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- Babu Ram Ghimire

Power Politics: Unveiling Political Incongruities in Herman Melville's *Billy Budd*

Power Politics: Unveiling Political Incongruities in Herman Melville's *Billy Budd*

A Thesis

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By

Babu Ram Ghimire

University Campus

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Central Department of English

Approval Letter

This thesis entitled "Power Politics: Unveiling Political Incongruities in Herman Melville's *Billy Budd*", submitted to the Central Department of English Tribhuwan University by Babu Ram Ghimire has been approved by the under signed members of the research committee.

Members of Research Committee:

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Internal Examiner

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External Examiner

.....

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Head

Central Department of English

Tribhuwan University

Date:

TRIBHUWAN UNIVERSITY

Central Department of English

Letter of Recommendation

Mr. Babu Ram Ghimire has completed his thesis entitled “Power Politics: Unveiling Political Incongruities in Herman Melville’s *Billy Budd*” under my supervision. I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for viva voce.

.....

Mr. Krishna Sapkota

Supervisor

Date.....

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Abstract

This dissertation does the connotative study of Herman Melville's *Billy Budd* in the light of Foucauldian notion of power and discourse to examine the power relations and to uncover the manipulation of authoritarian use of power. It highlights the nature of power politics and its intricate nexus with state apparatus like military and judiciary thereby unveiling the corrupt nature of its representatives who most often create various discourses that are purpose oriented for accomplishing personal goals. Basically they deploy discourse of order, discipline, mutiny and patriotism in order to exploit the junior ones. The research highlights the persecution of Billy Budd who has been victimized by his senior. Thus, it asserts that although laws are necessary, however, in the novel they are manipulated in such a way that justice remains outside the law.

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I. Unmasking the Underlying Dialectics of Authoritarian Construction of Discourses in *Billy Budd*

This project on Herman Melville's *Billy Budd* seeks to explore the power play of the authorities in the light of the Foucauldian discourse and power. It deals with the role and effects of power in shaping the individual and social life thereby highlighting the damages on the lives of three main characters. It subverts the ethos of rationally loaded logic of power politics by exposing the relationship between powerful and powerless to deconstruct conventional belief on truth and power. Superficially Captain Vere is exercising power over Billy Budd and other characters whose fortune in turn is determined by Billy Budd finally. Vere's exercise of power over Billy proves to be futile. In this line the research excavates the negative consequences of the political use of power, exemplifying the accusation and execution of Billy Budd as the distortions of power play. These calamitous consequences are the byproducts of the discourse of authoritarian power-politics that declares itself to be reasonable and discards one's right to live freely.

Furthermore, almost all the characters in the novel are entangled in the complex web of power thereby involving in the crime of conspiracy. Captain Vere pushes his private feelings in the background and rigorously upholds the military law. He is aware of the innocence of Billy Budd but believes that all things considered the letter of the law must be implemented. The two dimensional caricature shown by the characters have nexus with the reservoir of power politics and these are the instances of power being used negatively or politically which has so many other negative consequences. The thesis further reveals the nature of state apparatus like military and judiciary that ignore the individuals looking only at the interest of a class or a group among citizens. It also exposes how the government officials distort and twist actual

historical facts reporting Billy as a potential mutineer who was executed in time thereby eulogizing the villain and villainizing the innocent.

As with many great works of literature, it is important to become familiar with the author's life and time period in which he or she lived. This understanding helps to clarify the significance and meaning of his or her work. In many ways, *Billy Budd* depicts issues of importance to Herman Melville with both direct and indirect parallels to the time of the Civil War and to particular individuals of Melville's life. Important to the creation of *Billy Budd* were the war, current politics, slavery, and even the assassination of President Lincoln. One can identify the analogous relationship between these incidences and the particular individuals of Melville's life that inspired him to write *Billy Budd*. Melville lived a life that was inevitably centered on war and politics. His grandparents were fighters during the Revolutionary War and Melville's age was forty-two when the Civil War erupted. Melville also spent a large part of his life as a sailor. Although he never participated in the war in any official capacity, we see evidence of how the Civil War was of glaring significance in his life by examining *Billy Budd* and most of his other works. Politics becomes an important factor in the life of Herman Melville. Although never voted he held tenaciously to his socio-political opinions. During that time, it was common for politics to be a big topic of family discussion. Around them major dissension existed between the Democrats and the Republicans. Also, families lived and behaved according to a particular faction's ideals. The Melville family generally shared the same political beliefs.

One important influence on Melville during his life was General George Brinton McClellan. Melville was impressed by his political character and his heroic acts during the war. McClellan exemplified outstanding leadership tactics during a

crucial time of battle. Most captivating to Melville was his charm and attractiveness that made people wanted to follow and listen to him. This directly parallels Billy Budd the “Handsome Sailor” who the other sailors naturally loved. He was attractive and reasonable and it is believed that this is representative of Melville’s perception of McClellan. Another important political figure in Melville’s life that closely parallels a character in *Billy Budd* is General Morgan Dix. Similar to the relationship between Billy Budd and Captain Vere, Melville had reason to both hate and love Dix. Showing two faces of love and betrayal, Dix used under-the-table influence to help Melville. It was that same influence, however, that required him to make a harsh decision and act against him. Vere, who grew to love Billy, was also responsible for calling the trial which led to Billy’s execution. The persecution suffered by a man named William E. Ormsby represents Billy’s execution. Ormsby, after being seduced by a couple of women and becoming drunk, allowed himself to be captured, causing officials to question his allegiance to the Union cause. He was tried and ordered to be executed in front of the entire brigade. Chaplain Charles A. Humphreys prayed beside him and Ormsby was then shot to death as he sat on his coffin. This form of punishment had huge impact on the other men and obviously impressed Melville. It is apparently a direct parallel to the trial and execution of Billy Budd.

There are a multitude of evidence that says that *Billy Budd* deals with the struggle between powerful and powerless relating it to the war and politics of that time. This is lightly depicted in *Billy Budd* when the sailors who mutinied at Spithead and the Nore are later praised by the British nation. Herman Melville, one of America’s greatest authors, is best remembered as a creator of *Billy Budd*, a novel that heralded a triumph of nineteenth century American fiction. Born in New York City in 1819 to a family of both English and Dutch ancestry Herman Melville enjoyed a child

amid the comforts and security of relatively well-to-do family. However, in 1832, the death of his father who had by then gone into bankruptcy left the family subject to the munificence of kind relatives and the assistance of charitable friends. An introduction to *Billy Budd* contends on Melville's sea-faring obligations, which later proved to be a landmark in his literary career. Herman's education did not go much beyond his 15th birthday after which he undertook various jobs, before joining a ship bound for Liverpool as a cabin boy in 1839 (Introduction 1st). The voyage proved to be both romantic and harrowing and was described in his novel *Red burn*. Introduction further holds "the trip also ingrained in him a love for the sea and his eighteen month trip on a whaling ship bound for the South Seas in 1841 provided much of the factual details found in *Moby Dick*". (Introduction I)

Melville is much more than a story teller of adventure on the high seas and on exotic islands. His highly rewarding personal association with Nathaniel Hawthorne and his careful and perceptive reading of Shakespeare, Sir Thomas Browne and Carlyle were instrumental in carrying him beyond romance to the sounding of his own inner depths. Questioning the circumstances of man from traditional, religious, political and philosophical forces, Melville penetrated the masks of appearance and illusion and in the process wrote what is considered one of the major novels of all times, *Moby Dick* (1851). Unfortunately for Melville, this shift from an emphasis on romantic adventure to metaphysics did not bring him financial and critical rewards. Like so many artists who live in their own time, he found that by not accommodating the popular tastes which demanded less thought and more action, his audiences dwindled. Although he attempted to return to his earlier mode of writing as evidenced by *Israel Potter* (1855), he could not produce a type of novel that brought him his

early acclaim. Apart from a collection of short stories published in 1856 in his novel *The Confidence Man* (1857), Melville wrote no further prose.

