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**In Search for the Villain in Herman Melville's
"Billy Budd, Sailor"**

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Abstract

Billy Budd, Sailor* is the last novel penned by Herman Melville. This work is posthumously published. In this novel, Melville, once more, as it is known about him, is going to probe deeply inside the human's mind and soul. He is concerned with the problems of human being on the seas and oceans to generalize the sense of neither equality among men who came from dissimilar countries and cultures declaring that there is neither superiority nor inferiority among people of different cultures and ancestry. Their efforts decide who the most important person is and who has less importance in the rank of the work. The sailors share the same circumstances to save themselves from storms, sharks and other mysterious forces, but still the innate instincts rooted inside each one of them lead some not only to control and subject but to arrest and murder each other.

In this work, the researcher is going to deal critically with the three principal characters of the oeuvre to decide who the villain is. The researcher is also going to analyze and evaluate critically each one of the villains because each has his own merits but without demerits. However, some of these demerits and faults may be forgiven and some are justified _according to the characters, readers and the researcher _ but there are some destructive demerits incited by evil power to cause destruction to the ship .The researcher is going to give evidences to prove the opinions and views that support the critics' viewpoints to arrive at his aim.

The present paper comprises three parts each is named after one of the villains. In each of them, the researcher is going to discuss, elaborate and evaluate the virtues and the vices of them. Moreover, the researcher enhances his ideas by the opinions and depictions of some critics and gives some elaborative instances from the text to reach his aims which is to determine who the villain is. Also, the study has a concluding part in which the researcher is going to unfold the villain's name according to his point of view.

Key Words: villain, crew, mutiny, accusation, execution

- The title is going to be abbreviated into BBS

Introduction

Herman Melville (1819-1891) is an American writer who writes novels, short stories and poetry. He is fascinated by the sea adventures narrated by his relatives and cousins. He is fond of the sea stories and he encounters some of them closely during his sailing experiences. His career as a sailor deeply influenced his literary career as a writer.

The present paper clarifies and gives some notes about the war preparations and naval laws, as they are referred to in the novel, that limit the sailors' freedom and the desire of the big

states to control the important sea passages and channels . Tally (2007:154) emphasizes that Herman Melville's Billy Budd, Sailor is an actual story occurred in 1797, during the English war with Napoleon, the main character is enlisted into the naval service of the English ship where the outline of the story continued. When Melville's works are revived at the beginning of the twentieth century, after T. S. Eliot's endorsement and opinion, critics shed close light on his novels and poetry. Nowadays, it is a general fact that Melville wants, through his novels about the sea and the lives of people in it, to announce that people are equal and free from the limitations of classism and racism. His target is to make them collaborate and share their feeling during the confrontation in the high seas.

Moreover, Melville focuses on an idea that people should be aware not only for the mysterious powers of the seas but they should be aware of themselves and innate evil power in each of them to live safely. Melville seeks to make people take care of the fact that their only enemy is not the mysterious power but they should give a heed to each other for some people enjoy dealing with concoctions and weapon equally.

Forster (2004:114) opines that the novel cannot be limited to a book narrowed and hardened into mere words, however, it portrays the battle against evil that lasted for a long time waiting for unknown destiny. The villains contrive here and there to assuage the potentiality of people to thwart them and hinder their desire to rule themselves and reach the welfare. It is better for these villains to sow hostility among people to corrupt their circumstances and then defeat them. So, Melville's main concerns is to show us the human relations among people from different nations where he raises his slogan in which he declares that love, friendship and amiable emotions are general senses. He seeks for a way to escape

hostility and enmity spread here and there and everywhere we live.

What Is Meant By the Term "Villain"?

The term villain is one of the basic terms used in literature especially in drama, novel and short story to refer to the person or a character of demerits to destroy and kill each and every counterpart at any cost. So, the writers outline their oeuvres according to their tastes and genres to delineate their characters (heroes and villains) to shape their works. We shall start here to define the term villain according to different authors to clarify and serve the paper.

