

## **SEA DESCRIPTION IN HERMAN MELVILLE'S *MOBY DICK***

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*Great literature, if we read it well, opens us up to the world. It makes us more sensitive to it, as if we acquired eyes that could see through things and ears that could hear smaller sounds.*  
(Donald Hall)

### **ABSTRACT**

Great literature is achieved through high imagination which needs big inspiration. Nature can be the power to create such great creation. Most of Melville's works are his works on his wanderings in the sea. *Moby Dick* is the famous one which tells about American whaling, that was popular in the 1840's. In his novel of *Moby Dick*, Melville reveals an extraordinary one which are full with emotive words and poetic language. His closeness with nature is reflected on *Moby Dick*. The sea gives him a power to reach universal idea for human being. As we find many philosophical commentary in this novel which conceives the truth for us. From the description and the explanation in this discussion, I can conclude that nature is the inspiration source in Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*.

**Keywords:** *great literature, inspiration source, nature, philosophical commentary*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Literature is an expression of the deepest mind of an author. By his sensitive thinking, he brings out colorful and profound words that can make readers become astonished to what reflects on it. We as the reader can not neglect that by reading and understanding a poem, we can find the richness and the beauty of life that usually we do not find in daily life. Instead of that, when problems come to us, our mind is full of hate, anger sadness and disappointment. After reading literature, however an author wants the reader to realize that problems happened to human being are not without any meaning (Guth & Rico, 2002).

In bringing out his idea, an author of a novel expresses characters, setting, and plot to be the imitation of life that afterwards problems in society accompany it. Understanding literature means we want to get the answer of our life problems. With his sensitive mind, an author creates an imitation of life, giving a judgement and a solution to the problems of the characters of his work, in consequence he tries to explain to us the meaning of life (Packham, 2017). The process of literary work is an author to be the witness of many and endless problems faced to human being while he feels it, too. He always has many questions for the curiosity of the events in nature and the life of human being.

Kirkpatrick and Goodfellow in his book *Poetry With Pleasure* (2012) explains about this case: You will remember how necessary it is, if they are to be fine poets, that they become especially good observers of life. Their deep, profound thoughts of this life, however, have caused many of them to examine certain basic, age-old questions: Why are we born? Is there a higher power which shapes our lives? If there is such a power, how much or how little does it rule us. What is truly a "good" or "bad" action? What is the purpose behind our being alive in this world? (p. 124).

They are such questions loading in thoughtful people, and particularly happens to authors. They are interested in life and they want to know about the mystery of life. In examining life an author has a desire to present his idea in literature. He must have a high imagination in his mind. He does not want to tell merely unmeaningful statements to the reader. In composing a poetry that, whether or not it reflects exactly the personal beliefs we realize to be true.

As a keenly sensitive person, it is common to a poet, as we see in many literary works, loving of nature. With the beauty and unlimited expression of nature he finds much and big inspiration from that endless source. Then from there the readers can notice great creations of literary work as the reflection of his idea. Some poets have been so impressed with the beauty of nature that they found in it glorious evidence of a divine force behind creation (Kirkpatrick & Goodfellow, 2012: 125).

There is unlimited source we get from nature. Nature gives us the shower that clear our mind and clean our thinking. While society means many things deal with busy life, a chaos, competition, anger, sadness, disappointment; nature, however can present happiness, equality, brevity, encouragement, peace, dignity, hope and honour. If we see nature, it means we feel the creation of God, there is a Mighty of God in it. There is no lying and we do not find hypocrisy in nature.

### **HERMAN MELVILLE'S *MOBY DICK***

Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* is one of the greatest novels in the world. It was published in 1851, in London and New York. It tells about American whaling, an interesting job but also a dangerous one for man, which was popular in America in the 1840's. Here are some of many appreciations about Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* from the quality readers:

*Moby Dick* has "the power to entrance young readers and old so that, as we turn the pages, our hands close about an imaginary harpoon and in our ears rings the cry: "Thar she blows!" writes Clifton Fadiman in his afterword. (Melville, 1962).

My first encounter with *Moby Dick* was when I was in high school. I read the story then for its adventure and I wasn't disappointed. On rereading Melville's book, I discovered a lot in it that I had missed or overlooked in my earlier reading (Robert Shore, the illustrator of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*).

The imaginative unity Melville achieves is most directly observable in the texture of his prose. Arvin speaks of the language of *Moby Dick* as describable only as we describe the language of Milton or Shakespeare it must be called "Melvillean." He goes on to define the properties of this language in a very interesting way (Anderson, 1962).

In *the Encyclopedia Americana* it is stated that the work of *Moby Dick* is really made up of three elements. One of these is a fairly full and accurate account of American whaling customs in the 1840's and the natural history of the sperm whale. The second is an exciting narrative depicting the hunt for a particular white whale, *Moby Dick*, by mad Captain Ahab, who has previously lost one leg to its ferocious jaws. The third element is a philosophical commentary upon human life and fate (cf. Andayani & Purbowati, 2016).

### **SEA DESCRIPTION IN *MOBY DICK***

Nature is an inspiration source for human being. Great creation needs a big inspiration that can be the power to achieve a high imagination. Literary work is an expression of idea of an author. Unlike most of the great nineteenth-century novels of England and the Continent, in this case, to bring out his idea, Melville focuses his view to nature, instead of plunging into the life of society.

