

REWARD AND PUNISHMENT AND HERMAN MELVILLE

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of English
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Katherine V. Pope
August, 1966

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ABSTRACT

Herman Melville (1819-1891) lived during the height of the Romantic period in literature. Because he spent most of his life in the New York and New England section of the United States, he found himself to be the product of Romanticism and of Puritanism, two seemingly polar and irreconcilable doctrines.

The object of this study has been to evaluate the position of Herman Melville, Romantic and Puritan, toward reward and punishment. This theme figures most prominently in his four prose works, Typee, White Jacket, Moby-Dick, and Billy Budd; and appears on three levels--reward and punishment of the self by the self, by society, and by God. As Puritan, Melville felt the need for order which each level afforded him; as Romantic artist, he felt the desperate need to escape the same order; and the images and statements in each of the four novels have been grouped to express this duality.

It is the conclusion of this thesis that Melville suffered greatly from this dual need for reward and punishment and for escape, which is universal man's but is especially the artist's, and that in his suffering, he found a way to reconcile polar needs. Melville discovered, first unconsciously in the early images of Typee, in White Jacket, and in Moby-Dick, and then consciously in writing the ending of Billy Budd, that through confrontation with and submission to the punishment of the order, the Puritan could become free of the guilt-ridden self and of the oppressive order, and find unjudging union with the self, with another human being, and with the mystical divine being of Romanticism.

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INTRODUCTION

In the world of Herman Melville's prose, man encounters reward and punishment on three levels--the divine, the social, and the personal. His need for order (which is essentially a system of rewards and punishments) on these three levels is universal or existential. Lucretius writes in De Rerum Natura:

So things came to the uttermost dregs of confusion, when each man for himself sought dominion and exultation. Then there were some who taught them to create magistrates, and establish law, that they might be willing to obey statutes. For mankind, tired of living in violence, was fainting from its feuds, and so they were readier of their own will to submit to statutes and strict rules of law.¹

Melville admits even in the midst of his attack on the oppressive naval order in White Jacket that

were it not for these regulations [every man in his place], a man-of-war's crew would be nothing but a mob, more ungovernable stripping the canvas in a gale than Lord George Gordon's tearing down the lofty house of Lord Mansfield.²

Closer to the true spirit of Melville's attitude toward order is the statement of Fyodor Dostoyevsky in The Brothers Karamazov, which was published in 1881, just ten years before Billy Budd was completed:

. . . for nothing has ever been more insupportable for a man and a human society than freedom.³

Newton Arvin says of Melville,

¹Lucretius, De Rerum Natura, V (Cambridge, 1943), p. 421.

²Herman Melville, White Jacket (New York, 1956), p. 21.

³Fyodor Dostoyevsky, The Brothers Karamazov (New York, nd), p. 299.

(Calvinistic Protestantism's dogmatism) led him to believe or to hope that, beyond all the apparent formlessness, wildness, and anarchy of experience, there was an ultimate Rationality, an absolute order and purpose, in the knowledge of which one could reassuringly abide. They led him also to believe or to hope that, beyond all the moral and physical evil in human affairs, beyond wickedness and suffering, there was an Absolute Goodness or Justice on which one could unquestioningly rely.⁴

As one examines this theme of reward and punishment in Melville's prose, one sees symbolized and stated the idea that man also needs escape from the demands of reward and punishment.

Escape from divine reward and punishment is achieved through the Transcendental idea of the ego or self expanding to unite with the World Soul. Melville fully reaches this vision only four times: in a letter to Nathaniel Hawthorne in which he refers to the "All feeling,"⁵ in the protagonist's fall into the sea at the end of White Jacket,⁶ in Moby-Dick when Ishmael stands on the masthead at night and looks down at the all-encompassing ocean,⁷ and in Billy Budd when Billy finds peace through a mystical vision.⁸

Through the unjudging love of a companion in each of Melville's novels except Pierre, his protagonist escapes the second part of the three-pronged fork of reward and punishment in existence--that of the

⁴Newton Arvin, Herman Melville (New York, 1950), p. 34.

⁵Jay Leyda, The Melville Log, I (New York, 1959), p. 413.

⁶White Jacket, 368-372.

⁷Herman Melville, Moby-Dick (New York, 1964), p. 209.

⁸Herman Melville, Billy Budd (New York, 1950), pp. 358-367.

social order. Each companion symbolizes the role that Ivan ascribes to Alyosha in The Brothers Karamazov:

If I am really able to care for the sticky little leaves, I will only love them, remembering you. It's enough for me that you are somewhere here and I won't lose my desire for life yet.⁹

In contrast to the judging eyes of society, Alyosha's eyes speak of undemanding concern for Ivan:

Your expectant eyes cease to annoy me. I grew fond of them in the end, those expectant eyes. You seem to love me for some reason, Alyosha?¹⁰

You didn't want to hear about God, but only what the brother you love lives by. And so I've told you . . . Dear little brother, I don't want to corrupt you or turn you from your stronghold, perhaps I want to be healed by you.¹¹

In Melville's own life his relationship with Nathaniel Hawthorne held this same meaning: "'I feel,' he wrote [to Hawthorne] . . . , 'that the godhead is broken up like the bread at the supper, and that we are the pieces.'"¹² Arvin writes that Melville's "capacity for friendship, along with his need for it, was very great";¹³ and it is without an unjudging friend that Pierre, in Melville's last long work, confronts society alone and is destroyed.

⁹Dostoyevsky, p. 313.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 272.

¹¹Ibid., p. 280.

¹²Arvin, p. 137.

¹³Ibid., p. 75.

The third sanctuary is the center of calm, the island, the Typee at the heart of the self: "deep down and deep inland there I still bathe me in eternal mildness of joy."¹⁴ This, Melville writes to Hawthorne is "the calm, the coolness, the silent grass-growing mood in which a man ought always to compose . . ."¹⁵ and this, in Melville's prose works, is the escape from the ego and super-ego and from the guilt and reward and punishment that man inflicts upon himself.

In each of his long prose works, Melville deals with a world of reward and punishment on each of the three levels--that of the self, of society, and of God: Pierre presents primarily the personal level, White Jacket symbolizes the social, and Moby-Dick deals with the divine.

In Typee, Melville is symbolizing the truth of man's existential need for a world of reward and punishment as well as a world of freedom and escape, his need to move back and forth between the two, his inability to exist too long in pure escape or pure transcendence, his need for the security and solidity of limits if only for something against which to struggle.

In Billy Budd, Melville's final prose work, the theme of man's dual need for judgment and for escape reappears, and this time all three levels of reward and punishment are simultaneously submitted to and transcended.

The dual nature of the theme of reward and punishment is the

¹⁴Moby-Dick, p. 499.

¹⁵Leyda, I, 412.

result of the fact that Melville, living as he did from 1819 to 1891 and spending most of his life in New York, was both a Romantic and a Calvinist. Thus, the theme appears not only as a universal or existential idea but also as a personal historical concept, for the three levels of reward and punishment had a special effect on the Romantic artist in the Puritan society of the nineteenth century. Jay Leyda's The Melville Log shows Melville's extensive knowledge and personal identification with the Romantic artists in England and on the continent; and Melville's protagonists--Tom, White Jacket, Ahab, Ishmael, and Billy Budd--each symbolize the Romantic artist in Puritan society.

CHAPTER I

THE THEME OF REWARD AND PUNISHMENT IN TYPEE

In Herman Melville's first novel, Typee, the narrator, Tom, escapes from the tyrannical world of the whaler Dolly to the Eden-like valley of the Typees in the Marquesas Islands.

Melville deals in this early work with the nature of reward and punishment as it appears in Eden, the Old Testament symbol of pure reward; and also with the elemental forms of reward and punishment that man sets up for himself in the most primitive of existences. Typee society symbolizes both Eden and primitive society, and in this kind of analysis one must deal with two closely related levels of meaning of the multi-level symbol.

The author states that the island was not discovered until 1791, only 51 years before Melville arrived in July, 1842. Because the valley was part of the remote interior, it was practically untouched by civilization since the discovery.

Both as Eden and as primitive society, Typee represents a community of man in which the three levels of reward and punishment are fused: religious ordinance and social propriety are one, and individual thought is never in conflict with social standards as the Typees think and act as one.

As in Eden the three levels fuse to provide pure reward; and Melville explains that the reason for its blissful state is the absence

of money, "that root of all evil."¹ The effect of money outside the pristine valley Melville reveals in the imagery. He shows that money splits divine and social and self reward and punishment; that it confuses man's ideas of right and wrong; that it causes one man's reward to be another man's punishment; and that ultimately the rich are further rewarded for being rich while the poor seemingly are punished further for their poverty.

Tom presents an image in the Appendix of Types of confusion and debauchery due to money: he tells how the French government seized Tahiti, jailed young girls for their innocent promiscuity, and then began a racket of smuggling the girls out to ships at night for the pleasure of the sailors and the financial benefit of the civilized invaders.

As an example of the self-interest in which man brings punishment on others for his own reward, the narrator tells that his fellow sailors on the Dolly would have prevented his escape and brought down on him the violent and vengeful punishment of the captain "for a paltry hope of reward."²

And of the final effect of money, Tom says, "In the progress of events [the growing influence of post-Eden, money-corrupted, civilized life] at these Islands, the two classes are receding from each other; the chiefs are daily becoming more luxurious and extravagant in their

¹Herman Melville, Types in Billy Budd & Types (New York, 1965), p. 243.

²Ibid., p. 140.

style of living and the common people more and more destitute of the necessities and decencies of life."³ This final effect Melville has Tom consciously point out as the result of the Fall:

When the famished wretches are cut off . . . from their natural supplies [driven from Eden], they are told by their benefactors to work and earn their support by the sweat of their brows!⁴

This is also the nature of the banishment from Eden in Melville's own life. His childhood of pure reward--of social, economic, and parental security--ended abruptly with his father's death and his family's subsequent bankruptcy. Young Melville suffered from this abrupt change from a life of pure reward to one of punishment, and he later wrote in Redburn about the punishment of being forced into the world to suffer the persecution and humiliation of the poor common seaman while his wealthy father had always traveled comfortably as a cabin passenger.

Newton Arvin writes, "His [father's] death was the direst and most decisive event emotionally of Herman Melville's early life."⁵

And poverty continues to be the cause of punishment in Melville's later life:

What I feel most moved to write, that is banned,--it will not pay. Yet, altogether, write the other way I cannot. So the product is a final hash, and all my books are botches.⁶

³Ibid., p. 313.

⁴Ibid., p. 322.

⁵Newton Arvin, Herman Melville (New York, 1950), p. 137.

⁶Jay Leyda, The Melville Log (New York, 1951), I, 412.

This idea of society's rewarding the rich and punishing the poor Melville symbolizes in one of Tom's anti-missionary anecdotes in which the poor natives are pulling the Christian missionary's wife up the steep hill in a cart.

Thus, in contrast to the fallen world in which money and civilization have confused the standards of reward and punishment and have set the three levels against each other, Typee can be viewed as the Old Testament Eden with its life of pure reward in which "the Typees so far as their actions evince, submitted to no laws, human or divine--always excepting the thrice mysterious taboo,"⁷ which in the original Eden was God's word forbidding Adam and Eve to eat of the Tree of Knowledge.

As a world of concern only for the actions and the external but not for the inner life or knowledge, it is limited, as Eden was, to the physical life. The Typees were "thoughtless inhabitants"⁸ with no "arrogant pretensions"⁹ who thought and acted as one. The chiefs and the natives wore only slightly different costumes and their days were all the same.

Typee therefore symbolizes Melville's idea of Eden and its rewards for goodness: it is as though the natives have been rewarded their heaven already for they can think of heaven only as a continuing of

⁷Typee, p. 301.

⁸Ibid., p. 297.

⁹Ibid., p. 310.

their present existence of abundance and joy. Reward is represented in the simplest daily elements of food, sleep, and sex, all that one desires of each, plus "infinite glee"¹⁰ and "thoughtless happiness."¹¹

And these inhabitants of Eden have been rewarded even though they know neither guilt nor the true God. This fact suggests an ironic version of the Calvinist view that man is rewarded regardless of his good works by "God's arbitrary grace."¹²

It also suggests the straight Old Testament story that Adam was rewarded for not eating the apple of the Tree of Knowledge--rewarded for not acting. Thus the life of irresponsible leisure in Eden also ironically refutes the Puritanical view of the necessity of activity and the evil of inactivity in the Christian life, according to Calvinism.

For, for them divine reward fuses with social and self reward: "Nature had planted the breadfruit and the banana, and in her own good time she brings them to maturity, when the idle savage stretches forth his hand, and satisfies his appetite."¹³

By considering together the scene of the effigy to the dead chief which Tom discovers, the manner of preparation of the breadfruit, the main food of the Typees, and Tom's remarks on the making of fire on

¹⁰Typee, p. 117.

¹¹Ibid., p. 117.

¹²Arvin, p. 33.

¹³Typee, p. 321.

Typee, the reader discovers another aspect of Melville's concept of Eden--its preference for water over purgatorial fire. Melville further implies by the use of fire in the Typee valley that the Typees are slightly fallen in nature.

When Tom comes upon the effigy of the dead Typee chief seated in the stern of the canoe, paddling toward heaven, Kory-Kory explains that heaven is an island in the sky to be reached by water. In the Puritanical civilized world that Melville knew it is reached by the fires of purgatory. One of Tom's main points of comparison is the ease with which Western man makes a fire with the gruelling contortions of the Typee performing the same task. Indeed making fire is the most difficult task these islanders have to perform, suggesting that they represent if not pure Eden then a state very close to it, still unfamiliar with the purgatorial world of reward and punishment so natural to the Calvinists.

Melville makes the breadfruit, instead of the traditional coconut, the central food of the Typees; and the breadfruit tree is central to the life of the inhabitants. More important to the symbolic structure is the fact that the breadfruit must be cooked before it is edible. Thus, the punishment of the struggle to start the fire goes with the eating of the fruit of this central tree. This image places within this Eden only a hint of the purgatorial nature of the outside world with its Puritan insistence on work which both rewards and punishes.

Read on one level, this Eden has no punishment. "The savage, in short, lives in the continual observance of . . . dictates, which guide

and control every action of his being,"¹⁴ and punishment for breaking a taboo is instant death. Death has virtually no meaning, however, in a community where it means simply transition to another island with the same blissful life. The Typees' funeral celebration is much the same as that of a wedding.

Because it is only the world of action, the external, with which the Typees are concerned, Melville seems to be suggesting that the inner life and the sense of separateness, which man discovers in his exit from Eden, deprives him of pure reward. In Pierre the protagonist says, "I feel that there can be no perfect peace in individualness."¹⁵ This sense of the inner and the separate is one quality which isolates Tom from the blissful natives.

The world of Typee as Melville has created it is a multi-level symbol representing Eden and also primitive society.

In describing Typee as the archetypal primitive society, Melville presents the theme of man's basic need for reward and punishment.

The western Christian sense of good and evil and man's sense of the self as evil and needing punishment is not polar to the eastern religions with their concept of Nirvana, the mystical transcendence or escape from reward and punishment and time, but rather the concept of each includes the other: Christianity includes the mysticism of St. Paul, and the primitive Polynesian society of Typee feels the need to

¹⁴Typee, p. 349.

¹⁵Herman Melville, Pierre (New York, 1957), p. 67.

impose upon itself taboos and to reward its hero-warriors with a banquet celebration.

As the symbol of early society with only the skeletal elements of communal life, Typee, with its rewards and punishments, represents the universal, archetypal or existential need in man for judgment.

The Feast of the Calabashes is related to the images of Eden's physical abundance and leisure but it also represents the need of man to overcome a sense of separateness and to reward achievement; and the rewards are material possessions, and communion with and recognition by one's fellows. A sense not of Edenic togetherness but of separateness is suggested in the fact that only priests and warriors may come to the banquet. The reward is a cannibalistic feast at which the main course is the bodies of slain Happare. Man's existential desire for the reward of possession is suggested in the fact that "the heads of enemies killed in battle are invariably preserved and hung as trophies in the house of the conqueror."¹⁶ Tom says that there is a difference between the communal land and the intense importance of personal property.

This pride of possession and the use of it as reward suggest that primitive sense of reward which leads to the evils of money-oriented civilization. It also makes clear that primitive society, like Eden, is still concerned only with reward and punishment for external acts. "The four who had been the most active participants in the day's battle

¹⁶Typee, p. 320.

had the honor of carrying the slain bodies of the enemy back for the feast."¹⁷

Thus as social reward is relationship and possessions, so personal reward is a feeling of relationship and ownership. There is no hint that any guilt or insecurity deprives any Typee warrior of this feeling. The presence of the priests marks this banquet as a religious ceremony as well, divine reward to the military hero.

James Baird defines the feast as an archetypal sacrament (the New Testament form of reward in Melville's own world): "through corporateness the individual is made one with his fellows in communion with the deity."¹⁸

Baird sees Ishmael (the name he gives to the searcher-narrator who appears under a different name in each novel) as the symbol-maker who searches for the new emblem of corporateness. In Typee Tom finds two--first, the daily life in which the Typees partake of food, sleep, and sensual pleasure, thinking and acting as one in mindless togetherness in a state of Old Testament Eden; and, second, the primitive cannibalistic feast which represents both pagan primitivism and the New Testament sacrament.

Read as symbolic Eden, Typee is a world of pure reward in contrast to the too personal, too abstract world of Pierre which is pure punishment. "During the time I lived among the Typees," Tom says, "no one

¹⁷Typee, p. 364.

¹⁸James Baird, Ishmael (Baltimore, 1956), p. 56.

was ever put upon his trial for any offense against the public."¹⁹

Nor are there any signs of Typees indulging in self-punishment or any indication of the divine withholding of Nature's abundance.

The most important element to notice in analyzing Melville's works is, however, the discrepancy between the conscious comments of his narrator and the unconsciously motivated symbols. Even the lack of concern for land possession is contradicted by the fact that Happers are slain for trespassing on Typee property; thus social punishment is justified by the primitive Typees as by Melville's Puritan society, "chastising the insolence of the enemy."²⁰ Possession and honor reward the warrior most active in killing just as Ahab's doubloon will reward the spotter and killer of Moby Dick.

And the Typees not only carry on these "hereditary feuds . . . against fellow islanders,"²¹ they also feel great hostility . . . to foreigners."²²

This society also punishes the hogs that run wild in the valley, and these animals suggest to Tom the spirit of rebellion. Juxtaposed against this image is the scene in which Tom dresses as a native for the banquet because conformity (as opposed to rebellion) would please them most and bring him the greatest reward in terms of recognition

¹⁹Typee, p. 326.

²⁰Ibid., p. 246.

²¹Ibid., p. 332.

²²Ibid., p. 332.

and appreciation by society.

Thus, the meaning of the Typee world moves from Eden with its pure reward to a symbol of archetypal society reflecting the tendencies of Melville's own and all communities. At this stage one needs to consider Tom and his relationship to this Typee society within the theme of reward and punishment.

Having escaped from the tyrannical world of the Dolly to the primitive world of the Typee valley, the narrator-protagonist symbolically has escaped from the rewards the punishments of the self, of society, and of the Calvinist God as He was conceived in New England in the nineteenth century.

The three levels of reward and punishment are active in the life of the Typee. It is escape, however, that forms the central imagery of the book and gives the reader the counterpart to Melville's message in later novels, which is that man needs to be able to liberate himself from the world which considers him only the object of reward and punishment. In Typee, he shows the unsatisfying state of pure liberation: it is from an existence of pure escape on all three levels that Tom flees back to the boat at the end of the story.

In relation to Tom, Typee is not only a symbol of Eden and of primitive society; it is also a symbol of the escape of the self into the calm center of one's being. As further escape, Tom is designated taboo, separate from the rewards and punishments of Typee society and its gods. He is not allowed to enjoy the warriors' reward of the banquet, nor is he subject to the social punishments (which are also the divine punish-

ments) for breaking the various taboos; he is even able to suspend a taboo when he wishes his favorite, Fayaway, to join him in the canoe. And finally, he exists in the pure undemanding kindness and twenty-four hour companionship of Kory-Kory so that, socially, the unjudging relationship of a friend is all.