Since its publication in 1924, Melville's *Billy Budd* has continuously come into the scrutiny of criticism as the most applauded seafaring narrative, an adventure story and sexual paranoia. An introduction to the posthumously published *Billy Budd* emphasizes on Melville's consideration of controversial themes: *Billy Budd* is considered to be among the small masterpieces of American fiction unique in its narrative method, profound in theme and explores such controversial themes as isolated self and the failure of conventional worldly knowledge" (Introduction II). But it is equally important to analyze operation of the power and Billy's untimely death in the novel. Billy dies in order that discipline is maintained in the great navy that protects British against its enemies. Captain Vere in course of justifying his unjust act says: "Billy does not live in an animal instinctive world nature. His life is bound by social laws and particularly by naval laws in the time of war (87). From the very beginning of the Vere seems to be obsessed on the rigid implementation of the naval law. Regarding this issue, Richard Chase states:

Melville identifies himself partly with the lawyer. For example when the lawyer describes himself complacently as one of those unambitious lawyers who never addresses a jury or in any way draws down public applause, the lawyer's complacency is certainly an irony, for Melville himself was by no means complacent about his lack of public applause (147).

The distortion of power comes to its extremity when Captain Vere explains innocent Billy will be acquitted by god at "the last Assizes" but he says: "we proceed under the law of the mutiny Act that demands death for Billy's deeds" (93). Why is Billy

punished if he is really innocent according to Captain Vere, is the main question of my project.

Moreover, the research exposes the motif of power mongers who sell their soul for the sake of their personal benefits and interests thereby making a significant theoretical connection between the pervasive natures of power in general and Foucault's ideas of power being negative when it is used politically. The project also acknowledges the facts that truth is constructed at the intersection of those power relations and the people in power always generate the knowledge about others. This is to say that they make others representations and the representation becomes the discourse and finally the truth. Foucault says:

One can understand what knowledge consists of only examining these relations of struggle power, the manner in which things and men hate one another, fight one another and try to dominate one another to exercise power and thereby to dominate one another to exercise power relation over one another (12).

This idea is completely applicable in *Billy Budd* if we closely approach the text analyzing the dynamic relations that exists between Captain, Claggart and Billy Budd. Each of them has tried hard to overcome the other no matter what tricks they think necessary to play. In this connection it is important to quote Henderson Kincheloe's idea:

Although *Billy Budd* has occasionally been read as a veiled attack the unjust treatment of a hapless man by an impersonal, authorization state, a close reading of the novel makes it seem more likely that Melville's intent was to show, especially through captain Vere that the

protection of a state during a time of war must inevitably involve on occasion the sacrifice of an individual (157).

But this research attempts to highlight how the state representatives have become too much tyrannical to execute an innocent man like Billy. Protection of his right to live the life of freedom must not be forgotten here.

One can see the operating of the power in the novel where the powerful makes everything right even for the wrongs, applying force or wrong reason. This act results in the various distortions in the lives of the characters. In this context, it is quite appropriate to borrow the idea of Milton R. Stern who says:

Immediately, first thing come first and the needs of the man-of-war world take precedence over the needs of the ship of peace. The bitterness of this story's irony and anger first becomes noticeable in the impressments scene. For Ratcliffe who understands none of the things that Vere understands and who can use the gun only in order to use the gun makes the only possible, correct answer for all the wrong reasons (112-14).

It is in accordance with Michel Foucault's idea of power as explained in *Power* that power circulates systematically in the society through various discourses but not coercively: what would be proper to a relationship of power is that it is a mode of action upon actions.

Power relations are rooted deep in the social nexus not as a supplementary structure over and above society. To live in a society is, in any event, live in such a way that some can act on the action of others. A society without power relations can only be an abstraction (Foucault 343). This idea further helps us to see how power

relations have been maintained in the novel. *Billy Budd* arranged in thirty chapters, is the tale of the official naval report on the murder of a seaman and later the persecution of the murderer. In the Beginning of the story Billy Budd is compared by the narrator to a handsome black sailor the one he saw during the 1840s, who solicits admiration for both his well-formed body and his self possessed physical stance. Coming on the Bellipotent, Billy silently accepts his change of fortune. Billy talked of and worshiped from a far but such high praise renders him more mythological than real. This unusual praise of Billy Budd even coming to the Bellipotent, forecasts the forthcoming incongruities of the power play.

Billy, a young sailor, on a British merchant ship is impressed for service on a British warship. He offers no resistance but accepts his new assignment with good will and attempts to be an ideal sailor. He does so because he can't do away with the representatives of the state power. The ship's master-at-arms takes an immediate dislikes to the sailor, plots to cause him trouble and then accuses him to the captain of having plotted mutiny. The question arises here: Why does a responsible representative of a state does like this? This is an example of distortion of power at personal level. It is by accident that Billy happens to kill his senior, is obvious in the novel but still he is never be excused. The captain imprisons him, convenes a court martial, condemns him to death and has him hanged. This is how state power has tormented the innocent Billy and, therefore he dies.

Furthermore, in *Billy Budd*, Melville has presented his characters in individualized portraits whose contrast have delighted analysts over several centuries. However, his characterization engages in a dynamics interchange of beliefs, attitudes, sentiments and other expressions of state of consciousness. His text itself turns out as a discourse in which each character seems to be involving to define the context from

their own perspectives. In addition to this, he employs the meaning of a text as a disguise or substitution for underlying meanings which can be overtly said because they are suppressed by ideological or discursive necessities. This text is conceived as a discourse which seemingly reflects an external reality, in fact consists of what are called representations. These are the verbal formations which are the ideological products of the historical condition specific to an era. It seems in the novel that Melville understands the fact of how people in power produce discourse about those who are seemingly powerless. Many types of discourses have been made about Billy in the text. It is his simple nature and his increasing popularity among the crew members that assisted Claggart to create discourses about him. Billy's oblivion to those less sympathetic to his success proved him to be the failure in the power relationship that exists between and among the main characters in the novel especially Claggart and himself.

