

Homosocial Pretension No More — Lovelessness in the Cognoscenti: Melville's *Billy Budd* as a Camp Story

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O, now but for communion true
And close; let go each alien theme;
Give me thyself! (*Clarel* 2. 27. 68-70)

The divine magnet is on you, and my magnet responds. Which is the biggest? A foolish question — they are *One*. (Letter to Hawthorne, [17?] November 1851)

Introduction: Conundrum in the Cognoscenti

In *Billy Budd: Sailor (An Inside Narrative)* (1924), the posthumously published fiction of Herman Melville (1819-91),¹ the narrator confesses that during

his days of youth and inexperience “an honest scholar, my senior,” had him understand, in vain, that “in reference to . . . a man so unimpeachably respectable that against him nothing was openly said,” “Yes, X—is a nut not to be cracked by the tap of a lady’s fan” (74). This is not a hocus-pocus. As likely as not, X is a gay, judging from his being insensible to the seductions of women. This one and same narrator, now mature, is straining to convince readers of the esotericism: “to try and get into X—, [to] enter his labyrinth and get out again, without a clue derived from . . . source[s] other than what is known as ‘knowledge of the world’—that were hardly impossible . . .” (74). If *the world* in the expression of “other than *knowledge of the world*” implies the patriarchy, the order of the system dominant in the Euro-American society of the 19th century, then “a clue derived from some source other than ‘the knowledge of the world’” is probably something relevant to the psychology of the invert in both the patriarchy and the non-patriarchy [pre- or post- oedipal society]. And who is the counterpart to X, the representative of those “certain phenomenal men” (75), men without the “vulgar alloy of the brute” but invariably “dominated by intellectuality” (75)? The person in question is John Claggart, the master-at-arms of the warship *Bellipotent*. Claggart is a man always neat and careful in his dress, with facial features “cleanly cut . . . as those on a Greek medallion” (64), and a dapper figure “not amiss” (77). Far from being vulgar, he is “self-contained and rational” (90) and “will direct cool judgment sagacious and sound” (76) “in the language of no uneducated man” (92). Thus, his carriage cuts him out neatly as the X type. So does his sexual orientation. Claggart, recounts the narrator, “could even have loved Billy” (88). At one point, momentarily beside himself, Claggart assumes an expression with “a touch of soft yearning” (88), “his eyes strangely suffused with incipient feverish tears.” He then darts an “unobserved glance . . . to light on belted Billy” (87), Billy with “a lingering adolescent expression in the as yet smooth face all but feminine” (50), or “the cheerful Hyperion” “rolling along the upper gun deck in the leisure of the second dogwatch” (87). Claggart stifles his ardent admiration for Billy’s feminine beauty with a “semblance of a wrinkled walnut” (88) — an expression similar to the aforesaid X’s: “a nut not to be cracked by the tap of a lady’s fan.” “[F]emale beauty,” as defined by Richard Chase (294–95), the “gender, erotic, and joy-giving [that Melville] could see only in men,” is best exemplified and epitomized by Billy Budd, a figure whose



Figure I: Laurence Koe, “Venus and Tannhauser” (1896).

“Laurence Koe’s magnum opus for the Royal Academy exhibition of 1896, entitled “Venus and Tannhauser,” paid voluptuous tribute to the work of Richard Wagner, whose operas unquestionably have the dubious distinction of providing the late nineteenth century with the narrative context for many of the details in its iconography of misogyny” (Dijkstra 228-29).

“position aboard the seventy-four was something analogous to that of a rustic beauty transplanted from the provinces and brought into competition with the highborn dames of the court” (50-51). If Claggart is categorized as the above-described X type, if the X type man is suspected of “employing reason as an ambidexter implement for effecting the irrational,” what is the “aim which in wantonness of atrocity would seem to partake of insane elements” (76)?; and what instigates and exacerbates “the mania of an evil nature” (76)?

In a tactful though unduly decent and subservient way, Claggart vents his anger by slandering and traducing Billy as a “mantrap under the daisies” (95). In this way, Claggart daunts Captain Vere, a figure who confers, out of homoerotic motivation, partial favor to Billy Budd, “a fine specimen of the *genus homo*, who in the nude might have posed for a statue of young Adam before the Fall” (94). Why is Claggart reduced to a nasty persecutor, a false witness against Billy despite his ardent though unconfessed love for Billy? The narrator comments



Figure II: Arthur Hacker, “The Temptation of Sir Peceval” (ca. 1846).

“Sir Peceval, so fresh and intellectual that his spirituality surrounded him like a saint’s hero, was being stalked by a lady of catlike mien whose only wish was to dissipate our hero’s manly virtue” (Dijkstra 252-53).

that “Claggart could even have loved Billy but for fate and ban” (88). On the subject of Claggart’s love for Billy, Robert K. Martin, a queer critic who inquires into the male bonding and the same-sex love in Melville’s works, seems to overrate the amorous remarks of the presumably unreliable narrator. Martin attributes Claggart’s abstention from loving Billy to internal and external requirements: externally, Claggart faces a tyrannical demand by patriarchy for the establishment of masculine authority; internally, he contends with a master-at-arms’ need to steel himself against anything feminine (Figures I and II: the theme of misogyny in the 19th-century pictures). Martin recounts that “*Billy Budd*, although lacking female characters, is deeply aware of the need of male authority to suppress the female, just as masculine suppress the feminine” (124). Regrettably, Martin

does not fully explore Claggart's insanity. James Creech is successful in unveiling the failed same-sex love (focusing on *Pierre* rather than on *Billy Budd*), but his exploration is limited as well, delving merely into indications of the hero's submission to the pressure by the heterosexually biased society, the pressure to choose between sexual objects marked as male and female. Is the homophobic injunction the only pretext and justification for Claggart to refrain from loving Billy and to instead harass Billy? Is there some other driving force that perverts Claggart to a satanic figure? If so, is the force in question somehow related to Melville's creative élan and his dark impulse? Unfortunately, no satisfactory sexuality analyses on the possible relevancy of Melville to Claggart have yet been produced. Granted, Neal L. Tolchin is insightful in pointing out the effect of the 19th-century sentimental culture upon the gender formation of Billy, and Melville as well. Beyond that, however, he explains neither Claggart's malicious will against Billy nor the dyad of Claggart and the author. Indeed, critics such as Monika Mueller, Charles Haberstoh, Jr., James C. Wilson, Walter E. Bezanson, and the above-referred Creech — to name but a few — expose to view Melville's amorous glance at, and his resulting resentment against, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and they offer compelling demonstrations of the author's lovesickness and excruciation reflected in works such as *Pierre* and *Clarel*. However, these critics fail to bring to our ears the resonance of the skewed relation between Melville and Hawthorne reverberated in *BB*. Robert K. Martin adumbrates that Claggart's repression of his own sexual desire for Billy is somehow relevant to Hawthorne (111), but he does so without elaborating in detail. Therefore, my ultimate aim in this paper is to clarify Claggart's [and/or Melville's] inverted love and hatred for and against innocence, beauty, Billy, and Hawthorne.

I. The Authorial Presence in the Camp

Before grappling with our final goal of disentangling an emotionally tensioned dyad between Claggart [/Melville] and Billy [/Hawthorne], it will be useful to give an overview of Melville's personal involvement in the 19th-century cognoscenti. Homosexual subculture began to show signs of emergence in places and establishments in London such as Moorfields, Lincoln's Inn, and St. James's Park. In 1885, a year before Melville is thought to have started on *BB*, punitive laws were drastically revised in England. Sodomy became a far more serious

offense than it had been, regardless of whether it was committed in public or in private. It was only four years after Melville died that Oscar Wilde was convicted for homosexual acts. The British Navy strictly prohibited sodomy and went to the ruthless extreme of imposing the death penalty on the sodomites. Ironically, the homophobic ambience thus formed must have produced a very fertile breeding ground for homosexuality. Homosexual love, as Kate Millet recounts in her *Sexual Politics*, necessarily comes out of, and repeats imitating, heterosexual love. Judith Butler concurs with Millet: “[H]omosexuality emerges as a desire which must be produced in order to remain repressed. In other words, for heterosexuality to remain intact as a distinct social form, . . . it requires prohibition of that conception in rendering it culturally unintelligible” (77).

Middle-class American men of the 1830s, Melville included, faced many discourses acclaiming male purity and denouncing young bachelors for both masturbation and sodomy. *True Manhood*, a sort of counterpart to the highly praised conception of True Womanhood, is epitomized in a short sentimental story compiled in *Godey's*,² a magazine for middle-class women by best-selling women writers:

I do not like to dwell upon [bachelors'] miseries. Not I. I had rather marveled up the married man, who returns from his office, after the busy day, to meet the baby's eager greeting and his wife's glad kiss at the door (qtd. in Bertolini 25)

This American milieu paradoxically awakened Melville to his own perverted sexual preferences, preferences best illustrated in his bold poem, “After the Pleasure Party”:

Could I remake me! or set free
This sexless bound in sex, then plunge
Deeper than Sappho, in a lunge
Piercing Pan's paramount mystery!
For, Nature, in no shallow surge
Against thee either sex may urge. (*Selected Poems* 134)

This lamentation pours out from Urania, a transvested man playing the role of a proxy for Melville. As for the implication of the word *Uranian*, “the word coined by Karl Ulrichs to designate homosexuals in 1864,”³ Melville probably knew it through his association in the Duyckinck literary circle with the sex specialist

Dr. Augustus Kinsley Gardner, a gynecologist, psychiatrist, adviser on child-rearing, and a sort of family doctor who was summoned at the suicide of Melville's second son (Creech 121-22).

