

Amleth's Vengeance In Sjón & Robert Eggers' *The Northman* Movie Script (2020)

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to find out how Amleth's vengeance is portrayed in Sjón & Robert Eggers' *The Northman* movie script. This movie script illustrates how the theme of vengeance is portrayed through the main character, Amleth. The thesis writer uses a qualitative research method that allows for research based on the indicators of vengeance, such as its causes, characteristics, and effects. The characteristics are Retribution, Harm for Harm, Personal Motive. And the causes of this vengeance are anger, humiliation, betrayal, and grief. It is seen that Amleth's vengeance is portrayed through his character transformation from a playful child into a brutal warrior full of hate. The pursuit of vengeance within this film is represented as an inescapable fate that leads the main character to his death. The condition of vengeance is a central theme by portraying Amleth's quest and its effects on himself, his mother, his uncle, his cousin, and his lover through his actions and dialogue.

Keywords: Amleth's, The Northman, Vengeance

INTRODUCTION

Vengeance is a complex human response that arises from a perceived sense of injustice or moral violation, often rooted in the desire to restore balance or personal honor. Unlike impulsive acts of retaliation, vengeance is typically deliberate and motivated by an emotional drive for moral equilibrium. It has been interpreted as both a personal and social construct, reflecting deep psychological needs and cultural values (Elster, 1990). One movie script that strongly portrays this theme is *The Northman* (2020), written by Sjón & Robert Eggers.

The article writer gives an explanation of the Vengeance as the main term of this thesis. Vengeance is the deliberate act of inflicting harm or punishment on someone in response to a perceived moral or personal wrong, often motivated by the desire to restore justice or balance. It reflects complex emotional and ethical dimensions rooted in human nature and societal norms (Elster, 1990; Frijda, 1994).

this study aims to help readers develop a personal understanding and openness toward the concept of vengeance. Understanding vengeance personally can gradually foster a deeper awareness of human emotions, moral reasoning, and social consequences related to acts of retaliation. Such awareness may lead to a more reflective and empathetic view of why individuals or characters pursue vengeance, highlighting its psychological and ethical complexities. By seeing vengeance as a complex human reaction rather than just an act of hostility, readers can build critical thinking and moral sensitivity.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method to analyze the portrayals, causes, and effects of vengeance experienced by Amleth in Sjón and Robert Eggers's *The Northman* movie script (2020). The purpose of using a qualitative approach is to describe and interpret the psychological, moral, and social meanings presented in the script rather than to measure them numerically, utilizing both intrinsic and extrinsic approaches. The primary data are obtained from dialogues, narratives, and character communications within the movie script. Secondary data are collected from relevant scholarly books and journal articles concerning the psychological dimensions of vengeance, particularly theories surrounding its characteristics, causes, and effects. The data analysis process involves closely reading the script, coding and classifying the gathered data into specific themes, and interpreting them based on the theoretical framework to explain how vengeance dictates Amleth's character transformation and impacts both himself and his family.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Indicators	Data No.	Quotation
Temporary Emotional Relief	1.	Effect on Himself (Amleth) Amleth wakes up. He lies in a warm, steaming mountain tarn. Some of his wounds are healed by the swirling blue water... AMLETH "Hate is all I have ever known, but I wish I could be free of it." <i>(Page 108 - 110)</i>
	2.	Effect on Himself (Amleth) & His Lover (Olga) OLGA (V.O.) "We are safe. Now, make your passage." With relief and joy, Amleth looks to the sky ... AMLETH POV: The glittering gates of Valhöll await. <i>(Page 123)</i>
	3.	Effect on His Mother (Guðrún) Amleth narrowly escapes Guðrún's blade ... and strikes her a fatal blow! He plunges Draugr deep into his mother's chest. [...] GUDRÚN <i>(whispering)</i> "In the heart ... thank you ..." Guðrún is dead. <i>(Page 119)</i>
	4.	Effect on His Uncle (Fjölur) Fjölur picks up the slain body of Gunnar and puts him over his shoulder. He takes Guðrún's arms. FJÖLNIR "I will meet you at the Gates of Hel." <i>(Page 119 - 120)</i>

