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THE ALLEGORICAL MODE IN AMERICAN FICTION

by

GEORGETTE W. COK

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INTRODUCTION

I can think of no more appropriate opening for this study of American fiction than the concluding statement of one of our major novels:

> And as the moon rose higher the inessential houses began to melt away until gradually I became aware of the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors' eyes - a fresh, green breast of the new world. Its vanished trees, . . . had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams; for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder. (Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby)

I believe Fitzgerald's conclusion is a clear and beautiful embodiment of the dilemma which confronted our major authors: how can one cope with a reality which, the more directly it is confronted, the more completely it disappoints the human "capacity for wonder"? An answer--one frees the ideal "transitory enchanted moment" from the burden of historical denial and gives it fresh validity in a world where breath can be held forever--the world of art.

American fiction, from its beginnings to the present, is, as many commentators have pointed out, a perennial holding of the breath, a repeated quest for paradise which frequently culminates in disillusion and confusion and not infrequently in despair. We can return to The Great Gatsby to clarify this point. Nick Carraway grasps the full significance of James Gatz's destruction. "As I sat there brooding on the

old, unknown world," Nick muses, "I thought of Gatsby's wonder when he first picked out the green light at the end of Daisy's dock. He had come a long way to this blue lawn, and his dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it. He did not know that it was already behind him, somewhere back in that vast obscurity beyond the city where the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night."[1] Nick can even transform the specific into the general and locate the quintessence of the American dilemma: "So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past" (p. 80). He, too, is powerless against this past-ward current, yet he looks upon this powerlessness as moral strength--his victory against the corrupt forces of Eastern materialism: "I see now that this has been a story of the West, after all--Tom and Gatsby, Daisy and Jordan and I, were all Westerners and perhaps we possessed some deficiency in common which made us subtly unadaptable to Eastern life" (p. 78). The "Westerners" are, of course, deficient in guile. They do not know how to use corruption as a commodity, how to prevent themselves from becoming victimized by the Eastern environment. As he concludes his narrative, Nick is planning to leave the distorted Eastern wasteland, to go back "home" to the green paradise of the Middle West, the Eden the Dutch sailors saw! Here we have an example of the kind of blindness, confusion, and disillusionment documented by the lives of most of Fitzgerald's heroes and by his own as well.

The blackest depths of despair at the failure of the American promise of Eden is probably reached by Samuel Clemens in The Mysterious Stranger when Satan tells Theodor, "There is no God, no universe, no human race, no earthly life, no heaven, no hell. It is all a dream. Nothing exists but you. And you are but . . . a vagrant thought, a useless thought, a homeless thought, wandering forlorn among the empty eternities."[2] So many American characters will prove to be "homeless thought[s], wandering forlorn" throughout a stepmother world.

Even those characters who attempt to atone for the failings of their society with the positive examples of their lives must ultimately confront the same disillusionment, the same confusion, the same despair. William Faulkner's Isaac McCaslin, after renouncing his birthright--the land wrongly seized and misused by his forbears--lives to a lonely and isolated old age, his moral heroism resulting in a complete denial of human love, his atonement becoming a new sin. Dreiser's Jennie Gerhardt, at the conclusion of a life of selfless devotion and freely proffered love, learns that her reward is loneliness and isolation. As she secretly watches the funeral procession of the weak, selfish man she gave her life to, Jennie envisions, stretching before her, "a vista of lonely years . . . days and days in endless reiteration, and then--?"[3] She is as homeless as Ike McCaslin.

I concur, thus, with those critics like Marius Bewley (The Eccentric Design) and Richard Chase (The American Novel and Its Tradition) that the body of American literature is

unique and that, specifically as far as fiction is concerned, there are striking, meaningful similarities of idea and form between the works of our writers from Charles Brockden Brown to William Faulkner. I also accept the idea (treated by Bewley, Chase and others) that American literature is not essentially realistic in form. Bewley's thesis is, specifically, that the American tradition provided abstractions rather than manners for artists to deal with. Each author had privately to cope with the rift between the abstract idea or ideal on the one hand and the reality of American experience, the lack of traditional social pattern, on the other. Our major authors are therefore metaphysically oriented, concerned with analysis, interpretation, the juggling of ambiguities, the battling with doubt and paradox. The world of experience is not accepted as final, unified, as sufficient of itself to please and entertain, as at peace with the ideals it embodies. Our writers are concerned to show that the world of nature and that of ideas are at variance, whereas the essentially realistic artist is concerned with illustrating their correspondences.

This study will not only be concerned with the themes, the myths of our major writers, since these have been given much critical attention, but with the genre, the mode I believe they relied upon most heavily in their attempts to deal with the rift between the world of nature and that of ideas, to say Yes to the enchanted moment and No to historical denial. This mode is allegory. They turned to it in the hope that its

palliative potential could help them, if only in the ideal world, momentarily stay the encroachment of reality and their despair at this encroachment. There are fortunately several recent authoritative works dealing with allegory in a complete and thorough manner. Edwin Honig's _Dark Conceit: The Making of Allegory_, Angus Fletcher's _Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode_ and Michael Murrin's _The Veil of Allegory_ contain clarifications of many allegorical techniques and have confirmed my opinion that American literature is heavily allegorical in form.

It has already been mentioned that the essentially realistic artist is concerned with illustrating correspondences between the world of nature and that of ideas. If an artist stresses the discontinuity between the natural world of experience and the more or less spiritual world of ideas and ideals, he can rely upon one of two possible approaches; he can, theoretically, present his vision apocalyptically in the form of dream or free fantasy with no attempt to reconcile the discontinuity between ideal and real. This is the mythic approach; it usually takes the form of sacred scripture, prophesy, apocalypse. Here there is no veil of interpretation, mediation, between the prophetic truth and the hearer. Words have, according to Murrin, "magical potency." The second approach available to the non-mimetic artist is the allegorical. Allegory presents a mediated vision; it is the mythic vision subjected to interpretation, reason, to an attempt to explain if not resolve the ambiguities arising from the discontinuity

between the real and the ideal.[4] Modern critical usage has often substituted the term "myth" for the Romantic "symbol." In any case, mythic art and allegory are types of the symbolic mode as opposed to the realistic mode mentioned above. Of course, neither myth nor allegory ever exists as a pure modality. Every allegory has its share of mythic vision; and no work of art is devoid of the author's attempts to subject ambiguity to rationalization or interpretation.

It should be obvious that I am accepting the allegorical mode without the accompanying perjorative cast placed upon it by the Romantics, especially Coleridge. This insistence that allegory is synonymous with weak creative achievement is noticeable in a work like Feidelson's _Symbolism and American Literature_. Feidelson maintains that when American writers were at their spontaneous best, they were symbolists. When imagination faltered, they backslid into the safe deliberateness of allegory with its fixed and systematic identifications. Now, as I hope to illustrate, only the most simple, naive form of allegory is based on fixed and systematic identifications and easily separable levels of components. Sophisticated allegory is a subtle, organic blend of structure and meaning which does not comfortably admit fragmentation of its components. One need only think of Dante's _Divine Comedy_ or the beautiful medieval poem _Pearl_ to justify this definition. Since successful allegory must deal with myth, since it is, as Murrin writes, the "inevitable conversion of myth into reason,"[5] it is an art form which must of necessity deal

with the most profound questions of human existence, for this is the raw material of myth.

The notion of allegory as a palliative for the tensions of uncertainty is discussed thoroughly by Fletcher: "Anxiety is not a necessary ingredient of allegory, but it is the most fertile ground from which allegorical abstractions appear, like the Wood of Dunsinane, before the hero."[6] That allegorical heroes suffer extreme anxiety can be ascertained by merely reflecting on the trials of Kafka's Joseph K., Hawthorne's Hester Prynne, Melville's Captain Ahab and Bunyan's Christian. Fletcher adds that writers of allegory are "authors whose anxieties are close to the surface of their works."[7] Bunyan's own story, _Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners_, is a chronicle of "the fantasies that arose during his own periods of spiritual despair and anxiety."[8] Kafka's _Letters to Felice_ reveal an intense preoccupation with his anxieties: his fear of and at the same time his search for punishment, his desire for isolation, buffeted by a slight but needling inclination for the amenities of a robust bourgeois existence--companionship, marriage, respectability.

In that allegory is the author's means of attempting intellectually and consciously to ease his discomfort in the face of conflicting, dualistic world views, it is a vehicle for dealing with seeming irreconcilables. Each of the writers I will discuss has written works marked by tension resulting from his battles with irreconcilables. Each relied on the

allegorical mode as a palliative means of transforming these tensions into art.

The problem of determining when allegory became a major American literary mode is not a difficult one. The backbone of the first significant body of writing which can be called American, the literary records of the Puritans, is formed by the allegorical mode. No one can discuss the intellectual life of the Puritans without noting that allegory is the basis of their entire system of thought, of perception. We need think only of _Paradise Lost_ or _Pilgrim's Progress_ or, more relevant to this discussion, Bradford's _Of Plymouth Plantation_ to be convinced of this. It is only natural that our first major writers of fiction, Brown, Hawthorne, and Melville, intellectual heirs of the Puritans, would adapt the allegorical mode to their own literary needs.

In her carefully documented work, _American Thought and Religious Typology_, Ursula Brumm demonstrates how the Puritan forms of thought and belief influenced many major American writers. Dr. Brumm maintains, however, that American fiction is a predominantly symbolic or mythic art which grew out of the Puritan tendency to accept the universe typologically. She defines a type, in the biblical sense, as "a person, thing, action, or institution which in addition to its significance in its own historical context also prefigures a future person, thing, action, or institution (_antitypus_), the God who predetermines history having lent it this power."[9] Typology is based on historical reality. Symbolism, as defined by

Dr. Brumm, is typology freed from its historical bonds. "In the case of the symbol the interpretation begins with reality and aims at a certain meaning. . . . The symbol is a part of the world which has been singled out and ascribed a meaning."[10] Allegory, however, does not have a reality or a significance in its own historical context. "The decisive thing in the case of allegory is the meaning which the author has already abstracted from the world, which he then disguises in a second, artificial reality. Thus allegory is a preconceived idea which needs a fictitious reality in order to be revealed; it progresses from the idea to (artificial) reality."[11] Allegory is again restricted to its old niche of naivete. By insisting that typology be identified as a form of symbolism, not allegory, Dr. Brumm _must_ find it paradoxical that the Puritans were so preoccupied with interpreting their world symbolically, since, actually, they denied man's symbol-making power. God alone could create symbols; man's task was merely to interpret them.

I find that typology is distinctly an allegorical mode. The historicity serves as the very allegorizing factor, the factor of mediation; myth is mediated or interpreted by the historical reality. Christ, for example, is the figure, the means of expressing or mediating the mythic dream of redemption. The sign of Christ, be it Abraham or Adam, is the result of a doubly mediated vision, the idea of redemption reflected through two allegorical veils, so to speak. Thus the myth of redemption assumes the form of Christ, the type, who in turn

is expressed by the various antitypes, Abraham, Adam, etc. The idea of redemption becomes less a dream, a formless transcendency, than a rational, intellectual embodiment. And this procedure, of veiling myth, is the procedure of allegory. The Puritans rejected symbolism, but they accepted allegory. Their concern with types is an allegorical one.

We come now to another important consideration: Why did the Puritans find allegory so congenial an intellectual medium? A discussion of this question will of necessity involve extraliterary criteria, some psychological, some theological. I have already mentioned Fletcher's contention that writers of allegory are problem solvers, artists struggling with tensions arising from conflicting, dualistic philosophies. The Puritans were problem solvers by nature. They conceived of life as a campaign or battle waged by the Christian solider against the forces of Satan. Constantly, the Puritan searched his heart and soul for hidden sins which had to be exorcised. His was a life of the mind; the entire physical universe was made up of emblems and signs, communications from God or Satan to be interpreted and categorized. The necessity for this constant mediation, or interpretation of these emblems, this allegorizing, arose from the basic nature of Puritanism. This was a theology based on dualism, based on the attempt to reconcile opposites. The Puritans attempted to synthesize, as Perry Miller explains, a "dual contention: the fallibility of material existence and the infallibility of the spiritual,

the necessity for living in a world of time and space according to the laws of that time and that place, with never once forgetting that the world will pass, be resolved back into nothingness, that reality and permanence belong to things not as they appear to the eye but to the mind."[12]

The reconciliation of such opposing contentions demands a fierce alertness, constant mental activity. The moment this activity diminishes, the precious dualistic balance between the spiritual and material realms is upset and a form of monism results. One important aspect of this Puritan dualism was their attempt to reconcile the doctrine of faith (Antinomianism) with the doctrine of good works (Arminianism). Historically, Puritanism declined as a theological force when Puritans accepted the supremacy of the pious works doctrine. They became "moralists whose philosophy [was] based upon social and economic considerations."[13] The Puritans ceased being Puritans, in other words, when they ceased allegorizing. The technique at this point passed from theology into literature.

Notes to Introduction

[1] The Great Gatsby, Scribner Research Anthology (Carbondale, Ill.: Scribner's, 1970), p. 80.

[2] In The Complete Short Stories of Mark Twain (New York: Bantam, 1958), p. 579.

[3] Jennie Gerhardt (New York: Dell, 1963), pp. 413-414.

[4] I think the following can serve to illustrate the relationship between myth and allegory. In the Genesis myth, as Murrin describes it, "The auditor sees God make the world and man and call them good and then sees man commit evil." A rational explanation of the problem of evil is not part of this vision. However, a rational element is part of Milton's treatment of this myth, Paradise Lost, his explanation and justification to men of the ways of God. Of course, the attempt to understand does not explain the myth away; it adds shadow and depth to the meaning of the myth; it broadens the mythical implications. This is what successful allegory should do.

[5] The Veil of Allegory (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), p. 133.

[6] Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1964), p. 37.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

[9] John Hooglund, tr. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1970), p. 23.

[10] Ibid., p. 9.

[11] Ibid.

[12] "This World and the Next," in Miller and T. H. Johnson, eds., The Puritans, A Sourcebook of Their Writings (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), I, p. 287.

[13] Perry Miller, The New England Mind, The Seventeenth Century (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), p. 53.

CHAPTER I

HAWTHORNE

Many of Hawthorne's biographers and critics are aware of the overwhelming ambiguities and powerful tensions inherent in his creative vision. The many-faceted texture of Hawthorne's work, his tendency to offer the reader several meanings for a particular occurrence, several views of a particular object or character has been discussed often. Yvor Winters calls it "the formula of alternative possibilities."[1] Bewley sees "the tension between solitude and democratic community" as the source of this ambiguity.[2] Fogle identifies the characteristic Hawthornean complexity as a conflict between style and substance, of surface simplicity, Hawthorne's "clarity of design," and his underlying "tragic complexity."[3] Frederick Crews, in his penetrating study of Hawthorne, *The Sins of the Fathers*, traces this ambiguity to a psychological source. "Hawthorne's ambiguity . . . is not a didactic strategy but a sign of powerful tension between his attraction to and his fear of his deepest themes," incest and patricide.[4] These powerful schisms, evidenced by Hawthorne's works, did not remain undiscovered until the twentieth century. "My father," said Hawthorne's son Julian, "was two men, one sympathetic and intuitional, the other critical and logical."[5]

Hawthorne's readers have also discoveıed his powerful urge to resolve these tensions and ambiguities through his

tendency to moralize, and his moralizing is often so sincere it has been taken at face value. Almost all of Hawthorne's critics, except Crews, accept him as a moralist. Waggoner, for example, maintains that the following statements from "The Celestial Railroad" form the core of Hawthorne's moral philosophy. "Purify that inward sphere [the heart] and the many shapes of evil that haunt the outward . . . will turn to shadowy phantoms and vanish of their own accord."[6] H. J. Lang goes as far as attempting to annihilate the Hawthornean ambiguity by reading each of several representative stories as if he were reading naive allegory, with fixed identifications and easily separable levels of components. Lang professes to be guided by undeniable moralistic criteria which he feels other critics have slighted in their attempts to accentuate the dualism. Lang's Hawthorne emerges as an optimistic transcendentalist because the critic maintains that the characteristic Hawthorne story illustrates the dictum that evil exists only in the eye of the beholder who looks at the world with a jaundiced eye; there is no evil, in other words. As read by Lang, the stories are greatly reduced in scope. For instance, "the ambiguity of sin and sorrow" in "The Minister's Black Veil" can be resolved, maintains Lang: "it is Hooper's sorrow for the lost maiden whose funeral he conducts . . . and penitence for his sin." There is also no ambiguity in "Rappaccini's Daughter." Giovanni is poisonous; Beatrice is poisoned; the poison is a symbol of Dr. Rappaccini's "'perverted wisdom,' a moral evil. . . . If we want to be flippant, we could say it

is a case of lead poisoning. . . ." Again, Lang maintains that "the theme of . . .["Young Goodman Brown"] is, simply, going to the devil."[7]

It is immediately obvious that such restrictive readings narrow the scope and reduce the range of any literary work. Many critics feel that they can justify such readings especially if they call the work an allegory, since allegories cannot be anything but ordered, clear progressions offering the reader a moral at every turn. I think we shall see that great allegories are no more simple, indeed in many cases they are less so, than other forms of art. To illustrate the problems resulting from the over-eager, moralistic interpretations readers of allegory often produce, let us take a look at the medieval English poem _Pearl_[8] and some interpretations of it.

