

**“THE FICTIONAL WORLD OF HERMAN MELVILLE :
A CRITICAL STUDY OF SOME SELECTED NOVELS”**



A

THESIS

SUBMITTED FOR THE AWARD OF

Ph.D. DEGREE IN ENGLISH

2015

IN THE FACULTY OF ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF KOTA, KOTA

Supervisor :

PROF. G. M. MEHTA
Former Prof. and Head
Department of English
MLS University, Udaipur

Submitted by:

SHIKHA SHARMA
M.A., M.Phil

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SUMMARY

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Preface

Among the writers of the nineteenth century American fiction, Herman Melville stands out prominently and holds a prestigious position. He is one of the major writers, and known as one of the most eminent figures in the world of American literature. Herman Melville's popularity is due to his extraordinary writings which are based on his personal experiences. Melville tried his hand also at poetry and short stories but his fame rests only on the writing of fiction. He is a great novelist that the American literature has ever produced. Melville's novels are based on the actual events of his life that he saw during the voyages around the world. His novels are replete with the description of the adventurous voyages from one island to another island, and the experiences that he shared with the people whom he met whether on the ship or on the island. Superficially, his novels are full of adventurous voyages which he made roaming around the world but the profound study of his works highlights Melville's genius as a novelist.

The first chapter focuses upon his native place as well as the South Seas, where he stayed and which inspired him to initiate the journey of his writing.

The second chapter is based on psychological elements in his characters of which he is the master. He not only gives the outer or superficial description of his characters but also reveals their mental state. Melville tries to probe within the human consciousness to trace the hidden instincts of man. He very minutely explores the minds of his characters and records the inner fluctuations.

The third chapter contains the social and religious and mythological aspects,

and reveals how an individual is trapped in the circle of impenetrable social law in order to welfare of society. Herman Melville's novel particularly Billy Budd displays intolerance with hypocritical and unjust social conventions and practices. It is common in his works to encounter suffered exposure of human society with its injustices, exploitation and cruelty. Melville has been succeeded in stripping the light and strict rules and laws of society through the ship board life. The ship and its complements reflect society as the microcosm of life itself.

The fourth chapter elaborates the conflict between good and evil. In Melville's novels, his characters feel satisfied in a limited world but as they enter into an open world, the conflict and fragmentation arise. The characters get a chance to emerge from the shell of the inner world and become part of it or at least interact with the outer world. Thus, the characters get involved in the maze of good and evil.

The fifth chapter deals with his narrative technique, style and language. The narrative technique in Herman Melville's novels is very unique. Melville adopts a poetic style and symbolic language.

To,

The Director (Research),
University of Kota,
Kota (Raj.).

Subject: To submit Ph.D. Thesis.

Sir,

On the reference of above subject, I am a research scholar in Dept. of English, Govt. P.G. College, Kota (Raj.) since year 2009, under the supervision of Prof.(Retd.) G.M.Mehta M.L.S.University Udaipur. My research topic is “The Fictional World of Herman Melville: A Critical Study of Some Selected Novels.”

Now I have completed my research work and pursuing to submit thesis.

So, kindly permit me to submit my research work in the form of thesis.

I'll be Thankful to you.

Sincerely Your's

Shikha Sharma
Research Scholar,
Deptt. of English
Govt. P.G. College Kota,
Kota (Raj.)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

It would have been impossible to write this thesis without the help and support of generous people around me, to only some of whom it is possible to give particular mention here.

*In the first place, I feel fortunate enough to express my profound gratitude towards my esteemed supervisor, **PROF. G. M. MEHTA** for his permission to carry out this thesis work under his proficient suggestion and indulgent guidance.*

*I must not forget to record my cordial thanks to **Prof. Suresh Chand Ameta**, for his prudent and utile suggestions and selfless help for smooth running of my work.*

*I am very thankful to **Dr. Pratima Sharma** Head, Deptt. of English Govt. College, Kota for her wholehearted co-operation, invaluable support and help for providing essential facilities.*

*I am heartily grateful to my husband **Dr. Uttam Kumar** and my daughter **Koashiki**, for their unremitting support with great patience, every time, everywhere.*

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*I feel pleasure in conveying my sincere thanks to **Dr B. L. Sharma** Principal, Govt. Science P.G. College, Kota who immensely helped me with apposite suggestions and arbitrary thoughts.*

*I cannot close these remarks without expressing my reverences and veneration towards my father **Mr. Dinesh Chand Sharma**, my elder brother **Mr. Sandeep Sharma** and **Mrs. Jaya Sharma**, my mother in law **Mrs. Kanta Devi** and my father in law **Mr. Manak Chand ji**, without their motivation and understanding; I would never have been able to reach this stage.*

*I remember the generosity and encouragement of the **late Shrii Shrii Anandamurtii ji**, former Principal of Ananda Marga and eminent revivalist, who welcomed this academic study.*

*I also extend thanks to **Arun Mittal**, Apex Computers, who dexterously and painstakingly did his job of shaping my work finally.*

(Shikha Sharma)

DECLARATION

I, Mrs. Shikha Sharma W/o Dr. Uttam Kumar, resident of Kota hereby declare that the research work incorporated in the present thesis entitled "THE FICTIONAL WORLD OF HERMAN MELVILLE : A CRITICAL STUDY OF SOME SELECTED NOVELS" is my own work and is original. This work (in part or in full) has not been submitted to any university for the award of a degree or a diploma. I have properly acknowledged the material collected from secondary sources, wherever required. I solely own the responsibility for the originality of the entire content.

Date :

(Mrs. Shikha Sharma)

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A FEW WORDS OF GRATITUDE

I have not had adequacy of words to delineate the profundity of my feelings on paper. If there had been no footsteps for me to follow, no inspiration for me to go and no blessing hand over me, this work and indeed my research period would not have seen the light of the day.

*Language becomes a poor medium of expression when it comes to pen down my deep sense of gratitude and admiration, I possess for my respected teacher and honourable guide. This work certainly owes a great debt of knowledge and inspiration from **PROF. G. M. MEHTA**. In spite of all the odds and difficulties the immense support and continuous guidance has been greatly contributed to my thesis. Without his inspiring supervision, virtual criticism and consistent encouragement, the present work would never have seen the light of the day. I consider myself extremely*

*fortunate to have worked under such a dynamic,
scholastic and caring person.*

Shikha Sharma

INTRODUCTION

Literature is the foundation of life. When a writer puts his or her own experiences or writes about the real or factual events of life, it becomes a mode of the expression of feelings and emotions. While written, literature is a combination of imagination and realism, in words. It enables people to see through the eyes of others, and sometimes even inanimate objects; therefore; it becomes a looking glass in to the world as others view it. It is a journey that is inscribed in pages.

In the history of English literature, American literature is one of the most developed literatures. There are so many talented flowers in American literature. American literature has successfully handled overall all the branches of literature, and novel is one of them. The American nation's first novels were published in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. William Hill Brown wrote the first American novel "The power of sympathy" in 1789, which showed authors the way to overcome ancient prejudices by following Samuel Richardson's form of the sentimental novel.

Charles Brockden Brown was the first American who devoted himself exclusively to a literary career. He published six novels before his death in 1810. Brown took his subject matter from contemporary America, and championed American ideals of freedom and social reform. At the same time, the more exotic aspects of European Romanticism strongly affected him. One of the most popular literary genres during the Romantic period was the Gothic novel which dealt with morbid emotions and sensational experiences.

The first third of the nineteenth century was the period of New York dominance in American literature. New York had always been the most cosmopolitan of America cities, and since it was now rapidly developing in to the nation's leading seaport. It was becoming even more responsive to foreign influences. Such an environment tended to encourage with elegance and sophistications rather than emotional force or originality. The works of Washington Irving exemplified these qualities of early nineteenth century New York. Irving published his first book in 1809, and his last in 1859. Both at home and in Europe, throughout most of his long career, he was recognized as America's leading man of letters. Both in his writing and his personal life, Irving showed himself a man of low emotions who preferred the role of an observer and a dilettante. He was uninterested in political and social questions and did not have strong conjunctions on any subject. He enjoyed letting his fancy play over picturesque scenes and characters, especially in the past. A man with such a temperament found more congenial material in Europe, and Irving spent twenty three years in abroad.

The other leading New York writer of this period was James Fenimore Cooper. The American literature had its serious and creditable in the books of Charles Brockden Brown but it received its development at the hands of Cooper. As a man of thought and feeling, Cooper, than any other writer of his generation, understood the time and place in which he lived and gave them voice and meaning. It is he who stands at the portal of American literature rather than Freneau or Brown, Irving and Byrant. He is recognized at home and abroad as the first and one of the greatest American writers of fiction. Between 1820 and 1826, Cooper wrote a number of novels representing romantic action. He wrote all of his novels in the mode of Sir

Walter Scott's novels. High idealism in his works motivated him to give realistic pictures of the dwindling frontier. He believed that fiction should have a great significance and elevating purpose, beyond its values as entertainment. As prof. Quinn has pointed out Cooper's concept of out was "to write about those things which are important, scenes which have in them some flavor of nobility." ¹

The immense success of Scott's novels in England, inspired Cooper's writing. In the course of thirty years, he wrote various kinds of novels such as- simple romances, tales of adventure and many more. His novels that won lasting popularity deal with the wilderness and those that depict life on the sea. He is the first in modern literature to use the ocean as the scene of romance and adventure. His main talent was for telling an exciting story. This was most fully displayed in the series of five novels recording the exploits of the frontier hunter and scout, Natty Bumppo, the famous Leatherstockings. In this series he not only communicated the color and drama of the French and Indian Wars, but also created a stock figure which became a part of the American tradition. Cooper's contributions in his writings brought American literature into its own.

New England after the Revolution passed through a period of intellectual stagnation, chiefly because its dominant classes which fell into a state of panic about the radicalism of the French Revolution and the religious infidelity associated with it. Throughout the Federalist and Jeffersonian periods they resolutely opposed any introduction of new ideas. This cultural isolation ended after the war of 1812, when young men began to visit Europe and brought back new ideas. The seeds of Romanticism transplanted from Europe. Early American writers began to copy European models, and

gradually the New American literature became genuinely American. The writers of Revolutionary period mostly adopted the standards of eighteenth century classicism. But the main European influence on the later literature was Romanticism. Under the impact of the Romantic Movement new conceptions of nature and of the human personality became current, but it was still possible to affirm a confidence in man's fundamental goodness. Man should believe in his emotions and intuitions rather than his intellect. Ralph Waldo Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman were the most important American writers who developed the doctrine of Romantic individualism.

The Romantic exploration of the individual personality was not always optimistic. The pessimistic aspects of Romanticism also affected the other American writers. It emphasized on unhealthy emotional forces, on a basic contradiction between man's aspirations and the conditions under which he must live, and on his isolation from other human beings. Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Herman Melville developed these themes. They had not had much faith in the possibilities of social reform or in man's capacity to dispense with external authority. They were concerned mainly with the problem of isolation.

Among all Melville's contemporaries, Hawthorne immensely influenced Melville's writing. Herman Melville was not attached to many literary celebrities. He enjoyed a short companionship with Hawthorne. The relationship between Hawthorne and Melville is one of the most interesting features in American literature. Hawthorne is a prolific novelist and he is regarded to be the initiator of modern trends in American fiction. His style and genius contributed a lot in the development of the novels of the era.

David Levis writes:

“Hawthorne brought to the American novel an admirable talent for symbolism and a serious interest in historical fidelity, psychological truth and social order. In comparison with the other American novelists, he wrote comparatively little, but even he occupies a very significant place in the history of American fiction.”²

The novels of Herman Melville and Nathaniel Hawthorne are very important as well as interesting for their firmness of social outlook, their understanding of human psychology, especially the darker aspects, irony, ambiguity symbolism and fine art.

Among the writers of the nineteenth century American fiction, Herman Melville stands out prominently and holds a prestigious position. He is known as the most eminent figure in the world of American literature. His popularity is due to his extra ordinary writings which are based on his personal experiences. Herman Melville wrote poetry, short stories but his fame rests only on his fiction writing. The fictional world of Herman Melville is filled with the novels that reveal different aspects. He is one of the major writers of the nineteenth century American fiction. Herman Melville is a great novelist that the American literature has ever produced. The novels of Herman Melville deal with his own experiences as a sailor. Melville’s early academic distinctions soured his life and left him with bitter reflections and this augmented his sentiments. Melville’s novels are based on the actual incidents of his life that he saw during the voyages around the world or the journey of his life. The fictional world of Herman

Melville is replete with the description of the adventurous voyages from one island to another island and the experiences with the people whom he met whether on the ship or on the island. Superficially, his novels are full of adventurous voyages which he made roaming around the world but the profound study of his works highlights Melville's genius as a novelist. The purpose of my proposed research work entitled "The Fictional world of Herman Melville: A critical study of some selected novels", is to shed light upon Herman Melville's talent as a fiction writer. Melville is the master in writing novels, and he has put different aspects of his novels at the same place. I will study psychological elements, social, religious and mythological aspects, conflict between good and evil, narrative technique, style and language in Herman Melville's novels, Moby-Dick and Billy Budd in particular.

Here, in a nut-shell, I would like to discuss meaning and the aspects of a novel for a clear understanding of the work.

Aspects of the Novel:

Just as literature is the mirror of the society, the novel conveys some impression of life by telling a story and presenting characters. A novel has historical, social, political and religious aspects or it may also present some psychological aspects which are based on the behavior of human being as they appear in everyday life. It is the profound study of human nature and reveals an ordinary life of a lay person.

Jan Austen says;

“ A novel is a work in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of unit humour are conveyed to the world in the best chosen language.’³

The criteria which is set up for the novel, are twofold : first, the message or the purpose of the author must be delivered to mankind, and the second ,, the technique of the author in handling the choice of medium and standards of that medium must be artistic. The artist is not different from the rest of mankind whose supreme search is for truth. His method of thought is the same, but his subject matter is different. His theme is human life. It is some truth of human life that he endeavors to discover, to understand, and to announce; and in order to complete his work he must apply to human life an attention of thought which is successfully scientific, philosophic and artistic.

Henry James points out:

“The only reason for the existence of a novel is that it does attempt to represent life.”⁴

Art lives upon discussion, upon experiment, upon curiosity, upon variety of attempt. The purpose of fiction is to embody certain truths of human life in a series of imagined facts. The genuine novelist does not divert but instructs his reader by presenting characters and actions which are true. On the part of the author fiction requires the power of description, truth and fidelity, observation, selection, clearness of perception, dramatic sense, directness of purpose, and a profound belief in the reality of his story. The story is the

backbone of a novel, so the events should be narrated in their time and sequence. The story should be able to arouse the curiosity of the reader for the next happening.

As a painter uses shape, color, perspective and other aspects of visual art to create a painting, a novel writer uses the plot, character, point of view, emotional excitement to create artistic effect in a novel. The first essential aspect of a novel is plot, the story which is the record of the successful events. In a novel writing, the novelist controls all the dimensions that he has to present before the reader. He selects his style and adopts a dramatic way of writing. In the dramatic story, there occurs a conflict in which a character faces problem, if he fails to solve the problem, it leads to disaster. Therefore, it is very important for the character to be well motivated. Another important fact is that all the events in the story must occur logically. In a dramatic story, character, circumstances, and environment interact through their logical associations, and all the events in the story happen for logical reason and things must occur in a certain order. The element of certain order is important Horne defines it as:

“the tracing of a single series of events from their causes through their various interactions to their consequences.”⁵

And he draws upon the example of Honore Balzac to enhance his argument:

“The perfect plot should be three-fold.it should lead us to the summit of our climb by an interesting narrative of some series of outward events closing in a catastrophe, by a sympathetic tracing of some great emotion rising to a culmination, and also by a thoughtful study of some unformed character developing through these experiences of life. An important duty of the

novelist is that of simplicity in his plot. The word signifies the weaving together and a weaving together presupposes the existence of more than one strand. Every artist simplifies life in his own way; by selecting essentials from the helter-skelter details that life present to him, and then, by arranging these essentials in accordance with a pattern, a thread that weaves through the events of his segment of life.”⁶

In the continuation of the above statement, I can say that Herman Melville has presented all the events in a very systematic manner. In the beginning, he tells about his journey on different ships or islands with the harsh realities of life. The middle part arouses sentiment as the hero becomes the victim of adverse circumstances and finally falls into the bottomless pit of perdition.

Characterization is another significant aspect of the novel because it enables the novelist to lay emphasis on values. There is a unique intimacy between the character and its creator. When the novelist gives them too much freedom, they do not fit into the pattern of his book. On the other hand, when he restricts them too much, they become lifeless puppets. Thus, creating various kinds of characters need a careful handling. The novel is the most shapeless of all literary forms, that is not bound to follow rules like poetry and drama, but the novel has a speciality of its own, as the novelist is endowed with greater freedom with a greater scope of talking through his characters. Herman Melville, in most of his novels, renders his thought through his heroes. Herman Melville has presented two kinds of characters—first, the men who are really innocent, and the other who are not innocent but put the mask of innocence on their faces to hide their wickedness. The characters are from real life but Melville has them given a new personality by mingling fact and fiction.

Point of view in fiction refers to the source and scope of the narrative voice. In the first-person point of view, the novelist uses the pronoun “I”, a character who narrates the whole story. A first-person narrator may be a major character and is often protagonist. A first-person narrator may also be a minor character, someone within the story but not centrally involved. The author’s choice of point of view has a significant effect on the story’s voice and on the type of information given to the reader. Third-person point of view occurs when the narrator does not take part in the story. In third-person omniscient, the narrative voice can render information from anywhere, including the thoughts and feelings of any of the characters. This all-knowing perspective allows the narrator to roam freely in the setting of the story and even beyond. The last essential aspect to consider about the novel is that of emotion excitement on the part of the reader. From the beginning of time men, and thus readers, have consciously or unconsciously read themselves into the story, the novel. One of the encouragements given to reading is that in books one experiences vicariously the happiness and sorrow, the success and failure, of the characters. And that is the record of emotion. Mr. Stoddard states:

“The novel has made its way in a large measure by an assertion of the superiority of that which is apparently a weaker or a lesser part of life, namely emotion. For the novel does not stand in literary history as a record of achievement. It stands as a record of emotion..... It asserts that the emotional period in life is the great period of life.”⁷

Some extreme realists have protested against this prominence of emotion or passion as false to the truth of life. Some have grouped passion as a single minor element of character. But in general, they have felt its overshadowing importance and essentially extraneous impulse, upon the novel, as upon life. C. F. Horne sums up the case for emotion in the novel thus:

“A later school of authors, even more relentless in their devotion to science, have insisted on explaining emotion away altogether, reducing it to an expression of character, a matter of nerve ganglia and digestion, a thing not elemental and common to all the race, but unique in each of us, impossible to some, having its origin in the peculiarities of the individual.

Whether this be true or not, need not specifically concern the present generation. If the idea that emotion can be positively predicted and mathematically measured by character be ever established as a scientific fact, we shall all cease reading the novels that explained it, and study the truth and the demonstration more compactly in works on psychology. For the present there is every sign that the public will long continue to read itself into its stories, and will buy novels for the spell they exercise on the emotions, instead of seeking that spell in a direct assault upon the nervous ganglia.”⁸

Among these aspects of a novel, I have selected characterization and point of view for further study. After having a brief discussion of meaning and the aspects of a novel, I would like to throw light on the life and works of Herman Melville. The first chapter focuses upon his native place as well as the South Seas, where he stayed and which inspired him to initiate the journey of his writing.

Life and Works of Herman Melville:

Herman Melville was born on first August, 1819 in the New York City. His father Allan Melville was a prosperous merchant and his mother, Maria Gransevoort Melville belonged to a wealthy Dutch family which had long been resident in the New York State. His father Allan Melville was socially charming and sensitive but basically weak with a long-standing financial and psychological dependence on his father and, mainly on his wife's brother. Allan Melville was apparently unrealistic in practical affairs. He was a man who constantly lived beyond his means. At the same time he was borrowing money for business and to fulfill his wife's social ambitions. His wife, Maria Melville never committed herself emotionally to her husband, but remained primarily attached to the Gansevoort family, especially to her accomplished brother. This circumstance compounded the effects of Allan's inherent weakness, and made the psychic atmosphere of Melville's family that of a matriarchy. Herman Melville's mother was the central figure and the masculine authority resided not with the father but the maternal uncle. The first eleven years of Herman Melville's life were apparently secure and relatively happy. There were long vacations during the summer in Albany or Boston. Herman Melville was pleased with a fine home in which he was living. He was totally unaware of the upcoming storm that was still out of his imagination. The storm broke when his father went bankrupt, losing everything that he had. The family left New York and rushed towards the protective shadow of the Gansevoort family in Albany. Allan Melville attempted to carry on, but he had lost his spirit. Within a year, he had a complete mental breakdown. He miserably suffered a total financial and psychological collapse. This state of mind heralded an overt psychosis, and

after some days he died. Herman Melville certainly experienced the full impact of his father's fatal encounter with darkness, but was not old enough to assimilate the experience. It was no doubt, a crucial trauma. This created in Melville a psychological development. His writings reflect its effect which he carried for the rest of his life. The second chapter is based on psychological elements in his characters of which he is the master. He not only gives the outer or superficial description of his characters but also reveals their mental state. Melville tries to probe within the human consciousness to trace the hidden instincts of man. He very minutely explores the minds of his characters and records the inner fluctuations. Most of his works reflect his personal association with pain, suffering and death, and his personal disillusionment and surliness. His skill and perspective ability to describe objects and situation, and to develop into the psychology of his characters serve as notable complements to the darker aspects of his works. He is not only a writer but an observer of human nature. Thus, from this point of view this chapter is very significant and full of serious and interesting thoughts and characters.

Herman Melville had lost his joyful and carefree childhood. His emotions were changing into resentment. He never found again the emotional security which he had lost because of the unfavorable circumstances of his life. In one of his novels, *Redburn*, Melville, through the thoughts of a young hero, describes the personal catastrophe:

“But I must not think of those delightful days, before my father became a bankrupt, and died, and we removed from the city; for when I think of those days, something rises up in my throat...Talk not of the bitterness of middle-age and after life; a boy can feel all that, and much more, when upon his

young soul the mildew has fallen; and the fruit, which with others is only blasted after ripeness, with him is nipped in first blossom and bud. And never again can such blights be made good; they strike in too deep, and leave such a scar that the air of paradise might not erase it.”⁹

After having a comfortable life in New York City, Herman Melville suffered from many changes and shocks in his life. When he was very young, his father’s untimely death brought a great and sudden change in Herman Melville’s life. He had lost his happy childhood with the death of his father, whom he was greatly attached. This tragic incident shattered his dream of going to college and becoming an orator. Herman Melville had left school at the age of fifteen and in 1839, he was enlisted as a cabin boy on a voyage to Liverpool. This was the first of his many voyages. Melville, in his novel, *Redburn*, recalled, as a boy he had had “a vague prophetic thought, that I was fated, one day or another, to be a greater voyager.”¹⁰

The voyage proved Melville’s initiation into adulthood, as well as soured his taste of life at sea. At sea, Melville learned the necessity and satisfaction of hard labor, the arbitrary exercise of authority, and the value of human sympathy. Herman Melville had become acquainted with the hard and brutal discipline, the degrading life of sailors and the position of the officers on the ship.

On his return in 1841, at the age of twenty –two, Melville shipped out of New Bedford as a sailor on the whaler *Acushnet*. He committed himself to a voyage of at least three years hunting whales in the Pacific Ocean. Living and working conditions aboard ship were intolerable and men were bound to remain there at least for three years. The voyage around South Africa to the

South Seas was a long one and Melville noticed a dissatisfied crew under a tyrannous master. After a year and a half when the ship came near the Marquesas, the sailor Melville with his friend Toby, deserted the ship and lived for sometime as a captive among the ‘Cannibalistic’ Typees. Melville had decided to write the record of this experience. Herman Melville’s literary career began with the publications of the book *Typee* which first appeared in London under a long heading: *Narrative of Four Months in the Marquesas among Typees*. Soon afterwards this book was published under the title of *Typee: “A Peep at Polynesian Life”*. It records the incidents of Melville’s desertion with a fellow sailor, from the whaling ship *Acushnet*, on which Melville had served. Herman Melville was discontent of long spells at sea and the worst and tyrannical condition on the ship compelled him to move. In this novel, he shares his personal experience of the time which he spent among the Typees, living in the valley. Melville observes Typees’ custom and practices on an exotic island. Typee religion bothers him in many ways. He tries to understand their social values, their idleness, the lack of intellectuality, and the deceptiveness which was hidden under the mask of innocence. Richard Chase comments:

“*Typee* establishes Melville as an author whose mind is perplexed and where imagination is stirred by contradictions of human experience.”¹¹

The evil practices of savages make the author sicker more than anything. Melville has one more great experience, away from humanity. The innocent hero entangles in their web. He wants to shake off but the savages do not let him go at any cost. The south sea islanders were glamorous in their look and not as horrible as ghosts. They do not harm the hero who lives among them for a long time. They are both good and evil in their nature. Finally the

hero escapes and finds himself in an open world. Melville had many experiences but the great was the experience of the south sea. Being the first book of the author, Typee had a unique freshness. Lewis Mumford writes:

“ Typee belongs to the morning of the imagination...it is direct, fresh free from self-consciousness, like the healthy youth who experience these adventures and sat down to write about them. That quality is precious and irretrievable.”¹²

The success of Typee encouraged Melville, and in 1847, he published his next novel Omoo. This book carries forward the account of his adventures after his escape from the valley. Herman Melville's journey prepared a platform for his writings. His literary career as a fiction writer began with his third novel Mardi, published in 1849. In this novel, Melville tries at last to go inside to relate his own thoughts. He does not feel satisfied with the mere description of a voyage into the tropics, which is a prelude to the principal part of the work.

