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### **AHAB VS. SUN; HOUSE VS. GOD: LIFE WITHOUT PAIN**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

This article examines the similarities shared by two characters with disabilities: Doctor House, the main character of a popular television series House M.D. and Ahab in Moby Dick. Although Moby Dick was written in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it can still be studied from various perspectives, which makes it a valuable source to unroll the human psyche. In this respect, pain can be considered the source of obsession. Pain is taken as the major reason turning these two characters into pessimist, arrogant, and skeptical humans. One of the main similarities shared by the show House M.D. and the novel Moby Dick is a medical enigma called “phantom limb pain”. This medical enigma makes people feel their lost limbs; eventually affects and changes who they really are. Both Ahab and Murphy, one of the characters in the show House M.D., have suffered from phantom sensations since traumatic amputations. While Doctor House does not suffer from phantom limb pain, his acute limb pain reshapes his personality traits. In the absence of the everlasting feeling of pain, these characters could be entirely different. We can see this change not in Ahab’s personality but in House’s. In the episodes without House’s pain, he turns into a different person. Ahab and House are brilliant, arrogant, and excluded characters. Their obsessive personalities connect them. This article reveals that Doctor House has similar characteristics with another renowned character except Sherlock Holmes.

#### **STRUCTURED ABSTRACT**

In this article, our main objective is to explore the similarities shared by two popular fictitious characters, Ahab and Doctor House with the claim that pain plays a very important role in their lives. Their



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arrogant and insubordinate personalities and their attitudes towards other people reveal some common traits to be discussed.

Herman Melville's classic novel *Moby Dick* portrays an obsessive and experienced captain who rarely interacts with the crew and experiences phantom sensations. Although Ahab is gloomier than House, their mutual ground is never-ending pain. *House M.D.* is a popular TV show which ended in 2012 after eight seasons. The protagonist is Doctor Gregory House, a genius who solves medical puzzles that no one can. His acute limb pain makes him dependent on painkillers. The reason behind their cynicism in this article is based upon this common point. Continuous pain has such an enormous effect on people that it can change how they think, behave, and interact with other people. Pain becomes the only reality and the sole problem that should be eliminated in their lives. Phantom limb pain, in this regard, can be seen in both *Moby Dick* and *House M.D.* with the characters Ahab and Murphy, a veteran in one episode of *House M.D.* titled *The Tyrant*. People suffering from phantom limb pain experience pain in their lost limbs. House M.D., a medical Sherlock Holmes, treats Murphy, who is very pessimistic and unhappy at the beginning of the episode, with the mirror therapy. Murphy calms down and feels relieved for the first time since he lost his arm in the Vietnam War. Although we as the audience have no further information on his life without pain, we can conclude that he can now start a new life as for now pain will no longer limit or change his way of thinking. As will be discussed further in the study, House, in some episodes, shows up as a man almost fully recovered. His pain-free life offers him a new perspective on life. He runs to work, leaves his cane, and is more interested in patients' wishes. While Ahab does not get this opportunity in life, we can make inferences about his new personality similar to House's.

Ahab and House feel the pain due to entirely different situations. House is on opiate medications and he is addicted to pain killers because of an infarction in his leg. While House is a great diagnostician, other doctors could not diagnose him. Three days passed before House himself suggested that it might have been muscle death. At this point, the only way to save him was amputation. While his leg was saved, it left him with excruciating pain and a cane. Ahab, on the other hand, experiences phantom limb pain, a medical enigma that was even reflected in one of the episodes of *House*. Herman Melville, as a great keen observant, describes the phantom limb pain in detail, which is uncommon because in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was yet not a diagnosis. Even if it is still not a fully understood condition, Melville apparently observed the condition and had enough knowledge to write about it. Ahab is obsessed with the white whale which took his leg from him. He is skeptical, anti-social, and arrogant just like House.

Both House and Ahab undermine any kind of authority. They manipulate the system and use the resources in accordance with their benefits. As the captain of Pequod, Ahab is not interested in the owners' wishes to load the ship with whale oil. He has the unending desire to chase the white whale. House, in the same way, uses the resources of the fictitious Princeton-Plainsboro Teaching Hospital to unravel the medical mysteries in his own unique way, which can be both illegal and unethical. He uses these unique medical cases as a distraction from chronic pain.

The unsolved mystery is more important than anything to him. He has no interest in the benefits of the hospital or the orders of the Dean of Medicine Dr. Cuddy. While the hospital has much to lose because of House's actions, finding answers to puzzles is more important to House. In terms of a healthy relationship, neither Doctor House nor Captain Ahab is successful. Ahab is married to a beautiful woman; however, this marriage cannot keep him from hunting the white whale. He is unable to sustain a relationship just like Doctor House. House is unable to spend his life with Doctor Cuddy.