Absurdity in the exercise of power is brought out the way in which Claggart, the ship's master-at-arms or police chief is able to plant doubts about Billy's character in Vere's mind. Billy is deliberately presented against a captain who in the light of the recent mutinies on the Nore and Spithead wants to follow the letter of the law to create an example for his crew. Billy has become the victim of this futile plan. Captain Vere focus on the necessary and inevitable consequences of Billy action – capital punishment for a capital crime –comes with the cost of his deeply conflicted conscience. No one can respect for his attention to the law and frustration at his sacrifice of an innocent man. Captain Vere therefore continues to be haunted by the thoughts of the injustice which had been done to Billy. So that even at the time of death he is heard repeatedly murmuring the name of Billy Budd. While exercising power he always thought that he must have absolute control over the crew members,

“the people” (94), he calls them. He insists on drumhead court a guilty verdict and the maximum penalty because of his perception of naval necessity. In this regard this thesis seeks not only to revive the issue of Politics and power play but also to bring into forth the gruesome consequences of this process. The untimely death of young Claggart, Billy Budd’s execution and Captain Vere’s tragedy after the death of the both, are some of the political incongruities of power being used negatively. In order to dig out the hidden power politics, this study draws on those critics who have acknowledged the power s the multiplicity of force relations. It takes into account the notion of power that is ensured not by right but by techniques not by law but by normalization not by punishment but by control; above all these methods are employed on all levels and in forms that go beyond the state and it’s apparatus. Foucauldian notion of power: “the characteristics features of power are that some men can more or less entirely determine other men conducts but never exhaustively or coercively” is also the part of theoretical assistance to this project.

Through Foucauldian approach one can argue that Melville’s portrait in the Novel implies that the truth can never be known as the divergent and contradictory and relative “truths” play about us. We are constrained to think that the difference can not be known. It seems that he was aware of the fact that discursive practices are interwoven with social practices by the circulation of power in which power diffuses itself in systems of authority and the effects of truth are produced within discourses which in themselves are neither true nor false. Truth, then, is itself a product of relations of power and of the systems in which follows, and it changes as systems changes (Foucault 1144). The truth of “the capital punishment for capital crime” in the novel is neither true nor false. It is merely the construction of power where Captain Vere is playing the role of an agent. Scorza, Thomas J. in the *Time Before*

steamships; Billy Budd, the limits of politics and modernity, approaches the political dimension of the novel. He says that Melville's text led him to see modern tragedy as a result of prideful rational philosophy (3).

This project has been classified into three parts to make it easier to understand and acknowledge. In the beginning chapter, the introduction and the objective of the project on Herman Melville's *Billy Budd* have been clarified. To clarify the objective and the significance of the project, different critics and scholars' view on the novel have been taken into account.

II. Interrogating the discourses of authoritarianism and power politics through Foucauldian notion of discourse and power

The present paper seeks to problematize the central relationship between liberalism and rationally loaded logic of power politics in Herman Melville's *Billy Budd* in the light of Foucauldian discourse and power. One can see the true nature of power mongers, who, in the name of security, honor and pride, organize various discourses in order to exercise power over other people. Claggart, one of the representatives of the state has constructed a false discourse of "mutiny" against Billy Budd to exercise power. The political use of power proves to be the root cause of destruction of the lives in the novel. It is by accident that Billy Budd happens to kill his senior:

No there was no malice between us. I never bore malice against the master at arms I am sorry that he is dead. I did not mean to kill him could I have used my tongue I would not have struck him But he foully lied to my face and in presence of my captain and I had to say something and I could say it with a blow, God help me. (86)

If we examine the given lines, it can be said that Billy Budd is completely innocent and his innocence becomes the weak point that assisted Claggart to construct the false discourse of mutiny.

Foucault opines that power becomes negative if it is used politically. He says "Nothing including the exercise of power is evil in itself –but everything is dangerous" (Foucault 337). The apparent neutrality and political invisibility of techniques of power is what makes them so dangerous. Prison and police, Foucault argues work deliberately to create a well defined criminal subclass that will disobey

the state law and may steer counter revolution. Captain Vere who is thought to represent God in most instances, however, expresses his malicious intentions. While observing Claggart's lifeless form he cries out: "struck out by an angel of God yet the angel must hang" (79). Captain Vere, metaphorically the God is forced under law to punish good. Captain Vere formulates his discourse of "an angel" only to exercise power over Billy Budd being guided by malicious intentions.

This thesis seeks to highlight so many distortions of authoritarian power politics to control, dominate and exercise power over those who are innocent and powerless. The relationship between Vere and Billy Budd, if it is to be thought of in a political sense, becomes something like the relationship between powerful and powerless. Under the force of law Vere has become dogmatic and authoritarian who won't move an inch to save Billy's life. It is because he is solely guided by bad intentions of punishing Billy only to satisfy law and his personal desire. As Ray B. Browne writes, the main struggle of the novel is "between Captain Vere as a spokesman and apologist for authority with Claggart serving only as prime mover and Billy, who is [...] the voice of the people in their insistence on their rights" (322). Applying this argument to the narrative greatly changes the dynamics of power relations that exists between these three characters. Now, instead of Claggart being orchestrate of evil, he is only the "prime mover" of an authoritarianism that Captain Vere truly represents. Billy, as the impressed sailor sentenced to hang, becomes the victim of the struggle of freedom against authority. Billy is portrayed from the beginning of *Billy Budd* as a man whom no one could possibly suspect of rebelling against authority; he simply does not have the capacity to consider it. Even in the event of his forced enlistment, he "seemed to take [it] pretty much as he wants to take any vicissitude of weather" (49). He refuses to let himself involve in the gang of

impressed men who may actually be planning a mutiny. And he even refuses to argue in his defense in front of the drumhead court during his trial for killing Claggart. How, then, can we argue that Billy is plotting a mutiny? He clearly does not think beyond what strict British military law grants him.

Moreover, to understand the validity of this argument, we must turn to Captain Vere, whom C. B. Ives states, “sometimes... in the role of God the Father, and sometimes in that of Pontius Pilate; and although as God he has seemed to some critics a representative of Divine Justice, to others he has been the personification of Cosmic Tyranny” (31). One could more easily draw parallels between Vere and God in the novel who hanged Billy not because of the danger of mutiny but to satisfy his superior and maintain his control over people he thinks is ignorant like Billy Budd. It is an example of “cosmic tyranny” (31) as C.B Ives states. It may be just as difficult to characterize Vere as God, based on the historical context of *Billy Budd*. The Articles of War were a “combination of enactments by Parliament and regulations by the Admiralty” (Ives 32). In these articles, it is specifically stated that if any member of the British Navy would strike a superior officer, regardless of motive, they should be sentenced to death. So, even if Billy had not killed Claggart, Vere would still execute him because it is mob psychology of Captain Vere that is working in the novel. The mutinies which had taken place previously the same year made the situation direr giving Captain Vere no choice but facilitating to execute the full penalty of law. Vere does not hang Billy Budd because of any prophetic meaning that this may have for mankind; instead, he does it to appease what he knows is the will of King and country. It is important to quote Vere’s words here:

Well, I too fell that that, the full force of that, it is nature. But do these buttons that we wear attest that our allegiance is to nature? No to the

king [...]. Would it be so much we ourselves that would condemn as it would be martial law and rigor of it, we are not responsible; our vowed responsibility is in this: that however pitilessly that law operate, we nevertheless adhere to it and administer it. (92)

If we closely analyze these lines it seems that Vere frightens as any other Captain would have been at that time of things getting out of hand. Vere, then, may be the representative of Law, but he is not Justice. If he were, he would have commuted Billy's sentence as a result of lack of intent on Billy's part to actually commit a crime. We can finally see, then, that Law, not Vere, is the true God of this novel. Vere is only an instrument of rigid Law to which Billy is subject. Not only this, the extreme tensions surrounding these events like French revolution and "great mutinies" in British Navy sets the entire plot of *Billy Budd* in motion. It is because of the strictness of the law that Vere is forced to execute the naïve and innocent Budd for the murder of a superior officer. Despite the fact that the murder was involuntary and Claggart was the scoundrel.