5.	Effect on His Cousin (Thórir) Amleth finds THÓRIR lying asleep, stained in vomit. Without hesitation, Amleth raises Draugr high above his head and stabs Thórir in his sleep. <i>(Page 97)</i>
6.	Effect on Himself (Amleth) AMLETH "I ... I have never felt close to another person. Not since I was a child." [...] OLGA "That is for you to choose. Let's find our future." She takes his hand. They smile. <i>(Page 109 - 110)</i>
7.	Effect on His Lover (Olga) The steam shifts and reveals that it is Olga. [...] OLGA "I did not carry you that far. I am no Valkyrie. The dreams of your afterlife must wait. Besides ..." She slips the dress off her body and steps into the water. OLGA (CONT'D) "I'm not done with you yet." <i>(Page 109)</i>
8.	Effect on His Uncle (Fjölñir) FJÖLNIR "A voice cried out to me from darkness. It cried: 'Your end has come. You are come home ... home to Hel.' <i>(gasping for air)</i> I fear it was my brother." GUDRÚN

	"Calm yourself, my love." [...] Fjölñir finds peace in her words and closes his eyes. (Page 37)
9.	Effect on His Mother (Guðrún) GUDRÚN "If your brother calls you, he calls from the battlefields of the dead. That is where you and Aurvandil will meet again..." [...] "And you will kill him again. And again and again." (Page 37)
10	Effect on Fjölñir and Guðrún GUDRÚN (to Gunnar) "It will never befall you." (to Fjölñir) "Never!" Guðrún locks eyes with Fjölñir. After a beat he turns to his men and shouts with fury: FJÖLNIR "My hour of grief has passed! The time of wrath-kindled revenge is upon us!" (Page 107)

A. Temporary emotional relief

Temporary emotional relief is a brief and fleeting escape from intense psychological or physical pain. In the dark and brutal world of *The Northman*, the characters are constantly consumed by heavy burdens like hatred, fear, trauma, and violence. Temporary emotional relief occurs when Amleth, or the people closely involved in his violent quest, experience a short pause in their deep suffering before the harsh reality of their destiny returns. Whether this relief comes from a moment of unexpected love, the dark satisfaction of scoring a brutal revenge, or even the calm acceptance of death, these short moments provide the characters with the crucial emotional breaks they need to continue their tragic journeys. This analysis will explore how Amleth and his family experience temporary emotional relief throughout the story.

The first experience that shows this indicator happens when Fjölñir wakes up in a sudden panic, and his wife comforts him. It can be seen in the quotation below.

"A voice cried out to me from darkness. It cried: 'Your end has come. You are come home ... home to Hel.' (gasping for air) I fear it was my brother." GUDRÚN
"Calm yourself, my love." [...] Fjölñir finds peace in her words and closes his eyes (Sjón & Robert Eggers, 2020:37)

The quotation above clearly shows how even the villains in the story desperately need temporary emotional relief. Fjölfnir wakes up gasping for air because he is having a terrifying nightmare about the brother he brutally murdered. He is completely consumed by extreme guilt and an intense fear that his past actions will ultimately destroy him. However, when his wife Gudrún speaks to him with a soft and loving voice, telling him to calm down, her words act like a soothing medicine for his mind. This successfully allows Fjölfnir to temporarily forget his deep paranoia, giving him just enough emotional relief to find a short moment of peace and go back to sleep.

Gudrún provides an additional layer of relief by directly empowering Fjölfnir's violent nature. It can be seen in the quotation below.

"If your brother calls you, he calls from the battlefields of the dead. That is where you and Aurvandil will meet again... And you will kill him again. And again and again." (Sjón & Robert Eggers, 2020:37)

According to this quotation, Gudrún provides another layer of temporary emotional relief to her husband by strengthening his confidence. Instead of just telling him that everything is fine, she actively encourages his dark side by proudly reminding him of his past victory. By confidently stating that Fjölfnir is strong enough to kill his brother over and over again, she completely removes his feelings of weakness and sudden panic. This gives Fjölfnir a very powerful, yet temporary, emotional relief because it perfectly replaces his terrifying guilt with a renewed sense of masculine pride and absolute confidence in his own strength.

