

MONOMANIAC REVENGE IN MELVILLE'S "MOBY DICK" AND BRONTE'S "WUTHERING HEIGHTS"

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ABSTRACT

Revenge can be one of consequences of bad feeling towards others. This feeling of anger, hatred and prejudice could be based on traumatic visible or invisible experience. The level of that anger and hatred depends on the volume of damage caused by the action or judgment and, on other hand, it depends on man's endurance and tolerance upon that action or judgment. Revenge can be individual or collective as well. Individually, it is driven personally as a reaction of other's perceived harm when the individual desire is set to retaliate for bringing justice and satisfying his need. Collectively, most of ancient wars and conflicts were based on the concept of revenge which mostly brought collective devastation. This study will utilize rereading of the canonical texts; *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville and *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte, to make better understanding of the 'monomaniac revenge' by highlighting and analyzing the main characters in the two novels above 'Ahab' and 'Heathcliff', respectively, and their destructive revenge under the light of Psychological theory. Ahab was isolated from his family. Heathcliff was dismissed by his family. Later on they both lost their lives. Melville and Bronte prove that destructive revenge brings destructive results. The top focus of the study analysis will be on how Ahab and Heathcliff's excessive desire of revenge develops and then brings them and people around to death.

Keywords: monomaniac revenge, anger, love, damage, excessive desire, destructive results

INTRODUCTION

The significance behind rereading of canonical texts is to make sense and better understanding of life and its relevant concepts using our own lenses but the great writers' mediums and thoughts. *"Moby Dick"* by Herman Melville and *"Wuthering Heights"* by Emily Bronte are two most important examples of these texts. Both of the novels tackle, among other things, in particular the concept of the destructive revenge motivated by excessive human desire and selfishness.

Monomania is defined in (yourdictionary.com) as "a mental disorder characterized by irrational preoccupation with one subject." The two men's obsession in the idea of revenge made them blind of everything else, except revenge. Long experience of person's pain and deprivation in the past or getting harmed or humiliated by an individual or society may generate excessive preoccupation of monomaniac revenge.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Historically, many peoples, including the ancient Greeks, coped with injustice through revenge considering that it was compared with justice (Kim & Smith, 1993). At different times it was said that taking revenge against things and objects like trees is acceptable when that object was perceived to have injured an individual (Clove, 1993). The traditional justification of the purpose of revenge is “that it was for the purpose of the defense of one’s honor (Whitley R.P., 2012: 121). The concept of honor played significant role in pre-modern world as it was the crucial value of the world. Thus, honor is defined precisely as “person’s dignity or self-respect” (121).

Psychologically, Jaffe (2011) shows that psychological scientists have found that revenge usually generates a series of retaliation instead of bringing justice. He also asserts that recently, psychological scientists have explored many methods in which the act of revenge fails to achieve its tasteful potentials. Social scientists have observed that revenge which can extend the anguish of the original trauma and that simply bringing damage upon a wrongdoer is not sufficient to fulfill person’s revengeful spirit. Lipton and Barash (2011) points out that “sometimes even when retaliation or revenge is feasible, they just aren’t satisfy, especially if the former is too quick and easy, or if the latter, paradoxically takes too long or is too difficult and therefore unattainable. Redirected aggression may also prove additionally useful to the initial victim, because once the door is opened to attacking anyone, regardless of actual guilt, there is no end to the universe of prospective targets.” (132).