The present research presents an account of political incongruities with the help of typical characters like Captain Vere and Billy Budd. Billy was executed for two reasons; less important was that his one involuntary act of temper killed an officer, but more important is that Billy was too naïve and innocent to realize what he was up against. His lack of knowledge of evil and his inferior position in the ship helped Claggart make the "discourse of mutiny" plot against innocent Billy. As Foucault asserts in *Power*:

Power is not a substance. Neither is it a mysterious property whose origin must be delved into. Power is only a certain type of relation between individuals [...] the characteristic features of power is that

some men can more or less entirely determine other men's conducts
but never exhaustively or coercively. (324)

It is Captain Vere who determines the fortunes of Billy Budd. In the version of the world presented by *Billy Budd*, it seems that liberty can never be victorious against a more powerful force which does not wish liberty to exist. Billy Budd, representative of both Christ and personal freedom, is left with a dwindling legacy.

Foucault says that power is not always a matter of consent. In itself, it is not the renunciation of freedom, a transfer of right or power of each and all delegated to a few. The relationship of power may be an effort of a prior of permanent consent but it is not by nature the manifestation of consensus. In this line the abuse of power and corrupting nature of the people in authority is unveiled while analyzing the act of Billy's impressment in the beginning of the novel. Impressments become the common practices of seizing men against their will for service in a navy or an army at that time. This practice becomes an important issue in the novel after an officer of the *Indomitable* impresses Billy Budd when he is serving aboard the *Rights-of-Man*, a merchant ship. Budd himself does not protest his impressments, not out of a thirst for new adventure. Squarely he can't resist because he is junior in the position. So the act of mutiny in itself is an example of power being used negatively which causes distortion in the lives of the main character in the novel. So, Budd is mustered into service aboard the *Indomitable* to man the foretop a platform at the top of a mast nearest the bow of the ship. When an officer inquires about his family background, Budd says he does not know where he was born or who his parents were. "But I have heard that I was found in a pretty silklined basket hanging one morning from the knocker of a good man's door in Bristol"(2); Billy Budd says. This proves the utter innocence of Billy Budd who is unsophisticated, innocent in the ways of the world

because he was never formally educated, he cannot read or write. But his other qualities make him an asset aboard a ship. He has only noticeable debility in his dealings with others. He tends to stutter when experiencing strong emotions. Billy Budd has his flaws, including his stammer and lack of education. John Claggart is his opposite. In him, the narrator says: “was the mania of an evil nature, not engendered by vicious training or corrupting books or licentious living, but born with him and innate (15). Thus the novel echoes an original Biblical match up. Whether good defeats evil, or vice versa, is a matter of interpretation. It is clear that the struggle between the individuals is never-ending. It is acted out again and again everywhere—even in the middle of an ocean. The outcome of this struggle is the victimization of the powerless. This exactly has happened in the novel. Billy Budd is an innocent man who is pronounced guilty in a court-martial. John Claggart is a guilty man who is pronounced innocent in a naval chronicle.

Foucault says that social and political power works through discourses. He regards discourses as the controlling mechanism. In the text for example the discourses of “bravery”, “fair mindedness” and “patriotism” have been used in order to exercise power over the powerless people. The commander of the *Indomitable* is Captain Edward Fairfax Vere loves reading books especially the books of biography history and works that honestly comment or philosophize on the realities of life. His “discourse of bravery” and “fair mindedness” has no other purpose than to enforce the naval laws rigidly. In conversations, he sometimes alludes to literature with which his less educated listeners are unfamiliar, not realizing that his allusions fly over their heads. He just creates discourse of his own knowledge that ladders him to the state of a ruler. It is important to quote Michel Foucault’s idea from his *Truth and Power*: “discourse is simply a way of representing something. Once discourse is created

knowledge about some aspect of life is provided. This knowledge becomes the truth when approved by the power. But Foucault also says that such truth is neither true nor false. Discourse produces knowledge that becomes truth because of the position of power from which it is produced. He shows that social and political power works through discourse (Foucault 128). For a new historicist like Foucault no discourse by itself can adequately explain the complex cultural dynamics of social power:

There is instead, a dynamic, unstable interplay among discourses; they are always in a state of flux, overlapping and competing with one another in any number of ways at any given point in time.

Furthermore, no discourse is permanent. Discourses wield power for those in charge, but they also stimulate opposition to that power.

(Tyson 285)

One can argue that it is Captain Vere's rationality in the novel that is enforcing to create discourses about other characters; especially he uses discourse to control Billy Budd. Though Captain Vere attends the welfare of his men, he frowns on even the tiniest breach of the disciplinary code. When Claggart accuses Billy Budd of planning mutiny, Captain Vere doubts Claggart's veracity. Nevertheless, he summons both men to his cabin to allow Claggart to level his charge and Budd to respond to it. The first three letters of his surname are also the first three letters of Verus, the Latin word for Truth. But again he is also afraid to tell the Truth to his crewmen and the world after Billy hangs. His truth is no other than the authoritative representation; a construction. It changes when Captain Vere loses his position in the ship.

The discourse of patriotism is used throughout the novel only to exercise power over innocent people. Melville here seems to reject the discourse of patriotism as evident in: "In these instances in these days the character of this unfortunate man

signally refutes, if refutations were needed that peevish saying attributed to the late Dr Johnson, that patriotism is the last refuge of scoundrel “(120). It is further said:

Like some other events in every age befalling states everywhere including America, the great mutiny was of such character that national pride along with views of policy would fain shade it off into the historical background. Such events can not be ignored, but there is a considerate way of historically treating them. (18)

While analyzing these lines, one can become clear of the facts that it is more important to save Billy’s life than to execute him for the sake of Vere’s personal benefits. There is a considerate way of treating Billy for his crime.

Foucault concedes that power is multiplicity of force relation. Any type of relation is power. It is not static rather a process of strengthening. Power is all-pervasive and originated from everywhere. Foucault believes in power as creative which determines truth of a particular period of history (1133). The pervasiveness of power is evident while analyzing the way Billy Budd has been drawn to relationship of power politics. In the novel Captain Vere has become able to construct truth about Billy Budd and other crew members. It is evident in his words:

To steady us a bit, let us recur to the facts. In war times at sea a man-of-war’s- man strikes his superior in grade and the blow kills. Apart from its effects the blow itself is, according to the Articles of War, a capital crime. We proceed under the law of the Mutiny Act. In feature no child can resemble his father than that Act resembles in spirit the thing from which it derives-war. (93-94)

The so called truth here is that Billy Budd kills Claggart and he must be killed in turn. But the question is: Does that guarantee justice to the victimized? Vere's actions are guided by some more powerful person or power as evident:

IN His Majesty's service-in this ship indeed-there are Englishmen forced to fight for the king against their will. Against their conscience, for aught we know. Though as their fellow creatures some of us may appreciate their position, yet as navy officers, what reck us of it? Still less recks the enemy. (94)

Captain Vere's actions have no purpose of social welfare but it is just to follow supreme power of which he himself is the victim. It is evident if we closely examine his speeches and his activities in the mouth of the death. He dies by uttering Billy's name: "Billy Budd, Billy Budd" upon whom he had once imposed injustice.