“Mardi is no island gem in the blue pacific, but the whole world, and the author is undertaking to portray the beauty and the ugliness of the social order of the nineteenth century.”¹³

Melville threw all his power into the work. The novel portrays Taji and his adventures through the islands of Mardi, which ultimately represents the world, and its various faces. The story is based on Taji's quest for the beautiful Yillah whom he had saved from sacrifice by killing the priest who wanted to kill her. Throughout the novel, Taji's search for Yillah turns into obsession. The search of Yillah is symbolically of the author's search for truth, for beauty, which however, ends in a note of despair. Vice, misery,

hypocrisy, and incompetence, he discovers, are the only known order in Mardi. The tremendous effort put into Mardi did not become successful because the reading public was not prepared for such a book. After the failure of the book, he rushed out to his next novel Redburn. In this novel, Melville goes back to his youth and traces his experiences up to his eighteenth year, capitalizing on his voyage to Liverpool when he was seventeen. A note of personal disappointment appears in this book. He “recalled the cruel memories of his youth with the first bitter cry of his maturity.”¹⁴

The reading of Shakespeare exerted a deep influence on Melville’s attitude towards the blackness of human life. Before Redburn was printed, Melville wrote White Jacket or The World in a Man-of-War, published in 1850, an account of his experience aboard the United States. It portrays the life of a common sailor as the life of a lay man in the society. He enters into this world with purity and innocence but the realities of the cruel world teach him the way to survive in the negative atmosphere which he meets for the first time on the ship world. Gradually he comes to know the truth and ultimately accepts the worldly treatment and considers it as the part and parcel of life. Herman Melville’s novel particularly Billy Budd displays intolerance with hypocritical and unjust social conventions and practices. It is common in his works to encounter suffering exposure of human society with its injustices, exploitation and cruelty. Melville has been successful in stripping the light and strict rules and laws of society through the ship board life. The ship and its complements reflect society as the microcosm of life itself. The third chapter contains the social and religious aspect, and reveals

how an individual is trapped in the circle of impenetrable social law in order to welfare of society.

In the spring of 1850, Melville's friendship with Nathaniel Hawthorne reinforced his courage and convictions, and gave him a new strength. Melville was happy and content. He writes

"I shall leave the world, I feel, with more satisfaction for having come to you. Knowing you persuades me more than the Bible of our immortality."¹⁵

His letters to Hawthorne at this time gave a surer insight into Melville's moods and aims than any other pages he ever wrote. This passage from one of them illustrates his high spirits when he started *Moby Dick*:

"If ever, my dear Hawthorne, in the eternal times that are to come, you and I shall sit down in paradise, in some little shady corner by ourselves; and if we shall by any means be able to smuggle in a basket of champagne there (I won't believe in a Temperance Heaven), and if we shall then cross our celestial legs in the celestial grass that is forever tropical, and strike our glasses and our heads together till both musically ring in concert, - than, O my dear fellow mortal, how shall we pleasantly discourse of the things manifold which now so distress us, - when all the earth shall be but a reminiscence, yea, its final dissolution an antiquity."¹⁶

However, their friendship never developed into any real intimacy. Hawthorne always remained aloof and gradually their friendship dissolved. At the close of summer in 1850, Melville had started writing his next novel *Moby Dick*. When Melville ordered the half completed manuscript to a publisher *Moby Dick* was a romance of adventure, but his subsequent contacts with Hawthorne and the re-reading of Shakespeare changed his

course of writing entirely. He wrote constantly and the book began with exuberance. His note to Hawthorne proves this statement

“Can you send me about fifty fast-writing youths.....If you can I wish you could, because since I have been here I have planned about that number of future works and cannot find enough time to think about them separately.”¹⁷

And he writes later:

How then with me, writing of this Leviathan? Unconsciously, my chirography expands into placard capitals. Give me a condor's quill; give me Vesuvius' crater for an inkstand. Friends! hold my arms! if or in the mere act of the penning my thoughts of this Leviathan, they weary me, and make me faint with the outreaching comprehensiveness of sweep, as if to include the whole circile of the sciences, and all the generations of whales, and men, and mastodons, past, present, and to come, with all the revolving panoramas of empire on earth, and throughout the whole universe, not excluding its suburbs. Such and so meanifying is the virtue of a large and liberal theme! We expand to its bulk. To produce a mighty volume you must choose a mighty theme.”¹⁸

Moby Dick is Melville's 'Voyage book'. It deals with his own experience wandering around the seas as a sailor. This book is one of the most striking tales of the sea. Melville, owing to his knowledge of the sea and his acquaintance with the whaling industry, has given a unique strength and vitality to the theme. On the one hand, it is a superb combination of realism and fantasy based upon the South Pacific whaling industry which was a major commercial activity in mid-nineteenth century America, and on the other hand, it is a story of pursuit and avenger.

Melville names his book after the Whale, Moby Dick, and makes the pursuit plausible. He emphasizes the notoriety of the easily recognized white humped monster and uses the latest scientific details regarding the habits of the sperm whale. There is also a factually acute description of the complications connected with whale hunting, the elaborate preparation of equipment, the harpooning, the killing and cutting up of the whales and the melting of the blubber into oil.

Melville's novels are not confined to the South Sea adventures but have a deeper meaning in the stories. Moby Dick is a story of pursuit and revenge and the conflict between man and beast, between good and evil. Ahab, the protagonist, is a vengeful mad man who has only one goal in life that is to kill the White Whale. The White Whale, in the previous voyage, had snatched away his leg, leaving him mutilated in body with an artificial leg. Ahab is full of hatred and revenge and for him; Moby Dick visibly personifies all earthly malignity and evil. Ahab is determined to destroy the White Whale at any cost. The story concludes with a turbulent three-day struggle between the White Whale and the Pequod's crew. Ahab's campaign against the White Whale is the fight of the principle of goodness against the principle of evil, the White Whale symbolizes.

The novel is studded with suspense, high drama and philosophical speculation on the nature of man, of God and the Universe. The most outstanding feature is the character of Captain Ahab, who, in his defiance, courage and single minded pursuit of the mystery that is the White Whale, surpasses many well known tragic heroes in literature. Melville's long journey as a sailor in the South Seas among the natives and the missionaries and the whalers, made him a skeptical observer of human illusions and

pretensions, but he had a great intellectual energy, ambition and the will to believe in something. Melville had a strong interest in transcendental philosophy, listening to Emerson, talking enthusiastically with young transcendentalists and reading Thoreau as well as Carlyle. The blackness of Truth which he found in Hawthorne, brought him back to his earlier attitude of mind and restrained his new enthusiasm or strange ideas. It appealed strongly to the intellectual but not to the emotional side of his nature. The impression that he left on Melville, was so great that he developed his acquaintance attentively during the following months and eventually dedicated *Moby Dick* to Hawthorne.

Moby Dick is concerned with many issues which dominate nineteenth century thought in America. The relationship between land and the sea echoes the conflict between adventures and domesticity, between frontiersmen and city dwellers. Ahab's tragic monomania, as expressed in his obsessive pursuit of the Whale, is an indirect commentary on the feelings of disillusionment in mid- nineteenth century America and on the idea that the single-minded pursuit of an ideal is both vain and destructive.

The knowledge of Shakespeare also finds reflection in Melville's important works. Some of his characters are Shakespearean. Captain Ahab and Claggart in *Billy Budd* are like some heroes of Shakespearean plays. Ahab has a good blending of King Lear and Claggart possess some traits of Iago, an envious villain in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. It seems that Melville's aim in writing this novel was to produce a romantic romance with the characteristics of a romantic novel and the characteristic of a Shakespearean tragedy.

Moby Dick, like Typee-Omoo, Mardi and White Jacket, was initially conceived as a realistic narrative about sea life; but it took an epic proportion as Melville progressed in its composition. This novel is regarded as his masterpiece, serving as a mirror to the changing thoughts and feelings of changing time. The novel is Melville's most important and one of the greatest creations. Though it remained in between success and failure, it universally recognizes as Melville's leviathan and master-piece. Leon Howard says,

“Moby- Dick is one of those rare works of literature that have a capacity or growth through some inner vitality which increases with time.”¹⁹

Melville's another literary work of fiction which stands parallel to Moby Dick, in the highest ranks of American literature, is his last novel Billy Budd “An Inside Narrative.” At the very end of his life, Melville wrote this novel. The final days of his life were full of extreme misery and unhappiness. Mr. Wegelin gives the picture of him in his later days

“Melville, as I recall him, was slightly below the average in stature, and walked with a rapid stride and almost a sprightly gait....I particularly recall his gentleness of manner and his pleasant smile. I never found him to be the misanthrope that many authorities accuse him of having been it is difficult for me to believe that he was a disappointed man-if he was he did not permit his disappointment to come out into the open. Certainly Melville in 1890, had every right to feel embittered so far as his fame as an author was concerned, but I doubt if he was. He always appeared to me to have been a man who preferred being alive and neglected, to being dead and famous.”²⁰

Actually Melville could not complete the book in the form as he sought. Anyhow, he wrote the story in a much revised manuscript by April of 1891. The book remained unpublished during the rest few months of his life. It appeared posthumously in 1924, thirty three years after Melville's death. It is valedictory work, a tale of adventure based on the tragic events of an actual naval mutiny which occurred in 1842. Billy Budd is a story of a good and innocent sailor who joins the crew on the ship. There he meets an evil man, Claggart, the master-at-arms, who falsely accuses him of conspiring mutiny. Billy cannot accept this conspiracy and strikes a blow to the evil Claggart. Unfortunately, Claggart dies. Billy's goodness and innocence kills an evil man Claggart. Billy, for this crime faces various problems and ultimately he is hanged. The fourth chapter elaborates the conflict between good and evil.

Melville's use of first-person narrative is reflective. The narrator is, in some way or the other, a fictionalized portrait of the author himself; but even so, he is never quite the same as the author. Wherever Melville uses the first person narration, he projects the narrator-personae according to a specific scheme of presentation. Evidently, he lends to his narrators his own voice, experiences, thoughts and feelings; but the narrators are, at the same time, his fictive creations eminently adapted for probing the axis of reality. Melville is the hero in the novel Moby- Dick as he himself narrates the story of his experiences. His last novel Billy Budd is different from these novels. Billy Budd is third-person narrative. Melville narrates the story through the character of Billy, a sailor on the Bellipotent.

Melville has the advantage of his narrative device, and he is able to express the truth he experienced himself. Had he said all this in his own authorial

narration, it would have been, perhaps, unconvincing to his readers. But by creating a fictional surrogate for himself, he makes the protagonists himself, he makes the protagonists discover his own (Melville) meaning. It is a very characteristic device of Melville and he employs it in several of his novels. The aim of each book, writes F.L. Pattee, was a portrayal of himself

“He could center upon nothing objective. He like Byron, could write only of himself. Unless he had personally felt, or actually experienced, his imagination took no fire. All that he ever wrote was autobiographical, ego-centric and always it is an ego in fire rebellion.”²¹

Melville spent many years as a sailor in the south sea among the natives and the missionaries that made him a skeptical observer of human illusions and pretensions. Melville tried to keep himself away from his stories but found it impossible to do so and felt compelled to speak in his own person through his characters. In *Moby-Dick*, Melville as Ishmael, Melville as Taji in *Mardi*, Melville as White Jacket in *White-Jacket*, Melville in *Typee* as Tommo, narrates the stories. His heroes become Melville's mouth piece in disguise.

Melville's novels of the South Seas progress from realism towards romance, from simplicity towards complexity, and from relatively modest ambitions towards serious pretensions. His mature works of fiction are considered complex pieces that illustrate their author's incisive exploration of the use of allegorical symbolism and mastery of complex narrative technique. The fifth chapter discusses Melville's style, narrative technique and language.

Apart from novel writing, Melville devoted himself to the writing of short stories. *The Piazza Tales* is Melville's superb collection of short stories and sketches. *Benito Cereno*, *Teste*, *The Lightning Road Man* etc. In literary

activity, Melville did not confine himself to the writing of short stories and novels, but he tried his hand at poetry also. In 1856, he published a volume of poems on civil war themes which he named 'Battle Pieces and Aspects of the war'. As a poet, Melville shows profundity of thoughts rather than acuteness of expressions. Richard Chase comments about Melville's verse:

"A profound mind is at work in these poems and a mind in vigorous motion. This can be said of only one other American poet of the time, Emily Dickinson, despite its limitations, it reveals new forms of strength each time we read it over."²²

Melville has gained a new admiration because of his extra ordinary variety of opinions regarding his works and their interpretations. The critic traces five deforming influence in his literary career:

"..... the religious orthodoxy of his home, which left its imprint, though he revolted from it; his contact with the brutalities of sailor's life and with savage societies which impelled him to question premises of western civilization ; his reading in philosophy and bellas latters....., Rabelias , Sir Thomas Brown, Shakespeare and other Elizabethan dramatist ,the Bible and Carlyle, his friendship with artist and men of letters in New York who advanced his interest and educated him in his craft; and the sympathy of Hawthorne ,which more than any other factor contributed to the fruition of his genius."²³

The fiction of Herman Melville has appealed to the contemporary imagination with special force, and the twentieth century has accepted him as its own. However, the biographers and critics seem to be confused by the wave of commentary, explication, and documentation that has welled up

ever since the discovery of Melville in the nineteen twenties. Richard Chase comments:

“ despite Melville’s eloquence, his humour, his tragic sense of life, his often successful use of myth, symbol and allegory counterbalance with a solid realism, his art has distinct limitations.”²⁴

Some critics consider that in *Moby-Dick*, Melville parlayed the story of a sea captain’s vengeful search for a legendary whale into a narrative suffused with profound speculation concerning the nature and inter-relationship of the individual, society, God and the cosmos. The novel is also highly acclaimed as a distinctly American book. By resolutely grounding his speculations in American thought, language and experience, Melville elevated *Moby-Dick* to the status of a national epic. Although Melville’s contemporaries gave it little notices. The next generation studied *Moby-Dick* more intensively in the twentieth century than any other American novel, and it is now considered as one of the greatest novels of all times.

His later novel, *Billy Budd* is an effort to determine Melville’s final view on such issues as justice, morality and religion. Richard Chase writes,

“in contrast to some of Melville’s more violent works, *Billy Budd* is elegiac and tender, it displays a certain serenity which suggests that in his latest years Melville could derive solace from the idea that man might yet in his way through the ambiguities depending upon a principle of grace or spiritual health that still has a marginal place in a “man of war” world.”²⁵

Melville's mind was unusually reflective and philosophical. His love of speculative thought provided an important dimension to his works which are mainly the tales of the sea. Most of his works present his search for the truth against the background of water. Many of his novels show the heroes effort to fathom the ultimate truth against the background of the sea. The action in his novels takes place either on a ship or on a whaler. This realization colored his works with a deep thought, concerning the eternal problems of human life.

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Psychological Elements

Herman Melville's life, the previous chapter deals with, confirms the view that his life was not very easy. He struggled and faced many difficulties in his life. Herman Melville's childhood played an important role in his psychological development, and its influence lasted his whole life that is evident in his writings. During his life time, Herman Melville received appreciation primarily as a spinner of adventure yarns. By his death, his works were almost forgotten and remained so until the 1920s. At that time, people finally recognized his genius, and he became esteemed for his great moral and psychological insight. Interest in Herman Melville continually increased throughout the twentieth-century. His fame rests mainly on his great narrative power, his ability to create interesting characters, and his piercing vision of life. Herman Melville is one of the greatest American psychological novelists and his greatness is due to several reasons. One striking reason for his greatness is that his novels are both the novels of physical adventures and the psychological novels as well. Superficially, his works show the outer or physical condition of the characters but profoundly unhide the recesses of their minds. Herman Melville's novels are the outcome of his voyages which he made in his life. Therefore, in most of his writings there is the description of the sea and the islands. His voyages are twofold: firstly, voyages upon the sea, and secondly, voyages into the human mind. Psychologically, his novels measure the depth of the human mind, showing its complexity and its manifold manifestations. Melville here explores the active minds of his characters, which are responsible for initiating the main action of the stories. It is Melville's psychological genius which imparts him from others and the profundity that gives his writings a

special place in American literature. Herman Melville divides his characters into two categories: the masked and the mask less men who are generally wanderers and seekers. In his early life, Melville deserted his home and went on to the voyage as a sailor. That is why; most of his heroes are parallel to him. Ishmael, Ahab, Billy Budd, Captain Vere all are his mask less men and John Claggart, the master-at-arms, is his masked man. These are prominent protagonists and antagonists in his novels. To understand Melville's novel in the psychological context, a brief discussion about psychology will be made.

Psychology:

Psychology existed since philosophy was the main school of thought. People always seemed to try and interpret human behavior, but it was never acknowledge and recorded until scientific experiment took place. Three Greek philosophers Socrates, Plato and Aristotle were the first to raise the question of the nature of the mind and mental process during the fourth and fifth century. Psychology is the scientific study of the mind. Hippocrates was a Greek physician, and also called the father of medicine. He was very much interested in the study of the living organism and its parts. He observed the system of brain which controls various parts of the body. His medical ethics are now reflected upon by many physicians. This gave rise to the biological perspective of psychology. Following Aristotle, Plato and Socrates around the seventeenth century, there born big discussions of human psychology whether or not human beings are born with a knowledge that can understand reality or whether human beings acquire knowledge through experience and interactions. The first view is called the nativist view where human beings

are thought to be born with knowledge. The opposite of this view is the empiricist view, which is the thought that human beings gained knowledge through experiences. John Locke, put forward a theory that at birth, the mind is at a blank slate, or tabula rasa, onto which experiences of what one sees, hears, smells, tastes and feels are written. It means that the knowledge of a person can come through different senses. In modern psychology, there is still a debate as to whether or not this is true. This is called the nature versus nurture debate. This debate focuses on two sides. The first side is that biological processes affect one's emotions and behaviors. However, the other side acknowledges that experience can also affect a person's behavior. In 1897, some considered Wilhelm Wundt as the founder of modern psychology. He was a structuralist who debated that psychology is human experiences that come from a person's own experiences. He believed that the mind and behavior of a person should be the subject of scientific analysis. Wundt expressed the importance of introspection and self-exploration. Goodwin viewed the observations and recording of the essence of one's own perceptions, thoughts and feelings as introspection. Wundt believed in the separation of mind and body, without any interaction. Each time a conscious experience happened in the mind, a reaction occurred in the body. For instance, if a person has an angry thought, then the reaction in the body may be that of a feeling of rage. The mind and body work hand in hand with each other. If the mind has a thought then the body has a reaction or vice-versa.

Psychology flourished in America during the mid to late 1800s. William James emerged as one of the major psychologists during the period and the publication of his classic textbook, "The principles of psychology",

established him as the father of American psychology. His book soon became the standard text in psychology and his ideas eventually served as the basis for a new school of thought known as functionalism. The focus of functionalism was on how behavior actually works to help people live in their environment. Functionalists utilize methods such as direct observation. While both of these early schools of thought emphasize human consciousness. Their conceptions of it were significantly different. The structuralists sought to break down mental process into their smallest parts, the functionalists believed that consciousness existed as a more continuous and changing process. Up to this point, early psychology stressed conscious human experience.

An Austrian physician name Sigmund Freud changed the face of psychology in a dramatic way. He proposed a theory of personality that emphasizes the importance of the unconscious mind. Freud described how these unconscious thoughts and impulses are expressed, often through slip of tongue and dreams. Freudian psychoanalytic theory has a tremendous impact on twentieth century thought, influencing the mental health field as well as other areas of art, literature and popular culture. While many of his ideas are viewed with skepticism today, his influence on psychology is undeniable. Freud's psychoanalytic theory of personality contains three elements. These three elements of personality are the Id, the Ego, and the Super-ego. These elements work together to create complex human behaviors. The Id is an important part of our personality. It is based on the pleasure principle. This aspect of personality is entirely unconscious and includes of the instinctive and primitive behaviors. The Id does not care about reality, about the needs of anyone else. It wants only its own satisfaction. If the needs are not content

immediately, it results in a state of anxiety or tension until the demands of the Id are met. The second element, the ego is based on reality principle, which strives to satisfy the Id's desires in realistic and socially appropriate way. The third and the last element super-ego is the aspect of personality that holds all of the internalized moral standards and ideals, acquired from both parents and society. It develops due to the moral and ethical restrained. It provides the guidelines of making judgments. These elements along with other psychological elements such as obsession, hate, pride, envy will be focused in the study of characters and their actions.

Characterization:

Herman Melville's power of characterization is superb. He shows great skill in presenting characters. He is a master of portrayal. The foremost quality of his characterization is the immense reality and humanity of his characters. They are common men who have some merits and demerits. Each one of them has his good and bad appearance in the stories. Melville's characters are not mere caricatures on the pages of fiction. They are real human beings who display a unique blending of realism and humanism.

Melville's characters are not wooden and stereotyped, but life like and real. These men grow and change according to the situation in the stories, and behave in the same condition. His characters do not behave according to the set standards. It is for these reasons that Melville's characters produce an impression of reality. Melville picked up his men from the common race of mankind. They are the typical representation of general human race who speak in common language to general humanity.

The most important aspect of Melville's characterization is his psychological approach to his characters. His treatment of character is psychological. Melville is not content merely with the description of outer or superficial details of his characters. For him, the most important aspect of a character is his inner or mental state. He has a deep psychological insight into his characters. He probes into the mind of his characters and records inner fluctuations. Melville traces out the inner most recesses to the soul of his characters. He explores the minds of his characters and very minutely analysis them. It is Melville's artistic task not to rip off the mask and to explore the depths of the mind behind it and to reveal what is hidden there. In the fictional world of Herman Melville, his characters put the mask of innocence. Melville's characters who wear masks are of two kinds; those who put on the mask to conceal their felonious purpose and those who wear it unconsciously.

In Herman Melville's novels, the narrator often plays a crucial role to understand the author's attitude. The novel *Moby Dick* begins with Ishmael's character. He introduces himself as "call me Ishmael."¹

Numerous literary critics have pointed out the first line of *Moby Dick*. Ishmael is just trying to say not to mind his real name but to think him as a rejected outcast. He is the biblical figure of the rejected outcast, an alienate man, who having no fault of his own was cast out to wander beyond the pale. He, therefore, is the prototype of the alienate man, the outsider who feels no place for him in the nature of things. Melville's writings show that he was preoccupied throughout his life with the figure of Ishmael, the orphan. In *Mardi* he writes,

“Sailors are mostly foundlings and castways and carry all their kith and kin in their arms and their legs.”²

And in *Redburn*, “ At last I found myself a sort of Ishmael in the ship, without a single friend or companion.”³

Melville had an Ishmael complex. As with every major complex, it had two sources, Personal life experience and identification with an archetype image. The major personal cause was the insanity, the death of his father and the subsequent hardships of the family. Like Ishmael, who was replaced by Isaac, Melville’s mother rejected him also in favor of her first son. Isaac and Ishmael are one of many pairs of hostile brothers, one of whom God accepted, and rejected the other. Acceptance and rejection are properly alternating phases in the developmental process. Ishmael is the narrator of the tale. He thus represents the author’s ego, the operative conscious attitude, an alienate attitude of Melville’s experience of rejection. This state of alienate meaninglessness is prevalent in twentieth century men, so Melville’s novel speaks very profoundly. The story of Ishmael’s voyage clearly shows the state of his own soul. Ishmael tells about his background in a depressed mood:

“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.....it is a way I have of riving off the spleen, an regulating the circulation. Whenever I find myself growing grim about the mouth whenever it is a damp, drizzling November in my soul whenever I find myself involuntarily pausing before coffin warehouses, an ringing up the rear of every funeral I meet, an

especially whenever my hypos get such an upper hand of me, that it requires a strong moral principle to prevent me from deliberately stepping into the street, and methodically knocking people's hats off then, I account it high time to get to sea as soon as I can this is my substitute for pistol and all. With a philosophical flourish Cato throws himself upon his sword I quietly take to the ship. There is nothing surprising in this. If they but knew it, almost all men in their degree, sometime or other, cherish very nearly the same feelings towards the ocean with me.”⁴

The mood of a ‘damp, drizzly November in the soul’⁵ is the psychological starting point which sets the whole mood of the novel. It is a state of depression, emptiness and alienation from life values. Ishmael is not simply a narrative device for recording what happens in *Moby Dick*, he is a character, a protagonist not less than Ahab. As Vincent says:

“Ishmael is the chorus character whose commentary elucidates and whose person enfolds the entire work...(he) is narrator, but he is also prologue and epilogue.”⁶

Thus the narrative is about Ahab's hunt for *Moby Dick*, and a rich study of Ishmael's character. Unlike the other characters in the book, the author does not give the physical description of Ishmael. But through his activities and thought processes, one can infer that he is a young man who goes to sea in search of adventure. Ishmael is not just a detached observer in the story but he also participates in the action and events that shape the story of the novel. He is a sensitive person. He has a keen eye for details, and makes each character come alive to the reader. Ishmael also tries to understand each and every individual and event with a great psychology. From the opening of the

novel, Ishmael is a figure of isolation, an orphan. Throughout *Moby Dick*, Melville progressively develops the theme of the isolated individual. According to Porter:

“By actively choosing the name of an outcast, Ishmael emphasizes his exile stance.”⁷

He is ‘quite Ishmael’ who regularly displays detached tendencies as in “The Spouter Inn”

“knowing not what else to do with myself, I resolved to spend the rest of the evening as a looker on.”⁸

The introspective Ishmael also displays emotional instability revealed in his constant mood:

“Ishmael is gaiety and his high spirits are matched by an equally pronounced tendency to depression and gloom: his initial determination to go to sea arises from a mood of almost suicidal despair.”⁹

Ishmael acknowledges the shifting nature of his spirits, characteristically drawing an analogy, with the sea in the ‘Grand Armada’

“Amid the tornadoed Atlantic of my being ...deep down and deep inland there I still bathe me in eternal mildness of joy.”¹⁰

The perilous situation on board whaling ships partly procreates this double edged characteristic. Ishmael observes in ‘The Hyena’:

“There is nothing like the perils of whaling to breed this free and easy sort of genial, desperado philosophy.”¹¹

The juxtaposition of ‘genial’ and ‘desperado’ reveals the inconsistencies which characterize Ishmael’s personality. Intensity is one of the character traits in Ishmael which is similar; although not precisely the same as Ahab’s intensity. Ahab has an intensity leading towards self destruction while Ishmael’s intensity leads him towards self-creation. Vincent has called Ishmael’s own mental voyage “the quest of the human heart for its spiritual and psychological home”¹² which supports the view that the novel has a dual focus on Ahab’s revengeful voyage for Moby Dick, the White Whale, and on Ishmael’s scholarly voyage for answers to get to know himself as well “A whale-ship was My Yale College and My Howard.”¹³ The disturbing effect of Moby Dick on Ishmael perhaps explains his often cautionary statements about the Whale. Ishmael hints that his own participation in the hunt for Moby Dick was a form of satanic, seduction, damaging to his soul

“Give not thyself up....to fire, lest it invert thee, deaden thee; as for a time it did me.”¹⁴

The novel contains Ishmael’s own reflections, meditations, psychological observation based upon his experiences during the fantastic voyage. In fact, Ishmael’s own thoughts and his comments on what happens during the voyage, enhances the significance of the novel. But it is even more noteworthy that these reflections, meditations and psychology seem to have come from Melville himself. Leon Howard describes this psychological factor of Melville’s life, which exerted its influence on his creation:

“He had been the deserter in Typee, the runaway in Omoo, the escaped captive in Mardi, the orphan in Redburn, and the poor sailor denied a

charitable daub of paint in *White Jacket*. And in *Moby Dick* he was Ishmael the homeless wanderer.”¹⁵

Herman Melville tries to keep himself away from his story but finds it impossible to do so and feels compelled to speak on his own person through Ishmael. Thus, Ishmael becomes Melville’s mouth piece in disguise. That is why, the critics often refer to the narrator of the story as Ishmael-Melville or as Melville-Ishmael. Ishmael himself is a thought-diver. It is not alone the whale who dives deep, sounding a thousand fathoms but in *Moby Dick* Melville profoundly goes down and comes up with blood-shot eyes. It is the magic in this deep diving that interests us.