A summary of the poem does not appear to involve many complexities. The narrator begins by lamenting his loss of a precious pearl. He lost his jewel, he reveals, in a garden. He proceeds to this garden, falls asleep on the spot where his pearl vanished, and begins to dream. He envisions his pearl in the form of an exquisite, jewel-bedecked maiden who chides him for lamenting his earthly loss and explains to him the nature of the immortal existence of pious, deserving souls. The instruction takes the form of a dialogue between soul (the pearl-maiden) and body (the dreamer), the beauty and poignancy of _Pearl_ stemming, in large part, from the poet's compassion for and understanding of human impatience and error. The

dreamer is overwhelmed by the vision of bliss his pearl reveals to him; he mistakes heaven for a lost earthly paradise and cannot understand why he is unable to join his lost pearl in her life of beatific splendor. Ultimately, after an overwhelming vision of the loving splendor and goodness of Christ, the dreamer awakes, his sorrow replaced with joy, his doubts allayed.

For many years, this poem was accepted as an elegy, the pearl-maiden being the dreamer's young daughter, his sorrow that of a bereaved father. Although this interpretation does not deny the poem's poignancy and beauty, it does not come to grips with its depth and complexity and generates many unresolved inconsistencies. For instance, if the reader responds sincerely to the tone of the lengthy and learned theological discourse which the dreamer receives from the maiden, he cannot say with conviction that he is listening to the spirit of a child, or even of a young woman. An allegory should not be read primarily with annotation, translation in mind, with the desire to find clues leading to the solution of a moral mystery of correspondence between idea and image. The allegorical images mediate the author's vision; they veil his voice. It is important for the reader to try to hear the voice clearly if he is to share the vision. Once the voice is heard, then the images can be interpreted, and the interpretation becomes a natural, almost effortless process.

One reader of Pearl tried, patiently, over a period of approximately ten years, to hear the voice of the poet. In

her Pearl: A Study in Spiritual Dryness,[9] Sister Madaleva maintains that the Pearl poet wrote not an elegy but an allegory of spiritual despondency, of the desolation, doubt, and despair that is a common trial in the spiritual life of a deeply devout person. His vision of the pearl is a vision of his soul which he has imagined to be lost to him and to his God. His journey to spiritual reaffirmation and joy can thus be seen as similar to Dante's, to Bunyan's, and to many other medieval journeys which Sister Madaleva describes. With this interpretation, the poem's inconsistencies seem to dissolve themselves effortlessly; one is not driven to force the images to yield their meanings. It is more natural that the personified soul of a learned cleric produce a treatise on spiritual matters than that the soul of a child discourse in so learned a manner. Sister Madaleva's reading of Pearl also accounts for the poem's conclusion. The all-encompassing vision of the perfection of Christ with which the poem concludes and the poet's ecstatic resolution to become His servant create a mood which is deeper in devotional intensity than the mood of consolation with which elegies usually conclude. In tone, the final vision of Pearl is similar to Dante's vision of the multifoliate rose and of the living light with which his Paradiso concludes. An elegy concludes with a reacceptance of mortality on the part of the bereaved author. This poem concludes with a reacceptance of spiritual life. And this spiritual tone, this lack of concern with worldly matters which characterizes the poet's

voice, was what Sister Madaleva recognized and communicated with.

This rather lengthy discussion of Pearl can serve more than one function--that of illustrating the reward granted the reader who approaches an allegorical work with patience and sensitivity rather than just intellectual curiosity. Sister Madaleva discovered that the poet was a troubled, distraught pilgrim searching for reassurance and spiritual rebirth. As he listens, in his dream, to the spiritual instruction given to him by the maiden, he struggles with ambiguities, in this case with those inherent in religious doctrine and biblical truth: the nature of grace, the relation of earthly piety to heavenly reward, etc. The poet's spiritual misgivings, which can be deduced from the Pearl, are not unlike the profound discomfort in the face of the tension of ambiguity and dualism which a study of Hawthorne's works reveals.

It becomes necessary, at this point, to discuss some of Hawthorne's allegorical techniques, just to eliminate any remaining doubts as to his heavy reliance upon the mode. We will then take a close look at his representative heroes, for such a perusal will, I think, reveal the nature of Hawthorne's particular adaptation of allegory. In the enumeration of the various techniques, I will be relying upon the two notable works on allegory previously mentioned, Fletcher's Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode and Honig's Dark Conceit.

Fletcher notes that allegories generally assume either of two basic forms, battle or progress.[10] Progress can

usually be identified with questing journey, physical or introspective, for example: Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, Swift's Gulliver's Travels, Kafka's "The Burrow." The battle type can assume the actual form of a battle or be exemplified by mental or ideological conflicts such as the debate or dialogue. Here we have as examples Prometheus Bound, The Battle of the Books, 1984. Needless to say, progress and battle often merge; for instance Pilgrim's Progress has debates inset into the narrative progress. And in the Pearl, the spiritual progress assumes the form of a continuing battle: the debate dialogue between the dreamer and the maiden. It would seem that Hawthorne's stories usually assume the form of progress; they are journeys of discovery into the hero's self. "Young Goodman Brown," "My Kinsman Major Molineus," "Roger Malvin's Burial," "The Great Carbuncle" can serve as examples of the various uses to which Hawthorne puts the journey motif. Yet seathing beneath the surface of each journey is a battle between opposing forces: good and evil, guilt and innocence, dream and reality, forces against which the hero must attempt to define himself. Young Goodman Brown, for instance, must choose between the devil and Faith. The form of the novels, on the other hand, is more akin to battle: between sable and gules, Maule and Pyncheon, Donatello and Miriam, with journeys interspersed: into forests, castles, gardens, and ruins.

Another characteristic of allegory which should be discussed is its particular kind of imagery. Both Fletcher and Honig agree that images proper to allegory can be called

talismans. These allegorical images, whether of natural phenomena, weapons, articles of dress, jewelry, etc. usually are "active tokens of the hero's consciousness. Symbolic of authority or magical purpose, and denominating the heroic mission, the talisman," according to Honig, "reflects his [the hero's] will and the means of his strengthening it."[11] We can use as examples Achilles' shield, King Arthur's sword. Hawthorne most consistently chooses natural places and objects as his talismans; his many fountains, streams, lakes, trees, rocks, flowers, and gardens in general come readily to mind. They serve to reflect and interpret the hero's inner reality. Decaying logs, pools of sluggish and brackish water, vines creeping and intertwining snakelike along the ground contribute to the settings of stories like "The Hollow of the Three Hills," "Ethan Brand," "Young Goodman Brown," "The Man of Adamant." These settings accompany the discovery or perpetration of some form of evil. Hawthorne's use of the natural wilderness to reflect the tangled, overgrown shadowy regions of man's soul and his tendency to stress the frightening, dark, unholy aspects of the wilderness, to see it as an abode of devils, are reflections of the Puritan legacy.

There is a certain class of talismanic images which has seemingly been responsible for a large part of the allegory-symbolism controversy, as far as Hawthorne and Melville are concerned. These images include the scarlet A, the white whale, Rappaccini's garden. Thus, Waggoner writes of

"Rappaccini's Daughter" that it is a "symbolic tale with allegorical elements but without the fixed and systematic identifications proper to allegory. . . . As its images become symbols and its symbols expand to suggest myth, the simple anecdote of the poisoned girl takes on that density of meaning that we have come to expect of Hawthorne's tales at their best."[12] Now, first of all, only the most simple, naive form of allegory is based on fixed and systematic identifications, as I have previously indicated. Secondly, if Rappaccini's garden is to be removed from the allegorical framework because of certain "symbolic" properties, what are we to say about the multifoliate rose of The Divine Comedy or the pearl-maiden? These are not usually considered as extending beyond the allegorical frameworks that contain them. Fletcher calls this group of images cosmic talismans; they reflect not only the identity of the hero but "the cosmos of those works where they appear."[13] Thus the scarlet letter and Moby Dick can be seen as expanding in relevance until they seem to irradiate the meaning of the action, and yet they can still be accepted as allegorical symbols.

Another problem which has resulted in much critical turmoil is the relationship of allegory to ambiguity. As has already been observed, a critic who sees only a one-to-one relationship between meaning and its objective correlative in allegory would tend to deny the possibility of ambiguous allegory. At least he would present a reading of an ambiguous

work in which he would try to maintain such a one-to-one relationship, as the Pearl critics who insist on calling the poem an elegy do. The connection between allegory and anxiety has already been explored somewhat. We have maintained that writers of allegory are uneasy in the face of ambiguity and dualism. Allegory is like a religious ritual; it is palliative, accommodating; it is the author's means of attempting intellectually and consciously to ease his discomfort in the face of conflicting, often dualistic world views.

A religious ritual, for instance a funeral, is meant to help the mourner achieve emotional readjustment, to live a purposeful life without the one who has died. A typical funeral begins in sadness, with the company mourning the deceased, and concludes with a feast or other gathering less mournful than that which preceded. The understanding is that, by the time of the feast, the company has buried the deepest grief with the body of the deceased, after bidding him a ritualistic farewell, and is now prepared to consider again the needs of daily life represented by the food and drink they share. Grief has not, of course, been completely exorcized; it has been allayed so that life can continue unimpeded.

Like this kind of ritual, allegory too is palliative. The allegorist, maintains Fletcher, "creates a ritual which by virtue of its very repetition and symmetry 'carries off' the threat of ambivalent feelings."[14] We can refer again to Pearl. At the beginning of his narrative, as we noted earlier,

the poet is distraught over his spiritual desolation. At the conclusion, he is ecstatic over his full recovery of faith. His encounter with the pearl-maiden takes the form of an orderly ritualistic debate during which his doubts are allayed and his spirit is uplifted gradually, in stages, until the ecstatic reaffirmation of the conclusion is reached. This process is similar not only to the ritual of the funeral but to any ritual, the celebration of a Mass or a tribal war dance during which the waning morale of the warriors is strengthened.

Since allegory is the work of an author who aims toward the balancing of opposites, it would follow that the imagery of allegory is equally dualistic and ambiguous. Allegorical literature always displays a certain ambivalence toward what Fletcher calls its polar antagonisms, good and evil, ignorance and enlightenment, doubt and certainty, etc.[15] We need only think again of the scarlet A and Rappaccini's garden to envision the polarities embodied in these allegorical symbols: Angel-Adultress, Garden of Eden-Garden of Evil. Many of Hawthorne's natural images, fountains and trees, for instance, which we have observed are often used to represent aspects of man's depravity, are also used for the generation of quite the opposite effect. We have the pool of healing, actually holy water in "The Man of Adamant," the tall, sturdy, "great old tree," the symbol of family solidarity and belonging for which the lonely and confused Robin longs in "My Kinsman Major Molineux." Of course, the most intense ambiguity in

Hawthorne's art comes from the pull of the natural versus the supernatural cause, the dreaming versus the waking state, exemplified so perfectly in "Young Goodman Brown." This kind of ambiguity becomes increasingly more obvious in modern allegories. Its culmination can be found in the works of Franz Kafka. His particular brand of allegory is permeated with completely unresolved ambiguities; man's inability to find stability in his world constitutes the only meaning, if it can be called such, of his work. This is indeed anxiety carried to its most unbearable extreme.

We can now turn to Fletcher's discussion of the psychological analogue to allegory. Fletcher, unlike Crews, limits the detailed psychological analysis of allegory to the fictional heroes and their actions. Little attempt is made to present an intimate psychoanalytic portrait of the author. Fletcher identifies the psychological analogue to allegory as "the compulsive syndrome," which, he notes, Freud himself made parallel to ritualistic religious behavior.[16] In both cases of behavior, that characteristic of the compulsive neurotic and that characteristic of the allegorical hero, the actions are of an authoritarian sort, rigid, anxious, fatalistic. The hero of an allegorical epic will be presented as doing things the way a compulsive person does them, regularly, meticulously, blindly. The hero's mind is possessed by idea; he can hardly be said to have freedom of choice: "The commonest experience of the compulsive neurotic is that he is suddenly disturbed

by impulses that have no apparent rational meaning, and thence are seen as arbitrary and external commands."[17] If such a compulsive character should try to stop his "obsessive ruminations" or his compulsive rituals, he is plunged into an attack of anxiety. It is this anxiety that is precisely the quality of the actions performed by the obsessed character, "since he is always determined to get to some goal, to reach home, to reach the Celestial City."[18] Along his journey or during his battle, this character is confronted with those ambivalent images that we have determined are characteristic of the allegorical mode, images which are reflections of the hero's own divided state of mind. In his discussion of Melville's Pierre, Henry Murray makes a similar observation: "Moral conflict, if radical and stubborn, results in a division, an inflexible dualism, in all branches of feeling and thought, which so influences the sufferer's apperceptions, that every significant object becomes ambivalent to him, . . . both attracts and repels him, being composed, as he sees it, of two contrary elements, one good and one evil, which cannot be reconciled and blended."[19]

One of the most intense illustrations of compulsive behavior in Hawthorne is found in "Roger Malvin's Burial": Reuben Bourne's journey to the place of Roger Malvin's death. Reuben's mind has been possessed by the idea that he must return to the accursed spot where Malvin died: "There was . . . a continual impulse, a voice audible only to himself,

commanding him to go forth and redeem his vow," his pledge to Roger Malvin that he would return to bury him. His neglect of the commands of his conscience plunged him into the anxiety which resulted in his transformation into a brooding misanthrope. Preoccupied with his inner turmoil, he became a "neglectful husbandman" and ultimately had to recognize himself as a "ruined man."

Reuben's son Cyrus ultimately becomes the locus, the ambivalent image of his troubled feelings. The father loves him as a son, for his beauty and promise, and yet regards him also as an image of his guilty self, the self responsible for Malvin's death. "In Cyrus he recognized what he had himself been in other days." His ambivalent feelings are expressed during the forest journey by the war of conflicting emotions within him: "Reuben's spirit shone at intervals with an outward gladness; but inwardly there was a cold, cold sorrow." Ultimately, the sacrificial murder breaks the bonds imposed by the pressures of his conscience, and by the turmoil of ambivalence; after the killing of his son, Reuben is able, wholeheartedly, to weep and to pray. He is at peace because he has atoned for Malvin's death. "Young Goodman Brown" also provides many instances of the hero's confused state of mind. Does he hear voices or merely "the murmur of the old forest"? Does his "companion" hold a maple staff or a wriggling snake? Is he fully conscious, or is he dreaming?

The hero's ultimate relationship to this ambivalence which surrounds and envelops him, his final understanding of

his moral conflict, will determine the outcome of his mission or quest. The ambivalence surrounding the hero can be said to be made up of dark and light components. Should he ultimately identify only with the dark component, he is faced with myopia, solipsism, self-destruction. Should he choose to stress the light, after learning to thoroughly evaluate the place of the dark component, he may attain a positive knowledge or consciousness of his proper place in the universe. Before we discuss the type of final commitment most frequently made by Hawthorne's heroes, I think it will prove enlightening and interesting to take a look at the reactions of another allegorical hero. Spenser's Sir Guyon, Temperance, is faced with a predicament very similar to that confronting many of Hawthorne's heroes. Suddenly, he is faced with the reality of the repressed, dark portion of his nature. He must recognize it and deal with it or rebel against it and ultimately become destroyed by it. Guyon rebels for a while but ultimately confronts and triumphs. The self-knowledge he finally acquires seems a guarantee of subsequent purposeful and successful behavior. Spenser simplifies the task of illustrating the negative and positive possibilities open to an allegorical hero by presenting a hero whose career includes confrontations with both types of possibilities. Because the destructive and the creative alternatives are explored in such close proximity in Book II, Canto XII of *The Faerie Queene*, qualities of the one choice become more evident and understandable

because of the contrasting presence of the other. We will begin with Sir Guyon's most intensely destructive act, the climactic, compulsive expression of the anxiety which has been steadily mounting within him:

> But all those pleasaunt bowres, and Pallace brave,
> Guyon broke downe with rigour pittilesse;
> Ne ought their goodly workmanship might save
> Them from the tempest of his wrathfulnesse,
> But that their bliss he turn's to balefulnesse.
> Their groves he feld; their gardins did deface;
> Their arbers spyle; their Cabinets suppresse;
> Their banket houses burne; their buildings race;
> And, of the fayrest late, now made the fowlest place.[20]

Guyon has just destroyed Acrasia's bower with a tumultuous manifestation of Puritan frenzy the intemperance of which has not escaped critical attention. It is not my purpose to discuss the critical history of Spenser's poem but merely to point out some aspects of Guyon's relationship to Acrasia and to her creation, the Bower of Bliss, which will prove interesting to a student of Hawthorne. For assistance in my discussion of Guyon's quest, I have turned to Harry Berger's excellent analysis of Book II of _The Faerie Queene_, _The Allegorical Temper_.[21]

In Canto XII, Acrasia functions as what Berger calls a demonic allegorist. Mr. Berger is using the term demonic only in its negative sense. As Fletcher points out, there were good demons (or daemons), the intermediaries, part man, part god, who watched over and guided human beings, as well as evil ones.[22] Acrasia has created, in the Bower of Bliss, "a world of false images which pretend to be real, yet which

are completely dictated by a single intention, dedicated to a single purpose" (p. 224). All the visibilia in the garden emblemize the single meaning of human lust and express a single clearly human purpose: "All nature and art are directed toward intercourse" (p. 226). They are deprived of any other meaning, deprived of their natural functions. Now Guyon's history, as depicted to this point in Book II, has been characterized by shamefastness, a "retreat from the world of the body" (p. 225). Thus, Acrasia can be said to embody all the evils consciously weeded out from the hero's conception of himself. Acrasia and her garden can be seen as projections of Guyon's repressions. All he has ever denied existence to suddenly becomes the only reality, and he can no longer turn away; there is nothing else to turn to. Acrasia seems to loom before him, mocking him: "You possess the key to a definitive interpretation of the visible world, do you? Well, then, interpret my visible world. See if you can transform it into a reflection of your inner core of purity!"