Foucault argues that power becomes negative when it is used politically. Billy Budd gets along well with his shipmates and does a good job as foretop man. He is careful about arriving for duty on time, especially after witnessing the flogging of a young seaman who was absent from his post during a change in the ship's course. The sight of the red welts on the fellow's back makes him resolve never to commit an infraction warranting such a punishment. However, while trying hard to stay out of trouble, he finds himself the object of a "vague threat" (36) from one of the ship's corporals over trivial matters such as "the stowage of his bag or something amiss in his hammock" (38). The threat vexes him, for he really does not understand what, if anything, he did wrong. The old fellow says Claggart's manner is simply his way of hiding his true intentions. The question is: why does Claggart function like that? It may be that he is envious and jealous of naïve Billy Budd whom he seeks to overcome by abusing his post of a police officer. There exists complex power-relation

between the two. Budd, as previously mentioned, is an innocent, benevolent young man. Claggart is his opposite. He was born with “the mania of an evil nature” (46), the narrator says apparently, when he sees goodness, he wants to destroy it. He abhors innocence. Is it possible that Claggart envies Billy for his good looks and charisma? The narrator answers this question:

If askance he eyed the good looks, cheery health and frank enjoyment of young life in Billy Budd, it was because these went along with a nature that, as Claggart magnetically felt, had in its simplicity never willed malice or experienced the reactionary bite of that serpent [...] at times assumed that of cynic disdain –disdain of innocence-to be nothing more than innocence! (49)

. This is how power has been operated in the novel. Every character in the novel is trying to get control over the other but is not entirely successful. This has caused the big destruction in the lives of three main characters in the novel is the main argument. Claggart plans conspiracy against Billy. Wondering what the sailor was proposing, Billy again consults with the Dansker. The old Denskar tells Budd that afterguardsman is Claggart's errand boy but says little more about him. It is by now clear to the reader that Claggart was trying to get Billy to agree to participate in mutiny in order to entrap him. Claggart deliberately tries to blackmail the innocent Billy. In chapter-15 he says “We are not the only impressed ones, Billy. There's a gang of us.—Couldn't you—help—at a pinch?” (55). But Billy remains confused about the intentions of the after guardsman “I don't know what you are d-d-driving at, or what you mean, but you had better g-g-go where you belong!” (55). Knowingly or unknowingly he opposes Claggart's proposal as a form of resistance from the part of the powerless Billy.

The power that applies to everyday life categorizes the individuals, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him that he must recognize and others have to recognize in him (Foucault 331). In the novel the truth of capital punishment is imposed upon Billy that he must confirm. In this way there exists the complex power relation between and among the main characters in the novel. Budd's benevolence is a ruse, he maintains. "Not for nothing does he insinuate himself into the good will of his shipmates," Claggart says, "since at the least all hands will at a pinch say a good word for him at all hazards" (69). The accusation astonishes Vere equally because he believes Billy is an asset to the ship. Vere says, "Now, Master-at-arms, tell this man to his face what you told of him to me" (76). Claggart then repeats his accusation. The lie so overcomes Billy emotionally that he "stood like one impaled and gagged" (76) and he temporarily loses his ability to speak. He cannot even stutter a reply. Desperate to save his reputation, he responds with a fist that strikes the master-at-arms squarely in the forehead. Claggart falls "like a heavy plank lets out a gasp or two, and lies still" (77). This comes as an effect of power linked with knowledge, competence and qualification. Most importantly this is an example of resistance against the mystifying representation imposed on him. Moreover, Vere's artificial sympathy towards Billy "Fated boy, what have you done?" (78) is one of the tactics of exercising power. As Foucault says:

relations of power are not external; they are the internal conditions of differentials, they immanent in economic processes for example knowledge relation, sexual relation[...] power is exercised with a series of aims and objectives but it does not result from the individual choices. (72)

Although Vere sympathizes with Billy “struck dead by an angel of god” (79) he orders a trial in his cabin. The surgeon and other officers believe that the captain should wait until the matter can be brought to the attention of the admiral of the British fleet, from which the *Indomitable* became separated while chasing the frigate. But Vere prefers to go ahead with the trial in as much secrecy as possible in order to avoid stirring ideas of mutiny among malcontents. Vere holds the power to utilize solely for his own purpose. Billy tries to resist but fails to do so because he is comparatively less powerful to defend himself. So he does not have power to establish a new discourse in his favor. He has become the victim of Vere’s abuse of power.

Furthermore it is equally important to analyze the role of judiciary in the novel as power is exercised with the support of multitude of institutions. There are individualizing “tactics” that is characterized by a series of powers; those of family, education, medicine, psychiatry and employers (Foucault 335). In the novel a court-martial is quickly convened. Sitting in judgment are three men selected by Vere: the first lieutenant, the captain of marines, and the sailing master. First, Vere presents his testimony, repeating Claggart's accusation and Budd's reaction to it. When Budd testifies, he says: “Captain Vere tells the truth. It is just as Captain Vere says, but it is not as the Master-at-arms said. I have eaten the King's bread and I am true to the King” (86). After the trial, When Vere confers with the panel of three men, he says: that reason must prevail over “warm hearts” (94). In other words, they must abide by imperial law. The junior lieutenant asks, "Can we not convict and yet mitigate the penalty?" (94).The captain replies that showing leniency would send the wrong message to the impressed seamen:

They would think that we flinch, that we are afraid of them—afraid of practicing a lawful rigor singularly demanded at this juncture lest it

should provoke new troubles. What shame to us such a conjecture on their part and how deadly to discipline? You see then whither, prompted by duty and the law, I steadfastly drive. But I beseech you, my friends, do not take me amiss. I feel as you do for this unfortunate boy. But did he know our heart; I take him to be of that generous nature that he would feel even for us on whom in this military necessity so heavy a compulsion is laid. (95)

While analyzing the given lines, it can be argued that Captain Vere's decision comes from a very heavy compulsion that is he too is guided by some other more powerful power. He is not free to decide on his own. Melville is trying to hint at the State power as Foucault says in his *The Subject and Power*:

Power relations have come more and more under state control. Using here the restricted meaning of the word government, one would say that power relations have been progressively governmentalized i.e. elaborated, rationalized and centralized in the form of state institutions. (345)

The government in the novel has become a complex system whose function is the taking of everything under its swing, to be a global overseer the principle of regulation and the distributor of all power relations in a given context.

The exercise of power is neither a naked fact, an institution given, nor it a structure that holds out or smashed. Nevertheless, we should not forget that in eighteenth century the police force was invented not only for maintaining law and order but also for assuring urban supplies, and standards considered necessary for handicraft and commerce (Foucault 334). It is historically important that Billy was killed in

accordance with State's will to maintain law and order and not because he was guilty of a murder. In this way Billy was convicted and sentenced to hang in the morning. After Vere tells Budd of the verdict and sentence, he informs the crew of the death of Claggart and of the court-martial, the verdict, and the sentence. He does not mention the charge of mutiny is also the product of his malicious intentions. The distortion of power play here is that Vere single mindedly formulates the decision to execute Billy, discarding what other people are suggesting him to do. Though, believing Budd is innocent of mutiny and free of any intent to kill. Claggart, Vere quickly convenes a drumhead court to try Budd, who is convicted and hung the next morning.