Ishmael is the image of Melville himself, who himself was an isolato, Richard Chase throws light on the loneliness of Ishmael, “why does Ishmael feel alone?”¹⁶ this is because of Melville’s own background reason. “His father went bankrupt and then died when Melville was still a boy.”¹⁷ Melville-Ishmael went to sea. Ishmael is a solitary man. As the name indicates, he is under the impact of sense of isolation, and his only friend is the savage Queequeg, a fellow isolato in the world of Christianity. Queequeg is the only man whose presence soothes and comforts him.

Ishmael is not only a hasty young sailor who joins the whaling ship but also a thinker who treats all the crew members with great understanding of their minds. He is a man of contemplative turn of mind. He recounts his experiences and narrates his tale. The sketches of his characters are evidence of his thorough knowledge of the human psychology, not at the time of making the voyage but long afterwards when he looks back at his experiences and decides to record them. He is able to judge every member of

the crew on the Pequod where such characters viz- Ahab, Starbuck, Stubb, Peleg and many other all journey together. At the time of actually writing his narrative, he shows a capacity not only to grasp every situation and its significance, but to understand the psychological traits of the various persons with whom he has to work on the Pequod.

Ishmael loves adventure, but he is not a dynamic person. Whenever he feels a sense of gloominess, he takes sea faring. He does not explain the exact reason to go on a whaling voyage; and therefore he leaves his decision on fate. His love for thoughts is the main aspect of his personality. Ishmael thinks in order to establish a connection between man and the world. He does not suffer much from homelessness as from doubts, disbelief, inconclusive mental debates, and his contemplation. Ishmael portrays the plight and problem of the modern man removed from his inner world, the world of his spirit.

The character of Ishmael is indispensable to the novel. He is the central figure in the story, but he does not reveal much about himself to the reader. There is no physical description of this man. Additionally, Ishmael represents the fundamental contradiction between the story of Moby Dick and its setting. Melville has created a profound and philosophically complicated tale and set it in a world of largely uneducated working-class men; Ishmael thus, seems less a real character than an instrument of the author. No one else aboard the Pequod possesses the proper combination of intellect and experience to tell his story. Indeed, at times even Ishmael fails Melville's purpose and he disappears from the story for long stretches, which the dramatic dialogues and soliloquies from Ahab and other characters replace.

Of course, Ishmael is a thinker but different from Ahab who is also a thinker as well as a man of action. Although Ahab indulges in reflections and soliloquies, but he is ready for the most adventurous enterprise. Ishmael is also passionate for adventures because inspite of the full knowledge of the perils of the whaling voyage, he makes up his mind for journey. But he is not as courageous and prompt as Ahab. Ahab is a defiant, megalomaniac captain of the Pequod. He is the hero of the novel.

Jung, an American psychologist, describes Ahab as an archetype of a tyrannical mad man obsessed with vengeance. Several clues lead to this assessment. He had lost his happiness and sympathy with his leg during an encounter with the White Whale. Now he is a cruel man and an isolated one who keeps himself confined to his cabin as if he were a recluse. Peleg gives Ishmael some primarily information about Ahab as a good man “not as a pious good man but a swearing good man.”¹⁸ For some days after the commencement of the voyage, Ahab appears on the deck. He seems to be moody and savage. This look is owing to his barbaric white leg made of the “polished bone of the Sperm whale’s jaw.”¹⁹ The artificial leg on which he stands, intensifies his grimness. This whale-bone made leg is a replacement for the original leg which Moby Dick had snatched away from his body. Ishmael sees Ahab a strong man giving no sign of bodily illness. “His high, broad form seemed made of solid bronze.”²⁰ There is infinity of fortitude, determination and willfulness on Ahab’s face. He seems to be a moody stricken man with a crucifixion in his face and “some mighty woe in his heart”²¹, a woe which lends to him a high dignity. The physical disability and the scar have caused the psychological wound.

Ahab's second injury is the cause of his obsessed stage. The loss of his leg torments his mind. This grown injury makes him even more resolved to exact revenge. His mind is always occupied with a single idea that is to hunt down the monstrous White Whale. Ahab chases the White Whale and every time he keeps watch on his enemy and turns to a revengeful plan. Tragic dimensions of final monomania take final shape as Ahab draws upon disappointments of early years, or stage to regard the white whale at last as "the sum of all general rage and hate felt by his whole race from Adam down."²²

Ahab's mind which is both coldly sane and furiously mad, creates a pompous delusion. Ahab has a high sense of defiance. His firm and unflinching resolution is the most remarkable trait of his character. His arrogance and defiance are his hubris. The ungodly man challenges the mightiest force. He throws a challenge to the White Whale and darts his harpoon. Moby Dick arouses his anger, and he determines to wreak his vengeance on him,

".....it was Moby Dick that dismasted me; Moby Dick that brought me to this dead stump I stand on now.....Aye, aye ! it was accursed White Whale that razed me; made me a poor pegging lubber of me forever and a day."²³

Ahab challenges the white whale in his fury and he shouts,

"Aye, aye! and I'll chase him round the Norway Maelstrom, and round perdition's flames before I gave him up. And this is what ye have shipped for me! To chase that White Whale on both sides of earth, till he spouts black blood and rolls fins out."²⁴

He is full of revenge. He demands implicit and instantaneous obedience from the members of the crew. As a man of action his dynamism is par excellence. He believes in doing things and getting them done promptly. He administrators an oath to the members of the crew, and binds them to hunt down the White Whale, Moby Dick. The White Whale, Moby Dick is a character as important as Ahab. If Ahab is the protagonist in this novel, the White Whale is the antagonist. Ahab's unconcealed goal is supreme for him and to achieve that goal he works day and night consistently and untiringly. Melville's general portrayal of depths of monomania also appears to be in advance of portrayal of conscious or unconscious process of monomania. The deepest probing of Ahab's mind and his unconscious in particular appear with his mental turbulence. He is harassed with his passion for the White Whale and always seems to be tormented with the thought of unfulfilled desire of revenge. All the day and night he remains tensed, on his monomania Ishmael says:

“Ah, God! what trances of torments does that man's endure who is consumed with one unachieved revengeful desire. He sleeps with clenched hands; and wakes with his own bloody nails in his palms.”²⁵

Ahab's mind is always works. In a reflective mood, he looks at the doubloon which he had nailed to the Main Mast. The figures on the doubloon seem to him to reflect his own personality and mind. He associates himself with the lofty, and the magnificent things

“Look here-three peaks as proud as Lucifer. The firm tower, that is Ahab; the Volcano that is Ahab; the courageous, the undaunted, and victorious fowl that too is Ahab; all are Ahab.”²⁶

He is a strong individualistic. His egotism is only one symptom of his individualism. He believes that he is invincible and unshakable. On the third day of the chase while talking to Starbuck, he shows his individualism and fatalism: "Ahab is forever Ahab" he says, and then he goes to say:

"This whole act is immutably decreed. I am the fate's lieutenant: I act under orders (of fate). He says, further "although his body has lost one of his legs, his soul has a hundred legs to stand upon." ²⁷

Ahab does not lose his dare in spite of the lack of one of his legs. With every passing day his resolve becomes stronger. During a furious storm when his crew members give a hint to take their steps back from his mad pursuit, Ahab threatens them to kill with his burning harpoon and reminds them of the oath which they had taken before. In his long voyage he does not show any sign of deviating himself from the goal he has set for himself. Ahab is a man who declares himself to be a sovereign amid the powers of heaven, hell and earth. Such a man may perish but, so long as he exists, he insists upon treating himself as the equal of all the powers of the Universe. Ahab thinks himself superior to the rest of mankind

"This man wishes to be a democrat in his relations with all those who are above him, but he would like to govern all those who are below him." ²⁸

On the Pequod Ahab dominates his crew and imposes his will on them. Before all others, he thinks of him as the most important and powerful man. He, like a tyrant, forces the whalemens to follow his order instantly and to carry on their search. Ahab's belief to supersede the will of God shows his superior nature. In this thoughtless act, he loses the feelings of love, satisfaction and even his common sense. Ahab is guilty of hubris or

excessive pride as well as of self-reliance. This is a suicidal fault in him. Ahab follows the path of individualism which proves ruinous, and throws him to his doom. Ahab carries his self-reliance to the point of solipsism. He considers himself more important than anything else in the universe. When a man becomes self-reliant and begins to regard his selfhood as the only thing that matters, he should be prepared for extinction. It is so because life can be sustained only by a natural piety and by the ability to share with others the common variations of human life.

Ahab is a monomaniac, it is not so because he has only one serious purpose in life, that is a part of his heroic greatness. His monomania is essentially a matter of his undeviating sense of personal wrong and private vengeance, and this over-mastering sense is in turn the outcome of his total egocentricity. Starbuck thinks him mad but Ahab realizes that his madness is the result of a disintegrated mind but of a supreme intelligence

“I am demoniac, I am madness maddened. That wild madness that’s only calm to comprehend itself! The path to my fixed purpose is laid with iron rails, where on my soul is grooved to run.”²⁹

The self-knowledge evident through this soliloquy ultimately gives way to self-delusion in the long pursuit of Moby Dick. His madness is actually his obsession. He certainly loses his mental balance in thinking of the White Whale. His pride has eaten up the very possible qualities of love, affection and even common sense. Instead of minding his whaling business prudently, as Starbuck or other mariners do, he conjures up a soul’s antagonist in the Whale.

Ahab is very much in his sense throughout the novel; and he is a man of high intelligence. His meditations upon life and his metaphysical questionings show the profundity of his mind. In the quarter-deck scene, Ahab retires to his cabin and meditates alone. In personal anguish he acknowledges his human deficiency:

“Gift with the high perception, I lack the low, enjoying power; damned, most subtly and most malignantly!”³⁰

He often indulges in soliloquies: “No longer does the loveliness of Nature soothe him.”³¹

All loveliness has now become a kind of anguish for him.

Ahab’s mind consists of the intellect, sensibilities, and will. An important aspect of the will is power which is not a factual but a characteristic quality suffused throughout the mind and concentrated in the will. Any decision and action of the will is based on power, which becomes a factor therefore, in any disordered action of the will. A disordered action or insanity of the will, is more likely to come from insane aspects of other parts of the mind than from internal defect of the will. This simplistic explanation clarifies Ishmael’s complex accounts. Ahab’s rationality or mind, driven by monomaniac conceptions of self power, nullifies the effects of the soul, and in aligning itself with the disordered will, creates the delusions of a global mind. In such a development the will has power and is also powerless. The description of the effects of a deep and permanent melancholy upon the will, also clarifies the powerful account of Ahab’s midnight upset. Although this scientific accounts and Melville’s dramatic exposition can not be lengthily compared because of their different purposes only. Melville’s

fictional account creates a credible sense of the ineluctable mysteries and complexities of the mind.

Captain Ahab is the monomaniac who leads the crew of the Pequod to destruction through his insane compulsion to pursue and strike back at the creature who has ripped off his leg. Ahab, because of his culturally suppressed temperament and his uncontrolled desire, is regarded as the Freudian id. Moby Dick, his opponent, is the Freudian super-ego, the internal institution which is responsible for these repressions. The White Whale who has dismembered his assailant Ahab, has received the projection of Ahab's Presbyterian conscience which seems to have come from Melville himself. The Whale is the embodiment of the Old Testament Calvinistic conception of an affrighting deity, and its strict commandments, the derivation of puritanical American society. Also, most specifically, Moby Dick symbolizes the zealously righteous sermonizing parents who compelled Melville to seek escape at sea. Some critics consider the White Whale as the representative of God. In Ahab's view God is awful who is responsible for sufferings and evil in this world. Throughout the novel he quarrels with God and insults Him. Super-ego is the part of the mind that tells what one should do or not do. It provides the guidelines for judgment. The negative image of God becomes the cause of Ahab's death. In senseless attempt, Ahab does not hear the voice of his inner self. He loses his commonsense in his mad pursuit and does not make a good decision, and finally perishes with his crew members except Ishmael. For some critics, Moby Dick is a character while other critics do not consider Moby Dick a character, because the White Whale's thoughts, feelings, or intentions are far from understanding. Instead, Moby Dick is an impersonal force, one that

many critics have interpreted as an allegorical representation of God. Moby Dick thwarts free will and remains unbeatable. One can only accommodate or avoid. Like the Whale, only the ocean is available for human observation and interpretation, while its depths conceal unknown and unknowable truths. The White Whale symbolizes God; who is unknowable and cannot be pinned down. Ahab does not accept this reality and moves towards a futile goal. Ishmael does not involve in Ahab's mission and thus saves himself. Ishmael is the Freudian ego. The ego is the largely conscious, controller and decision maker. Ishmael is the character who makes balance between Id and super ego. He understands Ahab's pursuit as senseless efforts to hunt down his opponent, the White Whale, representative of God, an inscrutable and all powerful being that human kind can neither understand nor define.

Ahab's intellectual presumption, his denial of humanity, his identification of entire personality with his injured pride and towering conscious will, reign over circumstances. Ahab is tragic, not grotesque or pathetic. He has the courage to face what he fears, the inner nemesis he knows he has prepared for himself; and he finds he must constantly fight his own humanity to keep that courage. Throughout the long voyage, Ahab restlessly holds his course and single mindedly begins his search for Moby Dick. He does not even blink out of conscience when he meets other ships. He pauses only long enough to find out whether they have sighted the White Whale. He focuses on his own pursuit. Towards the close of the novel, Ahab's mind goes back to his past life. This shows one of the only glimpses of Ahab's character as he reminisces about nearly forty years earlier when he struck his first whale, and laments the solitude of his long life out at sea. He admits that he has "chased his prey as more as a demon than a man."³²

Tyrus writes

“Melville certainly means to convey in *Moby Dick* his vision that on one hand, pursuit of the Absolute leads to frustration and madness, on the other arrogance in the search is inherently self destructive. Ahab’s great error is his failure to accept human limitations. In assuming the possibility of learning final truth, he puts himself on a plane of equality with God. He is guilty of fatal sin of pride.”³³

Ahab, the Pequod’s obsessed captain, represents both an ancient and a quintessential modern type of hero. Like the heroes of Shakespearian tragedy, Ahab suffers from a single fatal flaw, one he shares with such legendary character as Fautus. His tremendous overconfidence, or hubris, leads him to defy common sense and believe that, like a god, he can enact his will and remain immune to the forces of nature. He considers *Moby Dick* the embodiment of evil in the world, and he pursues the White Whale monomaniacally because he believes in his inescapable fate to destroy this evil. According to M.H. Abraham, such a tragic hero “moves us to pity because since he is not an evil man, his misfortune is greater than he deserves, but he moves us also to fear, because we recognize similar possibilities of error in our own lesser and fallible selves.”³⁴ Unlike the heroes of the older tragic works, however Ahab suffers from a fatal flaw that is not necessarily inborn but emerges from damage. Both in his case of psychological and physical, he is inflicted by life in a harsh world. He is as much a victim as he is an aggressor.

Ahab's general domineering and dark character throughout the story, the crew men's awe and fear of their captain, and the way in which Ahab reacts to the crew and different situations, all lend an interesting aspect of Ahab's character. The novel contains not only an account of Ahab's voyage on the Pequod, but also traces the history of Ahab's mind. Ahab witnesses the Whale and darts the harpoon, but caught in his own line; he is dragged down to the sea. Ahab's immaculate fate overtakes him. He experiences his topmost greatness in his grief:

“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.”³⁵

He meets his lonely death in his life. Burning with his great spiritual energies to a suicidal as well as homicidal end, he becomes fully, painfully aware of what he has sacrificed in himself and in others. Ahab behaves like a sane man, but his motives are entirely insane. He resolves to use everything in his power to revenge himself on the White Whale, and agrees to be the captain of the Pequod in order to get an opportunity to pursue his vendetta. In the democratic framework of a novel that likes to remind just how egalitarian it is, Ahab, this rough, old Nauntcket seaman, seems to be as Shakespearean tragic hero. Like, King Lear, Ahab's madness drives him out into the storm, his 'Fool', his jester, who is both crazier and saner than he is, helps him. These 'Fools' manage to give their respective tragic heroes excellent advice. Ahab's Fool is Pip, the young African-American man who goes mad when he leaps out of Stubb's whaling ship in fear and is left to float alone in the open sea for an hour. Pip and Ahab become a strangely

appropriate pairing: the monomaniac who is losing to his vengeance and the crazy boy who has lost his sense because of his cowardice.

In Herman Melville's works, Shakespeare's influence is very clear. After Shakespeare, Nathaniel Hawthorne, one of Melville's contemporary, greatly affected him. Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville wrote on some common issues. Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter* and Melville's *Moby Dick* are the tales of sin, guilt, obsession and destruction. So the main characters in the novels, have various similarities. Chillingworth from *Scarlet Letter* and Ahab from *Moby Dick* stand out as the most related prominent characters of the novels. Both Chillingworth and Ahab are portrayed similarly in their respective novels and perform similar actions, which lead to their ultimate destruction. The names of these two characters are appropriate to their characters. Roger Chillingworth's name seems to come from the word 'chill', synonym for fear and coldness of the heart. He is notorious by Hester for having a cold heart. Indeed Captain Ahab's name seems to come from the biblical time. King Ahab of Israel was an evil man, who spent his time at war with neighbouring countries. In *Moby Dick*, Captain Ahab is at war with the Whale as well as other ship mates. These two men, strategically modeled after their names, take on the role of the villains in their own worlds.

In *The Scarlet Letter*, Chillingworth forces Hester to reveal the man that she sinned with. He uses his authoritarian nature to instill fear within her. He promises to avenge the man who wronged him by sleeping with his wife. Throughout the rest of the novel Chillingworth aims to destroy Arthur Dimmsdale, the man who slept with his wife. Similarly in *Moby Dick*, Melville uses Captain Ahab as evil character. When Ahab encounters, the

other captain who had lost his son at sea, asks Ahab to help him. But Ahab's determination to catch Moby Dick turns the other captain down. This shows his cruelty to other human beings as well as his evil nature.

In *Moby Dick*, Melville describes Ahab as an evil, harmful, destructive looking man. He has a cruel, domineering face. Similarly in *The Scarlet Letter*, Chillingworth is portrayed given bitter face, which instills fear in all around him.

The villainous characterization of these characters is parallel to their names, and their features reflect that personality. These two characters interact with other character similarly become obsessed with revenge and are eventually destroyed. Chillingworth sets his life goal to find the man who committed adultery. Once he finds him, Chillingworth tries to make Dimmsdale's life a living hell. Likewise, Ahab becomes obsessed with the idea of killing Moby Dick. Consequently, the two obsessions of the two men eventually lead to their ultimate destruction. Chillingworth devotes his entire life in finding out and torturing the man who wronged him. When doomed, the adulterer, confesses and dies, Chillingworth has no purpose for life after this event.

“This unhappy man had made the very principle of his life to consist in the pursuit of revenge and when left with no further material, had no reason to stay on the earth to do the devil's work.”³⁶

In the same way, Ahab gets caught on a harpoon line and pulled under and above the water.

On several occasions Starbuck, the first mate dissuades Ahab from his resolve to hunt down Moby Dick. He clears the purpose of the voyage of collecting spermaceti. He also tells him about the Whale's unintentional attack on him but Ahab pays no attention to Starbuck's objection and does not relent. His resolve becomes stronger day by day. Starbuck pleadingly says,

“Oh,my Captain,my Captain!-noble heart-go not go not!see,it's a brave man that weeps!how great the agony of the persuasion then.”³⁷

Ahab only utters his resolution on the second day of the chase,

“I'll ten times girdle the unmeasured globe,yea and dive straight through it, I'll slay him (Moby Dick) yet.”³⁸

Ahab with this phantom has an unceasing battle until its power over his soul destroys him. This inner human destruction is the core of the drama.

Melville does not just say that Starbuck is or is not brave; instead he explains the complicated way that courage works in the first mate's psychosomatic make up. This makes the characters in Moby Dick seem more rounded and natural, even though the tools, he uses to characterize them, are not always fancy. As a first mate, one of the dilemmas, Starbuck faces, is, whether or not to relieve Ahab of command, or possibly even assassinate him. Starbuck stands outside Ahab's stateroom with a loaded musket, indulging in some internal monologue:

“But shall this crazed old man be suffered to drag a whole ship's company down to doom with him?-Yes, it would make him the willful murder of thirty men and more, if this ship come to any deadly harm, my soul swears

this ship will, if Ahab have his way. If then, he were this instant- put aside, that crime would be his() is heaven a murder when it lightning strikes a would be murder in his bed, tinding sheets and skin together?”³⁹

Of course, Starbuck’s actions do not characterize him, but his simple thoughts and opinions reflect his personality. He, like Hamlet at a similar moment, cannot bring himself to go through with the murder, even though he thinks it might be for the best. This reminds of Hamlet’s view that “conscience does make coward of us all.”⁴⁰

Starbuck submits to an ethos, a job, and an emotional responsibility to his family, accepting any disproportion “between his just deserts and what he gets.”⁴¹ Ahab, on the other hand, profoundly sensitive enough, hurt by life, identifies himself with an injured unhealed part. He rationalizes his conquest derangements to set himself above the ethos. He denies his obligations and his human feelings, and opposes his personal conscious will to destiny. And, this, of course, is the hubris; over simplified, it is the sin of pride, a self mutilation result in disaster. Ahab is far from being a ‘divine or ‘perfect’ hero. He is a greater man than Starbuck but not a better one. This is chiefly because he lacks the nobler motivation of his self-appointed task as well as a true comprehension of its implications for the rest of humanity.

Starbuck, like Ahab, is a serious-minded man though not a gloomy man; while Stubb, the second mate, is always in a jovial and genial mood. Soon after the commencement of the voyage, Stubb receives a rebuff from Ahab when he suggests Captain Ahab not to walk on the deck with his ivory leg. Because striking against the wooden boards, produces a lot of noise. Captain Ahab feels furious. He addresses Stubb as a dog, and orders the second mate

to leave his cabin. Ahab's insulting treatment deeply hurts him. When Stubb opposes him, Ahab once again shows him down by calling him a donkey, a mule and an ass. Stubb takes his insult seriously. He thinks of hitting Ahab in retaliation. Stubb finds his own tolerance to be a queer matter. The thought of his insult begins to weigh upon Stubb's mind, but then he reminds himself of one of his principles, 'Think not', which is not to think much about anything. Saying this, he decides to go to bed and have some deep sound sleep. And yet the thought occurs to him that Ahab has called him a dog and a donkey and an ass. Stubb continuously feels unhappy about the incident. That night Stubb has a dream in which Ahab kicks him with his ivory leg. In the dream Stubb tries to kick back, but in the process loses his leg, while Ahab seems to him "as formidable as a pyramid."⁴² And, then, during that same dream, he has an idea that Ahab has kicked him, but he has done so with his ivory leg and not with his real leg. There is a big difference between a real leg and an artificial leg. Besides, he has one more thought that a great man kicked him, with a beautiful ivory leg and he should regard it as an honour and not as an insult. Thus, his dream shows Stubb's inability to forget Ahab's humiliating treatment of him, and the thought of the insult had been working upon his subconscious mind. This shows Ahab as a haughty kind of man and Stubb a very sensitive to the insult to which he has been subjected.