Tom exists therefore in the three states of escape described in the introduction to this thesis. He symbolizes for Melville the artist, the symbol-maker Ishmael, the genius who goes beyond society's values and beyond orthodox belief in divine reward and punishment, who rewards and punishes himself beyond normal limits. Tom is not satisfied by the physical rewards of food, sleep, and sex, and he punishes himself for stopping short of the self-reward called Yillah in Mardi which is the spiritual goal of Truth for which the Romantic artist searches.

Tom's leg wound, which festers periodically on Typee, is the symbol of self-punishment, and it heals only temporarily to allow him to enjoy the inner calm and joy symbolized in the island itself and also in the baths at the lake; and it returns most severely when Tom learns that he may be separated permanently by death or, more horrifyingly, by tattooing, which would identify him for life with the three-level opiate or retreat of escape.

Tom, as representative of the artist-genius, is also a trespasser like the slain Happers; he is a rebel like the butchered hogs; and as civilized man in primitive society he brings truth and disrupts their world of ignorance and superstition. For any of these contributions he could be punished by the social and divine standards of Typee.

Melville's protagonist in each of the novels has a sense of himself as a kind of god, creating his own meaning (Ahab, Taji, Pierre), a god-figure who is artist-genius, who is taboo, beyond common judgment. Pierre longs for the freedom, the escape, the taboo in order to live by his own order. He is the genius, the artist, the moral absolutist who actually wishes to be morally free to create his own moral order in which he is judge but not judged.

This analogy to Pierre suggests the positive aspect of Tom's taboo state beyond reward and punishment on the island. Marnoo, the only native with whom Tom can identify and communicate because of his small knowledge of English and his position as visiting stranger to the Typees, is friend, taboo, verbal artist, and god-figure to the Typees.

There are instances when a person having ratified friendly relations with some individual belonging to the valley, whose inmates are at war with his own, may, under particular restrictions, venture with impunity into the country of his friend, where, under other circumstances he would have been treated as an enemy. In this light are personal friendships regarded among them, and the individual so protected is said to be taboo, and his person, to a certain extent is held as sacred.²³

Thus, the taboo suggests the recurring idea that friendship, along with artistry and genius, sets one apart from the common social standards of reward and punishment.

Marnoo who comes from the neighboring valley is the verbal artist "all attractive . . . the inspired voice of the prophet."²⁴ Tom uses

²³Typees, pp. 258-9.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 255-6.

the phrases, "some celestial visitant"²⁵ and "some sacred vestiture"²⁶ to describe his own position among the Typees. Both he and Marnoo then are god-figures, artists who create their own meanings. Tom as artist creates pop-guns for the natives and is court minstrel. He is allowed to break other taboos such as taking Fayaway with him in the canoe.

These are the positive and desirable aspects of the artist's taboo, unjudged status in society.

However, the god-artist-genius, whose position is symbolized by Tom's taboo state on Typee, questions his own artistic ability, and the value of his new ideas. The guilt which results from such questioning can cause self-punishment which manifests itself in Tom's leg wound.

Charles Olson calls Melville's review of Hawthorne's "Mosses from an Old Manse" "a document of Melville's rights and perceptions, his declaration of the freedom of a man to fail."²⁷

For the artist who rejects regular standards of social, divine, and self reward and punishment to create and symbolize his own new meaning of truth takes the risk of either greater reward or greater punishment, greater failure. He is in a position to commit more serious crimes which deserve more terrible punishments: he is responsible as taboo god-figure for the effect his ideas have on the society which

²⁵Typee, p. 223.

²⁶Ibid., p. 223.

²⁷Charles Olson, Call Me Ishmael (New York, 1947), p. 38.

is invaded by his "unvarnished truth"²⁸ which may not be truth at all.

As false god he may be motivated not by truth but by a secret sin such as the possible incestuous motivation which haunts Pierre.

This possibility of falseness, of greater failure in the special taboo role, Melville symbolizes in the fact that Tom does cause at the end of his stay disagreement in this society which always before had thought and acted as one.

He causes Fayaway to ignore the taboo. This act symbolically links him with the French invaders who confuse the natives' sense of right and wrong and exploit their amoral sensual pleasure for profit.

He could further associate himself with other reformers whose new ideas cause debauchery and a high death rate. He also associates himself with the criminal in his comments on the horrors of solitary confinement, which he suffers in his taboo state; and by throwing a hook into the throat of a dear savage friend during his final flight, he may be making concrete these unconscious feelings of guilt that come from identifying as artist with false gods, Christian reformers, and criminals.

And of this guilt, Nietzsche says that Christianity "knows how to poison the noblest instincts and to inflict them with disease until their strength, their will to power, turns inward, against themselves--until the strong perish through their excessive self-contempt and self-immolation."²⁹

²⁸Lyons, p. 102.

²⁹Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, tr. Anthony M. Ludovici,

The symbol of the false god, the fallen god with which the Romantic artist or genius so often identifies reappears as Keevi and Roo in Mardi; as a fallen god, one loses the taboo and is no longer special; he therefore can again be judged by the standards he has previously rejected, transcended. Such is the constant threat on Typee if society decides he is not special. And in the special taboo state of the artist, if he tries to give them "unvarnished truth," he may bring social punishment upon himself like Pierre who is able to remain special until he takes advantage of his publishers and tells what he sees as truth. Thus, he must remain like Buck Mulligan of Joyce's Ulysses, the verbal artist who says what the people want to hear in order to avoid the punishment he hasn't the courage to face. This punishment Melville feared in publishing Moby-Dick; and Tom learns from Marnoo:

To meddle with their concerns, if persisted in, would at once absolve the Typees from the restraints of the taboo, although so long as he refrained from any such conduct, it screened him effectually from the consequences of the enmity they bore his tribe.³⁰

In Indolence: A Moral Essay by James Thomson, which Melville acquired on October 7, 1835, he scored:

". . . They are like certain men of genius who remain always obscure because they are all genius, having no vulgar profitable talents."³¹

Vol. XIV in The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche, ed. Oscar Levy, (New York, 1924), p. 209.

³⁰ Typee, p. 261.

³¹ Leyda, II, 794.

Thus, Melville felt the limits to the specialness of the artist-genius' position in society--the insecurity of his position, the threat of being either not special enough as false or failure, or too special, too revolutionary to communicate his vision. In either case, he would be again subjected to the world of social and divine reward and punishment that he had rejected.

Arvin tells that from his late teens on, the artist-thinker-man, Herman Melville, knew "neither settled prosperity nor irrevocable penury, but a demoralizing half-world between the two. . . ." ³² Such was the nature even of the orthodox Calvinist world in which he was steeped, in which all men sinned and deserved punishment but by "God's arbitrary grace" ³³ some few were rewarded and a man never knew in which state he was to be.

In the very beginning Tom is presented as approaching a situation that he knew might be either Happer country which meant a good benevolent response or Typee which was known to be cannibalistic, and which would mean death. Hints of cannibalistic tendencies among the Typees and Marnoo's warning of the precarious nature of the taboo create for Tom a feeling of ambiguity; and it is this feeling, and not that of cannibalism alone as Levin in The Power of Blackness states, which is the prevailing mood throughout. The mood of ambiguity, along with the other elements that have been compared, links this early novel with

³²Arvin, p. 24.

³³Ibid., p. 33.

the later work Pierre, the longer title of which is Pierre or the Ambiguities.

Melville's concern with the ambiguous relationship of reward and punishment is represented in the central image of the Feast of the Calabashes. The communion sacrament of the banquet rewarding the warriors is also a cannibalistic punishment of the trespassing enemy, whose bodies are the food.

The critic Marius Bewley notices feeding imagery in which good and evil become confused in Moby-Dick: because of "mutual devouring," good and evil become "assimilated into each other's being."³⁴

In Zoroastrianism, with which Melville, to some extent at least, was familiar, the world is divided between a good and an evil principle, and they are twin brothers. In the end the good will triumph, but their conflict is for the length of time.³⁵

"The ambiguity," he says, "that, in Pierre, will be rooted in the nature of reality itself, is, in Moby-Dick, restricted to the point of view."³⁶ And in Typee, it exists to a great extent still in the unconscious of the artist Melville, who presents numerous images of ambiguity without consciously discussing the nature of ambiguity.

It is the ambiguity both of social and divine reward and punishment awaiting the Romantic artist in his search for the new vision;

³⁴ Marius Bewley, "Melville and the Democratic Experience," Melville: A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1962), p. 101.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 102.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 106.

and it is partly fear of this ambiguity which drives Tom back to home and to mother where reward and punishment are more immediate and clear. This taboo state of the artist means simply delayed confrontation.

Because pure and permanent escape is also unbearable to existential man, Tom suffers a leg wound on Typee. Both D. H. Lawrence and Newton Arvin see the wound as psychologically self-inflicted, a form of self punishment. As Arvin suggests in his criticism of White Jacket, "though 'we the people,' like the common seamen in the Navy, suffer many abuses, the worst of our evils we blindly inflict on ourselves."³⁷

This self punishment can be explained in archetypal psychological terms employed by Freud and, later, by psychologist Edmund Bergler.

Within man's psychic apparatus is an ego, which "comes in contact with the environment through the senses [and] . . . learns to know the inexorable reality of the outer world."³⁸ The ego is "aware of the forces of civilization, religion, ethics."³⁹

The super-ego [is] . . . formed through experience absorbed from the parents, especially from the father [in Melville's case through the mother] . . . and consists of . . . all the rules of conduct which are impressed on the child by his parents and by parental substitutes. The feeling of conscience depends altogether on the development of the super-ego.⁴⁰

³⁷Arvin, p. 112.

³⁸Sigmund Freud, The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud, tr. and ed. Dr. A. A. Brill (New York, 1938), p. 12.

³⁹Ibid., p. 12.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 13.

Within the super-ego are two related elements--the first is the ego ideal, which is the Thou Shalt, the Eros, the life instinct. The second is the Thou Shalt Not. "Socrates assumed that a malignant spirit operated within . . . the unconscious conscience . . . and called it the Daimonion."⁴¹

The Daimonion is the Thou Shalt Not force, Freud's Thanatos or death instinct. Every deviation from the self-erected ego-ideal appears in the ego in the form of guilt "because the tyrannical Daimonion [is] forever using the benevolent Ego-Ideal to torture the Ego . . . constantly holding it up to the frightened Ego with the eternal rebuke: 'Have you fulfilled your self-created Ego Ideal?' Every discrepancy between Ego and Ego Ideal results in feelings of inner guilt."⁴²

"Illness results . . . in the narcissistic neurosis from a conflict between the ego and the super-ego."⁴³

The son of a strongly Calvinistic mother, Melville was taught that the originally sinful nature of man deserves only punishment and can reach heaven and divine reward only through purgatorial fires. Therefore such an inactive life of leisure as Typee afforded was evil in itself, not to mention Tom's sexual indulgences with Fayaway, who represents the savage as Id or forbidden impulse in Freud's map of the psychic self.

⁴¹Edmund Bergler, The Battle of the Conscience. A psychiatric study of the inner working of the conscience (Washington, 1948), p. 7.

⁴²Ibid., p. 10.

⁴³Freud, p. 12.

The Calvinistic doctrine also suggests that the artist, in his failure to pursue the materialistic middle-class goals or rewards, is leaving these social and divine standards of reward and punishment not to seek truth, Yillah, but only to indulge in the easy life of physical, sensual pleasure.

Typee deals with the conflict of this Calvinist doctrine with the Old Testament concept of Eden as God's reward for doing nothing and with both of the systems of reward and punishment in conflict with the artist-genius's seeking only the reward which is truth and its symbolic representation. Tom punishes himself for remaining either in the "narrow" valley of Eden or on the "narrow," gloomy, festering decks of the Dolly, which symbolizes the Puritan world from which he has come. It is this conflict and the polarizing of various interpretations of divine and social and self reward and punishment that caused Melville to suffer mental and emotional agony and that drive Pierre to suicide. The germs of that conflict appear in this first novel.

From all three of these conflicting levels of reward and punishment, each having its various interpretations, man must be able to escape. This Pierre cannot do. But the works of Melville before Pierre reveal the three means of escape--inner calm, an unjudging friend, and mystical union with the divine being.

Even in the Typee valley, however, Melville's "saturation in orthodox Calvinism"⁴⁴ caused guilt and a need for punishment by the Daimonion.

⁴⁴Arvin, p. 30.

Arvin goes on to say that Calvinism satisfied a positive need in Melville, the existential desire in man for order as well as for escape. The Calvinist God was ultimate rationality, order, justice, and security in a chaotic world which became more enigmatic the more Melville, the artist-genius tried to create his own symbolic ordering of truth.⁴⁵

The psychological critic, Richard Chase analyzes Tom's leg wound as symbolizing fear of castration, and his final departure from the valley as a move toward sexual maturity. Several references can be discovered to support Chase's idea. Tom refers to his taboo state as a state of infancy. Written two years before Melville's marriage to Elizabeth Shaw in 1848, a woman very like his dominating mother, a cousin, and the family choice for Herman, Typee contains several scenes from an area which Tom calls Bachelors Hall, rigorously taboo to females; and Tom spends many happy hours there. Its significance is further implied in light of the fact that Tom escaped from the Dolly whose tyrannical captain was named Marryat. To remain in the valley in a taboo state is to decay sexually as well as morally and artistically.

But more significant to Melville, the man and artist, is the separation from the rewards and punishments of society. As taboo he is not allowed to participate in the communal reward of the Feast of the Calabashes--the reward which society offers to victorious soldiers and priests only, the warrior being the masculine hero figure of society.

⁴⁵Arvin, pp. 33-35.

Melville's narrator-artist symbol finds, as Stephen Daedalus in Ulysses finds, that the artist is not the rewarded hero of society; he is the taboo stranger, like any other god-figure, outside the ordinary communal nature of things, outside common rewards as well as outside punishments.

Therefore Typee is too much unjudging companionship, too much inner calm and joy, too much freedom and escape for the soul of Melville, which D. H. Lawrence describes as "purgatorial by destiny."⁴⁶ And Tom flees at the end of the story back to the world of reward and punishment where he still belonged in 1846, the world to which he no longer can return in Pierre, the world suggested in the scene with Tom's friend who at the end helps him to get to the boat:

He placed his arm upon my shoulder, and emphatically pronounced the only two English words I had taught him-- 'Home' 'Mother.' I at once understood what he meant and eagerly expressed my thanks to him.⁴⁷

Melville cannot accept the punishment for his humanity, which is death and from which "no one is ever spared except in dreams."⁴⁸ This is not, however, the great fear on Typee because Tom is aware before he jumps ship that a form of cannibalism exists in the valley as well as in the world from which he escapes. While still on board the Dolly he tells the readers:

⁴⁶D. H. Lawrence, Studies in Classic American Literature (New York, 1951), p. 150.

⁴⁷Typee, p. 378.

⁴⁸W. H. Auden, "Herman Melville," The Collected Poetry of W. H. Auden (New York, 1945), p. 146.

Even the bark that once clung to the wood we use for fuel has been gnawed off and devoured by the captain's pig; and so long ago, too, that the pig himself has in turn been devoured.⁴⁹

Symbolically for the artist there is death in both worlds, death to the artistic imagination either in his own world of reward and punishment or in the life of pure sensual pleasure, of retreat and escape. He uses the word "narrow" first to describe the gloomy festering world of the decks of the Dolly, which suggests the nature of Puritanical society and its effect on the artistic imagination. Later the word "narrow" is used also to describe the valley; the word "escape" is used to describe both his entrance to and his exit from the valley.

Thus, it is not cannibalism; and it is not only ambiguity, it is also the fear of alienation, of solitary confinement of the artist. It seems to Tom the greatest social punishment in the civilized world that we "condemn [criminals, and because of the similarity of this state to the taboo state, we condemn artists] to perpetual solitude in the very heart of our population."⁵⁰

The aspect of confinement of the taboo concerns the narrator because, as he reflects Melville himself, he feels, as Baird says that Melville felt, that "life was indeed an absolutely personal experiment."⁵¹ And as a personal experiment, it requires freedom to search.

In searching for his own new Romantic vision of oneness with the

⁴⁹Tyces, p. 104.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 242.

⁵¹Baird, p. 34.

universe, he had to embrace sin and evil. Such unity was not to be attained in his own world with its fixed order of reward and punishment and its orthodox thought on divine reward and punishment, nor was it to be found in this mindless Eden, but achieved through a contrived world of the mind and heart of the individual artist. The energy of that mind was the result of eating of the Tree of Knowledge, and it made confinement intolerable. It also made fallen man, and especially the artist-genius Melville, intensely aware of the absurdity of the restrictions of any order because of the conflicting requirements for reward and punishment between and within each level. The self punishment inflicted by the artist for his failure to move on in his search for truth in the face of such complexity and ambiguity appears in the final image in Pierre as suicide, which expresses the inability of the protagonist to endure the ambiguity.

This special awareness or extra serving from the Tree of Knowledge isolates the artist and makes fear of the solitary as intense as fear of confinement.

The Romantic poet's sense of specialness is paradoxically coupled with self-abasement and his sense of otherness which like his taboo situation in Eden will render him "forever separated from friends and home,"⁵² and from Mother who, as a rigid Calvinist steeped in social values, represents both social and divine reward and punishment, but also represents order and security and belonging. For the Romantic

⁵²Typee, p. 368.

artist's specialness was viewed "both as blessing and curse, a source of pain, suffering, and alienation as well as of bliss, ecstasy and superior wisdom."⁵³ The sense of inability to communicate his "unvarnished truth" is also a central motivation in Pierre's suicide.

Thus, as symbol of these ideas of the artist and his relation to rewards and punishments, Tom anticipates the character of Pierre and of the man Melville, both artists in Puritan society.

The taboo is imposed only after Toby leaves, and it creates in Tom a longing that all Romantic rebels feel--the sense that there is "no one with whom I could communicate my thoughts,"⁵⁴ no one to sympathize with his pain.

When he is threatened with the natives' insistence that he be tattooed, "this incident opened my eyes to a new danger; and I now felt convinced that in some luckless hour I should be disfigured in such a manner as never more to have the face to return to my countrymen, even should an opportunity offer."⁵⁵ Tom's discussion of taboos suggests the artist's sense that he is not special at all but simply separate, different, for taboos are bestowed also on the pathetically ugly, the odd, the useless, and the harmless, among which were black hogs, scurvy dogs, and pregnant women.

⁵³Victor Erlich, "The Conception of the Poet in Krasinski and the Romantic Myth of the Artist," Studies in Romanticism, I (Summer 1962), 198.

⁵⁴Lycee, p. 359.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 347.

And this Romantic artist's desire not to be god, genius, artist, not to be special and to live by the same standards of social and divine and self-reward and punishment leads to his desire to communicate the new vision he has discovered in order to justify his rebellion; in other words, to be submitted once again to the values of his own society and to be rewarded in terms of social and divine orthodoxy.

Thus, like the existentialists, Melville's archetypal man Ishmael needs to become his own god, creating his own meaning, his own symbols of truth, and therefore to be beyond judgment to become the judge; but he never loses the sense of the Calvinist God who rewards submission and punishes the proud ego. There is no biographical indication that he ever rid himself of the influence of this God, just as he never rid himself of that mother figure who taught him of the Calvinist God.

But in Types the duality of wanting to escape as god-artist and also of longing to rejoin the order is only beginning to make itself known to the conscious mind of Melville, and it is in his unconsciously motivated symbols that we discover the complexity and ambiguity of Tom's feelings, expressed in the central image of the leg wound, for example, which makes it both necessary for him to leave and impossible for him to do so.

CHAPTER II
THE THEME OF REWARD AND PUNISHMENT
IN WHITE JACKET

On Typee, Tom's need for reward and punishment is only partially satisfied by his leg wound; and the world of White Jacket, Herman Melville's third book, is the three-level world of reward and punishment, the world of Puritan society, of the Puritan God, and of his own Demonion or self-punisher, the world of home and mother to which he finally returns.

In dealing with the theme of man's dual need for escape and for order, the free life of the Typees is Melville's most sustained symbol of escape, and at the other extreme is the oppressive order aboard the Neversink, that world dominated by the code of the Articles of War from which "there is no escape."¹ It is a world in which the officers "scruple not to sacrifice an immortal man or two, in order to show off the excelling discipline of the ship."²

While the word and act of escape occur at the beginning and again at the end of Typee, the word and act of punishment are the leitmotif of White Jacket. Some form of the word "punish" appears over thirty times in the novel, and "All hands witness punishment, ahoy!" is the refrain of Chapter XXXIII.³

¹Herman Melville, White Jacket (New York, 1956), p. 282.