In creating the bower, this embodiment of Guyon's repressions, Acrasia functions as a demonic allegorist because she offers Guyon a world of visibilia created by her expressly to embody ideas of darkness, perversion, evil. Guyon is faced with the alternatives of either yielding completely to Acrasia's evil seductiveness or understanding it for what it is and rejecting it. The latter alternative implies that

man must turn toward the evil, accept the risk involved, explore it in order to counteract its effect. Guyon does not do this. He wanders through the bower, ashamed and bewildered at the increasingly lustful turn of his mind and senses; he is both attracted and repelled by what he sees. Ultimately appalled at his mounting moral uneasiness, Guyon gives in to the fit of destructiveness depicted above. Momentarily he becomes his own demonic allegorist, perceiving only the evil shadows lurking behind natural phenomena and smashing through the pasteboard masks to obliterate evil.

Fortunately, Guyon is not himself destroyed; this was not Spenser's intention. He check-mates the demonic Acrasia by presenting Guyon with the possibility of redemption. As Berger notes, Guyon's destructive act occurs simultaneously with his awakening to "the consequences of Original Sin within himself" (p. 218). During the moment of release following the violence, Guyon realizes what has been happening to him; he recognizes the stirring of desire within him, a phenomenon which he will have to learn to cope with. As, "sorrowfull and sad," he is led away from the scene of destruction, he brings to the reader's mind the image of Adam and Eve departing from Eden, sadder but wiser than they were in their innocence. Guyon realizes that the universe is not his to interpret and that it and he are God's creations and that his function is not to forget "the excellence/Of his [God's] creation."[23] Guyon attains a self-realization, a clear

self-consciousness which allows him to see evil in its proper perspective and to continue on his quest, for we feel that it is not yet complete, with this proper perspective in mind. As Berger concludes: "In the final moment they [Guyon and the Palmer] stand on the edge of the false paradise waiting for the fresh wind of Creation to take them home. In a sense they have found themselves; they have a feeling . . . that they are not home" (p. 240). The serene, palliative power of this final reconciliation is all the more apparent if the frantic destructiveness of Guyon's act of annihilation is kept in mind. Guyon lashes out to quell the agitation repressed emotions have created within him. The result, however, is not self-annihilation but relief and freedom to understand the causes of repression. Except for his brief moment of violence, he does not give in to but withstands the tendency to become the demonic allegorist. By realizing the ambiguous nature of experience, he can resist the destructive lure of its darker components.

The concept of the demonic allegorist is extremely relevant to Hawthorne. His archetypal heroes, his particular mythic embodiments,[24] are, as we observed, allegorical heroes whose quest is an attempt to discover their identity and to use it as a basis for purposeful conduct in their world. The quest often does culminate in the discovery of some form of identity, but in Hawthorne's most characteristic works the discovery is not one which leads to purposeful action.

As he journeys through a world which is a reflection of his own compulsive, divided self, Hawthorne's hero becomes progressively more fascinated by the dark side of things; he becomes and remains a demonic allegorist, the Acrasia of his own soul. This is the situation not only in Hawthorne's most characteristic but also in his most artistically successful works. In _The House of the Seven Gables_, Holgrave chooses a life of simple, sunny domesticity with Phoebe Pyncheon and thus abandons a career of solitary prying into life's dark corners. The loving couple in "The Great Carbuncle" abandon a quest "deemed little better than a traffic with the Evil one." Roderick Elliston accepts his wife's love, and his bosom serpent ceases to gnaw him. These works, however, are not Hawthorne's most convincing creations. The sunny conclusion of _The House of the Seven Gables_ is contrived; it is, as Crews notes, a manifestation of Hawthorne's struggle to disbelieve that the world is indeed "a scene of guilt and of retribution more dreadful than the guilt."[25] In "The Bosom Serpent" and "The Great Carbuncle," the respective analogies, that of a snake and egotism and that of a "wondrous gem" and selfish desire, are inadequately developed. Hawthorne here indulges in what Honig calls "analogical baiting." The analogy in each case "simply dangles before the reader like an artificial bait."[26] There is no artistic interplay between fact and fantasy. These stories betray unsureness and coldness. Hawthorne does not really believe in the

efficacy of these happy endings; the warmth of human relevance does not activate the analogies.

There is a successful story in which the hero achieves freedom from guilt, release from the gloomy existence of a demonic allegorist; it is a freedom in which Hawthorne believed and which, I cannot help feeling, he momentarily shared. The story is "Roger Malvin's Burial," which was briefly discussed earlier in this study. This is one of Hawthorne's best stories, one which betrays an amount of human warmth and concern rare for Hawthorne. The conflict in Reuben Bourne's heart between his natural desire to save his own life and his equally natural wish to help Roger Malvin is a deep and tumultuous conflict between two equally-weighted alternatives, and it is communicated as such to the reader. The father-figure in this story is no harsh Satanic tyrant who enervates or warps his "children" like Rappaccini or Colonel Pyncheon. Roger Malvin is kind and heroic; he truly loves Reuben, for whom he reserves his "last prayer" and whom he encourages with the prospect of the hopeful probability of his (Malvin's) survival, which he knows is vain. Reuben's promise to return to bury Malvin is his declaration of love to a "father" truly worthy of it. It is not hard to accept the fact that Reuben's mind could become clouded by his failure to fulfil his promise, by his denial of the expression of love. For a large portion of his life, he becomes "sad and downcast," seeing in the external world only the reflections of the gloom of his soul

as Guyon saw only reflections of his concealed lust. Reuben Bourne is redeemed from the unproductive heart-hardening life of a demonic allegorist, but at the great cost of his son's life. The final reawakening of spiritual life results in the lifting of the curse, his tendency to read only the signs of blight and corruption in his surroundings: "At that moment the withered topmost bough of the oak loosened itself in the stilly air, and fell in soft, light fragments upon the rock, upon the leaves, upon Reuben, upon his wife and child, and upon Roger Malvin's bones." The calm repetition of words in this sentence has the effect of incantation and prayer; it results in a feeling of peace which is a manifestation of heart-felt auctorial sympathy. Because Hawthorne believed in his conclusion, that freedom from guilt is possible only after great sorrow and at great cost, the story emerges as an action which embodies its idea coherently and compellingly.

At the conclusion of "Roger Malvin's Burial," as Hawthorne describes Reuben Bourne's release from guilt, he creates a fine mythic moment. Such moments are common to all good allegories; they are moments of insight, revelation, the fruit of the ritualistic allegorical probing. Reuben's feeling of release from the oppression of guilt is powerfully rendered. The words flow; they embody the action. Language is used not to mediate between the author and his feelings but to express them. These moments are not frequent in Hawthorne's works, as language was most generally a factor of

mediation for him, but they occur in his grandest achievements. We find a very powerful mythic moment in The Scarlet Letter, in the chapter titled "The Flood of Sunshine." When Hester and Dimmesdale meet in the forest, express their long hidden feelings and Hester removes the scarlet letter, she regains her former beauty and "All at once, as with a sudden smile of heaven, forth burst the sunshine, pouring a very flood into the obscure forest, gladdening each green leaf, transmuting the yellow fallen ones to gold and gleaming adown the gray trunks of the solemn trees. The objects that had made a shadow hitherto embodied the brightness now. The course of the little brook might be traced by its merry gleam afar into the woods' heart of mystery which had become a mystery of joy."[27] The language expresses sympathy with Hester and Dimmesdale, a wish, against all odds, for their happiness.

Among Hawthorne's best stories, there is one other in which the hero can be accepted as reprieved, although perhaps only temporarily, from the life of a demonic allegorist. This is "My Kinsman Major Molineux," a story very different in tone from "Roger Malvin's Burial." The former is a brilliant, highly-colored, tightly-knit story, but the deep, stirring gleam of sympathy and warmth is not as apparent here. The reader is plunged into a kaleidoscopic nightmare of adolescent tension and anxiety. This story is similar in many ways to Spenser's Bower of Bliss episode. Like Guyon, Robin arrives at his proving grounds by water, in Hawthorne as in Spenser

an allegorical symbol for the separation of different states of mind. In The Scarlet Letter, for instance, the brook separates the world of vain but joyful possibility, of escape for Hester and Dimmesdale, from the world of dire reality, the other side of the brook where Pearl stands, demanding that her mother refasten the scarlet letter. The ferry brings Robin from the world of childhood and familial security to that of painful adolescent discovery.

Like Guyon, Robin wanders in the bewildering world of his repressions, seeing only the sinister, demonic ingredients of life until he, again like Guyon, indulges in a violent compulsive outburst of emotion. It is at this point that the dissimilarity between Spenser's and Hawthorne's allegorical worlds becomes evident. As we have observed, Guyon's outburst results in a more balanced outlook. But we are not sure that Robin's will; the ending of the story is unresolved. The gentleman who has become his friend calls him a "shrewd youth" and says that he "may rise in the world" without the help of his kinsman. However, Robin has been called "shrewd" all along; this final pronouncement is no less ambiguous than the earlier ones. And the fact that he "may" rise in the world is, of course, no indication that he will. Finally, Robin is said to be on the verge of adopting a "new subject of inquiry," to stand on the threshold of a new quest-cycle, another confrontation with his inner reality. There is no guarantee that the new quest will not merely be a repetition

in form of the old one. As Crews writes, "There is no basis for saying that he [Robin] has 'learned' anything besides the unreliability of nepotism."[28] Although our final view of Robin is of a youth enjoying the temporary emotional calm following the climactic outburst of his repressions, we cannot be sure that this calm will last or that it will lead to a final reading of the world that will allow for the coexistence of good and evil. There is no real feeling of auctorial sympathy for Robin as he indulges in the expressions of release after seeing his tarred-and-feathered kinsman: "The contagion [laughter] was spreading among the multitude, when all at once, it seized upon Robin, and he sent forth a shout of laughter that echoed through the street, - every man shook his sides, every man emptied his lungs, but Robin's shout was the loudest there. The cloud-spirits peeped from their silvery islands, as the congregated mirth went roaring up the sky! The Man in the Moon heard the far bellow. 'Oho,' quoth he, 'the old earth is frolicsome tonight!'"[29] If Hawthorne is not directly laughing at Robin, he is certainly not taking him very seriously at this point. Perhaps he feels that Robin has not earned a really deep and lasting release from guilt; he certainly has not paid Reuben Bourne's bloody price.

We can be sure that the quest undertaken by those heroes accepted as most characteristically Hawthornean--Ethan Brand, Aylmer, Giovanni Guasconti, Chillingworth, Parson Hooper, Richard Digby, Goodman Brown--will lead to

an assumption of the identity of demonic allegorist, an identity which will be, in each case, final and inexorable. The cost of this unhappy discovery of self is exorbitant. It can take the form of cruelty to or even the death of those associated most closely with the demonic allegorist: Goodman Brown abandons his Faith; Aylmer kills Georgiana; Giovanni kills Beatrice. In the most severe cases, like those of Richard Digby and Ethan Brand, the demonic allegorist himself dies or in some way solidifies, becomes an inanimate object as the result of his preoccupation with gloom, darkness, evil.

In the discussion of Guyon's journey, we observed that Guyon was introduced to the career of demonic allegorist by a character eminently successful in this devilish field, Acrasia. The heroes in many of Hawthorne's stories are also initiated into their prospective trade by such masters. Aylmer is aided in his experiment by the fiendish Aminadab; Goodman Brown's traveling companion is the devil. In "Rappaccini's Daughter," Dr. Rappaccini plays the role of initiator and supervisor. Thus, in Hawthorne's stories, the allegorical guide is generally a figure of darkness. The stories just mentioned are concerned with the incipient stages of the hero's career as demonic allegorist; the figure of the initiator therefore serves a useful function. Stories such as "Ethan Brand" and "The Man of Adamant" are concerned with the final moments of the hero's demonic life. The period of initiation has long since passed. The hero has become his own initiator, his own demon.

Crews notes that Hawthorne's archetypal hero illustrates a "classic pattern of phobia."[30] He flees obsessively from sexuality, driven by the pressures of unresolved oedipal conflict. But as we have observed, the notion of obsessive compulsive behavior is relevant to allegorical heroes in general. Guyon is as obsessed with the flight from recognition of his sexuality as any of Hawthorne's heroes. The allegorical mode in general, not only Hawthorne's own specific brand of allegory, has psychoanalytic analogues. What is characteristically Hawthornean is the idea that the flight from the recognition of sexuality is irreversible and inevitably leads to destruction and sorrow. The hero must generally accept the identity of the demonic allegorist as final and inexorable. Unlike Spenser, who counteracts Acrasia's scheme by offering his hero the possibility of a better world, Hawthorne generally offers no second chances. In his masterpieces, _The Scarlet Letter_ and the best stories, Hawthorne tantalizes the reader with the glimmer of a possibility for the hero's redemption. This arouses the reader's hopes and also intensifies the feelings awakened by the hero's ultimate failure to find earthly happiness. For instance, in _The Scarlet Letter_, Hawthorne keeps the possibility for a reunion of Hester and Dimmesdale open until the final chapters, as if he too were hoping for their redemption. At his best then, Hawthorne is a demonic allegorist who pities his victims and shares their sorrows. His heroes, though frail, are human and worthy of pity.

At his worst, for instance in the unfinished romances, Hawthorne creates unsympathetic, absolutely compulsive, unreal puppets whom he squelches without mercy and often with glee. Septimius Felton, for instance, is a caricature of the Hawthornean seeker, intense, dark, raving and, after a while, completely uninteresting. One gathers that Hawthorne himself does not take this figure seriously, as he undercuts the gravity of this story about the search for the elixir of life at every opportunity, introducing bibulous characters with names like Dr. Portsoaken and ridiculing the people and events in general. Septimius himself is referred to by the author as "poor Septimius" and as a "quack doctor." Crews notes that as Hawthorne progresses chronologically from _The Scarlet Letter_ to the late romances, he becomes less and less able to "add the stucco of ideas and moralizations to his structure of obsession."[31] Incest, patricide, the flight from sexuality dominate works like _Septimius Felton_ nakedly, brutally, often unreasonably. Hawthorne was no longer seemingly able to subject his visions to mediation. In his best works, the flight from sexuality--Dimmesdale's avoidance of Hester, Giovanni's fear of Beatrice, Goodman Brown's abandonment of Faith, Aylmer's murder of Georgiana--can be seen as Hawthorne's allegorical representation of the retreat into isolation from the "magnetic chain of humanity" which Bewley maintains is Hawthorne's idea of abstract democracy.[32] The flight from sexuality, or normal adulthood, becomes Hawthorne's creative

interpretation of American experience. Another one of his preoccupations, the oedipal conflict, is developed, in a story like "Roger Malvin's Burial," into a profound and moving portrayal of human involvement. In "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," the oedipal conflict becomes the basis for what can be accepted as a treatment of the relationship between England and her colonies.

Although the archetypal Hawthornean hero dominates both the novels and the stories, the novels and the most successful stories are based on two different formulas. Allegorically, the novels are battles. In The Scarlet Letter, for instance, the environment is focused through the consciousness of three different personae--Chillingworth, Hester, Dimmesdale. In other words, the projections of three different states of mind compose the environment. These three radically different views, the results of three differing states of mind, are then allowed to confront or battle each other. This kaleidoscope, always completely but unobtrusively controlled by the author, is characterized by the ambiguity which results when two or more views of one object, person or event are superimposed. For instance, the viewer of the scarlet A determines whether it represents Angel or Adultress. It is the perceiver of Pearl who determines her identity. To Hester, though often troubling, she is something to love. To Dimmesdale, she is a cause of fear, a reminder of hidden guilt; to Chillingworth, she is an object of scorn and hatred. Furthermore, it must

be noted that each perceiver is divided within himself. This divisiveness is reflected in his perceptions: Hester and Chillingworth often fear Pearl; Dimmesdale attempts, at times, to love her. Because Pearl is a focus for these conflicting systems of perception, she is enveloped in an aura of ambiguity.

Hawthorne's most characteristically fine stories assume the progress form. One character, one state of mind, is explored as it journeys toward some form of self-recognition. The environment is a projection of one consciousness: Reuben Bourne's, Goodman Brown's, Aylmer's, Giovanni's; it becomes the reflection of one state of mind. The characteristic ambiguity in these stories is produced by the character's ambivalent regard for the objects he sees and the situations he confronts; these are, it will be remembered, projections of his own divided consciousness. The ambiguity becomes extremely deep when the auctorial voice, also veiled and ambiguous, assents to the ambivalent view of the character. At moments, Hawthorne accepts Beatrice as evil only in the eyes of Giovanni; at other times, it becomes difficult for the reader to separate the auctorial voice from Giovanni's. Needless to say, this story has evoked various interpretations because of the depth of its ambiguity. Only a few of Hawthorne's stories take the overall form of battles; "The Wives of the Dead" is an excellent example of the confrontation of two opposing states of consciousness. Generally, the development of the

battle form requires a broader canvas than that provided by the short story. It must be remembered, though, that many minor battles take place within the stories that assume the progress form.