Most of his works are about his adventures and *Moby Dick* is one of his on his wanderings in the sea. The sea as nature is the main source of inspiration to answer his curiosity of life. From nature, as Melville mentions there is a reflection of the image of the ungraspable panthom of life: "But the same image, we ourselves see in all rivers and oceans. It is the image of the ungraspable phantom of life; and this is the key to it all" (Meville, 1962: 3).

In explaining the story, Meville does not give merely simple description. He always tries to present an event concretely and emotively. Melville takes his reader to his high imagination with his broad horizon which refers to the view in all over the world:

Why did the old Persians hold the sea holy? Why did the Greeks give it a separate deity, and own brother of Jove? (Melville, 2004: 3).

Go and gaze upon the iron emblematical harpoons round yonder lofty mansion, and your question will be answered. Yes; all these brave houses and flowery gardens came from the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans (Melville, 2004: 35).

For Lima has taken the white veil; and there is a higher horror in this whiteness of her woe. Old as Pizarro, this whiteness ... (Melville, 2004: 204).

There is a freedom of expression in nature. Melville shows an extraordinary one to create his words in every side as well as elements of this novel. Nature brings a power to him to tell the amazing story. As a matter of fact, he had read a tale of "Mocha Dick", a fabulous whale known to the South Sea fishery, and the narrative of the whale ship Essex. His triumph was to find the fable which united them (comment by Quentin Anderson). He reveals incredible description in each event:

The wind increased to a howl; the waves dashed their bucklers together; the whole squall roared, forked, and crackled around us like a white fire upon the prairie, in which unconsumed, we were burning; immortal in these jaws of death! (Melville, 2004: 241).

Call me Ishmael. 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, 2004: 1).

People say that life is complicated. Many philosophical commentary expressed in this novel show that there are many questions in the mind of Herman Melville. He wants to answer the questions that always bother his mind. We usually find many problems in life and there is no answer for the unreasonable questions. By the appearance of the sea Melville gets the inspiration to explain the mystery of life. What the meaning of life is, why there is a competition in life, what the purpose of it is. There is a contemplation on his wanderings in the sea. From the beauty and the fresh of nature, it can reflect the hospitality. Then from the dark blue and the depth of the sea, it can show the violence of life (cf. Andayani & Purbowati, 2016; Packham, 2017).

Should you ever be athirst in the great American desert, try this experiment, if your caravan happens to be supplied with a metaphysical professor. Yes, as every one knows, meditation and water are wedded for ever (Melville, 1962: 2).

What of it, if some old hunks of a sea-captain orders me to get a broom and sweep down the decks? What does that indignity amount to, weighed, I mean, in the scales of the New Testament? Who is not a slave? Tell me that (Melville, 2004: 5).

I concluded that this harpooner, in the course of his distant voyages, must have met with a similar adventure. And what is it, thought I after all! It's only his outside; a man can be honest in any sort of skin (Melville, 1962: 22).

..., praying God for annihilation until the fit be passed; and at last amid the whirl of woe he feels a deep stupor steal over him, as over the man who bleeds to death, for conscience is the wound, and there's naught to staunch it; so, after sore ... (Melville, 1962: 47).

Man as a creator of himself will never finish with his struggle, except if only he is dead. As an existence which is free to welcome his future, man plans everything for himself. He is responsible to himself. He will always try to seek happiness in his life. Whatever his existence and what he makes of his life, he is the only one who is responsible for it. Only from that responsibility, man can reach happiness. This second idea of Sartre can be explained from what we know about Ahab's life (cf. Andayani & Jupriono, 2018).

By reading literature we will have rich knowledge and wide horizon that we can appreciate it as a valuable one. It is also stated by Wilfred L. Guerin in his book *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature* that the larger function of literature is to teach morality and to probe philosophical issues. As Melville's *Moby Dick* contains of humanity or moral, religion and culture; the writer needs a theory to appreciate this work. She can feel satisfied if only she can find something worth in his mind after reading it.

From Melville's *Moby Dick* the writer is very interested that she finds a philosophical idea which is universal. From any philosophical ideas, like absurdity, existentialism and phenomenology; one that is revealed from this work is existentialism. She applies Sartre's existentialism for the theory of her study. (Andayani, 2018; Yadav & Yadav, 2019).

## CONCLUSION

Nature is an inspiration source for human being particularly it happens to an artist. Why must an author or a painter go to a remote place or a mountain area to create their works. They need solitary place where there is fresh air with no pollution and shows good panorama. The beautiful atmosphere that can not be found in our busy life in a city, gives big inspiration to them. The unlimited source reflected in nature make an artist to bring out his idea in free expression with his sensitive mind.

Great literature is achieved through high imagination which needs big inspiration. Nature can be the power to create such great creation. Most of Melville's works are his works on his wanderings in the sea. *Moby Dick* is the famous one which tells about American whaling, that was popular in the 1840's. In his novel of *Moby Dick*, Melville reveals an extraordinary one which are full with emotive words and poetic language (Andayani, 2005). His closeness with nature is reflected on *Moby Dick*. The sea gives him a power to reach universal idea for human being. As we find many philosophical commentary in this novel which conceives the truth for us (Packham, 2017; cf. Yadav & Yadav, 2019). From the description and the explanation in this discussion, I can conclude that nature is the inspiration source (Andayani, 1997) in Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*.

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