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Life and Death: Conjoined Twins

Human are mortal creatures; we have a set beginning and a set ending. But life and death are not separate parts of our existence. For us death is a part of our daily lives and we cannot run from it no matter how advanced our societies become. While Life and Death

Ishmael does not suffer alone as he wrestles with life and death; Queequeg struggles mentally with Life and Death as well. When he falls gravely ill, Queequeg resigns himself to death. He prepares himself mentally and physically for eminent death,

moment, he had just recalled a little duty ashore, which he was leaving undone; and therefore had changed his mind about dying: he could not die yet, he averred...if a man

wasting away to illness, but he was psychologically wasting away as well. In this

which implies Queequeg had no objections to dying previous to remembering his business on land. Queequeg mentally lost his will to live, and so his soul died before his body did. The entire

this limb is a ghost and no longer alive, Ahab tells the carpenter he can feel his leg as if it

dead limb. This shows how although Life and Death can coexist while remaining distinct states of being. Thus the juxtaposition of Life and Death manifest physically in Ahab.

falls into the Tun and the whale head breaks away from the *Pequod*. Ishmael chronicles

heaving just below the surface of the sea, as if that moment seized with some momentous idea; whereas it was only the poor Indian unconsciously revealing by those struggles the perilous depth to which he had sunk... poor, buried-alive Tashtego was sinking utterly

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slowly sinking whale head. Physically Tashtego was alive, but to those on the *Pequod* he was as good as dead because they saw no way to rescue him; and Tashtego would have died if not for Queequeg. Queequeg, full of foolish bravery, dove in after Tashtego and cut him out of the whale head as a midwife delivers a newborn child (Melville 348). Life and Death are physically manifested in Tashtego because he was a living creature being dragged to his death by a dead whale. He was Life inside the Dead whale, and the whale would have been the death of him. Tashtego touched physical Death when he fell into the whale head, but instead was reborn and given back his life by Queequeg who birthed

Yin and Yang

The communion between Life and Death are seen symbolically throughout *Moby Dick*. The intimacy of Life and Death can be seen in the Whale God of King Tranquo, the coffin life-hales,

Whale God, Ishmael commented on the juxtaposition between the green jungle and the

-worn verdant warp and woof

intermixed and hummed around [the skeleton], the mighty idler seemed the cunning weaver; himself all woven over with vines; every month assuming greener, fresher verdure; but himself a skeleton. Life folded Death; Death trellised Life; the grim god wived with youthful life, and begat him curly-

skeleton is a symbol of Death and the green vines symbolize Life. In this image, Life and Death are intertwined and inhabit the same place. The skeleton and vines show how Life and Death coincide and become inseparable. There is death in life and life in death; death will come to the living vines and there was life in the skeleton. Both symbols touch on mortality and show how Life and Death are juxtaposed.

In the same way, the coffin life-buoy demonstrate how Life and Death can function together. The coffin was built for Queequeg to be buried in when he died, however Queequeg never used the coffin. Later, the coffin was transformed into a life-buoy. What once served as a final resting place became a life-line. When the *Pequod* night, [he] floated on a soft and dirge-
became a life-buoy. Ishmael, the man who took to the sea to escape death, was saved by

death; for if Queequeg had not fallen ill, the log and line life-buoy would not have been replaced. In the life-buoy, the two spectrums of life occupy the same space and become one entity. Death cannot be taken away from the life-buoy, because it was originally made to be a coffin; neither can Life be removed because the coffin has been transformed into a life-saver. Here Life and Death are combined and coexist in the same physical space. The life-buoy shows how Life and Death can be one in the same, for what was

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and Life. Ahab forged his harpoon in order to kill Moby Dick, but when blacksmith
no water for that; I
want it of the true death-temper. Ahoy, there! Tashtego, Queequeg, Daggoo! What say
ing it high up. A
cluster of dark nods replied, Yes. Three punctures were made in the heathen flesh, and
but christened with the Life-blood of the other harpooners. The harpoon, made of dead
steel, symbolized Death for Moby Dick; the blood used to temper the barb represents
Life. The harpoon demonstrates how Life and Death can intermingle in a single object.
Just as Death and Life could not be separated from the life-buoy, they cannot be

on whale blood. However, the only blood it tasted was the human blood of Tashtego,
Daggoo, and Queequeg as Fedallah died before darting the fierce harpoon. The harpoon,
made in blood and Death, never killed its target; Moby Dick lived while Ahab died. This

irony shows how closely intertwined and interconnected Life and Death are in the story of Moby Dick.

Life and Death are two separate entities, yet Melville juxtaposes these two states and shows the connection they share. Just as Yin and Yang are polar opposites yet come together to complete each other in a circle, Life and Death are very different entities but coexist to define our mortal lives. Life and Death are juxtaposed throughout psychologically, physically and symbolically throughout *Moby Dick*; but such manifestations surround our everyday lives as well. Our mortal lives cause us to constantly walk with Life and Death. No one is guaranteed Life tomorrow and Death can creep up in unexpected ways, but we still live each day no matter how Life and Death intertwine. We live each day with the knowledge that someday we will die; we continue through Life, while acknowledging that Death is already in us as well. Humans themselves are the embodiment of how Life and Death coexist in their many different forms. Life and Death are as conjoined twins, they are never far apart and you cannot have one without the other; they are connected and coexist in the same body.

Works Cited

Melville, Herman. *Moby-Dick*. New York, Simon & Schuster, 1999.