Ahab's crew members support him in his chase for Moby Dick. It is Perth who forges Ahab's harpoon which he uses to hunt down the White Whale. He forges the harpoon exactly in accordance with Ahab's wishes and specifications. Ahab regards Perth as sane but he cannot penetrate Perth's solemnity to discover a hidden madness, a condition traceable to the past.

Losses of his wife and children had affected Perth far more grievously than Ahab and others. Years of sorrow and hardships had left a profound melancholy, and this made Perth one of Herman Melville's most deeply sad characters. He is sadness, saddened-to paraphrase the description of Ahab as "madness, maddened."⁴³ In the attempt to forget, Perth chose the sea instead of suicide because in Ishmael's words, the sea is "more oblivious than death."⁴⁴ The sea isolates Perth from the past, just as his solemnity and age isolate him from shipboard life. The blacksmith appears to be suffering from a form of monomania; in the early years of alcoholism and sorrow, and gets some mental disorder. Stubb shows his unfailing sense of humour in the way he talks on various occasions, and in the way he talks about Fedallah.

Fedallah is the leader of the special crew of Captain Ahab. He commands the boat while chasing Moby Dick. Fedallah is a sinister figure in the novel. It seems that he has some hold upon Ahab who trusts him implicitly. He is a mysterious Parsee who is even more eager to sight Moby Dick than Ahab himself. In his anxiety, he keeps a watch for the White Whale day and night. Indeed, his vigilance in this matter is amazing. Fedallah fully endorses Ahab's purpose in tracking Moby Dick, and serves further to harden Ahab's resolve. The Parsee seems to be a prophet. He makes a prophecy that "he (Fedallah) would die sooner than Ahab, that Ahab would see two hearses on the sea before dying, and that Ahab would be killed by hemp."⁴⁵ Significantly, Fedallah is a man of mystery, a non-christian who seems to be Ahab's guide or guru. Some critics suggest that, because Fedallah is a Parsee and supposedly devoted to good, he is a double agent, an assassin whom God sent to eliminate Ahab. Through his actions, though, Ahab's guide seems more demonic- perhaps a Parsee who shares Ahab's madness and

perceives the same evil that the Captain sees. In this case, Fedallah contributes to the rich ambiguity that surrounds Ahab. His prophecy regarding the Captain, comes true in surprising ways near the end of the novel.

In the series of Melville's characters Queequeg, one of the members of Ahab's crew, has a very important role in the novel. Queequeg is a harpooner, a cannibal with devilish exterior and terrifying appearance with his love for pagan rites and ceremonies. He is Melville's comic character with heroic qualities. His dark marked face, his whole body decorated with tattoos makes him a mysterious figure for Ishmael. Ishmael meets Queequeg for the first time in the Spouter inn where he becomes afraid of Queequeg's ghastly look. However, soon Ishmael finds him a perfectly harmless man and becomes his best friend. Ishmael feels the real human relationship with this primitive man. Queequeg does not hesitate to give his life for the sake of Ishmael if it is necessary to do so. He is a kindhearted man as well as deep religious man in his own heathenish manners. Queequeg regularly offers worship to Yojo, the wooden idol, which is his God. He cautiously observes Ramadan, abstaining from food and lost in meditation. Although the whole description of his observance of his pagan ritual is comic, yet the man's earnestness and his devotion to his god are unquestionable. Queequeg shows personal heroism on several occasions. He is endowed with immense courage.

On one occasion a fellow hurts his feeling by jeering at him. Queequeg throws him up into the air to teach him a lesson. But on another occasion when the same fellow accidentally falls into the sea, it is Queequeg, who at once jumps into the water and risks his own life to rescue the drowning man.

But even after doing this noble job, he remains unmindful of what he has done. It simply shows that he possesses innate nobility. Later again Queequeg risks his life to save his fellow harpooner, Tashtengo, who accidentally falls into the sea with the severed head of a Sperm Whale. Queequeg courageously and fearlessly jumps after him and rescues him. His devotion to Ishmael and his noble deeds show him to be a man of sterling qualities. Indeed, this savage heathen shows himself to be morally a superior to most Christians. This is how Ishmael describes: “It’s a mutual, joint-stock world is all meridians. We cannibals must help these Christians.”⁴⁶

When Queequeg falls ill and thinks about his coming end, he asks the ship’s carpenter to make a coffin for him to escape his dead body from sharks. However, soon afterwards, he recovers from illness and his coffin remains useless for him. His companion asks him whether it depends upon himself whether to die or live. He very philosophically replies “if a man makes up his mind not to die, illness by itself can not kill him.”⁴⁷ He suggests his coffin to convert into a lifebuoy with certain adjustments. This coffin saves Ishmael’s life from drowning while all other men on the Pequod fall into the vast sea and die.

The minor characters also play important roles in the novel. The mates and the harpooners who pursue and kill sperm whale in order to obtain oil, are indispensable from this point of view.

In Melville’s next novel *Billy Budd*, the hero of the novel, Billy Budd, a foretop man in the British fleet, is a young, handsome and the most innocent sailor. His god-like beauty, prowess and masculine charm attract attention wherever he goes. Melville has made great effort in emphasizing Billy’s

appearance. For him, Billy's physical beauty is indicative of moral perfection. Thus, he is one dimensional character who represents goodness with the combination of personable good look and inner virtue as well.

Herman Melville employs a number of devices to make Billy a larger than a lay character 'a man above men.' He is 'welkin eyed', 'jewel', 'an angel' or at times 'Baby Budd.' The devices represent his virtue and innocence. The novelist compares him with Apollo and Hercules to show his ideal young male beauty and strength. In Billy's praise Captain Gravelings says to Lieutenant Ratcliffe:

"See here, now. Before I shipped that young fellow, my forecastle was a rat-pit of quarrels. It was black times, I tell you, aboard the Rights here. I was worried to that degree my pipe had no comfort for me. But Billy came; and it was like a Catholic priest striking peace in an Irish Shindy. Not that he preached to them or said or did anything in particular; but a virtue went out of him, sugaring the sour ones."⁴⁸

One of the most striking qualities of Billy, is his capacity to maintain peace, harmony and order among the crew. On the ship 'Rights-of-man' it was merely his presence which established tranquility and melody. He did not have to make any effort to bring an atmosphere of calmness and its impact on the people around him. There was an aura about him which automatically produced a halcyon impression on the shipmates. Even his transference from the Rights-of-man to the Bellipotent does not bring any change in his good nature. The sailors on the ship well like and admire him just owing to his jovial nature.

John Claggart, the master-at-arms is the most significant character, next to Ahab. He is the best example of Melville's masked man. John Claggart, on the *Bellipotent*, is an officer of pale and unhealthy looking. Melville describes him as:

“His hand was too small and shapely to have been accustomed to hard toil...”⁴⁹

His strange, heavy chin, small and short hands, cunning violent eyes, his curly black hair contrast with polar of his face. It is an unnatural complexion of a sailor, although it is very displeasing to look as a hint of some bodily abnormality. He is a man of mysterious background because no one on the ship knows about his past. His responsible position master-at-arms, sort of chief of police, has been bestowed upon him by his officers because of his ‘constitutional sobriety.’ John Claggart wears the congenial mask of respectability to conceal his true nature from Billy. He puts mask on his face, outwardly it shows his superiority but it is totally persuasive. Claggart always shows his enmity towards Billy Budd; a foretop man in the British fleet, is a young, handsome and the most innocent sailor. Billy observes John Claggart's strange behaviour towards him. On most occasions, the master-at-arms refers to Billy as ‘a sweet and pleasant young fellow’ but inwardly he does not think so. Billy is so simple minded and candid that he cannot imagine the existence of man who speaks pleasantly but covertly the essential wickedness under the polished nature. Claggart is envious of Billy's compound beauty but intellectually capable of adequate appreciation of the moral phenomena presented in Billy, however the praise is superficial. Human nature is not easy to understand. An experience of life is one thing, but the capacity to understand the working of the human mind and motive is

quite another thing. The portrayal of Claggart is a triumph in the sphere of psychological analysis. The novelist frankly opens Claggart's mind. Of course, Melville first gives a graphic description of the physical appearance of Claggart; but later, he is concerned mainly with an analysis of the mind and the motives of the master-at-arms. In fact, Claggart develops feelings of antagonism towards Billy without any strong and apparent cause, and Melville describes it as a mystery "a mystery of iniquity."⁵⁰

Higher ranked Claggart's innate wickedness is groundless and seems limitless. His motives are far more sophisticated and subtle than Billy can comprehend. Billy lacks awareness of the discrepancies that exist between human action and human intention. Claggart, on the other hand, exhibits a great understanding of deception and ambiguity and makes frequent use of them in his nefarious plot. He shows kindness towards Billy to hide his unkind intentions. Claggart, the master-at-arms carefully conceals his own motives. His tendency to assume the secret malice on the part of the others motivates him to interpret the actions of others in order to find the villainy concealed within them. In *Billy Budd*, Melville struggles to explain the cause of Claggart's dissipation. John Claggart is a poker faced man, a hypocrite. This kind of wickedness is more dangerous because this type of men hide their madness and ill-will under the mask of respectability. The goodness in Billy is Nature's gift to him, just as the dissension in Claggart is Nature's curse upon him. The vague motive of the depraved master-at-arms destroys Billy's virtue. This is in the words of the narrator, "a depravity according to nature."⁵¹ Kivy notes that to capture Claggart's character, Melville eventually does posit a motive namely envy. Claggart is a special breed of envy, however, no vulgar form of passion. Envy is the vice that

most people struggle to resist in their lives. It is a common nature of human beings to be jealous of what other individual possess and they lack. Achieving those traits, gives them happiness and better feelings. It becomes more dangerous when humans do not succeed to acquire those qualities. Consequently they become the victim of circumstances. It is a common thread in many pieces of literature. John Claggart is the most envious antagonist in literature like Shakespeare's Iago. Like Claggart, Iago nurses a passionate and sustained jealousy and hatred that he successfully hides from the outer world. Envy is definitely a part of psychological make up. Hate and envy come from the depth of their malice. Waggish Claggart is the victim of jealousy and sets a sinister plot against Billy Budd that gradually meets his own death at the hands of Billy Budd and Billy Budd's execution.

Billy's own pitfall and influences that are outside of him and beyond his comprehension, prove the cause of his death. Claggart's conspiracy to trap Billy with an afterguardsman doubles Claggart's wretchedness. Here, the old Dansker shows a great power of perception who had long been in the service on the battleship. Billy Budd on the Bellipotent, had been well acquainted with the old Dansker; and he used to consult the old man about his personal affairs on occasions. When he had first seen Billy Budd on the Bellipotent, he had felt much amused, though his amusement was also tinged with certain grimness. The old Dansker had perceived a sort of incongruity between Billy Budd and the environment in which Billy Budd had now to work. Billy Budd was as exceptionally handsome man, and here he was on a battleship with its terrible, menacing look. Billy was a man possessing simple courage, but lacking in experience. For him, to work upon a battleship meant a great ordeal because on this battleship he would come in

contact with all sorts of seasoned men. However, Billy Budd becomes one of his favorite men on the ship. The old Dansker had the ability to acquire a capacity for judging human actions and motives, because of his intelligence and his vast experience of life. He correctly interprets Claggart's inner state of mind. He abruptly perceives Claggart's secret truculence towards Billy. He rightly judges the man who comes to Billy with a certain position. He surely understands John Claggart's strategy to make the use of one of his corporals to entrap Billy.

Billy has not developed the prudent cynicism of a figure like the Dansker, who is well aware of man's evil inclinations. Billy's clemency has no defense against a mischievous man Claggart, and he cannot perceive malice in master-at-arms' sarcastic comments. Billy's total inexperience of life is here contrasted with an experienced sailor. It needs a certain degree of intelligence in a sailor to be able to form such judgements. Instead of his warning, Billy does not agree with the old Dansker. He sees no connection between Claggart and the afterguardsman's strange behaviour. This incident supplies further evidence to support the view about Claggart's malpractice, and he has no shame in committing evil. In having manipulated this drama, Claggart behaves like a true antagonist. Billy does not see something odd and perplexing in Claggart's attitude towards him. Even he has not had the least suspicion in the case of Claggart's inward belligerence towards him.

Billy's failure to perceive anything wrong in Claggart's attitude is due partly to his own simplicity of nature, and partly to Claggart's capacity to conceal his real feelings. The conscience of John Claggart, the master-at-arms, strengthens and even promotes the action which he takes at a particular time. His conscience serves only as an advocate to favour his natural inclinations.

Here, the novelist seems to be changing the meaning of ‘conscience’. The conscience is the faculty in a human being which urges him always to follow the right path. A man’s conscience may prove ineffective, but it never approves any wrong-doing or any wrong thinking in a man. In the author’s view, Claggart’s conscience is only “the lawyer to his will.”⁵² His conscience is not conscience in its traditional form but the devil’s conscience. Claggart experiences no pangs of the conscience at the time of harbouring ill-will against Billy and plans something hostile strategy against him. He seeks opportunities to put Billy in trouble. He is desperately anxious to bring about some kind of crisis in Billy’s life. Claggart has an untamed instinct which in psychological term is Freudian Id. He fails to control his ideas to ruin Billy’s reputation and amputates Billy of having fostered discontent among the crew and having sown the seeds of mutiny. Billy, overwhelmed by the gravity and the falsity of the charge, gives a severe blow to Claggart who falls down dead. Captain Vere, thereupon decides to hold a court-martial. He plays a crucial role; it is so because Vere determines the fate of Billy. Melville describes him:

“Captain the Honourable Edward Fairfax Vere, to give his full title, was a bachelor of forty or thereabouts, a sailor of distinction even in a time prolific of renowned seaman. Though allied to the higher nobility, his advancement had not been altogether owing to influences connected with that circumstances. He had seen much service, been in various engagements, always acquitting himself as an officer mindful of the welfare of his men, but never tolerating an infraction of discipline; thoroughly versed in the science of his profession, and intrepid to the verge of temerity, though never injudiciously so.”⁵³

Captain Vere is an outstanding naval officer. He is dedicated to his profession. Just as Billy is a man of heart and no intellect, John Claggart, a man of all intellect and no heart, Captain Vere is a man of ideal balance with heart and intellect. His dreaminess and isolation are signs of an inner intellectual life and a keen intelligence. His long experience as a naval officer and the alarming mutinous climate in England and France had strengthened his faith in order. He regards his duty to maintain order as a practical necessity in critical situations. Like Claggart, he is intelligent and his intelligence brings him wisdom rather than Claggart's monomania. Captain Vere symbolizes the conflict between the individual's inner self and the role, society forces to play. Vere likes Billy and dislikes Claggart, and he does not believe Claggart's accusation against Billy. Though, the incident of Billy's prompt action upon Claggart fills Vere with sympathy. Vere's belief in Billy does not allow his conscience to accept Billy's act as a heinous deed. Billy's personality is apparent in the eyes of the Captain. Billy is completely a man of transparent personality. He is always true in saying and doing. Like Claggart, Billy has not had dual personality. Claggart, the master-at arms is a spurious type of character. He says something and does something. Captain Vere compares him to Ananias, a Biblical character, notorious for his falsehood and felonious attitude:

"It is the divine judgement on Ananias!" And then he goes to say vehemently, "Struck dead by an angel of God!"⁵⁴

Apparently, from the very beginning, Captain Vere has been having a very low opinion about the character of Claggart; and this is the reason which confirms to Captain Vere, Billy's fatal blow as an act of divine verdict. For him, Billy is an angel of God who is always in favor of truth. But despite his

certain views, Captain Vere declares Billy a culprit and he passes an order against Billy to sentence him to death. Captain Vere's fatherly attitude towards Billy undergoes a change:

"The father in him, manifested towards Billy thus far in the scene, was replaced by the military disciplinarian."⁵⁵

He shows a great promptitude in taking decision and declares: "Yet the angel must be hang!"⁵⁶ Death is the punishment prescribed by the military law for this kind of offences. Captain Vere, imposes the death sentence on Billy in order to preserve the navy order and the nation. He is Melville's final, mature portrait of the maskless man. Vere discovers the realities and necessities of the situation not as it out to be but as it is, and then he acts to prevent a personal catastrophe from engulfing an entire ship or an entire state. Melville here describes Captain Vere, as the "austere devotee of military duty."⁵⁷ Though, on this particular occasion, Vere experiences the feelings of distress which he might not have normally experienced. Melville, here turns to the problematic situation created by Captain Vere's conscience. He is sandwiched between the mind and the conscience. It is his private conscience which moves in Captain Vere.

Captain Vere has a considerable fund of humanity in his nature. His face wears an expression of extreme agony after his interview with Billy. Lieutenant notices Captain Vere's suffering more than the condemned prisoner himself. Moral responsibilities, moral judgements are the ingredients of moral psychology. In order to predict moral behaviour, one must first examine the moral judgements. A moral verdict can become a moral action by not only being moral, but by also being something the

individual is responsible for doing. This can only be accomplished when a person's identity is centered on morality. In Billy's case the focus is on Captain Vere. He becomes the central figure as he has to decide the fate of Billy in the hands of Vere. Captain Vere falls in a great dilemma. Thus, Captain Vere represents Freudian ego. He struggles with his conscience to decide between the letter of the law and his own view of Billy. He makes a balance between id and super-ego. The necessity of revealing judgment about what is right and wrong, good or bad bothers Vere. On the one hand, his private conscience urges him to forgive Billy and right on the other hand, the military law demands a different decision from him. Captain Vere, ultimately and hard heartedly, puts his sentiments aside and directs the members of the court-martial:

“But for us here, acting not as caustics or moralist, it is a case practical, and under martial law practically to be dealt with.”⁵⁸

He again says,

“Our vowed responsibility is in this: that however pitiless that law may operate in any instances, we nevertheless adhere to it and administer it.”⁵⁹

Thus, Captain Vere briefly sums up the case against Billy. Finally, Billy is hanged but after this last judgement, Captain Vere feels deeply grieved. He was sure about truthfulness of Billy and instead he had to take an unfavourable decision for Billy. He cannot get rid of his feelings of injustice. Melville here compares Captain Vere with Abraham who had to sacrifice his son Isaac in obedience of God's demand, subsequently also Captain Vere continuous to bemoan the fate which has befallen on Billy and for which he has himself been responsible. After some days Vere dies

fighting in a war. At the last moment he is heard murmuring the words “Billy Budd, Billy Budd.”⁶⁰ It is obvious that at that time he was haunted by memories of Billy Budd who had been sacrificed at the altar of military discipline. However, there was no hint of remorse in the manner in which Vere uttered the name of Billy. Evidently, though he was upset for Billy’s execution but he was not sorry at having upheld the military law against the demands of private morality. Vere does not involve in the action until the moment when Claggart appears before him and makes the accusation. From that point, whatever happens lies in Vere’s hands. Throughout the book, the narrator portrays Billy and Claggart as acting out forces beyond their control. He suggests that Billy could not even fathom the hatred that made him act the way that he did. Billy’s simplicity could not understand the web that was being spun around him.

Herman Melville’s characters are his outstanding creation. The characters in his novels *Moby Dick* and *Billy Budd*, have some similarities but different in many ways. Melville has shown some psychological elements such as Obsession, hate, envy and pride in his characters. Captain Ahab and Claggart are obsessed with a single idea of taking down their enemies. Ahab turns into an evil man while Claggart is innately evil. Claggart’s fundamental evil does not rest in him. He becomes enslave to his own evil ideas when he finally prepares himself to ruin Billy condemning him with lies to his face. Billy has no other idea to defend himself except a deadly blow towards Claggart. The master-at-arms, Claggart dies. In *Moby Dick*, the very thing that contributes to Ahab’s psychotic delusion is his obsession to seek revenge. He stabs the White Whale with his harpoon, claiming victory over the Whale. Thus he becomes entangle up in his own rope and

plunges to death into the unfathomable sea. However, Ahab and Claggart find their own peace of mind in this act and without realizing its consequences they create meaningless lives for themselves. The intensity of hate and envy drive them into a senseless attempt. Moby Dick the White Whale and Billy Budd, the sailor, both exhibit qualities of magnificence and strength that Ahab and Claggart do not possess. Claggart feels jealous of Billy's good looks while Ahab hates the monstrous who has snatched his freedom and mastery over his world. Ahab's desire to reach the White Whale becomes so intense that he tries to get into the mind of the Whale. He constantly follows his antagonist and takes his job seriously. Ahab makes strategy before his crew members who also join Ahab in his mad pursuit. He openly displays his purpose to kill the White Whale that has shattered his life. Claggart in Billy Budd, do not have clear ideas. He has a mysterious nature. Melville himself had a bit of mystery in his own personal character and he shows this quality through his character such as Claggart. Herman Melville had a strong desire to reveal the complexities of human life, so mystery was often a trait of his characters. Throughout the story, Melville does not give any clue about Claggart's thinking, and thus creates an air of mystery about his character. Besides Melville's mysterious nature, his stubbornness comes out through his character of Captain Vere in Billy Budd. Melville's career had its ups and downs, and his works were not always praised, even though, he continue to write the books that he wanted to write. Captain Vere's decision against Billy shows his resolute nature.

The portrayal of Herman Melville's characters proves him as one of the most well known writers of the nineteenth century America. His works show a super insight of human nature. His main interest in his novels is

psychological, an insight into and an understanding of characters by means of analysis. His main characters are often tormented and have preoccupation with human fate. Herman Melville's exploration of psychological themes foreshadows the twentieth century literary concern which gives Melville a special place in American literature.

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Religious, Social and Mythological Aspects

Herman Melville's novels are based on his direct experiences of life in its multifaceted hues. His writings deal mainly with social, moral and religious issues which are the evidence of his restlessness, his search for some kind of truth in human affairs. His works are regarded as the works of almost religious significance, in which Melville raises important questions about the existence of the individual and society, about truth and justice. The individual is the centre of his concern. He focuses upon man's response to his situation in the universe, where evil is omnipresent and where man by the involuntary act of birth becomes inevitably involved with evil. Through his fictional characters, Melville attempts to explore the reality in life.

Religious and Social Milieu of Melville's Era:

Herman Melville's writings suggest a strong spirituality. During the early nineteenth century, two major religious forces were the cause of constant debate. On the one hand, there were the Unitarians who belonged to a Christian church which rejected the doctrine of Trinity-the union of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit in one God. Instead, they believed that god is only one person. On the other hand, conservative Calvinists opposed the Unitarians, who held a different interpretation of the moral relation between God and man. The Unitarians thought that God had endowed man with inherent rights that divine providence would not violate, whereas the Calvinists believed in the predestination and God's particular selection of each individual. They thought that the Almighty ordained all evils and

sufferings of life because the innate depravity of the human race had displeased him that took its curse with the fall of Adam.

This Reformation dogma of the French protestant John Calvin, also affected Melville in his youth. Herman Melville was brought up in Calvinist household and his parents were the members of Dutch Reformed Church in America. Melville supposedly believed in the Calvinist theory until he left home. His experiences as a sailor offered him sufficient scope to develop a systematic knowledge of the other world. As a consequence, he began to doubt his Calvinist heritage, yearning for a God that was more benign and private source of truth. The struggle between his beliefs and doubts increased regularly, yet he never really refused the existence of God of Calvin. Instead, in his view, God was responsible for all the evil of the world and he accused Him for his brutality, animosity and the rigid obedience, he demanded from mankind. This caused so many human beings to be resisted. He finally recognized the failure of providence in his own family tradition, and came to invert the principle of the depraved mankind to his new concept of the depraved original sin.

Melville's life at home was not enjoyable. He left home and came to the sea where he realized that the social customs, he had seen at home, were not the universal truths. Melville was also a mordant social critic and philosopher who understood the vagueness of life and defined the individual's relation to society and universe. Among the nineteenth century narrators of the sea, Herman Melville understood best the social and symbolic importance of the ship board life. His own experiences as a sailor aboard the merchant ship, a Pacific-bound whaler, and a navy frigate, provided him a detailed description of early shipboard life in the Americans. As a writer of

philosophic romances, he often used maritime settings to proffer the hackneyed idea of the ship-as-world and the world-as-ship. Melville's ships are floating microcosm with microcosmic meanings. The Pequod, of course, is a special kind of world, dominated by Ahab and takes many of its qualities from the man who makes its law and commands. Melville's era was an era of expansion. The Great West was opened up, especially after the gold rush in California in 1849. Americans were ready to fight over a dispute concerning Oregon's border. The famous slogan by Horace Greecely, "Go West, young man" ¹ was ringing in all ears. The voyage of the Pequod represents, in a way, this spirit of expansion. The American whaling fleet was sweeping the seas, defying all competition in front of it. But there was a suspicion that expansion might be attended with certain evils. It was an era of radical individualism. The Americans prided themselves on the nation's independence. The Scout, the Frontiersman, the Settlers, and later on business entrepreneur and the self made man all contributed to the formation of the concept that rugged individualism was almost exclusively an American trait. This period placed a high value on industriousness. Industry was becoming the American way of life, and hard work was the key to success for every self made man. The whale ship is a kind of great machine. By the early 1800s, the whaling ships were on long voyages from New England to the Pacific Ocean in search of sperm whales. A number of seaports in New England supported the whaling industry, but one town, New Bedford, Massachusetts, was known as the world's center of whaling. Of many whaling ships on the world's oceans in the 1840s, called New Bedford, built large house in the best neighborhoods. New Bedford was the city that lit the life of world. Life aboard a whaling ship was not very easy, yet the dangerous work inspired thousands of men to leave their homes and

to take risk of their lives. It was adventurous and financially beneficial. The world of whaling had its own self-contained society.

