in the novel; it seems to be a defense mechanism but it is also a place to worship the whale’s carcass. At the same time, a diety is not at the center of worship, but the whale is ironically worshipped amidst their exploitation of the animal’s body. Its hot and cold nature here is caused by the notion of sacrifice to be largely

performative, praising the individual instead of the deity, which becomes detrimental to religion's construct. It can also explain why there is a gap between us and our self-identity, defining the way we see purpose in the supposed divine intervention. Ahab, for instance, confuses his divine calling with his own societal desire to break the myth himself and defeat Moby Dick. From this gap, it is hard to operate from our own independent thinking when we are hard-wired to register on this divine calling trope that defines our autonomy. As the believers in the temple slowly start to worship the provision itself and the whale's body as a way to honor their own manmade achievements on earth, the discussion is not about religion, but becomes an underlying discussion about the way in which one can manipulate language and perspectives to a social propaganda. Ultimately, this anonymous place becomes a space of social commentary where mankind takes the concept of religion and turns it into something else.

First, the mixed emotion of sacrificing the whale demonstrates how the act itself is largely performative. The passage is neutral to describing the process of whale sacrifice, but there seems to be a disconnect to what is actually being understood after the passage indicates its prominent death to the readers. "...They keep the whale's rib of an incredible length... which lying upon the ground... makes an arch, the head, of which cannot be reached by a man upon a camel's back.(Melville 499)" The text interestingly works to suggest that the role and presence of the whale is conflicting to the people, as they keep the whales dead to protect the building, but are accepting of its presence when it is so. From protecting the building of worship to now meditating on the dead whale's magnificent presence, it almost adds to the temple's stature.

According to Schuller (2010), exploring the leviathan in the intimacy and perspective of animal slaughter, larger sacrifice meditated in Moby Dick is mainly a signifier to demonstrate human excellency and dominion, instead of sacrifice being a reminder of the creator's

omniscient hand on society. "...on the other, the narratives...represent...whales in an affective, emotional, and intellectual exchange with whalers...The context these narratives provide for the creatures' resistance to slaughter betrays a respect for their unwillingness to submit..."(Schuller 4;8-9). While there is the notion of working class praising and slaughtering the animal for its provision from the Diety in the heavens, which becomes a reflection of 'the God's immense provision' to the people, there is also discourse of the whale being the sacrifice because it emphasizes human superiority to bend the terrifying and colossal whale's fate and will— which alters the whole point of sacrificing to glorify the creator. This overcompensating fear in mortality is very telling as the whole act of sacrifice now becomes performative in the face of religion, because true sacrifice demonstrates the reassurance and humility that the deity will provide. Keeping the rib of incredible length and the arch that cannot be reached by men is representative of this performance in religion. It rather emphasizes to spectators a level of competency, craft, and conquerism when faced with the now dead, suppressed whale. The machinery 'on either side of the temple' to wound the mammal becomes a prolific commentary to men's virtue on its own, advertising the dense labor and skill of heroism and coerced human labor in an homage to what worshipping is like in an industrialized perspective. Instead of the worship and praise for the religion, the colossal whale corpse is commercialized as the nation's hope of reformation, which reverts back to the hypocritical belief of the deity being in the center of religion's construct and providing that level of security for the congregational members. In other words, the sacrificial whale becomes their new "god" in high commercial society, and the temple and its many mechanisms become an illusioned prop to uphold dignified status amongst other nations.

In the same way that the mass-killing machine takes away the honorific aspect of sacrifice and demonstrates human superiority, the machine also exposes how easy it becomes to censor and alter narratives; and religion becomes a description of someone by which one is described as pure and ethical. Our distanced proximity to the whales at sea is significant in reading our patronizing closeness to the affinity of exploitation, and our repulsion to seeing the truth behind the construct and ourselves. "...by a secret power bestowed by God upon the temple, no whale can pass by it without immediate death. But the truth of the matter is...there are rocks that shoot two miles into the sea...(Melville 499)" The line calls out that while violent human labor is far from eyesight, the temple remains pure to the public eye. It seems that the people try to put God and this concept into a theatrical place in order for the others to believe and succumb to the earthly church's demands. Overall, the line confronts to readers the truth behind coerced social propaganda that is continued to be met by many privileged with this illusion as they choose not to see the gross truth behind censorship that can redeem a preferred reality of their world. Moreover, this illusion becomes a sanctuary that illustrates our dignities being in direct target to the influence of these dominant-looking animals, which is a demonstration of our closeness and power to real world productivity; and with this dynamic, reveals how one has the advantage to conceal and change the narrative. This happens in print in real time as 'God' is mentioned one time, and then his role in the temple vanishes in the paragraph, revealing that shaping narratives is easy in the mind's eye. Ishmael plays with this deception by indicating the temple as 'Afric' and indicating the worshippers as 'they', making us question the origin or rather concealing information(Melville 499). In actuality, we are far from the reality of being on the mast-head and the Pequod. In this symbolic light, the foundation represents us in society as well.