²Ibid., p. 193.

³Ibid., pp. 134-139.

The book is an indictment of a certain social punishment in the 1840's, corporal punishment in the Navy, where Melville found the laws generally unjust, degrading, despotic, especially the frequently used flogging.

The larger theme is, however, the unlimited and unjustified punishment of individual man by his society and that society's God, experienced by man everywhere, in particular by the Romantic artist with his view of individual man as divine and with his own desire to transcend the order and break out in order to search for his own vision of Truth,⁴ and certainly by Melville himself after his traumatic exit from the Eden of his childhood into this world of impersonal order run by arbitrary wills, which he found absurd and insecure.

The Neversink "is but this old-fashioned world of ours afloat,"⁵ White Jacket says, "a fast-sailing, never-sinking world-frigate, of which God is the shipwright. . . ."⁶ Melville is stating that the ship symbolizes earth. When a man speaks of the whole world, however, he usually means his own society, for it is that segment of organized human life which most directly threatens his own individual freedom, dignity, and happiness. That society for Melville was Puritan New England.

⁴Morse Peckham, "Toward a Theory of Romanticism, II. Reconsiderations," Studies in Romanticism, I (Autumn, 1961), 7.

⁵White Jacket, p. 369.

⁶Ibid., p. 374.

The social state which Melville describes is based on "mutual repulsion"⁷ and "bitterness"⁸ and its members delight in any opportunity to use the social (naval) code to punish one another.

Such is the nature of the sin-obsessed, sadistic Puritan society described by the Danish sociologist, Svend Ranulf, who examined twenty-five publications, selected at random from some 21,000 Puritan publications which appeared in England in the years from 1640 to 1663, and which now comprise the Thomason Collection at the British Museum. They are "the Directory for the Publique Worship of God, adopted by Parliament to replace the Book of Common Prayer, eleven sermons, seven religious or moral tracts, three pamphlets about politics or social questions, and three issues of a weekly paper called The Scottish Dove."⁹ From these Ranulf has made a study of the motives for social and divine punishment as conceived by the sadistic, middle-class Puritan mind, which represented the nature of social and religious reward and punishment in Melville's nineteenth century New England society.

"It is generally agreed that Calvinism is characterized by an unusually strong desire to see other people punished," Ranulf reports.¹⁰ "utterances indicating a sadistic-masochistic disposition in the Puritans

⁷White Jacket, p. 352.

⁸Ibid., p. 353.

⁹Svend Ranulf, Moral Indignation and Middle Class Psychology (Copenhagen, 1938), p. 61.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 12.

are to be found in thirteen of our twenty-five publications."¹¹ And Melville, in White Jacket, goes on to say that the results of this oppressive Puritan society are not only mutual repulsion, bitterness, and sadism, but "almost incredible corruption"¹² which "will neither bear representing, nor reading, and will hardly bear thinking of."¹³ Tyranny, therefore, causes ignorance and depravity; they are not, as society often assumes, "an apology for the oppressor."¹⁴

The Puritan society, then, is death to the individual spirit and especially to the artist: it is the "confinement of so many mortals in an oaken box on the sea."¹⁵

Such is the general unhealthy, negative, oppressive nature of the Neversink and of the Puritan order of reward and punishment.

Another adjective that Melville uses to describe the order is "absurd."¹⁶ One aspect of the absurdity is the agent of reward and punishment--a combination of arbitrary will, personal repulsion (a form of jealousy), and impersonal law. In these relationships of repulsion and jealousy, Melville says, "how easy it is to torture him by official treatment."¹⁷

¹¹ Ranulf, p. 72.

¹² White Jacket, p. 178.

¹³ Ibid., p. 354.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 143.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 353.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 139.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 352.

In the hierarchy of punishers, punishment is often prescribed by a midshipman because of injustice done to him.¹⁸ Thus, the punishment is arbitrary and yet it is "emphatically a system of cruel cogs and wheels, systematically grinding up in one common hopper all that might minister to the moral well-being of the crew."¹⁹ In its impersonality, "for nearly all degrees of transgression . . . little, if any, discrimination is shown."²⁰ Ranulf also points out the "disinterested moral indignation inherent in Calvinism."²¹

An object of reward and punishment which is both impersonal and arbitrary and sometimes motivated by bitterness or repulsion, a sailor is "liable to the 'colt' or rope's-end, a bit of rattlin-stuff, indiscriminately applied--without stripping the victim--at any time, and in any part of the ship, at the merest wink from the captain. By an express order of that officer, most boatswain's mates carry the colt coiled in their hats, in readiness to be administered at a minute's warning upon any offender."²²

In the Neversink, as in other national ships, the business of holv-stoning the decks was often prolonged, by way of punishment to the men, particularly of a raw, cold morning. This is one of the punishments which a lieutenant of the watch may easily inflict upon the crew, without infringing the statute which places the

¹⁸ White Jacket, pp. 214-215.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 352.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 140.

²¹ Ranulf, p. 16.

²² White Jacket, p. 140.

power of punishment solely in the hands of the captain.²³

Besides the absurdity of this combination of arbitrary will, repulsion, bitterness, and impersonal order, the nature of social reward and punishment in White Jacket contains the absurdity of having no relationship either to the crime or to the desired social or personal effect of reward and punishment. "It is in vain that the officers by threats of condign punishment, endeavor to instill more virtuous principles into their crew; so thick is the mob, that not one thief in a thousand is detected."²⁴

Melville is aware that diversity of human psychology often renders social reward and punishment absurd because the subjective response to the subjectively motivated act of rewarding or punishing has no relation to justified cause (true criminality) or to desired effect (true morality and order).

Four sailors--Peter, Mark, John, and Antone--are accused of fighting and are punished by flogging. The reaction of each man to his punishment is unrelated to anything but his own inner nature. John "went among the crew with a smile, saying, 'D--n me! it's nothing when you're used to it! Who wants to fight!'"²⁵ Antone began a habit of cursing, a thing he had not done before; Mark "became silent and sullen for the rest of the cruise"; and, most ironic of all, Peter, degraded

²³White Jacket, p. 94.

²⁴Ibid., p. 50.

²⁵Ibid., p. 138.

and pale, wept:

"I don't care what happens to me now! . . . I have been flogged once, and they may do it again if they will. Let them look out for me now!"²⁶

Regarding the case of the four caught fighting, the captain says, "I allow no man to fight on board here but myself."²⁷ "The law was not made for the captain!" White Jacket says.²⁸ This fact leads to a discussion of the third aspect of the absurdity of social reward and punishment, symbolized and exaggerated in life aboard the Neversink: the tendency to reward the rich and socially high-ranking and to punish the poor. The theme of punishment for poverty appears in Tynae and in Redburn, and Melville encountered it in his own life. The double standard Melville saw applied to the captain (and his officers) and to the sailors, to the Calvinist God and to individual man, to father and to son, to the rich and to the poor, to the conforming member of society and to the outsider. Melville's multi-level symbol often includes all the elements on the right or left, those on the left being the object of reward and those on the right, the object of punishment. Melville identified himself with those types on the right.

For example, "what . . . has he [the sailor] to expect from war? What but harder work, and harder usage than in peace; a wooden leg or arm; mortal wounds, and death."²⁹ ". . . Yet, while it held out to the

²⁶ White Jacket, pp. 138-139.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 137.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 286.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 203.

sailor no promise of promotion, and what is called glory, these things fired the breast of his officers."³⁰

The theme that society rewards the rich and the prominent and punishes the poor is embodied not only in the effects of war and in the pay scale in which "brow-beaten waiters . . . for a pittance, do our craft's shabby work,"³¹ but in the execution of the supposedly impersonal code itself:

. . . In cases where an officer commits a trivial violation of this law, a court-martial is seldom or never called to sit upon his trial; but in the sailor's case he is at once condemned to the lash.³²

Later, Melville comments on the same duality:

These [punishments] are not always employed to convert Sin to Virtue, but to divide them, and protect Virtue and legalized Sin from unlegalized Vice.³³

He also speaks from behind his ironic mask to that society on land which he is symbolizing in the life of the Neversink, a society which today still reflects the same inequalities in its social order of reward and punishment:

What would landmen think, were the state of New York to pass a law against some offence, affixing a fine as a penalty, and then add to that law a section restricting its penal operation to mechanics and day labourers, exempting all gentlemen with an income of one thousand dollars? Yet, thus in the spirit of its practical

³⁰White Jacket, p. 203.

³¹Ibid., p. 375.

³²Ibid., p. 145.

³³Ibid., p. 375.

operation, even thus, stands a good part of the naval laws wherein naval flogging is involved.³⁴

Melville goes on to state that the reward of the rich and high-ranking comes as a result of their punishing the poor which the Puritan mind interprets as justified retribution. "An aspect of Calvinism . . . is its harshness to the poor" who are evil in their idleness, Ranulf reports.³⁵ Similarly,

How were these officers to gain glory? How but by a distinguished slaughtering of their fellow-men? How were they to be promoted? How but over the buried heads of killed comrades and messmates?³⁶

The rhetorical style and vivid image of these lines suggest Melville's strong feeling and his own identification with the object of such injustice after his early exit from Eden at thirteen.

He speaks even more strongly to society with its rewards and punishments through an Indian warrior whom White Jacket sees displaying his trophy for scalping a foe:

Do you straighten yourself to think that you have committed a murder, when a chance falling stone has often done the same? Is it a proud thing to topple down six feet perpendicular of immortal manhood, though that lofty living tower needed perhaps thirty good growing summers to bring it to maturity.³⁷

Such a message, Melville very likely knew, was appropriate for any social order which applied corporal punishment even to the extent of destroying

³⁴White Jacket, p. 143.

³⁵Ranulf, p. 14.

³⁶White Jacket, p. 203.

³⁷Ibid., p. 257.

an individual life in the name of social justice.

Thus, in the symbol of life aboard the Heversink, Melville sees the nature of social reward and punishment as reward in money and glory won for the unjust punishment, indeed the murder of others. This same aspect of social reward and punishment is seen on Typee in the feast rewarding the warriors who had killed the most or rather punished the most trespassers, and in the sailors aboard the Dolly, who would have turned in Tom and Toby for money, and in the doubloon in Moby Dick which is to reward him who first sees what they are out to destroy.

In White Jacket, not only do "these coltings put the tin in the purser's pocket,"³⁸ but even the chaplain is entitled to receive a share of the bounty payable for "destroying ships full of human beings."³⁹

And thus do the people of the gun-deck suffer, that the commodore on the poop may be glorified.⁴⁰

Such Biblical language and sentence structure and the word "glorified" move the reader to another level of the multi-level symbol, from the social level to the divine level of reward and punishment.

Newton Arvin describes Melville's "saturation in orthodox Calvinism,"⁴¹ a religion in which

the whole tendency of Reformed doctrine, as a writer on the Church once said, was 'to exalt God and abase

³⁸White Jacket, p. 218.

³⁹Ibid., p. 137.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 193.

⁴¹Newton Arvin, Herman Melville (New York, 1930), p. 30.

man'; and the future author of Moby Dick was not likely to listen light-mindedly to such a gospel.⁴²

The main qualities of this central agent of reward and punishment aboard the Neversink, the captain, are an absurd combination of arbitrary will, personal repulsion (a form of jealousy), and impersonal law, the main qualities of the Old Testament God whose image was incorporated into Puritan and Calvinist theology. ". . . There was a peculiar affinity between Puritan psychology and the contents of the Old Testament," Ranulf reports.⁴³ He quotes the following passage from one of the pamphlets which refers to the Old Testament and describes the nature both of the Puritan God and of Captain Claret:

[God punishes] for the demonstration of his justice, to make it appeare, as David saith, that doublesse, there is a God that judgeth the earth. For, should the Lord suffer the wicked to run on in their wickednesse, without danger of cutting down, not only his justice but his very being too, would be called into question; men would be ready to say in their hearts with Davids foole, that there is no God.⁴⁴

Melville's conscious description of the New Testament "blessed Savior . . . full of the wisdom of heaven [and] divine consistency"⁴⁵ suggests an image of the Divine which also appears in Calvinist theology, in flat-contradiction to the preceding arbitrary, jealous, impersonal image of Him. In the twenty-five publications from which Ranulf

⁴²Arvin, p. 32.

⁴³Ranulf, p. 58.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 74.

⁴⁵White Jacket, p. 308.

draws the wrathful, sadistic, arbitrary, jealous image, "God's mercy and love of mankind are mentioned in fourteen [of the] publications."⁴⁶

It is, however, the negative characterization that is embodied in Captain Claret (and in his officers as an extension of himself). Claret, like Marryat in Typee, Moby Dick, and Vere and Claggart together in Billy Budd, is therefore the symbol of divine reward and punishment, which for Melville was the Calvinist God.

. . . I stood before my lord and master, Captain Claret, and heard these Articles read as the law and gospel, the infallible, unappealable dispensation and code, whereby I lived, and moved, and had my being on board of the United States ship Neversink. Of some twenty offenses . . . thirteen are punishable by death.⁴⁷

A figure of power and impersonal transcendent law and arbitrary will and jealousy toward man, Claret is a symbol of both social and divine reward and punishment because the God of Calvinism was conceived by the Calvinist human mind and shares its qualities. Melville, in this quotation is using St. Paul's statement of man's relationship to God which is found in Acts 17:28: "For in him we live and move and have our being. . . ."

Like the Calvinist God, and His model the Old Testament Jehovah, "if he but orders a sailor to perform even the most absurd action, that man is not only bound to render instant and unanswering obedience, but he would refuse at his peril."⁴⁸

⁴⁶Ranulf, p. 73.

⁴⁷White Jacket, pp. 278-279.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 211.

Ranulf quotes from one of the pamphlets:

"Hath the God of Heaven done you any wrong; come down upon the knees then, and accept your punishment, kisse the rod, or you are like to have the other lash."⁴⁹

"Pretentiousness, presumption and pride are considered to be grave sins, . . ." Ranulf says, for Puritan man should be content with his lot and always humble before his God.⁵⁰

Claret punishes for pride or insolence, indeed for any hint of manly independence and freedom which is read as an indictment of the system. One sailor is given two hundred lashes for "having had the insolence to appeal from an authority."⁵¹ "Provoking or reproachful words"⁵² are also mentioned in the naval code as cause for punishment.

Ranulf sees in this aspect of Calvinist doctrine the same convictions held by fifth century Athenians, whose Gods were strongly jealous of human happiness.⁵³

The next two characteristics of the Calvinist God--that of a hidden or transcendent nature and that of an arbitrary will--White Jacket attributes to Captain Claret and his Law in the following references:

. . . We may apply to the entire body of American man-of-war's men that infallible principle of Sir Edward Coke: 'It is one of the genuine marks of servitude to

⁴⁹Ranulf, pp. 64-65.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 66.

⁵¹White Jacket, p. 287.

⁵²Ibid., p. 285.

⁵³Ranulf, p. 66.

have the law either concealed or precarious. But still better may we subscribe to the saying of Sir Matthew Hale in his History of the Common Law, that 'The Martial Law, being based upon no settled principles, is, in truth and reality, no law, but something indulged rather than allowed as a law.'⁵⁴

Such a comment applies equally well to the inscrutable Judge, that Calvinist God of Melville's mother, whose "arbitrary grace is all. . . ."⁵⁵

Aboard the Neversink, White Jacket says,

You see a human being, stripped like a slave; scourged worse than a hound. And for what? For things not essentially criminal but only made so by arbitrary laws.⁵⁶

Both His jealousy of human happiness and individual development and His arbitrary will as all-powerful are suggested in the scene in which Claret commands that every beard (a symbol of manhood and individual freedom) must be shaved off.

This denial of individual freedom, this indiscriminating punishment, the punishment of both the innocent and the guilty, Ranulf sees in the Puritan God, who "may punish men even for sins committed by other men" or for the sins of some "bring in judgement upon all."⁵⁷

Nor [aboard the Neversink] was it a thing unknown for a lieutenant, in a sudden outburst of passion, perhaps inflamed by brandy, or smarting under the sense of being disliked or hated by the seamen, to order a whole watch of two hundred and fifty men, at dead of night, to undergo the indignity of the colt.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ White Jacket, p. 287.

⁵⁵ Arvin, p. 33.

⁵⁶ White Jacket, p. 139.

⁵⁷ Ranulf, p. 61.

⁵⁸ White Jacket, p. 140.

The same motivations for punishment are also seen in Claggart, the master-at-arms in Billy Budd and part of the God-symbol in that story. White Jacket feels when he is threatened with punishment that his failure to be sufficiently humble "set his heart against me,"⁵⁹ foreshadowing the man-God relationship in Billy Budd (also the artist-Calvinist God relationship as Melville saw it). White Jacket, like Billy Budd, is called up for "a crime of which I was . . . utterly innocent."⁶⁰

The analogy that Melville uses in White Jacket to indicate this relationship is that of the men playing checkers: "as the sailors used their checker-men, so, at quarters, their officers used these man-of-war's men."⁶¹ William Faulkner uses this same analogy of the deity as a checker player with men--implying the combination of arbitrary will of the player who uses men "to bring about his own designs"⁶² with the impersonal order of reward and punishment embodied in the rules of the checker game.

In a direct association of the ways of the Old Testament transcendent God of Calvinism with the ways of Captain Claret, White Jacket says:

⁵⁹ White Jacket, p. 267.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 268.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 170.

⁶² Ranulf, p. 63.

. . . Alas! When Virtue sits high aloft on a frigate's poop, when Virtue is crowned in the cabin a commodore, when Virtue rules by compulsion, and domineers over Vice as a slave, then Virtue, though her mandates be outwardly observed, bears little interior sway. To be efficacious, Virtue must come down from aloft, even as our blessed Redeemer came down to redeem our whole man-of-war world; to that end, mixing with its sailors and sinners as equals.⁶³

White Jacket symbolizes not only the extremes of social and divine reward and punishment, but the third level of reward and punishment which man experiences in life, that of the self. If the jacket is the Ego,⁶⁴ then the diamonion or self-punisher, defined in Chapter One of this thesis, is symbolized in White Jacket's attitude toward his coat and the effect it has on his life aboard ship.

The jacket is his flaw like Tom's leg wound, Ahab's lost leg, and Billy's stutter; and it marks him for punishment. "Jacket, jacket, thou hast much to answer for, jacket!"⁶⁵ he says after it evokes a kind of superstitious hatred on the part of the other sailors. Rejected from one mess, he becomes the unlucky number in another, where they fasten on him "the murder of one of my shipmates, and the probable murder of two more."⁶⁶

And what is the nature of this self-accusation and punishment that Melville symbolizes in each of the four novels? It is the guilt of the

⁶³ White Jacket, p. 222.

⁶⁴ Arvin, p. 113.

⁶⁵ White Jacket, p. 317.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 316.

non-conformist artist in rigid uniform Puritan society. Here as in *Typee*, he is identifying with the trespasser, the criminal. His jacket is both "immortal"⁶⁷ and "infernal"⁶⁸. As the artist, he must be able to escape reward and punishment, to break the order and transcend; but as criminal, he needs punishment. Like all creative men who find the created world inadequate and stifling, Melville compares the world of the ship to an oaken box, an image of death; yet the Romantic self is in conflict with the Puritan self which renders itself guilty for breaking away in order to create one's own order. The following simile suggests most clearly the sense of guilt of the artist in Puritan society:

[One of the suspicious sailors] ever afterward eyed me as virtuous citizens do some notorious underhand villian going unhung of justice.⁶⁹

Melville seems conscious, too, of the psychological nature of this particular level of reward and punishment that he finds himself submitted to: "oppressed by illiberal laws, and partly oppressed by themselves,"⁷⁰ he says of the sailors. And on the last page of the novel he recognizes again that "the worst of our evils we blindly inflict upon ourselves."⁷¹

⁶⁷White Jacket, p. 103.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 124.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 317.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 373.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 376.

