

Hawthorne and Faulkner

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In the works of Nathaniel Hawthorne and William Faulkner, the distinctive characteristics of New England and the South are fully explored. Although Massachusetts is quite distant from Mississippi physically and mentally, and Hawthorne and Faulkner lived almost a century apart, nevertheless, in the light of their literary achievements, they appear to have a common ground. Despite their seemingly different fictional worlds, Hawthorne and Faulkner have a common basis in their regionalism and in their literary and religious sensibilities.

Of course, there is no direct influence of Hawthorne upon Faulkner, the influence of the kind which we tend to see in the relationship between Hawthorne and Melville. It is true that Faulkner wrote a verse, *The Marble Faun*, which bears the same title as Hawthorne's romance of Monte Beni. Also, according to Blotner's book, Faulkner had a copy of *The Blithedale Romance* and Cowley's *The Portable Hawthorne* in his private library.¹ This fact may suggest that Faulkner read them and grasped from them certain ideas or materials for his writing. Yet, it does not seem so fruitful to try to explore the direct influence of Hawthorne upon Faulkner, for Faulkner seldom referred to Hawthorne in the interviews he had given many times or the class conference at the University of Virginia, except when he was asked to comment on the New Englander.²

It might be a general assumption that, even if a writer is tempted to use other writers' ideas or dramatic situations when they are suitable for his own fiction, he attempts to avoid the overt borrowing of them which risks the accusation of plagiarism. Indeed, every writer, especially in his early literary career, has a tendency to imitate great authors' works in various ways: When asked at the University of Virginia whether he attempted to parallel *As I Lay Dying* and *The Scarlet Letter*, Faulkner denied any such intention by saying, "No, a writer don't have to consciously parallel because he robs and steals from everything he ever wrote or read

A good example in Faulkner's works is Gail Hightower in *Light in August*, who desires to retain the image he has made of his grandfather who served in the Civil War. Similarly, we may recall the attempt of Harry Wilbourne and Charlotte Rittenmeyer in *The Wild Palms* to separate themselves from the world in order to maintain their love's purity; or the convict in the same novel who seeks safety and peace in the penitentiary which symbolizes insulation. We can add to this group, Quentin in *The Sound and the Fury* and Bayard Sartoris in *Sartoris*. Quentin secludes himself in the illusion of having committed incest with his sister, because he cannot accept the degradation of his family or the reality of man's fallibility which is embodied in Caddy's fall and indifference to the Compson honor. Bayard is also unable to adapt himself to the world surrounding him partly because of his obsessive sense of guilt for the death of his brother and partly because of his desperation about the lack of things with which to assert his identity.

The lives of the characters I have treated so far mirror in one way or another man's tendency toward aberration through his disharmony with the world, whether by choice or not. Both authors' inclination toward Calvinism shaped their imaginations when they created such characters. Cowley notes in *The Portable Hawthorne*: "Hawthorne believed in original sin, which consisted, so he thought, in the self-centeredness of each individual. He believed in predestination, as Calvinists did."¹³ This observation is well in keeping with what Melville says in "Hawthorne and His Mosses." He comments: "Certain it is . . . that this great power of blackness in him derives its force from its appeals to that Calvinistic sense of Innate Depravity and Original Sin, from whose visitations, in some shape or other, no deeply thinking mind is always and wholly free."¹⁴ Both of these observations are applicable to Faulkner's writings. Hawthorne and Faulkner seem deeply concerned with, in Blackmur's phrase, "a kind of black and blackened Christianity."¹⁵ Both share the idea of man's corruptibility and, further, the knowledge of "that dismal certainty of the existence of evil in the world"(IV, 328), as Hawthorne manifests this view in *The Marble Faun*.

That "black and blackened Christianity" can be detected, for example, in such characters as the Reverend Mr. Hooper in "The Minister's Black Veil" who puts on a black veil against his fiance Elizabeth's earnest request, the veil which, in accord with its color, is a sign of the "sin or sorrow, which enveloped the poor minister"(IX, 48); or Ethan

Brand who leaves his home in search of the unpardonable sin, only to find it in his own heart. We can recall one more in this line, Richard Digby in "The Man of Adamant" who turns to stone as a result of his scorning the rest of mankind, including Mary Goffe. We can compare Hawthorne's Mr. Hooper, Ethan Brand, and Digby with Faulkner's Doc Hines, McEachern, or even Joanna Burden, a descendant of New England Puritans, in *Light in August*. It could be said that their fanatical religious obsessions cause their deviation from otherwise normal expressions of feelings and attitudes toward life.