Even though Ahab and House have different working environments and incomparable people around them, they share some similar characteristics. *Moby Dick* is such a versatile novel that even after centuries it can still be studied from various angles. House M.D. is such a complicated character that House's personality can be compared to several other characters.

**Keywords:** *Moby Dick*, Ahab, *House M.D.*, Doctor House, Phantom Limb Pain, Disability, Comparison, Herman Melville

## AHAB GÜNEŞ'E, HOUSE TANRI'YA KARŞI: AĞRISIZ HAYAT

### ÖZ

Bu çalışma, engelli iki karakter, popüler *House M.D.* televizyon dizisinin ana karakteri Doktor House ve *Moby Dick* adlı romanın ana karakteri Ahab, tarafından paylaşılan benzerlikleri inceler. *Moby Dick* 19. yüzyılda yazılmasına rağmen hâlâ pek çok farklı açıdan çalışılabilir. Bu durum, onu insan psikolojisini daha iyi anlamamız noktasında değerli bir kaynak yapar. Bu bakımdan acı, takıntının kaynağı olarak düşünülebilir. Acı, bu iki karakteri kötümser, kibirli ve şüpheli insanlara dönüştüren ana sebep olarak ele alınır. *House M.D.* dizisi ve *Moby Dick* romanı tarafından paylaşılan temel benzerliklerden birisi "fantom ekstremitte ağrısı" denilen tıbbi bir enigmadır. Bu tıbbi enigma insanların kaybettikleri uzuvlarında acı hissetmelerine neden olur; en sonunda gerçekte oldukları kişiyi etkiler ve değiştirir. Hem Ahab hem de *House M.D.* dizisindeki karakterlerden biri olan Murphy sarsıcı amputasyonlardan beri fantom ekstremitte ağrıları çekmektedir. Doktor House bu tür bir ağrı çekmezken uzvundaki kronik ağrı onun kişilik özelliklerini tekrar şekillendirir. Sonu gelmez acının olmadığı durumda bu karakterlerin tamamen farklı insanlar olma ihtimali vardır ki bu durumu Ahab'da görmesek de House'da görürüz. House acısının ortadan kalktığı bölümlerde farklı bir insana dönüşmüştür. Ahab ve House keskin zekâlı, kibirli ve dışlanmış karakterlerdir. Takıntılı kişilikleri onları birleştirir. Bu çalışma Doktor House'un birçok benzerlik gösterdiği ünlü karakter Sherlock Holmes dışında başka bir karakterle benzer özellikleri olduğunu ortaya koyar.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Moby Dick*, Ahab, *House M.D.*, Doktor House, Fantom Ekstremitte Ağrısı, Engellilik.

## I. Introduction

Pain is such a prevailing feeling that it has the power to turn its victims into completely opposite human beings. The lives of Ahab, House and Murphy would have been utterly dissimilar only if they had not led lives in excruciating pains. There is a short period when Doctor House is pain-free and he does not need the painkillers he has been addicted to. As will be discussed later his mood changes, so do his cynic manners. There is a point in Murphy's life when his phantom limb pain is gone thanks to Doctor House's mirror therapy. When House and Murphy are studied together especially in the moments when they are completely pain-free, it can be noticed that they are no longer the same people. In this respect, it can be asserted that Ahab's inapproachable personality may be the result of his acute phantom limb pain.

Herman Melville's exceptional novel *Moby Dick* portrays an obsessive, brilliant captain whose never-ending energy to seek revenge and satisfy his obsession is shared by another brilliant but arrogant character named Gregory House (played by Hugh Laurie), the main character of an acclaimed television series called *House M.D.* created by David Shore. There are some close similarities between the protagonist of *Moby Dick*, Ahab and Gregory House who is the protagonist of *House M.D.* which was broadcasted by Fox Network and ended in 2012 after eight seasons. When Ahab and House M.D. are studied closely, these similarities come to the surface easily.

## II. House, Ahab, and Murphy: Lives with Chronic Pain

Gregory House's resemblance to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's renowned character Sherlock Holmes has been discussed or mentioned in various papers (Amaro, 2012; Lepre, 2014; Rich et al., 2008). For instance, Rich et al., state: "House may be a hero, but he is a tragic hero. He walks with a cane, refuses to dress like a doctor, and is addicted to opiates, much like his literary equivalent, Sherlock Holmes" (2008: 227). Dr. House has so many similarities with Holmes that even their home addresses are alike: ". . . Dr. House's address is 221B Baker Street, a reference to the London home of Sherlock Holmes – a character from which the series' authors drew inspiration when creating the character of Gregory House" (Lepre, 2014: 506). While the common similarities shared by Gregory House and Sherlock Holmes have been studied before, the parallels between Ahab and House remain to be discussed. While House walks with a cane, Ahab uses prosthetic leg carved out of whalebone; what is more they are both tragic heroes. When they are studied together, there appear to be striking parallels.