Here we must concede again that Melville's *BB* undeniably smacks of the homosexual. The playground where the drama of *BB* unfolds is the British Navy at the end of the 18th century, an institution which visualized a stereotyped masculinity, the male gender strictly constructed along the norm. We can easily infer that the Navy might even be prone to become a homosexual ground. This kind of problem seems likely to have arisen precisely because the 18th century saw the creation of a new masculinity, a masculinity whose ideal Philippe Ariès shows as a cubic-faced figure, dressed in an appropriate military uniform, an androgynous beauty, the stark opposite to the rambunctious ruffian of the 17th-century Dutch and Spanish pictures (252-53).

By the end of the 19th century, when anthropologists, ethnologists, and tourists revealed new information about the tolerance of homosexuality in the colonies and undermined the presumed universality of homosexual injunction in Christian society, scholars in Oxford University began studying anew the same-sex love in Ancient Greece. If Melville had involved himself in this atmosphere in the same way as Oscar Wilde, Arthur Symons, and Walter Pater, it would be no surprise that *BB* is so fraught with the homosexual innuendoes — albeit innuendoes that remain gibberish to those laymen who “hardly shed so much light into obscure spiritual places as the Hebrew prophets” (75). In fact, there appears a prophet-like man, the Dansker, who is “ruminating by himself” “in a dogwatch” “[when] off duty” “with somewhat cynical regard” (70-71). A target for the author's spear is William Blackstone, a jurist noted for commenting on the Common Law of England, defining the homosexual act as an offense and disgrace to the human nature, a crime not fit to be named. The unmentionable crime in *BB*, the crime sailors should refrain even from hinting off-hand, is mutiny. Yet the issue of “mutiny” probably seems to be closely though circuitously related to same-sex love. Claggart, the regulator of a possible mutiny, the internal police force on the man-of-war, is derogatorily dubbed “Jemmy Legs.” According to *Oxford English Dictionary*, “Jemmy” in Jemmy Legs means “a dandy or fop; a finical fellow.” If you add *Jessamy* (*Jessamine*) to form *Jemmy Jessamy* (*Jessamine*), meaning “dandified, foppish, effeminate,” you can use it as an attributive

like the following: “Who is this Jemmy Jessamine Gentleman? — I am Charmoleus the Dandy, universally admired for my shape and figure and complexion.” Without saying, Jemmy suggests the invert. In a ditty of the very last part of this unfinished novel *BB*, Melville makes reference to Molly as Billy’s lover, a reference which convinces us of Melville’s deep interest and involvement in the cognoscenti. Alan Bray describes *Molly* as an epithet for the homosexual subculture in England, while the *OED* defines Molly as the name of “a girl, a woman, especially a lower-class one, and occasionally a prostitute.” By still other definitions Molly refers to “an effeminate man or boy; a male homosexual; a man who performs work typically associated with women, or who concerns himself with women’s affairs.”

Here it will be necessary to justify my method for analysis, the method by which I bridge the distance between two places, England and America, and erase the time differences between three periods, the end of the 18th century, when the narrated anecdote actually takes place, the mid-19th century, when the narrator gives his account, and the end of the 19th century, when the author actually wrote the novel. The problem of justification for the contrapuntal composition would be resolvable if Melville had deliberately written *BB* as an allegory, a literary form characterized by three distinguished features — timelessness, destiny, and the subjectivity of the objective.

The allegorist needs one of these features, *timelessness*, for the sake of its narrative economy. The Christian empire in nascence had actually chosen this tactic in its pictures and narratives propagating the doctrine of Millennialism (Dimock 23). *BB* is religiously tinged: the narrative is rife with biblical allusions, and the fate of Billy, his execution as an innocent, reminds us of the [mock] Golgotha theme.

As another integrant tactic, the allegorist also needs the theme of *destiny* to stabilize the logic of hierarchy. If predestined and unchangeable, the positions of the superior and the inferior are fixed. The superior has a prerogative to assign destinies — assigning one to the free and the other to the dominated. This allegorical form was somehow congenial to the circumstances of 19th-century America, a political landscape in which Melville witnessed the contradictory phenomena of expansion and contraction. One phenomenon was the imperial expansion of American territory, the unfolding of what his acquaintance John L.

O'Sullivan aptly called Manifest Destiny. The other was the contraction of American citizenship to exclude all but the whites. John C. Calhoun (vice president 1825–32) sought to vindicate the denial of citizenship to Indians and Mexicans in the territories conquered after the Mexican-American War: “[W]e have never dreamed of incorporating into our Union any but the Caucasian race. . . . Ours, sir, is the Government of a white race” (Weber 135). If “the conflation of the private with the national dream” of the territorial expansion “characterizes American romanticism” (Bercovitch 173), then one such romanticist is Melville, an author who passionately praises Hawthorne using geographical metaphors expressive of expanding America: “The smell of your beeches and hemlocks is upon him; your own broad praises are in his soul; and if you travel away inland into his deep and noble nature, you will hear the far roar of his Niagara” (“Hawthorne and His Mosses” 414).

Finally, in the words of C. S. Lewis, allegory is a narrative form which evinces “*the subjectivism* of an objective age” and by extension, of an objective place (Dimock 79, emphasis added). “Allegory inherently affirms (and, in effect, enacts) the hierarchy of meaning inherent in the Law of the Father. The allegorist personifies the speaking subject as totalitarian overlord of language who directs and manipulates his world according to a priori thoughts” (Williams 81–82). Thus, the author becomes appropriative and constitutively present. It was no wonder, during this period of American imperialistic expansion both internally and externally, that Melville needed to reinforce his fragile authorship with the literary form of allegory. All the more so in view of his competition with female best-selling sentimental writers and the deplorable decline in his own fame after publishing *Pierre* (1852). It was no wonder that the author stole into the world of *BB* and blended an end-of-the-18th-century-affair in England with his own private life in the 19th-century America. Melville thus activated himself in the story of his own making, the *camp* story, the story about the pervert men exhibiting homosexual behaviors.

II. Masking with the Public Persona

In the introduction of this paper I referred to the man called X, one of the “phenomenal” or “exceptional [incidentally, both adjectives reverberate with homosexual] characters” (75). I also referred to the narrator’s frank confession of

his immature failure in confusing “what is known as ‘knowledge of the world’” with “the knowledge of human nature” (75). There seem here to be antipodal pairs of knowledge: the knowledge of the world vs. the knowledge of human nature, the knowledge about the straight in the patriarchic world vs. the knowledge about the invert in the spurious patriarchy or the non-[pre-/post-] patriarchy, and the knowledge about the public persona vs. the knowledge about the undisguised self. After confessing, the narrator hesitantly murmurs, “I am not certain whether to know the world and to know human nature be not two distinct branches of knowledge, which while they may co-exist in the same heart, yet either may exist with little or nothing of the other . . .” (75). In accordance with the narrator’s division of “knowledge[s],” I will dissect the features of the X man’s [Claggart’s] knowledge into halves and deal with them separately. On the one hand I will consider something related to the “knowledge of the world,” that is, Claggart’s public persona and his studied engagement with the specious patriarchal order on the warship. On the other, I will clarify something related to “the knowledge of human nature” in order to delve into Claggart’s apparently irrational perverted private realm and clarify the pre-/post- oedipal psychological mechanism of Claggart’s backhanded love and hatred for and against Billy. Melville, however, admits the difficulty in the clear-cut division of human mentality by asking: “Who in the rainbow draw can the line where the violet tint ends and the orange tint begins” (102)? I must hurriedly add, as a provision, that dividing these two types of “knowledge” can never be so incisive or final. In chapters III and V of this paper I will discuss the phenomena in this murky zone.

Policing the (Quasi-) Patriarchic Family

To make a breach into Claggart’s (dis)engagement with order in the patriarchic society [warship], we will begin by zeroing in on the 1830 *Reports on the Course of Instruction in Yale College* jointly written by James Kingsley and Jeremiah Day, president of Yale. This report clearly illustrates the theorem described by Jacques Donzelot as *the government through the family*: a principle deployed in various institutions, private or public, beginning from the 19th century:

In the *internal police* of the institution, as the students are gathered into one family, it is deemed an essential provision, that some of the officers should constitute a portion of this family; being always present with them,

not only at their meals, and during the business of the day; but in the hours allotted to rest. The arrangement is such, that in our college buildings, there is no room occupied by students, which is not near to the chamber of one of the officers

The tutor of a division has an opportunity, which is enjoyed by no other officer of the college, of becoming intimately acquainted with the characters of his pupils. It is highly important that this knowledge should be at the command of the faculty. By distributing our family among different individuals, minute information is acquired, which may be communicated to the Board, whenever it is called for.⁴ (my emphasis)

Interestingly enough, this surveillance system of the internal police is also adopted on the warship. On the *Bellipotent*, Claggart is actually stationed for this purpose and entrusted with the role of the master-at-arms. To bear out the importance of putting a family (-like institution) under scrutiny, it is useful to look into the uncompromising principles of Heman Humphrey, a Yale graduate and the President of Amherst College from 1823 to 1845. Humphrey persistently touted the inseparability of the family from the nation and the need to keep people in line. In his *Domestic Education*, Humphrey declared that “if it is important to secure a prompt obedience to the wholesome laws of the state, then is family government indispensably necessary.”⁵

However, this tactic of *government through family* had an intrinsic conflict within itself. Harriet Beecher Stowe vociferous abolitionist and sentimental best-selling woman author, declared the following in an article entitled “What is a Home?” from *House and Home papers*: “Order was made for the family, and not the family for order” (Merish 147). According to the 19th-century reformers and proto-feminist women writers, family should be differentiated from factory. The factory, the workhouse, is not a place where objects and bodies are tenderly nurtured or cared for, but a place where they are exploited in an orderly and methodical fashion. Melville knew that this domestic discourse was flagrantly misused by New England capitalists. He knew that the owners of the textile mills in Lowell, exploiters of young girls who had been lured away from their rural homes into the sweatshops, published a magazine called *The Lowell Offspring* “to forge an atmosphere where workers could feel themselves ‘outside the realm of the lower and working class’” (Sasaki, “*Figuring Authorship*” 93). Without

saying, family is the stark opposite to navy, an institution which adopts a system basically similar to a factory. Theodore Parker, social reformer, abolitionist, and minister [the last avocation, minister, shared a ‘disabling position’ with middle-class women at a time when people lost their religious fervor (Douglas 80-117)], repudiated the recourse to the cruel discipline and warmly preached the substitute: “[f]orce may hide, and even silence effects for a time; it removes not the real causes of evil”; “[i]n the old story Satan did not take pains to understand his children, nor learn thereof; he only devoured them up, till some outgrew and overmastered him.”⁶ In a word, it is love that cures in a family. What counts in the eyes of social reformers and proto-feminists is domestic love. The proto-feminists of the 19th century applauded the role of the family as an affectionate safe haven and the position of middle-class housewife as an equivalent to “the Angel in the House” (Gittins 206; Trodd).