Duffy and Pettit (2008:131) notice that the term villain means "a character whose opposition to the hero supplies the conflict. Villains may be figures of towering grandeur or merely despicable. Whatever their stature, they are agents of evil. Spansos (2011:265) defines the term villain as he is the antagonist filled with evil, or capable of cruel or criminal actions. Baldick (2001:272) opines that the term villain means" the principal evil character in a play or a story. The villain is usually the Antagonist opposed to the hero". Forster (2004:116) states that "for real villain, we must turn to the story of Melville's Billy Budd". Then, he (2004:158) adds" villains, of Melville, I haven't the spirits to give separate notes to". So the representation of the villain reality is clearly portrayed in Bill Budd, Sailor.

So, out of the above definitions, the term villain means that it is the character provoked by his (her) motives to promote and develop his level. He is led by his evil impulses to kill or harm any character to reach at his aims.

1-Billy Budd As A Villain:

Billy is Melville's chosen hero and the title is dedicated for him. He has many good features" happily endowed with gaiety of high health, youth, and a free heart"(BBS: 22)...." He has an "irresistible good nature" (BBS: 71) which will

make him a character of great confidence of himself. Being so, he is going to be an easy target for the abhorrence of many other characters in the novel. These characters plan to drag his legs in the middle of the dilemmas. These characters would conspire together to reduce his confidence and situation among the crew of Bellipotent. Claggart the principal enemy of Billy leagued with Squeak, another enemy of Billy, to aggravate the sense of hostility between Billy and Claggart.

Billy continues feeling confidence to the degree that he refuted the sailor Old Dansker's advices who warned Billy from the mischievous Claggart. Billy effects all the crew and they adored him but this will increase the hostility of Claggart . Above all, he is suffering from stuttering fits when he is under stress .Also he did not refuse the order to move from the ship Rights -Of -Man to Bellipotent the present place where he will face his fate and ,of course, killing Claggart though in a spasm of anger . Although he is the hero, he is marred by some unlovely merits which lead to his ultimate destruction. For only these defects confidence stuttering and acceptance of the shifting order an unintended killing blow, the researcher regards Billy as being one of the villains in the oeuvre, but not the principal one.

Billy is a young sailor who is about 21 years old" twenty one"(BBS: 17). He is in the prime of his youth. He has a very flexible and athletic body" masculine beauty"(BBS: 27). He has a pair of blue eyes which are associated with the sky "welkin- eye"(BBS: 17) and a blond hair "yellow curls"(BBS: 17). He is obeying the orders immediately.

Rochlitz (2012:59) delineates exactly the merits of Billy as they are given by Melville. He is a boy of no education as far as the school is concerned ,however, he has well experiences in life; he has sweet voice that he usually chirped

and crooned" illiterate; he could not read, he could sing, and like the illiterate nightingale was composer of his own songs"(BBS: 25). Billy's only disadvantage is his imperfect way of speech in an "occasional liability to a vocal defect" particularly "a stutter or even worse under sudden provocation or strong heart- feeling"(BBS: 27).

Lall (2011:113) proves that Billy has an exceptional proficiency in the performance of his duties on the board of the ship and ashore. He is distinguished equally by his strength and beauty to the degree that he is cynosure that catches everyman's attention. Initially, he was a sailor on an English merchant ship, however, when this merchant ship was sailing back home, it was intercepted by Bellipotent , a warship equipped with 74 guns. Billy is obliged to be recruited into the service of the battleship and without any demur he obeys. Rochlitz (2012:58) sees that Billy does not show any sign of objection to the shifting order to Bellipotent because he is fond of adventures and he looks for new places. He regards this order as a chance" adventurous turn in his affairs, which promised an opening into novel scenes and martial excitements"(BBS: 22). Billy is punctual and he is perfect at each and every job he is chosen to do" punctilious in duty", " always alert", "never let any cause of offence to anybody" for he is always anxious of his work to avoid incurring", " through remissness"(BBS: 46). Billy's dynamic body and spirit is expansive, and it creates impressive influences on everybody and anything in its path. Lall (2011:113) proves this when he refers to the good merits of Billy through the speech of Captain Gravelling who had a very high opinion about Billy. He told lieutenant Raticliffe that before he had acquired Billy as a member of his crew Bellipotent. There used to be frequent quarrels among the sailors, but Billy's arrival was like a Catholic priest appearing at a place where a brawl was happening:" But Billy came;