Although Ahab and House are both authority figures in the environments they function, they still undermine any kind of authority and power over them. For Ahab, the captain of Pequod, who is responsible for success of the hunt and the lives of the crew, the authority figures are seemingly the owners of the ship. The clear motive of the owners is to make money from whale oil which will be stored in the hold by the crew under Ahab's command. The fact that Ahab is a persevering and experienced captain makes the owners' decision to consign their ship to Ahab easy as he is the best captain they can find. At this point, they do not consider Ahab's personality or methods as obstacles as long as he loads the ship with whale oil. They overlook Ahab's obsessional personality without difficulty. However, Ahab has a hidden agenda and he could not care less about whale oil or filling the owners' pockets. When the oil in the hold leaks and Starbuck warns Ahab that they will lose more oil than they make in a year, Ahab does not want to hear it. He has no intention to lose his valuable time fixing the hold instead of chasing the white whale:

"What will the owners say, sir?"

"Let the owners stand on Nantucket beach and outyell the Typhoons. What cares Ahab? Owners, owners? Thou art always prating to me, Starbuck, about those miserly owners, as if the owners were my conscience. But look ye, the only real owner of anything is its

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commander; and hark ye, my conscience is in this ship's keel.—On deck!” (Melville, 1966: 554)

As can be seen in the dialogue between Starbuck and Ahab, the captain is not duty bound to make the owners get what they actually want. His quest for vengeance is more important than the owners' wishes despite the fact that the ship does not belong to him. As the “commander” of the ship, Ahab thinks that he has the right to use the ship and crew in the direction of his needs and desires. The same attitude can be seen in *House M.D.* as Gregory House does not consider himself a part of the fictitious Princeton-Plainsboro Teaching Hospital run by Dr. Cuddy (played by Lisa Edelstein). House uses the resources of the hospital even at times unnecessarily to prove himself right. The same reason the owners let Ahab be in full charge of their ship applies to Dr. Cuddy's motive not to fire House despite all his non-observant deeds. Cuddy warns House in the pilot episode of the show as: “Look, Dr. House, the only reason that I don't fire you is because your reputation still worth something to this hospital” (Shore & Singer, 2004). The fact that both Ahab and House are highly talented, smart, and determined characters make them indispensable parts of their working environments. Dr. House's genius is unique and priceless; moreover, his reputation to diagnose the diseases that nobody can make Dr. Cuddy overlook his disobedient character and sarcasm. Dr. House manipulates, mocks, and ignores his patients but he almost eventually treats them. In this respect, DuBose writes:

. . . House is still the type of doctor who most of us would want . . . not because he fits the mold, not because we think he cares, and not because we think he would follow all proscribed procedures in his treatment. Rather, we would want House simply because he is extremely good at his job. (2010: 21)

As it is clear from the quotation above, even if House is not regarded to be a traditional doctor, his patients count on him that he will treat them like no one else can. DuBose also approaches *House M.D.* from a different angle and concludes that *House M.D.* is not a medical show; instead according to the critic it is a superhero show and House's brilliance is his super power (DuBose, 2010).

Ahab's experience at sea and House's genius separate them from the rest of people around them. They are both respected but excluded characters; however, their detachments from the society are due to their abilities and choices. Even if Ahab has a very good chance of leading a happy and peaceful life, he chooses an exact opposite life full of turmoil and agony. Ahab says: “When I think of this life I have led; the desolation of solitude it has been; the masoned, walled-town of a Captain's exclusiveness, which admits but small entrance to any sympathy from the green country without—oh, weariness! heaviness!” (Melville, 1966: 627). Ahab is separated from the society; what is more he leads an exclusive life even on the ship. His authority as the captain of Pequod, his madness and obsession to chase the white whale keep him apart from the rest of the crew. Interestingly, the isolated captain Ahab is married to a young girl with whom he spent very little time. During his conversation with Starbuck, Ahab mentions his wife and her ill fate: “. . . whole oceans away, from that young girl-wife I wedded past fifty, and sailed for Cape Horn the next day, leaving but one dent in my marriage pillow—wife? wife?—rather a widow with her husband alive!” (Melville, 1966: 627). The fact that Ahab spent most of his years at open water becomes more obvious as he had an opportunity to get married only when he passed fifty years old. Even marriage and a beautiful wife cannot retain Ahab from hunting. In the episode titled *Fall from Grace*, House, on the other hand, gets married to a Ukrainian massage therapist so that she can acquire citizenship in the USA (Kelley & Gates, 2011). He uses the institution of marriage as a tool to evade the law so that Dominika (played by Karolina Wydra) can settle in the USA. House finds it difficult to maintain a strong relationship with a woman. House's narcissism deprives him of intimacy. On the same issue but on a different character Dyer (1994) states:

One of the most crippling characteristics of narcissism is the narcissist's inability to experience mature love for another human being. So involved is Ahab with his self-

centered revenge that he abandons wife and child, rejects Starbuck's compassion when he needs it the most, and even fails to care responsibly for the hapless cabin boy, Pip (21).