Melville, however, must have found it difficult to describe the so-called empire of women, the typical, closely-knit affective nuclear family of middle-class America in the 19th century. In most of his works, including *BB*, there are realms off-limits to women. The world of *BB* cannot attain the ideal of the middle-class family because of the grieving among many impressed men for a hearth, wife, and children. Billy is said to be a foundling, probably not a “by-blow” of “noble descent” as the narrator romanticizes (52), but a child born to a sailor and a prostitute in Bristol, a port town. Claggart, on the other hand, makes no allusion to his own life ashore, let alone his family. Biographically speaking (Renker 49-68), the Melvilles were far from a typical, affectionate, middle-class family. Herman was a heavy drinker and verbally abusive toward his wife Elizabeth and the Melville children. Thus, there is every likelihood that Herman availed himself of the compromised version of the gynocentric affectionate family. The author must have transformed the heterosexually composed family into a similar but completely different one, a homosexually composed quasi-family, a foil to be set out against an ideal heterosexual, gynocentric, middle-class family.

To deal with this deformed family system adopted on the man-of-war in *BB*, we will turn our attention to the sequel of above-mentioned discourse from Heman Humphrey. While reiterating his belief that “[e]very family is a little state, or empire within itself, bound by its patriarchal head . . .” (qtd. in Dimock

158), Humphrey seems to have been vaguely aware of what these social reformers and proto-feminists insisted. He had to compromise with them by stressing the genteel way of taming and keeping the family members in subjection. This recalls the approach defined by Michel Foucault and his follower Jacques Donzelot, i.e., discipline and supervision by the (seemingly liberal) patriarchic leader. Humphrey thus differentiated his disciplinary way from the one the autocrat would assume or the one symbolized by the bayonet of the Czar and the scimitar of the Sultan. In Humphrey's view, the members of the middle-class family in the allegedly *civilized* societies of Europe and America in the 18th and 19th century would have been degenerated if they had been subjugated by the intimidation and enforcement of an autocratic patriarch.

Captain Vere precedes the drumhead court-martial with unusual secrecy for a trial for the killing of Billy's superior Claggart. This secretive procedure reminds the narrator of "the policy adopted in those tragedies of the palace which have occurred more than once in the capital founded by Peter the Barbarian" (103), the Russian Czar whom Humphrey criticizes. Captain Vere presumably assumes the role of chief justice, analogized to Peter the Barbarian, and is thus proven to be an inappropriate figure as the patriarchal head of the warship of the allegedly *civilized* country 18th and 19th centuries. In fact, the surgeon overseeing the inquest over Claggart suspects Vere to be "unhinged" and "recall[s] the unwonted agitation of Captain Vere and his excited exclamations . . ." (101-2). Just as the author's own father, Allan, passed in and out of maniacal delirium in his final weeks, Vere raves insanely on his own death bed, calling out, "Billy Budd, Billy Budd" (129). The "patriarchal head" is deranged and the patriarchic family system on the warship becomes completely dysfunctional. Even before the contretemps of Billy's killing Claggart, Vere has already forfeited his reason and the qualities of an ideal patriarch. As a paternal figure, he infringes the rule of being fair to all his children/sailors under his charge and shows favoritism only for Billy. Vere's nickname, *Starry*, with its suggestion of cosmic order and, by extension, the importance of strict order on the warship, ironically betrays itself. His disqualification, however, is easily compensated if we accept Foucault's theory that "authority leaves an actual person to inhere in a disciplinary function that can be performed by anonymous, interchangeable personnel" (Brodhead 146). We thus arrive at two questions: Who performs this disciplinary function

and who helps most to maintain patriarchic order on the warship? The man who should carry the ball is none other than Claggart, the master-at-arms, “a sort of chief of police charged with . . . the duty of preserving order on the populous gun decks” (64). In carrying out his task and in meeting the bedrock requirement of Foucault’s theory, Claggart hides his real intention of persecuting Billy. Claggart carries out this persecution mostly unnoticed by the sailors. Indeed, he would be successful in his persecution of Billy, were it not for the Dansker, who surreptitiously warns Billy, “[Claggart] is down upon you” (71).

III. Midway between the Public Arena and Private Realm: Surviving the *Anal* Hierarchy of the Unstable Patriarchy

In this chapter we will explore the idiosyncrasy of the specious patriarchic order which Claggart is entrusted to sustain. By doing so, we will recognize how this idiosyncrasy influences the crooked nature of the master-at-arms. This is a pyramidally shaped patriarchic order positioned in directly opposition to the frank mode of camaraderie and communion idealized by Melville in *Moby-Dick*. In *BB*, we find the latter mode on the *Rights-of-Man*, a merchant ship owned by a male Francophile from Philadelphia, the City of Brotherly Love. Predictably enough, this fraternal comradeship smacks of homoeroticism.⁷ Graveling, the captain of the merchant ship, attests to the existence of easygoing camaraderie: “it’s the happy family”; “[a]nybody do anything for Billy”; and even the Red Whiskers, “the buffer of the gang,” “loves him” (47). Graveling entreats the boarding officer, Lieutenant Ratcliffe, not to impress Billy in a *sissy* way, having “really some ado in checking a rising sob” (47). The polar opposite to this merchant ship *Rights-of-Man* is the man-of-war *Bellipotent*. The latter’s stringent shipboard hierarchy is epitomized in the charge against the young sailor Billy for killing his superior officer and the false allegation against him for mutiny. Mutiny, by definition, is a form of subverting the established order by low-ranking men. Captain Vere remains ever mindful of the need to maintain order/hierarchy and ever afflicted with concern over possible mutinies in the future. Unforgettable memories of two uprisings that actually took place in history (1797) stay with him: the commotion at Spithead [the anchorage at Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight in Southern England] and the more serious outbreak in the fleet at the Nore [the sandbank in the Thames estuary]. He also fears some undeniable influence of

the French Revolution, a contagious influence that threatens to tempt the lower classes of England to overturn the hierarchy.

In differentiating the merciless patriarchic hierarchy from the benign brotherhood, Melville points out the problem of the so-called *anal* society. This *anal* society “can be compared to a busy well-organized hive that functions according to strict and implacable rules.” The politico-psychoanalyst Béla Grunberger recounts:

Analinity, bound by the whole structuralization of the hive down to its very substance, by its organization, by the ordered activity of its inhabitants, and by the discipline that they undergo and impose at the same time, is unleashed and turns upon them, since they have never learned to integrate it in an authentic and personal mode or to sublimate it. Therefore, there is panic, rout, and a blind fight of all against all. The anal character then loses his feeling of security and no longer collaborates. On the contrary, he sees enemies in everyone and everywhere: “Are you with me, or must I destroy you, cover you with dirt, and trample on you?” (164)

The *anal* mentality is made up of Emerson’s somewhat distorted self-reliance [individuation] and competitiveness. The anal society is based on enmity, jealousy, contempt, hate, and disgust — a wolfish world of resentment and quarrel, “the basis of the Hobbesian political mythology reflected in *Moby-Dick*,” or “Ahab’s Leviathan world of trenchant oppositions and tyrannical domination” (Adamson 206-7). The author in *BB* exposes the *anal* nature of the ship by naming it *BELLIpotent*, the strange name intoned with the sound of belly, an organ of the lower body which paradoxically conjures associations of the upper part of the body and, by extension well-organized shipboard hierarchy. To thicken the consistency of the *anal* atmosphere, the author makes use of the imagery of rats. Rats are generally characterized as greedy animals inhabiting the filthy sewers: “denizens of the lower depth, the bowels of the ship, the *anal* foundation or fundament of the pyramid of authority and rank” (Adamson 206). RATcliffe, for example, intuitively pounces on Billy as a prey for impressments and sates his own thirst with grog without permission from Captain Graveling, and unambiguously manifesting an affinity to the rat. ClaggART, whose name “contains a transposed ‘RAT’” (Adamson 206), wins the RAT race in the competitive society of the warship: for it takes him no time to win promotion to his rank as petty officer,

his freedom from drudgery, through “*ferreting* genius” (emphasis added 67) and other abilities commonly imputed to RATs. One of his RAT-pack (one of his “CAT’s paw[s]” (85)) is a corporal nicknamed “Squeak” for his squeaky RAT-like voice and rodent-like habit of “ferreting about the dark corners of the lower decks” (79). Even the Dansker, before becoming Billy’s private mentor, wears RAT-like features, “slyly studying Billy” with small “weasel” eyes (70). Both weasels and RATs are endowed with “*ferreting* genius” and a rodent-like sneakiness.