The Golden Age of American whaling extended into the 1850s, and whaling with all its hardships and peculiar customs, was immortalized. Melville himself had sailed on a whaling ship the *Acushnet*. Melville perhaps suggests that an attempt to subdue nature through technology, can bring about success, but at the same time can be dangerous and tends to dehumanize man.

Mythological Elements :

The religious and social aspects in Melville's novels are extremely important. The novel *Moby Dick*, on the one hand, is about whaling and the industry, and on the other hand, the book is about the spiritual search, the search for religious understanding, and the struggle for religious enlightenment that underlines the meaning of the work. In the beginning of the novel, Father Mapple gives a sermon which creates a religious atmosphere with a particular emphasis on pain and suffering which leads to redemption. Melville relates spirituality to intense struggle and thus gives the voyage a religious significance in the novel. Ishmael's first encounter with the ideals of the man-God relationship in the novel occurs at the Whale's Chapel where Father Mapple, a devote Christian, delivers a sermon based on the biblical story of Jonah and the Whale. He states,

“are hard for us to do-remember that and hence, he oftener commands us than endeavors to persuade. And if we obey God, we must disobey ourselves; it is in this disobeying ourselves, wherein the hardness of obeying God consists.”²

The idea that God requires the sacrifice of self is consistent in the novel. It also helps to create an atmosphere of religious fear and has a direct relevance to the life of sailors who go on a whaling voyage. This contention emphasizes Ishmael's purpose to prepare readers for the tragic end of Ahab. Ahab deserves the punishment because he always willfully obeys the promptings of his self and disobeys God in the story. This contention conforms to the Calvinists theory of Predestination. His sermon has a great value to human beings that, who disobeys God's command, must come to grief. Some critics say that however, the story of Jonah is not entirely irrelevant to the main action of the novel. Jonah defied God and a whale swallowed him. But Jonah then repented of his folly and the whale vomited him out. Ahab also goes against the will of God but he does not regret, hence, he is punished and ruined in the end.

The use of the Christian myth, the Bible, exposes Melville's faith in religion and the wisdom and knowledge that he possessed. The Bible was an inescapable part of his education. It was Melville's one of the best and earliest sources. Herman Melville was raised in a pious middle class perception of religion, and broadened his horizon of knowledge about the Bible and its reception throughout the countries, through the study of Biblical commentaries. No other major writer of Melville's time makes such extensive use of scripture. Neither Emerson nor Hawthorne, who grew up in a solemn Calvinist family, made a comparable effect to use the Bible as a source. They did not imply incomparable consequences for the world.

In the course of his study of the Bible, Melville must have taken notice of the literacy and religious revaluation of the Bible that was typical for his time. He was aware of the fact that from the middle of the nineteenth

century, the social and natural science, even the Biblical criticism itself, were taking increasingly secular approaches to the scriptures. Herman Melville's acquaintance with the Bible, which led him from intensive research to personal immersion, shows that Melville, despite his temporary emotional involvement, read it like other books, searching for its significance for himself personally.

In *Moby Dick*, Ishmael represents the religious mind of Melville upholding all the virtues of religion. Ishmael is very different from all of the sailors on the ship. In the book of Genesis Ishmael was an outcast; he was the biblical son of Abraham and his servant Hagar. He was disowned in favour of Isaac, Abraham's son with his wife Sarah. An angel prophesied to Hagar that his hand will be against everyman and every man's hand will be against him. Here, Ishmael absolutely differs from the sailors. He is looked down from the beginning because he does not have the history that other people on the ship have as sailors. Ishmael's friendship with Queequeg, a tattooed cannibal, affects his views about religion. Ishmael, like Melville, is a Presbyterian who does not believe in worshipping idols. Queequeg worships a small black idol and says Ishmael to participate in the idol-worship. He views that worship is simply doing the will of God. Ishmael wonders whether he should join his new friend in such worship, even though he is a Christian. He reasons as follows:

“I was a good Christian; born and bred in the bosom of the infallible Presbyterian Church. How then could I unite with this wild idolater in worshipping his piece of wood? thought I. But what is worship - to do the will of God- that is worship. And what is the will of God?- to do my fellow man what I would have my fellow man to do to me- that is the will of God.

Now Queequeg is my fellow man. And what do I wish that this Queequeg would do to me? Why, unite with me in my particular Presbyterian form of worship. Consequently, I must then unite with him in his; ergo, I must turn idolater.”³

Ishmael agrees that in order to be a good Christian, he must turn idolater. He must turn to the genuine spirit of Christianity rather than following the dry letter of the law. He must show love and respect for Queequeg, treating him as a worthy fellow human being, another creature of God. This conveys the message that the structure of Church is secondary to the personal understanding of God’s will.

Melville was not dogmatic about any particular religion and creed. Ishmael, the religious mind of Melville, reflects the liberal attitude of the author towards religion. In his view “a man can be honest in any sort of skin.”⁴ This is the reason that he does not hesitate to share the bed with Queequeg, who becomes his bosom friend.

Ishmael says, “I cherish the greatest respect towards everybody’s religious obligations, never mind how comical, and could not find in my heart to undervalue even a congregation of ants worshipping a toad stool...”⁵

He further claims that “good Presbyterian Christians should never consider themselves superior to pagans and what not because of their half-crazy belief; calling anyone a pagan denies his own claim of unquestioning acceptance. Any faith is fine as long as it does not torment him or become really frantic.”⁶

For Melville tolerance of other religion is a good thing. Ishmael becomes somewhat impatient with Queequeg’s queer notions about Yojo and

Ramadan, his practice of unmovable posture and fasting. Ishmael instead of being a Christian, learns to tolerate Queequeg's Ramadan and his idol 'Yojo.' Though he fails to realize adequately the significance of fasting and other rituals by a non-Christian, yet it is Ishmael's tolerance and his friendship with pagan Queequeg that saves his life. In contrast, Ahab has not had tolerance for religion. He is absolutely different from Ishmael. Ahab is engaged in a form of self-idolatry that makes him far more irreligious, far less a true Christian than Ishmael.

Melville compares the biblical Ahab to Captain Ahab in *Moby Dick*. King Ahab worshipped false gods and Ishmael remembers him as 'Vile and wicked. Melville's Ahab is also an enemy of the godhead. He is infidel, impious and diabolic. Captain Ahab adores the sun and the stars, invokes fire and tempers his harpoon in pagan blood. However, the American whaling captain differs from his biblical counterpart in that, it is his own choice that he curses God and becomes an enemy of God. False prophecy destroyed King Ahab. Captain Ahab disregarded all creation, the pleadings of Starbuck, and the calamities which had struck the ships. He heads only Fedallah. To heighten the devilishness of Ahab, Ishmael – Melville has deliberately associated him with Fedallah who serves as the evil spirit of Ahab. Ishmael takes Fedallah as a part of Ahab's self; "As if in the parsee, Ahab saw his fore thrown shadow."⁷ He clears that Ahab is not Ahab without Fedallah. Fedallah in Arabic means 'the sacrifice of god.' Ahab in this sense is the false prophet, the destroying angel sent to kill Ahab. If Ahab is the adversary of God, *Moby Dick*, the White Whale is the God incarnate.

Melville makes extensive use of the Christian and the Hindu Mythology to enhance the religious importance in the novel. The influence of Hindu myth

becomes very clear when he describe the story of Vishnu to present “the true form of the Whale.”

“Now, by all odds, the most ancient extant portrait anyways purporting to be the whale’s, is to be found in the famous cavern-pagoda of Elephanta, in India. The Brahmins maintain that in the almost endless sculptures of that immemorial pagoda, all the trades and pursuits, every conceivable avocation of man, were prefigured ages before any of them actually came into being. No wonder then, that in some sort our noble profession of whaling should have been there shadowed forth. The Hindo whale referred to occurs in a separate department of the wall, depicting the incarnation of Vishnu in the form of Leviathan, learnedly known as the Matse Avatar.”⁸

In addition to this reference to the portrait of the Hindu leviathan, Melville narrates the story of the “Matse Avatar” as:

That wondrous oriental story is now to be rehearsed from the Shaster, which gives us the dread Vishnoo, one of the three persons in the godhead of the Hindoos; gives us this divine Vishnoo himself for our Lord;- Vishnoo, who, by the first of his ten earthly incarnations, has for ever set apart and sanctified the whale. When Brahma, or the God of Gods, saith the Shaster, resolved to recreate the world after one of its periodical dissolutions, he gave birth to Vishnoo, to preside over the work; but the Vedas, or mystical books, whose perusal would seem to have been indispensible to Vishnoo before beginning the creation, and which therefore must have contained something in the shape of practical hints to young architects, these Vedas were lying at the bottom of the waters; so Vishnoo became incarnate in a whale, and sounding down in him to the uttermost depths, rescued the sacred volumes.

Was not this Vishnoo a whaleman, then? even as a man who rides a horse is called a horseman? ⁹

Melville's masterpiece *Moby Dick*, in Hindu light, establishes Moby Dick, the giant sized Whale as Maste Avatar and Ahab as the traditional adversary of the avatar worshipping the God through defiance. The *Shrimad Bhagavatm* recognizes 'Virodhibhav', defiance, as the most powerful means to attain 'Moksha.' The third canto of *Shrimad Bhagavatm* narrates the story of Jay and Vijay, the two gate keepers of Lord Vishnu, who were banished from the heaven to be born on earth and the Lord blessed them to be born as 'Asuras', demons worshiping Him with intense Virodhibhava to expedite their reunion with him. The *Shrimad Bhagavat* accounts in all consuming 'Bhava' whether love or hate, as means to attain Moksha, the ultimate bliss. However, it recognizes 'Virodhibhav' as the shortest way to Moksh. It says, "By devotional service one cannot achieve such intense absorption in thought of the supreme personality of Godhead as one can through enmity toward him." ¹⁰

Ravana, Kansa, Shishupal were such traditional adversaries, 'asuras', who worshipped the Lord through all pervading defiance.

Captain Ahab's antagonism for Moby Dick is not an ordinary antagonism of a person to a creature who unlimbed him. The relationship between Ahab and Moby Dick, which has remained curious riddle for critics, in Hindu 'Virodhabhakti' is worship through defiance.

Herman Melville delineates the stories from the Hindu myth, yet these stories do not match with the actual stories.

In the chapter ‘The honor and glory of Whaling’, Melville describes Brahma as the creator of Vishnu and Vishnu as the God of creation. It says ,
“When Brahma, or the God of Gods, Saith Shaster, resolved to recreate the world after one of its periodical dissolutions, he gave birth to Vishnu, to preside over the work.”¹¹

But according to Hindu scripture, Lord Vishnu is the creator of Brahma. Though called the ‘self- born’ Brahma originated in the lotus flower which sprouted out of Lord Vishnu’s naval. The Shrimad Bhagvatam describes the origin of Brahma as:

“Piercing through this sum of the fruitive activity of the living entities it took the shape of the bud of flower generated from the personality of Vishnu. Into that universal lotus flower Lord Vishnu personally entered as the supreme soul and when it was thus impregnated the personality of the Vedic wisdom, whom we call the self- born was originated.”¹²

Moreover, according to Hindu scripture, it is Brahma who presides over the task of creation. Melville has presented Moby Dick as Maste Avatar, an incarnation of God, but it is not so. In fact, Vishnu’s Maste Avatar was meant for rescuing the Vedas, but in this novel, the Whale does not serve the purpose. He does not save his own species from destruction. He is very much conscious of his own self and always tries to defend himself against the enemies and to save himself from extinction, unlike he does not pursue his opponents but his enemies pursue him. He does not attack his pursuers but counter-attacks. Thus the elements of Hindu mythology are justified or not justified at the same time.

Through the character of Ahab, Melville shows his deep disillusionment with God, and his skepticism. The critics think that Melville felt that God was unjust in allowing so much suffering and evil in this world, and not permitting human will and reason to succeed. This conception of God, says, Murray, reigns over Moby Dick. By the time, Moby Dick was written, Melville's knowledge of evil in the world had increased to such an extent, that, instead of loving God he turned skeptically to hating God. According to Thompson, the author of Moby Dick was compelled to project the story of his own immediate disillusionment into the story of Ahab's voyage, and in this way to adopt symbolic means is to scold and rebuke God.

William Braswell says that Melville's inability to account for evil had changed the Christian concept of a wholly benevolent deity. For Melville, it was wrong and so Melville could give full artistic expression to his heretical views without suffering any pangs of his conscience. His rage represents the doubts which he felt about the concept of divine goodness and about the validity of a Christian submissiveness to God. Each shows his hate to the prevalent protestant alternatives of his day.

Melville has presented Ahab as the opponent of God. Ahab rejects all religion. His monomaniacal quest has replaced his need for any religion and along with it, has also taken his ability to effectively adjust into society. This continually shows himself to be a man concerned with a single unchanged mission. The more he comes closer to reaching Moby Dick, the more he goes away from mankind. During his journey on the sea, Ahab meets with many other whaling ships which are independent of other societies and the other worlds, yet the Pequod has some relations with these other worlds. However independent one's life may be, one cannot escape entirely from

relation and communication with others. This is so because individuality itself may require some relation in order to put forth and maintain its essential independence. The loneliness of the individual human being oppressed Melville. Throughout his books, Ahab's companionship is only with the ship crew at sea, never with either a man or woman on shore. And for Melville, this loneliness was an essential aspect of man's place in the scheme of things; man was doomed to fight against implacable cosmic forces and to be defeated. Loneliness seems to be the main concern of modern life and literature. The mariner shuts himself from beauty through a lavish act of violence. This results in his alienation from God, nature and society.

Though Ahab is cut off from the society on land, but on the sea he has his floating society where he has social meetings with ship captains. Melville defines a "social meeting of two or more Whale ships, generally on a cruising ground; when, after exchanging hails, they exchange visits by boats crews." ¹³ This meeting occurs only on 'Whale Ships' not on all ships.

The sociality of these meetings, in which captains and their men "have all sorts of dear domestic things to talk about", ¹⁴ discriminates the behavior of captain Ahab, and confirms that he is unquestionably exceptional and unsociable. It is important because it shows that Ahab's perseverance to find and kill the White Whale is 'intense' and demonstrates him completely unable to relate to mankind. Ahab, by keeping himself away from the rest of society, attempts to create justice for his personal loss of a leg to the White Whale on a previous expedition, and fights against the injustice, he sees in the uncountable forces that surround him.

On the sea, Ahab, first of all, meets with the whaling ship Albatross, Melville intensifies the event in which the Pequod becomes unsuccessful to communicate with the Albatross. Albatross's captain drops his trumpet his only tool for communication,

“putting his trumpet to his mouth, it somehow fell from his hand into the sea; and the wind now rising amain, he is vain strove to make himself heard without.”¹⁵

By dropping the trumpet, the Albatross captain breaks a mechanical bond. When the two captains become unable to communicate, this once again breaks a social bond. When communication with the Albatross fails, Ahab seems to be eager to catch the sight of the Whale. He is so curious about the Albatross possible information concerning Moby Dick that he wishes to travel to the other ship in order to find it out. This shows the beginning of Ahab's obsession.

The pequod meets with another ship the Jeroboam. This meeting illustrates Ahab's increasing inability to interact with other men. He only wants to know whether the Jeroboam's captain has seen Moby Dick. This indicates the gradual loss of his ability to relate rationally to his fellow man. Its forcefulness is also suggestive of his growing concern. He becomes reckless with the desire to search and destroy the Whale that finally engulfs him.

The last meeting with the Rachel shows Ahab's extreme selfishness as it emerges from self destruction. Ahab shows his true self as he cruelly denies the Rachel's needs in order to persuade his fixation with Moby Dick. The Rachel's captain Gardiner boards the Pequod in order to ask Ahab to assist him in finding a lost whaling board, a vessel containing men's own son.

Captain Gardiner's act of saving a life is positive. In trying to find the lost whaling board, he has committed himself to giving, rather than taking life. In sharp contrast, Ahab's desire exists entirely for the destruction of a life. When he sees the need to save rather than destroy, Ahab cries, "touch not a rope, yarn; then in a voice that prolonging moulded every word kept in Gardiner, I will not do it. Even now I lost time." ¹⁶ The devastated captain requests the Pequod's assistance in searching of the boy, but Ahab focuses only on his battles plan, and does not show any societal concerns. He clearly denies his friend for any help, "God bless ye, man, and may I forgive myself but I must go."¹⁷

Ahab's refusal to Gardiner for any help shows Ahab's lack of empathy and humanity for his fellowman. His need to kill is of greater importance than the chance to save lives. He has destroyed any last hope of connecting to anyone and has doomed himself to an isolated death at sea.

Moby Dick portrays Melville as a rebel against the inhumanity of man to man in society. In this work, Melville rejects the established social values and the religion in favour of total freedom. In his last novel Billy Budd, though he appears as a rebel, there is no total rejection of society and of religion. He accepts the necessity of peace and harmony based on established laws. It is not the defiant Melville of his youth, but a mature and reconciled Melville. Joseph Schiffman says,

"The aged Melville like the Dansker of Billy Budd, never interferes in aught and never gives advice. He wrote Billy Budd ,his last work without interjecting moral pronouncements; for this reason the story is usually taken

as Melville's 'Testament of Acceptance' or, in the latest and most extended criticism as Melville's Recognition of Necessity." ¹⁸

In *Billy Budd*, a grown writer has developed a "new way of fighting against injustice-irony, which is a subtler and fine device for the fiction writer than headlong attack on social abuses." ¹⁹

In this aspect *Billy Budd* is different from other Melville's stories. In *Billy Budd*, Melville has brought myth into the contemporary life and has elevated that life into a myth. *Billy Budd* "the work is simply a retelling of Christ's story in modern dress." ²⁰ He represents the origin of myth, which mirrors man's tragic situation. Melville does not present *Billy Budd* as a conventional hero. He is a symbolic character, an ironic figure. Melville, through such characters of captain Vere and Billy, suggests an optimism and acceptance of fate and at the same time, speaks against the evils inherent in the society in which Billy lives. Melville uses Biblical elements to show his religious views and makes Billy larger than life character, a man above man, almost a mythical figure. Billy is 'Welkin eyed', a 'jewel', 'an angel'. He is Adam before the fall. In order to show Billy's innocence and nobility, Melville uses similarities with Adam and tries to flesh out Billy's mental characteristics. He is a young man without "any trace of wisdom of the serpent." ²¹ Captain Vere remarks to stress Billy's lack of knowledge about evil "in the nude might have posed for a state of young Adam before the fall." ²²

Through unquestionable parallels with Adam, the writer makes Billy a representative of humanity before its fall by eating of the apple from the tree of knowledge. Billy not only shares natural innocence with Adam, but he

also shares Adam's nemesis –the serpent. The master- at-arms in this relationship is a demon.

“ Upon any abrupt unforeseen encounter a red light would flash forth from his eye like a spark from an anvil in a dusky smithy” ²³

Although physically strong than Claggart , Billy cannot avoid the trap that only a depraved intelligence could against him. Melville had a special interest in religion and he portrays Claggart though intellectual and civilized, but naturally depraved. Melville refers to John Calvin's theory of “Natural Depravity” according to whom all human nature is depraved and fallen because Adam, the first man sinned against God. The haunting blackness of Hawthorn's tales had fascinated Melville, which was a revelation of human nature. Melville was certain that this great power of blackness in Hawthorne is derived from the Calvinistic sense of Innate Depravity and Original Sin. Melville says,

“Natural Depravity is the real motivating force within Claggart. It has nothing to do with the brutish or the sordid or the sensual but it is dominated by intellectuality and overruling prides which transcend views or small sins.” ²⁴

Being naturally depraved Claggart does not see anything good in nature. He uses reason to bad end. He blames Billy of spreading mutiny among the sailors. Billy has goodness and virtues, but he also has an imperfection, a draw back like any other man. In times of stress, he loses his power of speech, and anxiety finds its out let in the form of physical violence. Billy, like Claggart, is also depraved to some extent.

“Melville like Hawthorne believed that human nature can be more truly represented in the wishes of its heart, than in its actions. It contains both good and evil, vice and virtue than we witness in the other world.”²⁵

Billy's blow on Claggart symbolizes man's attempt to obliterate natural depravity by a simple act of violence. Billy's stammer depicts him as a weak person and symbolizes his inability to communicate with the society. In society, it is the physical strength that fights the battles, not the natural forces. Billy's natural virtues and innocence protect him. Unable to speak in the moments of stress, he defends himself only through his physical force. Claggart provokes Billy, who strikes the evil incarnate, a senior official, consequently Claggart dies. The lack of civilized weapon of speech leads to Billy's downfall and thus he is doomed to suffer for that sin.

Billy is also an angel of God who has struck down the devil. Melville here introduces the trial as was in the case of Jesus. The mythical elements become strong when Captain Vere calls Billy into his cabin to make the matter apparent. Billy does not utter a word in self-defense just as Jesus remained silent before the priests and elders. He is tongue-tied, though he makes agonized efforts to speak, and defend himself. Melville differentiates between the two aspects of Billy's crime that is his innocence and guilt. According to one aspect, he is not guilty but in other he is. He is innocent as far as his intentions are concerned, but he is guilty of his action. Law of nature of heavenly justice offers no check to evil and support to goodness in times of crisis. Nature does not stop Claggart of falsely accusing Billy nor does it stop Billy from striking out at his superior. Both react naturally in their own ways. Natural justice also includes the guilt or innocence of mind. Billy did not intend to kill Claggart. When captain vere asks him, he says,

“There was no malice between us.....I am sorry that he is dead. I did not mean to kill him.”²⁶

He is innocent in what he is, not in what he has done. Billy, unable to bring his speech organs to work and simple frustration, aims a severe punch at Claggart. Captain Vere knows the reality behind his action. He says

“I believe you, my man; yet to maintain discipline on his ship, which symbolized the society, he has to punish Billy. What has a military court to do with it?..... the prisoner’s deed with that alone we have to do.”²⁷

Billy’s blow is not logical, but it is an impulsive action, without any thought of consequence. Billy has to be hanged because his blow is a crime and therefore unpardonable. Vere explains to the Drumhead court two kinds of justice- justice of nature and the justice of society. Billy is innocent because nature looks on man’s deeds. Though Vere knows the bitterness of the military law, but he has to adhere to it. He thinks of the justice which is appropriate in society.

“The mutiny act made no exceptions for the palliatry circumstances. The officers responsibility is to adhere to it and administers it. The exceptional in the matter moves the heart and conscience but it cannot move the without the judge.”²⁸

Human law and the law of nature are different. Human law looks primarily on man’s action, on the reality that is present. It is practical; vere says, “It is a case practical, and under martial law practically to be dealt with.”²⁹

Melville feels at the same time that the law should look beyond the action.

“Harsh thought it may be, we must be judged by a universe under than the one in which our actions are played out the act of Billy, must be judged from outside his struggle against suffocation.”³⁰

In human law necessity of the action is not the fact which is taken into consideration. What is considered is what has happened. Thus Vere suggests the call of the nature and gives his practical judgment.

Charles A. Reich says, “To preserve one’s life is generally speaking a duty, but it may be Plaines and highest duty to sacrifice it.”³¹

However reluctant he is, but in order to presence order and peace, Vere has to be practical and suppress his emotion and compassions. In Billy’s case where compromise is impossible and captain Vere is forced to submit to the imperations of law. It is inescapable.

“Melville has shown us a law whose logic is impeccable and yet which makes us feel that this law has terrible short comings to what is wrong with the law? What is wrong with the society the law progenitor?. It is these questions that the novel ultimately asks.”³²

Melville questions vere’s motives at the same time answers for his actions,

“Though this not perfect, yet it has to be practiced for the common good of all. He suggests that it is wrong to submit to unjust law. Those in power such as Vere, should do all they can to resist the evil inherent in an institution or government. All men are flamed but not all men are depraved. We must not let these institutions designed to control evil, destroy the good. Man should not resign himself to the presence of evil but must strive against it.”³³
Ultimately Vere declares Billy’s execution.

“Billy’s execution is thus an image of society’s failure to make its actions fit its understanding. Everyone knows that Billy is not innocent but no one knows how to deal with the transgression. The law designed to be the protector of man’s highest aspirations against the savagery of nature has become instead the irrational destroyer of man.”³⁴

Billy is presented less as a rational being than as a child of nature. The interrogation between captain Vere and Billy is very significant in the social and religious context. This makes a clear reference between the sacrifice Billy has to make and the sacrifice that Jesus was required to make. From the beginning of the novel, there are certain aspects of Billy’s characters that fit in with the Biblical standard, but do not especially refer to Adam. The previous captain of the Rights of man declares Billy as a peacemaker. This not only helps to describe his enjoyable presence among the sailors but also foreshadows a parallel between Billy and Jesus. In this case, Melville compares Vere to Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor of Judea, at the time of Christ’s crucifixion. Pilate believed in the innocence of Jesus Christ but was afraid to save him. Like Pilate Vere condemns the innocent man to a disgraceful death but unlike Pilate, he does not wash his hand, but courageously assumes the bitterness of the execution upon himself.