Dyer bases Ahab's inability to sustain a long term relationship upon his narcissism. The comment can be applied to House, as well. The common feature both Ahab and House share is that they are unwilling to get in contact with other people. Ahab leaves his beautiful, young wife as he is unable to share; House, on the other hand, mocks marriage as he cannot maintain a lifelong relationship with a woman. Ahab, at first, does not even bother to introduce himself to the crew. Even the narrator of *Moby Dick*, Ishmael takes the job without seeing the captain of the ship. When Ishmael asks to see him, Captain Peleg is not sure how to answer his question:

“And what dost thou want of Captain Ahab? It's all right enough; thou art shipped.”

“Yes, but I should like to see him.”

“But I don't think thou wilt be able to at present. I don't know exactly what's the matter with him; but he keeps close inside the house; a sort of sick, and yet he don't look so. In fact, he ain't sick; but no, he isn't well either. Anyhow, young man, he won't always see me, so I don't suppose he will thee. He's a queer man, Captain Ahab—so some think—but a good one” (Melville, 1966: 96).

Captain Ahab's unwillingness to see the sailors under his command can be encountered in Gregory House, as well. House M.D. does not consider it a necessity to see his patients before treating them. According to House, it is not deemed reasonable to chat or listen to patients' complaints and problems. While patients can lie, medical examinations and test results can hardly lie. Throughout the entire eight seasons, we come across this rigid view of his. House does not want his judgment blurred by patients' remarks, accordingly he keeps his distance from his patients. In a sense, both Ahab and House lead reclusive lives away from social norms and limits. Just like Ahab spending most of his time in his master cabin away from the crew, House M.D. spends most of his time alone in his office thinking of a possible treatment. In *Moby Dick*, Ahab's loss of motivation to make a friend is written: “For, as it eventually turned out, he cared not to consort, even for five minutes, with any stranger captain, except he could contribute some of that information he so absorbingly sought” (Melville, 1966: 280). He talks to other captains to obtain information on the white whale. As for friendship, House does not need anyone else but Dr. Wilson (played by Robert Sean Leonard) who is the head of the Department of Oncology. As an oncologist, Dr. Wilson shows empathy towards his friends and patients unlike Dr. House. They are complete opposite characters, and yet they somehow get along. There are, furthermore, various close comparisons in *Moby Dick* and *House M.D.*, one of which is a medical mystery called phantom limb pain.

### III. Phantom Limb Pain: A Medical Enigma Reflected in Fiction

Phantom limb pain is a medical enigma which was even reflected in Herman Melville's outstanding novel *Moby Dick* written in 1851 and in an episode of *House M.D.* Herman states on phantom limb and Ahab: “As an amputee, Captain Ahab, the chief among the dramatis personae of *Moby Dick* (1851), would be expected to have first-hand knowledge of phantom limb” (1998: 76). After quoting the dialogue between Ahab and the carpenter on phantom limb, Herman also writes: “Despite the personal and popular knowledge of phantom limb evinced by Melville's interlocutors, medicine continued to ignore it for two more decades” (1998: 76). The pain is explained as such: “Following amputation, virtually all amputees experience phantom sensations, painful or not, that are perceived to be associated with the missing limb. Essentially, the brain is remembering the missing part of the limb, and is still reporting its feelings” (Cone, 2008: 4). This medical term even arouses greater interest when it is found in one of the earliest American novels in history. Ambrose Paré, as early as in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, expressed his amazement and stated:

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Truly, it is a thing wondrous, strange, and prodigious which will scarce be credited, unless by such as have seen with their own eyes and heard with their own ears, the patients who many months after cutting away the leg, grievously complained that they yet felt exceedingly great pain in that leg so cut off (qtd. in McVeigh, 2000: 22).