When the anal society grows distortedly large and goes to extremes, it takes the form of master and slave, the form that plagued America. The *anal* subject, with his prickly ego and brain, is eager to place himself in a superior position “above the object, to whom the quality of subject is denied”: “You are my object, I will do with you what I want, and you will have no way of opposing me” (Grunberger 149). The relationship between Billy and the Dansker graphically embodies this superior/inferior relation albeit to a mild degree. The depiction of the Dansker as a man who has “subordinated lifelong to the will of superiors” and “developed the pithy guarded cynicism that [is] his leading characteristic” (71) implies that he has long been a victim to the highly hierarchic *anal* society. The Dansker, a veteran who served under Nelson on the warship called *Agamemnon*, proudly shows the docile Billy his past exploits, and thus his superiority, by “shoving up the front of his tarpaulin and deliberately rubbing the long scar at the point where it entered the thin hair” (71). Captain Vere is also negatively affected in the *anal* hierarchic society he governs. He assumes the air of intelligentsia and intellectual superiority. Not a few officers of his rank find him “lacking in the companionable quality” (63), and those who nurse “professional jealousy” are likely to criticize him “in the confidential talk of more than one or two gun rooms and cabins” (103). Claggart, on the other hand, is a bit of a nerd. He is similarly immersed in the *anal* society, but conscious of his insulation and of “how secretly unpopular may become a master-at-arms, at least a master-at-arms of those days, zealous in his function, and how the bluejackets shoot at him in private their raillery and wit” (79).

The influence of *anal*ity is not confined to the world of the navy, but extends to the people in the world of commerce, the modern capitalistic democracy. When democracy topples and supplants the rigid feudalistic hierarchy, a new hi-

erarchy generally emerges. Though still patriarchic and based on a system of fair evaluation of talent, this type of hierarchy is forged so unstably that the people living within it are prone to fret over the stability of their social positions and their prospects for professional advancement. What begins as positive rivalry in a democratic society is easily distorted into a negative rivalry which sets allies against enemies, and superiors against inferiors, thus deepening the degree of hierarchic *anal*ity. The author creates an epitome of the capitalistic but fragile democratic society not only in the whaler captained by Ahab in *Moby-Dick*, but also in the merchant ship in *BB*, the ship aptly called *Rights-of-Man* (the principle of democratic society), *before* Billy boards. Captain Graveling tearfully entreats Lieutenant Ratcliffe not to impress Billy into service and reprovvingly warns the lieutenant that the merchant ship was once a “rat-pit of quarrels” (46). The Red Whiskers, a crewman on the *Rights* who once worked as a butcher, provokes Billy sensually by “insultingly [giving] him a dig under the ribs [— the rib is biblically and jocularly associated with a woman]”. . . “under pretense of showing Billy whence a sirloin was cut [— a pretense probably intended as a threat to castrate, to unman, Billy]” (47).

René Girard partly explains the ferociousness of the competition in the *anal* society (*Since the Foundation* 137). Unlike a primitive society in which one would be expected to occupy a prenatally allotted position and to act accordingly, Girard argues that a person born in modern society is fated to inescapably expose himself to the fierce competition (the *rat* race) and driven to act competitively and truculently, whether he be creating a work of art, producing a scholarly work, or serving a public or private institution. The establishment of the new democratic hierarchy by seemingly civilized modern men is paradoxically followed by a regression back to the primordial order of the animal kingdom, the world where the stronger prey upon the weaker. Though the uneducated Billy is regarded as *barbaric*, as a figure emerging from the wilderness like “Casper Houser” (53), this depiction of *barbarism* applies not so much to Billy as to those residents in the allegedly civilized *anal* patriarchic society.

All of the following sailors are disturbed in the *anal* hierarchy of the patriarchic society: Captain Graveling and the Red Whiskers (at the least) on the merchant ship before Billy’s employment; and Captain Vere, the Dansker, and Claggart on the man-of-war that employs Billy. Where can we draw the line that

divides Claggart from the others? Most of the others are ready to accept their own sense of same-sex love for Billy. As we have already seen, both Captain Graveling and the Red Whiskers love Billy. Ratcliffe takes to Billy the instant he boards the *Rights-of-Man*. We know that the Dansker, a figure who has developed passivity through lifelong subordination to his superiors and to their nominally homophobic inhibition against same-sex love, “[takes] to Billy” “in his ascetic way” (70). Captain Vere, after struggling against “primitive [homoerotic] instincts strong as the wind and the sea” in deliberating his final judgment over Billy (109), informs the young sailor of his death sentence and then has sexual intercourse with him. This final deed of Vere’s can be gleaned both from his “letting himself melt back into what remains primeval in our formalized humanity” and from the narrator’s abstention “to set forth” “the sacrament” where “two of great Nature’s nobler order embrace” (105). Though he dies unheroically and fails to be admired like Nelson, his role model, Vere receives benediction from Billy. In sum, all these sailors in *BB* successfully undo the alienating stressor in some measure and manage to survive this *anal* patriarchy. Unlike these sailors, Claggart, a *de facto* policeman responsible for protecting the *anal* hierarchy, knows not how to reap the joy of love in an apparently loveless, profit-seeking, homosocial world. Indeed, we can indirectly reaffirm Claggart’s secret desire for “Baby Budd” by recalling the chief of police on the man-of-war in Melville’s *White Jacket*, a figure depicted as a look-alike of “Vidocq, the master criminal and child molester become police chief” (Martin 111). Claggart could certainly love Billy, “but for fate and ban.” Yet Claggart, the man of self-control, holds back his own yearning for Billy, keeps himself [or falsely convinces himself that he is] hidebound to the last degree in his observance of the heterosexual norm, exercises his authority as a proxy for Captain Vere with an “official rattan” in his hand (72). [The rattan, incidentally, is a symbol of physical discipline, law enforcement, and most importantly, “a perfect figure for the repressive authority that relies upon a transformation of erotic,” or “a refusal of sexual that is transformed into a hatred” (Martin 112, 111)].

IV. Pre-/Post- Oedipal (Quasi-) Family

From here we will seek a provenance of Claggart’s love and anger for Billy, then attempt to solve two questions: why does Claggart stumble over the prob-

lem of love, and what further aggravates his problem of love? Claggart is responsible for controlling the anal society under his surveillance and fortifying it with the strict discipline of heterosexuality. We must ask, however, whether his professional duty is his only reason for not loving Billy.

Claggart has risen like a rocket from “the least honorable section” to the rank of petty officer (67): he has triumphed in a rat race. Yet Claggart is shell-shocked by the erroneous vision of the new comer Billy elbowing his way into a speedy promotion. Billy, for his part, expects the captain to “recommend him to the executive officer for promotion to a place that could more frequently bring him under [the captain’s] own observation” (95). As a “stripling” (95) endowed with “the good looks, cheery health” (78), Billy probably hopes that his own person can give pleasure to Vere; he might even dream, unconsciously, of pleasing Vere by displaying himself [Billy’s own body], “a fine specimen of the *genus homo*, who in the nude might have posed for a statue of young Adam before the Fall” (94). Interestingly, Claggart is of a feminine beauty and “of no ill figure” (64), “his hands too small and shapely” and “his face . . . well molded” (77). In a word, Claggart resembles Billy. Unlike the illiterate Billy’s, however, “[Claggart’s] general aspect and manner” is “suggestive of an education and career incongruous with his naval function” (64). Yet, in spite of Claggart’s resemblance to Billy and his intellectual superiority over Billy, Vere holds esteem for Billy alone. As a man rivaled and threatened by the boarding of the Handsome Sailor, Claggart quite naturally comes to suspect, with envy, that Captain Vere will favor the newcomer over himself. Seeing that Billy is to be promoted much higher in the precarious *anal* hierarchy, Claggart fears that he will be cuckolded, outshined, supplanted, and evicted from the paradise by the youth. Worse still, he smarts at the pain of betrayal and abandonment by his loved one [Captain Vere]. Claggart necessarily undergoes exactly the same the fate imposed on Satan i.e., expulsion from a paradise in which he was “wrapped up” in “the infant’s memory of ‘unique and privileged state of elation,’” “illusion of uniqueness,” occupying a “megalomaniacal position,” under the protection of his parents (Grunberger 20). Claggart, the accuser of Billy, is comparable to Satan, the accuser in Hebrew (Girard, *Bouc* 326). Thus Claggart evokes John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*:

O Hell! what do mine eyes with grief behold,

Into our room of bliss thus high advanced
 Creatures of other mould, earth-born perhaps,
 Not Spirits, yet to heavenly Spirits bright
 Little inferior; whom my thoughts pursue
 With wonder, and could love. . . . (4.358-63)

Claggart envies Billy precisely for his “good looks, cheery health, and frank enjoyment of young life . . . [go] along with a nature that . . . had in its simplicity never willed malice or experienced the reactionary bite of the serpent [the agent of Satan]” (78). Billy’s angelic innocence, the antipodal quality that Claggart/Satan lacks, nettles Claggart. Claggart feels ousted from the affectionate field of family (or family-analogized man-of-war), from home “reconstructed as earthly paradise” in the 19th century (Ellis 166). Melville is irresistibly attracted to a theme: <Claggart / Satan / serpent / pagan god> being symbolically ostracized by <God / godly patriarchic leader in the (pseudo-)family analogized warship> and supplanted by <Christ / the Christ-invoking Billy, the executed innocent>. When Melville voyaged to San Francisco, he brought along *The Poetical Works of John Milton* (Cohen and Yannella 23) and took special note of line 173-78 of stanza XIX in “On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity”:

The Oracles are dumb,
 No voice of hideous hum
 Runs through the arched roof in words deceiving.
 Apollo from his shrine
 Can no more divine,
 With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos leaving.