Another instance of Fjölfnir transforming negative feelings into relief occurs after a terrible tragedy hits his family. It can be seen in the quotation below.

GUDRÚN (to Gunnar) "It will never befall you." (to Fjölfnir) "Never!" Gudrún locks eyes with Fjölfnir. After a beat he turns to his men and shouts with fury: "My hour of grief has passed! The time of wrath-kindled revenge is upon us!" (Sjón & Robert Eggers, 2020:107)

This quotation portrays a very intense moment where deep sadness is forcefully transformed into temporary emotional relief through pure anger. After discovering that his eldest son has been brutally murdered, Fjölfnir is completely crushed by the heavy weight of true grief. However, when Gudrún strongly promises that their remaining youngest son will remain perfectly safe, Fjölfnir feels a sudden burst of emotional relief. To escape the unbearable pain of mourning his dead child, he loudly announces that his sadness is officially over. By completely focusing his mind on aggressive, wrathful revenge, he temporarily distracts his broken heart from feeling the devastating loss of his son.

For the main character, Amleth, temporary emotional relief sometimes comes in the form of achieving violent payback against his abusers. It can be seen in the quotation below.

Amleth finds THÓRIR lying asleep, stained in vomit. Without hesitation, Amleth raises Draugr high above his head and stabs Thórir in his sleep. (Sjón & Robert Eggers, 2020:97)

This quotation clearly demonstrates that violent actions can bring emotional relief to a deeply angry person. Throughout his life as a hidden slave on the farm, Amleth has been constantly humiliated and beaten by his cruel cousin, Thórir. When Amleth finally gets the perfect opportunity to kill Thórir while he is defenseless and asleep, he does it immediately and without any hesitation at all. This brutal and bloody action gives Amleth a massive feeling of temporary emotional release and dark satisfaction. Striking back against the family that ruined his childhood gives his angry heart a very short, satisfying break from feeling completely powerless.

Amleth experiences a completely different, positive kind of relief when he wakes up severely injured in a hot spring. It can be seen in the quotation below.

The steam shifts and reveals that it is Olga. [...] "I did not carry you that far. I am no Valkyrie. The dreams of your afterlife must wait. Besides ..." She slips the dress off her body and steps into the water. "I'm not done with you yet." (Sjón & Robert Eggers, 2020:109)

This quotation illustrates a beautiful and tender moment of temporary emotional relief for Amleth after a very brutal fight. Amleth wakes up severely injured in a magical hot spring, initially believing that he is dead and looking at a heavenly angel coming to take his soul away. However, when the thick steam clears, he joyfully realizes that the magical figure is actually Olga, the woman he deeply loves. Knowing that she safely escaped the dangerous farm and willingly came back just to save his life brings him an immense amount of physical and emotional relief. For a brief moment, he feels completely safe, protected, and deeply cared for.

This feeling of safety allows Amleth to open up emotionally, bringing him even more relief. It can be seen in the quotation below.

"I ... I have never felt close to another person. Not since I was a child." [...] "That is for you to choose. Let's find our future." She takes his hand. They smile. (Sjón & Robert Eggers, 2020:109-110)

The quotation above shows a very rare and deeply emotional moment of temporary relief for Amleth's isolated soul. Because of his traumatic and bloody past, Amleth has lived his entire adult life completely alone, acting like a wild beast without trusting anyone around him. When he finally opens up his heavy heart and confesses his deep loneliness to Olga, she kindly holds his hand and promises him a better future. They both share a warm, genuine smile. This simple human connection gives Amleth a wonderful, temporary break from his dark existence, making him feel truly happy and loved for the very first time since he was a little boy.

While healing in the water, Amleth admits his desire to escape his violent life. It can be seen in the quotation below.