One set of jurisprudential questions centers on the justice of Budd's Conviction and his execution. Budd is an extraordinarily sympathetic Character. He is happy-go-lucky, well-liked, and devoid of cynicism or ill will towards others. We know him to be innocent of the charges of mutiny. Claggart's accusations are not only false but malicious, as Claggart is a man controlled by envy, determined to destroy Budd. In short, in purely moral terms, we may view Budd as the innocent party, and Claggart as the guilty one who receives his comeuppance. But then there is the fact, witnessed by the Captain himself, that Budd struck and killed a superior officer aboard a warship in plain contravention of enacted law. This set of facts makes a good jumping off point for discussions about the relationship between human-made law and principles of justice that exist independently of convention. In addition, since the action centers on a trial decided by a three-judge panel, the story also provides a ready entree into the related question of how judges should interpret and apply the law. What considerations are relevant to the determination of Budd's guilt or innocence? Is it a matter that Budd may have been morally free of guilt? Are the judges entitled or obliged to consider the justice of Budd's actions, or is their authority limited to strict

application of the letter of the law? Nor must the reader conjure up these themes with imaginative interpretations of obscure text; Melville hand-delivers them. In describing the situation confronting Vere after Claggart's death, for example, Melville writes:

[I]nnocence and guilt personified in Claggart and Budd in effect changed places. . . The essential right and wrong involved in the matter, the clearer they might be, so much the worse for the responsibility of a loyal sea-commander inasmuch as he was not authorized to determine the matter on that primitive basis. (96)

It seems that the narrator describes Captain Vere as fair-minded and courageous. But he betrays himself, Billy, and the truth when he persuades the court-martial panel to find Billy guilty in order to forestall any thoughts of mutiny among the crewmen. After Red Whiskers harasses Billy Budd on the *Rights-of-Man*, "Quick as lightning Billy let fly his arm [against Red Whiskers]," the narrator says. "I dare say he never meant to do quite as much as he did, but anyhow he gave the burly fool a terrible drubbing"(77). Billy reacts in the same way when Claggart accuses him of organizing a mutiny. His rash action costs him his life.

The novel in its true sense deals with the everlasting conflict between humanity as represented by Billy and authoritarian politics represented by Captain Vere. Where Budd seems less an actual individual than a symbol of primitive humanity, Vere is the embodiment of political order and strict application of enacted law. He brooks no delay in trying and executing Budd. At the trial, he persuades the judges to consider nothing beyond the bare facts of the matter – that Budd's fist caused Claggart's death – since the applicable law places no weight on intent. Sensing the judges' moral qualms about convicting Budd of a capital crime, Vere argues but in natural justice is nothing but the prisoner's overt act to be considered? How can we

adjudge to summary and shameful death a fellow-creature innocent before God, and whom we feel to be so?

Does that state it aright? You sign sad assent. Well, I too feel that, the full force of that. It is Nature. But do these butt that we wear attest that our allegiance is to Nature? Not, to the King...so little is that true that in receiving our commissions we in the most important regard ceased to be natural free agents. (92)

Vere can be seen as representing public order and the general welfare pitted against Billy, the individual. When the court raises the possibility of mitigating Budd's sentence, Vere counters by noting the potentially dangerous consequences of displaying weakness to the other sailors.

Foucault believes that power is multiplicity of force relation. Any type of relation is power. It is not static rather a process of strengthening. For him power is all pervasive and originated from everywhere. One of the interesting matters in the novel is the mutual respect that Vere and Budd show for each other. When Budd tells the court that Claggart's charges of mutiny were unfounded, Vere jumps in to say "I believe you, my man," prompting Budd to reply "God will bless you for that, Your Honor!"(109). In his last words before hanging, Budd proclaims "God bless Captain Vere," and we are told that Vere's last words before dying of a battle wound were simply "Billy Budd, Billy Budd." The story, then, opens the door to provocative questions at the broadest level about the nature and purposes of law and political community. What makes *Billy Budd* such a decisive text is in it's to approaching these questions. One can easily navigate between the "big" questions and more specific inquiries about the characters themselves. What is the significance of the fact that Budd and Vere seem to respect each other so deeply, despite their strikingly different

characters, and Vere's role in bringing about Budd's hasty execution? Why does Claggart so detest Budd? If Budd represents primitive humanity and Vere civilization, then does Claggart represent the risks of corruption and arbitrary power inherent in the establishment of government? And how should one feel about Budd's death? Does Budd's execution amount to the unjust slaying of an innocent man? If so, does this injustice represent something vital that is inevitably sacrificed in the name of political order? Can Budd's homicide be justified on the grounds of self-defense? The story also provides an easy entree into questions about criminal responsibility and the purposes of punishment. In a digression chapter of one page, Melville even alludes to the "intricacies involved in the question of moral responsibility; whether in a given case, say the crime proceeded from the mania in the brain or rabies in the heart." Indeed, Vere's own Sanity is repeatedly drawn in question.

Not only this, we have in the novel a juridical system designed to establish misdemeanors, to determine who committed them, and to sanction these acts by imposing the penalties prescribed by the law. These established facts have penalized the innocence. The awkward punishment imposed upon Billy exemplifies the distortion of power play. *Billy Budd, Sailor* is evidently an extremely divisive text when one considers the amount of dissension and disagreement it has generated critically. Some people may argue that Vere's condemnation as a necessary military action performed in the name of preserving the political order on board the *Bellipotent*. But this thesis seeks to illustrate that Billy Budd's execution is the greatest example of injustice. In this sense it is a text that deals with the consequences of power being used negatively and also that the society has functioned basically through the power relation that exists between individuals. Here we have a story about

two murders. Billy obviously kills Claggart and Vere kills Budd. Both of their action seems to be resulting from their attempts to gain power over one another.

Obviously the exercising of power relations does not exclude the use of violence any more than it does the obtaining of consent. The violence has become the instrument of exercising power in *Billy Budd*. This political use of power is resulted in so many distortions. The distortion of power play comes in the extremity when Vere executes Billy. Surely, Captain Vere executes Billy Budd in order to gain some kind of sick pleasure. In this sense punishment is the means to gratification for him. Vere employs interprets and adapts a procedure of punishment for Billy Budd. A procedure that is prescribed by law, but which is inflicted in what Foucault writes:

Punishment as a declaration of war and a war measure against an enemy of peace, of the law, of order, of the authorities, whom, as a danger to the community, as one who has broken the contract that defines the conditions under which it exists, as a rebel, a traitor, and breaker of the peace, one opposes with the means of war. (106)

Vere, regardless of how he personally feels, as a military disciplinarian, he sees Billy as a transgressor and enemy of the peace of his ship. Billy's action has never upset the law, order and authority of his community on board the *Bellipotent*, but still Vere punishes him. This is essentially how punishment works in human culture, and how it works in *Billy Budd*. It has become a means of personal gratification for military disciplinarian like Captain Vere. In accordance to the action of Vere, ideally the punishment should cause a "sting of conscience". The text of *Billy Budd, Sailor* confirms this. Indeed, locking someone in a filthy prison for committing a crime seldom causes that person to really feel remorse for their crime. Punishment generally

makes people hard and indifferent. In the act of punishing, the punisher is placed in a position of power over the punished.