No wonder that “envy and antipathy,” “[though] irreconcilable in reason” (77), coexist in the same habitat within Claggart, a man whose heart is allotted to envy / antipathy and whose brain is allotted to reason. No surprise that “envy and antipathy” are not out of character with Claggart: as the narrator explains, the intellect has to supply a dike against gushing envy and antipathy, no matter how intellectual one may be. The Lacanian psychoanalyst and feminist Julia Kristiva postulates that indomitable passion, or what she calls the “abject,” emerges from the pre-oedipal / the abject realm of the female. The *abject* is threatening and inimical to reason, whereas reason is identified [though fallaciously in the human mind] with masculinity as a product of <word (law) / Word (Law) / God /

Father / father>.

We might suggest that Claggart has yet to outgrow the Holden-Caulfield mentality that he still remains in the pre-oedipal nursery competing for the love of <the parent / father(ly Vere) / Father>. Relying on the politico-psychoanalysis expounded by Irvine Schiffer, Joseph Adamson contends that a theme of sibling rivalry or struggling brothers runs through Melville's works. He explains that envy-related aggression comes from "pre-oedipal roots springing from old rivalries in the nursery, in which the child would fight his fellow for the favor of the primal mother" (196). Adamson searches for the primal cause of the sibling rivalry in Melville's works within the Freudian dynamic of sexual possession of the mother. In doing so, however, he fails to note the absence of both tyrannical father(s) and admirable mother(s) in Melville's poetical sphere in *BB*. Orphans like Claggart and Billy solicit recognition not from some motherly woman, but from the fatherly figure, Captain Vere. The debate between "motherly" and "fatherly" ultimately becomes nonsensical, for that matter, as Vere primarily resides in a shaky patriarchy and is regarded as a maternal father figure. Captain Vere is in fact disqualified as a warship leader; so much so that he inadvertently slackens the patriarch-dominating [oedipally characterized] hierarchal society and helps produce a *degendered* post-oedipal sphere. When we recall how effete and disentitled Captain Vere is as a patriarchic leader,⁸ we can safely assert that Claggart has already plunged into the post-oedipal realm from the outset.

Recall that both Claggart and Billy are orphans. If an orphan discovers his lost parent, whether his father or his mother, he is lulled into "the final harbor" (to borrow the words from *Moby-Dick*, 492) or into "the final and safe pillow for the head of the troubled child" (to use the phrase of Charles J. Haberstroh, Jr. (13)). In *BB*, Claggart cannot find [a substitute for] his lost parent and is defeated in vying with Billy for recognition and love from the fatherly Captain Vere. Indeed, the mere presence of Claggart "provokes a vaguely repellent distaste [in father/Vere]" (91), and Vere involuntarily betrays "a sort of impatience lurked in the intonation of the opening word" (91-92). Not just slighted, but shunned by Vere, Claggart finds himself in the position of "the spokesman for the envious children of Jacob" (96) when the envious brothers of the youngest Joseph deceived Jacob, their frail senile father, with the coat dipped in goat's blood to remind him of the primogenital arrangement. Anthropologically speaking, the pri-



Figure III: Harmansz van Rembrandt, “David Playing the Harp before Saul” (ca. 1633).

Saul laments for being deserted by God, and he is consoled by David.

mogeniture was infused in the critical moment of the transition from matriliney to patriliney (Millet 223). This interpretation makes it easy to admit that Claggart should be obsessive in maintaining patriarchic order. If Billy is equal to an “upright barbarian” (52), as if “exceptionally transmitted from a period prior to Cain’s city and citified man” (53), then the well educated but cunning Claggart is equal to the representative of the citified men in the civilized world, and equal to Cain himself, the older brother who failed to earn the primogenital recognition of his God/Father and killed his younger brother Abel. If so, Claggart might lament for being deserted by a father figure, Vere (cf. Figure III), and unsheathe “that streak of apprehensive jealousy that marred Saul’s visage perturbedly brooding on the comely young David [referring to Billy the Handsome Sailor]” (78). Satan [/Claggart] might, as Robert Martin aptly propounds it (46), be an unloved brother of Christ [/Billy], a brother who demands that their Father

[/Vere] should strictly observe the primogeniture.

In her analysis of the relation between the Gothic and the middle-class domestic ideology (33-54), Kate Ferguson Ellis describes the Satan depicted in John Milton's *Paradise Lost* as a mutineer against Father God, a SECOND born naysayer of primogeniture demanding equality among God's children. If this interpretation can be slightly changed and applied to *BB*, then the satanic Claggart plays the role of a FIRST born son who initially defends his primogenital right but later, upon seeing the primogeniture already forfeited in the nursery democracy, demands of <fatherly Vere / father / Father / God> the equal treatment of his <children / sailors>. In a word, Claggart converts himself from the defender of primogeniture-based patriarchy to the champion of democracy in the nursery. As it happens, Claggart wants Billy to be a "billy," as described in the OED: namely, as a "brother," and a "fellow; companion, comrade, mate."

Claggart's precursor in *Redburn* is Jackson, a crewman who hates the handsome Redburn, bullies other sailors, and comes to be feared as a "tyrant over much better man than himself" (61). In demanding of the captain [Vere / patriarchy] fair and equal treatment, Claggart resembles Jackson as a wielder of "the tyranny of the democratic hero, a tyranny as great as that of the aristocratic hero" (Martin 45). The latter's name even suggests Jacksonian Democracy, a government ideology now notorious linked to the atrocious policy of removing Indians to the reservations. The phallic bravado of Claggart as he reports to the captain a possibility of Billy's fomentation — "bridling—erecting himself as in virtuous self-assertion" (96) — appears to be "an attempt to alarm [threaten] [Vere]" (93).

It was generally unthinkable, in those days, for a captain to readily comply to a direct request for a hearing from men of lesser grades such as petty officers. Just when Captain Vere is flooded with mortification over his blunder in overtaking the enemy frigate, the master-at-arms boldly requests permission for a hearing. This appears to Vere's "quick sense of self-respect" (93) to be "a most immodest presumption" (93). Claggart stands up for Jacksonian Democracy, threatening the aristocratic and conservative Captain Vere, who holds "a settled conviction as a dike against those invading waters of novel opinion social, political, and otherwise" (62). It turns out that the pervert democrat Claggart is a possible mutineer who manages to make a false charge against Billy for plotting

a mutiny. This view of Claggart as a pervert democrat is all the more validated by the narrator's suspicion of Claggart's resemblance to Titus Oats (English impostor and fabricator of the Popish Plot) and Vere's remembrance of a perjurious witness in a capital case.

One might propose another scenario in which Claggart thrusts on the others his satanic Jacksonian Democracy, an ideology under which, from a psychological viewpoint, the dysfunctional patriarchic leader Vere should be demoted to the same rank as Claggart's, to a rank where he would vie evenly for the love of Billy. Yes, this scenario might be equally conceivable, though Claggart's craving for approbation from the paternal figure surpasses the sense of rivalry with Vere. Claggart is eaten away by the delusion of being defeated, ashamed, and humiliated by Billy, the sibling rival in the competition for the love and attention of the parent.

In further explaining the psychological mechanism whereby Claggart ruins himself, it might be useful to refer to the theory of smugness postulated by Donald L. Nathanson. To do so, however, we will have to backtrack our initial understanding that Claggart's anger is wholly attributable to Billy's beauty:

[T]he humiliated fury of the onlooker at *what is perceived* to be an unjustified assertion of superiority, fury that is always inherent in smugness . . . the smug person evokes humiliated fury by ignoring all attempts by the other to form a[n interpersonal] bridge and allow even marginal feelings of attachment. . . . The smug person is independent. He seems in need of no one. This element arouses envious fascination. But beyond that, the smug person acts as if he were oblivious of his surroundings, even unaware of the people in the immediate vicinity, or aware of them only in a general, undistinguishing way. It is this aspect of the smug person which is most intolerable and infuriating to such patients. Their sense of self-esteem is offended; the blow to their narcissism is compounded with a sense of futile and injured rage. The mere presence of a smug person, they complain, is something they cannot endure. (202)

We can double-check this approach to Freud's theory of narcissism. According to Freud (207-8), we are likely to be attracted to those that remain narcissistic, namely, completely smug children, disagreeable but paradoxically comical people, some feline species that are indifferent to human beings, and beasts of prey

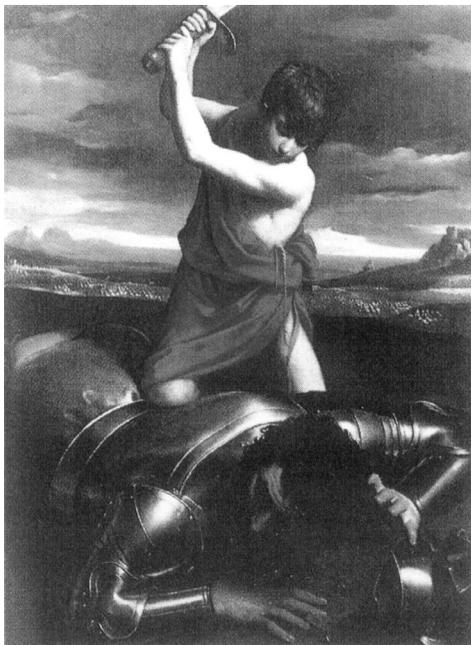


Figure IV: Guido Reni, “David Decapitating Goliath” (1606-7).