Except for *The Blithedale Romance* and the early *Fanshawe*, Hawthorne's remaining completed novels, *The House of the Seven Gables* and *The Marble Faun*, are based primarily on the battle form. These two works are not entirely satisfactory. In *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne presents us with an environment, the seventeenth-century town of Salem, which is physically simple, if not absolutely bare and limited. The complexity and richness which the primitive locale radiates during the course of the story is provided by the states of mind of the personae through whose eyes we see Salem, by the contrasts between and superimpositions of these states of mind and by the author's deep and serious concern for and involvement with his characters. On the other hand, the canvas of *The Marble Faun* is, physically, extremely crowded. The story takes place in Rome as well as a large area of suburban Italy. There are innumerable descriptions of museums, churches, market places, works of art, country towns, catacombs and everything else imaginable. These descriptions are generally not related to the story; they appear to be interruptions and digressions. The reader becomes confused; he is never quite sure through whose eyes, Miriam's, Hilda's, Donatello's, Kenyon's or Hawthorne's he is supposed to be viewing the environment.

The novel is basically concerned with the same problems Hawthorne repeatedly treated: the nature of man's fall, the problems of guilt and maturity, the limitations of innocence. However, the easy resolutions that the novel arrives at do not do justice to the profundity of the questions it raises. Simple, innocent, faun-like Donatello, raised in a sunny, rural environment, comes to corrupt Rome, falls in love with a dark lady and commits a murder, ostensibly to protect her from an evil persecutor. The lady, Miriam, sees the analogy between their affair and the fall of man and asks this question:

> The story of the fall of man! Is it not repeated in our romance of Monte Beni? And may we follow the analogy yet further? Was that very sin, - into which Adam precipitated himself and all his race - was it the destined means by which, over a long pathway of toil and sorrow, we are to attain a higher, brighter, more profound happiness, than our last birthright gave?[33]

Kenyon asks a similar question somewhat later:

> Is sin . . . 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?[34]

Donatello, however, does not ask such questions and it is he who falls the hardest. Only fleetingly is the world seen through the eyes of the fallen Donatello as it should be if his experience is to affect us as momentous. Hester Prynne's actions acquire cosmic significance partly because Hawthorne lets us wander through the labyrinths of her mind and react with her to her tormentors.

The Marble Faun suffers also because of its closed finale. Donatello is jailed, Miriam left to expiation and grief; Kenyon marries Hilda and prepares for a life of sweetness and light. The novel does not prove equal to the gravity and profundity of the questions it raises. And Hilda, whose purity and sweetness are posited against the darkness and corruption of Miriam and Rome, is supremely unconvincing. With her doves and her tower and her asexual, bland innocence, she is a nineteenth-century stereotype in whom the reader just cannot believe. Donatello himself is made ridiculous by his constant prancing and his supposedly hairy ears. Not even the characters' occupations (they are, except for Donatello, artists) are related to the ostensible themes of the story. It is sure, however, that no reader could conceive of Dimmesdale as being anything but a minister of God or Chillingworth as being other than a scholar and physician. Their occupations reflect the nature of their innermost selves.

The House of the Seven Gables is not cluttered, but it is trivial. Hawthorne constantly undercuts any efforts at depth or seriousness by ridiculing his characters. Here, for instance, is a description of Hepzibah: she is a "gaunt, sallow, rusty-jointed maiden in a long-waisted silk gown, . . . with the strange horror of a turban on her head! Her visage is not even ugly. It is redeemed from insignificance only by the contraction of her eyebrows into a near-sighted scowl. And finally, her great life-trial seems to be that,

after sixty years of idleness, she finds it convenient to earn comfortable bread by setting up a shop in a small way." At this point, Hawthorne inserts the following statement: "Nevertheless, if we look through all the heroic fortunes of mankind, we shall find this same entanglement of something mean and trivial with whatever is noblest in joy or sorrow."[35] The reader finds nothing noble here, merely triviality. Because of the forced gaiety and cloying lightness of tone, we have play instead of battle; babies, in a sandbox, confronting each other with shovels. In one novel, _The Marble Faun_, Hawthorne clutters his canvas so that his themes become obscured; in the other, _The House of the Seven Gables_, he laughs at any efforts at seriousness and belittles his characters so that his themes appear ridiculous.

The Blithedale Romance, in spite of the presence of several dominant characters, is not primarily in the battle form. It is the study of one mind, Coverdale's. Once this is realized and the reader can stop trying to accept it as mainly a treatment of such issues as utopianism, agrarianism, hypnotism, and reformism, he realizes that this is a rather interesting if not completely successful study. Everything, the entire physical environment, the other characters, is projected to the reader through the mind of Coverdale, and his is an extremely subjective, self-involved character. He is, of course, another one of Hawthorne's seekers, analyzers, pryers into other human minds and souls. As a narrator, he

is completely unreliable. He is jealous of Zenobia's vigor and talents and constantly belittles her even though he is much attracted, though at the same time repelled, by her physical beauty. "Her poor little stories and tracts never half did justice to her intellect," he says peevishly, at one point.[36] He is also prurient, relishing nothing so much as to imagine Zenobia without clothes or think about her as a woman who has "lived and loved" (p. 72). And he is a prude who thinks that "a bachelor always feels himself defrauded when he knows or suspects that any woman of his acquaintance has given herself away" (p. 72). Finally, Coverdale is afraid of Zenobia, who repeatedly ridicules him and belittles his efforts to become a working member of the Blithedale community. Of the virile and sexually attractive Hollingsworth, Coverdale is extremely jealous. His views of Hollingsworth as a selfish, brutal, dangerous man are therefore completely untrustworthy. The only character Coverdale does not consider threatening is the frail, mousy Priscilla; he finds her safe to admire--from a distance.

As precise a study of Coverdale's journey toward identity as this work is, there is something missing. The sense of Hawthorne at his best, those brilliant flashes of insight and sympathy glimmering beneath a surface of ambiguity, are not in evidence. The world of The Blithedale Romance is a projection of Coverdale's consciousness and the author keeps us and himself locked within this consciousness throughout.

We never see the other characters except through Coverdale's eyes; we lose our individual powers of judgment and appreciation. Ultimately, Coverdale rejects purposeful action. His journey ends with a negative, unhappy self-discovery. The world becomes sour to him: he retires to peep and pry at it for the rest of his life, a prisoner of his own rigidity. Locked as we are within Coverdale's consciousness, we are prisoners too. Hawthorne has become so successful a demonic allegorist that he has imprisoned not only Coverdale but the reader also.

The three works which followed The Scarlet Letter are not successful allegories, as we have seen. Hawthorne either obscures serious considerations with unnecessary detail, ridicules himself, or entombs himself within one of his less admirable characters. Unfortunately, as the unfinished romances prove, he never regains his full creative powers. He had seemingly become his own demonic allegorist; he had become imprisoned within the boundaries of the gloomy, guilt-ridden, haunted world of his mind.

Postscript

Shortly after completing this study of Hawthorne, I read John Becker's penetrating study of Hawthorne as allegorist, Hawthorne's Historical Allegory.[37] In his discussion, Dr. Becker makes use of both Edwin Honig's Dark Conceit and Angus Fletcher's Allegory: The Study of a Symbolic Mode. The similarities between his treatment of Hawthorne and mine

are striking in many respects. We both feel that Hawthorne, like all writers of allegory, used the mode as a testing ground for his ideas. However, Dr. Becker's view of Hawthorne, centering as it does on _The Scarlet Letter_, is of a writer whose concerns are preeminently moral. Ultimately, Dr. Becker feels that the principle which Hawthorne evolved by experimentation in _The Scarlet Letter_ is that "morality must be more than respect for the sanctity of the human heart, or rather one must respect it in all its dimensions by being ultimately and in all things true" (p. 147). Dr. Becker maintains that in _The Scarlet Letter_ Hawthorne is using his allegory to criticize the Puritan allegorical view of the world which deprives people of humanity and turns them into allegorical figures: "The scar of the Puritan punishment marks Hester for life; her resistance twists her into a figure of resistance" (p. 98).

I would maintain that Hawthorne's allegory here is as demonic as is the Puritans'. If the Puritans make Hester into a figure of sin, _Hawthorne_ makes her into a figure of resistance. She must remain in Salem and resist the moral paralysis imposed on her by her oppressors because Hawthorne has her do so. Given her environment, her character and the nature of her associates, Dimmesdale and Chillingworth, there is no way that Hester can respect the sanctity of the human heart more deeply than she does. The moral that Dr. Becker sees emerging from _The Scarlet Letter_, noble as it is, is

not integrally related to the story. However, the depth of Hawthorne's greatest work does not refuse the validity of this dictum as it accepts most of the philosophical truths critics have chosen to apply to it. The values tested and proved by the allegorical method must emerge organically from the events and configurations of the work in question if they are to be spoken of as part of the work. At the conclusion of The Scarlet Letter Hawthorne may have wished that Hester could have been redeemed by broadening and deepening in some way her respect for the human heart, but during the course of his writing, he did not allow her this possibility.

What form, we might ask, could Hester's greater respect for the human heart have taken? Should she have proclaimed Dimmesdale as the father of her child? Should she have revealed Chillingworth's identity to Dimmesdale and to the community at large? The fact remains that if these acts had been within the range of her possibilities, another much less drastic act would also have been available to her--the act of flight. Now Hawthorne states explicitly that Hester is rooted to the Puritan town, that she can under no circumstances leave at any time. Why not? Because Hawthorne chooses so to root her, to make her suffer as much as the Puritans, in their way, do. Much of the novel's greatness stems from the appearance of free will, the possibility of happiness for Hester that Hawthorne allows us to hope for, especially during the moving forest scene.

Hawthorne is as inflexible an allegorist as the Puritans were. Yet he seems at times to be critical of his demonic inflexibility as much as he is of the Puritans' ability to warp human beings into types. In _The Scarlet Letter_, he faces his inflexibility so squarely that he is in control of it. He can even, at times, relax and allow himself to feel for his characters and to wish, along with them, that things could change, that they could love and find peace. At these points, we find the moralizing statements, the statements which seem to excuse the rigidity of Hawthorne's allegorical control. But close examination shows them really to be independent of the inexorable demonic force of the action. In Hawthorne's later works, as I hope this study has illustrated, Hawthorne's demonic tendencies are in control of _him_, and here the moral statements seem much more forced, much less related to the action.

Notes to Chapter I

[1]"Maule's Curse or Hawthorne and the Problem of Allegory," in A. N. Kaul, ed., Hawthorne, A Collection of Critical Essays, Twentieth Century Views (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966), p. 114.

[2]The Eccentric Design; Form in the Classic American Novel (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 114.

[3]Hawthorne's Fiction: The Light and the Dark (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), p. 4.

[4]New York: Oxford University Press, 1966, p. 8.

[5]Quoted by Fogle, p. 5.

[6]Hawthorne: A Critical Study (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 1962), p. 23.

[7]"How Ambiguous is Hawthorne?" in Hawthorne, A Collection of Critical Essays, pp. 91, 93, 96.

[8]E. V. Gordon, ed., Pearl (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953).

[9]New York: Phaeton Press, 1925.

[10]Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1964), pp. 147-180.

[11]Dark Conceit: The Making of Allegory (Cambridge: Walker-DeBerry, 1960), p. 85.

[12]Hawthorne: A Critical Study, p. 116.

[13]Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode, p. 219.

[14]Ibid., p. 343.

[15]Ibid., p. 222.

[16]Ibid., p. 219.

[17]Ibid., p. 287.

[18]Ibid.

[19]Introduction to Melville's Pierre (New York: Hendricks, 1962), p. xv.

[20]Spenser, The Faerie Queene, Vol. I, Book II, Canto XII, Stanza LXXXIII (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1959), p. 333.

[21]New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1957. Subsequent references to this work will be followed in the text by page numbers, if possible.

[22]Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode, pp. 41-47.

[23]The Faerie Queene, Book II, Canto XII, Stanza LXXXVII, p. 334.

[24]According to Bewley, The Eccentric Design, the typical American hero is a mythic embodiment of the tensions in the American experience as each author conceives of them in the larger historic context.

[25]The Sins of the Fathers (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 192.

[26]Dark Conceit: The Making of Allegory, p. 127.

[27]The Scarlet Letter, Signet (New York: New American Library, 1959), pp. 192-193.

[28]The Sins of the Fathers, p. 78.

[29]"My Kinsman, Major Molineux," Nathaniel Hawthorne: Selected Tales and Sketches (New York: Rinehart, 1950), p. 32.

[30]The Sins of the Fathers, p. 243.

[31]Ibid., p. 257.

[32]The Eccentric Design, p. 174.

[33]New York: Dell, 1961, p. 389.

[34]Ibid., p. 410.

[35]The House of the Seven Gables (New York: Washington Square Press, 1960), p. 43.

[36]The Blithedale Romance (New York: Dell, 1960), p. 68. Subsequent references to this work will be followed in the text by page numbers.

[37]New York: Kennikat Press, 1971. Subsequent references to this work will be followed in the text by page numbers.

CHAPTER II

BROWN

The importance of Charles Brockden Brown's position in the history of American letters has certainly been established. In his four major novels, written with an astonishing burst of creative activity during the years 1798-1800, appear most of the themes and many of the techniques perfected by our major writers. Many of our most influential critics begin their various studies of American literature with discussions of Brown's works. According to Leslie Fiedler, Brown established the mode of the American Gothic, the novel form relied upon, as Mr. Fiedler maintains, by all our major writers of fiction.[1] R.W.B. Lewis finds that one of the earliest prototypes of what he feels is our archetypal hero, the American Adam, is represented by Arthur Mervyn in Brown's novel of that name.[2] Brown has also been credited with providing the first fictional treatment of the American Indian in his _Edgar_ _Huntley_.[3] In the same novel is also found one of the first fictional treatments of the American wilderness.

Perhaps the most fascinating of the various ways in which Brown foreshadowed many of our writers can be localized in the personal descriptions of him provided by observers, friends, and even by himself in his many letters. Seemingly, Brown was a melancholy, passionate, lonely man who

died at thirty-nine from tuberculosis, a disease which had plagued him for most of his life. Here is a description of him written by the portrait painter Sully: "It was in the month of November,--our Indian summer,--when the air is full of smoke. I was caught by the sight of a man, with remarkable physiognomy, writing at a table in a dark room. The sun shone directly upon his head. I shall never forget it. The dead leaves were falling then. It was Charles Brockden Brown."[4] In his letters, Brown describes himself as one much given to gloomy introspection and probing self-analysis. In a letter to his friend W. Wood Wilkens (Jan. 22, 1793), Brown writes as follows: "I utterly despise myself. I am the object of my most unbounded pity, the slave of a gloomy and distressful musing. The fair forms of social dignity and happiness still continue to diminish to my sight. . . . Pity my depravity."[5] These recollections of Brown bring to mind many descriptions of Poe, Hawthorne, Melville and other isolated, introspective Americans who chose writing as a vocation. Mr. Fiedler comments on this vision of Brown as the archetypal American writer very succinctly: "If Brown deserved no other credit," he writes, "he should be remembered at least as the inventor of the American writer, for he not only lived that role but turned it into a myth."[6]

In this study, I too am concerned with Brown as an innovator and inventer--in this case, of American allegorical fiction. A study of his four major novels, _Wieland_, _Ormond_, _Arthur Mervyn_ and _Edgar Huntley_, reveals that Brown's

themes, images and characters have a definite and often uncanny resemblance to Hawthorne's. This resemblance becomes understandable and expected when the reader perceives that both writers chose the allegorical mode as a basis for their creative efforts. Brown came from Quaker stock; he spent most of his life in the vicinity of Pennsylvania and New York, yet his preoccupations with man's dark side, with the workings of natural depravity, with introspection and isolation, are Calvinistic in nature. In this sense then, because of these preoccupations, Brown can be called an intellectual heir of the Puritans. I chose to begin this study with Hawthorne because I feel that, in his works and in Melville's also, as we shall observe, the way of perceiving the world which was characteristic of the Puritans--as a battleground between dualistic forces--reached full fictional flower. In Brown's works, we have the beginnings, often obscure and confused. It is easier to appreciate the nature of the source of a literary mode after it has been viewed at a point of full development.

In the previous section, we talked at length about the relationship of allegory to ambiguity. A writer chooses the allegorical mode because of his preoccupation with some form of ambiguity, his desire to come to grips with it. Hawthorne's greatest works, we observed, are studies in ambiguity: The Scarlet Letter, "Rappaccini's Daughter," "Young Goodman Brown." Each of Brown's major novels is also directly concerned with the ambiguous nature of experience.

In *Wieland*, Brown provides a canvas of characters, ranging from the mentally unstable Wieland to the most eminently rational Pleyel, and then subjects them to "voices" produced by the ventriloquist Carwin and notes their interpretations of and reactions to these sounds. The novel becomes, in one sense, a study of the discrepancies between what they actually hear and what each thinks he hears--a study of the ambiguous nature of the perceived world. In *Arthur Mervyn*, the reader is subjected to several layers of ambiguity. The same events are reported to him by several narrators. He is forced to determine the individual narrator's reliability and to try to discover the true nature of things for himself, if he can. *Arthur Mervyn* is thus a puzzle of ambiguities which the reader is asked to solve. *Edgar Huntley* is the study of one man's attempt to understand the ambiguities of his own nature, as he is forced to cope with his environment through the haze of various stages of mental derangement. And, in *Ormond*, Constantia Dudley is faced with the necessity of coming to grips with the nature of Ormond, a man whose character it is difficult to assess because he is adept at appearing to be other than he is--he is accomplished in the art of disguise and imposture. In each of his four major novels, then, Brown seems to be intent on discovering the real nature of experience--the true nature of the means by which an individual may successfully and happily perceive and interpret some aspect of his environment, whether it is an event,

another person, or a facet of his own character. We will analyze this process of perception in greater depth when we take a closer look at two of Brown's major novels. At this point, I merely wish to establish the fact that Brown, like any allegorist, is intimately concerned with the ambiguity of experience.