The central conflict in this novel, as in the other three we are examining lies in man's dual need for freedom and for order. Melville's society, his God, and his own Diamonion instilled in him the need for order with its rewards and punishments. Yet his Romantic view of "immortal man"⁷² convinced him that man was not fallen but divine; that sin-obsessed Puritan society, man's oppressor, makes him feel fallen and drives him to do evil; and that the "cannibal cruelty"⁷³ of much social reward and punishment, symbolized here in the corporal punishment of flogging was "opposed to the essential dignity of man, which no legislator has a right to violate."⁷⁴

Melville's personal instinct as Romantic artist was to strike out for Truth and against the undemocratic, arbitrary nature of the established order of which man was victim and object. This feeling was combined with the particular need of Melville as artist to be free to commune with his inner spirit and to explore his world for the new metaphor, the new vision of unity--the need to be the subject of his own life.⁷⁵ That this world of reward and punishment aboard the Neversink stifled the natural, the spontaneous, and the fresh is symbolized in the fact that the marines even "stand guard over the fresh water."⁷⁶

⁷²White Jacket, p. 193.

⁷³Ibid., p. 127.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 146.

⁷⁵Peckham, pp. 6-7.

⁷⁶White Jacket, p. 352.

And in the instinctive need that man has to be free "sailors have actually jumped into the sea to escape from their fate, or set themselves adrift on the wide ocean on the gratings, without compass or rudder."⁷⁷

Of his own personal need as man and artist, White Jacket says, "I was not born a serf, and will not live a slave!"⁷⁸ This statement is precursory to Ahab's address to his men in which he says that he will fight any power that is unjust to him, even God.

White Jacket, like Tom and Ahab and Billy Budd, is the Romantic artist--the archetypal wanderer, isolated and restricted by his society, the outsider or trespasser or criminal of rigid and conforming Puritanism, the revolutionary and democratic spirit; and through his eyes, as artist, the nature of reward and punishment takes on certain personal and historical characteristics.

"A wanderer is the archetypal symbol of man's capability for becoming and the personification of his yearning,"⁷⁹ and this motif in German literature is the highest point in Romanticism.⁸⁰ The idea is repeatedly conveyed by Jack Chase, captain of the maintop, who lists the great sailors--Ulysses, Noah, Columbus, Paul--and among them he includes the great artists--Homer, Shakespeare, Camoens (author of the Portuguese

⁷⁷White Jacket, p. 355.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 281.

⁷⁹Theodore Gish, "Wanderlust and Wanderleid: The Motif of the Wandering Hero in German Romanticism," Studies in Romanticism, III (Summer, 1964), 226.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 239.

epic, The Luciad), and the Romantics, Shelley and Byron:

"What does the blessed Bible say? Don't it say that we
main-top men alone see the marvelous sights and wonders?
. . . the sea is the place to cradle genius! Heave and
fall, old sea!"⁸¹

This image indicates that the Romantic artist is not only the wanderer but above the norm, and Melville's Romantic concept of the effect of environment on personality is revealed when White Jacket says of these top men of the fore, main, and mizen masts:

. . . The reason of their lofty-mindedness was that they
were high lifted above the petty tumults, carping cares,
and paltrines of the decks below.⁸²

By the mid-nineteenth century, this highly individualized poetic self of the Romantic artist had distinguished itself, as Melville's image shows, from the bourgeois as the rebel against society, the genius in contrast to the humdrum man.⁸³ White Jacket sees himself and his kindred poetic spirits aboard the Neversink as leaders and creators of the new and true order:

. . . among our people we have gallant fore, main, and
mizen-top men aloft, who well treated or ill, still trim
our craft to the blast.⁸⁴

However, immediately following this reference to his group above and ahead of society, Melville mentions that "we have a brig for

⁸¹ White Jacket, p. 260.

⁸² Ibid., p. 57.

⁸³ George Boas, "The Romantic Self: An Historical Sketch," Studies in Romanticism, IV (Autumn, 1964), 12-13.

⁸⁴ White Jacket, p. 375.

trespassers. . . ."⁸⁵ This shift in thought suggests again the conflicting attitude toward the artist and the nature of social and self punishment which is particular to the artist.

Isolation and confinement are the social punishment of the artist. Because even his language and symbol are "multiple in meaning, as opposed to an impossible Puritan insistence upon uniformity,"⁸⁶ Melville, as Romantic artist in Puritan society "made his new sacrament and salvation, and worshipped, like every Ishmael, alone."⁸⁷

The nature of the Romantic artist is embodied not only in White Jacket, but in his kindred spirits aboard the Neversink. One of these, Nord, is introduced in Chapter XIII in an image of isolation: the title of the chapter is "A Man-of-War Hermit in a Mob."⁸⁸

The jacket itself is white and sets White Jacket apart from the other jackets, which are blue; in his desire to be accepted, White Jacket makes numerous efforts to rid himself of the jacket or to change its color, rubbing it on the deck and asking for black paint. These efforts recall the previously quoted statement that the Romantic artist's sense of specialness was viewed "both as blessing and curse, a source of pain, suffering, and alienation as well as of bliss, ecstasy and superior wisdom."⁸⁹

⁸⁵ White Jacket, p. 375.

⁸⁶ James Baird, Ishmael (Baltimore, 1956), p. xvii.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 61.

⁸⁸ White Jacket, pp. 60-62.

⁸⁹ Victor Erlich, "The Conception of the Poet in Krasinski and the Romantic Myth of the Artist," Studies in Romanticism, I (Summer, 1962), 198.

That White Jacket, symbolizing the artist, is not only isolated and alienated, but picked out for punishment, is a recurring idea:

Most monkey-jackets are of a dark hue; mine, as I have fifty times repeated, and say again, was white. And thus, in those long, dark nights, when it was my quarter-watch on deck, and not in the top, and others went skulking and "sogering" about the decks, secure from detection--their identity undiscoverable--my own hapless jacket forever proclaimed the name of its wearer. It gave me many a hard job, which otherwise I should have escaped. When an officer wanted a man for any particular duty--running aloft, say, to communicate some slight order to the captains of the tops--how easy, in that mob of incognitoes, to individualise "that white jacket," and dispatch him on the errand! Then, it would never do for me to hang back when the ropes were being pulled.⁹⁰

The suspicious hatred that the masses felt for White Jacket, as artist, is echoed in the general social feeling toward another kindred spirit, Lemsford the poet, a feeling which White Jacket describes as "the deadly hostility of the whole tribe of ship-underlings--master-at-arms, ship's corporals, and boatswain's mates--both to the poet and his casket [of poems]."⁹¹

In the character of White Jacket, of Lemsford, and of Nord, Melville symbolizes the particular nature of reward and punishment for the artist.

"Shortly before [M's] death the magnanimous poet-critic, Edmund Clarence Stedman, managed a complimentary dinner for him and with difficulty got him to attend it. It was about the only public recognition he ever received." [Frank Jewett Mather, Jr in The Review, Aug. 19, 1919]⁹²

⁹⁰ White Jacket, pp. 123-124.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 52.

⁹² Jay Leyda, The Melville Log (New York, 1951), II, 831.

White Jacket mentions another sailor, an obvious analogy to himself, who is keeping a record of the life on board called The Cruise of the Neversink, or a Paixban Shot into Naval Abuses. ". . . The volume was seized by the master-at-arms, armed with a warrant from the captain," and thrown overboard.⁹³ The punishment was based on "a certain clause in the Articles of War, forbidding any person in the Navy to bring any person in the Navy into contempt, which the suppressed volume undoubtedly did."⁹⁴

Lemsford also suffers from a similar threat of social punishment to his much less harmful poems. He attempts to hide his casket of poems among the guns which are guarded with fanatical attention by Quoin. "Now, from this Quoin's vigilance, how could my poor friend the poet hope to escape with his box?"⁹⁵

Melville, however, also makes reference to the nature of self-reward particular to the artist: Lemsford writes, "poetry is its own exceeding great reward."⁹⁶

The artist breaks the established social and divine orders, seeking greater rewards but also risking greater punishments. It is from the masthead, the place of the new vision and of mystical union with everything for which the artist seeks, that White Jacket falls into the

⁹³ White Jacket, p. 54.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 53.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 51.

pure impersonal cannibalism of the sea. Such is the risk of punishment, both social and divine, involved in the artist's rejection and transcendence of the order.

But the need to break out, to defend immortal individuality, to justify rather than to judge, and to carry the revolutionary spirit of democracy was almost instinctive to the Romantic artist, while those who play the other roles in society accept the oppressive lie and evil in the established order:

Upon the platform [of punishment] stand a lieutenant, a surgeon, a master-at-arms, and the executioner with their "cats."⁹⁷

[The surgeon] if he thinks that the punishment is becoming more than the culprit's constitution can well bear, he has a right to interfere and demand its cessation for the time. . . . How seldom does he exercise it in cases where humanity demands it.⁹⁸

Thus, it is left to the artist to be rebel-reformer, the Platonic poet-philosopher who sees the new and true order; it is the "men aloft, who well treated or ill, still trim our craft to the blast." In his volume of the poetry of Shelley, Melville double-scored the following lines:

"Me, who am as a nerve o'er which do creep
The else-unfelt oppressions of this earth. . . ."⁹⁹

"I but desire to see wrongs righted, and equal justice administered to

⁹⁷ White Jacket, p. 349.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 311.

⁹⁹ Leyda, II, 640.

all,"¹⁰⁰ White Jacket says in defense of his attack on the order. "White Jacket, it is true, would have gone to his death rather than submit to a flogging . . . in an act of protest,"¹⁰¹ and he would take the source of untruth and evil with him, just as Billy Budd and the Romantic artist in general did or tried to do: in the face of unjust punishment by arbitrary will and impersonal order, White Jacket realized in the moment of accusation that "it was certain that a sudden rush against him [Claret], along the slanting deck, would infallibly pitch him head-foremost into the ocean, though he who so rushed must needs go over with him."¹⁰²

Like Billy Budd, he faces punishment "for a crime of which I was . . . utterly innocent," and like Budd, he consciously strikes out for truth and against evil, something Budd does instinctively:

I felt my man's manhood so bottomless within me, that no word, no blow, no scourge of Captain Claret would cut me deep enough for that. I but swung to an instinct in me-- the instinct diffused through all animated nature, the same that prompts even a worm to turn under the heel. Locking souls with him, I meant to drag Captain Claret from this earthly tribunal of his to that of Jehovah, and let Him decide between us. No other way could I escape the scourge.¹⁰³

Both protagonists, as artist, also find themselves unable to defend themselves against judging society. Like Billy Budd, White Jacket

¹⁰⁰ White Jacket, p. 289.

¹⁰¹ Arvin, p. 119.

¹⁰² White Jacket, p. 268.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 269.

is speechless before his accuser and is saved from striking out and dying only because his friends speak up for him in a symbolic act of love which frees one from social reward and punishment.

The social and divine order of Billy Budd appears only in images of punishment and of unjust reward, and aboard the Indomitable one simply surrenders fatalistically to punishment in an order which is a sham. He escapes only through the inner self in communion with the Spirit. That there is still some hope within the order itself in White Jacket is reflected in the fact that, along with the images of punishment, Melville presents images of healthy, just social rewards for external acts which do not violate personal integrity and ability.

The following image presents a reward typical of the academic world which provided many of the rewards in the Eden that was Melville's childhood. The image suggests a shred of remaining hope for the world of reward and punishment in which he found himself, a cold world which was blatantly lacking the security and rewards he and Gansevoort had known at the Albany Academy:

The portion that fell to my own share I kept in superior order, quite equal in polish to Roger's best cutlery. I received the most extravagant encomiums from the officers; one of whom offered to match me against any brazier or brass-polisher in Her British Majesty's Navy. Indeed, I devoted myself to the work body and soul, and thought no pains too painful, and no labor too laborious, to achieve the highest polish possible for us poor lost sons of Adam to reach.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ White Jacket, p. 163.

Following this image of genuine reward comes one of the most ecstatically optimistic comments in all of Melville's prose:

Oh, there is something worth living for,
even in our man-of-war's world, . . .¹⁰⁵

This he exclaims as he views the surrounding shore scenery--an image which could just as easily have suggested deprivation to a ship-bound viewer. And since White Jacket was written in only two and a half months,¹⁰⁶ one can safely assume that paragraphs often came out in a continuous flow of mood as well as idea. Indeed, the same view of the harbour did have the opposite effect on White Jacket two pages later: he sees his fellow ship-bound sailors as "under lock and key; all hopeless prisoners like myself. . . ."¹⁰⁷

The following is the second image of just social reward, which Melville presents without irony and with a sense that it was won without the sacrificing of personal integrity and was awarded by objective standards of social reward and punishment which are valid and healthy:

The mainmast-man of the Neversink was a very aged seaman, who well deserved his comfortable berth. He had seen more than half a century of the most active service, and, through all, had proved himself a good and faithful man.¹⁰⁸

And even when Melville presents the order as hopeless, he strikes a note of hope for man himself to transcend all three levels of reward

¹⁰⁵ White Jacket, p. 169.

¹⁰⁶ Arvin, p. 110.

¹⁰⁷ White Jacket, p. 171.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 271.

and punishment--that of the self, of society, and of God--by his own strength of individual selfhood, a fourth kind of escape closely related to the state of inner calm through which man escapes self-reward and punishment:

. . . this feeling of innate dignity remained untouched, though outwardly the body be scarred [by flogging] for the whole term of the natural life, is one of the hushed things, buried among the holiest privacies of the soul; a thing between a man's God and himself; and forever indiscernable by our fellow-men, who account that a degradation which seems so to the corporal eye.¹⁰⁹

Man is the object of an arbitrary will and impersonal order. By becoming a subject, however, he not only transcends but his individual subjectness may be strong enough even to change the nature of reward and punishment in the world.

Melville's own hope is fulfilled--the hope of improving the order by pointing out its faults to "the peculiar chosen people--the Israel of our time"¹¹⁰ which is America:

. . . White Jacket was said, by an American admiral, to have had "more influence in abolishing corporal punishment in the Navy than anything else. This book was placed on the desk of every member of Congress, and was a most eloquent appeal to the humane sentiment of the country. As evidence of the good it did, a law was passed soon after the book appeared abolishing flogging in the Navy absolutely, without substituting any other mode of punishment in its stead."¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ White Jacket, p. 142.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 151.

¹¹¹ William Plomer, "Introduction" to White Jacket by Herman Melville, p. vii.

Melville's book is a hope for improving the order, an eloquent appeal rather than a stutter at the moment of confrontation, just as hope is symbolized in the voice of a friend which saves White Jacket from murder and punishment while Budd must strike out not only unsupported and alone but without influence on the order. The effect of White Jacket in Melville's day represents the high point in the relationship between Melville the artist and his judging society.

White Jacket also shows the need of man to transcend the absurd oppressive nature of Puritan reward and punishment in order to be not only a true artist but a man with personal authenticity, the fourth escape symbolized in the characters Jack Chase, Mad Jack, Colbrook, and Ushant. These men have a highly-developed sense of their own individuality, freedom, spontaneity, and personal authenticity; and each makes at least one choice which overcomes the social order and which White Jacket recognizes as "true heroism."¹¹²

When White Jacket is accused and is about to be condemned to flogging, Colbrook speaks out in his defense. "The very unusualness of his interference seemed Colbrook's protection."¹¹³ Jack Chase then speaks out in White Jacket's defense, as another symbol of the almost magical human being who by the power of his own sense of individual integrity and personal commitment transcends the regular order of reward and punishment.

¹¹² White Jacket, p. 117.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 269.

Earlier, Chase deserted to fight for freedom in Peru: "He went to draw a partisan blade in the civil commotions of Peru, and befriend, heart and soul, what he deemed the cause of the Right."¹¹⁴ Chase had a "nut-brown beard which amazingly lengthened and spread during his absence";¹¹⁵ and the beard in White Jacket is a central image of manhood and freedom from the objective order. Chase is not reprimanded when he is brought back aboard the Neversink because this natural inner order of highly developed selfhood to which one learns to respond spontaneously and instinctively makes possible the choice which transcends all systems of judgment.

White Jacket expresses most clearly the power of this fourth escape in the following explanation of Mad Jack's action "during a gale . . . when he countermands the captain's order at the helm":¹¹⁶

To show how little real sway at times have the severest restrictive laws, and how spontaneous is the instinct of discretion in some minds, it must be added, that though Mad Jack, under a hot impulse, had countermanded an order of his superior officer before his very face, yet that severe Article of War, to which he thus rendered himself obnoxious, was never enforced against him, nor, so far as any of the crew ever knew, did the captain even venture to reprimand him for his temerity.¹¹⁷

Ushant, "the bearded master,"¹¹⁸ does not avoid social reward and

¹¹⁴ White Jacket, p. 29.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 31.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 115.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 116.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 333.

punishment, nor does he improve the order; but his is also a victory over it through inner strength and individuality.

Of this highly-developed individual, White Jacket says:

. . . This Ushant was an old man, of strong natural sense, who had seen nearly the whole terraqueous globe, and could reason of civilized and savage, of Gentile and Jew, of Christian and Moslem. The long night-watches of the sailor are eminently adapted to draw out the reflective faculties of any serious-minded man, however humble or uneducated. Judge then, what half a century of battling out watches on the ocean must have done for this fine old tar.¹¹⁹

But to the Puritan society and the Puritan God only the guilt-ridden, humble and submissive conformist is safe and acceptable; and this highly individual nature which escapes or transcends the order by the strength of its own inner order is a threat that must be stamped out. Symbolically, Captain Claret commands that all beards be shaved. Confronted with this arbitrary order to give up his "token of manhood"¹²⁰ and individual expression of freedom, Ushant refuses to comply even after the grotesque flogging of his old body and a period in the brig.

White Jacket says of this transcendence of the social (and symbolically the divine) order of reward and punishment:

It was a glorious conquest over the Conqueror himself, as well worthy to be celebrated as the battle of the Nile.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ White Jacket, p. 332.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 347.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 345.

The fact that Ushant is beyond social reward and punishment is symbolized by his refusal to file suit against naval authorities when the trip is over:

"I have won the battle, my friends," [Ushant tells his fellow sailors] "and I do not care for the prize-money."¹²²

In White Jacket Melville presents four main images which symbolize the escape from social reward and punishment which is unjudging love and friendship.

White Jacket's two friends, Colbrook and Jack Chase, both speak up in his defense and prevent him from being flogged.

Chase's friendship is again a source of escape from social punishment when White Jacket becomes the brunt of superstitious hatred by his fellow sailors: "'White Jacket there is my particular friend,' [Chase tells them] 'and I would take it as a particular favour if you would knock off blasting him.'"¹²³

The fourth image combines escape from reward and punishment through unjudging love with escape from divine reward and punishment through the mystical union with the universe; "removed from the immediate presence of the officers [who symbolize the rigid social and divine order],"¹²⁴ it is the scene in "The Main-top at Night"--the scene of union with the universe, of poetry and meditation, and also of pure friendship:

¹²² White Jacket, p. 345.

¹²³ Ibid., p. 316.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 294.

We main-top men are all aloft in the top; and round our mast we circle, a brother-band, hand in hand, all spliced together.¹²⁵

Such communion and sense of wholeness reminds one of Melville's symbol of his friendship with Hawthorne in which "the Godhead is broken up like the bread at the Supper, and . . . we are the pieces."¹²⁶

The main-top men danced to the band music from below or else "our nightingales mustered their voices and gave up a song."¹²⁷ Chase is one of these nightingales. Like the bird in Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale" and the bird in Walt Whitman's "When Lilacs Last in the Door-yard Bloom'd," Chase is White Jacket's higher poetic soul, his ideal as Romantic artist. When Chase is discoursing in the main-top on philosophy and poetry in general he often mentions White Jacket's name, speaking directly to him as the bird calls to Keats and Whitman, two other Romantic artists.

Nighttime in the main-top is also the scene of "the All feeling," the place of escape from divine reward and punishment through mystical union, as it is again in Moby-Dick. White Jacket speaks of "the poetry of the scene"¹²⁸ in which "we became more romantically inclined," and Chase recites poetry, ten lines of which Melville includes in the chapter. The language itself becomes more metaphorical, joining in a

¹²⁵ White Jacket, p. 373.

¹²⁶ Arvin, p. 137.

¹²⁷ White Jacket, p. 295.