In *Billy Budd*, Melville’s concern is the problem of man in society. His solution is to make Vere’s behave as a social being but pay a penalty by suffering the private agonies of his private conscience. Even though Vere has condemned Billy to death, he is haunted by his conscience and he dies with Billy’s name on his lips. Captain Vere’s desire to enact justice twists itself in to injustice. Such a corruption of intentions reveals the fallen state of man who has knowledge of evil. Herman Melville borrows from the

Christian doctrine that men in general are in fallen state that is the result of Adam's sin and the idea of 'noble savage' from Rousseau, a French philosopher who argued civilization which have temped man that Man in his natural or simple state was free of sin. Thus, Bully is Adam before the serpent unlike these fallen men whose lives are corrupted by life in the cities.

Billy does not show any emotion when he is condemned to death, instead he accepts his death in the world, in which he finds himself unfit. The execution of Billy is highly religious. When he is hanged, the vapory fleece, hanging low in the eastern sky is shot through with a soft glory of the Lamb of God. As Billy ascends the gallous, he receives the fully rosy light of the down. This clearly suggests the crucifixion, with its reference to the Lamb of God. The phrase 'Lamb of god' refers to Jesus who was often called as the lamb because of his gentleness, meekness and humility. Here the word ascend is significant. As the Christ ascended to heaven on the third day after his crucifixion so Billy also ascends to heaven when the soldiers defy him, "Billy in the Darbies."³⁵ This ends the book. He represents Melville's final expression of faith in Man- Kind- Faith. The nature also mourns over Billy's death. The birds scream to the spot where Billy's body is immersed, keep circling round that spot, symbolizes nature's requiem over Billy's death. The death of Billy is one of the crucial scenes in terms of religion. His death presents a paradox. He dies yet he is reborn. Descending he ascends.

Billy Budd is regarded as Melville's attempt to justify God's ways to men. The will of God should accept the will of God even though it may be contrary to man's will. While giving out judgment, Vere says that he is not a free agent, "he is responsible for carrying out the higher law."³⁶ Law which

demands complete justice, the divine law. It seems that even Billy blesses him for such a justice like Adam, who blessed god for punishing him in Milton's Paradise Lost.

Melville's reconciliation in this social and religious context, presents that the laws which cling in this majesty's Navy, are in fact symbolic of universe. Man must follow the law whether it is contrary to his personal opinion. The "Indomitable" proves its loyalty to the king by observing his rigid laws and thus defeating the Enemy's ship. This loyalty symbolizes Melville's realization that man must accept his position in the universal scheme of god. Richard Chase says,

"In Billy Budd, that is, fallen humanity is reborn in the Christ-like hero, and for the first time an American fiction has entered, once and for all, into the dimension of myth."³⁷

The story of Billy Budd is the myth of the death and rebirth of the divine hero. It is a narrative representation of some universal truth or law. Melville's thinking has not changed but it is the style of his writing that has changed. It is an unchanged Melville, who earlier fought and rebelled against the evil and practices of society and Melville of Billy Budd has become reconciled. Sciffman says,

"Gone are the mad tossing of the Pequod, moored are the home-sick soliloquies of Starbuck, in ashes are the beautiful wild fires of the 'hot-old man Ahab' the aged Melville became reconciled."³⁸

Melville's philosophy in it has grown from that of rebellion to acceptance. Billy Budd is the product of aged serenity. Its author has unmistakably got beyond his anger regarding man's helplessness, or he has found a key to it in

the form of acceptance of life. Melville favours the idea and mystery of Christianity, and the thoughts and views around it. He seems unwilling to totally believe the ideas of Christianity yet cannot fully reject the tradition behind it. It is not clear to tell whether Melville had a stronger condemnation for practical society or for Christianity. Melville sided with the practical society than that of Christianity as it really is.

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CONFLICT BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL

Herman Melville, in his novels, describes the wondrous and distant lands filled with strange and pagan people. Alongside his observations of life in the South Seas, in all its varied facets, appears an account of the life of a roving sailor both as a seaman at sea and as a vagabond at his ease in the world at large. His characters go on journeys either realistic or purely imaginative. In Melville's novels, the travelers are in search of fulfillment, a quest in which some succeed and while others fail. His characters feel satisfied in a limited world but as they enter into an open world, the conflict and fragmentation arise. The characters get a chance to emerge from the shell of the inner world and become part of it or at least interact with the outer world. Moral realism, society and religion also exist in his novels so there is a conflict between the inner self and the outer world as the characters get involved in the maze of good and evil.

Since the origin of the world, the two opposing forces of good and evil have been at war with each other. This is apparent in the subject of many works in literature, drama and poetry. The battle between good and evil is one of the most primitive feelings within human beings. Human beings face various small and big incidents in their lifetime that are based either on good or bad. They find themselves entangled in the thread of good and evil.

The Source of Evil in Herman Melville's Works:

Herman Melville had a crucial period in his early age and after coming to the ship, he once again observed the human sufferings. This was sufficient to disillusion him with the tyranny and brutality and to give him a first-hand acquaintance with the good and evil in the world. Melville's personal experiences are the major source of his knowledge of evil. During his voyage, Melville becomes captive among the Typees, a tribe of Polynesians-cannibals, though noble savages. Melville admires them for their beauty, happiness, and utter freedom from corruption of the Western civilization. He feels as if he were in the paradise, he was looking for. But under the sunny, tropical surface of Typee valley, he finds the evil lurking in the form of violence, the cannibalism and the dark mysterious rites. Herman Melville was the first person to have the knowledge of the wild barbarians behind their savagery. They seem to be private and even fiercely reserved in their evil practices. Superficially, they appear as happy-go-lucky men but internally they involve in hateful deeds. The good looking appearance of the Typees and the evil behind it, creates confusion for the hero and he cannot understand the secret of evil of the cannibalism. Though the people of the Typee valley seem to be innocent and kindhearted but the food habits and rituals make them evil. At this time, Melville remains unconscious of his own growing awareness of evil.

After spending some days as a captive among Typees, Melville saves himself and becomes prepare for another voyage from Honolulu to Boston, aboard the American naval ship, the United States. Here , on the ship, he realizes another evil of the brutal punishment of flogging. This time he

reminds the wickedness of the world “The pent-up wickedness of five hundred men nearly overcame all my previous theories’.¹

The World in a Man- of- War, presents the whole world in miniature. The battleship Neversink is a kind of microcosm of the universe. Melville turns to a more conventional narrative. He has a speculative eye on the White Jacket’s confrontation with the evil of the world. On the man-of –war world, the greatest unworthy treatment was the punishment of flogging. The sailors on the ship generally suffered from this evil. The worst practice of the flogging was “Flogging through the fleet”² in which the officers, the cruel men carried the sailor from one ship to another ship in order to flog before all the crews. This certain atrociousness in this man-of-war world was common to the sailors. Through this horrible act, the tyrant officers wanted to spread fear among sailors and to enhance the evil and suffering on the ship. The practice of flogging was the greatest evil of Melville’s time. At home, Melville remains totally unknown of the bitter reality of life. But when he sets forth from home on his way to sea and comes to know this brutal sight. His journey becomes the journey of his initiation into the corrupt and evil world. He enters into this world with purity and innocence but the realities of the cruel world teach him the way to survive in the negative atmosphere which he meets for the first time on the ship world. Gradually he comes to know the truth and ultimately accepts the worldly treatment and considers it as the part and parcel of life. Every experience destroys an illusion. Now, Herman Melville becomes aware to a corrupt and evil world and to the necessity of shedding innocence in order to survive in the world of evil.

At the time of writing *Moby Dick*, Melville becomes curious to find out the reason of the evil. He begins to seek the source of evil in the good and perfect world. Melville, for several years, had been rebellion against the scheme of things in the universe. He could not solve the problem of evil owing to the inadequate philosophies and the traditional religion of his day. The universe seemed to him full of evil on a large scale. There was nothing to soothe his troubled mind. He says, those were the days of everlasting nay means the rejection of faith. In his early career, Melville was very anxious because of evil in this world. The current philosophies and creeds could not satisfy his skeptical mind. He tried to probe the nature of truth, fate, evil and virtue, but could not reach at any affirmative answer to his question. *Moby Dick*, his best creation, reflects this stage of his mind. In this novel, Ahab's quest for the White Whale, an evil, becomes a search for the mysteries of Man, Nature and the Universe, as the good and the evil both are embedded in the structure of the universe. He knows that there can be no absolute certainty for mortal man; though man's curiosity and pride drive him on to know the unknowable.

Alfred Kazin says, "Moby Dick is a representation of the passionate mind speaking for its metaphysical concerns, out of the very midst of life."³

If one has the intellectual curiosity to ask the question about the more permanent things in human life, he eventually meets the problem of evil. Herman Melville did, and he wrestled with it for half a century. Melville had two requisites, first concern with the problem of evil with man's plight on earth, and the second, a great hearted humanity, a broad sympathy with human sufferings. He escaped the native optimism that both Emerson and Whitman lived to repent ; as W.B. Yeats has said 'Emerson and Whitman

have begun to seem superficial precisely because they lack the vision of evil.’⁴ In the early 19th century almost all religious, social and intellectual movements were positive, because people of that time were tired of the English view that everyone is bad and life is always a struggle. They wanted to have a positive outlook on life. This caused the transcendentalist view on life that everything happens for a reason and life always turns out well in the end.

Herman Melville, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Emerson and Thoreau were the major romantic authors of the nineteenth century. Emerson and Thoreau were the main transcendentalists of that time. They believed in the perfection of man. They impelled man to trust on institutionism. Transcendentalists had faith that the people are at their best when they are self reliant and independent. They forced to demolish the blemishes and corruption of society. However, some people still believed in the old English view on life. Herman Melville and Hawthorne separated themselves from the optimistic vision. They believed transcendentalism hype. For them, the old English views were the only right views. Herman Melville believed in the innate depravity of man. He viewed that man is inherently flawed and has to face a critical situation in his life and a personal and social struggle of good and evil. The stories of Melville show his views. For Millville, an awareness of evil is essential to be nature and get real and true knowledge of life. All of his works do not have happy endings. However, when Melville was writing *Billy Budd*, his last novel, his mind was completely changed. This was genuinely the final stage in his spiritual development. He adjusts himself to the existence of evil in this world and reconciles himself to the universe in which he lives. In the novel, the hero becomes the victim of

Claggart, an evil man. Ultimately, he accepts his fate with courage and resigns himself to a world in which good and evil mix inextricably.

Meaning and Types of Conflict :

The struggle which grows out of the interplay of the two opposing forces in a plot, is called conflict. It is the conflict which gives the elements of interest and suspense in any form of fiction whether it be a drama, a novel, a short story. At least, one of the opposing forces is generally a person. This person may be involved in conflicts of four different kinds. First, Man versus Nature, he may struggle against the forces of nature, second, Man versus Man, he may fight against another person, third, Man versus Society in which, he may struggle against social traditions or rules as a force, and fourth Man versus Self, two elements within the character himself may struggle for mastery. Conflict is a characteristic of human existence. It is a part of the dynamic of life that drives man into the future. But it needs to be managed constructively. When associated with violence, destruction and killing, it is no longer a healthy part of living. Violent conflict solves few problems, creates many, and breeds more unhealthy conflict to come. It brings evil, suffering and misfortune. Evil is the opposite of good. Evil serves as everything that a person fears and hates. It serves as foil to the quantities of good. Where good brings love, evil spawns hate; where good brings hope, evil creates despair.

The study of the conflict between good and evil in the works of Herman Melville is very interesting and highly inflammable. This approach seems to place him in the proper light not simply as a master teller of sea tales, but in the line of the serious writers who concern themselves with the central

problem of man's destiny. Melville is perhaps the only nineteenth century American novelist who belongs to this group. He was an extremist of this comparison and brought forth new ideas about the whole subject in itself. In the writings of Herman Melville

“.. the intellectual and moral world appeared as consisting not merely in a duality of good and evil, truth and falsehood, but in endless and soul defying.”⁵

There are two discernible approaches to evil in Melville's works. One is the defiance depicted in early Melville's works like *Mardi* and *Moby Dick*. *Taji* and *Ahab* dichotomize good and evil disobediently and are defeated finally. *Billy Budd* and *White Jacket*, in his later works, recognize evil as a part of life. They accept the reality of the harsh world. *Typee* and *Omoo* seem to be Melville's almost unconscious record of his own growing awareness of the problem. Melville intends upon the problem of evil. He probes deep in to the basic ambiguity of good and evil.

Herman Melville has faced the issue of good and evil in numerous ways. In his famous novel *Moby Dick*, good and evil are faced upfront. This novel apparently shows the conflict between good and evil, which is always going in this world or faced at every step. Evil first appears with the *White Whale's* mutilation of *Ahab's* legs in an encounter. Since then the evil nature of this wicked Whale had established in *Ahab's* mind. To *Ahab*, this *White Whale*, *Moby Dick* is wholly evil.

“The *White Whale* swam before him as the monomaniac incarnation of all those malicious agencies which some deep men feel eating in themThat intangible malignity which has been from the beginning

....deliriously transferring its idea to the abhorred White Whale, he pitted himself, all mutilated, against it...all the subtle demonism of life and thought; all evil, to crazy Ahab, were visibly personified and made practically assailable in Moby Dick. He piled upon the Whale's white hump the sum of all the general rage and hate felt by his whole race from Adam down; and then, as if his chest had been a mortar, he burst his hot hearts shell upon it.”⁶

Ahab perceives the evil of the entire world in Moby Dick which had been cause of many deaths and physical sufferings for whalers. This White Whale seems to him easily approachable. That is why, he, once again begins his voyage, chasing the tremendous White Whale, with the idea of killing it.

“ Ahab had cherished a wild vindictaion against the Whale, all the more fell for that in his frantic morbidness he at last come to identify with him not only his bodily woes but all his intellectual and spiritual exasperations....”⁷

Moby Dick, the White Whale had left an indelible imprint on Ahab's mind and soul. His whole thinking has subsequently become sick and now he identifies with the White Whale not only all his physical suffering but his mental unrest also. His tribulation is owing to the overwhelming desire to avenge himself upon the White Whale. He has only one goal in his life that is to destroy the tremendous White Whale. This is the real motive behind his voyage. The entire pursuit of the White Whale and three days chase of Moby Dick is Ahab's device to take revenge. Ahab's wound, the White Whale had given him, fills his heart with sorrow and anger. Every time he thinks about the White Whale who does not let him sleep and provokes him for fighting.

There is an evil in Moby Dick. Ahab sees in Moby Dick a principle of absolute evil, but Ishmael observes early in the novel that the great White

Whale has no face, no expression: people read only their own meanings into blank whiteness. Moby Dick is wholly evil to Ahab because of what he looks like; of course he is so huge and unbeatable. “On early voyage, Ahab lost a leg to the jaws of the giant whale known as Moby Dick.”⁸ It expresses the evil in Moby Dick to the people who tried to kill him.

If Moby Dick’ the White Whale, is evil, Ahab also has some traces of antagonism. Some critics consider him as a representative of evil and the White Whale that of good. Henry A. Murray identifies Ahab as “an incarnation of Adversary.”⁹ Though he seems to be good, his revengeful attitude, his extreme egotism and his unconcerned behavior with his crew make him an evil man. Ahab is a man who on the whale ship, Pequod, dominates and imposes his will on the world whether it is the crew. He compels them to follow his orders instantly or to carry on their pursuit for the great Whale that is essentially unconcerned to him. Ahab is human embodiment of Lucifer, Satan, the Devil or the Adversary. He seems to be anti-Christ because he is not Satan himself but a human being possesses of all Satan’s pride and energy. Ahab’s evil is not born evil. The White Whale is the source of evil nature in him. Ahab sees all the evil in Moby Dick because it had left him with the wound that is still panic for him. Whenever he looks at his artificial leg, he becomes aggressive. The more he gazes at his single leg, the more he gets enraged. The Whale had broken him down physically as well as mentally so Ahab always feels his mind studded with sinful thought of finding and putting the monstrous to an end.

Ahab is not purely evil. No one learns wickedness from birth; it is the realities or the cruelties of the outer world which make a man guilty of many crimes. Ahab is also culpable of having idea to take revenge upon the White

Whale; the outer source of his offence which he is going to commit. Ahab also takes the White Whale's attack on him as a deliberate and intentional act but has an option to think over the matter. Starbuck, one of his crew mates, warns him to give up the idea of revenge because he considers the White Whale as only a dumb brute, who attacks whale man blindly. But Ahab refuses his opinion and persistently considers Moby Dick as an embodiment of evil. Ahab has the chance to change his mind and to save himself and the rest of his crew members. Instead of his warning, Ahab does not take his steps back and moves on to his final destination.

Herman Melville with his Moby Dick is the greater traveler and explorer that he fathoms very deep in to the profundity of evil. He thought deeply of evil and of good. Ahab's great error is a failure to accept, and to submit to human limitations. Ahab assumes that it is possible to learn the final and the absolute truth and in making this assumption he puts himself on a level of equality with god. Thus he is not only unrealistic but guilty of the fatal sin of pride because he believes himself to be above, and apart from other men. Ahab is purely evil incarnate. His impiety is sufficient to show that he is demoniac. He orders a special harpoon to be forged for him, tempered not in water but in blood and baliged not in the name of Christ but in the name of Devil. Even his blasphemous attitude has eclipsed all of his feelings. He gets his special harpoon.

“I baptize thee not in the name of God, the father, but in the name of the Devil.”¹⁰

Ahab greatest enemy is the White Whale and he is in revolt against the dumb creature. Ahab keeps a special harpoon in order to attack the White

Whale and he desires to purify it in the blood of Moby Dick, the White Whale. For Ahab, the White Whale is a devil, possessing all the evil. His uncontrollable desire and skewed thinking deviates him from the right path. He has not had belief in God. Ahab's inflated ego, which makes him defy the god represented by the fire worshipped by the Parsee, dehumanizes him completely. Lewis Mumford comments

“Ahab becomes the image of the thing, he hates; he has lost his humanity in the very act of vindicting it.”¹¹

Ahab does not care about anybody or anything. He only thinks of killing Moby Dick and going back to his normal life. He is a sinisterly marked man, with a record of blasphemy and darkly violated deeds; with a series of evil prophecies hanging over him. All this is suggestive preparation for the complete deliverance of Ahab's soul to evil through obsession and revenge. His motive for revenge is not simple, not merely wicked but his quest for Moby Dick, the White Whale, shows his revolt against the existence of evil itself. His blind vindictiveness, the cause of his personal hurt, is nevertheless against the eternal fact of evil.

As the novel progresses, Ahab's pursuit turns to fixation. His quest for the White Whale becomes a vengeful obsession. The White Whale symbolizes nature. To Ahab, conquering the Whale, is conquering nature, which he views evil. In the Third Day Chase Ahab delivers his soliloquy in which he mocks the wind as a coward. Ahab continuously states his superiority of nature: “Talk not of blasphemy, man; I'd strike the sun if it insulted me.”¹²

This fascination of Ahab, completely ignores the lives of his crew and his own life. “Dear Moby Dick god hunts us all if we do not hunt Moby Dick to

his death.”¹³ Ahab’s quest for conquering nature ends with his death. The White Whale represents the evil in nature. His bitterness becomes an intolerable monomania. Ahab objectifies evil or his wickedness as he challenges the most powerful force of nature. Instead of mollifying his anger he becomes even more aggressive. Ahab is a hero running against time and fighting against reality.

“God did not create evil. Just as darkness is the absence of light, evil is the absence of God.”¹⁴

It generally happens that man thinks twice or thrice before committing something wrong which is against the will of God. The fear of God insists him to take his steps back and ultimately he does not go forward. But Ahab has different ideas in his mind. He wants to defeat even the God if He comes on his way. His fiery temper, his egoism, this chaotic condition and the removal of God result in chaos. The chaos, says Melville, is not merely around man, it is in him. In fact the evil in man is the cause of the apparent outer chaos. In the words of Parke:

“As an internal moral and emotional predicament the chaos of evil and idealism and madness in the individual is certainly the most compelling phase of the archetype and the one which evokes more and deeper echoes than any other.”¹⁵

Ahab’s tragedy is his inability to locate and objectify evil in him, or to accept it and deal with it prudently, as a part of the entire created world. Moby Dick is as an impersonal life force, impervious to the desires and wishes of the human beings. Some critics regard the White Whale as a personification of God and so they regard the whole story of the novel the

conflict between good and evil. Good as embodied in the White Whale and Ahab as an evil man. White Whale represents God or an instrument of God, representing good in the world. It is an agent of God who is sent to take revenge upon evil man like Ahab. Moby Dick is of good nature. The White Whale is white, for this symbolic reason the narrator of the story comes to realize that the whale is out of reach and the quest is actually folly. The color white on the Whale is God, who surrounds himself with good. Although the whale, symbolic whale, is mostly representative of good, no one thing is purely good or purely evil.

Thus the white whale is not all that evil through his actions. Moby Dick is both good and evil; Ahab also has evil as well as good nature.

“Still Ahab must not be dismissed as merely evil. In his struggle against all those things that limit human life, there is heroic grandeur of humanity long effort to know the meaning of existence.”¹⁶

He is not an evil man but noble and heroic in his actions. Ahab is also a religious person.

“In seeking vengeance upon a dumb brute that attacked and maimed him out of blind instinct, he may seem merely mad, as Starbuck would like to believe, but Ahab’s madness is of a deeper sort. In the attack of the white whale, he has felt the pain and shock by which the human beings must recognize their own morality.”¹⁷

Captain Ahab is mad but it is for a good reason.

In Billy Budd the conflict is between man and man. John Claggart, the antagonist in the story, draws on evil to prevent Billy from reaching glory.

Claggart's dark and unknowable characterization establishes a feeling of dread about him. The presence of Claggart is very perplexing in the navy because he does not hold amplitude of knowledge.

The master-at-arms Claggart shows ultimate evil. His evil is strong; no goodness is ever portrayed through him. Claggart seeks chance of conflict with Billy Budd, an innocent and good man on the ship. He is wholly good. There is not even an iota of evil or wickedness in Billy, and he ignores of the existence of evil. Although he is a man of physical qualities that are attributed to a grown human being but he has no sense of right and wrong, of good and evil from worldly point of view. Men aboard the ship refer to him as Billy and sometimes Baby Budd. His full name is William but owing to his childish nature, sailors call him Budd, which has to bloom now. Billy Budd is like those flowers which are to bloom in the early stages of life. Billy himself is in the blossoming time of his life. He is naive and young, just starting to open up and experience the world of adulthood.

There is no malice in him, and he can't conceive of there being any malice in the heart of anybody else. Being entirely and wholly good himself, he does not suspect anybody else of having any evil intentions. That is why, he remains totally unaware of evil. Claggart's mysterious enmity towards him signifies ultimate evil in the novel. Billy boards the indomitable from the Right – of- man. Claggart is an experienced man on the ship with the crew but Billy is totally unaware of it. Claggart does not like Billy's innocence or all of the work that Billy does because everyone seems to be fond of his beauty and innocence. Billy's simplicity goodness, innocence arouses a feeling of envy in Claggart. He becomes jealous of Billy's beauty and goodness and consistently gives him dirty look. In a dramatic scene, Billy's

innocence really comes out. When he spills soup on the deck, Claggart comments on Billy for this act, 'Handsome is as handsome does.'¹⁸ Billy fails at picking up the sarcastic comment. Claggart notices the soup flowing at his feet, and takes it not merely as an incident but some wickedness designed on the part of Billy. It seems to him Billy's deliberate act in order to stimulate him. Claggart is a man

“in whom was the mania of evil nature, not engendered by vicious training or corrupting books or licentious living, but born with him and innate, in short depravity according to nature.”¹⁹

This is the most dangerous evil because Claggart had not learned it. It is a natural evil, born with him. He is an evil man, and Billy's goodness doubles his envy and enmity towards him. Melville focuses on the innate quality of Claggart's evil, a quality usual among literary portrayals of villains. Most villains appear evil either because of events that have corrupted them or because of deliberate, avoidable choices which they have made. This results in evil, comes from a painful background or a conscious decision to betray evil. His evil has no such antecedent. Claggart simply embodies evil. Melville makes this fact clear when he describes Claggart's ability to understand goodness, but his powerlessness to embrace it. He has no power to overcome the element of evil that lies inside him.

Claggart's evil is beyond that of a human nature. Human nature is to commit sin, but it also gives man the choice of differentiating between good and evil. Claggart is pure evil. He has no room for selection because everything he does, there conceals some kind of evil motif behind it. His act automatically becomes evil. Normally a man's conscience is expected to urge him to

distinguish between good and evil and to follow only the good; but in the case of Claggart, his conscience is only an instrument which merely strengthens his inclinations and preferences only for evil.