What shapes this kind of characterization is, as Melville and Cowley point out, the Calvinistic view of human nature. In addition, the Calvinistic sense of predestination, in conjunction with the sense of historical continuity, composes "the great power of blackness" in the writings of Hawthorne and Faulkner. Indeed, these attitudes lead them to create the darkness hanging over the Pyncheon family in *The House of the Seven Gables* and the Sutpen family in *Absalom, Absalom!*. The combination of the sense of predestination and the sense of the presentness of the past is one of the most conspicuous points that characterize both authors' literature.

It is true that there are other authors, such as Melville and Robert Penn Warren, who attempted to substantiate such a sense of historical continuity in their works, *Pierre* and *All the King's Men*. Yet, what differentiates Hawthorne and Faulkner is that they felt it was necessary to see the present in terms of the past. For both New England and the Deep South developed peculiar cultures according to their social and economic needs; in addition, these cultures with their rich history, values, and manners are reflected, explicitly or implicitly, in the works of Hawthorne and Faulkner. In other words, the rich historical heritage, including their own family backgrounds, played an important role in both writers' quest for self-identity.

However, both writers were ambivalent about their heritage due to its moral defects such as the Witch Trials in Hawthorne's Salem and the institution of slavery in Faulkner's land. These wrongs, conducted in moral self-delusion, naturally evoked in the writers a sense of shame and guilt. But attention must also be paid to another side of the heritage, the historical richness of their lands along with their rich family backgrounds. As Frederick Crews writes, Hawthorne's "commemoration of William and John Hathorne deserves to be seen in the light of such other pieties

as his restoration of the English spelling of that family name and his attraction to the family myths of noble English ancestry and rich landholdings in Maine." This kind of feeling Hawthorne had toward his ancestors is shared by Faulkner, who, for the composition of such works as *Sartoris* and *The Unvanquished*, drew upon "the store of family legend which had grown up about the figure of Colonel W. C. Faulkner," his great-grandfather whose active and often violent life attracted him so much.

Thus, both writers' attitudes toward their heritage become ambivalent, wavering between admiration and repugnance. Although they hate the bad qualities of their heritage, they cannot disregard the heritage because of their strong sense of identity. This ambivalence necessitated their attempts to explore and re-define the past in their own terms. The past, in turn, serves as a mirror for the contemporary situations of their societies. Both cannot help seeing the way the wrongdoings of one generation live on into succeeding generations, or, in other words, the way the present is overshadowed by the past. This is dramatized most notably in *The House of the Seven Gables* and *Absalom, Absalom!*.

Hepzibah and Clifford are described in the novel as descendants of the Pyncheon family, oppressed with the curse from the past, namely, from "the gloomy wrongs"¹⁸ of Colonel Pyncheon who, envious of the fine location of the house of Matthew Maule, helped convict him of witchcraft and caused him to be hanged. With the decline of the Compson family in mind, Quentin in *Absalom, Absalom!* accepts Miss Rosa's interpretation of the Sutpen tragedy in terms of the Calvinistic sense of predestination, an interpretation seeking the cause of the fall of the South as well as that of the Sutpen family in the wrongdoings of Thomas Sutpen, whose career she sees as epitomizing the history of Southern society. As Randall Stewart observes, we never fail to see in these works the writers' view that "the past is not dead, it is not even past, it is a continuous living force."¹⁹

Here, what we should keep in mind is that both writers' attempts to reconstruct the past are not bound by the necessity of making a rigidly mimetic presentation of the past, based on historical facts. As O'Connor says, "both writers are concerned with legendary and imaginative as much as with realistic materials."²⁰ To Hawthorne and Faulkner, facts are of no use unless they are presented in relation to man. Their aims are not to describe the history of their lands but to sublimate it into fiction, a sublimation which dramatizes the real and fabulous past. It is in this

sense that both are called the creators of regional myths. If both writers' myths function as a means to throw light upon the shadowy realm of the past, then the reader's imagination is necessarily demanded because the past to be recreated, as has been suggested so far, does not always have to agree with accurate historical facts. Both authors' respect for "the rights of the imagination"²¹ can be sensed in their respective treatment of the legends related to Colonel Pyncheon and Matthew Maule and Thomas Sutpen. We should not overlook, however, the fact that both are never inclined to sacrifice the weight of actuality although they are well aware of the function of the imagination which serves to illuminate the nature and meaning of ambiguous modes of life lying behind easily recognizable actualities.