The innocent-looking boy David killed the Herculean Goliath. Billy [“Baby Budd”] tames “the burly fool [the Red Whisker]” by giving him “a terrible drubbing” (47). Billy then murders the intellectual behemoth [Claggart] by dealing a deadly blow to his forehead.

that are difficult to approach. The narcissism of the narcissist does not wield a neutral effect on either the narcissist or the party, but rather a harmful effect on both. Those around the smug cannot attain that blissful state of smugness, but rather feel continually piqued by the smug and compelled to accept the smug person’s absolute superiority. The smug is thus envied and resented. Recall that Billy is portrayed as “taking on something akin to the look of a slumbering child in the cradle” (109), with “the warm hearth-glow of the still chamber at night play[ing] on the dimples . . .” (109). Here the hearth represents an affectionate house and a mother[ly father figure / the captain]. Billy is compared to “the well fed nursling falling asleep at its mother’s breast,” an “ideal prototype” from which a perception of self-sufficiency is gained (Nathanson 202). The narrator

says that “from the first in addressing him,” the Dansker “always substitute[s] *Baby* for Billy” for some “recondite reason” (70) (Figure IV: David [/Billy] as a young handsome boy). This reason, as Adamson points out (183), may be Billy’s identity as “the very incarnation of narcissistic independence and self-containment,” the prey to be attacked by the outsider of the affectionate home. Claggart is an exile from domestic happiness in the heyday of the middle class when the family is regarded as a center of affective ties. In the eyes of Claggart, Billy, foundling though he may be, represents the “cloistered virtue” of innocence (Ellis 120), the vision of innocence at the heart of *the middle-class domestic ideology*. Claggart growing envy of Billy is only natural.

V. Overplaying the Persona

Now that we have traced the pre-/post- oedipal fount of Claggart’s resentment against Billy, we have several more problems to solve. How does Claggart turn the table? How effective is his false charge of mutiny against Billy? Why does the apparently effective plan of revenge backfire on Claggart? What damage does he incur from this failure?

V. A. Love, Geopolitically Speaking . . .

When we recall Humphrey’s remarks in Chapter II of this thesis, namely, that the order-sustenance of the patriarchic family is exactly the same as that of the warship and, by extension of the imperial nation, and when we remember the *Manifest Destiny*, the 19th-century euphoric American Zeitgeist “buttressing the dominant white society’s narcissistic impression of itself as an empire operating under the auspices of divine Providence” (Powell 12), we can conjecture that the Captain’s right-hand man should be a zealous nationalist and patriot. The nationalists and imperialists of the 18th and 19th centuries, among them the believers of the Manifest Destiny, must have keenly agreed that the legitimate nation is a proprietary of due territory. This concept reflects the view on the right of property expounded by William Blackstone, a jurist in Britain who, in an episode mentioned in passing in this story, outlawed homosexual acts. Blackstone’s view that the right of property is *sole and despotic dominion* anticipates a possibility of usurpation by alien powers. Blackstone’s clamor for cartographical property rights echoes with the idea of the proprietary self held forth by John Locke in his

The Second Treatise of Government: “Every man has a property in his own person” (287). In Melville’s creative mind, this right of property, either a man’s right or an empire’s, is always under the threat of a possible subjection to an expropriation by foreigners and aliens whose agencies take the personified form of “love,” specifically, in the world of *BB*, same-sex love. In the following citation from Melville’s *Pierre*, “China” is fixed as an empire, assailed within by “Truth,” or by love sensually characterized by the implied narrator as a love that “Truth” “nourishes in its loins”:

Sudden onsets of new truth will assail him, and overturn him as the Tartars did China; for there is no China Wall that man can build in his soul, which shall permanently stay the irruptions of those barbarous hordes which Truth ever nourishes in the loins of her frozen, yet teeming North; so that the Empire of Human Knowledge can never be lasting in any one dynasty, since Truth still gives new Emperors to the earth. (167)

If you recall that the nation seems to be analogized to the 19th-century patriarchal middle-class family, the heterosexual family, you can perceive that the nation/family or the warship representing the nation/family is under the threat of alien powers, the insidious powers of the homosexuality. In reporting to the captain that Billy is a mutinous fomenter against the high-ranking officers, Claggart uses the phrase “*mantrap* under the daisies” (my emphasis 95). Incidentally, the daisy implies an effeminate man or a male homosexual (*Random House Dictionary*). In his role as protectorate of the patriarchal family order on the man-of-war, Claggart is obliged to exclude [same-sex] *love* and stay in a loveless sphere.

V. B. Homosocial Pretension No More

Though Claggart acts out a vicarious role for the captain and maintains patriarchal/heterosexual order, Vere appreciates him little. The instant he sees the master-at-arms, the captain intuits that “the patriotic zeal officially evinced by Claggart” is “somewhat irritat[ing] [to] him as appearing rather supersensible and strained” (94). Vere even likens the “self-possessed and somewhat ostentatious manner” of Claggart to that of a “bandsman, a perjurious witness in a capital case” (94). This is a suspicion shared with the narrator and the sailors. Among the “grizzled” sailors, gossip has it that Claggart was once a “*chevalier*” who

“volunteered into the King’s navy by way of compounding for some mysterious swindle whereof he had been arraigned at the King’s Bench” (65). In describing Claggart’s facial expression, the narrator makes passing reference to Titus Oates, the false witness who effectively signed the death warrants of thirty-five accused of plotting the assassination of Charles II (1678). Subsequently, the narrator directs the reader’s attention to the strange similarity between Claggart and Guy Fawkes: “Guy Fawkes prowling in the hid chambers underlying some natures like Claggart’s” (80). Citing the remarks from “a Baltimore Negro, a Trafalgar man” (66), the narrator tilts toward a bold though unverified supposition — either that Claggart has once been imprisoned and mobilized into a Navy deficient of manpower, or that Claggart has once been one of those “[i]nsolvent debtors of minor grade,” or even worse, “promiscuous lame ducks of morality” — one of those questionable people who have “found in the navy a convenient and secure refuge” (65). By now we clearly see that Claggart bears a nationalistic pretension to ingratiate himself with Captain Vere; and that Claggart is a fitting validation of the “peevish saying attributed to Dr. Johnson, that patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel” (130).

Claggart is painfully certain that the best way to make friends in a world lacking friendship is to hold in common the same enemy (Girard, *Since the Foundation* 258), as if he knew Thomas Hobbes’s imperative: “peace at home and mutual aid against their enemies abroad” (Hobbes 88-89). According to Hobbes, the social covenant is an agreement to tyranny and the wills of the people are thus formed under their sovereign. The crew of the *Pequod* under the dictatorial Ahab in *Moby-Dick* and the sailors of the *Bellipotent* under the apparently genteel Vere are both examples. Against external enemies like France under Napoleon, Vere and Claggart might close their ranks, or we could say, homosocially unite on the *man-of-war*, a vessel *manned* solely by *men*. Yet Vere and Claggart hold conflicting ideas about the problem of the homosexual, the problem within, the problem of the enemy residing within, or the problem of what Hobbes failed to detect. In his attempt to stifle the same-sex love that pervades on the *man-of-war*, in exterminating the fatal enemy against empire and its agent [the warship], and in keeping intact the heterosexually organized homosocial patriarchic order, Claggart overplays his role on the warship, vies for Vere’s attention, and scrambles to wrest back Vere’s fatherly love from Billy.

Unfortunately for Claggart, his malignant charges against the Handsome Sailor infuriate the captain and make it difficult for Claggart to realize his revenge. Claggart does not realize that Billy is a last resort for Captain Vere and the sailors, all of whom are striving for survival in the *anal* rat-race ferocious patriarchy (cf. chapter III of this paper). Here we realize that Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's theory of the *homosocial* is not a panacea in the so-called *queer* field.

Claggart's ambiguous masculinity, along with the distaste he incurs in Vere, aggravates the problem so severely that he is placed at disadvantage. While over-emphasizing his masculinity by showing off the phallic rattan, and while managing to defend the <nation / patriarchy / heterosexuality> by pretending to be an ardent patriot, Claggart ironically draws our attention to his feminine feature: "His hand was too small and shapely to have accustomed to hard toil" (64). As it happens, Claggart resembles both Vere and the Vere's role model Nelson, the Navy Admiral who gratuitously put himself on display in ostentatious battle regalia during the confrontation with the enemy. These three men unnecessarily set forth their masculinity and ironically assume femininity: as Freud says, to willingly expose oneself to the gaze of others is the custom of a woman, especially a narcissistic woman (Irigaray 50). Besides, Claggart is similar to Billy. Recall Billy with his "smooth face all but feminine in purity and natural complexion" (50). Recall that Billy is equivalent to the Handsome Sailor, and that the narrator exaggerates the Handsome Sailor's heroic masculinity, as evinced in the effusive praises: "astride the weather yardarm-end . . . in the attitude of young Alexander," a "superb figure tossed up as by the horns of Taurus against thunderous sky" (44). In her *Against Interpretation*, Susan Sontag aptly postulates on the mannerism of gender:

Camp taste draws on a mostly unacknowledged truth of taste: the most refined form of sexual attractiveness (as well as the most refined form of sexual pleasure) consists in going against the grain of one's sex. What is most beautiful in virile man is something feminine; what is most beautiful in feminine women is something masculine. . . . Allied to the Camp taste for the androgynous is something that seems quite different but isn't: a relish for the exaggeration of sexual characteristic and personality mannerisms." (279)

Sontag goes on to cite evidences drawn from the movie actors and actresses:

Jayne Mansfield, Gina Lollobrigida, Jane Russel, and Virginia Mayo for their “corny flamboyant femaleness”; Steve Reeves and Victor Mature for their “exaggerated he-man-ness.” Claggart, Vere/Nelson, and Billy can be listed among these camp actors by virtue of their exaggerated masculinity. Billy’s innocent behavior and manner does not awaken Vere directly to either his penchant for androgynous boys or his own doubtful masculinity. Yet Claggart’s unnatural pretension to act out the part of patriot awakens the captain from his cozy indulgence in homoerotal pleasure. This awakening squarely confronts Vere with his look-alike and ugly self-image, Claggart. This self-same image of himself, i.e., Claggart, repels him. In spite of his excited claim that “the heart here, sometimes the feminine in man, is as that piteous woman, and hard though it be, she must be ruled out” (111), Captain Vere does not want the campy tincture entirely extricated from his man-of-war. Indeed, anger fills him when Claggart overplays his hand.