The amputees thus feel their missing limbs which can be seen in greater detail in *Moby Dick*. Phantom Limb pain arouses interest and amazement, and that is why this enigma can be encountered even in popular television series one of which is *House M.D.* ended in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the USA. Gregory House, who is addicted to pain killers because of chronic pain in his leg, comes up with answers to unexplainable medical mysteries. As he is the head of department of diagnostics, he tries to determine the problems with his unique brilliance. In a television series like *House M.D.* which deals with medical mysteries, phantom limb appears as a mystery that needs to be solved. This medical enigma appears almost naturally in the show which deals with medical puzzles. In the episode titled *The Tyrant* in the sixth season, a veteran called Murphy claims to have lost his right arm in the Vietnam War and suffers from phantom sensations for thirty-six years. The first time they meet in the apartment, Murphy confronts with House and threatens him as Murphy claims that House makes too much noise with his cane (Blake & Straiton, 2009). What is interesting is that the veteran is similarly tense and in poor spirits like House; thus it can be concluded that pain changes the personalities of these three characters: Murphy, House and Ahab. Recurring phantom sensations seem to have turned the veteran into a short-tempered, moody, and pessimistic man. As can be concluded, Murphy, House, and Ahab suffer from continuous pain in their limbs. Phantom limb pain seems to have ruined the lives of Murphy and Ahab and turned them into men who do not get pleasure out of life. Murphy also leads a lonely life in his flat away from people. We have, unfortunately, little knowledge about Murphy and his lifestyle as in the episode *The Tyrant*, Murphy's condition is not treated in detail. He does not even come to the hospital or ask for House's help. More details on Murphy's life and past would be helpful in order to compare him with Ahab and House. Even though House first thinks that he is faking the pain, he later believes and tries to end his pain with mirror therapy. With the help of mirror therapy, the veteran's pain fades. Murphy thanks House sincerely while crying out of joy: "Oh, my God. It relaxed. For thirty-six years, I've been in pain. And it's finally gone" (Blake & Straiton, 2009). It is engrossing to realize that phantom limb enigma can be encountered in a classical novel written in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and in a modern television series as *House M.D.* in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Herman Melville, as a great observer, narrated Ahab's condition and misery because of this medical enigma so thoroughly that it is challenging not to be amazed. It is a surprising fact that Melville had a great knowledge of this medical enigma and that he successfully enriched Ahab's personality; because we can take this side of Ahab as a motive to chase the white whale. While *Moby Dick* was given many symbolic meanings and it was considered more than a whale, the scope of this study is limited to considering the white whale as a distraction. In order to cope with the excruciating pain in his lost limb, Ahab may have chosen an impossible mission to keep his mind out of pain that cannot be obtunded. Trying to accomplish an impossible mission is one of the features which both Ahab and Gregory House possess. On phantom pain and coping mechanism, it is written:

... an individual with phantom limb pain may experience considerable pain and suffering without any active nociception. Because pain and suffering are separate components of the pain experience, individuals with chronic pain may take steps to reduce their suffering via the use of adaptive coping techniques, such as relaxation exercises and distraction techniques (Hanley et al., 2006: 35).

As can be seen in the quotation above finding distraction is one of the techniques to cope with the pain; thus Ahab struggles to kill *Moby Dick* and wants to achieve his goal more than anything. In the same way, Gregory House follows a different path reaching the same goal. *House M.D.* chooses the medical cases as his distraction and tries to solve the medical mysteries that no one can. The mysterious

medical cases are possibly House's white whale. Ahab surely has phantom limb pain; however, the same situation cannot be applied to House M.D. who does not have any phantom sensations as his body is intact. Gilmer approaches to the character House M.D. from a different aspect and probes his pain and the results of House's constant pain are revealed. Gilmer writes: "House seeks distraction from the pain, and finds it in his medical mysteries" (2007: 146). While House's body is intact, he is in constant pain because of a limb infraction. Due to this constant limb pain, he uses painkillers to ease his suffering; however, painkillers are not enough to relieve his pain. House needs to preoccupy himself and to achieve his aim, he uses medical cases as his own distraction tool; because "[p]ain becomes the center of House's universe. It traps him. It becomes the only thing in his thoughts" (Gilmer, 2007: 145). The personalities of these three characters, Murphy, House and Ahab, seem to have changed in a negative way due to the effects of excruciating pain. To highlight this point in *House M.D.*, the first episode of third season titled *Meaning* helps us realize the constructive effects of being pain-free on Gregory House. In this episode, House does not suffer from any pain, and his leg is finally "normal" again, which lets him walk without a cane and even run for miles. He tries to ride on a skateboard, runs for miles before getting to work. In this episode, House wishes to help Richard (played by Edward Edwards), a person with brain cancer. Although House, at the beginning, knows that he cannot make diagnosis for someone who has been successfully diagnosed before, he just wants to help the patient and ease his pain. In this case, Richard is at the hospital because he drove his wheelchair to the pool and his lungs were filled with water. His case is not medically mysterious or a puzzle which House enjoys solving. He takes the case only because of the fact that he is not in pain anymore; so he does not want others to feel pain. Even Richard's wife thanks him as he is quite interested in her husband's medical condition (Kaplow et al., & Sarafian, 2006). While House is finally in good spirits after years of agony, his pain-free condition does not last long. Neither does his new personality. The changes in House's personality should be highlighted here as he is less cynical and pessimistic.