In "The Custom-House," a kind of introductory explanation of the way *The Scarlet Letter* was produced, Hawthorne expressed the notion of "a neutral territory, somewhere between the real world and fairy-land, where the Actual and the Imaginary may meet"(I, 36). Like Hawthorne, Faulkner seems to be concerned with the aesthetic tension between the actual and the imaginary, a tension which, while keeping the reader in suspense, might make him privy to the nature and meaning of human experiences. In *The Marble Faun*, the relation between Miriam and the shadowy figure haunting her is liable to be placed in that sort of neutral territory. Even with the verisimilitude of such a character as Donatello resembling the Faun of Praxiteles, Hawthorne tries to be vague by saying, "He [the Author] had hoped to mystify this anomalous creature between the real and the fantastic, in such a manner that the reader's sympathies might be excited to a certain pleasurable degree"(IV, 463). In *The Hamlet*, Ike Snopes' poetic love affair comes out of Faulkner's concern to grasp and dramatize the extremes of man's experiences which could reveal their true nature only in this neutral territory.

It is true that this kind of tension, namely, that between the past and the present or the actual and imaginary, is an imaginative tension rather than a definite, clear-cut one. Still, that sort of tension works as a dynamic principle for both authors. In this connection, then, we may point to a large antithetical framework which helps to express the polar modes of human experiences. That framework consists of various aspects of the world such as light and dark, good and evil, innocence and experience, and life and death: For example, the fatality and curse of the Sartoris clan is, broadly speaking, contrasted with Miss Jenny's

wisdom, with the noisy world of the male characters against the serene world of the female characters. The pastoralism of Lena's world is placed against Hightower's frozen way of life and also against the tragic situation of Joe Christmas. Benjy's innocence and Dilsey's simple but enduring faith in life stand in sharp contrast with the complex variety of the Compsons' emotions and experiences. Sutpen's innocence and inhumanity are projected through Quentin's sensitiveness to and mental involvement in reconstructing the Sutpen story as an epitome of Southern history. So much for the antithetical framework featuring Faulkner's writing because we could detect it similarly in almost all of his novels.²²

The Scarlet Letter is shaped to contrast Hester's passion with Chillingworth's cold rationality and detachment, and Dimmesdale's yearning for redemption with Chillingworth's frozen heart which results in damnation. Also, Pearl's simple yet wild innocence serves to emphasize her parent's guilt. In the same way, Miriam's guilt stand in contrast to Hilda's moral self-righteousness, while Donatello's innocence and metamorphosis are placed in relief against the other characters' experience on the one hand, and Hilda's shrinking from the acceptance of evil on the other. The dark, decayed world of Hepzibah and Clifford is contrasted with the happy, romantic world of Phoebe and Holgrave. Coverdale's cynicism and tendency to watch the drama of the other characters contrasts with Hollingworth's determination to try to complete his design even at the sacrifice of the others, and also with Zenobia's passion. In addition, Zenobia's pride and passion are depicted against Priscilla's modesty and feebleness.

These antithetical presentations of complex human experiences reveal in various ways the correspondence between both writers' observations. "Like Judge Pyncheon," says Theodore Colson, "Sutpen has 'a scale and balance system' of morality."²³ A common quality of the Judge and Sutpen is their ledger mentality, one which seeks to measure their relation with people solely in terms of material gain and loss. Hollingworth is similar to Sutpen in that, as Colson also sees it, he is "inflexible in pursuit of his design."²⁴ Coverdale's tendency to hold the position of a cynical outsider in the current of human affairs is analogous to that of Mr. Compson in *Absalom, Absalom!*. Interesting is that both characters express the same idea about destiny, the expression which we may take as a reflection of both authors' own belief. Coverdale observes that "Destiny, it may be,—the most skillful of stage-managers,—seldom

chooses to arrange its scenes, and carry forward its drama, without securing the presence of at least one calm observer"(III, 97). As this type of calm observer, Mr. Compson makes a cynical comment on the collapse of Sutpen's design: "He was unaware . . . that while he was still playing the scene to the audience, behind him, Fate, destiny, retribution, irony—the stage manager, call him what you will—was already striking the set and dragging on the synthetic and spurious shadows and shapes of the next one."²⁵

Indeed, both Hawthorne and Faulkner are concerned with the inexorable force of fate, often combined with the curse from the past, a concern which takes a dramatic form in *The House of the Seven Gables* and *Absalom, Absalom!*. Less dramatic is their respective rendering in *Sartoris* and *The Marble Faun*. Miriam says, "There was such a fatality," adding, "Yes, the shadow fell upon me, innocent, but I went astray in it, and wandered—as Hilda could tell you—into crime"(IV, 430). In *Sartoris* Faulkner describes: "It showed on John Sartoris' brow, the dark shadow of fatality and doom, that night when he sat beneath the candles in the dining-room and turned a wineglass in his fingers while he talked to his son."²⁶

Again, we may note many correspondences between Hawthorne's and Faulkner's characters. Hepzibah resembles Mrs. Compson in her feeble effort to emphasize her "gentility," an empty, pathetic effort in the face of the degeneration of the Pyncheon family. Hepzibah says, "I was born a lady, and have always lived one—no matter in what narrowness of means, always a lady!"(II, 45). Mrs. Compson likewise sticks to her own hollow notion of gentility, saying to Dilsey, "I'm a lady. You might not believe that from my offspring, but I am."²⁷