Another force on the loose also works to hinder Claggart’s plan to exact revenge on Billy. We have seen that Claggart and Billy resemble each other: the two are sibling-like, or we could even go so far as to say twin-like. Twins are supposed to stand in a basically equal footing. Twins are undifferentiated, and likely to compete keenly and antagonize each other. (Girard, *Bouc* 47). Twins symbolize the hierarchy-destabilized flattened society inhabited by people desperate to restore the differentiation and the hierarchic order — by people eager to find a scapegoat and inflict collective violence upon the scapegoat through some lynching-like ritual. More often than not, the victim is a figure such as the orphan, the handicapped, the stranger [Jews and Blacks], or the homosexual. As a hierarchy-maintaining chief of police [master-at-arms], Claggart is cunning enough to recognize that Billy satisfies the conditions of the victim: an orphan, defective of speech [stuttering], co-opted into the role of the Handsome Sailor, a sailor who is more often than not sinewy, young, Black, and androgynous. The ritual of persecution works effectively only if all the members of the society except the victim unanimously behave on the consensus. On the *Bellipotent*, however, it is only Claggart and a few underlings under his charge who dare to unlove the Handsome Sailor. Claggart thus fails to forge a homosocial alliance with Captain Vere and the high-and low-ranking sailors, and dies completely loveless in the cognoscenti.

VI. Against Hawthorne / the American Beauty / the American Innocence

Thus far we have seen the following. First, the social institutions of the 18th and 19th centuries were modeled after the patriarchic middle-class family and indebted, for its maintenance, to surveillance by the patriarchic authoritative; second, the *Bellipotent* is no exception to the axiom of this institution; third, on the man-of-war (and on the merchant ship as well), where the patriarchic hierarchy may tend to slide into the *anal* society, the hierarchy becomes destabilized and stays indicative of the negative hierarchic order of <the master-slave / the superior-inferior / the subject-object relation>; fourth, all the main characters except Claggart manage to survive the barbarity of the modern *anal* hierarchic society by unashamedly giving and receiving same-sex love, that is, by loving the androgynous Billy (the only exception is Claggart, who represses his desire for Billy). Fifth, Claggart confines himself into the world of his own making, the delusive world of pre-/post- oedipal perception, the world of futile sibling strife. He indirectly blames Billy for his smug innocence and self-sufficiency as a nay-saying assertion to his democratic proposal for arranging affectionate brotherhood.

Melville overemphasized a facet of Claggart's as the facet of a champion of (distorted) Jacksonian Democrat's. Conjecturally, the author must have awakened himself to the ironic common interlinkage between himself and the imperial nation, America. Melville was aware of his authorial identity as an allegorist, a "personif[ier] [of] the speaking subject as totalitarian overlord of language . . ." (Williams 81), and simultaneously he was sensitive to the political climate of the contemporary America under the slogan of the westward expansion. If Claggart wants to restore his once dignified self and pitch himself in Billy's face, and by extension, "seek to melt into the body of a powerful nation" (Adamson 173), i.e., the 18th-century imperial England, then the author wanted his authorial ego to be merged with the nation of America, in spite of his own harsh criticisms of American society and its hypocritical democracy (depicted in his other works such as "Benito Cereno," *Moby-Dick*, and *The Confidence Man*). Melville found himself as one of those Americans, "the Americans [who], since [the times of] the Puritans, have been likely to locate their personal meaning in American his-

tory,” “confus[ing] American life with their own salvation,” “distorting critical awareness” (Bercovitch 173). While depicting the abject Claggart, Melville found himself abject, and thus, aggravated his own self-loathing. Besides, if Claggart wants to transfer his narcissistic ego into the idealized parental surrogate [the imperial Britain or its personification, Captain Vere (/Admiral Nelson)], Melville probably aspired to merge with the nationally admired American canonical writer, Nathaniel Hawthorne.

During their six-year friendship, especially the neighborly fifteen months from August 1850 to November 1851, when the Hawthorne family resided nearby Pittsfield and Arrowhead [where Melville lived], Melville had been ecstatic over Hawthorne’s presence. Hawthorne had been “the ultimate chummy, the sort of companion soul Melville’s sailor[s] [including even Claggart] sought for so often but could so rarely find” (Haberstroh 66). In his letter in November 1851, Melville expressed his deep gratitude to Hawthorne for his appreciating *Moby-Dick*: “I feel that the Godhead is broken up like the bread at supper, and that we are pieces. Hence this infinite fraternity of feeling” (Corres. 212). The metaphors for Epiphany and Eucharist bring to mind the unanimous behavior of the *Bellipotent* sailors after the execution of Billy. The sailors keep pursuing the spar from which Billy is suspended, even when it becomes “reduced to a mere dockyard boom.” To them, “a chip of it” was as a piece of the Cross” (131). In his succession of letters to Hawthorne, Melville turned phrases as “your heart heat in ribs and mine in yours, and both in God’s,” adding postscripts with fervid remarks such as: “The divine magnet is on you, and my magnet responds. Which is biggest? A foolish question — they are *One*” (Corres. 212-13). Melville’s own experience of the relationship, *as opposed to the actual relationship*, can be summarized in a phrase borrowed from Melville’s long poem, *Clarel*, as “a bond . . . surpassing the love of woman fond” (3.30.153). Despite and because of these ardent avowals of love, Hawthorne left Melville in 1851, committing what the latter must have perceived as a desertion. Estrangement by Hawthorne revived in Melville the memories of Allan, his own father, and Gansevoort, his elder brother. The death of the father in the author’s boyhood was akin to a desertion. Melville felt himself deserted by both his father and Hawthorne, just as Claggart feels himself deserted by Vere. Moreover, Hawthorne’s distant attitude toward Melville revived in the latter memory of an unhappy childhood when Gansevoort,



Figure V: Postmortem daguerreotype of Samuel Stowe, July 1849. Porter and Fontayne's Gallery, Cincinnati, Ohio. (Sánchez-Eppler 69)

his elder brother, always outshined him, monopolizing the parents' attention. Gansevoort was the spitting image of the deceased androgynously beautiful father and somehow resembled the beautiful Billy and Hawthorne, Claggart's symbolic younger brother and Melville's elder brother on a professional level. This memory once more revived and embodied in the person of Claggart, the pervert.

The difference between the two authors in their personal backgrounds must have made it difficult for them to keep comradeship. Hawthorne, a man petted by his widowed mother and sisters, enjoyed the middle-class family lifestyle once his professional status as a canonical male writer was established (Erich, Herbert). Melville was the exact opposite of Hawthorne. When young, Melville was somewhat deprived of parental affection by the presence of his smarter elder brother, Gansevoort. After publishing *Pierre* and incurring stricture for the novel, he led a miserable family life, committing so-called domestic violence



Figure VI: Postmortem daguerreotype, ca. 1850. Southworth and Hawes, Boston, Mass. (Sánchez-Eppler 71)

against his wife and children, both physically and verbally (Renker). Unlike Melville, Hawthorne observed and adhered to the hetero-sexual middle-class domestic ideology in which the former could not comfortably live (Person, Pfister). Though Hawthorne was already renowned and old enough to be called a patriarch, Melville saw him relaxed in a cozy domestic realm, as a “well fed nursingling falling asleep at its mother’s breast” (Nathanson 202). Hawthorne was to Melville an ideal prototype of the smug. Recall the portrayal of Billy: “taking on something akin to the look of a slumbering child in the cradle” (109), with “the warm hearth-glow of the still chamber at night play[ing] on the dimples . . .” (109). Recall that the portrayal is drawn immediately after Billy is executed. Perhaps, Melville weirdly enlivened the smug image of Hawthorne, by then (i.e., by the composition of *BB*) dead, with pictures of dead children. Fearsome though it might be to the consumers in the 21st century, portraits of dead chil-

dren became immensely popular in the market economy (Figures III and IV). The theme of dying or dead innocent children was commercialized and persistently reiterated in the literary and cultural imagination of 19th-century America (Sánchez-Eppler). The dying child was personified as Beth March in *Little Women* by Luisa May Alcott and as Eva St. Clare in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe. [Figure V is the picture of Stowe's eighteen-month-old son who died of cholera.] In his *Mourning, Gender, and Creativity in the Art of Herman Melville*, Neal L. Tolchin suggests the influence of 19th-century mourning custom on the construction of "feminized protagonist": "[Billy Budd] is the flower 'nipped in the bud' of the standard mourning poem collected in mourning manuals"; "[h]is origin — he is found in a silk-lined basket on a door-knocker — evokes the basket of flowers Americans placed on the door-knocker of the house of mourning, in place of the black crape badge used in England" (33). Melville must have been absorbed in, though hostile to, this gynocentric commercialized American culture that flatly rejected Melville's works.