From the dependence on conventional tropes that continues to generate illusioned inspiration over the nation, the passage exposes how this delusional condition makes people to be less independent and vulnerable at the hands of deception. Ishmael hastily exclaims while examining fragments of the whale, “How, then, with me writing of this Leviathan?” Give me a Condor’s quill! Give me Vesuvius’ crater for an inkstand!(Melville 497)”It is seen from the line above that the people believe the “...secret power betwowed by God...(Melville 499)” Yet, even right after the guarantee of death from the creator, the text indicatively suggests that the people shed more blood than meditate on the sacrifice already present at this temple. Ishmael indirectly reveals in both scenes of the chapter that the public’s imaginative state is not only suppressed, but it is coerced brainwashing overtime that encourages this limitative state. At the same time, man does not realize his human nature compared to the whale which is what Ishmael reminds us here. Weiman, explaining the philosophy of religion indirectly points out to this brainwashing that is happening in industrial and productive facets in culture by acknowledging the power of moving emotions. “To be sure feeling or emotion is found in religion, as in everything else man does. But feeling grows sickly and sentimental when it becomes a goal of endeavor.(Weiman et al 61)” Alternative to Ahab’s transcending objective in tropes, the market knows that the narrative of human tragedy and incentive to peace can weaken overtime; but, by understanding feeling as also wavering in that case, Weiman indirectly proposes how generative productivity increases the more our feelings find a security in going through the motions. Eventually, Weiman instigates that this physical notion and presence becomes an increasingly dependent factor that influences less doubts of internal conflict and insecurity.

We mistaken overconsumption and archived activity as worship, when in reality, worship and sacrifice takes independent thought and overall acknowledgement to the invisible power

above being worshipped. By needing constant activity of seeing the whale slain for worship through the mass-killing machine described in the text justifies how the public need constant external validation of the creator's presence in their life; and this type of external justification destroys the discipline of faith that believers should be expected to have. The text alludes to how society has made people believe in a subscription of a guaranteed life that comes easily and fast, rather than naturally challenging and maturing. The implication of keeping the whales on high alert and hostage demonstrates that industrial enterprise affects how the public sees the mythical idea of religion and acting right by the law as a transactional means to an end and true decision-making on their part. To see the temple as anonymous at first glance is a technique that calls out the shallow and manipulative brainwashing effects of the industry, dictating what is good and bad for the people. In a similar vein, the clause in the sentence adds to how our imagination stems from our perception of our own worldview instead of separating the spiritual from the commercial aspect of religion. To be swayed by religious psychosis and a cult-like mentality instigated by terracentric narratives bound by mechanical and industrial society is not only horrific from a birdseye view, but also caustic to independent and critical thinking that should be pursued in critical foundations like religion. Faith should not only come from the physical sacrifice but the whole-hearted belief that provision is sacred and not a cash-cow feature to add onto capitalism. In the end, the passage itself is indicating to us the question of whether or not we know what sacrifice or ritual is, or do we operate through society's definition of it altogether. In a full circle moment, the passage makes us re-evaluate the notion of worship that is mainly justification through activity or a separation from the world's activity.

The novel takes apart, most specifically, the societal foundation of what religion and worship should be in an age where generative productivity, reputation, and charisma is most

looked after. It confronts us with the testing of our faith and dignity as a person, which Ishmael also experiences by reflecting on the story with a bunch of friends, casually drinking away in a Spanish bar. By that way of extending to this passage's meditative premise on Ishmael's end, the chapter reflects on the horrors of carcasses; our pondering to that; and, finally, how the act of sacrifice becomes desensitized because of our need for face value in status. The true horror is presented when mankind rips apart the whale in sacrifice, while also clinging to their innocent reputation. In a shifting moment, the passage seems to talk about religion but then religion becomes a way where people are able to define themselves as innocent when propaganda and independent ideals are being pushed. By examining the body of the whale, or what remains, we examine mankind's anthropocentric destruction of itself slowly.

Works Cited

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