We can also see a similarity between Owen Warland in "The Artist of the Beautiful" and Quentin in *The Sound and the Fury*. Colson notes: "Warland wants to escape from time, and his occupation as watchmaker is ironic. He hates time almost as much as Quentin does in *The Sound and the Fury*. Quentin breaks the hands from his watch: Warland has spoiled the accuracy of some of the best watches in Peter Hovenden's shop."²⁸ Both characters' desire to escape from time is different in its direction: Owen tries to escape because of his yearning for something eternal, while Quentin does because he senses his inability to cope with change. Still, both are similar in that they prefer the eternal to the temporal: That is, a mechanical butterfly is to Owen, what death-wish is to Quentin, for Quentin believes, as is shown in the "Appendix" Faulkner put to that

work, that death is the only alternative to enable him to secure an eternal place, the hell, where he can protect his narcissistic love of Caddy.²⁹

Also, Colson refers to the analogy of Donatello and Christmas by contending that both "realize their fallenness through a woman, and both despair."³⁰ Here, we can further Colson's observation: Both writers seem to have a notion peculiar to them about a quality of women, a quality which is inclined to threaten men's peace and safety. For example, Hawthorne in *The Marble Faun* makes Miriam use the phrase, "woman's cause," in talking to Kenyon: "Have I shocked you many times during this interview by my betrayal of woman's cause, my lack of feminine modesty, my reckless, passionate, most indecorous avowal that I live only in the life of one who, perhaps, scorns and shudders at me?" (IV, 286). What "woman's cause" suggests is probably analogous to a quality in women, which Faulkner often refers to as "female principle." The female principle is typically presented in *The Wild Palms*. Harry considers himself and Rittenmeyer doomed to succumb to Charlotte's pursuit of a passionate, indefatigable faith in pure love: "It seemed to him that they both stood now, aligned, embattled and doomed and lost, before the entire female principle."³¹ It is a principle, as Mr. Compson manifests his idea about it, "which existed, queenly and complete, in the hot groin of the world . . .—a principle apt docile and instinct with strange and ancient pleasures of the flesh."³²

It might be safe to say that Hester and Zenobia partake of the quality Hawthorne's "woman's cause" implies, just like Lena Grove, Eula Varner, and a nameless, pregnant woman in the "Old Man" section of *The Wild Palms*, though Faulkner's women are much closer to the physically archetypal function of woman.

Incest too is both writers' common concern. As O'Connor notes, "It is clear that in all three novels, 'The Marble Faun,' 'The Sound and the Fury,' and 'Absalom, Absalom!' incest is used as a symbol of inward-turning. And Hawthorne and Faulkner have related it to evils that have their origins in a diseased sort of self-centredness."³³ In *The Marble Faun* incest is not described as a fact but only hinted: "The character of her [Miriam's] destined husband would have been a sufficient and insuperable objection; for it betrayed traits so evil, so treacherous, so vile, and yet so strangely subtle, as could only be accounted for by the insanity which often develops itself in old, close-kept races of men,

when long unmixed with newer blood"(IV, 430-31). Thus, the relationship between Miriam and her "destined husband" is no doubt incestuous. So is the relationship of Leonard and Alice Doane and Walter Brome in "Alice Doane's Appeal." The relation of these three figures resembles that of Henry and Judith Sutpen and their half-brother, Charles Bon, in *Absalom, Absalom!*. Except for *The Marble Faun*, the other three works, "Alice Doane's Appeal," *The Sound and the Fury*, and *Absalom, Absalom!*, commonly concern a brother's almost morbid tendency to see himself as a protector of his sister's physical purity, in conjunction with his latent incestuous inclination.

Moreover, we may point to the Garden of Eden myth as one of both writers' common concerns. Since both accept the idea of man's fallibility and weakness, the idea that man is a fallen creature in a fallen world, neither of them argues that it is possible for man to go back to Adam's existence in the Garden. Still, we can detect their employment of that myth in their works, although it functions in most cases as a parody or a parable of it. *The Blithedale Romance*, as the title ironically suggests, is an inversion of the Eden myth, a sort of parody in that the scheme of constructing Eden in Blithedale incurs an inevitable failure because of each participant's self-centeredness. When Coverdale says in retrospect, "How cold an Arcadia was this!"(III, 38), he seems to echo Hawthorne's belief that the attempt to improve the world is a mere illusion, unless accompanied by the change of human nature.