Another great episode showing the relationship between pain and personality is the episode in the third season titled *The Jerk* (Dick & Sackheim, 2007). In this episode, a great chess-player entering puberty (played by Nick Lane) suffers from severe headache and is brought to Princeton-Plainsboro Teaching Hospital in order to be effectively diagnosed. What is interesting in this case is that the bad-mannered, reckless, and disrespectful personality of the young boy who often uses abusive language is written on the board as a possible symptom. House also correlates between the young boy's pain and his cynical personality as he seems sure that severe headache is the agent behind his deeds and words. Even though House, at the end, eliminates "personality" from the symptoms and turns out to be right, we can reason from this episode that House possibly knows how much pain alters and affects a person's identity (Dick & Sackheim, 2007). In this case, pain did not change who the young boy was, however House's approach to the connection between pain and character was revealed. Thus it is not unfair to conclude that pain is an effective tool shaping the personalities of House, Ahab and Murphy.

Captain Peleg's speeches are great sources of information for the reader and Ishmael as he starts to shape Ahab's personality at the beginning of the novel. He also gives us the chance so that we can evaluate Ahab in an objective way. Peleg tells Ishmael why Ahab is not a happy man:

"Aye, aye, I know that he was never very jolly; and I know that on the passage home, he was a little out of his mind for a spell; but it was the sharp shooting pains in his bleeding stump that brought that about, as any one might see. I know, too, that ever since he lost his leg last voyage by that accursed whale, he's been a kind of moody- desperate moody, and savage sometimes; but that will all pass off. And once for all, let me tell thee and assure thee, young man, it's better to sail with a moody good captain than a laughing bad one" (Melville, 1966: 97).

In Peleg's narration of the terrible and agonizing event Ahab went through, the phrase "sharp shooting pains" is of vital importance since phantom pain is explained with Peleg's exact words. How patients feel is explained as such: "Patients usually describe the pain as shooting, stabbing, piercing, cramping, pinching, or burning" (Wolff et al., 2011: 406). The fact that Ahab is a good captain encourages the crew to take part in the voyage full of danger. In Peleg's speech, it should also be noted that Ahab's personality seems to have shifted vividly after losing his leg. Although it is clear that Ahab and House were never lively men, they seem to have turned into moody and depressed people. Winters states: "In fact, according to Dr. Wilson, House was actually a jerk long before the infarction that crippled his leg and left him in constant pain" (2007: 37-38). House's rebellious side cannot be based solely on the infarction and pain; yet it is obvious that pain affected and changed him profoundly. His rebellious identity became more cynical, reckless, and unhappy. Ahab's pain, on the other hand, never seizes even after years. We can make this comment confidently as Ahab explains his phantom limb pain while chatting with the carpenter:

"Look ye, carpenter, I dare say thou callest thyself a right good workmanlike workman, eh? Well, then, will it speak thoroughly well for thy work, if, when I come to mount this leg thou makest, I shall nevertheless feel another leg in the same identical place with it; that is, carpenter, my old lost leg; the flesh and blood one, I mean. Canst thou not drive that old Adam away?" (Melville, 1966: 550-551)

Unlike other amputees in the novel, Ahab is the only one who suffers from the phantom pain. He can never let his lost leg go or even forget momentarily. He is as obsessed with his lost limb as he is with the white whale. Ahab's monomania seems to result in agonizing, never ending pain. The dialogue between Ahab and the carpenter continues:

"Truly, sir, I begin to understand somewhat now. Yes, I have heard something curious on that score, sir; how that a dismasted man never entirely loses the feeling of his old spar, but it will be still pricking him at times. May I humbly ask if it be really so, sir?"

"It is, man. Look, put thy live leg here in the place where mine was; so, now, here is only one distinct leg to the eye, yet two to the soul. Where thou feelest tingling life; there, exactly there, there to a hair, do I. Is't a riddle?"

"I should humbly call it a poser, sir" (Melville, 1966: 551).