Actually, Brown is subjecting the thesis of William Godwin's Enquiry Concerning Political Justice (1793) to the test of the ambiguity of human nature and experience. Accepting the empirical philosophy of John Locke, Godwin postulated that "human reason and moral will, if they would act sincerely, could by themselves establish absolute justice and institute moral perfection in society."[7] This would work beautifully, Brown seems to be saying, but for man's depravity, that protean dark side of him, which always manages to elude the grasp of rationality. Significantly, not one of Brown's supreme rationalists is able to interpret his environment correctly and act purposefully on the basis of this interpretation.

The author's concern with ambiguity is not, of course, the determining factor in deciding whether a literary work is primarily in the allegorical mode. The realist may also be concerned with depicting the paradoxes and ambiguities of existence. In each of Brown's major novels, however, the reader discovers not only the author's depiction of and comment on life's ambiguities, but his profound struggle to

understand and accept them. In each of his novels, Brown invites the reader to share his struggle. In Wieland, this invitation to the reader is overt. Clara, the writer of the long letter in which she details her experiences, often directly invites her reader to share her reactions and to moralize upon the incidents.

Most critics seem to agree upon Brown's concerns in Wieland. He is calling into question "the validity of the optimistic psychology of the day" and systematically questioning "some [of the] fundamental tenets of the Enlightenment," writes Donald A. Ringe.[8] Each of the major characters, Wieland, Clara and Pleyel, represents a stage of rationality. Each, as I already indicated, is subjected to the ventriloquistic machinations of Carwin, and each then comes up with interpretations of these happenings upon which he or she attempts to base his actions. The complete rationalist Pleyel misinterprets his sensations. He accepts Carwin's falsifications of reality as true and therefore misjudges Clara's intentions and actions, causing her much grief. The introspective, unstable Wieland, unable to forget his father's strange death by spontaneous combustion, is driven insane by Carwin's voices. Ultimately, he "hears" voices of his own and, obeying these mysterious divine commands, he murders his entire family. Clara, although not an iron rationalist like Pleyel, accepts the sensationalist theories of her time even though they do not lead her to a logical

explanation of her father's death, a phenomenon which perplexes her greatly. The voices she hears and the events she witnesses drive her from one explanatory theory to another until, her rational resources exhausted, she too suffers a mental breakdown from which she ultimately recovers. At the conclusion of the novel, the reader finds her enlightened as to some of the strange phenomena she has witnessed but saddened, disturbed, and disillusioned. This novel is sprinkled liberally, like Hawthorne's works, with moral statements. For instance, Clara concludes her letter with these words: "If Wieland had formed juster notions of moral duty and of the divine attributes, or if I had been gifted with ordinary equanimity or foresight, the double-tongued deceiver Carwin would have been baffled and repelled."[9] But, as in Hawthorne's works, these statements, as we shall observe, are unrelated to the action. Neither Clara nor Wieland could have acted differently; Brown did not allow them these choices.

The rationalistic reading of Wieland provided above is not erroneous in any way, but it seems to leave many aspects of this novel out of account. For instance, if this is a story of three individuals and their reactions to identical stimuli, why are the brother and sister, Wieland and Clara, much more fully developed characters than is Pleyel? He does not change at all throughout the work, even though he, like Clara and Wieland, is subject to the forces of transformation. Actually, Wieland is the story of Clara and her brother; it

details their journeys to self-discovery: Wieland becomes a demonic murderer, and Clara's faith in herself and in the forces of goodness and sanity becomes completely shaken. Of course, of the two, the reader comes to know much more of the internal workings of Clara since she is the narrator--we perceive the world through her senses.

One of the aspects of this novel which is powerfully evident from the onset is the isolation with which Brown surrounds his characters. They seem to constitute their own world. At one point, Clara depicts this isolation quite clearly. She writes: "Six years of uninterrupted happiness had rolled away since my brother's marriage. The sound of war had been heard, but it was at such a distance as to enhance our enjoyment by affording objects of comparison. The Indians were repulsed on the one side, and Canada was conquered on the other. Revolutions and battles, however calamitous to those who occupied the scene, contributed in some sort to our happiness, by agitating our minds with curiosity" (p. 34). It seems as if Brown wants nothing to interfere with the tremendous psychic forces he intends to unleash. As in all allegories, in _Wieland_ also, these forces, emblematic of the characters who generate them, projections of their inner reality, will subsequently become aspects of the physical environment; they will fill the void of isolation.

Something which is immediately striking to the reader is the intense regard brother and sister have for each other.

They are constantly in each other's company, and Clara painstakingly documents every aspect of Wieland's character, his every whim and change of mood. But it is not clear until the close of her narrative that Clara seems to understand the passionate nature of their relationship when she notes that Wieland "was wont to love [his sister] with a passion more than fraternal" (p. 211). Wieland, as we mentioned, documents Clara's and Wieland's quests for self-knowledge. The form of this journey is determined and dominated by a terrible battle--Clara and Wieland's battle, their attempt to subdue the powerful forces of an overwhelming illicit passion. And it is Carwin who spins the web of Clara's and Wieland's passion in which the brother and sister become ensnared.

Carwin is similar to many characters we have already discovered in Hawthorne's works. Dark, intense, forceful, he lives by prying and spying into other people's affairs and by manipulating people to suit his own perverted sense of pleasure. Like a puppeteer, he controls his victims with the deceitful strings of his gift of ventriloquism. He creates false appearances and delights in watching people act on the basis of misinterpretation. Carwin's similarities to Acrasia are extremely clear; he is the demonic allegorist of Wieland who unleashes the latent dark forces of destruction and unreason. Paradoxically, he is also the embodiment of the forces he unleashes as Acrasia embodies Guyon's repressed desires. Carwin, the initiator of action in this novel, can

be said to function according to the principle of what Fletcher calls imitative magic.[10] He precipitates the action he desires by the process of imitation--he imitates the voice of the individual whose commands would result in the effects Carwin is seeking. For instance, in order to motivate Wieland, Carwin initially adopts the voice of Catharine, Wieland's wife, since this is a voice he feels Wieland would harken to. Ultimately, when Wieland hears his own divine voices, to save Clara's life, Carwin imitates this "voice of God" since, at this point, this is the only voice Wieland would obey. The principle of imitative magic is, according to Fletcher, one of the means by which events are initiated and connected in allegories since, generally, allegorical events are not based on the principle of plausibility. In allegories, the "reversals and discoveries arbitrarily imposed on the action, the _deus ex machina_ introduced to rid the action of an impasse--these do not imitate nature, though they may imitate ideas and theories."[11] Thus, magical causation is one of the principles which imparts unity to allegories. And imitative magic is an agent of causation most frequently found in allegories primarily assuming the battle form.[12] _Wieland_, as we've already indicated, is heavily dependent on the battle form. The novel details the confrontation between the forces of darkness and irrationality, the forces of Carwin, and the forces of reason and enlightenment.

As in most allegories, the physical environment of Wieland can be seen as a projection of the mind of the allegorical hero. We saw this system of symbolic projection constantly in operation in the works of Hawthorne. During the course of the discussion of "Young Goodman Brown," for example, we observed that the battle occurring in the forest between the forces of Satan and the forces of Faith was a concrete representation of the battle taking place in Goodman Brown's mind. We observed also that Hawthorne uses the natural world emblematically as the landscape of the human mind. Brown also uses this allegorical technique. The natural landscape is often evocative of a character's inner being. For instance, after Pleyel hears of the death of a woman he loves, he takes a solitary lakeside walk, and Brown describes the area he traverses as follows: "No scene can be imagined less enticing to a lover of the picturesque than this. The shore is deformed with mud and encumbered with a forest of reeds. The fields, in most seasons, are mire; but when they afford a firm footing, the ditches by which they are bounded and intersected are mantled with stagnating green, and emit the most noxious exhalations" (p. 58). An unpleasantly disorganized landscape is thus used to concretize a distraught state of mind.

In Wieland, man's rational components can be seen as represented by the edifices he constructs, the most significant of these being the small temple constructed in the

wilderness by Wieland's fanatical father as a place for his religious worship. After his mysterious and violent death in this building, it is taken over by Clara and Wieland's family. They convert it into a true temple of enlightenment, decorating it with a bust of Cicero and furnishing it with a harpsichord, and spend countless evenings there reading aloud, singing, and conversing. It is in the vicinity of this temple that Wieland first hears Carwin's voice. Clara's summerhouse, a place she loves, is the location where she first hears Carwin's deceitful voice. Subsequently, the place becomes frightening and loathsome to her. The other two edifices assaulted by unreason and violence are Clara's home and Wieland's. Clara first sees Carwin when he comes to her home, thirsty after wandering in the surrounding wilderness. And it is at Clara's residence that reason is finally vanquished by the forces of darkness, as we shall see. Wieland's home becomes inundated by violence when he brutally murders his children there. Since the forces of violence and darkness are depicted as besieging man's shelters from the wilderness that surrounds them, and since the wilderness is generally emblematic of man's dark passions, it can be said that Brown represents the battle between reason and disorder as the assault of the wilderness, the large rocks and dense trees which he often describes, upon the structures built by man as places of refuge.

That the forces of disorder are incestuous in origin[13] can be clearly seen if we look closely at the events leading

up to the triumph of unreason and violence, Wieland's murder of Catharine and their children. The road toward disillusionment and madness begins for Clara when, falling asleep near her summer house, she dreams that she is standing before a ditch and that her brother is urging her to proceed--toward certain destruction. It is at this point that she first hears Carwin's voice, the external manifestation of her inner turmoil. Some time later, disheartened and disturbed after Pleyel fails to appear at a temple gathering, Clara retires to her chamber. Again she hears the mysterious voice, at this time issuing from her closet. Immediately, she thinks of her brother and his threatening overtures. Imagining that he is hiding in her closet, she rushes frantically to open the closet door; she runs not away from but toward the danger! Ultimately, she is confronted by Carwin, not by Wieland. After this incident, still strongly suspecting her brother and fearful of him, Clara decides to live with him and his family. The final revelation of the nature of this frantic, violent attraction between brother and sister occurs with the death of Catharine. Wieland lures his wife to Clara's dwelling, indeed to her very bedchamber, and there murders her slowly and brutally, leaving the body as an offering for his sister, a mutilated declaration of his demonic passion for her. The discovery of the body drives Clara to madness. Significantly, prior to this series of incidents, Clara, ostensibly in love with the rational Pleyel, imagines that

he has died--as reason must before irrational violence can triumph.

Wieland is driven to committing a sacrificial murder just as Reuben Bourne ("Roger Malvin's Burial") is compelled to offer his son as a declaration of his neglected commitment to Roger Malvin. What drives both of these characters to commit acts of violence is the logic of compulsion.[14] Both are driven subconsciously, by the force of guilt. Reuben must atone for a broken promise, Wieland for an illicit passion. Wieland, however, is not allowed to find peace in atonement as Reuben is. Once the long-repressed dark passions within him surface, transformed into the lust for blood and violence, there is no stopping them. To break the chain of murderous desire, Wieland must ultimately kill his sister or himself; he kills himself. The dark forces have won the battle; the quest for self-discovery has ended in self-annihilation.

After witnessing her brother's suicide, the distraught Clara is taken to Europe by a "rational" uncle and, supposedly, she regains her sanity, marries Pleyel and concludes her epistle with this moralization, quoted earlier in this study: "If Wieland had framed juster notions of moral duty and of the divine attributes, or if I had been gifted with ordinary equanimity or foresight, the double-tongued deceiver would have been baffled and repelled" (p. 276). I think the inapplicability of this conclusion is now perfectly evident. It

is as if Reuben Bourne were to wish that he did not feel responsible for Roger Malvin's death. The forces unleashed by Brown were part of the protagonists they tormented and, in Wieland's case, destroyed. Carwin sprang of the attraction between Wieland and Clara; this attraction was strong enough to transcend any notion of moral duty or any gift of equanimity or foresight, however extraordinary. Brown, seemingly confused by the explosive forces he has unleashed, is hoping the moralizing will serve to quench them or at least diminish the number of questions raised by them, but I do not believe he accomplishes this goal.

In Wieland, Brown is trying to understand the role played by the often destructive blind passions which are so unavoidable a part of human nature; incestuous passion is, for Brown, representative of human irrationality in general. To what extent do these irrational powers control human motivation, determine human relationships? How can the forces of society, of civilization control or just account for man's irrational energy so that it can perhaps serve a useful function or at least result in something less than total destruction? Brown discovers that man is certainly controlled to a large extent by his irrationality. But he arrives at no satisfactory solution to the problem of society's role in relation to man's dark self. The moralizing is certainly not a solution; it is merely the author's final effort to seal Pandora's box. Clara has been presented with a glimpse of

the dark forces of human motivation, but she is not allowed more than a partial understanding, and that only for a brief moment. She notes, as we indicated earlier, that Wieland's passion for her was more than fraternal. Also, toward the conclusion of her narration, she presents an exemplum, the story of Maxwell and the Stuarts, to illustrate the vast amount of human destruction unleashable by misguided sexual passion. But this glimmer of insight into her own situation is soon blocked by the moralization with which she concludes.

In his study of Wieland, Larzer Ziff has discussed the importance of Brown's "hard look at the murky sources of human behavior" in relation to our American civilization. He notes that the America of Wieland is "a land in which the dreams of prosperity conjured up by a free society occupying cheap and fertile lands are realized. But the promises of modern enlightenment phrased so as to encourage the American in his belief that the past is dead and that the old age of his land, the Colonial period with its rigorous Protestant doctrines and aristocratic social formulas, has given way to a new world, these are siren songs."[15] I feel Brown's indictment of his native land is deeper than this. The rigorous Protestant doctrines, Brown seems to be implying, serve not only to condemn many perhaps unpleasant but definitely undeniable aspects of human nature but to exclude them from social consideration. Our skeletal social structure seems too rickety to tolerate any deviations. Ultimately, we must

remember, Clara must remove to Europe in order to regain her mental and emotional well-being. America can offer her shattered sensibility only guilt-ridden rejection and isolation.

Of his three other major novels, Edgar Huntley, published in 1799 between the two sections of Arthur Mervyn, is the most heavily dependent on the allegorical mode and also, I feel, Brown's most disturbing novel. It is indeed as Fiedler has observed, "not so much written as dreamed."[16] This novel clearly takes the form of a quest in which Edgar Huntley, guided by Clithero Edny, travels the road to self-knowledge which, here, takes the form of a descent into madness. In this work, the process by which the hero becomes his own demonic allegorist, the process by which Edgar Huntley becomes Clithero Edny, is detailed with the clarity and precision of a diagram. We see this transformation in its entirety with the vision of irony since Huntley is the narrator and, although he painstakingly details every aspect of his experience, he is never fully aware of what is happening. In dividing a major character into two antithetical but similar halves, to illustrate, by magnification, an internal struggle, Brown is using the allegorical technique of doubling which, as we shall observe, Melville relies upon so heavily.[17]

From the onset of this moon-struck narrative, the reader is aware of the uncanny similarities between Edgar and Clithero. The actions of both are of an extremely compulsive

nature. Edgar is driven to pursue the sleep-walking Clithero through the wilderness as Wieland is driven, by the logic of compulsion, to murder his family. Like Clara, Huntley offers moral rationalizations as explanations for his actions. Not until the close of this novel does he accept the irrevocable nature of Clithero's insanity, not until Clithero dies; and at this point, Huntley has his own madness to contend with. Seen from the point of view of Huntley's misunderstanding of Clithero's actions, the novel can be accepted as another of Brown's attacks on the supremacy of rationality, another of the presentations of the triumph of ambiguity, and such it is. But it is also something more; Edgar Huntley, like Wieland, is an exploration of the nature of madness and a discovery of society's inability to civilize, to render purposeful or even harmless, the dark self.

Clithero's narration of his past history is extremely important since Huntley's future is destined to be a repetition of Clithero's past.[18] As a child in Scotland, Clithero relates, he was taken into the home of a wealthy, benevolent woman, Mrs. Lorimer, ostensibly to serve as companion to her somewhat prodigal son. The nature of Clithero's relationship to Mrs. Lorimer is clearly established. "She was," Edny narrates, "not ashamed to manifest . . . the tenderness of a mother."[19] Clithero's position in Mrs. Lorimer's household becomes strained when he finds himself strongly attracted to another member of the household, the illegitimate daughter

of Mrs. Lorimer's profligate twin brother. Clithero desires desperately to leave the family at this point, but Mrs. Lorimer not only refuses his request but insists that he marry the girl, Clarice. At this point, Clarice's father, long absent and believed dead, suddenly reappears and Clithero shoots him in self defense. Consequently, he rushes at night to Mrs. Lorimer's home, intent on alleviating her sorrow at the death of her brother by killing her also. Prevented by Mrs. Lorimer from mistakenly shooting his "beloved" Clarice instead of her, Clithero flees and emigrates precipitously to America.