¹²⁸ Ibid., pp. 294-295.

mystical whole all parts of the world:

. . . The canvas on the mainmast and foremast presented the appearance of two majestic, tapering pyramids. . . . Three shrouded masts looked like the apparitions of three gigantic Turkish Emirs striding over the ocean.¹²⁹

This scene of Romantic mystical oneness with the universe, out of which comes poetry, foreshadows the image of White Jacket's fall from the yard-arm into the sea at night. The final mystical union and poem are two final structural elements which, along with White Jacket's confrontation with Claret, closely associate this story and its protagonist with Billy Budd.

As in the mystical vision of Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale," there occurs in White Jacket's fall a kind of death of the ego and an escape into nature where the self expands to merge with the whole. This expansion means freedom and spontaneity of poetic expression having surrendered to passion and emotion, just as Keats is "fading" and "dissolving" into the rich darkness at the heart of which is the nightingale's song. And out of the union there comes the new self and the poem.¹³⁰

Like the speaker in Keats' poem, who is the Romantic artist, White Jacket becomes submerged in the ocean, which is associated, like the night and the main-top, with poetry: "the very poetry of the ocean,"¹³¹ White Jacket says. Elsewhere he speaks of the "speechless profound of

¹²⁹White Jacket, p. 294.

¹³⁰John Keats, "Ode to a Nightingale," The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose of Keats (New York, 1931), pp. 290-293.

¹³¹White Jacket, p. 360.

the sea."¹³²

Just as Keats' speaker dissolves himself into the night, and like the mystical experience it is a pleasant death outside of time, so White Jacket describes his own mystical moments:

Great God, this is Death! Yet these thoughts were unmixed with alarm.¹³³

Time seemed to stand still.¹³⁴

The powerful, poetic language of the scene, which Newton Arvin calls "hypnotic,"¹³⁵ suggests the visual, sensual language of Keats' Ode. White Jacket says,

The blow from the sea must have turned me, so that I sank almost feet foremost through a soft, seething, foamy lull. Some current seemed hurrying me away; in a trance I yielded, and sank deeper down with a glide. Purple and pathless was the deep calm now around me, flecked by summer lightnings in an azure afar.¹³⁶

Out of this mystical union White Jacket emerges with a vision of "everlasting brightness--and that is the everlasting glorious Future, forever beyond us."¹³⁷ Out of it also comes the poem which Chase recites (Chase as symbol of White Jacket's higher poetic self which is now at one with White Jacket since his lesser self, the jacket has

¹³² White Jacket, p. 370.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Arvin, p. 117.

¹³⁶ White Jacket, p. 370.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 373.

fallen away).

For "the white jacket has sunk to the bottom of the sea";¹³⁸ and he is momentarily free, having escaped social reward and punishment through union with Jack Chase in spirit, divine reward and punishment through the mystical vision, and self reward and punishment through the loss of the limited self or ego which he had judged and accused throughout the story. The guilt-ridden Puritan self falls away and he reaches Romantic freedom. The jacket, which shrank and became too small, is the Puritan self which Melville in his Romantic need for freedom and escape outgrows. It is restrictive and inadequate; but until now he had nothing to replace it and thus allowed himself to be the object of Puritan social, divine, and self punishment. Melville faced punishment by society for what he was--the son of a bankrupt, fatherless family and a member of Puritan society. It is this inescapable self that keeps him from transcending as continually as Colbrook, Mad Jack, Jack Chase, and Ushant, who always appear as subjects, creators of their own spontaneous inner orders, recreated with each choice they make.

But White Jacket is free for a moment in this final image of the fall into the sea. He severs with his knife the cord of the jacket which would have caused him to be drowned, and by this act he symbolically becomes a man, severing the umbilical cord and transcending that Puritan self reward and punishment caused by parental attachment.

¹³⁸ White Jacket, p. 372.

Almost simultaneously with the cutting of the cord, the sailors begin to spear the jacket with harpoons, thinking it a shark; and this act symbolizes the punishment and destruction that society desires for his individual identity as artist and man.

This simultaneity of punishment and transcendence of the self which Melville presents in this image suggests the idea that the moment the order actually punishes the self, as it constantly threatens to do, the self is freed from the order. It is as though the power of both the limited self and the oppressive order existed in the anticipation of that moment of confrontation; and the relief comes in the moment of punishment for which the guilt-ridden self has waited--relief even to the point of freeing one from that guilt-ridden self. This psychological concept is illustrated also in Moby-Dick and in Billy Budd. The most obvious symbol of the idea of simultaneous punishment and transcendence occurs at the end of Billy Budd.

The optimistic spirit of White Jacket is emphasized by the new, fourth escape which signifies a hope for individual man. It is also indicated by the intent and effect of the book which was to improve the social system of reward and punishment that Melville knew. The most important indicator of optimism, however, is the nature of the white jacket itself, a flaw like Tom's leg wound, Ahab's lost leg, Billy Budd's stutter, which brings punishment down on the protagonist and is symbolic of self punishment.

White Jacket's flaw is less organic than the others, and is dealt with humorously as the others are not. While Ahab and Billy Budd are

destroyed by their flaws, White Jacket is able to escape his flaw.

Thus, White Jacket, in spite of the oppressive order of social reward and punishment, is a bright speck in the dark thread of pessimism that runs through Melville's prose.

CHAPTER III
THE THEME OF REWARD AND PUNISHMENT
IN MOBY-DICK

Following the freedom of Typee and the oppressive order of White Jacket, "the fundamental conceptual antithesis, throughout Moby-Dick may be represented by the clash between the concept of freedom and the concept of tyrannous and brutal enslavement."¹ Within the three-level duality that is the nature of reward and punishment as man experiences it, the relationship between the two concepts is not always that of a "clash" but merely a juxtaposition. For example, both Ahab and Ishmael symbolize the Romantic artist: in Ahab he confronts hiscrippler, the Puritan God, whose main relationship to man is one of divine reward and punishment, and in Ishmael the artist transcends on all three levels to meet in mystical union with the pantheistic god of Romanticism.

Ahab is the object of self and divine reward and punishment and the agent of social reward and punishment, while Ishmael finds inner calm, an unjudging friend, and the mystical vision. The "midnight spout"² of the whale draws Ahab because it is a symbol of the unjust divine punishment toward which "he was intent on an audacious, unmitigable, and supernatural revenge";³ while for Ishmael, the spout represents the

¹Lawrence Thompson, Melville's Quarrel with God (Princeton, 1952), p. 170.

²Herman Melville, Moby-Dick, ed. with intro. by Charles Feidelson, Jr. (New York, 1964), p. 310.

³Ibid., p. 251.

mystical "phantom of life."⁴

The climax of the novel is an image of divine punishment in Ahab's confrontation with Moby Dick and subsequent death; and the final image is one of escape on all three levels when Ishmael describes himself clinging to the coffin of his friend in the calm center of churning waters before being rescued by the Rachel. Melville reinforces the idea of escape by quoting Job 1:15, "And I only am escaped alone to tell thee."

Thus, the nature of reward and punishment in Moby-Dick is again a three-level duality of judgment (order) and freedom (escape, transcendence) and has particular application in relationship to the Romantic artist in Puritan society.

The main symbol in Moby-Dick represents divine punishment--"that remote God, . . . formulated by John Calvin, largely out of the Old Testament,"⁵ who combines remoteness with arbitrary will, impersonal order, and hatred and jealousy of man, and the God who appears as Captain Marryat in Typee, Captain Claret in White Jacket, and Captain Vere-John Claggart in Billy Budd.

Svend Ranulf describes this Puritan God as jealously demanding complete submission, as motivating men to sin and punishing arbitrarily (which means punishing the innocent).⁶ Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609)

⁴Moby-Dick, p. 26.

⁵Thompson, p. 123.

⁶Svend Ranulf, Moral Indignation and Middle Class Psychology (Copenhagen, 1938), pp. 59-77.

also accused Calvin "of developing the doctrine of predestination in such a way as to make God the Author of Sin."⁷

Thus, while Ishmael, as Romantic artist, is driven to seek the mystical vision of oneness with the Romantic God, Ahab, as Romantic artist, is driven to confront this Calvinist God that blocks his path to the vision. When Ahab says, "it was Moby Dick that dismasted me,"⁸ Melville's choice of words is significant because the masthead is the place of the Romantic vision of oneness in White Jacket and in Moby-Dick, and the Calvinist God prevents such transcendence of the guilt-ridden self.

As Romantic artist, Ishmael sees that "some certain significance lurks in all things. . . ."⁹ As artist he is also alienated from society, the object of suspicion, judged by society's standards of reward and punishment before which he looks and feels like a criminal. Captain Peleg, who owns the Pequod and first interviews Ishmael, symbolizes society as judge of the artist. Suspicious of his desire for freedom "to see the world," Peleg says,

"But flukes! man, what makes thee want to go a whaling, eh?--it looks a little suspicious, don't it, eh?--Hast not been a pirate, hast thou?--Didst thou rob thy last Captain, didst thou?--Dost not think of murdering the officers when thou gettest to sea?"

I protested my innocence of these things. I saw that under the mask of these half humorous innuendoes, this old

⁷Thompson, p. 22.

⁸Moby-Dick, p. 219.

⁹Ibid., p. 549.

seaman, as an insulated Quakerish Nantucketer, was full of his insular prejudices, and rather distrustful of all aliens, unless they hailed from Cape Cod or the Vineyard.¹⁰

Ishmael, as artist, must break out of this judging established order, for the Romantic artist must be free to return to nature and to recover the mystical oneness with the universe out of which he will discover the new vision of Truth. Because the Romantic artist felt this need for self-disorientation from the static dogma in order constantly to see and create anew, "throughout the nineteenth century, there occurred the use of drugs, alcohol, sex, the Asiatic theologies as means of deliberately dislocating the senses so that new worlds may emerge."¹¹ Ishmael finds this freedom at sea, to which he feels driven when the story opens; and later, in the chapter entitled "The Lee Shore," he says,

Glimpses do ye seem to see of that mortally intolerable truth; that all deep, earnest thinking is but the intrepid effort of the soul to keep the open independence of her sea; while the wildest winds of heaven and earth conspire to cast her on the treacherous, slavish shore?

But as in landlessness alone resides the highest truth, shoreless, infinite as God--so, better it is to perish in that howling infinite, than be ingloriously dashed upon the lee, even if that were safety! For worm-like, then, oh! who would craven crawl to land!¹²

Ishmael therefore sees himself as the Romantic artist who is symbol-maker, as a criminal in the eyes of society whose order he must escape,

¹⁰ Moby-Dick, p. 108.

¹¹ Morse Peckham, "Toward a Theory of Romanticism, II. Reconsiderations," Studies in Romanticism, I (Autumn, 1961), 7.

¹² Moby-Dick, p. 149.

desperately in need of freedom, and also as a revolutionary, democratic spirit living as he did in the age of the French and American Revolutions. In the following statement Ishmael calls himself poet, criminal, and democrat:

Thou just Spirit of Equality, which spread one royal mantle of humanity over all my kind! Bear me out in it, thou great democratic God! who didst not refuse to the swart convict, Bunyon, the pale, poetic pearl. . . .¹³

Of his spiritual kinship with Ahab, who also symbolizes the Romantic artist, Ishmael says, "A wild, mystical, sympathetical feeling was in me; Ahab's quenchless feud seemed mine."¹⁴

And Ahab identifies with Ishmael and with the Romantic artist through his attraction to Pip, who reaches the mystical vision but like Billy Budd cannot communicate it:

Here, boy; Ahab's cabin shall be Pip's home henceforth, while Ahab lives. Thou touchest my inmost center, boy; thou art tied to me by cords woven of my heart-strings.¹⁵

And he longs to be free to be at one with nature, to merge with the sea as White Jacket does in his final fall:

. . . the lovely aroma in that enchanted air did at last seem to dispel, for a moment, the cankerous thing in his soul. . . . From beneath his slouched hat Ahab dropped a tear into the sea; nor did all the Pacific ocean contain such wealth as that one wee drop.¹⁶

¹³ Moby-Dick, p. 161.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 239.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 659.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 682.

As Romantic artist, he longs to return to nature and to find the new mystical vision of oneness but the artist in Puritan society is never free of that self, social, and divine rigid order of reward and punishment; and the artist's other instinct besides the desire for escape is the desire to strike out at his oppressor, which White Jacket and Billy Budd have, to strike out for Truth and Justice against the established Lie and its evil. These two desires or instinctive drives in the Romantic artist are symbolized in Ishmael and Ahab respectively.

For Ahab, "the path to my fixed purpose is laid with iron rails, whereon my soul is grooved to run."¹⁷ As Romantic artist, Ahab is a man dominated by passion not by reason; he feels the world more personally, more emotionally than any of the other protagonists though they also symbolize the Romantic artist. Ahab's feeling is expressed at one point as "a terrific, loud, animal sob."¹⁸ Melville double-scored those lines by Shelley which describe this painful sensitivity of the Romantic artist:

"Me, who am as a nerve o'er which do creep
The else-unfelt oppressions of this earth. . . ."¹⁹

Ahab is symbolic of the Romantic artist who remembers the lost vision of the past, just as Melville remembers the exit from the Eden of his childhood. Following the memory of his first going to sea at eighteen, Ahab says, "I feel deadly faint, bowed, and humped, as though

¹⁷ Moby-Dick, p. 227.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 219.

¹⁹ Jay Leyda, The Melville Era (New York, 1951), II, 640.

I were Adam, staggering beneath the piled centuries since Paradise."²⁰

As artist in Puritan society he is a cripple. Both the Calvinist God and Puritan society are his foe because in their demand for complete submission to the rigid order they stifle the artist who must create his own new order. This God, as Nietzsche writes, "knows how to poison the noblest instincts . . . through . . . excessive self-contempt."

Therefore, Melville presents Ahab "furious with this tantalizing vicinity of his foe, which placed him alive and helpless in the very jaws he hated. . . ."²¹ The artist in Puritan society is crippled by guilt and by previous punishment at the hands of a society and a God which condemn art;²² in this society all suffering is labelled the just punishment of the all-powerful Calvinist God to whom Maria Melville attributed her husband's breakdown which led to his death, family bankruptcy, and Melville's exodus from his secure, rewarding childhood into a world that punished both poverty and artistry.

The weapons of the artist are the tongue and the pen; and before this God White Jacket and Billy Budd are speechless and Ahab is killed by the line of his darting harpoon, which suggests the pen. As the artist's only defense, it is Ahab's first concern when he is dragged from the sea on the first day of chase: "'The harpoon,' said Ahab,

²⁰Moby-Dick, p. 684.

²¹Ibid., p. 692.

²²Ranulf, p. 13.

half way rising, and dragglingly leaning on one bended arm--'is it safe?'²³

Like Ishmael and Tom and White Jacket, Ahab is the isolated rebel "above the common"²⁴ in the "slavery of solitary command."²⁵ His lonely self is special, noble, but also related to Fedallah the Parsee who reeks of evil. Thus, he exhibits the polar self-concept of the "ungodly, god-like man"²⁶ as the others do.

Driven by the artist's sense of individual importance and the revolutionary, democratic spirit of Justice and Truth, Ahab must confront the divine punisher that stifles him:

I'd strike the sun if it insulted me. For could the sun do that, then could I do the other; since there is ever a sort of fair play herein, jealousy, presiding over all creations. But not my master, man, is ever that fair play. Who's over me? Truth hath no confines.²⁷

Ahab, like Melville, is the Romantic artist who is never permanently free of the agent of divine reward and punishment in his rigid Puritan background. Lawrence Thompson calls his a "two-fold attitude toward the Calvinist concept of God . . . [in which] he continued to be fascinated by the very concept which repelled him. Having previously honored that concept with love, he subsequently honored it with hate, and in the

²³Moby-Dick, p. 695.

²⁴Ibid., p. 119.

²⁵Ibid., p. 683.

²⁶Ibid., p. 119.

²⁷Ibid., p. 221.

very act of hating he acknowledged his continual dependence on it."²⁸

Before the three burning masts, Ahab says:

"Oh! thou clear spirit of clear fire, whom on these seas
I as Persian once did worship, till in the sacramental act
so burned by thee, that to this hour I bear the scar; I
now know thee, thou clear spirit, and I now know that thy
right worship is defiance. To neither love nor reverence
wilt thou be kind; and e'en for hate thou canst but kill;
and all are killed. No fearless fool now fronts thee.
I own thy speechless, placeless power; but to the last
gasp of my earthquake life will dispute its unconditional,
unintegral mastery in me. In the midst of the personified
impersonal, a personality stands here."²⁹

Even when he moves into these more abstract archetypal philosophical terms for the good and evil and indifferent principle in the universe, the root of such concepts--partly because they are considered in relationship to man most often through reward and punishment--is that Calvinist God planted in the Super-Ego by the dominant parental figure of Melville's mother. The fire especially suggests the purgatorial nature of this New England God as contrasted with the water imagery which dominates the society and religion of Typee.

Any effort to confront this Calvinist God who demands guilt-ridden submission is an act of pride and self-assertion and, as Ishmael says of whaling which symbolizes God-hunting in Moby-Dick, "you run no small risk of being eternally stove and sunk by him."³⁰

²⁸Thompson, p. 149.

²⁹Moby-Dick, p. 641.

³⁰Ibid., p. 352.

The first man of the Pequod that mounted the mast to look out for the White Whale, on the White Whale's own peculiar ground; that man was swallowed up in the deep.³¹

The walls of the Whaleman's Chapel in New Bedford in which Father Mapple preaches are covered with tablets in memory of those punished for God-hunting: "As well might those tablets stand in the cave of Elephanta as here," Ishmael thinks. Fiedelson explains in a footnote that "on an island in the harbor of Bombay, India, ancient temple caves are carved into the hillside. Melville is apparently alluding to the association of the main temple with Sivalam, a sect of the Hindu religion devoted to worship of Siva the Destroyer."³²

The jealous nature of this God and his attitude toward man as it also appears in White Jacket and Billy Budd Melville states in "The Town Ho's Story" with regard to the conflict between two members of the crew:

Now as you well know, it is not seldom the case in this conventional world of ours--watery or otherwise; that when a person placed in command over his fellowmen finds one of them to be very significantly his superior in general pride of manhood [my underlining], straightway against that man he conceives an unconquerable dislike and bitterness; and if he have a chance he will pull down and pulverize that subaltern's tower, and make a little heap of dust.³³

This "general pride of manhood" is the state of the blasphemer, a term used several times to describe Ahab, and this statement of punishment

³¹ Moby-Dick, p. 662.

³² Ibid., p. 65.

³³ Ibid., pp. 326-327.

because of jealousy is the meaning of Gabriel's message to Ahab: beware the blasphemer's end!"³⁴

The idea of the punishment of pride interpreted by the sociologist Svend Ranulf as divine jealousy and hostility toward man introduces one of the three qualities of the Puritan God which are motives for divine punishment; the others being remoteness, which includes inscrutability, transcendence and impersonal order or Law, and arbitrary will which punishes indiscriminately the innocent and the guilty but especially the proud for His own designs and for the purpose of His own power and glory.

And "in Protestant thought, particularly in Melville's day, the Leviathan reference in the Forty-first Chapter of Job was considered as symbolic of God, and of God's inscrutable power."³⁵ In his sermon on Jonah, Father Mapple says, "God came upon him in a whale."³⁶ Thus, *Moby Dick* symbolizes the Calvinist God and this God is known by man chiefly as an agent of divine reward and punishment.

Father Mapple prays, "O Father!--chiefly known to me by Thy rod. . . ."³⁷ Thompson points out that Ishmael uses the same word rod to describe the scar on Ahab's face, and that "in the allegorical framework of *Moby-Dick*, Captain Ahab is motivated to blasphemous defiance

³⁴*Moby-Dick*, p. 413.

³⁵Thompson, p. 171.

³⁶*Moby-Dick*, p. 79.

³⁷*Ibid.*, p. 81.

by his indignant notion that he has been 'struck' twice by God. . . ."³⁸

Ahab says of Moby Dick, "I see in him outrageous strength, with an inscrutable malice sinewing it. That inscrutable thing is chiefly what I hate."³⁹

The physical qualities of Moby Dick also reflect the characteristics of the Calvinist God: his whiteness suggests inscrutability; his forehead depicts wisdom and cold unfeeling intellect and impersonal rationality; his wrinkles show age; and his great mouth and teeth reveal the wrathful, hostile, jealous nature which punishes any threat to his power and glory.