In *Moby Dick*, Melville depicts the scenes of a strange setting and strange characters, all weaved dramatically to serve his attitude towards American society at the nineteenth century. Bersani (1994) in ‘Incomparable America’ offers an interpretation of the society of the Pequod’s crew, and expresses the universe outside Ahab’s monomania as a kind of democratic friendship in shared work after stating fraternalism in the crew’s collective motion. Bersani concludes his paper by signifying that the Pequod is a radicalized copy of America. Many writers suggest that in *Moby Dick*, Ahab is not the only insane in the story, he is one among other insane people. Paul McCarthy (1987) focuses on Ahab and several other characters in *Moby-Dick*. He also examines Melville’s psychological insights as stated in mid-nineteenth-century terms. McCarthy concludes that “We can learn much about the quality of such insights if these are examined within the context of American psychological knowledge, 1830-1860.” (39)

Ronald Paulson (2007) explains the concept of monomaniac revenge in *Moby Dick* focusing on an idea that Ahab considers *Moby Dick* as a representation of evil, not merely evil, but a world evil. Ahab tries to destroy the natural evil inside the animal which devoured his leg. At last his process turns in doing evil rather than killing it when he causes his and his crew’s loss and death.

Wuthering Heights, though its narrative structure is more complex, it follows basically a process of approaching an extensively violent private reality through a narrator who symbolizes an ideology that rationalizes the violence (N. M. Jacobs, 1986). George Marotous (2013) states that approximately all the events in *Wuthering Heights* are the impact of character’s action of revenge. He shows that desire for revenge and evil are introduced as devastated forces in the book. Heathcliff, the lover, is transformed into a human monster enjoys others damage and pain.

Daniel Ingi (2013) explains the loss of Heathcliff's sympathetic part and creating of his identity as a repugnant, self-devastated villain. Heathcliff has been introduced firstly by the author as a poor orphan neglected by the whole except Earnshaw family whose heir, after that, humiliates and degenerates him. However, this sympathy towards Heathcliff by the readers has diminished after his personal change when preoccupied with self-destructions and damage of others.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The term Psychoanalysis is used to refer to many aspects of Freud's works and researches. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) advanced his amazing theories about the working of the human psyche, its formation, its organization and its maladies (Sidney Hook 1990). This principle holds that nothing happens by chance in all mental functioning. There is a psychological motive behind everything a person dreams, feels and does. In his essay (Beyond the pleasure principle) Freud classifies the human psyche into three types or models; id, ego and superego. The id contains our darkest wishes and our secret desires, the id wishes only to fulfill our impulses of the pleasure attitude (Charles E. Bressler 2011). The second type of the psyche is the ego, the rational, logical part of the mind, though many of its activities remain in the unconscious. Whereas the third type is the superego, "acts like an internal sensor causing us to make moral judgments in light of social pressures. In contrast to the id, the superego operates according to the morality principle and serves primarily to protect society and us from the id." (127).

Actually, there are some approaches of psychoanalytic criticism adopted by Freud's pupils; Carl G. Jung, Northrop Frye and Jacques Lacan. All these approaches had been derived from Freudian basic psychoanalysis principle. Understanding these theories, in spite of difficult mastering them, and applying them on texts result in discovery of the realities that lie within each of us. However, the applicable approach on this study is Freudian one explained above which is called structural model.

The paper highlights the monomaniac revenge in Melville's "Moby Dick" and Bronte's "Wuthering Heights". Thus, the focus will be on the part of the id in both of the two men's psyches. Moreover, conceptual framework will include the main theme of monomaniac revenge and concepts related to it. Ahab, the tragic hero of "Moby Dick", and Heathcliff, the tragic hero of "Wuthering Heights" both suffer from nearly similar problems during their early life.

METHODOLOGY

Both, Ahab and Heathcliff struggle mind's id overflow to take revenge from others whatever the price was. Hence, there are convergences and some divergences can be seen through analysis of Ahab's and Heathcliff's characters.