Unconsciously, during his narrative, Clithero reveals glimmerings of other than rational and benevolent motivations. Mrs. Lorimer had absolutely prevented his departure from her household and had "arraigned . . . [his] impatience of obligation as criminal, and condemned every scheme . . . [he] had projected for freeing . . . [himself] from the burthen which her beneficence had laid upon . . . [him]" (p. 76). This "burthen" or at least a large portion of it consisted of his impending marriage to Clarice. Aware of Mrs. Lorimer's strong attachment to her missing brother, compulsively, as if to punish her, Clithero kills her brother and then, again compulsively, as if to free himself, he attempts to murder Clarice, ostensibly mistaking her for Mrs. Lorimer. Incest is not as blatant an undercurrent in _Edgar Huntley_ as it is in _Wieland_, but it, or at least the fear of it,

certainly exists. Clarice is Mrs. Lorimer's "adopted" daughter as Clithero is her "adopted" son. Patricide and the fear of sexuality, motifs certainly present in the works of Hawthorne, are to be discovered in Brown's works also. The flight from sexuality into isolation is Brown's interpretation of the American experience, as it is Hawthorne's. In isolation, human irrationality, often identified in Brown by incestuous passion, gradually takes the individual over. Clithero's attempt to kill Clarice is certainly a subconscious attempt to avoid any marital commitment. And somewhere in the depths of his tormented mind, the image of Mrs. Lorimer's brother takes on the attributes of a father. Clithero refers to the killing as follows: "Had the assailant been my father, the consequences would have been the same" (p. 74). Along the road to isolation and irrationality, ties that bind the individual to the human family, to the past, to normality, must be severed in Brown's works as in Hawthorne's. And both writers accept the father as the most obvious embodiment of such ties.

An allegorical technique used very skillfully in this novel is the emblematic image: the entire landscape becomes a reflection of Edgar's mental state as he tracks Clithero compulsively to the depths of madness. This technique is present in Wieland but not quite so powerfully as it is here. As Edgar follows Clithero through the "desert track called Norwalk," he climbs rugged hills, plunges into echoing caves,

and explores the "deepest thickets" of cliffs. The cavern image is the most often used to depict the dark, haunted, enclosed world of Edgar's mind. At the beginning of his quest, Huntley describes a portion of his surroundings as follows: "The vale was narrow, and hemmed in on all sides by lofty and precipitous cliffs. The gloom deepened as the moon declined, and the faintness of starlight was all that preserved my senses from being useless to my own guidance" (pp. 17-18). His knowledge of himself, at this early point in his tale, is very aptly described as a "narrow vale hemmed in by cliffs." Clithero will indeed lead him over these cliffs to whatever lies on the other side.

Edgar's actions start paralleling Clithero's more and more closely after his reawakening in the cave, his rebirth into the world of madness. All of the events following this awakening have a distinct dreamlike quality which is not dispelled until Edgar returns to civilization. It should be mentioned at this point that the dream vision is an extremely important part of the allegorical mode, as we observed when we examined Pearl. The dream state gives full reign to the forces of the unconscious and yet preserves enough of the semblance of reality to be comprehensible to the reader. Also, as Honig notes, "the dream . . . in violating temporal sequence and standard patterns of behavior," appeals for interpretation.[20] It is a signal that something unusually significant is being revealed, a red light, so to

speak, which heralds the intensification of the allegorical technique. In Edgar Huntley, this intensification is extremely noticeable because it comes so abruptly. At one moment in his narrative, Edgar is preparing for sleep in his chamber; the next moment, he awakes in the cave. The dream imagery continues as he makes his way to the mouth of the cave and thereupon discovers a small band of Indians and a captive maiden. The Indians are described in exaggerated dream terminology: they are four "brawny and terrific figures," their gigantic hands clutching muskets. After killing one of them, Edgar escapes with the captive girl and begins the road through the "wild and desolate" wilderness back to civilization.

As has been frequently noted, Edgar Huntley is the first notable American novel to deal with the Indian. In picturing the Indian as an unpredictable savage enemy, Brown is relying upon the well-established tradition of the Indian captivity narrative. The Indian here played the allegorical role of Satan's disciple, the opponent of God, whose goodness the narrative was meant to illustrate. He kept the captive alive and eventually arranged for his rescue, in return, of course, for the captive's continuing faith. Even when the captivity narrative lost its religious significance, it continued as a vehicle for Indian hatred and lent its negative cast to many descriptions of the Indian.[21] It is this portrayal of the Indian as murderous savage which is

found embodied creatively in Brown's novel. His Indians are fierce dream figures of irrational authority who menace Edgar as he attempts to fight his way back to civilization and sanity.

It can be argued that the rescue of the girl has no integral relation to the plot of this novel. However, this is a point I wish to contend with since I feel Edgar's treatment of this girl is meant to parallel Clithero's reaction to his Clarice whom he attempts to do away with. At one point in his journey, Edgar and the girl find shelter in an Indian hut only to be again, almost immediately, threatened by their savage pursuers. The girl has fallen asleep inside the hovel; Edgar, armed with a rifle, hides himself in a sand bank adjacent to the hut, planning to shoot the Indians as they make their entrance. Suddenly, watching the Indians enter, he is beset with indecision. The Indians find the girl and Edgar hears "a heavy stroke descend." Then he hears sounds like those produced "by dragging somewhat along the ground and shrieks . . . incessant and piteous" (p. 200). Not until the enemy has dragged the girl from the house and wounded her severely does Edgar finally shoot. It seems to the reader as if he were compelled to see the girl tortured even though he is armed and was, initially, prepared to defend her.

Edgar's dream rejection of this maiden is paralleled somewhat by his reaction to his intended, Mary Waldegrave.

It seems that he has strong reservations about this marriage, as Clithero did about his marriage to Clarice. Mary, Edgar notes, threatens his simple, frugal bachelor life with her "love of independence and ease and impatience of drudgery," and his present condition, he notes, "is wholly inconsistent with marriage" (p. 162). Here we have the same fear of marriage that we discovered subconsciously motivating Clithero.

During the course of his assumption of Clithero's identity, Edgar parallels the latter in yet another way. He too kills figures who are symbols of authority to him. Clithero, it will be remembered, shot Mrs. Lorimer's brother and likened the act to the killing of a father. Edgar shoots several of the gigantic Indians who constantly impede his journey, and threatening dream figures such as these are accepted as symbols of authority.[22] He also, although unconsciously, shoots at Sarsefield, a man he accepts as the teacher and mentor of his youth.

Perhaps the most significant revelation of how completely Edgar assumes Clithero's identity occurs after he reaches civilization. Finally aware of Clithero's hopeless insanity, and of his desire to kill Mrs. Lorimer, now the wife of Sarsefield and residing in New York, Edgar sends the Sarsefields a letter warning them of the danger of Clithero. He sends this letter against the wishes of Sarsefield, who is afraid of its effect on his pregnant wife. Sarsefield's fears are realized. Upon receipt of the letter, his wife

miscarries and almost loses her own life. Edgar Huntley has thus fulfilled Clithero's desire: he has profoundly hurt Mrs. Lorimer. The reader is left to wonder whether Edgar will repeat Clithero's act of attempting to kill the woman he is expected to marry.

Huntley concludes his narrative with a moralization, just as Clara Wieland does hers: "I have erred," he writes to Sarsefield, "not through sinister or malignant intentions, but from the impulse of misguided, indeed, but powerful, benevolence" (p. 305). This statement, similar to Clithero's rationalization of his attempt to kill Mrs. Lorimer, is indicative of Edgar's tragic inability to come to grips with what has happened to him. He has returned from the savage forest, but he has not fathomed the wilderness of his mind. Nowhere, implies Brown, is man free of his dark impulses, of his tendency to become his own demonic allegorist--to become incarcerated within his irrational and destructive impulses. Inadvertently and most probably without comprehension, Edgar gives voice, earlier in his narrative, to the sensations Brown must have experienced as a result of writing _Edgar Huntley_: "How little cognizance have men over the actions and motives of each other! How total is our blindness with regard to our own performances! . . . Disastrous and humiliating is the state of man! By his own hands is constructed the mass of misery and error in which his steps are forever involved" (pp. 293-294). For Wieland and Clara, for Clithero

and Edgar, Brockden Brown has constructed a world in which misery and error and madness are the rewards of one who would search for his identity. Brown has been their Acrasia, and in so being he has become his own demonic allegorist. The works which follow *Edgar Huntley*, *Clara Howard*, *Jane Talbot* and the second section of *Arthur Mervyn*, are devoid of any deep plunges into human depths and human darkness. Like their successor Holgrave, of Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables*, the heroes of these later works ultimately choose shallow lives of superficial, sunny domesticity.

Of Brown's four major novels, I have chosen to discuss *Wieland* and *Edgar Huntley* because, I feel, they are his most unified works. *Ormond* and *Arthur Mervyn* also deal with the enigmas of human irrationality. In *Ormond*, the heroine, Constantia Dudley, escapes the machinations of her demonic allegorist Ormond, as Clara does Carwin but she, also like Clara, is left profoundly disturbed and disoriented as a result of her experience. And, again like Clara, she flees America, the land of her disenchantment, and settles in Europe. *Ormond* is a much less intense study than is *Wieland*. Partially, this is a result of the narrative technique used by Brown in *Ormond*. The story is told by a narrator whose objective distance dims the intensity. She doesn't enter the novel as a participant until quite late. Most of the narration comes to the reader second hand, as the narrator is retelling Constantia's story. Also, the complexity of

the relationship between heroine and guide (demonic allegorist) is simplified in this novel to that between maiden and seducer. This limits, I think, the depth to which Brown can probe human depravity as a seducer's motivations can be made to appear just so complex.

The movement of Arthur Mervyn is impeded by so many digressions, so many characters, so many incidents, that the novel loses directness immediately and becomes quite confusing. It bears a definite similarity, in this respect, to Hawthorne's The Marble Faun, which is also an extremely cluttered novel. Yet, Arthur Mervyn is definitely an allegorical quest during the course of which the hero is also forced to deal with a dark guide figure--Welbeck. Brown, however, abandons his attempt to delineate the boundaries of human depravity in the second volume of this novel, published after Edgar Huntley. Arthur Mervyn's quest becomes one of financial security and he concludes what has become a sentimental narrative on the eve of his wedding to a wealthy widow he calls "Mamma." Like his successor Hawthorne, Brown seemingly could not tolerate the dark world of violence, depravity and guilt he had discovered for long. His allegorical quest had not ended in solace but in confusion. Thus, he turned toward his final sentimental novels and then abandoned fiction altogether.

Notes to Chapter II

[1]Love and Death in the American Novel (New York: Stein, 1960).

[2]The American Adam (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1955).

[3]R. H. Pearce, "The Significance of the Captivity Narrative," American Literature, 19 (1947), 1-20.

[4]Quoted by Fiedler, pp. 130-131.

[5]Quoted by David Lee Clark in his Charles Brockden Brown, Pioneer Voice of America (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1952), pp. 34-35.

[6]Love and Death in the American Novel, p. 130.

[7]Quoted from Godwin's Enquiry by Warner Berthoff in his "Charles Brockden Brown: The Politics of the Man of Letters," the Serif, 3, No. 4 (Dec., 1966), 5.

[8]Charles Brockden Brown (New York: Twayne, 1966), pp. 41-42.

[9]New York: Doubleday, 1962, p. 270. Subsequent references to this work will be followed in the text by page numbers.

[10]Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1964), pp. 188-195.

[11]Ibid., p. 182.

[12]Ibid., pp. 189-190.

[13]The incest theme in Wieland has not been unnoticed by critics. Leslie Fiedler (Love and Death in the American Novel) notes that "Geschwisterinzest is everywhere in our literature (from Wm. Hill Brown to Hawthorne, from Poe to William Faulkner) associated with death; only Brockden Brown, however, is willing to portray it as naked agression. The tender alliance of brother and sister, so beloved of the Romantics, becomes in his works a brutal conflict; his brothers rob, cheat, and harry their sisters, yet are bound to them so closely that, as in Edgar Huntley, each feels his own life and death mysteriously linked to the fate of the other" (pp. 135, 136). I believe that in Wieland Brown's concern is primarily with Clara and Wieland's misunderstood

and misguided passion for each other. Clara's battle with her brother is depicted with the most minute detail; it is responsible for all the destruction and misery described in the novel.

[14]Frederick Crews discusses Reuben Bourne's "Logic of Compulsion" in his The Sins of the Fathers (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 80-95.

[15]"A Reading of Wieland," PMLA, 73 (1962), 56.

[16]Love and Death in the American Novel, p. 144.

[17]Allegorical doubling is discussed by Fletcher on pp. 182-219.

[18]Although it has not been fully explored, the similarity between Huntley and Clithero has not been neglected by critics like Fiedler, p. 145, and Harry R. Warfel, Charles Brockden Brown, American Gothic Novelist (Gainsville: University of Florida Press), p. 160, and by Ringe, p. 94.

[19]New York: Macmillan, 1928. Subsequent references to this work will be followed in the text by page numbers.

[20]Dark Conceit: The Making of Allegory (Cambridge: Walker-DeBerry, 1960), pp. 68-81.

[21]R. H. Pearce, "The Significance of the Captivity Narrative," pp. 1-20.

[22]Sigmund Freud, "Representations by Symbols in Dreams," in his The Interpretation of Dreams, J. Strachey, tr. (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1954), pp. 350-404.

CHAPTER III

MELVILLE

With Melville, the form of allegory deriving from the Puritan consciousness reaches its peak and, I must say, its finale. Melville's work progresses to a point at which he depicts a world in which communication--between man and man, man and God, man and self--is virtually impossible. The ever-continuing Puritan dialogue, the soul-searching, the attempt to reach God, to understand, however dimly and partially, the creative power behind the universe, has ended, as if the pain inherent in such communication has become too great. Again and again, in their search to reach, to communicate with, some living force in their worlds, Melville's heroes come face to face, ultimately, with a wall, with layers and layers of pasteboard wall behind which looms a void. Indeed, Melville's work can be called an allegory of walls.

Although the best works of Hawthorne and Brown are tales of demonic penetration in which the characters are eventually taken over by their demons, some form of lasting communication, however negative and destructive, does take place. Wieland does penetrate Clara, even if this penetration results in severe shock and temporary insanity for her. Clithero penetrates Huntley so completely that their identities merge. Some form of communication also characterizes

most of Hawthorne's works. In The Scarlet Letter, Chillingworth gains full access to the heart of Dimmesdale; so completely are they united that Dimmesdale's death is followed rapidly by the death of Chillingworth. Young Goodman Brown's sight is forever dimmed because of his intimate meeting with the devil. Aylmer, of "The Birthmark," invades his wife so deeply that he puts his destructive hand on the innermost core of her mortality. Again, in "Roger Malvin's Burial," Reuben Bourne's spirit, imprisoned in guilt, is finally freed to join that of Roger Malvin. This story is, of course, unusual for Hawthorne in that the final meeting in spirit of the two men is undeniably positive in effect.

Besides their concern with the human need for communication, Brown, Hawthorne and Melville share another Puritan concern--man's preoccupation with his identity, his constant search for his identity, a search which absorbed many a Puritan as he attempted to ascertain whether or not he was one of the Elect. The heroes of Brown and Hawthorne generally begin their quests for identity with very little knowledge of self. This knowledge increases as they confront their environment and attempt to surmount the obstacles their creators place in their paths. Ultimately, as we observed, most of these questers end up only too aware of the dark sides of their nature. Most of Melville's heroes, on the other hand, walk onto the stage with what they think is a definite sense of themselves, and they do not grow or

consciously expand very much during the course of their adventures. "Call me Ishmael," are his first words and, as he floats in terrible watery isolation at the conclusion of his narrative, "Call me Ishmael" could very well be his last words. What Ishmael demanded from his voyage on the _Pequod_ was not so much a sense of himself; he already possessed this. He desired to engage himself, to unify himself with others, and, in a sense, to lose the feeling of isolated self. Knowing his identity, he wanted others to know it. He wanted it to make its mark, its permanent dent, on the surface of things. Unfortunately, he ends up as he began, conscious only of his sense of Ishmaelness.

This demand to act on the basis of one's sense of self is evident in all of Melville's tales, and in few of them is the individual allowed to realize this hope. He remains isolated throughout his story, and as a result of this isolation, he does not grow. Bartleby begins as he ends, facing walls. The attorney he works for concludes his narrative as he begins it, fatuously moralizing and analyzing. Amasa Delano also does not change throughout the course of "Benito Cereno"; he remains optimistic and blind. It seems as if Melville spreads out a whole world for his characters to see but denies them a right to make any small part of it, however undesirable, theirs. Homeless they start out; homeless they remain. Melville creates them without the necessary keenness of perception, depth of wisdom, and open-mindedness

necessary to fathom the mass of rumbling ambiguities he forces them to confront. In a sense, Melville often creates naive allegorists who try to set up simple, clear-cut, one-to-one relationships between the concrete and the abstract and who, as a result of this procedure, are faced with blindness, ignorance or madness.

The attorney of "Bartleby" is an excellent example of this naive allegorist, the limited individual who will not recognize his limitations, who thinks he can analyze and understand anything. The lawyer feels he knows himself thoroughly. He is, as he writes, "a man who, from his youth upwards, has been filled with a profound conviction that the easiest way of life is the best."[1] He has quite a lofty opinion of his "prudence" and "method" and his ability to make men like John Jacob Astor think well of him. This attorney also feels he can easily understand others, maintaining that he could "write the complete life" of most law-copyists he has known. And the reader is shown that, within the tight little world of his office, the lawyer does manipulate the weaknesses of his two clerks, Turkey and Nippers, to his advantage. But he is not allowed to rest in firm control of his sense of identity completely undisturbed: Bartleby enters his life. There is a brief period of turmoil, but ultimately there is no communication between this "safe" man and his demon Bartleby. They meet but do not really touch.