The pinnacle of Claggart's evil comes in the novel with Claggart's false charge upon Billy for being the leader of a mutinous group. He blames Billy of spreading mutiny among the sailors. He adopts the desperate course of fabricating a report against Billy. Envy and antipathy begin to co-exist in Claggart when he looks at Billy. At this moment, an expression of malice appears on his face. Claggart lodges a formal complaint to captain Vere. He even tries to convince captain Vere that Billy hides his wickedness. In his view, the good looks of Billy are deceptive. Claggart is evil by nature. Evil is innate in him. Claggart's sick intentions are masterminded with his scholarly mind. His deceptiveness allows him to disguise his hatred towards Billy from everybody else on Bellipotent. He admits that looks can be deceiving about any person including Billy "a mantrap may be under his ruddy tipped daisies." 20 Claggart obtains pleasure by giving Billy evil looks, while at the same time he pretends to be his comrade. His evil intentions symbolic to Lucifer, come out when he accuses Billy of being the leader of mutinous group of impressed officers. His evil tempts Billy to do a terrible deed.

After this incidence, Captain Vere summons Billy in his cabin for questioning. He wants Billy to make the matter apparent. However, Billy is not surprised and has no fear or distrust. On the contrary, he has a vague feeling that the captain, having formed a good opinion about him, wants to promote him, probably on the basis of recommendation by Claggart or perhaps the captain wants to know Claggart's opinion about Billy and then

to take a decision about promoting him to a higher position on the ship. Great were Billy's bewilderment and amazement, therefore, when the captain orders the master-at-arms to tell Billy to his face what he has previously told the captain about him, Billy appears serene. This time, he first experiences the existence of evil. He cannot understand what Claggart has told the captain. Claggart steps close to Billy and, looks directly into Billy's eyes and repeats the charges which he had already brought against Billy in his absence. On hearing Claggart's accusation, Billy looks pale with surprise. Billy's innocence and goodness make him an entirely exceptional kind of man. Though he has all the qualities but being human he suffers from a defect also. In this crisis moment or at a time of emotional stress, his vocal defect renders Billy incapable of speaking properly. When captain Vere says Billy to prove his truthfulness, in his defense, Billy only stammers and produces a gurgling sound from his throat. He fails to prove himself blameless. This is precisely the defect which becomes liable for Billy's inability to defend himself in the moment when Claggart falsely accuses him of spreading mutiny. This leads Billy impulsively to give Claggart a severe punch that proves fatal. Billy hits Claggart upon the forehead, and Claggart falls down motionless and still. The confrontation between Billy and Claggart very obviously shows the struggle in Billy. Melville makes a study of evil and man's tragic confrontation with this might power. Every man has to face evil as it is powerful. Man is pitilessly crushed ultimately; but the manhood of man lies in confronting this power boldly and dying heroically. Melville is conscious of the power of evil.

Herman Melville cries out at the enormous evil of flogging as the social state in a man-of-war world. In this world, evil is prevailed everywhere,

whether it is the society of common people on the earth or it is the naval society. Each and every man has to fight against it. Evil comes in the way of social development. Society creates tyrannous rules to make it fundamentally strong. It is the social system which is responsible to produce evil at the very extent. Though, the sin is not very serious but the social cruel laws insist man to bear various difficulties which born such more kinds of evils on the large scale. The social habits and behavior prove harmful to the world. The more cruel laws are made the more cruel evils are born. The naval officers on the ship abuse their lower ones and show their inhumanity and brutality which bear the name of law and order .Human being has to suffer many difficulties under the superiority of social status. The rich and the poor; the higher and the lower, the sinner and innocent, the good and bad come into the sphere of the evil. Evil does not know the discrepancy between right and wrong.

In Billy Budd, the goodness of Billy and Captain Vere suffers much from this social evil. When Claggart imposes false charge on Billy of spreading mutinous intensions among sailors, Billy goes mad and kills the wicked Claggart. Though his inclination is not the assassination of Claggart, but in the eyes of the social laws Billy is guilty of this hateful crime. Captain Vere ,in the whole story ,remains fatherly with Billy but after this incident Vere takes decision against Billy.

Instead of knowing the truth, Captain Vere goes in favour of social law and order. He maintains peace and discipline even in this critical situation in order to keep the laws secure in the mind and heart of the people. The goodness of Billy does not work here. Unfortunately, Billy is hanged. His good nature cannot stave off Billy from the paws of death. Here, in the case

of Billy, innocence and goodness proves negative. He could not understand the evil nature of the master-at-arms Claggart and ultimately became the victim of evil. Out of this, conflict between the different orders of law that warrant the higher law which Melville dramatizes in terms of dignity of man, grows the problem of good and evil. Captain Vere, before the evil social law, suffers from an inner conflict. He very well knows the necessity of taking decision. An upright and determined disciplinarian like him has no other choice. The circumstances do not allow any compromise, especially to the discipline which is significant in the armed forces. Vere feels that military law must be upheld at any cost. In this predicament human beings often find themselves. There is no escape from such situation. Man is thus doomed creature. One way or another, man finds it obligatory to perform certain actions which he simply cannot avoid.

“Human nature is a mixture of the shame and the true, of kindness and cruelty, of meanness and generosity, of good and evil.”²¹

This is perfectly portrayed in the main character's action; their struggles, conflict and how they progress in the play. Human nature is the embodiment of good and evil. Humane are full of lies yet they are truthful. Humane are kind yet they are cruel, humane can be mean as well as they can be generous, they can be good and evil. Captain Vere represents goodness with a strong admixture not of evil exactly but of an excessive preoccupation with duty, a preoccupation so excessive which seems to be almost evil. Claggart and Billy represent the two extremes, goodness and evil; Ahab and the white whale represent good and evil; and the novels tell the stories of their actions and interactions.

Herman Melville's books have received a world-wide acclaim not because of the marine adventure, but owing to the interesting study of man and his predicament in the world of evil, both natural and human.

Some critics have accepted the moral significance in the books. If the white whale is the evil laming the spirit of man or an incarnation of the dark aspects of life, Ahab is the hero fighting against the evil sacrificing his life for the general good. In this case, evil wins and good does overcome the evil. Herman Melville, after completing the novel and conveying this moral, wrote to Hawthorne, "I have written a wicked book and feels spotless like a lamb."²² Melville must have felt guilty of creating a God-defier in Ahab and of making him a proclaimed hero, but when he punished the God-defier severely, he felt quilt less. Henry A. Murray sees Ahab's end as a punishment for his satanic defiance, with which he burns throughout his life. He quotes,

"He (Melville) could feel 'spotless as the lamb', because he had seen to it that the huge threat to the social system immanent in Ahab's two cardinal defects-egoistic self-inflation and unleashed wrath-was, at the end, fatefully exterminated."²³

Ahab sees Moby Dick as an incarnation of evil and falsely imagines himself to be a martyr. Leon Howard mentions,

'Melville identified with his hero emotionally but disapproved of him intellectually. He admired Ahab for his heroism; but he himself was defying the grandest and noblest illustrious of his age when he called Ahab's inspired heroism madness.'²⁴

According to this statement, Melville did not want to make Ahab a grand martyr. Ahab's heroism is the heroism of a defiant adversary. Murray says of him as "an embodiment of the fallen angel or demigod who in Christendom was variously named as Lucifer, Satan, Devil, Adversary."²⁵ If Ahab is the adversary of God, Moby Dick is the God incarnate in the white whale who ultimately destroys an evil man. In Billy Budd, Billy's hanging reminds of the crucifixion. Billy, at his end, appears to be a Christ figure. He sacrifices his life in the interest of the large good. Melville believes at the end that though good goes to defeat and death, but its radiance redeems life. Billy becomes a martyr among sailors.

James E. Miller finds the Christ as the dominant metaphor of the story. He says:

"Almost invariably Melville has described his Titanic heroes as stricken Christ. But with none has the analogy being as complete as with Billy Budd."²⁶

However, this statement of Miller does not seem to be quite appropriate. Christ, throughout his life strived for the good of human being. Neither he was innocent nor ignorant. The parallelism between Christ and Billy is only to the extent that Christ was crucified for none of his fault and Billy was executed for an unintentional guilt. Christ accepted his crucifixion without any fear of God, so did Billy. He sacrifices his life in the interest of the large good. Melville believes at the end, though good goes to defeat and death, its radiance redeems life. Billy becomes a martyr among the sailors.

Melville, like Emerson, had a view that "Good is positive, evil is merely privative, not absolute that in the physical and moral spheres alike, the ugly

facts are mere partial and can be transcended consequently no matter how black appearances might be. There could always be found a small excess of good, a small balance in brute facts, favourable to the side of reason. All fragmentary sorrow and suffering would disappear in the radiance of good, like mists before sun.”²⁷

One should not only accept the inevitable presence of good and evil in man’s nature but must also possess the power to envisage some reconciliation between these opposites and a control to hold a balance. Herman Melville’s attitude in *Billy Budd* is one of acceptance or of ‘Everlasting Yea.’ Therefore, some critics have described *Billy Budd* as Melville’s ‘Testament of Acceptance.’ While some critics say:

“This novel is neither a testament of acceptance nor of protest, but Melville’s last parable of the human condition. The phrase human condition means the vicissitude of life, the predicaments, the dilemmas, the limitations, the constraints, the pressure, the compulsion; human beings are compelled to face and which lead to indescribable suffering inhuman life.”²⁸

Herman Melville, like all other American writers of the mid and late nineteenth century, judged the thoughts and writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Emerson saw the sources of beauty, strength, and nobility within each individual. He was inclined to see each human soul as a beacon of light, however, Melville described and defined the darkness, the bitter and harsh world of reality that could put out the light. Both of them wrote about life in specific terms, pointing towards human nature in general. The problem of evil is the part of life. It is ever present. This paradoxically separates and unites both authors. Emerson looked inward and Melville

pushed outwards. Emerson's influence directly or indirectly helped to shape Melville's ideology and thus his fiction. Both the authors acknowledged human pain and suffering, corruption and vice. Emerson's contemporaries including Melville accused him of neglecting these most basic elements of the human condition, turning instead towards the glib optimism of self-reliance. Emerson viewed that one can know and knowledge evil, only because one possesses a soul that is ultimately good.

Summing up this chapter I can say that man is puny in the stern reality of life. Billy, the idol of goodness is sand witched between two evil forces. One opposing force is society and the other is a person like Claggart. Billy, a happy-go-lucky man suffers miserably and ends in destruction. But Billy is god and continues to be good till yhe end when he utters the words "God bless Captain Vere"²⁹ with his dying breath. Clagagart is evil and remains evil man despite the occasional look on his face "the man of sorrows."³⁰ Captain Vere finds it obligatory upon himself to suppress the voice of his conscience on order to uphold the military law. The extraordinary way of presenting good and evil really carries us to Billy where innocence is inevitably foredoomed by black malice. Claggart is a dark mysterious man. He is the antagonist to Billy who is the godlike protagonist. He is very envious of Billy and his hatred builds up towards him. Claggart has the rare trait to bring out the worst in people. If Billy is Adam before the fall, Claggart represents the serpent who introduces the innocent man to pure evil.

This comparison to the biblical story also helps to demonstrate how Billy is a parallax to the good and evil in the world. In the beginning of the novel Melville presents Billy as a good man but in the end Billy strikes Claggart

down and destroys the evil. The world is full of good and evil and there is no good way to fight it, but in the end the unavoidable might be the only way to defeat the evil. Melville gives Billy superhuman qualities and portrays Claggart with antagonistic qualities to demonstrate conflict between good and evil.

Captain Vere also faces an inner conflict of good and evil. Ahab is a fatal loser. He carries his personal doom with him. The nature of his reaction to the void with which his time, his misfortune, and his own disposition confronts him, seals his fate. Hate still does not triumph over Nature but over the hater at last; Moby Dick goes free and immortal.

Through literary history, the conflict of good versus evil has tended to dominate the classical literary trend and many authors have used this term in their writings. Goodness and evil can always be determined centered upon the individual. The individual confirms whether certain things are good or evil. Goodness always originates from God and is connected to Him, while evil comes from the opposite being, Satan. The road of goodness leads to heaven, while the evil path leads to hell. Good versus evil is good story line because one cannot exist without the other. In everyone there is a bit of evil or good, as it is the part of our nature, and we struggle through the battle every day. There are two fundamental ways of life: the way of goodness and the way of evil. If the fall of man had not taken place, there would have been only one way of life, one road for man to go. The world is divided between the good and the evil principles, and they are twin brothers. Good and evil are the flip of the same coin. Where there is evil, good also exists.

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Narrative Technique, Style and Language

Herman Melville's narrative method is different from many other novelists. His major novels are the first-person recitals. Herman Melville's fiction, he most often chose, are not romantic or the well made. His novels are also not the novels of character or Plot, but they are the personal adventure chronicles, the recitals, the confession, a form in which the voice of the narrator tends to become the chief center of interest. Before the question of technique taken up, it is well to bear in mind the following injunction:

“The question of technique is not the only one with which the novel is concerned. There is a power of genius, of mastery over human thought, of fire and poetry and splendor, which far transcends technique. There have been true master works of fiction that abounded in errors of form; and one can conceive the possibility, though scarce the probability, that technically perfect novel might still be a cold and tedious one. This caution does not, however, contradict my proposition that the question of technique is of the first importance, and that a clear understanding of it must vastly increase the pleasure of reading and the chances of success in writing.”¹

Herman Melville chooses first-person point of view narrative. Some of Melville's early works were highly autobiographical morphing into fiction, and others, later, were less autobiographical, however, come from “I.” A novel written in first-person is a first-hand account of events which a single character, typically the main character narrates. Herman Melville's works written in first person are easily identified because of the use of the pronoun “I” rather than “He” or “She”.

Writing in the first person requires frequent use of I, me and my but especially I. Narrative is a tale of some true or fictitious event or connected sequence of events which a narrator recounts to a narratee. The category of narratives includes both the shortest accounts of events and the longest historical or biographical works, diaries, travelogues etc., as well as novels, ballads, epics, short stories, and other fictional forms. In the study of fiction, it is usual to divide novels and shorter stories into first-person narratives and third-person narratives. Literally speaking, narrative is a story and through pictures, songs, poetry, speech, fiction and non-fiction as well it conveys its message. Narrative technique is vastly an aesthetic enterprise. It is binding vine of the narrative. A narrator detains the past, holds present and prepares the reader for future.

The narrative technique is very unique in *Moby-Dick*. The voice of the narrator Ishmael utters all narratives. There are two Ishmaels: Ishmael, the narrator and Ishmael, the character. Ishmael seems to be an incarnated narrator, who serves as the agent, through which the story passes. He also inhabits the world of the novel and is a character within his own story. The opening chapter "Loomings" establishes his position as a retrospective narrator. He retells the autobiographical events of whaling voyage that he undertook.

Ishmael is a keen observer, who thrives on facts and information, especially related to whaling. As Brodhead points out, the inquiring mind of Ishmael is what characterizes the narrative:

(The novel's) hugeness is achieved finally less through the length of its inventory than through the sheer variety of...mental stance, science and

languages through which Ishmael tries to grasp things. In a sense most characteristic sentence in Moby Dick is Ishmael's "I have another idea for you." ²

The narrative is a study of the Pequod's voyage in particular and whaling in general, that makes it distinct from traditional adventure stories of this kind.

Ishmael's personality is not only contradictory, but his character is also difficult to isolate as to its symbolic qualities. "Melville leaves it ambiguous as to whether (Ishmael) survives between of his superior virtue...Ishmael's peculiar narrative functions itself makes the meaning of his survival uncertain." ³

In his close relationship to the narrative; it is often difficult to distinguish whether he is creating a scene; or the scene is creating the narrative. In the narrative, Ishmael seems to recreate the feelings of medieval romance:

"Melville looks through the whaling cruise in such a way to see its 'secret part' the romance action of the dragon slayer's quest. According to Broadhead, Ishmael inhabits a 'wonder-world which would fit in with his romantic treatment of the narrative.'" ⁴

The use of different narrative technique, other than the first person is very striking. This divergence from the first – person is the presentation of the Spouter Inn. This method is used to describe the interior of the Inn, and to focus the narrative through the use of second person style. It is adopted in order to establish an empathy with Ishmael's perception. In the Chart Ishmael commences: "had you followed Captain Ahab down into his cabin... you would have seen him go into a locker." ⁵

This demonstrates not only how Ishmael is aware of his scenes, but also how easy it would be for anyone to observe it. By using the second person form, he transfers his experience, establishing the scenes as potentially universally true, and not simply springing from his imagination.

Ishmael's reporting of thoughts of other character is more problematical. In 'Surmises' Ahab's thought are offered, rather than the musing of the narrator. Likewise Starbuck's thought are presented in 'The Spirit Spout'.

“ Terrible old man I thought Starbuck with a shudder, sleeping in the gate, still thou steadfastly eyest thy purpose.”⁶

The detached presentation allows Ishmael to remain impartial in his presentation of this struggle. The reason for his willingness is to disregard his narrative point of view. As Ahab is important in these episodes, Ishmael allows his personality to dissolve; he focuses attention on the protagonist, recreating him as a 'tragic hero' in the Shakespeare mould, to some extent glorifying his position.

On such occasions, the first person narrative becomes third person. The view of the outstretched ocean hypnotizes the sailors at the Mast Head, who speak in the third-person, and yet the passage describing this hypnotic scene clearly demonstrates that Ishmael is speaking from experience:

“Lulled into such an opium like listlessness of vacant, unconscious reverie is this absent-minded youth by the cadence of the waves with thoughts, that at last he loses his identity, takes the mystic ocean at his feet for the visible image of that deep blue, bottomless soul, pervading mankind and nature; and every strange, half-seen, gliding, beautiful thing that eludes him...seems to

him the embodiment of those illusive thoughts that only people the soul by continually flitting through it.”⁷

Ishmael does not only detach himself from his character in the narration, but also from the Pequod. His detachment from the action is at its peak in the later half of ‘The Doubloon’ in which Stubb takes over as narrator, observing the crew members thoughts on the coin.

For nearly the first forty chapters, Ishmael, the first person narrates the story of the novel. For the rest of the book, Ishmael’s personality and the first person pronoun fades in and out. Obviously, this makes talking about point of view quite complicated. The first person seems ambiguous, as though it could be Melville himself talking about his whaling experience, instead of his character Ishmael. Narrator Ishmael tries to defend himself and his authority even by making up a story. Consequently, he becomes an unreliable narrator.

In Moby Dick, the narrator Ishmael often gives out his appropriate speech, and extravagant comments on the events around him, and he presents him openly. Sometimes, the narrator Ishmael fades in and out of his own narration, and he remains in the background to observe the character. Here, he is the covert narrator of the novel. Several Chapters in the novel are made up entirely of soliloquies, and the narrator is completely absent in the novel.

There is a clear progression from Ishmael as the first-person narrator at the center of the story to the third- person description of the destruction of the Pequod at the end, which does not even mention Ishmael’s name. It is only in the Epilogue, where his voice comes back. Ishmael, as a character, tells in retrospect. Ishmael certainly but secretly participates in the journey to have

information about the voyage, information about whales, about whaling, about events and crew members that he readily shares with the reader. Much of this information comes from his own observations and experiences. On the other hand, some information comes to the narrator through venues less direct than his own experience.

Ishmael's shift from being a first-person limited narrator to being a seemingly omniscient narrator occurs so consistently throughout *Moby Dick* that it cannot be anything other than intentional. There are two narrators, the limited Ishmael and other nameless, unlimited narrator.

On the lowest narrative level, the level of character at which Ishmael is an actor in narrative, Ishmael is just another crew member of the *Pequod*, no different or more commanding in the story than most characters, and considerably less than others. At another narrative level, though, on the level of narration, Ishmael shows himself to be a more dominance personality. He is the narrator, the mind that retells the tale. At this point, it is perhaps possible that there are two narrators. After all, it is the author, Melville, the hidden god of the work who can do whatever he wants. If he wishes to employ both a limited and an unlimited narrator in his book, he can do so, and the explanation for such an action may be nothing more than whim rather than anything of any significance. This is not the case, however because there is a level between narrator Ishmael and author Melville that must be taken into account. Ishmael, as well as being a character and narrator of, is also, at a particular narrative level, the work's author. Ishmael as the work's fictional author is another way of saying that there cannot be a second narrator, more privileged than Ishmael because the second narrator, the omniscient narrator, would then himself be a creation of the book's

author Ishmael. No, there is only one narrator, Ishmael himself, and since Ishmael's dual status as author and narrator prevents readers from dismissing the narrative shifts as Melville's mistakes or his pointless experiments.

Point of View:

Essentially, there are two kinds of point of view in fiction: first person and third-person. Point of view in fiction may be managed through the employment of the third-person narrator who may be either dramatized or undramatized. He may be a participant in the action of the fictional work or a mere observer. The device of employing the first-person narrator in fiction may involve a distance between the author's point of view and that of the narrator; the distance may be ironic. Further, the first-person narrator's voice may not be always reliable, since the point of view of some major or minor characters may be occasionally or frequently observed to it through the free indirect style. The knowledge of the first-person narrator about his subject may be more or less limited, i.e. he may be an omniscient narrator, or he may have limited omniscient about his subject.

The second way of managing point of view in fiction may be through the employment of the third-person who is not necessarily to be identified with the author's point of view. The third-person narrator (who seems to be the author himself) may have an ironic attitude to his subject. In such a case even the third-person narrator cannot be relied on. In many cases, the point of view of the major and minor characters may be absorbed to the authorial voice through indirect style. In Melville's last creation *Billy Budd*, he tells the story by means of a shadowy first-person narrator. The first-person

narrator refers to himself as “I” and briefly talks about himself and his past experiences. He does not give his name and is not on the Bellipotent, yet he speaks authoritatively about the events that take place there. Melville may have intended himself to be thought of as the omniscient observer. If so, it is Melville, the complex artist working with imaginative material, and not Melville the man, who speaks alternately as witness and commentator on events.

The author shifts point of view by looking into the mind of one character to another character, by making general comments from time to time, by presenting scenes of dramatic action, and, when necessary, by shutting himself and the reader off from the scene, such as in the intensely dramatic meeting of Vere with Billy to inform the latter of his condemnation. The narrator has a limited omniscient point of view, which means that he is able to see nearly the action of the entire novel, including some of the character’s thoughts. His admission of being unable to grasp Claggart’s character shows the narrator as the limited omniscience, but it also contributes to the novel’s overall depiction of Claggart’s strangeness and forgiveness. The narrator generally focuses on Billy’s point of view, but in certain chapters, shifts to that of Claggart and Captain Vere. The narrator of the story does not involve in the action, and we have no idea how he even got wind of Billy Budd’s story in the first place. Yet in many ways, he is a realistic third-person narrator. In a lot of nineteenth century novels, the narrator tries to make himself invisible, but at the same time he is everywhere. He knows exactly what happened in great detail, and he can even tell what different people were thinking at any given time.

Melville's writing style deserves a special notice. On many occasions in *Moby Dick*, he becomes poetic in the narrative. In the second sentence of 'The spirit-spout' 's' sounds are profuse, evocative of the mystery and menace of the phantom:

".....when all the waves roved by like scrolls of silver, and, by their soft, suffesing seethings, mad what seemed a silvery silence, not a solitude on such a silence night a silvery jest was seen." ⁸

At times the conceit he uses are equally affect his language. The parting sight of the Rachel is one such instance:

"But by her still halting course and winding, woful way, you plainty saw that this ship that so wept with spray, still remained without comfort. She was Rachel, weeping for her children because they were not." ⁹

The altered grammar of the last line is a poetic affection, intended to help in the creation of rhyme: 'way' and 'spray' ; 'comfort' and 'not'.

Melville adopts his style to various uses is required by the occasion. He makes use of this style for philosophical reflection and metaphysical questioning and for arguments and discussion. This is obvious in the episode in which Starbuck raises a dissident voice and Ahab tries to convince him of the rightness and justice of his decision to wreak his hatred upon the White Whale. The chapter "Affidavit" offers a well reasoned advocacy of whaling as a profession. This style suits to dramatic purpose. The monologues of Ahab and Starbuck, illustrate both the dramatic quality of this style and its suitability for reflection. The monologue in which Starbuck argues with himself whether or not to put an end to Ahab's life, is a striking example of

the dramatic effects, which Melville produces. He uses this style for the expression of feelings and sentiment also.

Another conspicuous feature of Melville's literary style is the abundance of vivid imagery and graphic descriptions. Melville gives brief pictures of an extended description, the description of the inns; the descriptions of the town of New Bedford and its people and of the ship, the Pequod. The chapter "Moby Dick" is one of the most outstanding examples of Melville's descriptive power. The presentation of the White Whale seems lively with its huge bulk, its white forehead and white hump, and its exceptional ferocity, and it also creates fear. Melville brings the various organs of a whale- the nose, the ears, the tail, and above all the head. This invokes an unforgettable experience. He also describes the hordes of the whales, male and female, and their behavior that one can visualize these monsters summing in large groups. Other descriptions in the book include those pertaining to the techniques of killing whales and of extracting oil from them. Melville's style is complex and expansive. He prefers big, difficult, and unusual words. His style is overwhelmed with accumulation of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences. The style of Melville's writing has the lack of brevity, lucidity and clarity.