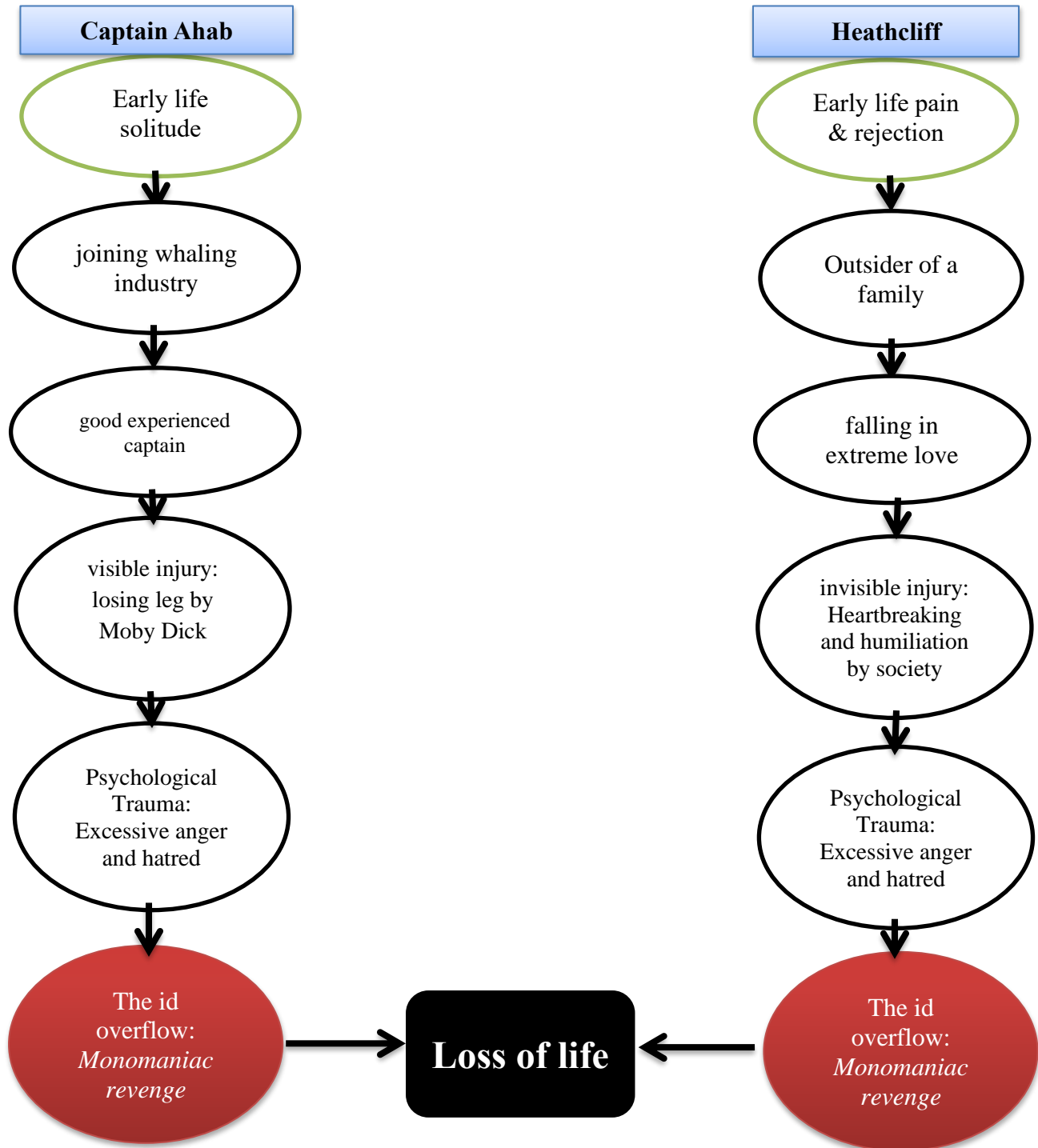
For Ahab, he brought up isolated from his family, and then he joined whaling industry. Then, he left his wife too early. During performing his job in an ocean, he lost his leg by a great White Whale. This action resulted in psychological trauma. Aftermath, the excessive anger and

hatred to the animal due to his flew motivated him to take revenge. Thus, he grew insane and possessed with monomaniac revenge that pushed him to lose his and his crew's lives.