and it was like a Catholic priest striking peace in an Irish shindy" (BBS: 19). The sailors of Rights- of- Man as well as the crew of Bellipotent highly respect him. All the sailors were anxious to please Billy in every possible way, said Captain Graveling:" some of 'em do his washing, darn his old trousers for him; the carpenter is at odd times making a pretty little chest of drawers for him. Anybody will do anything for Billy Budd; and it's the happy family here"(BBS: 27). Then, Captain Graveling depicts Billy "you are going to take away the jewel of 'em; you are going to take away my peacemaker."(BBS: 28).

Gentry, Paddock, and Rollyson (2007: 39) confirm that Billy is innocent to the degree that he does not take into the consideration that there are evil impulses and ill intentions in Claggart's heart, who thinks that Billy's popularity is increased so he has to reduce it, that drove him to accuse Billy of conspiring a mutiny because these concepts of evil and intention are far from the nature of Billy's mind. For the above fact, Melville portrays Billy's character to represent good and be able to face the bad nature of Claggart's heart that stands for evil. Snodgrass (1991:6) believes that the confrontation between the good and bad natures of human being is an obvious recurring theme in Melville's works. This is clearly represented on Bellipotent where Billy stands for good nature. Lall (2011:181) elaborates that the novel has some sort of religious significance when Billy is referred to as being like Apollo and sea Hyperion, Melville compares Captain Vere to the prophet Abraham (Peace Be Upon Him) the Islamic name is Ibrahim in Quran and the Bible (PBUH)) when he sacrifices his son Isaac (PBUH) (Ismael (PBUH) in holy Quran) to deify the God (Allah). So, in the same way Captain Vere jettisons one of his best members to save the rest moreover, Billy here and there is referred to as being Adam before the fall.

Peck (2001:123) focuses on the idea that Melville, in his posthumous novel, has nothing to narrate for us about the terror of the sea and ocean but he probes inside the psychology of the seamen and the officers to keep everything under their control. This is the nature of the leaders and captains to control the fonts and ships at any expense.

Moreover, Hayes (2007: 105) assures the same thought when he affirms that Melville neglects the cultural discrepancies and dissimilarities in the sailors' levels to declare that he sides with the equality of people. For the equality will lead to unity to face the perils of the seas and without it everything becomes worse. On the other side, the inequality and abhorrence cause problems between the civilized and savage world views.

Kulkarni (2003:9) assures that Billy Budd is a symbolic story where the handsome Viking is perverted to an evil person within a moment of irrational fit. He assails Claggart for wrongly claiming that Billy is planning for a mutiny aboard the *Bellipotent*. Crane (2014:143) contradicts the previous opinion thinking that Billy's personality is pure no space for a blemish is found within and it is nearly perfect. This physical beauty highlights the sense of hostility in Claggart's heart. Stern (2010:79) elucidates his notes about the novel saying that Captain Vere is torn and tormented whether to follow the alleged speech of Claggart, his assistant, to defame Billy. Captain Vere is vexed to with soul and heart which prefer Billy or obeying Claggart's threatening way of speech that he is the responsible person for what is about to happen by the sailors (mutiny). Now, to jump over the problem, Captain Vere decides to summon the accuser and the accused to face each other's claim. Billy's flaw, the stuttering fit, prevents him from uttering the truth and this grants Claggart to prove his claims. So in great sense of despair Billy blows Claggart a fatal blow which leads to

his death. This leads Captain Vere to arrange a ship-board trial, the drumhead court, doing his role as a main witness, a prosecutor and a judge, he guides the jury to convict and execute Billy "fated boy,... what have you done struck dead by an angel of God ! Yet the angel must hang "(BBS: 10). So, Captain Vere determines to victimize his best sailor to save the rest of the crew because if Billy is left free, other sailors would imitate his violent deed which would corrupt the atmospheres in Bellipotent. Sterling (2009:261) sees that this deed of executing the innocent boy, though he kills to defend, strengthens the pessimistic view of the work when neither fair nor justice bring welfare for innocent people. Though Captain Vere is happy because he jettisons the despicable Claggart but he is not able to free Billy from execution. Even Billy in the last moment of his life utters his last phrase" God bless Captain Vere".