Where there is power there is resistance and yet this resistance is never in position of exteriority in relation to power. There is plurality of resistance each of them a special case (Foucault 149). This power vs. powerless relationship alienates the guilty one and alienation strengthens the power of resistance. By resistance Foucault means the act of opposing the force which seeks to impose a feeling of guilt. Therefore, for someone to feel remorse or guilt, they must feel it from within themselves (Foucault 154). The punishment inflicted by others is nothing to the cause. In this sense, punishment and guilt are contradictory forces. In accordance to the action of Vere the punishment is supposed to invoke a feeling of remorse in *Billy Budd* but he has nothing to regret in the novel. Rather punishment has made him harder and indifferent. Billy silently revolts against Vere. We can read Billy's actions resulting from Melvillian doctrine of resistance. It is the punishment that excludes the expression of guilt and remorse in *Billy Budd*.

The story of *Billy Budd* helps one to see man's insatiable desire to punish and requite injuries even through erroneous means. Foucault writes: "We may unhesitatingly assert that it was precisely through punishment that the development of the feeling of guilt was most powerfully hindered" (108). If we conceive of the text of *Billy Budd* everyone "gags" at the death of Billy Budd. The unfair and unjust killing of a sympathetic character doesn't make sense while considering human nature. This can be a serious example of distortion of power play in the novel. However, because envy comes from the heart and not the head, there is little one can do to prevent it from happening? Melville goes further in saying that Claggart's envy strikes deeper than simple jealousy, if jealousy could ever be simple. Claggart's envy is rather a

complicated paradox. He envies Billy because he felt that Billy had never had the types of malicious feelings that Claggart himself is experiencing towards Billy. Claggart is envious of Billy's innocence and how it seems that Billy has never experienced any malevolent thoughts of anyone before. Claggart's natural inclination to these evil thoughts, and "in whom was the mania of an evil nature" (76) makes it easy to mark him as the symbol of Natural Depravity, a symbol that Melville uses to link him to Calvinism and its doctrines.

The discourse of Calvinism has become one of the vehicles of exercising power. The condition is worsening not only from the fact that powerful exercises power over powerful but that he is guided by false ideology and malicious intentions. Captain Vere condemns an innocent man to death. Similar to Christ's death on the cross, Billy dies almost instantaneously and does not suffer any pain. However, prior to his death, he exclaims, "God bless Captain Vere!" (123). Like an overzealous Calvinist, "Claggart sniffs out vice among the seamen" (Coffler 59) particularly looking for faults in Billy Budd. It is hypocritical of Claggart to intentionally look for faults in those around him to make himself feel better. For instance, Claggart finally gets to mouth off to Billy in a condescending fashion in the scene where Billy accidentally spills his soup. The master-at-arms whimsically scoffs, "Handsomely done, my lad! And handsome is as handsome did it, too!" (72). Billy's spill was harmless and accidental, yet Claggart made it a point to turn the accident into a show among the other sailors to emphasize Billy's fault. As Gail Coffler says in her essay, *Religion, myth, and meaning in the art of Billy Budd, Sailor*:

[...] Claggart signifies the Calvinistic awareness of sin and depravity that was an essential part of Melville's vision but that he despised for its naïve literal-mindedness, its pious bigotry and hypocrisy, it's

authoritarian policing of sin, and its infliction of guilt and shame upon those who broke its laws. (65)

To Claggart, Billy was so pure and innocent that Claggart became envious and angry at the same time. Readers do not clearly see a viable reason for Claggart to hate Billy, other than the fact that Claggart is naturally evil and despises naivety. The antagonist apprehends good, but is “powerless to be it” (93). Thus Claggart is purposely seeking out flaws in Billy, abusing his authoritative power by “policing sin.” Melville uses these parallels and images to emphasize how Calvinism, like Claggart, acts as a “religious police” and seeks out wickedness (Coffler 59). Captain Vere is torn between two moral codes, obeying the government or obeying his own nature. The accusation against Billy Budd has left Captain Vere with the decision of whether Billy was right or wrong for killing Claggart. Vere is made aware that the case involving the accusation against Budd is no longer to be decided on the basis of essential right and wrong. One must decide this on the basis of the natural law.

In the narrative, Billy’s main concern was not to understand the accusation, but to be understood by his captain. Though he is seemingly tries to be servile to Captain Vere but is actually questioning the authority by favoring him. This also serves as Melville is engaged in questioning the authority. Towards the end of the narrative, Billy Budd says his last words as he is put to death by Captain Vere’s ruling. Billy utters, “God bless Captain Vere!” (123) right before he dies instantaneously. These last words become a crucial part of Captain Vere’s guilt that he feels towards the end of the narrative. Hence, when Vere dies, he mutters the words, “Billy Budd, Billy Budd” (129). It is recognition of guilt for something that he feels bad for. “Injustice and inhumanity are implicit, yet Captain Vere, her commander, is the man who obeys the law, and yet understands the truth of the spirit”

(Watson 75). Captain Vere made his decision according to the law, and he dies believing he has made an immoral decision in sentencing Billy to death. Likewise, Melville seems criticizing Calvinist zeal and church dogma. It seems that he chooses to scrutinize the discourse of religion.

For obtaining power to dominate others power mongers even abuse their position. Vere sacrificed his conscience rather than "violate" an unjust law. Metaphorically, he felt that slavery was wrong, yet he upheld the law requiring the return of escaped slaves to their "rightful" owners. This research does not mean to either excuse Vere's technical errors or to argue that technicalities are unimportant but to base criticism of the legal order or even to question just well-intentioned but confused individuals in positions of authority. It seeks to question the rigidity of law that slaughters the humanity itself:

"One lesson that we might draw from our historical cases and from *Billy Budd* is that Vere is a corrupt and hypocritical man, employing rhetoric of strict adherence to the law in order to disguise their conscious manipulation of the law. Or, more generously, we might conclude that they are sincere men who are so concerned with fulfilling their duty that they unconsciously violate the very principles they claim to uphold. A more fruitful line of inquiry is to try to understand what it is about the logic of the legal order they have sworn to defend that causes three well-intentioned men seemingly to contradict their own most sacred principles. (112)

If Vere lets the "discourse" of rationality dominate his own conscience, he sincerely believes that it is based on an authority outside of him; an authority that he submits to.

Melville's work helps us see that although laws are necessary, they can be manipulated in such ways that justice is not always the result, even though the intention of laws is to administer justice. The idea tells us not to judge and which also tells us that the letter of the law kills while its spirit gives life. The legal system should make us think and think hard. Understanding all this should also make us better "judges" but we shall be judged according to how we ourselves have judged. If we have been just, we have nothing to fear.