Melville says of the "peculiar snow-white brow of Moby Dick, and his snow-white hump",⁴⁰

. . . the Sperm Whale, this high and mighty God-like dignity inherent in the brow is so immensely amplified, that gazing on it, in that full front view, you feel the Deity and the dread powers more forcibly than in beholding any other object in living nature.⁴¹

. . . I should call this high hump the organ of firmness or indomitableness in the Sperm Whale. And that the great monster is indomitable, you will yet have reason to know.⁴²

Thus, "the glorified White Whale . . . so divinely swam."⁴³

³⁸ Moby-Dick, p. 170.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 221.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 271.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 447.

⁴² Ibid., p. 452.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 271.

That nature not only reflects God but is God, Melville suggests in his presentation of the sea as a character: Father Mapple preaches that "the sea rebels; he will not bear the wicked burden."⁴⁴

Also, not only Moby Dick's physical qualities but his spiritual characteristics identify him with the agent of divine reward and punishment in Melville's Puritan background: ". . . malicious intelligence [is] ascribed to him . . ."⁴⁵ and ". . . wilful, deliberate designs of destruction to his pursuers."⁴⁶

The Sperm Whale is in some cases sufficiently powerful, knowing, and judiciously malicious, as with direct aforethought to stave in, utterly destroy, and sink a large ship; and what is more, the Sperm Whale has done it.⁴⁷

". . . The demoniac indifference with which the White Whale tore his hunters, whether sinning or sinned against . . ."⁴⁸ suggests Ranulf's main point on the indiscriminate moral indignation of the Puritans and God as they conceived of Him, punishing innocent men for the sins of others and for His own designs:⁴⁹

. . . The Calvinists found no practical difficulty in combining belief in predestination with severity against sinners . . . [and] thus there can be no doubt of the

⁴⁴ Moby-Dick, p. 76.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 692.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 282.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 277.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 674.

⁴⁹ Ranulf, pp. 62-63.

very strong disposition to disinterested moral indignation inherent in Calvinism.⁵⁰

Ahab's fate is the frequent fate of the artist in a society headed by this Calvinist God; Ahab is the Romantic artist confronting the indomitable God who hates and punishes him, who cripples and stifles and would destroy him; Ahab confronts Moby Dick as White Jacket faces Captain Claret and as Billy Budd faces Captain Vere-John Claggart.

Ahab also embodies the idea that by the mid-nineteenth century (Moby-Dick was written in 1850-1851) the highly individualized poetic self of the Romantic artist had distinguished itself from the bourgeois as the rebel against the order, the genius in contrast to the inert masses, and that this self-concept eventually evolves into a Zarathustra-- a God beyond good and evil because he is deciding what is good and evil.⁵¹ Or as Albert Camus says in The Rebel, "The slave begins by demanding justice and ends by wanting to wear a crown."⁵²

Starbuck observes this development from rebel to tyrant: "Who's over him, he cries; -- aye, he would be a democrat to all above; look, how he lords it over all below!"⁵³

Ahab thus symbolizes the idea that the Calvinist rigid order of divine reward and punishment (often indistinguishable from social and

⁵⁰ Ranulf, p. 16.

⁵¹ George Boas, "The Romantic Self: An Historical Sketch," Studies in Romanticism, IV (Autumn, 1964), 12-13.

⁵² Albert Camus, The Rebel. An Essay on Man in Revolt, tr. Anthony Bower (New York, 1953), p. 25.

⁵³ Moby-Dick, p. 228.

self reward and punishment) sickens the natural drive of the Romantic artist toward freedom and the new vision, and he turns on his oppressor seeking not freedom but revenge. The result is that he takes on the oppressor's qualities of arbitrary will, impersonal order, and jealous hatred.

Melville identifies Ahab with his punisher, first of all, through details of appearance and action. Both have the wrinkled face of age and both have a large pale forehead. The cry of Ahab, "'There she blows! there she blows!--there she blows!' [is] . . . attuned to the gradual prolongings of the whale's visible jets."⁵⁴

Ahab himself suggests the identity: "I now prophesy that I will dismember my dismemberer."⁵⁵ "Cannibal old me," he calls himself.⁵⁶

At another moment when he probably is less conscious of his association with the God whom he hates, he sees himself as all-powerful, demanding complete submission: "Ye are not other men, but my arms and legs; and so obey me. . . ."⁵⁷ Like the God of Calvinism, "the old man's despotic eye was on them."⁵⁸

". . . The clamped mortar of Ahab's iron soul"⁵⁹ and the "mechanical

⁵⁴ Moby-Dick, p. 689.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 227.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 685.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 716.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 674.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

humming of the wheels of his vitality in him"⁶⁰ remind one of the cogs and wheels of the impersonal crushing orders of social and divine reward and punishment symbolized in White Jacket.

And like the remote, all-powerful Old Testament God of John Calvin, Ahab was the "inaccessable" head of "an irresistible dictatorship."⁶¹

As arbitrary will, author of irrational force in the universe, Ahab smashes the quadrant, which represents man's effort to create order and sanity through science.

Identified also with evil as Author of Sin, Ahab is accompanied by Fedallah, the Parsee.

The absurd combination of impersonal order and arbitrary will stressed in White Jacket appears again in the character of Ahab:

Nor, perhaps, will it fail to be eventually perceived, that behind these forms and usages, as it were, he sometimes masked himself; incidentally making use of them for other and more private ends than they were legitimately intended to subserve.⁶²

Ranulf quotes from the Puritan pamphlet which states this motive for indiscriminate divine punishment of men--"making use of them to bring about his own designs."⁶³

Melville writes of Moby-Dick, "I have written a wicked book, and feel as spotless as the lamb."⁶⁴ Yet the image of Ahab, which embodies

⁶⁰Moby-Dick, p. 218.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 198.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Ranulf, p. 63.

⁶⁴Thompson, p. 141.

so many of the qualities of Melville himself and of the Romantic artist in Puritan society, suggests that the writer is responsible for the effect of his ideas on that society. If the concept of the Calvinist God is equally accurate, then the fate of the Pequod's crew is the fate of the readers, influenced by the convincing and appealing nature of Ahab's rebellion. Thus Melville and many another Romantic artist must have questioned the God-role he was playing, just as Starbuck asks of Ahab:

But shall this crazed old man be tamely suffered to drag a whole ship's company down to doom with him?--Yes, it would make him the wilful murderer of thirty men or more, if this ship come to any deadly harm; and come to deadly harm, my soul swears this ship will, if Ahab have his way.⁶⁵

Because the crew does die in pursuit of his attack on the seemingly indomitable Calvinist God, Ahab represents the God-role of the Romantic artist carried to the extreme; just as Albert Camus's novels symbolize the universal truth that man is condemned to die, in situations which show this truth in exaggerated form, in the most intense form of greatest immediacy--for example, a plague, or a murderer condemned by the state to be executed.

Thus Ahab is both victim of divine reward and punishment and agent of social reward and punishment.

He also is victim of self reward and punishment as explained by Sigmund Freud and Edmund Bergler and also by the critic Henry A. Murray:

⁶⁵ Moby-Dick, p. 631.

Stated in psychological concepts, Ahab is captain of the culturally repressed dispositions of human nature, that part of personality which psychoanalysts have termed the "Id." If this is true, his opponent, the White Whale, can be none other than the internal institution which is responsible for these repressions, namely the Freudian Superego. This, then, is my second hypothesis; Moby Dick is a veritable spouting, breaching, sounding whale, a whale who, because of his whiteness, his mighty bulk and beauty, and because of one instinctive act that happened to dismember his assailant, has received the projection of Captain Ahab's Presbyterian conscience, and so may be said to embody the Old Testament Calvinistic conception of an affrighting Deity and his strict commandments, the derivative puritan ethic of nineteenth-century America and the society that defended this ethic. Also, and most specifically, he symbolizes the zealous parents whose righteous sermonizings and corrections drove the prohibitions in so hard that a serious young man could hardly reach outside the barrier, except possibly far away among some tolerant, gracious Polynesian peoples. The emphasis should be placed on that unconscious (and hence inscrutable) wall of inhibition which imprisoned the puritan's thrusting passions. "How can the prisoner reach outside," cries Ahab, "except by thrusting through the wall? To me, the white whale is that wall, shoved near to me . . . I see in him outrageous strength, with an inscrutable malice sinewing it." As a symbol of a sounding, breaching, white-dark, unconquerable New England conscience what could be better than a sounding, breaching, white-dark, unconquerable sperm whale?⁶⁶

Melville implies that Ahab's relationship to Moby Dick is one of self reward and punishment when he points out that Ahab is returning to "the very latitude and longitude where his tormenting wound had been inflicted. . . ."⁶⁷ Father Mapple states the psychological nature of that defect which appears in all of Melville's protagonists when he says

⁶⁶ Henry A. Murray, "'In Nomine Diaboli,'" New England Quarterly, XXIV (December, 1951), 443-444.

⁶⁷ Moby-Dick, p. 674.

of Jonah, "conscience is the wound. . . ." ⁶⁸ To Pip, whose friendship would have healed the guilt-inflicted wound, Ahab says: "There is in thee, poor lad, which I feel too curing to my malady. Like cures like; and for this hunt, my malady becomes my most desired health." ⁶⁹ thus rejecting the state of social escape in friendship and the divine escape through mystical union which Pip had when he fell in the ocean.

Ahab himself says that the world "to each and every man in turn but mirrors back his own mysterious self." ⁷⁰ In response to Starbuck's comment, he says, "What's that he said--Ahab beware of Ahab--there's something there!" ⁷¹

Is Moby Dick symbol of the God as He objectively exists? Is he a symbol of Ahab's Super-Ego, the agent of self reward and punishment and is there no God as the New England Calvinists conceived of Him? Does Ahab of his own free will become God-tyrant in the manner of the Romantic artist as Morse Peckham and Albert Camus described it, or is he throughout the tool of the Puritan God? One of the Puritan pamphlets from Ranulf's study states:

"If Kings hearts goe . . . to root out the godly and godliness itself, as Ahab's; . . . the hearts of Kings are in the hands of the Lord, hee turns them whither soever he will, in all these motions he acts in just

⁶⁸ Moby-Dick, p. 75.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 672.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 551.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 605.

judgment, not changing their wills, but making use of them to bring about his own designs."⁷²

The same pamphlet goes on to say that "No creatures, nor Angels, no causes inferior or superior, can go otherwise, or act otherwise, than the Spirit would have them."⁷³

Ahab's final conscious decision reflects this final concept of divine punishment:

What is it, what nameless, inscrutable, unearthly thing is it; what cozening, hidden lord and master, and cruel, remorseless emperor commands me; that against all natural lovings and longings, I so keep pushing, and crowding, and jamming myself on all the time; recklessly making me ready to do what in my own proper, natural heart, I durst not so much as dare? Is Ahab, Ahab? Is it I, God, or who, that lifts this arm? But if the great sun move not of himself but is as an errand-boy in heaven; nor one single star can revolve, but by some invisible power; how then can this one small heart beat; this one small brain think thoughts; unless God does that beating, does that thinking, does that living, and not I.⁷⁴

God therefore punishes indiscriminately through him as He does through the murderous creatures in Nature such as the Albacone to which Ahab refers.⁷⁵

Ahab represents the Romantic artist as object of self and divine reward and punishment and as agent of reward and punishment in society when the rebel becomes a tyrant. He shows the effect of rigid order and of punishment by this stifling three-level order on the artist,

⁷²Ranulf, p. 63.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Moby-Dick, p. 695.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 696.

with his special need to be free to seek the vision, when the natural drive is sickened and he turns instead on his oppressor.

Ishmael, on the other hand, finds the means of escape on each level--the divine escape into the mystical vision, the escape from judging society through his friend, and escape from the Super-Ego into the deep calm center of the self.

The following is his image of self escape:

. . . In the soul of man there lies one insular
Tahiti, full of peace and joy,⁷⁶

and

deep down and deep inland there I still bathe
me in eternal mildness of joy.⁷⁷

An analogous image is that of the fragrant ambergris "found in the inglorious bowels of a sick whale!"⁷⁸

Ahab knows only a brief moment of this escape from the judgment of the self when "the lovely aromas in that enchanted air did at last seem to dispel, for a moment, the cankerous thing in his soul. . . ."⁷⁹ Even something of that healthy inner order and dignity of selfhood beyond reward and punishment which appeared as the fourth escape in White Jacket, Ahab feels briefly when on the second day of chase he says, "old Ahab is untouched . . . nor White Whale nor man, nor fiend, can so much as

⁷⁶ Moby-Dick, p. 364.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 499.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 523.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 682.

graze old Ahab in his own proper and inaccessible being."⁸⁰

In overall characterization, however, escape into inner calm is Ishmael's and not Ahab's.

Likewise, on the social level, while Ahab, the tyrant captain, says "Cursed by that mortal inter-indebtedness,"⁸¹ Ishmael finds escape in the friendship of Queequeg. They first share a bed at the inn before sailing and Ishmael says, "Upon waking next morning about daylight, I found Queequeg's arm thrown over me in the most loving and affectionate manner. You had almost thought I had been his wife."⁸²

Escaping through Queequeg, Ishmael is no longer the socially judged and judging rebel described in the quotation from Genesis which Feldelson includes in a footnote: "And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him."⁸³ With Queequeg, Ishmael says, "I felt a melting in me. No more my splintered heart and maddened hand were turned against the wolfish world. This soothing savage had redeemed it."⁸⁴

Queequeg also has achieved that strength of selfhood which is the fourth escape seen in Mad Jack, Ushant, Colbrook, and Jack Chase in White Jacket.

⁸⁰ Moby-Dick, p. 705.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 601.

⁸² Ibid., p. 52.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 23.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 83.

Free of divine reward and punishment, he whittles on the wooden idol of his well-meaning but fallible God, Yojo, whom he also cherishes and esteems.⁸⁵ The sailors ask him "whether or not to live or die was a matter of his own sovereign will and pleasure. He answered certainly. . . ."⁸⁶

Beyond social reward and punishment, "he looked like a man who had never cringed and never had had a creditor."⁸⁷ And when the captain threatened to throw him overboard after he had sneaked aboard the ship bound for Christendom, "Queequeg was the son of a king, and Queequeg budged not. Struck by his desperate dauntlessness, and his wild desire to visit Christendom, the captain at last relented, and told him that he might make himself at home."⁸⁸ He later rescues a young sailor who made fun of him and then went running to the captain when Queequeg tossed him around. The captain, that symbol of rigid authority, even apologized for falsely accusing Queequeg of trying to kill the boy.⁸⁹

Ishmael responds to this scene as though he actually saw Queequeg as a means of escape from social reward and punishment: "From that hour I clove to Queequeg like a barnacle."⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Moby-Dick, p. 103.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 611.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 82.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 89.

⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 94-95.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 95.

Queequeg is also a symbol of escape in friendship to Melville who later has Queequeg rescue Tashtego from his fall into the soft center of the dead whale. Finally, in one of the central images of the book, Queequeg's coffin floats by Ishmael just as he is being drawn into the vortex where all other elements of the Pequod, including its entire crew, have been destroyed.

In Melville's description of the coffin coming to save Ishmael's life, the author suggests in the physical details all three levels of escape--the inner calm of self escape which is the "vital center," the friendship of Queequeg in which he has felt protection from social judgment and which is symbolized in the floating coffin, and the sea itself which is the place of mystical oneness with the Divine as Pip and White Jacket knew it. Ishmael is drawn

toward the closing vortex . . . Till, gaining the vital center, the black bubble upward burst; and now, liberated by reason of its cunning spring, and, owing to its great buoyancy, rising with great force, the coffin life-buoy shot lengthwise from the sea, fell over, and floated by my side.⁹¹

Ahab is aware of this form of escape, which, like the others he can never have:

Close! stand close to me, Starbuck; let me look into a human eye; it is better than to gaze into sea or sky; better than to gaze upon God. By the green land; by the bright hearth-stone! this is the magic glass, man; I see my wife and my child in thine eye.⁹²

⁹¹Moby-Dick, p. 724.

⁹²Ibid., p. 634.

Ishmael's images of divine escape echo those of White Jacket when he says,

In the serene weather of the tropics it is exceedingly pleasant the mast-head; nay, to a dreamy, meditative man it is delightful. There you stand, a hundred feet above the silent decks, striding along the deep, as if the masts were gigantic stilts, while beneath you and between your legs, as it were, swim the hugest monsters of the sea, even as ships once sailed between the boots of the famous Colossus at old Rhodes. There you stand, lost in the infinite series of the sea [my underlining], with nothing ruffled but the waves.⁹³

At another moment, Ishmael again "loses his identity; takes the mystic ocean at his feet for the visible image of that deep, blue bottomless soul."⁹⁴ Feidelson comments on "Ishmael's characteristic tendency to a 'mystic' reverie in which his mind and the objective world are united to form a pantheistic universe."⁹⁵

This is the escape from divine reward and punishment into mystical oneness with the Romantic God which Ahab cannot reach:

. . . Few thoughts of Pan stirred Ahab's brain, as standing like an iron statue at his accustomed place beside the mizen rigging, with one nostril he unthinkingly snuffed the sugary must from the Bashe isles (in whose sweet woods wild lovers must be walking), and with the other consciously inhaled the salt breath of the new found sea; that sea in which the hated White Whale must even be swimming.⁹⁶

Unique to this particular work of Melville's as it presents the

⁹³ Moby-Dick, p. 209.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 214.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 623.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 614.

theme of reward and punishment is the fact that even the images of escape have a fearful, unknown quality. Queequeg, the means of escape from social reward and punishment, is the first friend of the protagonist who combines unjudging love with darkness (in his skin color); and in Moby-Dick appears the first image suggesting that one might also die saving a friend in the monkey-roped "interindebtedness" of human life, and Queequeg does die at the same time he is saving Ishmael's life through his coffin.

The mystical, which has always appeared as a glorious masthead or ocean experience in White Jacket and in Moby-Dick and as a private sacred holy meeting in Billy Budd, appears here in several images which suggest the fearful, dangerous aspect of such a spiritual expansion and oneness with Spirit and the world.

The horrid supernatural hand which grasps Ishmael's in the dark room when he is a child, the effect of the vision on Pip, and the threat of death Ishmael recognizes if, in a mystical trance on the masthead you "slip your hold at all; and your identity comes back in horror."⁹⁷

Thus while divine punishment is the dark climax of the book, even divine escape has its dark, negative, questionable side.

Narcissus, who because he could not grasp the tormenting, mild image he saw in the fountain, plunged into it and was drowned. But that same image, we ourselves see in all rivers and oceans. It is the image of the ungraspable phantom of life; and this is the key to it all.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Moby-Dick, p. 214.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 26.

Feidelson's note says:

Just as Narcissus was drowned in the fountain, any man who pursues the image too far will lose his sense of what he is [personal identity] in the infinite possibilities of "life."⁹⁹

Ishmael expresses in this image fear of freedom not only in the artist, but in man, that fear pointed out by Dostoyevsky. It is the fear that freedom may result in the loss of the individual self, a mystical vision of oneness which is negative and horrid, alienation and no vision, or insanity. Each possible effect is symbolized in one of the images of divine escape. This fear is perhaps the main basis for man's need for order, his need to be limited by the rewards and punishments of his Super-Ego, his society and his God.

Loss of the self which is death Ishmael describes in the idea of Narcissus and in the description of letting go on the mast-head.

The negative mystical vision, the isolation of the artist with some supernatural horror Ishmael describes: as a child, he was put to bed, while it was still daylight, in a dark room, and in the darkness "a supernatural hand seemed placed in mine." He calls it a "horrid spell."¹⁰⁰

The third fear, that of alienation and no vision, was especially prevalent among the early Romantics whose heroes were often doomed to wander an outcast without a vision.¹⁰¹ Byron's Manfred was one of

⁹⁹ Moby-Dick, p. 26.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 53.