Peck (2001:66) certifies that all readers felt the sense of pity for Billy's innocence to the degree that it is hard for them to delete the nice portrayal of Billy from their minds. They feel that he is entrapped as a victim of the foulest treachery. So, the readers pity him and justified his sin of manslaughter. Moreover, they give reasons and deals with Billy as an unfairly executed victim of the inhuman articles of war, a "martyr to martial discipline"(BBS: 110).

2-Captain Vere As A Villain:

Captain Vere is leader of the ship (captain) Bellipotent. He is an educated man. He is very wise and honest. Kulkarni (2003:10) discusses that Captain Vere oscillates between "natural justice" and "martial law" (BBS: 90). Moreover, he comes under severe perplexity whether to declare the death sentence against Billy, to frighten the rest of the crew and lessen the mutinous sense of them, because he fell under Billy's fascination for his abilities to perform and fulfill the jobs given to him and his athletic body or to choose to

sacrifice one of his best member to control the others. He decides to relinquish and lose young boy to control the rest of the crew. He comes under the spell of Claggart's evil reports about a forged mutiny led by Billy. Lall (2011:128) depicts Captain Vere as the following he is bachelor of forty; he had distinguished himself as a seaman; he had won his advancement by merits not by family influence; he was very considerate to his subordinates; but could never tolerate indiscipline; " a bachelor of forty or thereabouts, a sailor of distinction even a time prolific of renowned seamen,.....,always acquitting himself as an officer mindful of the welfare of his men, but never tolerating an infraction of discipline" (BBS:32). Hove (2008:119) shows us that Captain Vere is essentially good gentleman, But his inner emotions- the emotions that would keep the innocent boy alive, not only from his demise, but from the dishonorable demise, come completely under orders which he should follow " obedience to the exacting behest" of the call of the ruling authority. So Mr. Vere is guided the military costume and unnecessary fear of mutiny.

Rochlitz (2012: 76) expounds closely Captain Vere's character when she explains that the crew esteem him "an earnest man, Not less superior in mind than in naval rank"(BBS: 99). So, he is respected by his crew and there is a mutual valuable relationship among them. As a man of great naval experience, he disregards Claggart "a vaguely repellent distaste"(BBS: 72). Even though he is able to hide his feeling towards Claggart with "much of his wonted official manner", there remains some sort of "impatience" in his behaviour (BBS: 74). It is obvious that Captain Vere receives Claggart's "illusion" to the mutiny in a very disinteresting way "a most immodest presumption". He has always suspicions about the validity of Claggart's "patriotic zeal"(BBS: 76).

Snodgrass (1991:30) thinks that Captain Vere is the most debatable character of the three main characters (villains). He is a man of knowledge and this knowledge aggravates his monomania. He is a perfect man and he stands for the blending mixture of heart and mind. Captain Vere falls under the threatening insinuation of Claggart that he comes under the spellbound of Billy's fascination "you are but noted his fair cheek. A man trap maybe under his ruddy –tipped daisies"(BBS: 77) and such a claim is very offensive and unsuitable for a man in Captain Vere's position. So, Billy's fatal blow, Captain Vere comments on this occasion "fated boy,... what have you done struck dead by an angel of God ! Yet the angel must hang "(BBS: 10).

As it is the human desire to defend himself, Captain Vere is blind to his heart and determines not to follow his sense of justice and humanity and the worst is that he refused to enhance Billy's situation by adding or hiding some facts to save Billy. Captain Vere's position is clarified that he is divided into two polarities the first one is the call of heart and spirit which sided with Billy and the mind and his position inside the ship and the crew which throw him towards Claggart who causes the conflict in Captain Vere's mind. Stern (2010: 77) highlights the feeling of despair in Captain Vere's heart and mind when he depicts the situation he is standing in one's complete sense of greatness upon the surrounded quarter – deck of the state springs not from the personal pathetically heroic idealism of the questor , but from the social and strategic view point of the captain who knows that this is the historical occasion that obliged him to deliver a sacrament to the possible triumph that the combined head and heart may get. So, he places himself on the altar of "the honest sense of duty" (BBS: 130), getting his very using up of one _self a man _self victory which is to rescue rather than destroy the ship.