Amleth wakes up. He lies in a warm, steaming mountain tarn. Some of his wounds are healed by the swirling blue water... "Hate is all I have ever known, but I wish I could be free of it." (Sjón & Robert Eggers, 2020:108-110)

While resting his broken body in the warm, healing water of the mountain tarn, Amleth experiences a profound moment of internal reflection and temporary emotional relief. He suddenly realizes exactly how tired and exhausted his spirit is from carrying a lifelong burden of revenge. By bravely speaking out loud that he actively wishes to be completely free from his own hatred, he gives his mind a brief, peaceful vacation. He allows himself to happily imagine a normal, quiet future where he no longer has to murder anyone. However, this sweet relief is strictly temporary because the heavy reality of his unavoidable destiny eventually forces him to keep fighting.

At the climax of the story, other characters also find dark forms of relief. Gudrún's relief comes in her final moments. It can be seen in the quotation below.

Amleth narrowly escapes Gudrún's blade ... and strikes her a fatal blow! He plunges Draugr deep into his mother's chest. [...] GUDRÚN (whispering) "In the heart ... thank you ..." Gudrún is dead (Sjón & Robert Eggers, 2020:119)

In a very dark, twisted, and tragic way, Gudrún finally experiences her own temporary emotional relief at the very end of her complicated life. After engaging in a fierce and desperate knife battle with her own biological son, Amleth manages to stab her directly in the chest with his magical sword. Surprisingly, instead of screaming in terrible pain or cursing him, she calmly whispers her thanks to him. This incredibly strange reaction indicates that the fatal blow actually gives her a peaceful relief from her deceitful, angry, and highly stressful existence. By finally dying, she is permanently relieved from the chaotic web of lies she built.

Similarly, Fjölfnir finds a grim form of relief by fully accepting his death. It can be seen in the quotation below.

Fjölfnir picks up the slain body of Gunnar and puts him over his shoulder. He takes Gudrún's arms. "I will meet you at the Gates of Hel." (Sjón & Robert Eggers, 2020:119-120)

This quotation demonstrates how Fjölfnir also manages to find a strange kind of temporary emotional relief during the absolute worst moment of his life. After walking into his bedroom and discovering that his beloved wife and youngest son have been brutally murdered by Amleth, he does not break down in a panic. Instead, he completely accepts his dark and unavoidable fate. By calmly picking up his son's bloody body and directly promising Amleth that they will meet in the terrible afterlife for a final battle, Fjölfnir relieves himself of all his previous fears. Accepting his absolute doom gives him the cold, emotionless focus he desperately needs.

Finally, Amleth experiences his ultimate and final emotional relief as he passes away. It can be seen in the quotation below.

"We are safe. Now, make your passage." With relief and joy, Amleth looks to the sky ... AMLETH POV: The glittering gates of Valhöll await (Sjón & Robert Eggers, 2020:123)

The final quotation perfectly captures Amleth's absolute and ultimate emotional relief at the very end of his incredibly tragic journey. After fighting his wicked uncle to the death inside the burning volcano, the dying Amleth receives a magical,

comforting vision of Olga and their future twin babies. Hearing Olga's voice clearly promise that their family is completely safe officially washes away all of his lifelong anger, stress, and trauma. He finally feels true, overwhelming joy and deep peace. Knowing for sure that his bloodline will survive and thrive gives him the perfect, beautiful relief he needs to proudly close his eyes and enter the glorious gates of Valhöll

CONCLUSION

This chapter brings the study of vengeance to a conclusion, with a focus on the primary character, Amleth, as depicted in the film script for *The Northman*, written by Sjón and Robert Eggers. The present study explores the portrayal of vengeance, its underlying causes, and its profound effects on Amleth and his surrounding family members. Utilising a qualitative approach, this study analyses the narrative, dialogue and character interactions in the script. *The Northman* is an epic poem that portrays a brutal and barbaric Viking world. The narrative chronicles the life of Prince Amleth, whose life is tragically and drastically altered after he witnesses his uncle, Fjölfnir, murder his father, King Aurvandil, and usurp his kingdom. This traumatic event forces Amleth to flee his home and fuels a lifelong, inescapable vow to avenge his father, save his mother, and kill his uncle. In the course of his survival, the subject undergoes a profound transformation, precipitated by the unforgiving nature of his circumstances. This transformation results in a complete alignment of his existence with a single, violent purpose

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