For Heathcliff, he was dismissed by his own family at his early life. The father of Earnshaw family took him to grow up in Wuthering Heights. When he became young man he fell in extreme love with Catherine Earnshaw. His heart was broken by losing his beloved and by bad treatment of the new family master who dealt with him as an outsider. These two reasons caused to him a psychological trauma which motivated him, after gaining power, to return back overloaded with anger and hatred to those who had taken his soul-mate and who had humiliated and harmed him. His id made up his mind to monomaniac revenge. Like Ahab, his excessive desire of revenge caused death to him and to people around.

The following diagram may serve better understanding to the conceptual framework of the study:

Hard Causes, Bad Effects



RESEARCH FINDINGS

“Moby Dick” by Herman Melville:

Moby Dick is a novel of whaling industry in America. It is written in 1851 by Herman Melville. The story is particularly about monomaniac revenge when a man is obsessed entirely with idea of revenge whatever the price will be. The narrator of the story is Ishmael who travels to the whaling capital, Massachusetts. Consciously, Ishmael looks for adventure though he has been in sea before that. Now, he intends to experience whaling as something new for him. Unconsciously, he feels that his life in New York is meaningless, thus he wants to depart that world where, to him, there is no purpose in society. At his arrival, he is shocked by a very strange, savage cannibal man called, Queequeg, whom he has to share the bed with. However, they became later close friends.

Soon after signing the papers of joining Captain Ahab’s crew, Ishmael and Queequeg run into a disfigured and malformed man, who warns them about the risk of signing on-board Ahab’s ship named Pequod. He tells them marks to several frightening events relating to Ahab, but they neglect the man’s advices. Some days ago, before starting the journey, Ishmael hears that Ahab is still recovering from the loss of his leg which has been taken by a great wale called Moby Dick.

When the Pequod is in the high ocean, Ahab finally appears on the deck. This is the first time Ishmael observes Ahab carefully. Ahab looks a strong, intentional character, though his previous confrontation with Moby Dick has disfigured him both mentally and physically. He announces in front of the whole crew that he is going to take revenge upon Moby Dick, the great white whale, and the person who would see it first will be awarded with a Spanish gold doubloon, fixed on the mast column. Ahab’s loss of his leg results in psychological trauma. Bruce Carruth (2013) explains the term of psychological trauma, “in its broadest sense, is a wound to one’s self, one’s personhood. Trauma impacts how people perceive their worlds, their thoughts, judgment and intuition. What feelings they allow themselves to have and what feelings they can’t stop themselves from having.” (1-2). This traumatic state caused Ahab’s disordered mind and he became ready to sacrifice everything for satisfying his id. “All ye mast headers have before now heard me give orders of a white whale. Look ye! D’ye see this Spanish ounce of gold? It is a sixteen dollar piece men. Whoever of ye raises me a white headed whale with a wrinkled brow and a crooked jaw, he shall have this gold ounce.” (Melville, 1851: 170).

Starbuck, the most rational man on the deck, protests telling that they come for whaling not for murdering. The crew and Ahab drink together and the latter announces, “Drink and swear, Death to Moby Dick, God hunt us all if we do not hunt moby dick to his death.” (175). The crew’s agreement to follow Ahab gives him more strength and determination to kill the wale confessing that he is mad, in certain extent, “What I’ve dared, I’ve willed; and what I’ve willed, I’ll do! They think me mad – Starbuck does; but I’m demoniac, I am madness maddened! That wild madness that’s only calm to comprehend itself! The prophecy was that I should be dismembered; and – Aye! I lost this leg. I now prophesy that I will dismember my dismemberer.” (172).

Ahab's obsession with the whale increased more and more with feeling of anger and excessive hatred against the animal. The id motivates Ahab's mind towards revenge both consciously and unconsciously. Consciously, Ahab wants to revenge himself upon the animal and spends every second planning to get this desire because Moby Dick has champed his leg. Unconsciously, obsession with Moby Dick is an issue of pride for the captain as the whale has taken his pride and reduced his manhood, thus he feels he will not be perfect unless he slaughters Moby Dick. He projects all of his insights about the existence of evil in the world onto the White Whale. Though Ishmael notes the innate irrationality of this projection, his observation that other cultures have assumed the presence of malignant forces in the world advocates that Ahab's faith in a malignant presence prowling behind creation is not necessarily wrong.