The style in Billy Budd is lucid, clear and even brief. There is no surplusage and long and difficult sentences. The novel has a new, mature style with condensed sentences rather than the expanded sentences. Though, Melville uses long sentences but this does not need two or three readings to understand the meaning. Melville's style in Moby Dick is sometimes ornate, and frequently poetic. In Billy Budd this quality is missing. The style in Billy Budd is bare and austere, in keeping with the solemnity of the theme

and atmosphere. The theme even in Moby Dick has a solemnity and profundity; but ornate passages occur in this novel. In Billy Budd there is an almost complete absence of ornamental and decorative writing; and there are no embellishments for the sake of mere effect. But the writing has a poetic quality:

“And now it was full day. The fleece of low-hanging vapour had vanished, licked up by the sun that late had so glorified it. And the circumambient air in the clearance of its serenity was like smooth white marble in the polished block not yet removed from the marble-dealer’s yard.”¹⁰

In fact, the whole account of Billy’s hanging and of his deification possesses this poetic quality.

Symbolism

The most remarkable feat of symbolic language in the novels is Melville’s ability to show that man is not a blank slate passively open to events, but a mind that constantly seeks meaning in everything it encounters. In him, the transcendental passion for symbolizing all things is instinctively significant. In Melville’s novels, symbolism is used to emphasize a deeper and bigger meaning. He, through his novels, tries to set his emotions by manipulating with symbols to discuss a greater issue than just narrating mere stories. Melville’s novels have several meanings owing to their symbolic language. Moby Dick symbolizes as quest for universal truth. Ahab’s search for the White Whale, is, his search his search for the ultimate reality of the universe. It is an attempt to solve the mystery of the universe.

“All visible objects, man, are but as pasteboard masks which must be pierced through in order to get at the truth behind. If man will strike, he must strike

through the mask. How can the prisoner reach outside except by thrusting through the wall? To me, the White Whale is that wall.”¹¹

Ahab symbolizes goodness and the White Whale represents evil. According to some critics,

“The white whole as an agent of God, sent to take revenge upon wicked man like Ahab. Moreover, the antagonism of the white whole to Ahab is not personal and deliberate. It is instinctive to all men”.¹²

Some critics consider the White Whale symbolizes the evil which controls the universe. Others take the opposite view, and believe the White Whale represents God or an agent of God’s vengeance upon evil men. In fact, the evil side of Ahab’s character is as conspicuous as his good side. He is both a hero and a villain. In the same manner, the White Whale is also both evil and good. Ishmael sees Moby Dick as an immense power, and as an astonishing force. It is a mysterious creature. If the White Whale is regarded as a mystery which embodies the Truth in its absolute sense, Ahab’s desire to hunt down the White Whale becomes a quest after that Truth or the limitation of man’s power to know God through his intellect; yet, instead of submitting to his weakness, he hopes to rise above it by sheer defiance. However, being a prisoner of his human form and his human limitations, he fails in his enterprise. His mind fails in its attempt to pierce the wall; and his response to the failure is anger at both fate and his own weakness. He strikes back blindly. He is driven by an urge to know the mystery; and he openly defies the power which binds him into weakness, and he defies the mind which remains forever hidden behind the mask. Sometimes he thinks that there is nothing behind the mask; and he feels that perhaps there is no secret

and mystery at all. And yet the possibility of the existence of a secret provokes him and acts as a challenge to him. Ultimately, Ahab's own life comes to an end. His pursuit of the mystery leads to his own extinction. In Melville's view on the one hand, a pursuit of the mystery and truth leads to frustration and madness; and on the other hand, arrogance in this pursuit results into his tragic death. Mr. Thompson says:

“Melville's own disbelief in God is behind the negative attitude of Ahab towards God and the mystery of the universe. Whatever might be the case, Melville seems to convey to us that a pursuit of the mystery and the absolute truth leads to frustration and madness, and that, arrogance in this pursuit is certainly self-destructive.”¹³

Ahab destroys himself and his crew because of his rigidness, even though he knows it is crazy. Starbuck, the mate, cannot kill Ahab, even though he knows it is the way to save the lives of the crew. Stubb sees only fun, and Flask sees only his own interest. As in many ship novels, the Pequod, a microcosm of the human race, isolates each man from others and from a full view of the world. The ship, the whaling crew sails on, is a symbol of doom. It is infact marked for death. The name Pequod is derived from an early Nature American people whom the white settlers destroyed. Pequod represents destruction. Queequeg's coffin alternately symbolizes life and death. Queequeg has built it when he falls seriously ill, but when he recovers, it becomes an emblem of his will to live. The coffin further comes to symbolize life, in a morbid way, when it replaces the Pequod's lifebuoy. When the Pequod sinks the coffin becomes Ishmael's lifebuoy, saving not only his life but the life of the narrator.

The unique salvation of Ishmael shows that he is the only man on the Pequod who has faced with courage the facts of his universe; he alone has learned well without becoming mad. There is no necessity that Ishmael live in the action of the novel; there is necessity that he services inherent in the moral order of the universe in which Melville puts him the primitive. In that universe he has learned the lesson of acceptance. The mixed good and evil in all things, the prevalence of suffering in the world, the horror in which at times the universe seems formed. These he has come to take without fright and without affront.

Ishmael has rebelled against the order of the universe; a vast inscrutable symbol of incomprehensible reality has loomed before him in the form of a great Whale. And he has learned that, though in this darkly imperfect world wisdom is woe, still man must learn to avoid the woe that is madness. He knows that there is no alternative to shouldering the burden of this ambiguous and affrighting world.

In the opening statement he calls Ishmael. He is a symbolic outcast on a journey to the sea to commit symbolic suicide, to lose himself, is a call to engage in an inner spiritual search. His search is opposed to Ahab's. Ishmael's "God shall hear"¹⁴ signifies man's embarking into the deepest understanding of his own self. Ahab, on the contrary, is on an external search through spheres of time and experience.

In the chapter "whiteness of the whale", Moby Dick symbolizes the unknowable, what individual chase and can never catch. He spends most of the time submerged beneath the waves, out of sight only viewable in glimpses and fragments. In some sense, the pursuit of Moby Dick

symbolizes the pursuit of a Whale and lasting truth, a nature and man's place in existence, which of course we can never but for which Ahab dies at the end of his ultimately futile venture. To Ishmael, Ahab seems to be a king of the sea and a great lord of leviathan. But there is an irony behind this symbol because at the end we find that it is the leviathan which is the king and lord of the sea. Symbolically, Ahab is trying to solve the ultimate mystery of the universe but any philosopher, thinker and metaphysician cannot solve the mystery. The mystery forever remains mystery. Herman Melville relies on symbols to tell a profound and more complex story which is explicitly presented in Billy Budd. Billy Budd stands for Childlike innocence in a world of war and evil men.

Billy Budd, as a main character, is innocent, more like a child who is brought up from his caring home to a place of wild beasts. Billy Budd himself is a symbol. His last name Budd symbolizes a bud in nature, something beautiful that has not yet opened itself to the world. The narrator describes Billy Budd as “unpretentious good looks and a sort of genial happy, go lucky air.”¹⁵ Billy is a representative of youthful innocence. He is a handsome sailor and his sweet and pleasant looks make the other sailors happy. The name of Billy Budd gives rise to a feeling of happiness because of its association with a rose bud.

Billy symbolizes purity and innocence while Claggart's looks indicate evil, the opposite of goodness and purity. Melville describes him,

“his complexion though it was not exactly displeasing, nevertheless seemed to hint something defective and abnormal in the constitution and blood.”¹⁶

The physical descriptions of Claggart are far less appealing than those granted to Billy and white and which, in the case, represents goodness with a strong admixture not of evil exactly but of an excessive preoccupation with duty which seems almost evil. These are the three characters, each of whom symbolically embodies a particular aspects of human nature-almost wholly good; almost wholly evil; and a blend of the largely good with a zeal which, by its very excess, seriously undermines and weakens the good. In this context the very names of the characters have symbolic implications.

Billy Budd, because of his goodness represents the heart; and Claggart whose brow is large enough to suggest a more than average intellect symbolizes the head as distinguished from the heart. When Melville was writing this novel, he had begun to put his faith largely in the dictates of the heart and had repudiated the claims of the head. According to this interpretation, Captain Vere symbolizes the will. The head and heart in the novel come to a conflict with each other, though the heart symbolized by Billy is not conscious of the conflict. The conflict leads to a catastrophe, and then Captain Vere takes charge of the affair which itself proves to be controversial.

The fiction of Herman Melville has appealed to the contemporary imagination with special force, and the twentieth century has accepted him as its own. However the biographers and critics seem to be confused by the wave of commentary, explication, and documentation that has welled up ever since the discovery of Melville in the nineteen-twenties. There is astonishing richness and maddening prolixity in the contradictory and confused nature of the literature that has accumulated on Melville. The consensus of Melville criticism regards him as essentially a symbolist,

although there are protests against such a view. The symbolic approach has intruded even into the biographies of Melville, which consider him as a symbol, almost a mythical American writer.

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Conclusion

Herman Melville wrote under the influence of the hardships of sea life. He wrote the novels with a sense of romance and adventure but exposed the dangers and hardships of sea-board. The uncompromising realities of life had shattered his romantic ideals. The traumatic experience of the naval life had been so deep that Melville could not escape himself from its effect for the whole course of his life. The feelings of futility and terror, the moral degradation, born out of this life provided materials for the majority of his novels. His novels are the best examples of the dark realities of the sea life. Herman Melville, in his fictional world, shares his own experiences which he had during his different voyages from one island to another island. His great works, *Moby Dick* and *Billy Budd*, bring out his outstanding qualities, and put him in the series of the best fiction writers. Herman Melville wrote on many important issues such as social, religious, and he also brought the problem of evil before a lay man which is very common in this world. Melville is the master in writing novels, and he has put different aspects of his novels at the same place. Though the stories are different but these aspects are common in all of his novels. I did not find this outstanding quality in any other American novelist.

Herman Melville had multiple experiences in his early life. These experiences shaped his intellectual make-up. There was a risky but creative mingling of the fortunate and the unfortunate, pleasant and the injurious. His early life swung between the two forces. On the one hand, there were high expectations, emotional security and its basic confidence, and on the other hand, there were disappointment, insecurity and distrust. The inexplicable

genius of Melville was the product of this interplay of his early circumstances. The death of his father was a serious and sudden blow on his young sensibilities. In the midst of a general security, the security of fatherhood was forcibly wrested from him. At this stage of his life the frightening sense of abandonment the reproachful sense of discretion must have been quite intense and overwhelming. This early tragic experience of Melville left an indelible mark on his creative genius.

Herman Melville was a man who put American literature on to the level of world literature with his literary classic *Moby Dick*, the famous 'Whaling Story'. Yet Melville was never acknowledged as such in his own life time, and for several decades after his death in 1851, was just another minor New York writer. Melville wrote of man's innocence and evil. He also wrote of the agonies of self discovery, as well as the betrayal one receives on the way of these discoveries. In the early part of his life, he looked upon humanity and saw innocence. He saw man and life in an optimistic way. At that time in his life, he wrote many of his adventurous stories, which made him popular in the literary world. With this confidence, Melville felt the need to expand his writing style; he wanted to write more out of his soul. *Moby Dick* is a story in which the Whaling voyage becomes the image of man's struggle against the forces of the universe. This story presents the changes that Melville was experiencing. Before writing *Moby Dick*, he was an innocent man. He viewed his life as good, and every man as open and hardworking, but after the publication of this novel people portrayed him differently.

Melville's career had its ups and downs and the majority of people did not enjoy his early works. But he continued to write books that he wanted to write and achieved popularity among the best authors. At the very end of his

life, Melville wrote his last novel *Billy Budd* “An inside Narrative. This literary work of fiction stands parallel to *Moby Dick* in the highest ranks of American literature. The book remained unpublished during the rest few months of his life. It appeared posthumously in 1924, thirty three years of Melville’s death. Melville wrote these two novels that from the bottom of his heart had a great influence in the literary history and are still unique and have vitality.

Newton Arvin has investigated the influence of the Gothic novel. Ryan observes that Melville uses a literal and commonsensical narrator together with a mysterious figure in this work to create a sense of enclosure and impending catastrophe without relying on the outward trappings of medieval gloom and decay ordinarily found in traditional Gothic narrative. Critics have also studied *Moby Dick* as it is informed by Gothic themes, conventions, and characterizations. Tony magistrate has viewed the novel’s revenge obsessed Captain Ahab as an embodiment of the demoniac Gothic villain. Others have elucidated such Gothic motifs as isolation, insanity and the pervasive presence of an unseen evil in Melville’s *Moby Dick*.

Moby Dick is Melville’s most important and one of the greatest novels. At the narrative level, it is the story of Captain Ahab’s hunt for White Whale which had turn off one of his legs in a previous encounter. Ahab’s revenge and wounded pride motivates him, and he begins his journey in search of *Moby Dick*. After a long chase throughout the Pacific Ocean, and several encounters the Whale finally attacks and sinks the ship. Ahab and his crew die, with the sole exception of Ishmael the narration of the story.

Herman Melville's exploration of psychological theme foreshadows twentieth century literary concern. Melville had a keen insight into human psychology. His characters involve both physical and psychological elements.

Ahab because of his culturally suppressed temperament and his uncontrolled desire is regarded as the Freudian Id. Moy Dick, his opponent, is the Freudian Super-ego, the internal institution which is responsible for these repressions. Ishmael does not involve in Ahab's mission and thus saves himself. Ishmael is the Freudian Ego. Ishmael is the character who makes balance between Id and super ego. He understands Ahab's pursuit as senseless efforts to hunt down his opponent the white whale, representative of God, an inscrutable and all powerful being that human kind can neither understand nor define.

In Billy Budd, Claggart has an untamed instinct which in psychological term is Freudian id. He fails to control his ideas to ruin Billy's reputation and amputates Billy of having fostered discontent among the crew and having sown the seeds of mutiny. Billy, overwhelmed by the gravity and the falsity of the charge, gives a severe blow to Claggart who falls down dead. In Billy's case the focus is on Captain Vere. He becomes the central figure as he has to decide the fate of Billy in the hands of Vere. Captain Vere falls in a great dilemma. Thus, Captain Vere represents Freudian ego. He struggles with his conscience to decide between the letter of the law and his own view of Billy. He makes balance between id and super-ego. He knows the necessity of revealing judgment about what is right and wrong, good or bad bothers Vere. On the one hand, his private conscience urges him to forgive

Billy and right on the other hand, the military law demands a different decision from him.

Herman Melville's characters are his outstanding creation. The characters in his novels *Moby Dick* and *Billy Budd*, have some similarities but different in many ways. Melville has shown some psychological elements such as obsession, hate, envy and pride in his characters. Captain Ahab and Claggart are obsessed with a single idea of taking down their enemies. Ahab turns into an evil man while Claggart is innately evil. Claggart's fundamental evil does not rest in him. He becomes enslaved to his own evil ideas when he finally prepares himself to ruin Billy, condemning him with lies to his face. Billy has no other idea to defend himself except a deadly blow towards Claggart. The master-at-arms, Claggart dies. In *Moby Dick*, the very thing that contributes to Ahab's psychotic delusion is his obsession to seek revenge. He stabs the White Whale with his harpoon, claiming victory over the Whale. Thus he becomes entangled up in his own rope and plunges to death into the unfathomable sea. However, Ahab and Claggart find their own peace of mind in this act and without realizing its consequences they create meaningless lives for themselves. The intensity of hate and envy drive them into a senseless attempt. In *Moby Dick* the White Whale and *Billy Budd*, the sailor, both exhibit qualities of magnificence and strength that Ahab and Claggart do not possess. Claggart feels jealous of Billy's good looks while Ahab hates the monstrous who has snatched his freedom and mastery over his world. Ahab deeply involves, and thus he tries to get into the mind of the Whale. He constantly follows his antagonist and takes his job seriously. Ahab makes strategy before his crew members who also join Ahab in his mad pursuit. He openly displays his purpose to kill the White Whale that has

shattered his life. Claggart in *Billy Budd*, do not have clear ideas. He has a mysterious nature. Melville himself had a bit of mystery in his own personal character and he shows this quality through his character such as Claggart. Herman Melville had a strong desire to reveal the complexities of human life, so mystery was often a trait of his characters. Throughout the story, Melville does not give any clue about Claggart's thinking, and thus creates an air of mystery about his character. Besides Melville's mysterious nature, his stubbornness comes out through his character of Captain Vere in *Billy Budd*.

Thus it clearly proves that the most important aspect of Melville's characterization is his psychological approach to his characters. His treatment of character is psychological. Melville is not content merely with the description of outer or superficial details of his characters. For him, the most important aspect of a character is his inner or mental state. He has a deep psychological insight into his characters.

Herman Melville is one of the most well known writers of the nineteenth century America. His works show a super insight of human nature. His main interest in his novels is psychological, an insight into and an understanding of characters by means of analysis. His main characters are often tormented and have preoccupation with human fate. In *Moby Dick* and *Billy Budd*, Melville has created characters like Ahab and Billy Budd who share a common bond with the characteristics inherent to all men, and because of this, every man can relate to the characters. They have strengths and weaknesses along with desires and flaws, but each also has his own internal conflict which makes them real people.

Herman Melville's novels have unique qualities which deal mainly with social, moral and religious issues. His writings show his recklessness, his desire to find out some kind of truth in human affairs. The religious, social and mythological aspects in his novels have great importance, in which Melville shows his concern about the existence of the individual and society, about truth and justice. He focuses on the problem of the individual. Through his fictional characters, Melville attempts to explore the reality in life. He reveals his belief and disbelief in religion and society, where an individual becomes the victim of injustice in order to follow the cruel laws.

In *Moby Dick*, Melville has presented Ahab as the opponent of God. Ahab rejects all religion. His monomaniacal quest has replaced his need for any religion and along with it, has also taken his ability to effectively assimilate in to society. This continually shows himself as a man concerned with a single unvarying mission. The more he comes closer to reaching *Moby Dick*, the more he becomes unsociable. He does not involve in any social and religious meeting.

Moby Dick portrays Melville as a rebel against the inhumanity of man to man in society. In this work, Melville rejects the established social values and the religion in favour of total freedom. In his last novel *Billy Budd*, though he appears as a rebel, there is no total rejection of society and of religion. He accepts the necessity of peace and harmony based on established laws.

Herman Melville's characters, in his novels, get a chance to emerge from the shell of the inner world and become part of it, or at least interact with the outer world. Moral realism, society and religion also exist in his novels so

there is a conflict between the inner self and the outer world as the characters get involved in the maze of good and evil. Herman Melville's books have received a world-wide acclaim not because of the marine adventure, but owing to the interesting study of man and his predicament in the world of evil, both natural and human.

The conflict between good and evil runs throughout in his novels *Billy Budd* and *Moby Dick*. Claggart's false charge displeases Billy and consequently, by mistake he kills Claggart with forceful whap. In this case Captain Ahab and Billy are not liable for their wickedness but it is the scene and situation which stimulate them to be accused of sin. The oppressive nature of clamorous White Whale and vicious Claggart produces evil in Ahab and Billy. They are in revolt against the existence of evil itself. The vivacious White Whale is the source of all evil in the eyes of Ahab as well as the unpardonable Claggart is the cause of evil for Billy. Their ways are different to fight against evil. Ahab's encounter with evil is preplanned but Billy remains totally unaware about his attack on Claggart. Ahab takes a long time to destroy this evil and Billy's unintentional blow shows ground to the master-at-arms within a minute. Billy abruptly raises his hand and the curtain falls. Ahab has evil intensions for the White Whale and Billy is wholly good and has not had any evil idea for Claggart. He is innocent and lacks the knowledge of good and evil but under the evil influence there comes a little bit of evil in him. Evil emerges automatically because where the power of demonic forces are increased, the situation across all the positive planes of existence begins to worse. Good and evil forces are opposed to each other, there is always conflict between two. The balance

fluctuates over time and is never constant. Its effects are felt across all the regions of the universe.

In *Billy Budd*, Melville journeys into the deep recesses of man's soul and comes out with the feelings, he himself was not aware of. He has become reconciled to the presence of evil in the world. He no longer rages against it. The primary concern of his writings show man's best living in harmony with the society and God. In *Billy Budd*, Melville re-examines the theme of his earlier works and now he has written a Testament of Acceptance. Melville had always been fascinated by the evil and sufferings of this world and he had desired that God should win over evil, but in *Billy Budd*, where a new note of reconciliation- a compromise between the good and the evil. There should be a balance between the two extremes. If this balance is destroyed one consumes the other. Good and evil both are integral and important parts of human life. Balance is necessary. His last work deals with such balance. Billy, who represents goodness, is consumed by evil. He is destroyed, yet in the end, it is the good that triumphs over evil. It is not Claggart but Billy who is remembered after his death. Melville wants to show Billy as a saint and a martyr who becomes a legend after his death. Melville thought that good can never die. *Billy Budd* suggests that in defeat lies victory.

This comparison to the biblical story also helps to demonstrate how Billy is a parallax to the good and evil in the world. In the beginning of the novel, Melville presents Billy as a good man but in the end Billy strikes Claggart down and destroys the evil. The world is full of good and evil and there is no good way to fight it, but in the end the unavoidable might be the only way to defeat the evil. Melville gives Billy superhuman qualities and portrays

Claggart with antagonistic qualities to demonstrate conflict between good and evil.

Billy Budd is not simply a tale of good versus evil, but a tale of liberalism versus conservatism of freedom and rights versus authority and law. James E. Miller writes,

“His reputation borne out by his behaviour aboard ship is that of a peacemaker, one who can miraculously transfigure hate and hostility into admiration and love.”¹

Indeed, this reputation of Billy draws a noticeable amount of envy and hostility from the character of Claggart who falsely accuses Billy of planning to commit mutiny. The only answer to which Billy can provide is a blow so powerful that it kills Claggart on the spot. Billy accepts Vere's judgment and is hanged from the mainmast, the spar of which is so significant for the common sailor that they keep it for years, ‘as a piece of the cross.’ Billy's hanging from the main yard, is in itself significant. If Vere's characterization is neutral, unbiased judge is representative of god, and then Vere has no choice symbolically to use the mainmast as the site of execution. The nature of this symbolism, coupled with Billy's aforementioned acceptance of the judgment of Vere, solidifies Billy's place as a Christ-like figure in the novel.

Billy's ‘crucifixion’, while symbolic, is meaningless. Unlike Christ, Billy's death has no real significance for mankind; though Ray B. writes,

“Billy's death creates a new myth in the death of the old, that Billy Budd is an example of how the new birth will come, wining for mankind a unity such as they knew under Christianity”,²

There is no concrete evidence in the text to support this, and it simply leaves with the death of Billy and its short, inconsequential aftermath.

The tension between good and evil exists everywhere; people face it every day in some form or another. For Melville's Billy, his own goodness made him victim of the more powerful forces of evil in Claggart. Had Billy been a more mature sailor, more familiar with the characters of men, more aware of the dangers around him, he would not have been placed in a situation when physical violence was his only means of getting out. Likewise, if he was an older, more experienced sailor, he probably would not have had the same position as favourite among the crew, nor would he have been such a tempting target for the malicious Claggart. It is the in-born good and evil in each of these characters that creates the tension which drives the story. More than a story of a sailor, more than a story of two men at odds, it is a story about the most basic instincts of human nature, and the resistance that forms when two such oppositions are forced together.

Melville's use of first-person narrative is reflective. The narrator is, in some way or the other, a fictionalized portrait of the author himself; but even so, he is never quite the same as the author. Melville is the hero in the novel *Moby-Dick* as he himself narrates the stories of his experiences. James E. Miller says,

“The first entire moment of ‘*Moby Dick*’ is devoted not to the protagonist Ahab but to the narrator Ishmael.”³

His last novel *Billy Budd* is different from these novels. *Billy Budd* is third-person narrative. Melville narrates the story through the character of Billy, a sailor on the *Bellipotent*.

The language that Melville has used is suggestive and symbolic and full of brilliant evocative power. Melville's art of symbolism has given a new form to his writings. His novels are equipped with clusters of symbolism. He has so beautifully and rationally been succeeded in giving symbols in his writings that each and every symbol seems proper and invites the readers for the profound studies. Although he has been cautious in this art but we can say that the use of symbolism in his novels is inappropriate and irrational, because various symbols as dealing with one thing or character make it difficult to find the exact meaning of the novel. Melville's uses of symbols are appropriate and inappropriate, rational and irrational. His writings are heavily layered with symbolism. The greatest books rise from such great depths that they underline all the levels common to humanity in all times and climes. In the Bible, in Shakespeare, a single reading is not sufficient to grasp the complete meaning of a passage or a chapter. So with Herman Melville's novels, a single reading stirs the depths of human emotion but it is not enough to discover all the meaning hidden in the stories. In *Billy Budd*, Billy symbolizes pure good and Claggart as pure evil. Billy's innocence symbolizes Adam before the fall and at the end Jesus Christ. The scene of Billy's hanging is also quite symbolic. The absence of the spasmodic movement which is always notice in the body of a man who is hanged it shows Billy as an extra ordinary man. He is an angel, who came to the earth as an emissary of god, and having accomplished his mission, has departed from the earth to heaven. In *Moby Dick*, the white whale symbolizes as an agent of God, whom He has sent to destroy an evil man like Ahab. On the last day of the chase, the White whale fiercely attacks on Ahab and his crew. They all drown and perish except Ishmael. He holds the coffin and saves himself. The coffin symbolizes death but for Ishmael it

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proves as a lifebuoy. Ishmael escapes as the only survivor on the ship to narrate the whole story.

Herman Melville is one of the major writers of the nineteenth century American fiction. He is one of the greatest novelists that American literature has ever produced. His place in the main-stream of American fiction does not rest on the quantity of his work, but on the quality of his works. His contribution to the nineteenth century fiction has been noteworthy.

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