It has been noticed by many critics that Melville relies very often on what Widmer calls "a pattern of matched-and-split characters"[2] like Ishmael and Ahab, Benito Cereno and Amasa Celano, Claggart and Billy Budd and, in this case, Bartleby and his employer. Melville is here practising the allegorical technique which I mentioned during the discussion of *Edgar Huntley*. Character doubling can signify plot doubling, a technique we have observed, if not precisely identified, as utilized by both Brown and Hawthorne. *Edgar Huntley*, for instance, is composed of two stories, Edgar's and Clithero's. *Wieland* can be accepted as presenting four tales: Wieland's, Clara's, Carwin's and, most important in relation to the others', Wieland's father's strange story. Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables* details the stories of two opposing forces, the Maules and the Pyncheons. Generally, the relationship between such character doubles in an allegory takes the form of a battle: Edgar Huntley fights to save the sanity of a reluctant Clithero who perversely insists on maintaining his negativity, his darkness. Ultimately, Clithero wins; he takes over the character of Huntley completely. These battles between Edgar and his demon give Edgar's quest for identity the shape of a jagged, hell-bound spiral. The three characters of *Wieland* are also engaged in various battles: Clara tries to save Wieland; Wieland tries to kill Clara; Carwin tries to manipulate them all and, finally, both members of the Wieland family struggle to

evade the predestinating curse of insanity and destruction bequeathed to them by their father.

Now, these battling allegorical figures have certain definite characteristics, chief of which is their striking similarity to each other, as we observed during the discussion of Edgar Huntley. They are equal in power and, often, in appearance. We can think, for instance, of Spenser's Fair and False Florimells. Even in The House of the Seven Gables, the similarities between the survivors of the Maule and Pyncheon dynasties are stressed: both lines have atrophied in power and number; the youngest members of each family (Phoebe and "Holgrave") have so lost the characteristic Pyncheon or Maule lineaments that they fail to recognize each other as enemies. Clara and Wieland too are certainly similar in their mental instability. During the discussion of Brown, we identified the principle of imitative magic, the agent of causation in allegorical battles. According to this principle, forces and entities can be "magically" produced, like Carwin's voices, or magically destroyed. When two equal but antithetical forces confront each other and one emerges victorious, the other has been magically overcome; the principle of realistic probability does not apply because the equality would preclude a victory. An improbable or fantastic turn of plot can also have a magical effect. For instance, as Clithero and Edgar become more and more like each other, it becomes more and more

difficult for one to gain ascendancy over the other. In his race to reach Clithero, Edgar has trouble diminishing the distance between them. A magical turn of plot, the improbable arrival of Mrs. Lorimer, diverts Clithero, and the battle is allowed to come to a climax.

If we consider the techniques of allegorical doubling, we find that Melville, like Hawthorne and Brown, has relied on most of them. However, if we compare the form of Melville's allegories with those of Hawthorne and Brown, we discover significant differences. Melville's battles are devoid of victories or even compromises. The opponents, however similar, come truculently near each other, but their proximity does not trigger the power of imitative magic. They merely threaten each other for a time and then drift apart.

The structure of "Bartleby" follows the dialectical or symmetrical pattern of allegorical battles completely. We have, first, an opening section in which the lawyer sets before us his analysis of his character and of his situation. The structure of his office is described in dualistic terms: one boundary of the cistern-like chamber is a white wall, the other, a black one. The doubling principle operates even upon the clerks the attorney employs; they are, as one critic points out, antithetical "humor" characters, Turkey being sanguine and plethoric and Nippers alternatingly choleric and melancholy."[3] As one is operative in the

morning and the other in the afternoon, each one can be seen as half of a character. The second section is devoted to Bartleby; it begins with his entrance and concludes with his refusal to examine his work. It is not difficult to understand why Bartleby appears when he does. The attorney is living in a fragmented world of doubles, exemplified by the two walls, the two clerks. Being a bachelor, he has no commitments, seemingly no life, outside of the cistern which is his office. Ginger Nut, the little messenger boy he employs, often seems his only link to the outside world. It is only logical that the attorney too would become fragmented, that this "safe" man of the surface would be forced to confront his antithetical double, the dark portion of his character, his demon--Bartleby.

The next or third section is devoted to the attorney; his attempts to deal with Bartleby are depicted. This section can be accepted as concluding when the lawyer decides that Bartleby's presence is a result of necessity.[4] Now, at this point, the reader expects a resolution of some kind. The doubles have met, have confronted each other. A victory, a defeat, or a compromise is, seemingly, imminent. Instead, we have a drifting apart of the two figures and a return of the attorney to the state of mind revealed at the onset of his narrative. This final section concludes with a description of Bartleby's final resting place, the Tombs; we have returned to the starting point, a discussion of walls. The

symmetry of the structure of "Bartleby" should now be apparent. There is an introductory, scene-setting section, a section devoted to each of the combatants and then, instead of providing a section devoted to the coming-together of the two, the story abruptly breaks and returns us, seemingly, to the point of origin.

Apparently it is Bartleby's task to take over, to confound the attorney until he becomes engulfed by the world of negation which Bartleby radiates. Bartleby is the walls come alive and threatening. No method of handling Bartleby succeeds for the attorney: neither commands, cajolery, kindness, nor pity. Finally, the attorney accepts Bartleby as a factor of necessity. "My mission in this world, Bartleby," he maintains, "is to furnish you with office-room for such period as you may see fit to remain" (p. 31). But even this "wise and blessed frame of mind" evaporates; to escape Bartleby, the attorney moves his chambers.

The allegorical technique of projection by which the environment becomes emblematic, an extension of the character, is very much in evidence here. The cistern-like chamber, sparsely furnished, completely walled in and even further fragmented by partitions, is representative of the attorney's mind, a trap narrow and deficient in "life." On a summer day, life does enter, in the form of Bartleby, at least, the possibility of full life inherent in self-knowledge, but the attorney immediately sets up another

partition to separate himself from Bartleby. Nevertheless, Bartleby immediately begins to expand, threaten and loom, to fill up the empty cistern. Soon all the other inhabitants are using his word "prefer," thereby assuming a bit of Bartleby's identity. But here the take-over stops as the attorney begins to pull away from Bartleby's influence, to block his awareness of Bartleby's meaning by applying his powers of naive rationalization to the case of Bartleby. Gradually, of course, the attorney moves out of his office, runs away from the possibility of any self-knowledge. Bartleby is eventually removed to a place which is truly emblematic of his inability to affect anyone, a prison, the Tombs, by its very definition a place for outcasts where they cannot touch society or the outside world in any significant way.

The attorney never comes to an understanding of the significance of Bartleby. He approaches him with the logic of the naive allegorist, and the self confidence and ease which he applies to his pragmatic solution of any problem. At one point, he feels Bartleby's actions, or inactions, are the result of poor eyesight. At the conclusion of his narrative, he attributes the scrivener's negative attitude to his stay in the Dead Letter Office. The concluding statement, "Ah, Bartleby! Ah, humanity!," reveals the extent of the lawyer's blindness. Bartleby has nothing to do with abstract humanity; he is part of his employer's self, and this the

attorney fails to grasp. The pressure of his environment caused a fragmentation within the attorney; a latent part of him, the nay-saying, inactive, dark part, suddenly assumed power of its own. The attorney's task was, apparently, to recognize this portion of himself. He does not do this but thrusts Bartleby from him and continues along his naive way. The two half-men never make a whole. Without the qualities inherent in the attorney, the qualities of life, however shallow, Bartleby, the essence of death, cannot survive. He shrivels away as Chillingworth does after Dimmesdale rejects him. Without the dark depths embodied in Bartleby, the attorney must go through life partially blind, seeing only the vague shadows of things.

Many interpretations of "Bartleby" have been advanced. The tale has been accepted as a parabolic treatment of Melville's plight as a writer--as one who, Bartleby-like, dared to confront the walls of things.[5] It has been accepted as Melville's depiction of the dehumanizing sterility of the American business community.[6] "Bartleby" has also been analyzed as Melville's diagram of the conflict between necessity and free will.[7] It is all this and more. "Bartleby" is Melville's statement that American society fosters the existence of fragmented half-men, that it encourages a narrow, self-satisfied complacency which prevents an understanding of the world around one and indeed of one's self. Both Hawthorne and Brown present the giving-in to one's dark side

as a method of dealing with the tensions inherent in being an American. In many of his works, Melville denies even this. There is often no release, not even that of annihilation. There is, seemingly, no way man can advance in his knowledge of himself. There is no such thing as human perfectibility, just fragmented mediocrity. The attorney never recognizes the essential similarities, however antithetical, between himself and Bartleby, the similarities between the Tombs, Bartleby's emblem and No. __ Wall Street, his emblem. Each is prevented from understanding the other because of his own limitations. Although the two human fragments are kept apart, the reader senses the yearning of each half for the other manifested by Bartleby's tenacity and the lawyer's deep involvement with Bartleby. Melville, however, does not allow this yearning to be fulfilled.

"Benito Cereno"[8] was written after "Bartleby" although in the same period, which saw the production of almost all of Melville's shorter fiction--1853-1856. In this story, the technique of doubling is much more sophisticated and the walls preventing union of the human fragments much thicker than in "Bartleby." We have three entities, not two: Amasa Delano, Benito Cereno, and Babo. With three opposing forces, the chances of unity become much slimmer. The battles involve the struggle between Babo and Benito Cereno and Amasa Delano and Babo-Benito Cereno.

Slavery is an unnatural situation involving the subjugation of one force by another. The resulting

relationship between the two forces is eminently unstable; the slightest relaxation or distraction of the ruling force can cause an upset or reversal, as unnatural, as unstable and potentially chaotic, as the initial arrangement. Undoubtedly Melville conceived of this struggle as a contention between the dark, potent, instinctual impulse embodied in Babo and the pale, genteel, civilized, impotent component-Benito Cereno. Like the antithetical opposites of most allegories, these two combatants are quite similar: they are both intelligent and ruthless; as a slave master, Cereno employed the same methods of intimidation and subjugation as Babo does. And Babo, in the position of master, can appear extremely genteel and civilized. Before the opening of this story, one battle between Cereno and Babo had already taken place. Because of a relaxation on the part of the ruling force (their owner persuaded Cereno to allow the blacks to travel without fetters) the enslaved changed places with the masters. The dark instinctual force is temporarily triumphant, dragging its impotent, languishing opposite along like a wounded Siamese twin. As they stand together at the opening of this tale, Benito and Babo are very much like a pair of Siamese twins: Benito requires the physical support, the strength of Babo, and Babo the genteel, civilized facade of Benito, however much both hate the arrangement. "Benito Cereno" has been the cause of much critical uneasiness because of the seeming callousness with which Melville

accepts the Negro as an emblem of malignant, disguised evil. We can say with assurance, however, that Melville does regard the evil as resulting from the institution of slavery. The stern-piece of the *San Dominick*, the cosmic emblem of this story, presents Melville's view of the unnatural and brutal situation created by slavery. The central figure of this heraldic tableau is "a dark satyr in a mask, holding his foot on the prostrate neck of a writhing figure, likewise masked" (p. 110). No matter who is in the position of power, white master or black rebel, the result is malignant; human beings are transformed into veiled emblems of brutality.

The *San Dominick* is the perfect emblem of Babo-Benito Cereno. She too is like a bizarre pair of Siamese twins, with her tarnished shreds of former power and gentility animated now by the demonic force of black anarchy. Her very name provides a deft ironic touch. The Dominicans or Black Friars are God's administrators, literally, *Domini cani*, the hounds of God. In this case, the ship's power is being provided by the hounds of hell. Melville is attempting, of course, to set up a proportion in which the hounds of hell would stand in relation to the hounds of God as Babo stands in relation to Don Benito. The ship's emblematic stern-piece is an indication of how precarious and paradoxical this relationship is. The entire universe of "Benito Cereno" is permeated by such unstable proportions of equal

yet antithetical forces. We have man at war with himself, master at war with slave, aristocracy with anarchy and, to repeat, the legions of the devil with those of God.

Amasa Delano is presented with this mass of paradox and ambiguity and is asked to analyze it. The task is, of course, impossible. However benign, he is a man more simple and shallow even than Bartleby's employer. His emblem is not only his ship, the _Bachelor's Delight_, but his dinghy, the _Rover_, his "household boat," faithful as a Newfoundland dog, for which, while onboard the _San Dominick_, he is constantly on the lookout. His is a warm-hearth-and-cozy-slippers kind of mentality. It, like the keel-less dinghy, will not, because it can not, penetrate beneath the surface of things. And, to make his problem even more difficult, Melville makes him an outsider to it. Bartleby, as we observed, is created for the attorney by the pressures of the fragmented, cistern-like environment in which the latter lives. In being asked to recognize Bartleby, his employer is asked to recognize a part of himself. Delano, on the other hand, is a complete outsider to the world of the _San Dominick_; he has had no previous experience with evil; he is being asked to solve a problem completely alien to him. Delano cannot even be called a naive allegorist; he often refuses to allegorize; he rejects as irrelevant or incomprehensible every sign, every talisman offered to him, even the most obvious ones. Delano will not lift any veils. At best,

he can sense only a physical threat to himself, but the sight of his Rover makes him ashamed even of this sensation. His dinghy fills him "not only with lightsome confidence, but somehow with half humorous self-reproaches at his former lack of it" (p. 144).

The signs of disorder offered to Delano are of varying complexity. At one point, he leans against a carved balustrade which gives way before him; "had he not clutched an outreaching rope, he would have fallen into the sea" (p. 141). This is dismissed as accident, which it could very well have been. At another point, he is thrown a complex knot formed by an old sailor and told to "undo it, cut it quick" (p. 143). "For a moment, knot in hand and knot in head," Captain Delano stands perplexed. At this moment, he merely feels "queer." Then there is the sailor who seems to keep trying to tell him something and there is the scene of insubordination during which a Negro wounds a Spanish sailor without penalty. None of this does Delano read correctly. The most obvious emblematic tableau presented to him is the shaving scene which takes place in Don Benito's battered, disheveled cabin. Every incident depicted during the scene suggests a pattern of threatened torture--from Babo's use of the Spanish flag as a towel and Cereno's constant shuddering to Babo's final drawing of blood. Captain Delano can lift none of the veils. At his best, he attributes Babo's use of the flag to the Negro's indiscriminate love of bright colors.

The American's senses are numbed by the cliches fostered by slavery; he can accept the Negro as nothing more than a docile, domesticated animal. Thus Amasa Delano's limitations prove too restrictive for his task, that of severing the Siamese twins, of eliminating the impasse, destroying the false equilibrium holding Babo and Don Benito in solution. Benito Cereno, driven to desparation, seemingly, by Delano's intractability, sets himself free and precipitates the final violent acts of his battle with Babo. And the situation finally becomes clear to Captain Delano.

Amasa Delano, however, is not yet free. Melville has another task for him. The man who could not interpret the physical manifestations of the dialectical power struggle which is existence must now observe a much more profound phenomenon, the decay of an individual who has been overcome by this struggle. Benito Cereno, having stood at the brink of his dreadful human depths, chooses to plunge into this void and vanish. Like Bartleby, he wills his own death; like Conrad's Kurtz, he is overcome by "the horror." It is ludicrous to think that Amasa Delano could comprehend this; it is futile to berate him for not comprehending. The limits of Delano's understanding are defined by the legal documents, summarizing the case, quoted at the end of the story. They deal with surface facts; so does he. There has been no real communication between Amasa Delano and Benito Cereno in spite of Cereno's forced entry into the Rover. At

the moment Cereno yields to the horror of his experiences, Delano tells him, "The past is passed; why moralize upon it? Forget it. See, yon bright sun has forgotten it all, and the blue sea, and the blue sky; these have turned over new leaves." Don Benito replies, "Because they have no memory, . . . because they are not human" (p. 192).

Again, Melville has written a story in which the man who has been overcome by darkness and the man who will see none have met but not communicated. Like Bartleby's employer, Amasa Delano has not been altered by his experiences. He has remained alone with his shallow sense of himself. The technique of doubling has been used to reinforce singleness. The depths of Delano's unawareness are sounded with irony during the violent scuffle onboard the _Rover_. At one point, he and Babo reproduce the tableau of the stern-piece: "The left hand of Captain Delano . . . clutched the half-reclining Don Benito . . . while his right foot . . . ground the prostrate negro" (p. 170). Delano has entered the world of the _San Dominick_; he has become immersed in its evil, yet his naivete prevents the experience of evil from becoming the knowledge of evil.

That the technique of doubling, as it involves the splitting of one individual into psychological fragments, is primarily an allegorical technique, has already been stressed. Doubling, as Fletcher points out, is often based on the antithesis between good and evil and, since literature

dealing with character doubles allows for the development of double plots, an allegorical effect is almost often felt, as the work necessitates an exegetical reading.[9] Also, an author who tends to fragment his characters reveals an analytical, exploratory restlessness which is not conducive to strictly realistic art. He is unsure of something, so to speak. And, of course, the character fragments will be idea determined; they will become what they represent and thus never have the fullness nor the freedom necessary for the existence of the realistic character. Doubling is a striking characteristic of the work of two authors whom it will prove interesting to compare with Melville, Dostoevsky and Conrad. Both authors rely heavily upon the allegorical mode in their works.