¹⁰¹ Morse Peckham, "Toward a Theory of Romanticism," PMLA, LXVI (March, 1951), 20.

these. Ishmael says of this fear,

. . . In pursuit of those far mysteries we dream of, or in tormented chase of that demon phantom that, some time or other, swims before all human beings; while chasing such over this round globe, they either lead us on in barren mazes or midway leave us whelmed.¹⁰²

Melville also fears that the end of the search is insanity, reflected in Pip's state after jumping from Stubb's boat and being left behind in the water to experience the vision of God: the sea had

drowned the infinite of his soul. Not drowned entirely, though. Rather carried down alive to wondrous depths, where strange shapes of the unwarped primal world glided to and fro before his passive eyes; and the miser-merman, Wisdom, revealed his hoarded heaps; and among the joyous, heartless, ever-juvenile eternities, Pip saw the multitudinous, God-omnipresent, coral insects, that out of the firmament of waters heaved the colossal orbs. He saw God's foot upon the treadel of the loom, and spoke it; and therefore his shipmates called him mad. So man's insanity is heaven's sense; and wandering from all mortal reason, man comes at last to that celestial thought, which, to reason, is absurd and frantic; and weal or woe, feels then uncompromised, indifferent as his God.¹⁰³

Pip's garbled language suggests the inability of the artist to communicate the vision; and, just as at the end of White Jacket the moment of vision follows immediately a moment of punishment when the sailors harpoon the jacket of self or identity, so Pip's punishment for cowardice which is Stubb's leaving him behind, is followed by the vision.

The vision in Ishmael's childhood also is the result of his being punished for misbehaving. And at the end of Moby-Dick, the escape of

¹⁰² Moby-Dick, p. 316.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 530.

Ishmael follows immediately the punishment of Ahab, his kindred spirit who also is the Romantic artist.

Thus, as was discussed at the end of the chapter on White Jacket, when the guilt-ridden Puritan self is finally punished, the relief that follows sometimes includes even the transcendence of that limited self and the expansion of the ego into mystical oneness with everything and with the unjudging Romantic God.

This truth about the relationship of the world of reward and punishment to the world of escape, freedom, and transcendence will also be seen in the final scenes of Billy Budd.

The final state of Ahab, of Ishmael, and of Pip each symbolize a possible Fate for the Romantic artist in Puritan society--victim of the rigid order; transcendent and free and escaped into the vision of oneness for which the Romantic artist seeks; or insane and isolated, with no vision or with the negative vision.

Moby-Dick embodies the duality of freedom and rigid order as stated in the beginning by Lawrence Thompson. It is even more a three-fold struggle for the Romantic artist, which Morse Peckham sees going on still today--a struggle between static mechanism in which man and especially the artist is nothing more than an object to be rewarded and punished and from which he endeavors to escape, positive Romanticism in which he escapes and reaches the vision, and negative Romanticism in which he is simply a despairing or mentally disturbed outcast.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴Peckham, "Toward a Theory of Romanticism," pp. 22-23.

CHAPTER IV
THE THEME OF REWARD AND PUNISHMENT
IN BILLY BUDD

In Melville's Billy Budd, finished in the spring of 1891, only a few months before the author's death, the theme of reward and punishment and its three-level effect on the Romantic artist in Puritan society appears in its final form: the protagonist is subjected to the three orders of reward and punishment and simultaneously transcends or escapes the judgment of each--thus fulfilling the dual need in man, especially visible in the life and work of Herman Melville.

Billy Budd is a foretopman pressed out of the merchant service into the King's Navy in the year of the Nore Mutiny.

Billy has the sensitivity, magnanimity of spirit, and the moral sense of all of Melville's protagonists, which resemble Melville himself. He is "an individual who possesses in more than usual measure certain timeless precious human attributes."¹ A special, sensitive example of human nature, he is judged and punished for suspected rebellion, the basic reason for punishment by Puritan society and the Puritan God which, being a God of the middle class, imposed a rigid discipline on every aspect of the life of the individual.²

¹Richard Chase, "Introduction," Selected Tales and Poems by Herman Melville (New York, 1948), p. xiii.

²Kenneth Murdock, Literature and Theology in Colonial New England (Cambridge, Mass., 1949), p. 175.

The critic Norman Holmes Pearson, in response to the bulk of criticism which forces Billy Budd into the role of Christ figure, Adam, or Isaac, recalls an essential fact to remember in interpreting Melville's works, a fact verified by the unending variety of supportable readings of any one of his stories: "Melville establishes momentary resemblances rather than complete identities" and Billy Budd is not Christ or Adam so much as he is a sailor.³

As an orphan sailor, he then primarily "resembles" that archetypal symbol of the Romantic artist, the rootless wanderer, who is man searching and becoming, as the name "Budd" suggests.

As symbol of the Romantic poet, which Melville himself was, Billy Budd is described as a singing bird, a priest, Apollo or creator of order, peacemaker. Cast in the role of a bird, the image in which Keats and Yeats and so many other Romantic artists saw themselves, Billy Budd is compared with "a goldfinch."⁴ And later Melville said of him, "He was illiterate; he could not read, but he could sing, and like the illiterate nightingale was sometimes the composer of his own song."⁵ When he calls out before being hanged, "God Bless Captain Vere!", his words are heard as "the clear melody of a singing-bird on the point of launching from the twig."⁶ At this final moment, he also

³ Norman Holmes Pearson, "Billy Budd: 'The King's Yarn,'" American Quarterly, II (Summer, 1951), 107.

⁴ Herman Melville, Billy Budd in Selected Tales and Poems by Herman Melville, ed. Richard Chase (New York, 1948), p. 292.

⁵ Ibid., p. 299.

⁶ Ibid., p. 367.

resembles the priestly role when he calls out and all the sailors repeat the words after him in unison. Percy Bysshe Shelley in A Defense of Poetry sees the poet as legislator or creator of the true order and as prophet or priest of the new vision.⁷ Billy Budd is compared to "a Catholic priest striking peace in an Irish shindig."⁸

By the mid-nineteenth century the Romantic artist felt himself to be a highly individualized poetic self; distinguished as a rebel and a creator of his own order, he was in one sense a god figure above the humdrum masses, who asserted truths beyond empirical evidence and science; he was a moral self and a democratic self in sympathy with the French Revolutionary spirit.⁹ All these qualities are embodied in Billy Budd.

"Assigned to the starboard watch of the foretop,"¹⁰ Billy had a superior and god-like position and his contemplative nature in contrast to that of the man of action is suggested:

There, when not actually engaged on the yards yet higher aloft, the topmen, who as such had been picked out for youth and activity, constituted an aerial club lounging at ease against the smaller stunsails rolled up into cushions, spinning yarns like lazy gods, and frequently amused with what was going on in the busy world of the decks below.¹¹

⁷Percy Bysshe Shelley, "A Defense of Poetry," The Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley (New York, 1930), VII, 107-140.

⁸Billy Budd, p. 294.

⁹George Boss, "The Romantic Self--An Historical Sketch," Studies in Romanticism, IV (Autumn, 1964), 1-16.

¹⁰Billy Budd, p. 296.

¹¹Ibid., p. 314.

In the play version of Billy Budd, Captain Vere says to Billy:

The sea and the Navy exact a discipline, but it need not be a harsh one. In some ways I envy the man who dances across the tops and seems to rule the ship and sea below. Up there is a pleach of ropes for you to make a world of. Though winds have their way with tackle of your world, you live at ease against your strength and the round bole of the mast in your back. You are a king up there, while the water curds and frolics at the forefoot. I envy you that stance.¹²

Therefore, "Billy is budding man, yet [like the Romantic artist's concept of himself] he is also the budding God."¹³

The primitive barbarian nature found in Billy was one adopted by many Romantic artists such as Paul Gauguin; and the organic theory of art, which was first stated in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's Biographia Literaria and later embodied, for example, in the content, style and manner of publication of Walt Whitman's Leaves of Grass, was the Romantic theory that the work of art itself should grow like a plant rather than be created like a machine according to superimposed literary rules in the manner of the Augustans.

Melville seems to be suggesting in the character of Billy Budd that it is part of the primitive instinct for man to strike out at evil in society and in the Puritan God, which the Romantic artist often did. To further suggest that Billy's closeness to nature and his poetic spirit are not conflicting but rather complimentary aspects, both of which are

¹²Louis O. Coxe and Robert Chapman, Billy Budd in A Modern Repertory (New York, 1953), p. 594.

¹³Ray B. West, Jr., "The Unity of Billy Budd," Hudson Review, V (Spring, 1952), 123.

to be found in the Romantic artist, the critic John Freeman says that even Billy Budd's "guilelessness is a kind of genius."¹⁴ The primitive, the spontaneous, and the emotions all are predominant in the ideal Romantic self; and the following quotation in a letter from Melville to Julian Hawthorne reveals his identity with Billy's nature: "I stand for the heart. To the dogs with the head."¹⁵

Melville identified also with the breakers of the established literary order: he creates a disordered order in the structure of Moby-Dick and includes five digressions in Billy Budd because "truth uncompromisingly told will always have its ragged edges."¹⁶

As Romantic artist Billy is the spontaneous speaker of truth, from his farewell to the Rights of Man to his honesty at the trial--the "unvarnished truth"¹⁷ aimed for by the narrator Tom in Typee and in Pierre's final novel. As Romantic rebel who seeks truth, Billy strikes out instinctively at evil even when it is part of the respectable established order which the master-at-arms, John Claggart, represents. As searcher after truth, he is striking out at the evil of untruth, which Claggart's accusation is.

That this role is left to the artist in society is suggested by the

¹⁴ John Freeman, Herman Melville (New York, 1926), p. 131.

¹⁵ Julian Hawthorne, Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Wife: A Biography (Boston, 1895), I, 404.

¹⁶ Billy Budd, p. 372.

¹⁷ Herman Melville, Typee in Billy Budd and Typee (New York, 1965), p. 102.

number of other characters who represent major roles in society, and who lie in order to maintain the established order: the surgeon, the minister who did not speak up in defense of Billy though he knew his innocence, the officers at the trial who deferred to Captain Vere's will, the Dansker who did not interfere with Claggart's plans to use the order to punish Billy unjustly. "The Chaplain," Melville says, "lifted not a finger to avert the doom of such a martyr to martial discipline."¹⁸

The critic E. L. Grant Watson is one of several critics who feel that "Billy Budd has not, even under the severest provocation, any element of rebellion in him; he is too free a soul."¹⁹ Yet like Ahab and Pierre and Taji he strikes out at evil in the established order; and like Ahab and Pierre and Tom he insists on truth. "As Billy represents the 'Revolutionary Spirit' in its amiable aspects, Athéiste, flying the flag of the French government, which deliberately embodied that spirit, represents conflict with form in its positively destructive aspects."²⁰

Thus, Billy is the rebel-artist who in the Romantic concept is also the God-figure, peacemaker, the priest who establishes an organic natural order in true relationship to Truth. Captain Vere says, "With

¹⁸Billy Budd, p. 365.

¹⁹E. L. Grant, "Melville's Testament of Acceptance," New England Quarterly, VI (June, 1933), 322.

²⁰Mary Foley, "The Digressions in Billy Budd," Billy Budd and the Critics (San Francisco, 1961), p. 163.

mankind . . . forms, measured forms are everything; and that is the import couched in the story of Orpheus with his lyre spell-binding the wild denizens of the woods."²¹ However, he is unaware that his imagery implies a contrast between the organic-artistic order of Orpheus and Billy Budd and Melville, and the unnatural, superimposed mechanistic order represented by Vere and by the pale, unhealthy sadistic policeman, Claggart, for whom the rational order is but a tool of the irrational will.

Orpheus is the poet, Shelley's legislator-priest, and like Orpheus, Billy Budd is the one who causes order and peace on the Rights of Man and on the Indomitable--preventing mutiny by calling out, "God Bless Captain Vere!"

Billy Budd is punished for the two major sins of the Romantic artist: rebellion and the inability to communicate.

The stutter which is Billy Budd's affliction at moments of stress is the human imperfection felt keenest by the artist. Billy Budd suffers like a suffocating priestess when, in the moment of confrontation with Claggart, he cannot speak to defend himself against the accusation of mutiny. The image combines the sense of agony with the priestly role of the poet; it represents the artist's need to justify himself to the society and the orthodox God that he has gone beyond in his search for a new vision. He longs to communicate the truth as Billy Budd does; but "under sudden provocation of strong heart-feeling his voice otherwise

²¹ Billy Budd, p. 371.

singularly musical, as if expressive of the harmony within, was apt to develop an organic hesitancy, in fact more or less of a stutter or even worse."²²

Billy's stutter, no less than the spiritual faults (symbolized by physical defects) of other protagonists brings punishment down upon him: "Could I have used my tongue I would not have struck him. But he foully lied to my face in the presence of my Captain, and I had to say something, and I could only say it with a blow, God help me!"²³

Melville felt this inability to communicate in his own work: "All my books are botches," he wrote to Hawthorne.²⁴ Richard Chase also suggests that Melville may be "speaking of his own youth," and that "Billy Budd's stammering is Melville's own."²⁵ It is therefore significant that before the character of John Claggart Melville himself cannot communicate what he feels to be the truth: "This portrait I essay, but shall never hit it. This was John Claggart, the master-at-arms."²⁶

Autobiographical elements have been referred to in the preceding paragraphs, and, of course, Melville's most immediate model for the Romantic artist in Puritan society was himself. The exit from the Eden of pure reward is a theme that appears in Typee, in Pierre, in Redburn,

²²Billy Budd, p. 300.

²³Ibid., p. 350.

²⁴Jay Leyda, The Melville Log (New York, 1951), I, 412.

²⁵Richard Chase, Herman Melville: A Critical Study (New York, 1949), p. 277.

²⁶Billy Budd, p. 310.

and again in Billy Budd: the protagonists in these four novels exit from a form of Eden just as Melville did at the age of thirteen.

"As primitive man Billy lives at comparative ease with his shipmates aboard the Rights of Man--a society similar to that pictured in Typee."²⁷ Like Redburn and Pierre and the young Melville, Billy is taken from the Eden which is the Rights of Man into the social order of war aboard the Indomitable. Like them, he is "hopelessly unfitted for existence in a world of men."²⁸ ". . . Something in the mobile expression, and every chance attitude and movement, something suggestive of a mother eminently favored by Love and the Graces; all this strangely indicated a lineage in direct contradiction to his lot."²⁹

In Billy Budd, as in Redburn and Melville, the democratic spirit combines with an aristocratic background. He protects the sailors by not revealing the details of his secret meeting with the member of the crew who tried to draw him into the plans for mutiny. And he reacts as the other two do to the new post-Edenic world: ". . . he is horrified by the false charges Cleggart brings against him."³⁰ Of this youthful horror, Melville says in Redburn:

Talk not of the bitterness of middle-age and after life; a boy can feel all that, and much more, when upon

²⁷ West, p. 123.

²⁸ James E. Miller, Jr., "Billy Budd: The Catastrophe of Innocence," Modern Language Notes, LXXIII (March, 1958), 169.

²⁹ Billy Budd., p. 298.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 134.

his young soul the mildew has fallen; and the fruit, which with others is only blasted after ripeness, with him is nipped in the first blossom and bud. And never again can such blights be made good; they strike in too deep, and leave such a scar that the air of Paradise might not erase it. And it is a hard and cruel thing thus in early youth to taste beforehand the pangs which should be reserved for the stout time of manhood, when the gristle has become bone, and we stand up and fight out our lives, as a thing tried before and foreseen; for then we are veterans used to sieges and battles, and not green recruits, recoiling at the first shock of the encounter.³¹

After his exit from the Eden of pure reward, the artist must confront his own inner nature and also, though they judge him, his society and the orthodox God of his background. According to the psychology of Freud and Bergler, these last two are part of one's own self-punisher.

Inasmuch as the inner cabin suggests the inner nature of the artist, the confrontation with the Thou Shalt Not force of the Super-ego is symbolized by "the master-at-arms' clandestine persecution of Billy,"³² by his efforts to make Billy guilty, and by the generally mysterious, hidden nature of Claggart's evil. And Billy is guilty of protecting the man who spoke mutiny to him. Melville suggests that the Revolution itself, in rectifying old wrongs, "became a wrongdoer."³³

To the Freud-oriented, Tom's leg wound, Ahab's lost leg, Pierre's suicide and Billy Budd's hanging all are symbols of Melville's desire for self-punishment, though none but Pierre's is consciously, openly

³¹ Herman Melville, Redburn. His First Voyage (New York, 1957), p. 10.

³² Billy Budd., p. 326.

³³ Ibid., p. 299.

sought. However, Billy is not only striking out at the sources of self-punishment, of personal guilt in Puritan society; but as the artist, he strikes out at evil in society and its God: Billy's is a blow from the heart to the evil intelligence in the world.³⁴ And he is punished just as Ahab and Pierre strike out and are punished.

Confronting his inner self, society, and God, Billy Budd "found himself closeted there as it were in the cabin with the Captain and Claggart."³⁵

The idea of the solitary confinement of the artist, which Melville both symbolized in Typoe's taboo and mentioned directly as Tom's greatest fear--the isolation seen also in Redburn, White Jacket and Pierre--is symbolized here in the inner cabin and also in the chains in which Billy is put as prisoner. One is reminded again of the fact that the poet's sense of specialness is paradoxically coupled with self-abasement, and his otherness is viewed "both as blessing and curse, a source of pain, suffering, and alienation as well as of bliss, ecstasy and superior wisdom."³⁶ The cabin and chains symbolize the loneliness and isolation, indeed the punishment of the gifted.

The first sin that Billy Budd confronts in himself, the inability to communicate, is the greatest sin to the artist; the second, rebellion,

³⁴William Braswell, "Melville's Billy Budd as 'An Inside Narrative,'" American Literature, XXIX (May, 1957), 135.

³⁵Billy Budd, p. 342.

³⁶Victor Erlich, "The Conception of the Poet in Krasinski and the Romantic Myth of the Artist," Studies in Romanticism, I (Summer, 1962), 198.

is the greatest to the Puritan society and rigid Puritan God, and it is the second for which he is punished by the social and divine order.

Billy encounters in Claggart and Captain Vere two kinds of punishment, each of which is both social and divine; in other words, these two characters in Billy Budd symbolize social punishment and divine punishment occurring for two reasons: the first is "abstract legality"³⁷ or impersonal standards of reward and punishment because "authority will willingly sacrifice the unusual for the sake of order";³⁸ the second is jealousy, envy, hatred of the innocent, beautiful, and gifted.

These two punishments are aspects of the Puritan God, symbolized respectively by Captain Vere and the master-at-arms, John Claggart. Vere is the impersonal, detached, cool, indifferent transcendent aspect of the Old Testament God which is also the Puritan God. In a letter to Hawthorne, Melville said that "the reason the mass of men fear God, and at bottom dislike Him, is because they rather distrust His heart, and fancy Him all brain like a watch."³⁹

Claggart, on the other hand, resembles the wrathful, jealous nature of the Old Testament God who says in Proverbs 1:26, "I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; . . ." He is the Puritan God who punishes the innocent and causes the innocent to sin.⁴⁰

³⁷Chase, "Introduction," p. xiii.

³⁸Foley, p. 163.

³⁹Hawthorne, I, 404.

⁴⁰Svend Ranulf, Moral Indignation and Middle Class Psychology (Copenhagen, 1938), p. 66.

As symbols of the Puritan God, neither Claggart nor Vere have known backgrounds; and Claggart "is the only person aboard with the exception of Vere who is "intellectually capable of adequately appreciating the moral phenomenon presented in Billy Budd."⁴¹

In the play version of Billy Budd, Vere says, "Men cannot stand very much perfection. It's a disease that we stamp out at its first rash showing."⁴² The story of Eden--of innocent man's being tempted by God and punished--has suggested to some that God felt the same way and therefore Milton and others have felt His ways needed justification. Certainly, Melville's exit from Eden at thirteen was the most traumatic event of his life,⁴³ and Maria Melville, Herman's mother, imposed upon her children the powerful, arbitrary judging God.

. . . The religious tone of his mother's household seems to have become increasingly intense as time passed; one hears of formal family prayers, of the reading of religious tracts, of a somber observance of the Sabbath.⁴⁴

By her husband's diary account of his mental breakdown, which led to his death and their subsequent bankruptcy and Herman's being forced out into the world, Mrs. Melville wrote, "God moves in a mysterious way--"⁴⁵

Claggart's identification with this Calvinist God, like that of

⁴¹Billy Budd, p. 324.