As we know power relations are both intentional and subjective, and there is no power that is exercised without a series of aims and objectives, in the same manner Vere's actions are oriented towards placing oneself in the position of God. His ambitious character is revealed when he deliberately speaks of himself in third person thereby creating an artificial distance between himself and other mortals. It is as if Vere stands for God removed from ordinary beings. As truth is constructed in the intersection of power relation; Vere, at having in the position of both possessing and exercising power; circulates his power being valiant and having patriotic affection that ultimately occupies a way forth for generating the knowledge of patriotism. This concept is quite clear in his words:

Quite side from any conceivable motive actuating the master-at-arms, and irrespective of the provocation to blow, a court martial must needs in the present case confine it's attention to the blow's consequence which consequence justly is to be deemed not otherwise than as the striker's deed. (88)

Emanating from a set of impersonal laws outside the self rather than from a single powerful individual ideology pervades every person's consciousness that no one seems to be capable of escaping its constraints. A recent legal critic argues that the

rule of law has become an effective political weapon because it is able to offer reassurance while it contributes to repression. It reassures by appearing to demonstrate that seemingly unjust actions are actually just because human society follows a legal, rational system of laws. It is repressive because its demonstration depends on the assumption that the legal, rational system of laws governing society is just. This reification of the law keeps people from asking whether seemingly unjust actions may be caused by the very system that the logic of the law justifies.

Moreover, it is important to analyze the incidents after Billy's execution. Some few weeks after the execution, among other matters under the head of News from the Mediterranean, there appeared in a navel chronicle of the time, an account of the affair:

The criminal paid the penalty of his crime. The promptitude of the punishment has proved salutary. Nothing amiss is now apprehended aboard H.M.S, Indomitable...His function was responsible one, at once onerous and thankless, and his fidelity in it the greater because of his strong patriotic impulse Melville. (120)

The above quoted news appearing in a publication has helped us to ask the question what manner of men respectively were John Claggart and Billy Budd? In this way this project seeks to unveil the corrupting nature of state representatives who hold the power and most often create discourses that are purpose oriented towards centralizing actions for accomplishing personal interests and goals. The published news is the outcome of the violence done to the natural right to live a life of freedom. The following words as said by Foucault are worth mentionable:

Establishing of power relations does not exclude the use of violence any more than it does the obtaining of consent; no doubt, the exercise of power can never do without one or the other, often both at the same time. But even though consent and violence are instruments or results, they do not constitute the principle or basic nature of power. The exercise of power can produce as much as acceptance as may be wished for: it can pile up the dead and shelter itself behind whatever threats it can imagine. (340-341)

In this way violence has come to the fore regarding Billy's execution because in spite of being an embodiment of innocent, peaceful and benevolent character he is sentenced to death only to satisfy the desires of the powerful represented by the corrupt state representatives who have abused their position.

III. Exploration of power-politics vis-à-vis Hegemonic state mechanism working under the discourse of Patriotism.

This research on Herman Melville's *Billy Budd* digs out the hidden power-politics of the authority thereby displaying the hegemonic power-relationships under the name of order, discipline and patriotism. It foregrounds the nature of power politics and its intricate nexus with state apparatus and its representatives who are instrumentalized for the personal sake. Through the careful examination of two opponent ideological forces; authoritarian military and judiciary versus sense of individual freedom, the project exhibits the importance of Billy's life rather than sacrifice of human being in the name of "oath of allegiance to the king" (86). The so-called rule of law has become repressive as its demonstration depends on the assumption that the legal rational system of laws governing society is just. This reification of law helps us to question whether the unjust actions caused by the very system that the logic of law can justify. The negative consequences of political and ideological use of power are brought forth exemplifying the death of Claggart and Billy Budd and Captain Vere's sufferings as the distortion of power-play. The discourse of power-politics declares itself to be reasonable and suppressed the discourses of imagination, intuition, emotion and personality. Moreover, this research unveils the corrupting nature of state representatives who most often create the discourses that are purpose oriented towards centralizing own actions for accomplishing the personal interests and goals.

Melville's novel helps us see that although laws are necessary, however, law becomes discourse to manipulate in such ways that justice is not always the result even though the intention of laws is to administer justice. The law and order become the frequent uses in army; however, there remains the possibility of creating the

discourse of law in order to exploit the juniors. In this way Billy Budd, the novel draws upon a cycle of history that involves continuous disintegration and the inevitable progress of power exercised and transmitted through different means of discourses. Most of the characters are presented in brilliantly individualized portraits whose contrasts have explored the conception of power, authority, honor order and freedom as such. It's remarkable for the way in which all personal relationships are enmeshed and masked with professions honor and rites of love in order to conceal their hidden motifs and satanic nature. And while confronting in-between each others in a different situation at least in responses to spatial and temporal location, responses and reactions; necessarily involves the purpose and choice, mind and will that ultimately functions as the apex for the construction of discourse and its knowledge. I found most of the characters in the novel engaging themselves in the struggle for power.

Moreover, it seems that the entire novel is about the debate between authoritarianism and sense of individualism but as we unmask the very traits of characters. They, one or the other way, found to be struggling to accomplish personal goals. Each character attempts to vindicate own action through generating divergent discourses of order, honor, love, patriotism and so forth in order to camouflage their treacherous tendency and evil mindset. Because of the discourses imposed by the senior on juniors, the individuality of the juniors is no longer addressed. They become the victim unnaturally. In the novel "sense of duty" functions as the overriding force for the powerful characters in their construction of their representative discourse to exercise and circulate the power. Even the minor characters of the novel exercise their representative discourses and power. The Dansker, an old man must often forces Billy in accepting that Claggart possesses animosity towards him. He does so because he

wishes to achieve influence and also control over Billy Budd. The Afterguardsman, the Squeak, the surgeon, the Red Whiskers who harasses Billy Budd, are some other characters who engage themselves in the complex web of power exercise over one another. I do agree with the Foucauldian notion of power that flows horizontally and is within possession of none this is what exactly justifiable at the end of the novel when either of the characters; Claggart or Captain Vere or Billy himself, become able to exercise power over other characters rather each of them have suffered their own destiny. It further approves the notion that power is dynamic and pervasive.

Power relations are exercised through the production and exchange of signs and they are the goal directed activities to the process of domination and to enable them to operate. While Billy is fundamentally innocent and Claggart is guilty of evil, the law demands that Billy be hanged for murder. Is the law, therefore, an instrument of Claggart's evil? Or is Billy's sacrifice necessary to sustain justice overall? The central character of this theme is Captain Vere and the central scene is Billy's trial, when Vere argues the importance of upholding the law, even at the expense of human feelings. Though law is never perfect, imperfect human nature makes it necessary is the basic argument of this project. Vere's decision to execute Billy is totally legal and yet totally unnatural. Billy accepts his fate, but does he understand the forces that brought about his doom? The narrator hints at many possibilities of meaning and many possible responses to underscore the ambiguity of the case. Far from accepting evil at the end of his career, Melville draws a chilling portrait of it and asks the question: Why must we have this force in our world? Billy is the natural man destroyed by the rigidities of a civilized society that cannot accommodate his goodness and trust. What must we think of a world that believes it is necessary to condemn Billy to death? Do we live in a world that has become progressively more

brutal and inhumane? Billy Budd signals the transition of society from a state of simplicity to the nightmare of the modern world.

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