Although Hawthorne was fifteen years older, Melville felt like placing Hawthorne in the position of the young Billy — beautiful, innocent, untainted by overt homosexuality, and smug in the manner of a *Baby*. Like Billy, Hawthorne is said to have been endowed with girlish beauty, coyness, and innocence. Ralph Waldo Emerson, for example, blurted out that "Talking with him [Hawthorne] was like talking to a girl" (Mellow 445). Oliver Wendell Holmes, in turn, asserted that Hawthorne's "shy, beautiful soul had to be wooed from its bashful pudency like an unschooled maiden" (Mellow 28). We can thus speculate that if Claggart loves and hates Billy, Melville loved and hated Hawthorne. If Claggart hates the innocent Beauty, Melville hated the *American* innocence, the *American* Beauty.

Conclusion: Ruthless Democracy for the Cognoscenti

Previously, Melville wrote to the reclusive Hawthorne to encourage him to come out and be unreserved:

. . . there have been those who, while earnest in behalf of political equality, still accept the intellectual estates. And I can well perceive, I think, how a man of superior mind can, by its intense cultivation, bring himself, as it were, into a certain spontaneous aristocracy of feeling, — exceedingly

nice and fastidious, — similar to that which, in an English Howard, conveys a torpedo-fish thrill at the slightest contact with a social plebian. So, when you see or hear of my *ruthless democracy* on all sides, you may possibly feel a touch of a shrink, or something of that sort. (italics mine) (*Corres*, 190)

Contrary to Melville's expectation, Hawthorne shrunk at Melville's passionate approach, at his ruthless democracy, at the "democratic" love that hardly discriminated the sameness of the sexes or the differences between them. Hawthorne's response to Melville's amorous declaration of democracy is found, as Robert K. Martin suggests, in *The Marble Faun*, specifically in the flat denial of the possibility that Kenyon will love Donatello. As Kenyon puts it, "I am a man, and, between man and man, there is always an insuperable gulf. They can never quite grasp each other's hands; and therefore man never derives any intimate help, any heart-sustenance, from his brother man, but from woman — his mother, his sister, or his wife" (285). As a staunch proponent of *ruthless democracy*, Melville romanticized "the first French Assembly as Representatives of Human Race" (43), and found an ideal form of comradeship/brotherhood in the company of a shipmates in the center of whom majestically walked a "Handsome Sailor" or "a native African of the unadulterated blood of Ham — a symmetric figure much above the average height" (43). If Hawthorne had lived to read *BB*, he would have been terrified by Melville's radical political stance,⁹ his blindness to race and social rank, and his clamor for a gender-free human association. Just when his own death awaited him, Melville fell into a Claggart-like abjection, and finally betrayed his wrath against Hawthorne, the already dead. No longer could Melville restrain his long-held resentment.

Notes

1. Hereafter the title of the story in this thesis is shortened to *BB*. All subsequent references to this story will be parenthetically included in this thesis. Herman Melville, *Billy Budd, Sailor (An Inside Narrative)*, eds. Harrison Hayford and Merton M. Sealts, Jr. (1924; Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1962).
2. "The Old Bachelor," a two-part story in *Godey's* 41 (1850) : 250-7, 269-73. Quoted in Bertolini 25.
3. The *OED* cites the following example. "Oscar Wilde. Let. c 18 Feb, 1898: To have

- altered my life would have been to have admitted that Uranian love is ignoble.”
4. *Reports on the Course of Instruction in Yale College* (New Haven: Hezekiah Howe, 1830) in Dimock 157.
 5. *Domestic Education* (Amherst, Mass.: J. S. and C. Adams, 1840) 16 in Dimock 159.
 6. Theodore Parker, “A Sermon of the Dangerous Classes in Society” (1847), *Works*, 14 vols. (Boston, 1907-1913), X, 137-39 in Rogin 190.
 7. This reminds us of a 1993 movie, *Philadelphia*. “The film was the first Hollywood big-budget, big-star [—Tom Hanks and Denzel Washington] film to tackle the issue of AIDS in America and also signaled a shift in the early 1990s for Hollywood films to have more realistic depictions of gay people” (*Wikipedia*).
 8. See, Sasaki, “*Billy Budd* as a Mock-Hagiology: Accusation against the Patriarchs by Melville, a Psychologically Battered Child *Budding* into a Sanctimonious Child-Beater,” *English Review* 19 (2004): 7-38.
 9. As for Hawthorne’s doughface attitude on slavery, see Gilmore and Reynolds.

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**Homosocial Pretension No More —
Lovelessness in the Cognoscenti:
Melville's *Billy Budd* as a Camp Story**

SASAKI, Eitetsu

In his posthumously published *Billy Budd* (1924), Herman Melville (1819–91) refers to the *invert*, the X man, as “a nut not to be cracked by the tap of a lady’s fan,” as an “exceptional” man, as a man “without vulgar alloy of the brute” but “dominated by intellectuality.” This X man is equivalent to the master-at-arms on the man-of-war *Bellipotent*, Claggart, a figure who could even have loved [the Handsome Sailor, Billy Budd, or the innocent Baby Budd] but for fate and ban.” What holds Claggart back from enjoying same-sex love? What drives him to his policy of harassment? Do Claggart’s mentality and his perverted behavior toward Billy have something to do with Melville’s failed companionship with Hawthorne? Taking into consideration the author’s use of allegory to dissolve the differences in time and location, I try to clarify Claggart’s [and/or Melville’s] inverted love and hatred for and against innocence, beauty, Billy, and Hawthorne.

When thinking of the patriarch system of “government through surveillance,” we can verify the importance of Claggart’s role as the-master-of-arms, the chief of the internal police on the man-of-war. At the same time, we may suspect that Claggart hides his intention to persecute Billy. The patriarchic order defended by Claggart is a society quite opposite to the benign brotherhood, i.e., the fiercely competitive society, what the politico-psychoanalyst Grunberger characterizes as the *anal* hierarchic society. This society is symbolically represented by *rat* — in RATcliffe, in Claggart (whose name can be slightly transposed to ClaggRAT), in his cats-paws, or his RAT pack, with their rodent-like behavioral pattern of ferreting, etc. The more unstable the patriarchic hierarchy becomes, the more harmful its effects grow. These harmful effects — enmity, jealousy, contempt, hate, and disgust — afflict Captain Graveling and the Red

Whisker on the merchant ship *Right-of-Man*, and Ratcliffe, the Dansker, Captain Vere, and Claggart himself on the man-of-war *Bellipotent*. All of these sailors but Claggart manage to survive the anal society by reaping the joy derived from the same-sex love for Billy. Only Claggart stays loveless. Only Claggart waves a phallic rattan to show his persistency in refusing the sexual, and in him this persistency is transformed into hatred.

Then, we delve deeper into Claggart's psyche, the pre-oedipally constructed and post-oedipally strengthened inward realm. Discerning the speedy promotion of the new comer Billy and the ostensible partiality toward Billy in the paternal Captain Vere, Claggart responds with fright, fury, and the feeling that he has been supplanted by the youth and evicted from the paradise by the loved one [Vere]. In a way, Claggart has to acquiesce to exactly the same fate of a loser in the sibling competition for the attention and love of the parent. Claggart symbolically stands in exactly the same footing as an unloved elder brother, resolute in vainly demanding of his father figure [Vere] the observance of primogeniture. After this demand is proven to be impossible to realize, Claggart turns to the tactics of threatening the captain/father by converting himself into a satanic Jacksonian Democracy practitioner or a claimer of equal treatment, a radical democrat in the <highly hierarchic warship / a specious patriarchic institution / a symbolic nursery in the mock affectionate family>. He then reports to the captain that Billy is a mutinous fomenter against the high-ranking officers. Claggart's demonic motivation partly comes from Billy's apparent smugness: smugness or self-sufficiency hinders the former's hidden but genuine will to hold a brotherly thence democratic relationship with the latter.

Regrettably, the only viable course of action for the master-at-arms to take is to overplay his public role, and by doing so he aggravates his problem of love. Without saying, the warship is an agent of an imperial nation, a nation which, according to Blackstone — the jurist who appears in *BB* and is noted in the British history for outlawing homosexual acts — is based on the right of property. This implies that the nation and the warship are under the threat of being divested of their rightful property by enemies, and that one of the enemies — as the author himself points out — is love, or more especially, the same-sex love which steals into the seemingly heterosexual domain or property. Claggart pretends to be patriotic and loyal to his role, defining the androgynous Handsome Sailor, Billy as

the archenemy of <imperial nation / its agent warship / the captain of the warship / family>. Claggart intends to arrange homosocial alliance with Vere and seeks in vain to share with Vere the same sentiment, the sentiment that they have a common enemy within. In overtly playing the pretended role of patriot and in trying to bring the Handsome Sailor to ruin, Claggart incurs Vere's displeasure and dies without the love of either the fatherly captain or the smug Baby Budd.

In the years leading up to the composition of *BB*, Melville was anxious to fortify his fragile authorial self by merging with larger beings. As it happened, these larger beings were America, a nation whose imperial policy of territorial expansion he detested, and Nathaniel Hawthorne, a nationally admired writer. In the author's infatuated wooing to Hawthorne, we see similarity between the Handsome Sailor and allegedly beautiful Hawthorne, between the smug Baby Budd and the reclusive Hawthorne, between the innocent Billy and the bashful Hawthorne. Melville held the idea of ruthless democracy, the radical democracy that would nullify the distinction between the genders and erase differences among the races, classes, and professional ranks, whereas Hawthorne, a personage with an established professional status as a canonical author, stuck to the status quo and came to fear Melville. Estranged by Hawthorne, Melville may have emphasized and identified with the abject master-at-arms. Indebted to Claggart for the creative brio of *BB*, Melville explored Claggart's perverted mentality, as well as his own perverted mentality, and hurled a spate of resentful words against Hawthorne after Hawthorne's death.