⁴²Coxe, Billy Budd, p. 594.

⁴³Newton Arvin, Herman Melville (New York, 1950), p. 40.

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 33-34.

⁴⁵Leyda, I, 51.

Marryat, Claret, and Moby Dick, is even clearer in light of the study by sociologist Svend Ranulf, in which he summarizes the reasons for divine punishment in Puritan society:

. . . The Puritans believed that men must be made to suffer, and that God actually inflicts suffering upon men in a number of circumstances where we should think any kind of punishment unjustifiable: when men fail to be sufficiently censorious against one another, when they are happy and self-confident, when they have sinned only under compulsion or temptation from God, or even sometimes when they cannot be blamed for anything at all. This acceptance of every possible pretext for the infliction of punishment makes it natural to suspect that the Puritans in reality took delight in human suffering for its own sake, quite apart from the question whether there was any sin to be atoned for or not.⁴⁶

This quotation states the nature of social and divine punishment symbolized in Billy Budd. It also states the nature of the relationship between Billy Budd and Claggart, whom Richard Chase calls an "emotionally complex and ambivalent sadist."⁴⁷ The Puritan God defined in Ranulf's study, like Claggart, "is inducing men to sin even when they have not previously done anything for which they could be punished."⁴⁸

"The view that God will bring down sin and disaster upon innocent men is directly stated in eight out of the twenty-five publications" examined in Ranulf's study;⁴⁹ and "the idea that pride, self-confidence,

⁴⁶Ranulf, p. 72.

⁴⁷Chase, Herman Melville, p. 274.

⁴⁸Ranulf, p. 63.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 66.

happiness, etc. are objectionable is referred to in seventeen out of twenty-five publications.⁵⁰

And these ideas suggest what the fifth century Athenians actually stated to be the central quality of their Gods: that "God would be jealous of too much human happiness."⁵¹

Thus, besides resembling momentarily "the man of sorrows,"⁵² the serpent of Eden, and natural depravity, Claggart represents these characteristics of the Puritan God and of the Puritan society which conceived of Him, the jealous, sadistic God who punishes for His own designs.

Like Him, the sadistic Claggart feels "envy and antipathy"⁵³ toward Billy Budd's "personal beauty,"⁵⁴ self-confidence, happiness, and giftedness; he causes the innocent Billy to sin and brings punishment down upon him; and he exploits events, people (both Vere and Billy Budd) and uses his own power as master-at-arms "to bring about his own designs," as the Puritan pamphlet says.

For example, when Billy accidentally spilled soup in his path, Claggart "justified animosity into a sort of retributive righteousness,"⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Ranulf, p. 68.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 66.

⁵² Billy Budd, p. 333.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 323.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 326.

a tendency both in the Puritan God and in Puritan society. This righteous indignation is only one of the qualities of organized Puritan society which Claggart represents, others being a "constitutional sobriety, ingratiating deference to superiors . . . and a certain austere patriotism. . . ." ⁵⁶

In his manipulation of people and events, Claggart plays on the Captain's fear when he first accuses Billy Budd of mutiny:

God forbid, your honor, that the Indomitable's should be the experience of the --- ⁵⁷

(Claggart is implying the Nore mutiny in which the captain's life was in jeopardy.)

Melville was keenly aware of this basis for social and divine punishment of the Romantic artist. He scored in his own Bible the words of Genesis 38:8, "And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words"; ⁵⁸ and during the last six years of his life he at some moment scored in his copy of Balzac's The Duchesse de Langeais:

Men will permit us to rise above them, but they will not forgive him who refuses to descend as low as they. Thus the feelings they bestow on noble characters are never without elements of hatred and fear. To be worthy of high honor is for them a tacit censure, which they forgive neither the living nor the dead. ⁵⁹

"For his righteousness he is hanged," wrote the critic Raymond M. Weaver

⁵⁶ Billy Budd, p. 313.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 338.

⁵⁸ Leyda, I, 369.

⁵⁹ Leyda, II, 829.

of Billy Budd.⁶⁰

"What indeed could the trouble have to do with one so little inclined to give offense as the merchant ship's peacemaker, even him who in Claggart's own phrase was 'the sweet and pleasant young fellow?'⁶¹ is a question that Melville answers by saying,

For what can more partake of the mysterious than an antipathy spontaneous and profound such as is evoked in certain exceptional mortals by the mere aspect of some other mortal, however harmless he may be? if not called forth by this very harmlessness itself.⁶²

That the blame for evil in the world tends to fall on God, in Melville's thought and work, and not on man (as in Nathaniel Hawthorne's stories) is also suggested by this interpretation of the character of Claggart; and Melville writes that "innocence and guilt personified in Claggart and Budd--in effect changed places" at Claggart's death:⁶³ because Claggart first led Billy to sin, as some feel God led Adam, then the first guilt was really Claggart's, or God's, and the blame is really his, or His. And Melville's reaction to this concept is apparent in his comment upon reading the same idea in Matthew Arnold's poem, "Empedocles on Etna," which states: "Couldst thou but once discern/Thou has no right to bliss,/No title from the Gods to welfare and

⁶⁰ Raymond M. Weaver, Herman Melville: Mariner and Mystic (New York, 1960), p. 381.

⁶¹ Billy Budd, p. 319.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 347.

repose/. . . ."⁶⁴ Beneath the lines, Melville wrote, and later erased: "A Western critic here exclaims--'Where in thunder did the Gods create us for then? If not for bliss, for hate? If so, the devil take the Gods.'"⁶⁵ The fact that he later erased this spontaneously rebellious comment suggests the spirit of Billy when it encounters Claggart was not one that Melville with his strong Calvinist background could sustain.

Claggart thus stands for the element of evil, irrational intellectuality in divine punishment which previously had appeared as a monstrous, terrifying non-human image of a white whale to the creative mind of Melville.

Like Moby Dick's, Claggart's pallid "brow was of the sort phrenologically associated with more than average intellect; and as with Moby Dick, Claggart can be read both as Nature (as "'depravity according to nature'"⁶⁶ which "like the scorpion for which the Creator alone is responsible, [acts] out to the end the part allotted it"⁶⁷) and as God (the ungodly God of Infernal Transcendentalism which is also the wrathful, jealous, irrational God of Puritanism).

In his experiences at sea and in his mother's strong Calvinistic beliefs, Melville discovered that divine reward and punishment often mysteriously coalesce with the seemingly indifferent forces of nature.

⁶⁴Leyda, II, 718.

⁶⁵Leyda, II, 718.

⁶⁶Billy Budd, p. 322.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 324.

In Seraphita (1839), Melville scored, checked, and underscored:

How came it that Evil, king of the earth, was born of
a God supremely good in His essence and in His facul-
ties, who can produce nothing that is not made in His
image?⁶⁸

Melville symbolizes in Claggart an ironic reading of this question, or rather the idea revealed in Ranulf's study, that God does create evil and therefore an aspect of His nature is evil. Thus the tempting to evil and the punishment of innocence and happiness which is delegated to the serpent in the Old Testament and Miltonic versions is included in the character of God himself in the Puritan doctrine and in Billy Budd, and Claggart, on one level of Melville's multi-level symbolism, represents an aspect of the Puritan God and Puritan society which punishes the artist.

Captain Vere symbolizes that aspect of the Puritan God which is the military disciplinarian, "all brain like a watch," the symbol of "abstract legality." He embodies naval authority and, on a higher level, the Old Testament Jehovah, insisting on the Law. Billy Budd is punished by naval law which, as Captain Vere tells the officers at the trial, overrides the "heart" and private conscience."⁶⁹

As the Old Testament God who has lost his dialogue with man, not only is Vere concerned with detachment from emotionalism; he also maintains a certain aloofness from his fellow naval officers by making

⁶⁸Leyda, II, 830.

⁶⁹Billy Budd, p. 355.

pedantic allusions of which the officers obviously had no knowledge.⁷⁰

"The reason no one questions Vere's arguments at Billy's trial is that no one understands them":⁷⁰

Loyal leiges, plain and practical . . . they were without the faculty, hardly had the inclination to gainsay one whom they felt to be an earnest man, one too not less their superior in mind than in naval rank.⁷¹

Of "a resolute nature"⁷² with "settled convictions,"⁷³ he preferred instead of dialogue with man to look at history (man's experience); however he was only interested in history as it reflected his own unchanging ideas, a God-like attitude for a symbol of the Old Testament Jehovah; and his unchanging ideas were similarly God-like: "the peace of the world and the true welfare of mankind."⁷⁴

However, Melville suggests that his main concern above human welfare was order or the Law:

. . . always acquitting himself as an officer mindful of the welfare of his men, but never tolerating an infraction of discipline; [Vere was] thoroughly versed in the science of his profession, and intrepid to the verge of temerity, though never injudiciously so.⁷⁵

Ranulf quotes from one of the Puritan pamphlets which suggests this

⁷⁰ Phil Within, "Billy Budd: Testament of Resistance," Modern Language Quarterly, XX (June, 1959), 120.

⁷¹ Billy Budd, p. 357.

⁷² Ibid., p. 307.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 309.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 306-307.

motive for divine punishment:

[God punishes] for the demonstration of his justice, to make it appeare, as David saith, that doublesse there is a God that judgeth the earth. For, should the Lord suffer the wicked to run on in their wickednesse, without any danger of cutting down, not only his justice but his very being too, would be called into question; men would be ready to say in their hearts with Davids foole, that there is no God.⁷⁶

The quotation implies not only order above man's welfare but order only as a means to His glory and because He fears loss of power.

Vere is ambitious, and the critic Paul Withim points out that "the captain's name . . . at first glance suggests veritas 'truth,' but on second glance can as easily suggest veritus 'fear.'"⁷⁷ God's fear of man's disbelief causing His loss of power and glory, which the Puritan pamphlet indicates, is realized in Billy Budd, for it is a musket ball from the Atheists that kills Vere. Richard Chase suggests that "in Claggart he [Vere] sees his own hostility toward Billy Budd."⁷⁸

The Romantic artist in America in the 1830's then faced and was often punished, even destroyed by the impersonal established order of middle-class society and of God's Law, and also by the personal jealousy, envy, and hatred of both.

Claggart and Captain Vere together represent the indomitable Calvinist God who is the Transcendent and yet jealous God of the Old

⁷⁶Ranulf, p. 74.

⁷⁷Withim, p. 125.

⁷⁸Chase, Herman Melville, p. 275.

Testament. (All of the Biblical references in Ranulf's study are from the Old Testament because, as Ranulf explains, "there was a peculiar affinity between Puritan psychology and the contents of the Old Testament."⁷⁹) Together Claggart and Vere symbolize the God whom neither Ahab nor Billy Budd could confront without being punished; together they also represent Puritan society with its order, its instinct for self-preservation at the expense of the non-conformist, and its jealousy and hatred of the unusual, which posed a threat to the rigid order and showed up its faults and inadequacies--the society which neither Pierre nor Billy Budd could confront without being punished. And the nature of this society and God is the source of the need of the individual who is influenced by such a society and God for self-reward and punishment, as explained by Freud and Bergler and symbolized in the wounding or destroying of Tom, Ahab, Pierre, and even Billy.

But if Captain Vere represents half of this concept of the Calvinist God, the Transcendent Jehovah, insisting on the Law and concerned for his own power and glory, he also resembles the New Testament eminent Father figure. When Billy is confronted with the two-sided God in the inner cabin, it is the loving aspect of God, "the father in him, manifested towards Billy,"⁸⁰ "doubtless touching Billy's heart to the quick,"⁸¹ that prompts him to strike out at the evil image of Him.

⁷⁹Ranulf, p. 58.

⁸⁰Billy Budd, p. 344.

⁸¹Ibid.

Ranulf discovers this flat-contradiction in the Puritan concept of God: "God's mercy and love to mankind are mentioned in fourteen (of those same twenty-five) publications."⁸²

Vere, as a multi-level symbol, also has special meaning in relation to Billy Budd as the Romantic artist. Billy as the Romantic who has broken with the established order in order to find the new vision is reconciled with the vision and with the Divine Essence, the spiritual father figure for which Stephen Daedalus searches in Ulysses and for which other Romantics have searched.

Thus, the final meeting of Billy Budd and Captain Vere is symbolic of a mystical vision--the meeting of the individual poetic imagination with the Divine in whose essence the Romantic artist felt he shared.⁸³ Melville describes the two as "each radically sharing in the rare qualities of our nature."⁸⁴ After the meeting, Billy Budd is "the young sailor spiritualized"⁸⁵ from whom Vere has "concealed nothing."⁸⁶

Because it is a mystical vision, the contents of the meeting cannot be recreated for "the gadding world."⁸⁷ The words "sacrament" and "holy"

⁸²Ranulf, p. 73.

⁸³Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, ed. J. Shawcross (London, 1907), I:195-202, II:5-12.

⁸⁴Billy Budd, p. 359.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 367.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 359.

⁸⁷Ibid.

are used to refer to it,⁸⁸ and Billy's state afterwards is one of serenity and peace and full understanding of his own mortality and the judgment of the world on him.⁸⁹

The effect of the meeting resembles the new Jerusalem of Blake and "the One Life within us and abroad" of Coleridge.⁹⁰

In Seraphita (1839) Melville scored, checked and underscored a passage which ended: "Your destiny is a secret between yourself and God."⁹¹ To the Romantic this relationship with the Divine and to Truth is intuitive and mystical--an escape from divine reward and punishment by the orthodox God which Melville describes to Hawthorne as "the All feeling."

Newton Arvin calls the final secret meeting "the most complete reconciliation."⁹² E. L. Grant Watson feels that at the hanging "the souls of Captain Vere and Billy are . . . strangely one."⁹³ And Melville says, ". . . The tension of the agony was over now. It survived not the something healing in the closeted interview with Captain Vere."⁹⁴

⁸⁸ Billy Budd, p. 359.

⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 362-363.

⁹⁰ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "The Eolian Harp," Poems of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge (London, 1912), pp. 101-102.

⁹¹ Leyda, II, 830.

⁹² Arvin, p. 299.

⁹³ Watson, p. 326.

⁹⁴ Billy Budd, p. 363.

The mystical vision also caused Billy Budd's lack of a spasm at the end.

And finally, the story ends with a poem, Yeats' "artifice of eternity"⁹⁵ and the Romantic poet's form of immortality which is Billy's form of immortality along with the story itself. All other reports of the event are inaccurate, a journalistic distortion of history in which Billy, like the Romantic artist, is accused, his life distorted, misjudged, forgotten.

The fact that the poem was written by "another foretopman, one of his own watch"⁹⁶ suggests the closeness of identity of the poetic nature with Billy's, emphasized by the fact that the poem is written in the first person.

The language of the poem, in which the speaker is Billy, combines the natural and the poetic, as Billy's character does:

There are humble picturings--'down on his marrowbones,'
'nibble-bit o' biscuit,' and 'a blur's in my eyes,' and
there are others with the poet's own trademark on them--
'the moon-shine astray,' 'a jewel-bloock they'll make of
me,' 'pendent pearl from the yard-arm-end,' 'his cheek
. . . like the budding pink.'⁹⁷

Thus, as a result of the mystical vision through which he escapes divine reward and punishment, as the artist must be able to do; he

⁹⁵William Butler Yeats, "Sailing to Byzantium," The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats (New York, 1939), p. 291.

⁹⁶Billy Budd, p. 375.

⁹⁷Macha Louis Rosenthal and A. J. M. Smith, Exploring Poetry (New York, 1955), p. 375.

achieves his own form of immortality; and he communicates his vision at the end, justifying himself symbolically for breaking with the order through the indirect creation of a poem.

Both the poem and *Billy Budd*'s final line, which bursts forth "in the clear melody of a singing-bird on the point of launching from the twig," reminds one of Yeats' "Lapis Lazuli," in which the artist's image emerges out of the state of war which is also the state of the world of *Billy Budd*.⁹⁸ The poem or the song is the purpose for which the artist must be able to transcend or escape the three-leveled limits of reward and punishment; it is the result of his ability to go beyond the limits of his society and its orthodox God.

However, Melville is symbolizing also in *Billy Budd* his final "fatalistic view of the world"⁹⁹ in which the artist must also eventually confront society, God, and himself, even though all three judge and punish him. The artist must deal with his world as Stephen Daedalus learns--the artist may not remain the transcendentalist dealing in pure revelation, pure mystical visions; he must involve himself in phenomena, just as Stephen must eventually meet Leopold Bloom.

But not only is it the Romantic artist's need to confront his world that Melville is symbolizing; it is man's existential need to be rewarded and punished which causes Tom to return to Home and Mother at the end of *Typee*.

⁹⁸Yeats, "Lapis Lazuli," *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats*, p. 191.

⁹⁹Rosenthal, p. 374.

Melville fatalistically accepts the fact that man cannot remain in the Eden of pure reward which is childhood as Melville knew it; neither can he exist in exile or isolation or permanent escape. In The Encantadas, written thirty-seven years before Billy Budd, Melville describes the unhappiness of those who permanently escape even unjust reward and punishment, even the orders of social and divine reward and punishment as Billy Budd sees them in the poem:

But aren't it all a sham.¹⁰⁰

In the Tenth Sketch of The Encantadas, Melville comments:

Hence the Enchanted Isles become the voluntary tarrying place of all sorts of refugees; some of whom too sadly experience that fact, that flight from tyranny does not of itself insure a safe asylum, for less a happy home.¹⁰¹

Billy Budd both submits to divine reward and punishment, represented in the actions of Claggart and Vere, and escapes it through the mystical vision with Vere. He also faces social reward and punishment administered by Claggart and Vere, and at the same time escapes it through the unjudging love of a friend—Captain Vere.

Like Melville's other protagonists, Billy is punished for striking out at evil and for insisting on truth, but this is the first of Melville's stories in which love and punishment are found in the same character. W. H. Auden says in his poem, "Herman Melville":

¹⁰⁰ Billy Budd, p. 376.

¹⁰¹ Herman Melville, The Encantadas in Selected Tales and Poems by Herman Melville, ed. Richard Chase (New York, 1949), p. 235.

Even the punishment was human
and a form of love. . . .¹⁰²

Vere is therefore also the human father figure, whose background is noble, like Billy's,¹⁰³ and who calls Billy's name twice before he dies.¹⁰⁴

Thus Melville embodies in the story of Billy Budd the idea of man's dual need for reward and punishment and for escape on all three levels--the personal, the social, and the divine. Whether Melville ever found Yillah, the Truth that Billy found, remains a question, for the Romantics also felt that the tension between what a man is and what he feels he should be is the basis for creativity. Therefore, in this aspect, Billy may be what Melville longed to be--his ideal, like Jack Chase, the sailor to whom the story is dedicated.

¹⁰²W. H. Auden, "Herman Melville," The Collected Poetry of W. H. Auden (New York, 1945), pp. 146-147.

¹⁰³Billy Budd, p. 309.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., p. 373.

CONCLUSION

Calvinism, positive Romanticism, and negative Romanticism collided in Herman Melville--the need to confront and be rewarded and punished, the need to escape, and the fear of both. Thus, what makes the works of this Romantic artist in Puritan society vital and fascinating is not the Romantic vision of unity which Ishmael captures for a moment on the masthead so much as it is these polar needs symbolized in each prose work, and the resulting inconsistencies and internal contradictions, the tension and ambivalence which stand at the core of Herman Melville and his prose and at the core of the Romantic movement, binding it to modern culture and philosophy.

As Romantic artist from Puritan society Tom finds freedom on Tyneg unbearable because he is never free of that Puritan order whose judgment he feels; and in the symbols of his narrative he unconsciously projects this order of rewards and punishments in his own culture into the nature of this most primitive Polynesian society.

White Jacket, as Romantic artist, feels acute spiritual claustrophobia within the social order of reward and punishment aboard the Neversink, just as Ahab, symbol of the artist, finds the restrictions of a judging divine order intolerable; and Billy Budd discovers what earlier symbols have unconsciously revealed--that the moment of punishment frees the Puritan to be a Romantic and reach the vision.

I would like to suggest as a footnote that this discovery is the main psychological motivation for the participation of the white liberal

in today's political and social demonstrations, in which the guilt-ridden self seeks freedom through confrontation with the order and punishment.

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