"Rappaccini's Daughter" is a parable of Eden in a way, for Giovanni and Beatrice could be Adam and Eve without Dr. Rappaccini and Professor Baglioni whose professional interests and desires turn the young couple into puppets. The Pyncheon garden, like Dr. Rappaccini's garden, is symbolic of Eden. Of course, allusions to it occur in connection with Phoebe at first, and later, with the young maid and Holgrave. Toward the end of the story, Hawthorne describes: "The bliss which makes all things true, beautiful, and holy shone around this youth and maiden. . . . They transfigured the earth, and made it Eden again, and themselves the two dwellers in it"(II, 307).

Faulkner does not use the Eden myth in such an explicit way as Hawthorne does. Yet, it seems clear that he had in mind the framework of the Eden myth when he wrote *The Sound and the Fury* and *The Wild Palms*. Evocative of it in the former is the scene in which Caddy climbs the pear tree, with Quentin looking up at the muddy bottom of her drawers. Here,

it could be that Caddy plays an archetypal role of a seducer in a figurative sense. In addition, Quentin most probably desires to see themselves as dwellers in Eden, a sole place which he hopes allows him to unite himself with her, physically as well as mentally. In his thoughts, the word 'Eden' appears twice, both in conjunction with Benjy's grievous voice at Caddy's wedding as in "the voice that breathed o'er Eden."³⁴

It might be possible to see both stories of *The Wild Palms*, specifically that of "Old Man," as a kind of parody of the Eden myth. Obsessed with "the inert and inescapable mass of female meat"³⁵ the pregnant woman embodies on the boat, the convict wants to escape from her and return to the world of order and peace, which he believed can be obtained in the penitentiary. An allusion to a snake which is made when the woman bears a baby surely derives from the author's intention to envelop the situation with the Eden myth.

The fact that both authors use that myth serves, in turn, to illuminate their concern for innocence because it is impossible for man to create Paradise anew in our world which is a complex mixture of good and evil. Since both are aware of man's liability to error and sin, they all the more sympathize with innocence in the face of the complexities of this world, just as Melville does in such works as *Typee*, *Redburn*, and *Billy Budd, the Sailor*.

Hawthorne comments on the tragic situation of Clifford Pyncheon in the textbook: "With a mysterious and terrible Past, which had annihilated his memory, and a blank Future before him, he had only this visionary and impalpable Now, which, if you once look closely at it, is nothing"(II, 149). This description indeed recalls the situation of Benjy in *The Sound and the Fury*. Faulkner says in an interview, "Benjy knows only that something is wrong, which leaves a vacuum in which he grieves."³⁶ As with Clifford, what Benjy has in his absolute innocence is that "visionary and impalpable Now which is nothing." Here, Vardaman in *As I Lay Dying* and Ike Snopes in *The Hamlet* come to our mind. Both, like Benjy, serve to throw into relief the avarice and self-centeredness of the other characters.

In connection with innocence, Hyatt Waggoner's comment deserves attention: "Loss of innocence, initiation into the complexities of experience in a world of ambiguously mingled good and evil, experiences of guilt so obscurely related to specific acts as to seem more 'original' and necessary than avoidable, these had been his [Hawthorne's] subjects

in story after story.³⁷ The theme of moral initiation or that of "a crisis of maturity,"³⁸ in the phrase of Crews, is the dominant one in *The Marble Faun*. Horrified by the weight of the crime of murder, Donatello, a dweller in an Arcadia, is forced to recognize the darkly tangled nature of human experiences, and later the omnipresence of evil. Thus, after experiencing that doubt, Donatello is initiated into "the complexities of experience in a world of ambiguously mingled good and evil."

Just as Donatello's mental growth is gained through his experience of guilt, so is the mental and moral growth of Isaac McCaslin forwarded in *Go Down, Moses*, though it is not through his own experience of guilt but through his hunting experience in the woods and then through the recognition of his stained heritage. Sutpen's innocence, however, has not finally allowed him to reach the self-knowledge, although his innocence is once brought to "a crisis of maturity" by the negro servant's neglect of his personality at the plantation house. Thus, his combined innocence and ambition results in moral blindness. In this sense, Sutpen's boyhood innocence and departure from the mountains of West Virginia could be seen as a parody of the myth of man's fall.

A close parallel, as Colson sees it, is found between Colonel Sartoris Snopes of "Barn Burning" and Robin of "My Kinsman, Major Molineux." Colson writes, "For both boys loss of home and family and knowledge of evil go hand in hand."³⁹ In short, both Sarty and Robin are forced to face the inexplicable existence of evil.