Captain Vere feels as compassionate towards Billy as the members of the court- martial did, however, he would not allow himself to be deflected from the right course by any considerations of sympathy and morality. Crane (2014:145) maintains that Captain Vere loses his greatness morally and legally not only because he misjudges the situation by choosing the wrong choice but, because, he believes that he should choose between two dissimilar values when he is obliged by the power of law to determine which one is the right case and this needs a balance between these two opposed situations. What reduces and pacifies the results of the difficult decision of Captain Vere is the last sentence uttered by Billy " God bless Captain Vere"(BBS: 205) sterling (2010: 79) affirms Captain Vere hesitation because he is torn between the two contradicting powers Billy who represents his heart and soul which refer to humanity and Claggart who symbolizes dictatorship and authority and the aim to subject everything and everyone. Yothers (2011:61) opines that this phrase strengthens the sense of allegorical sacrifice in the story. The phrase raised by Billy has a double meaning according to Captain Vere firstly it is an act of Christ – like forgiveness and secondly it is an indication of the spiritual unification of soul between Captain Vere and Billy but it has another meaning that is making Captain Vere predicament greater and not easy to be forgotten.

Captain Vere is one of the three villains of the novel. Though he is selfish and thinks only of his naval situation and this made him easily entrapped by Claggart's threatening. He was able to save Billy but he did not do so. To some extent he can be regarded as a villain but the researcher sympathizes with him, just like the majority of readers of this novel, because he is full of the nicest qualities as a captain. He is too rigid to enforce the military law. The researcher realizes Vere's compulsions in the case and justifies the faults

with him for having influenced the proceedings of the judgment of the court- martial. Captain Vere is a flawed villain because he is guilty of having upheld the military law at the cost of certain higher values and principles. He stands for the gray colour which in this case is a combination of goodness and evil but with a much larger component of goodness and only a very small proportion of evil. The evil and villainous sense appears only in the rigidity and inflexibility with which he insists upon the enforcement of the military law and neglects all humane and moral regards.

3- Claggart As A Villain:

Claggart is the assistant of Captain Vere. He is the master – at – arms of the ship. He is the man in charge of the crew after that he sends his reports to Captain Vere. Rochlitz (2012:67) states some proofs about the real character of Claggart showing that he is a man of an adverse and inimical nature. He is a man deprived of any amiable and intimate relations with the sailors. He stands for the evil power sowed on the back of Bellipotent" a peculiar human creature the direct reverses of a saint "(BBS: 64). He is not young but not old man either "about five – and -thirty ". He is smart and attractive "spare and tall", "he has an elegant physique, He is not only neat but careful in his dress"(P.58). The narrator shows us that Claggart's soul is fraudulent, denounced and devious "self- contained and rational"(BBS: 72). His way of pronouncing words gives an impression that he is not English by birth. He is a man who searched for enjoyment and adventure, he comes to naval service to escape from molestation and maltreatment "for some mysterious swindle"(P.42) of his own claims and allegations.

Lall (2011:125) sheds light on Claggart's personality through the sailors who investigate his past but find nothing deserve to depend on. Melville, through his narrator, tells us that the popular hearsays about Claggart's history have

aggravated, the "rude uncultivated" sailors cannot stand the reason behind his moral depravity or the evil beyond "vulgar rascality"(BBS: 44). He is a cunning and artful person but not without infallibilities, however, the "antipathy" he carries against Billy leads him to foment claims which come out of an over enthusiastic person "understrapper"(BBS: 60). He is prevented by "fate and ban"(BBS: 70) not only from loving Billy but each and every member of the crew. Stern (2010:79) points out that Claggart symbolizes the deceptive appearances of the world and he is a malign sample. To Dansker, one of the crew members, he is a queer and curious man.