There are two bad omens happen warning the crew of their end. The fish that averts the Pequod to follow the Albatross, another whaling ship, and the death of Radney, all predict a disastrous end to the Pequod's journey. The concept of fate, in particular, aids Ahab's purposes, as he employs the crew into accepting that the chase for the Moby Dick is their destiny. Fatalism, the belief in the certainty of fate, is a willful relief to the sailors, manipulating them to set aside their worries during times of risk as they believe that what will occur in the future has already been decided by an exterior force. Yet, this supposed relief doesn't stop them from searching signs of their fate.

However, Moby Dick appeared in front of Ahab and the latter provoked the crew to kill "the evil of the world". The battle breaks out and the spears of the crew penetrate Moby's body, but for the animal, they were as if energy supporter. Moby Dick destroys Pequod, kills his attackers. Captain Ahab's monomaniac revenge prevented him to regret his destiny. After the White Whale destroyed the Pequod, Ahab uttered his last words in the following excerpt: "Towards thee I roll, thou all-destroying but unconquering whale; to the last I grapple with thee; from hell's heart I stab at thee; for hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee. Sink all coffins and all hearses to one common pool! and since neither can be mine, let me then tow to pieces, while still chasing thee, though tied to thee, thou damned whale! Thus, I give up the spear!" (Melville, 585). This tragic tone is meant to meet the tragic destiny for Ahab and his crew except Ismael, the narrator who is rescued ironically by his friend's coffin to narrate us the story.

Including the magnificent and pessimistic, monomania deceptively presumed more weird than moral absurdity. In this way, the excessive desire and monomaniac revenge led Captain Ahab and his crew to meet their fate in the ocean where Ahab had worked, experienced, injured and died.

"Wuthering heights" by Emily Bronte

Wuthering Heights is the only novel written by Emily Bronte and published in 1847. Basically, the novel is about an unknown origin boy 'Heathcliff' who is neglected by his own family to be taken by Earnshaw family to save him from loss. The story begins with Mr. Lockwood's dream in a young girl's ghost trying to get in through the window. Then, he left Wuthering Heights and travelled to Thrushcross Grange asking the housekeeper, Ellen Dean, to tell the story of Wuthering Heights.

Earnshaw family consists of the father, the mother, Hindley and Catherine of about six years old. The father Mr. Earnshaw returns from his travelling to Liverpool bringing a boy of about 7 years old and then he adopted him to live with the family naming him, Heathcliff. From that time, Hindley's prejudice towards Heathcliff began to rise. Hindley was sent for college for three years. In contrast to Hindley, Catherine and Heathcliff made a very strong relationship that they spend more times together running and playing in the moors. Hindley returns when Mr. Earnshaw died, he became the new master of the family. Thus, he eliminates Heathcliff from the family and treats him as a servant. Heathcliff is usually humiliated by Hindley and Edgar. Accordingly, he began to think in revenge on Hindley. "I'm trying to settle how I shall pay Hindley back. I don't care how long I wait, if I can only do it at last. I hope he will not die before I do!" (Bronte, 1847: 64).

After few years, Catherine and Edgar became two close lovers causing another calamity to Heathcliff who now, loses his respect and his soul-mate. He makes sure that Catherine is no longer on his side when he hears Catherine tells Nelly her attitude, in this excerpt:

I've no more business to marry Edgar Linton than I have to be in heaven; and if the wicked man in there had not brought Heathcliff so low, I shouldn't have thought of it. It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now; so he shall never know how I love him: and that, not because he's handsome, Nelly, but because he's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same; and Linton's is as different as a moonbeam from lightning, or frost from fire. (Bronte, 85-86)