It might be a safe generalization that the loss of innocence is an inevitable experience when a man becomes a member of the human race and shares the knowledge of the unchangeable core of good and evil in human nature. Here, Matthiessen's comment demands our notice:

Tragedy does not pose the situation of a faultless individual (or class) overwhelmed by an evil world, for it is built on the experienced realization that man is radically imperfect. Confronting this fact, tragedy must likewise contain a recognition that man, pitiful as he may be in his finite weakness, is still capable of apprehending perfection, and of becoming transfigured by that vision. But not only must the author of tragedy have accepted the inevitable co-existence of good and evil in man's nature, he must also possess the power to envisage some reconciliation between such opposites, and the control to hold an inexorable balance.⁴⁰

This vision of tragedy and evil are, of course, shared by Hawthorne and Faulkner. Both seek in their works to burrow into the depths of the

heart in which, as the narrator of "Earth's Holocaust" says, there is "the little yet boundless sphere"(X, 403). In this sketch, a red-eyed stranger talks, "Unless they hit upon some method of purifying that foul cavern, forth from it will re-issue all the shapes of wrong and misery—the same old shapes or worse ones—which they have taken such a vast deal of trouble to consume to ashes"(X, 403). This statement, which we may take as a reflection of Hawthorne's own view, is in accord with what Faulkner wrote to Malcolm Cowley: "Life is a phenomenon but not a novelty, the same frantic steeplechase toward nothing everywhere and man stinks the same stink no matter where in time."⁴¹

Probably Faulkner agrees with Hawthorne's view which I think is expressed in Kenyon's remark echoing Miriam's idea of the fortunate fall: "Sin has educated Donatello, and elevated him. Is sin, . . . like sorrow, merely an element of human education, through which we struggle to a higher and purer state than we could otherwise have attained? Did Adam fall, that we might ultimately rise to a far loftier paradise than his?" (IV, 460).

Both writers are concerned with conveying various truths of the human heart, which is usually veiled by appearances. Both's interests in the extremes of human experiences surely come out of their honest attempts to shed light upon them. Yet, unlike Melville who seems to show in his books of tragedy a tendency to glorify irrationality in his unflinching pursuit of the riddle of the universe, both Hawthorne and Faulkner as moralists appear to retain their sense of balance in their treatment of radically opposite experiences, or they hold, in Matthiessen's phrase, "an inexorable balance."

It is true that Hawthorne in writing "The Birthmark" seems to have ambivalent feelings, a respect as well as a grief for Aylmer's desire to raise his beloved Georgiana to more than mortal perfection, for his having aimed so highly. And Faulkner, in a letter to Cowley, describes Sutpen as a man who "could not only have dreamed so high but have had the force and strength to have failed so grandly."⁴² Out of these attitudes of both writers emerges their symbolic quality. According to Cowley, the Symbolist precepts are: "Instead of being extolled or condemned for their social consequences, they [actions] should be observed and presented for their dramatic qualities. The most reprehensible actions, in social terms, might be precisely those which enhanced a work of art by virtue of their passion and singlemindedness, or 'purity'."⁴³ In this sense, both

come closer to Melville: That is, both, like Melville, sometimes seem to judge actions from the standpoint of their artistic value. Still, the organic whole of both's literary worlds show their moral balance, which can be sensed in their employments of such antithetical phases as those I have pointed out above.

In order to put these phases into dramatic situations, they sometimes draw upon the convention of the Gothic romance, which is reflected in *The House of the Seven Gables* and *Absalom, Absalom!*. The passage from the moment of Judge Jaffrey's death at the Pyncheon house to the moment of the return of Hephzibah and Clifford to it is as effectively rendered in the Gothic mood as Quentin's encounter with the aged, almost lifeless Henry Sutpen at the Sutpen mansion. It should be remembered, however, that the Gothic mood is a means to create a dramatic situation and enrich the book.

In conjunction with the Gothic mood as a means to enrich the book, we may recall both writers' awareness of the function of symbolism. Both use easily recognized symbolic names: Chillingworth, Pearl, Phoebe, Coverdale, Faith, Aminadab, and so on from Hawthorne's works; Narcissa, Christmas, Hightower, Dewey Dell, Jewel, Cash, and so forth from Faulkner's.