McGlamery (2004:30) depicts the character of Claggart stating that Melville delineates his characters to refer to physiological types that are always exposed to correspond closely with characterological types ; that is, a great deal of physiognomic and physiological stereotypes occurs. So, the narrator spreads here and there the sense of opposed hate among the characters towards Claggart. The rest of the crew are doubtful of him to the degree that they keep silent we Claggart passed near them. They fear that he might design an accusation to execute each of them. So, his countenance uncovers his intentions to harm each and every one aboard the Bellipotent. All the crew members are aware of him to the degree that they stop their speech when he passed. That is why; he is abhorred by the whole crew. He feels that he suffers from the bereavement of accomplishing any sort of intimacy with other sailors.

Gentry, Paddock, and Rollyson (2007: 43) unfold that Claggart is depicted as a representation of evil and devilish power on aboard of the Bellipotent, and no one justifies the sense of hostility he carries for Billy. Lall (2011:126-127) enforces the idea of Claggart's bereavement and depravity showing that ,on different occasions, Claggart's eyes chase

Billy rambling and achieving the tasks given to him. His tears flow down his cheeks while looking in a melancholic mood to his ability. Sometimes, this melancholic sense invites him to purify his soul and change his demeanour towards Billy but his destructive evil prevents him repeatedly. He is sexually attracted to Billy and he has a severe desire to succumb Billy to his sexual needs. His feeling of hostility towards Billy now changed into a sense of insanity and destructive desire to control and lessen Billy's glimmering fame. This sense of abhorrence was like a subterranean fire burning inside Claggart's heart. The worse is that now, Claggart is coming under the impact of his destructive feeling. He designed to take a daring step which is to have a frontal assail on Billy. He goes to the ship's captain and claims that one of the sailors aboard the Bellipotent was a perilous man who might raise a putsch. He was careful not to utter the word "mutiny", but he sends his message to the captain. When Claggart is asked about the real identity of the perilous man, he answered that it was no one other than Billy Budd. As Captain Vere doubts Claggart's intentions, Claggart enhances his reports by bringing to Captain Vere's mind Billy's objectionable conduct on aboard of Rights –Of-Man. Moreover, he refers to Captain Vere's fascination of Billy "you have but noted his fair cheek. A man trap may be under the ruddy-tipped daisies"(BBS: 77).

To check the problematic situation, Captain Vere summons Billy to face his accuser. With no hesitation, Claggart approaches Billy looking fiercely at Billy's eyes. He reiterates the fabricated speech he has previously uttered to Captain Vere in front of Billy. Appalled by this accusation, Billy delivers a fatal blow to Claggart's forehead sending him to his destiny" quick as the flame from a discharged cannon at night" by the strong "right man" of the "young

athlete"(BBS: 83). The crew of the ship denied the concocted claims of Claggart about Billy. Furthermore, they cannot imagine that Billy would kill Claggart" the last man would have suspected, either of mutinous design...or of the undeniable deed he himself had done" (BBS: 91).

Claggart proves to be the most villainous character of the novel. He tries to concoct falsifying reports against many of the crew of the Bellipotent and, of course Billy is one of them. His false reports create some destructive desire to subject and overcome each and every one who stands against him. This deportment leads Claggart to live in an isolation and hostility by the whole crew. On the other hand, he hatched a desire to destroy and defeat everything which at the end of the novel turns the table upside down against him. He gets his fatal end without any pity.

Conclusion:

The present paper intends to shed light on the three main characters of Melville's last novel "Billy Budd, Sailor". These three main characters can be studied to be villains for the qualities they have inside their soul and mind. The daily life tasks among the crew of the ship and each character's deportment will determine the qualities of these villains according to other characters. A close reading of the oeuvre will unfold the real identity of the villain in the reader's and the researcher's eyes equally.

Though each of the characters has his own virtues, still there are some vices inside them. These vices drove each of the characters to dream of controlling and subjecting others. They will dream of this superiority to the degree that they are going to conspire with other hopeful characters to reach their aims. The researcher declares the identity of the villain who lost his life but the worst is that his killer is executed though he is, to some instance, not guilty but he is obliged to commit this crime.

According to the researcher the most villainous character is Claggart. The researcher proves this result supporting his ideas by the critics's opinions and the text itself. Captain Vere and Billy only react because of his fabricated accusations. So, the paper reaches at the conclusion that the villain is Claggart the master –of- arms of the ship.

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