Catherine's phrase above "It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now" results in psychological trauma to Heathcliff as he knew that Catherine could not marry him because of his low status and ignorance. Besides, she does not actually love Edgar, however, in this way she will be capable of helping Heathcliff. Hence, he decided to leave away because he felt his heart is broken. Later, Catherine and Edgar get married. After three years, Heathcliff goes back to Wuthering Heights as a strong and rich leman. Catherine felt happy to meet him again. Edgar's sister, Isabella falls in love with Heathcliff who considers it a good chance to harm Edgar. This is in fact the beginning of series of revenge that Heathcliff has already made up his mind to satisfy his id. Meanwhile, He exploits gambling with Hindley to make him in debt and then he shares Hindley the farmhouse to payback the debts. Heathcliff elopes with Isabella and disappears for two months during Catherine's illness in order to gain two goals with one shoot. The first goal is to make Edgar loses his sister, the second is to 'return the slap' to Catherine by marrying Isabella.

After his return with his wife Isabella, he plans to see the sick Catherine secretly. This meeting and the conversation done between them is enough to kill her after hours of Heathcliff's leave when she gives birth to Cathy, as in the following excerpt:

'You teach me now how cruel you've been—cruel and false. Why did you despise me? Why did you betray your own heart, Cathy? I have not one word of comfort. You deserve this. You have killed yourself. Yes, you may kiss me, and cry; and wring out my kisses and tears: they'll blight you—they'll damn you. You loved me—then what right had you to leave me? What right—answer me—for the poor fancy you felt for Linton? Because misery and degradation, and death, and nothing that God or Satan could inflict would have parted us, you, of your own will, did it. I have

not broken your heart—you have broken it; and in breaking it, you have broken mine. So much the worse for me that I am strong. Do I want to live? What kind of living will it be when you—oh, God! would you like to live with your soul in the grave?' 'Let me alone. Let me alone,' sobbed Catherine. 'If I've done wrong, I'm dying for it. It is enough! You left me too: but I won't upbraid you! I forgive you. (Bronte, 302)

Although Wuthering Heights became under Heathcliff's control after Edgar's death, but he forced the young Cathy to get marry from the sick boy Linton Heathcliff. Later, his son also died. Later on Heathcliff himself died to be buried near Catherine Earnshaw's grave. Mythically, some travellers and shepherds claim that they, from time to time, see Heathcliff and Catherine's ghosts run and play in the moors as they used to do some years ago. Bronte discovers the great destructive desire of uncontrolled passion in Heathcliff's psyche. Heathcliff is a symbol of wild and deadly human emotion. This ghostly combination of the two dead lovers out of the graves, Bronte advocates, suggests that the bond of love is immortal one.

Finally, like Ahab, Heathcliff sacrifices himself and two families so that he can satisfy his id. Ahab and Heathcliff motivated by monomaniac desire of revenge thought that harming and damaging others may bring rest, satisfaction and pleasure. Yet, Melville and Bronte prove that the opposite is true. Destructive revenge brings destructive results.

CONCLUSION

"Moby Dick" by Herman Melville and "Wuthering Heights" by Emily Bronte tackle, in particular, the concept of the destructive revenge motivated by excessive human desire and selfishness. In both novels, respectively Captain Ahab and Heathcliff's monomaniac desire of revenge brought death to them and to people around. Ahab was preoccupied in killing the White Whale regardless of damage and risk that may impact him and Pequod's crew. His insane part of his psyche 'id' pushed him to sacrifice a big number of men and himself in the high of the ocean to get revenge on an animal upon one leg! For Heathcliff, he got harm and damage to member of two families, including his sweetheart, in addition to himself only to get relief to his psyche from the savage experience in the past.

Psychological trauma grew anger and hatred inside the two men in the extent that made lose wisdom and rationality. The feeling of anger and hatred is based on visible or invisible injury. However, in the cases of Ahab and Heathcliff, revenge did not bring justice or order, instead, their revenge did evil rather than confronted it. At the end of their stories, Melville and Bronte want to prove that destructive revenge brings destructive results.

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