Ahab stands out amongst others as he is the only one who can never accept his loss. Melville shows this side of Ahab with two other characters as Elijah and Captain Boomer. Elijah seems to be unable to think in his right mind and at the same time he suffers from the loss of his left arm. Both physical and mental disability can be observed in this character which makes him unique in the novel. Elijah is an outcast, excluded from the society and not taken seriously by anyone although he speaks the truth. He suffers from prejudices and fails to make his thoughts heard. In the scene before boarding the ship, he tries to warn Ishmael about possible consequences on the voyage. He feels that something serious can go wrong during this voyage and seems sure that no one will survive and come back home safe; however, he is just a cracked man to Ishmael: "'He's cracked, Queequeg,' said I; 'come on'" (Melville, 1966: 116). Ishmael disregards Elijah and does not show any interest to hear his thoughts. This is a good and simple example to show how the exclusion machine works in the society. Elijah says: "All right again before long!" laughed the stranger, with a solemnly derisive sort of laugh. "Look ye; when Captain Ahab is all right, then this left arm of mine will be all right; not before" (Melville, 1966: 109). Elijah accepts the loss of his left arm and knows that nothing can bring it back. Unlike Elijah, Ahab is in pursuit of a miracle and thinks to relieve his ongoing pain after getting rid of the white whale. Although they both lost their limbs, their vantage points are so diverse. This difference may be the source of Ahab's pain. Because of the pain, he may have lost even his sleep: "He ain't in his bed now, either, more than three hours out of the twenty-four; and he don't sleep then" (Melville, 1966: 148). All

these details make it clear that Ahab's pain never ceases to exist. His own words prove it right: "And if I still feel the smart of my crushed leg, though it be now so long dissolved; then, why mayest not thou, carpenter, feel the fiery pains of hell for ever, and without a body? Hah!" (Melville, 1966: 551). Ahab clearly has phantom sensations. His moody personality and pessimistic thoughts about the creation of the universe, his everlasting wish for vengeance may well result from phantom sensations and sleep deprivation. Were it not for his limb loss, his personality would be much different. It is not fair to base his entire desire to kill the white whale on the phenomenon of phantom pain; however, we can deduce that it has an important role that cannot be ignored. His dismembered body is no obstacle in front of him. He is in full charge of the ship *Pequod* and his men obey his rules and make his orders come true. Unlike the common assumption and unjust stereotype that people with disabilities are passive members of the society, Ahab participates in each action whenever required, he even wants to kill Moby Dick himself. Thomson criticizes this general assumption: "... disabled people are often imagined as unable to be productive, direct their own lives, participate in the community, or establish meaningful personal relations-regardless of their actual capabilities or achievements" (Thomson, 1997: 46). Melville also opposes to this idea by drawing two powerful amputees who happen to be the captains of two big ships. Ahab and Captain Boomer, without an arm or a leg, conn the ships with full of brutal, strong, skillful harpooners and whale men recruited from various places of the world like Queequeg, Tashtego, and Daggoo who are all enormous sized and powerful men. Ahab thus cannot be categorized, stereotyped, or classified into one single group. His misfortune has no right to halt him. He believes in his abilities and feels confident that he is able to cope with even things beyond his power:

"... I'd strike the sun if it insulted me. For could the sun do that, then could I do the other; since there is ever a sort of fair play herein, jealousy presiding over all creations. But not my master, man, is even that fair play. Who's over me?" (Melville, 1966: 192).

Another similarity thus emerges and we can state that Ahab and House's ways of thinking seem to be in harmony. The narcissist side of Ahab, which is well-known and accepted, comes to the surface and reminds us of House. While Ahab can even make enemies with the sun, House does not see anything wrong with competing with God. This is highly ironic as House intends to compete with God he does not believe in.

#### IV. Genius and Arrogance

In the episode titled *House vs. God* in the second season, a teenage boy claims to heal people with faith and claims to talk to God. What is ironic is that although he considers himself as a faith-healer, he needs a doctor to recover. House comes to the conclusion that the boy is an imposter as he does not believe in any power beyond him. In this episode, Dr. Chase (played by Jesse Spencer), who is a member of House's diagnostic team, keeps score and turns the diagnostic process into some kind of a competition. House participates in this competition and tries to win. While the competition ends in a draw, House actually thinks that he is the winner (Egan & Showalter, 2006). The points written in House and God's section highlights House's narcissistic side. Even if he does not believe in God, he finds it challenging to compete against a superior power. This side of House can also be encountered in another episode called *Human Error*, which is the season finale of the third season. In this episode, a Cuban couple desperately struggles to reach House. Esteban and his wife risk their lives and travel on a boat from Cuba to the USA (Moran, Kaplow, & Jacobs, 2007). Their effort to reach House by jeopardizing their lives indicates that House's brilliance cuts across all boundaries. Esteban, who does not believe in God, starts believing when his wife's heart beats miraculously. House says: "... my mistakes don't prove there's a God. You came a long way to see me, you going to put her life in God's hands or in mine" (Moran, Kaplow, & Jacobs, 2007). House's intelligence and unique way to evaluate his cases, his unrivalled diagnostic skills strengthen and feed his self-esteem and narcissism. A similar arrogance is easy to trace in Ahab's personality. Ahab's enemy is greater in power; however, he is reluctant to stand up to someone no match for him: "I now prophesy that I will dismember my dismemberer" (Melville,