The choice of these names suggests that the authors are inclined to emphasize one peculiar quality of a man and create stories, using a hint from a mental picture or an idea. For example, Faulkner says in an interview with Jean Stein, "With me, a story usually begins with a single idea or memory or mental picture."⁴⁴ Similarly, to the question about the origin of *Light in August*, the author answers: "That story began with Lena Grove, the idea of the young girl with nothing, pregnant, determined to find her sweetheart."⁴⁵ Also, with regard to *The Sound and the Fury*, he says, "It began with a mental picture. . . . The picture was of the muddy seat of a little girl's drawers in a pear tree."⁴⁶

In *The American Notebooks*, Hawthorne wrote down many ideas which I think led to the shaping of some of his stories. He writes: "A man who does penance in what might appear to lookers-on the most glorious and triumphal circumstance of his life. Each circumstance of the career of an apparently successful man to be a penance and torture to him on account of some fundamental error in early life"(VIII, 180). This is an idea which could have served to create Arthur Dimmesdale. Hawthorne also notes an idea which seems central for his writing of "Egotism; or, the Bosom-Serpent." That note reads: "A snake taken into a man's

stomach and nourished there from fifteen years to thirty-five, tormenting him most horribly. A type of envy or some other evil passion"(VIII, 22) Or, an idea found in the *Notebooks*, "A physician for the cure of moral diseases"(VIII, 235), helps in part to shape the figure of Aylmer in "The Birthmark." These examples might confirm Henry James' observation that "Hawthorne is perpetually looking for images which shall place themselves in picturesque correspondence with the spiritual facts with which he is concerned."⁴⁷

This tendency of both writers to develop the stories with an idea or mental picture in mind is no doubt an important part of their creative attitudes in trying to illuminate the universal modes of man's being. Since both understand that such illumination needs more than mere accumulative descriptions of actualities, they attempt to sublimate, in Faulkner's phrase, "the actual into [the] apocryphal."⁴⁸ That is, they seek to look beyond empirical actualities. In this sense, indeed, what Hawthorne tries to grasp by the form of romance or 'psychological romance' is in essence no different from what Faulkner as a modern writer means to catch.

At the same time, however, they are well aware in catching human experiences by word that there is, as Walter Brylowski observes, "that part of expression and meaning which has always eluded words in a theoretical-empirical manner."⁴⁹ This idea of the failure of language is seen in Quentin's introduction of his grandfather's idea about it, an idea of "the language (that meager and fragile thread . . . by which the little surface corners and edges of man's secret and solitary lives may be joined for an instant now and then before sinking back into the darkness."⁵⁰ Miss Rosa expresses a similar idea, though in a slightly different way: "There are some things for which three words are three too many, and three thousand words that many words too less."⁵¹

Similarly, we come across the idea of the failure of language in *The Marble Faun*. Kenyon says, "Words have been feebly substituted in the place of signs and symbols"(IV, 78) or "It is a great mistake to try to put our best thoughts into human language"(IV, 258). Although these are not the omniscient author's words but one character's, we may take them as Hawthorne's own, just as with the above quotation from *Absalom, Absalom!*. For both's awareness of the ultimate weakness of language is reflected to some extent in their introducing a 'sleep-waking quality' not only into *The Marble Faun* and *Absalom, Absalom!* but into several of their works like *The Blithedale Romance*, "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," "Young Goodman

Brown," *The Sound and the Fury, Light in August, The Hamlet*, or "The Burn Barning."

This sleep-waking quality is a product of the writers' dilemma in writing. It is their destiny to use words as a tool for handling human experiences in a literary form, with the uncomfortable knowledge that there are things beyond words. Still, it is in language that events or acts can become permanent and fully meaningful and even universal as a part of a racial memory.⁵² Perhaps the so-called ambiguity device in Hawthorne's writing has a great deal to do with that dilemma. So is it with Faulkner's writing because Faulkner, like Hawthorne, seeks for a sure insight into the dark enigma of the human world which contains things "terrible, uncontrollable, and therefore demoralizing in human nature."⁵³ And both Hawthorne and Faulkner try to turn ambiguities into a creative asset, representing them in dramatic moments or situations.

NOTES

¹ See Joseph L. Blotner, *William Faulkner's Library: A Catalogue* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 1964), p. 36.

² It is interesting to note that Faulkner defines Hawthorne as a writer of the European tradition. See James B. Meriwether and Michael Millgate, eds., *Lion in the Garden: Interviews with William Faulkner, 1926-1962* (New York: Random House, 1968), pp. 95, 101, 168.

³ Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner, eds., *Faulkner in the University: Class Conferences at the University of Virginia, 1957-58* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1959), p. 115.

⁴ George M. O'Donnell, "Faulkner's Mythology," in *William Faulkner: Three Decades of Criticism*, ed. Frederick J. Hoffman and Olga W. Vickery (Michigan State University Press, 1960), p. 88.

⁵ Malcolm Cowley, *The Faulkner-Cowley File: Letters and Memories, 1944-1962* (New York: The Viking Press, 1966), pp. 99-100.

⁶ Richard Chase, *The American Novel and Its Tradition* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1957), p. 220.

⁷ In this connection, Henry James' remark on Hawthorne deserves attention. James says in his book, *Hawthorne*, "He [Hawthorne] was poor, he was solitary, and he undertook to devote himself to literature in a community in which the interest in literature was as yet of the smallest" (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1879), p. 24. This observation can also be applied to Faulkner.