1966: 197). Ahab's goal to "dismember his dismemberer" is not shared by Captain Boomer. He does not even think of taking his vengeance upon Moby Dick on his lost arm:

"No, thank you, Bungler," said the English captain; "he's welcome to the arm he has, since I can't help it, and didn't know him then, but not to another one. No more White Whales for me; I've lowered for him once, and that has satisfied me. There would be great glory in killing him, I know that; and there is a ship-load of precious sperm in him, but, hark ye, he's best let alone; don't you think so, captain?"- glancing at the ivory leg (Melville, 1966: 517).

Melville once again emphasizes the difference between Ahab and Boomer. Their coping mechanisms are entirely distinct as on the one hand there is Ahab who can even attempt to take vengeance upon the sun and on the other hand there is Captain Boomer who is content with his life. He is not consumed by his rage and obsession maybe because of the fact that he does not suffer from those phantom sensations. It should be kept in mind that although they have a common ground like their disabilities, they do not form a group or show any form of solidarity. This lack of solidarity comes to surface because "[a]lthough categories such as ethnicity, race, and gender are based on shared traits that result in community formation, disabled people seldom consider themselves a group" (Thomson, 1997: 14-15). Just because they are disabled in one way or another, they do not feel any intimate feelings toward one another. Their personalities and feelings are so unlike in no small measure that these two characters do not even think of their disabilities as a common connector. This superficial connection is only observed among people around them. Ahab, however, acts like an intact leader who does not consider his misfortune as an obstacle: "It has before been hinted, perhaps, that every little untoward circumstance that befell him, and which indirectly sprang from his luckless mishap, almost invariably irritated or exasperated Ahab" (Melville, 1966: 511). Yet he sometimes makes fun of his amputation: "'Aye, aye, hearty! let us shake bones together!- an arm and a leg!- an arm that never can shrink, d'ye see; and a leg that never can run. Where didst thou see the White Whale?- how long ago?'" (Melville, 1966: 512). As it is clear Ahab is unable to keep his mind off the white whale. Ahab copes with his pain by following the white whale. House follows a similar path and tries to find distraction, as well. Barnett, by referring to the episode *Skin Deep* (Season 2 Episode 13), presents a coping mechanism of House when he is left alone with pain: "Trying desperately to divert himself from escalating leg pain (which Cuddy and Wilson insist is psychosomatic), House sits at his piano [...]" (2010: 48). As can be seen House tries to cope with pain with the help of music. While he struggles to soothe the pain in his leg with music, pain overrides. Barnett explains: "The music is a metaphor here for House's resolve, his battle against rising pain and his defeat; he retreats when he can no longer do battle against it" (2010: 48). House's musical skills are not limited to playing the piano, he also plays the guitar and other instruments to clear his head. House's musical skills show that his genius is not limited to thinking out of the box.

Two obsessive, suffering, and highly smart characters as Ahab and House thus seem to share common traits. In *House M.D.*, the obsessive personality of Ahab is also mentioned. House says: "Only an idiot stands between Ahab and his whale. Move" (Friedman & To, 2006). House correspondingly compares himself to Ahab and knows that his obsession is as strong as Ahab's monomania. Ahab's obsession is mentioned in another episode, as well. This time Wilson, who is House's best friend for life, compares him to Ahab. The dialogue between Wilson and House is enlightening:

Wilson: Have you read *Moby Dick*?

House: It was a book?

Wilson: It was 10 years ago.

House: 12.

Wilson: Obsession is dangerous.

House: Only if you're on a wooden ship and your obsession is a whale. I think I'm in the clear.

Wilson: You do realize it's a metaphor? (Foster & Gerber, 2006)

According to Wilson, who knows House well, House's obsession is equally dangerous. This comparison of House and Ahab correspondingly supports the idea that Ahab and House have a common ground upon which to meet.

### Conclusion

Pain, which prevails, changes people's identities, their perspectives on life, and turns them into very different people. Doctor House is obviously a genius who solves medical puzzles that no one can. He does not seek a meaningful personal relationship; neither does he need for approval. His acute pain may be considered to be the cause of his cynical and arrogant manners. While Ahab's phantom limb pain refreshes his desire for revenge, House's acute pain imprisons him and this leads to a vicious circle. House, Ahab, and Murphy thus behave in line with their never-ending pain. Melville, as a great observer and an author, created such an incredible and influential character that even after decades, the traits of his personality are still discussed. David Shore, the creator of *House M.D.*, created such a versatile and complicated character that House's world still needs to be discovered from various angles.

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