⁸ All citations to Hawthorne's writings refer to *The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, except for the unpublished volumes, ed., William Charvat, Roy H. Pearce, C.M. Simpson (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1962). Citations to volume and page of this edition are given in parentheses.

⁹ Hubert H. Hoeltje, *Inward Sky: The Mind and Heart of Nathaniel Hawthorne* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1962), pp. 45-46.

¹⁰ *The Faulkner-Cowley File*, p. 78.

¹¹ Robert A. Jelliffe, ed., *Faulkner at Nagano* (Tokyo: Kenkyusha Ltd., 1956), p. 95.

¹² Such a faith can be sensed, for example, in his Nobel Prize Speech.

¹³ Malcolm Cowley, ed., *The Portable Hawthorne* (New York: The Viking Press, 1948), p. 13.

¹⁴ Herman Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses," in *Shock of Recognition*, ed. Edmund Wilson (London: W.H. Allen, 1956), p. 192.

¹⁵ R.P. Blackmur, "Afterward" to *Nathaniel Hawthorne: The Celestial Railroad and Other Stories* (New York: A Signet Classic, 1963), p. 293.

¹⁶ Frederick Crews, *The Sins of the Fathers: Hawthorne's Psychological Themes* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 37-38.

¹⁷ Michael Millgate, *The Achievement of William Faulkner* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), p. 78.

¹⁸ William Van O'Connor, "Hawthorne and Faulkner: Some Common Ground," *Virginia Quarterly Review*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (Winter 1957), 105. Interesting is that Hawthorne in his "Preface" to *The House of the Seven Gables* expresses a similar idea: "The Author has provided himself with a moral;—the truth, namely, that the wrong-doing of one generation lives into the successive ones, and, divesting itself of every temporary advantage, becomes a pure and uncontrollable mischief"(II, 2).

¹⁹ Randall Stewart, "Hawthorne and Faulkner," *College English*, 17 (February 1956), 260.

²⁰ O'Connor, 122-23.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 123.

²² Kenneth E. Richardson in his *Force and Faith in the Novels of William Faulkner* explores at length the antithetical framework in Faulkner's literary world (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1967).

²³ Theodore Lewis Colson, *The Characters of Hawthorne and Faulkner: A Typology of Sinners*, Diss. Ann Arbor 1967 (Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan, 1969), p. 89.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

²⁵ William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!*, introd. Harvey Breit (New York: The Modern Library, 1951), pp. 72-73.

²⁶ William Faulkner, *Sartoris* (New York: Random House, 1929), p. 23.

²⁷ William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury* (New York: The Modern Library, 1929), p. 315. This edition includes *As I Lay Dying*.

²⁸ Colson, p. 113.

²⁹ In the "Appendix" prefixed to the Modern Library edition of *The Sound and the Fury*, Faulkner puts it: Quentin "loved not the idea of the incest which he would not commit, but some presbyterian concept of its eternal punishment: he, not God, could by that means cast himself and his sister both into hell, where he could guard her forever and keep her forevermore intact amid the eternal fires. But who loved death above all, who loved only death, loved and lived in a deliberate and almost perverted anticipation of death"(p. 9).

- 30 Colson, p. 107.
- 31 William Faulkner, *The Wild Palms* (New York: Random House, 1939), p. 57.
- 32 *Absalom, Absalom!*, p. 116.
- 33 O'Connor, 120.
- 34 *The Sound and the Fury*, pp. 100, 125.
- 35 *The Wild Palms*, p. 170.
- 36 *Lion in the Garden*, p. 246.
- 37 Hyatt Waggoner, *Hawthorne: A Critical Study*, Revised Ed. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 209.
- 38 Crews, p. 24.
- 39 Colson, p. 24.
- 40 F.O. Matthiessen, *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* (London: Oxford University Press, 1941), p. 180.
- 41 *The Faulkner-Cowley File*, p. 15.
- 42 *Ibid.*, p. 15
- 43 *Ibid.*, p. 154.
- 44 *Lion in the Garden*, p. 248.
- 45 *Faulkner in the University*, p. 74.
- 46 *Lion in the Garden*, p. 245.
- 47 James, *Hawthorne*, p. 94.
- 48 *Lion in the Garden*, p. 255.
- 49 Walter Brylowski, *Faulkner's Olympian Laugh: Myth in the Novels* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1968), p. 32.
- 50 *Absalom, Absalom!*, p. 251.
- 51 *Ibid.*, p. 166.
- 52 Olga W. Vickery expresses the similar idea in her *The Novels of William Faulkner: A Critical Interpretation*, rev. ed. (Louisiana State University Press, 1964), p. 280.
- 53 Crews, p. 8.

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