Conrad, like another great allegorist, Dante, lived the life of an exile, a wanderer, an Ishmael. Josef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski was forced to leave his native Poland at four when his parents, Polish patriots, were exiled by the Czarist government to various Russian towns. He became an orphan at eleven and, after a brief return to his native land, left for Marseilles at sixteen to go to sea. He eventually became a British subject. Conrad's life of isolation and transiency is similar to the experiences of many American authors. With no stable background of meaningful tradition against which to define themselves, and on which to fix blame for their loneliness and, often, unhappiness, it is understandable that these artists would use their work as a

means toward understanding and even more significant, revenge. Let us note what Melville himself says of Dante:

> The man Dante Alighieri received unforgivable affronts and insults from the world; and the poet Dante Alighieri bequethed his immortal curse to it in the sublime malediction of the _Inferno_. The fiery tongue whose political forkings lost him the solacements of this world, found its malicious counterpart in that muse of fire, which would forever bar the vast bulk of mankind from all solacement in the worlds to come. Fortunately for the felicity of the Dilettante in Literature, the horrible allegorical meanings of the _Inferno_ lie not on the surface; but unfortunately for the earnest and youthful piercers into truth and reality, those horrible meanings, when first discovered, infuse their poison into a spot previously unprovided with that sovereign antidote of a sense of uncapitulatable security, which is only the possession of the furthest advanced and profoundest souls.[10]

Is then the vision of allegory veiled to hide the profound depths of misery and hatred it reveals? One must admit that allegorical heroes are forced to suffer deeply and, often without relief, for long periods. How often does the pilgrim Dante shudder to the depths of his soul and almost lose consciousness as he is forced to behold horrors which only the poet Dante could clothe in words! How long must Hester Prynne feel the scalding heat of punishment! How deeply is Clara Wieland affected by the blackness of her brother's insanity! Fletcher admits that he is "taking a deliberately extreme view" when he writes that the allegorist often inflicts pain sadistically.[11] But this is certainly a valid observation. Conrad's isolated heroes too often feel, deeply and profoundly, the painful and destructive effects of the forces of malignancy which overwhelm them and crush their wills.

Dostoevsky too was undoubtedly made bitter by his life's events--his father's murder at the hands of his own serfs, his own heart-stopping last-minute reprieve as he stood, a convicted political revolutionary, in front of the firing squad, facing death, the hard-labor exile in Siberia for five years, illness, poverty. Some of his characters do find salvation but after plummeting to what abysmal depths of suffering, moral isolation and excoriating penitence! The need for suffering becomes, for him, a literary obsession.

Conrad and Dostoevsky share this preoccupation with suffering and misery with Melville as they share the technique of doubling. Both Conrad and Dostoevsky, like Melville, rely upon doubling to represent, allegorically, the schism produced in the human psyche by overwhelming stress, whether environmental or psychological. But neither Conrad nor Dostoevsky uses the technique as ironically as Melville does. As we observed, in "Bartleby" and "Benito Cereno," Melville spreads out the elaborate diagram of the fragmented individual before the reader only to roll it up again and put it back on the shelf. The diagram exists of and for itself; it explains nothing and leads to no solution. The character becomes fragmented and remains so. Not only does suffering not lead to salvation; it leads to no form of enlightenment.

Dostoevsky's "The Double"[12] is probably his most graphic depiction of human fragmentation and deterioration.

Yakov Petrovich Golyadkin, unable to cope with societal pressures inherent in the life of a "minor government official," recedes into the horrifying fantasy world of paranoia where, ultimately, he is confronted by an individual who looks like him, bears his name, comes from the town of his birth--who is his double. The horror deepens for Golyadkin when the double reveals that ability to advance in society and those traits, slyness, sycophancy, quickness and craftiness, which Golyadkin seems to lack. Eventually, his double replaces Golyadkin in society. Golyadkin's mental state deteriorates completely and he is removed from society and institutionalized. His suffering does, in a sense, come to an end as he is removed from the milieu which caused him pain, which resulted in his fragmentation. We have here a direct confrontation between the antithetical identities, Golyadkin I and Golyadkin II, a battle which leads to a victory. The depths of suffering and turmoil are so brilliantly depicted that the reader is often unsure at which point Golyadkin's self-destructive fantasy ends and reality begins. But there is a climax; there is a cessation of pain.

Conrad's "The Secret Sharer"[13] can serve as an illustration of one way in which this artist uses the doubling technique. A young captain, troubled and disheartened by the strangeness and loneliness of a maiden command--a strange ship manned by strange men--walks the decks of the vessel in the solitary hours of night, attempting to get the feel

of her. Suddenly, he is confronted by a figure in the water holding on to his ship's ladder; it is Leggatt, self-possessed, impassioned, who had swum a long distance from his own ship to avoid punishment for a murder he feels is justifiable. Instantly, the young captain accepts him as his "double," shelters him, and endangers his ship and crew in his attempt to present Leggatt with the opportunity for escape. There is deep communication and profound understanding between these two men similar in appearance and born in the same town. Leggatt illustrates for the captain the power of loneliness and the drastic consequences attendant upon the perpetrator of a rash act. Rather than face the legal consequences of his criminal act, Leggatt flees to a life of isolation and fugitive transciency as a criminal in hiding. In the process of allowing Leggatt to escape, the captain tests his ship and himself as commander--both pass the test. Allegorically, the captain, oppressed by fear and loneliness, is forced to confront a portion of himself he has been afraid to face; Leggatt is the self the captain could become if he failed. He comes to know the power of his dark side as well as its tragic possibilities and by accepting its existence he is able to exorcise his fear of it. In allowing Leggatt to escape, he brings the ship dangerously close to land but he maintains control and avoids disaster. By so doing, he gains the confidence of his men and, most important, his own self-respect. Again, we have a coming

together of the two human fragments and a definite denouement. How different from the coming together and pulling apart in the two Melville stories! In "Benito Cereno" and "Bartleby," Melville does not allow a climax, be it negative but palliative as in "The Double" or positive but portentous as in "The Secret Sharer." Again we observe the demonism which is so integral a part of the American allegorical mode. Melville's heroes are not allowed to realize themselves in relation to any aspect of their environment; they are not allowed to communicate, to digest and understand their surroundings and, through the process of interaction and understanding, to develop and grow. Melville expresses this inability in the form of the unfruitful fragmentation or doubling which is neither healed nor in any significant way resolved.

Melville's short fiction, of which the two stories thus far discussed are examples, was composed, as I already noted, in the mid-1850's. By this period, Melville had already written _Typee_, _Omoo_, _Mardi_, _Redburn_, _White Jacket_, _Moby Dick_ and _Pierre_. To any discussion of Melville's allegorical techniques, an understanding of _Moby Dick_ is crucial. I certainly do not wish to compress this triumph of the American imagination within any didactic system but I do intend to make certain suggestions concerning its form which, if they are not entirely novel, will perhaps serve to confirm and expand insights presented by other commentators.

I feel that Moby Dick is a book about the making of allegory, about the necessity for allegory under certain environmental circumstances. Melville presents a world and then shows us two individuals attempting to deal with this world, to relate themselves to it--Ishmael and Ahab. That Ahab's response to his situation is a demonic, naively allegorical response has often been recognized. It is Ishmael's response that is crucial and must be understood since Moby Dick is his fiction. Explicitly, he tries to avoid becoming a naive allegorist like Ahab. In his attempt to know his world, he appeals to history, geography, the practical sciences, mythology--in short, he appeals to almost every branch of learning at his disposal in order to separate himself from Ahab, to nullify or at least mitigate against the pull toward annihilation radiating from the mystical, fatalistic doomed bareness which is his environment.

In attempting to discover the exact nature of this environment, the reader has to remember that he sees it through the eyes of Ishmael; his sensibility colors all. We can state with certainty only that there is land and there is sea. In the sea lives a huge white whale with the scars of many human encounters on him. He is far-ranging, has been sighted in many different locations and has maintained himself as victor against his many battles with human enemies. If one chooses the sea environment as home, he becomes forced to deal with the white whale eventually. The

whale can be accepted as not existing at all, as a product of some deranged imagination and thus rejected; the captain of the Bachelor reacts in this manner. He can be feared as a dangerous animal foe and thus avoided; after his chance encounter with Moby Dick, the captain of the Samuel Enderby expresses such a desire to keep clear of him: "aint one leg enough?" he asks.[14] Then, of course, we have the reaction which necessitates a frenzied interest in and intimate involvement with the whale, an interest which transforms him from animal to myth; this kind of involvement is manifested by Ahab and Ishmael.

What determines how an individual will react to a particular situation is, of necessity, his character. Ishmael and Ahab, both sea people, become obsessively involved with the whale because Melville creates them to become so involved. Ahab is a questioner and a non-accepter. When presented, like Spenser's Sir Guyon, with what he considers false or misleading visibilia, he will smash them. As an orthodox Calvinist, he showed his abhorrence at the ritual of Catholicism by spitting into a silver calabash in a "deadly scrimmage with the Spaniard afore the altar in Santa" (p. 104). To a mind intent on seeing the universe in the strictly dualistic terms of black-white, evil-good, Zoroastrianism proved, in its dualistic directness, a more congenial religion than Calvinism, beset as the latter is with ambiguity and paradox. As a Zoroastrian he believed good

and evil to be in combat for the universe, but after he was struck by lightning and maimed by Moby Dick, evil, to Ahab, became the only essential power in the universe and Moby Dick its embodiment. His religious development is a definite narrowing down, a process by which he becomes more and more inflexible, more and more naive; he smashes things indiscriminately. Ahab ultimately hardens into idea like Hawthorne's man of adamant; he becomes as destructive as he believes the whale to be; he becomes, in other words, what he hates.

Like his namesake, the King of Israel who "wrought evil in the eyes of the Lord" (I Kings 16:25), and was thus destroyed by Him, Melville's Ahab is also fated to be destroyed. Melville's choice of Ahab as a name for his hero is an excellent one because, as Ursula Brumm points out, Ahab is a man whom God deceives in order to destroy:

> Now therefore, behold, the Lord
> hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all
> these thy prophets, and the Lord hath
> spoken evil concerning thee. (I Kings 22:23)[15]

Ahab is thus a rebel who both generates his cause and is generated by it. He must allegorize because he demands an end to ambiguity and because the ambiguities he confronts must be allegorized to maintain their full, destructive potency. Ahab's attempt to confront and understand the whale only serves to illustrate that it will neither be confronted nor understood. The harder he tries to destroy it,

naturally, the more destructively malevolent it appears to him.

Ishmael is similar to Ahab in many ways. Here again the process of doubling is in evidence. Both are alone, isolated in the world; both reject the solidity and seeming stability of land values; each is a man who would transcend the surface of things; both have a dualistic vision. In his thorough and intelligent study of Ishmael, Ishmael's White World, Paul Bordtkorb details Ishmael's dualistic vision minutely. All the phenomena presenting themselves to his senses splinter at contact into two portions; the sea is both "a realm of ferocity, estrangement, and dissolution as well as of interest and even beauty." Motion "is necessary to avoid stagnation and boredom, but it is circular and seems futile."[16] Ultimately, Ishmael is faced with admitting that nothing is knowable; Proteus-like, an object or phenomenon avoids and confounds digestion by man's senses, his only means of perception. Insisting as he does that allegory is "a rhetorical method emplying more or less systematically preconceived static conceptual reference," Brodtkorb maintains that Ishmael allegorizes only sporadically, during his weak moments; at his best, according to Brodtkorb, he is a symbolist trying to comprehend things as they are significant in themselves and not merely representative. This definition of allegory recognizes only the technique of naive allegory. As a symbolic mode, allegory

is much more than a technique; it is a state of mind, an attempt to comprehend a reality from which one is somehow divorced or about which one is uneasy; it is an attempt to alleviate anxiety in the face of ambiguity, as, I hope, has already been illustrated.

Brodtkorb also feels that, ultimately, Ishmael "accepts with minimal illusions and defenses his human condition in that world of experience to which . . . humanity seems abandoned."[17] I do not feel that, ultimately, Ishmael accepts anything or if he does, he is profoundly uncomfortable in the face of this "acceptance." Like the ancient mariner, he is compelled to tell, again and again, the tale of his sojourn aboard the Pequod, but, unlike the ancient mariner, his telling is not moral in scope; he is not a prophet who is compelled by divine ordinance to dispel myth or divine truth; Ishmael seems to speak primarily to produce an effect upon himself. The telling alleviates his discomfort and lessens the pressures of overwhelming unresolvable ambiguity upon him. He is trying to shape something graspable, something of his own will out of his tumultuous experiences.

Ishmael's desire to believe in the freedom of his will is evident in the famous opening line of Moby Dick, "Call me Ishmael." He will be an Ishmael, he maintains.[18] Perhaps he is thinking of God's mercy to Ishmael, God's decree, His revelation to Abraham that He has blessed his son

and that He "will make him fruitful and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and [God will] make him a great nation" (Genesis 17:20). The Biblical Ishmael eventually lives secure among his people; when he dies, he is "gathered unto his people" (Genesis 25:17). He has become part of something, has realized his identity; he is no longer alone. In telling his tale, Ishmael does create something, a great work of art, but he remains isolated. Ironically, he fulfills another aspect of God's prophecy concerning Ishmael; he does become the young Ishmael who God decrees will be "a wild man," an outcast. He becomes the Ishmael who dwells "in the presence of all his brethren" (Genesis 16:12), in their presence but not in their hearts. The irony contained within Ishmael's three opening words has a powerful effect. At the conclusion of his story, Ishmael pictures himself as indeed an outcast who is picked up by the _Rachel_, the bereaved parent whose heart belongs to the lost son and who can offer the strange orphan physical safety at best. He has succeeded indeed in being Ishmael.

Ishmael's explanation of his sea-going urge can also serve to explain the pressures underlying his desire to repeat his tale. He must stave off the "damp, drizzly November in his soul," his morbid fascination with death, his desire to attack people physically, perhaps to force them to know him. After this bit of revelation, Ishmael

quickly retreats, as if afraid to confront the hollow within him, as if afraid others will see it. He generalizes: all men stand, at some time in their lives, "fixed in ocean reveries." He philosophizes: "Yes, as every one knows, meditation and water are wedded for ever" (p. 22). He must generalize, make himself representative; he must philosophize; he must laugh at himself and at others because, as Brodtkorb notes, "a laugh emotionally distances us from what we laugh at."[19] But Ishmael is not a satirist; he certainly does not have the implicit moral standard which Frye notes "is essential in a militant attitude to experience."[20] Ishmael is not sure of anything. He piles up fact after fact, the true blended with the erroneous, to build the distance between himself and that feeling of hollowness, to convince himself it isn't valid. If Ahab wants to tear down pasteboard masks, Ishmael seemingly wants to construct them. Frequently, when he is intent on describing whaling procedures, discoursing on the whiteness of the whale, providing histories of whales and whaling or involving himself with Ahab and his concerns, Ishmael's voice almost disappears. He almost succeeds in constructing the wall between himself and that fear that he really does not know the whale and has not succeeded in engaging himself meaningfully with his world, that fear that he is and always will be alone and apart, a homeless thought wandering forlorn throughout a stepmother world. But Ishmael's voice always returns to admit that his wall has not

proved thick enough. We have the feeling, while reading Moby Dick, that we are indeed witnessing a pasteboard mask being constructed, that this edition is merely a stage in the building of the ultimate Moby Dick, that with each telling, the work will grow. Ishmael will add more facts, more philosophical statements; the laughter will become louder and more strident. But that hollow core will still be there, that "ungraspable phantom of life" will still be ungraspable.

Ishmael often maintains that he strenuously objects to symbolic representation; he stresses his dependency on realism and insists that his audience accept the fact that "not only is the most marvellous event in this book corroborated by plain facts of the present day, but that these marvels (like all marvels) are mere repetitions of the ages" (p. 209). He insists that people accept the realism of his tale so that they do not regard Moby Dick "as a monstrous fable, or still worse and more detestable, a hideous and intolerable allegory" (p. 205). At this point in his narrative, Ishmael is citing several instances of whales whose supernatural escapades had earned them mythological stature, whales, for instance, who had been harpooned but had escaped only to be finally killed, on the other side of the world, by the same harpooner. Undoubtedly, his insistence on the realism of his narrative is meant to reassure the fearful reader who might sense that Ishmael is leading him into very deep waters. Be reassured, he seems to be coaxing the

shallow and timid, my narrative is not concerned with anything evil or supernatural, anything you might not be able to accept or that might frighten you. At the same time that he is calming his audience, Ishmael can be denying his desire to allegorize also because to reveal this desire openly would be to reveal his own uncertainty in the face of the hostile universe he confronts and thus defeat his subconscious purpose, to allay this uncertainty by subjecting it to allegorical investigation.

We have merely to glance at Ishmael's rendering of any incident or scene in his tale to feel the irresistible pull of his tendency to allegorize, often very naively. Here, for instance, is his description of Flask standing on Daggoo's shoulders in the whale boat in order to gain a better view of the sea: "On his [Daggoo's] broad back, flaxen-haired Flask seemed a snow-flake. The bearer looked nobler than the rider. . . . So have I seen Passion and Vanity stomping the living magnanimous earth, but the earth did not alter her tides and her seasons for that" (p. 221). The following is Ishmael's description of a fast fish towing two boats after him: "Round and round the _Pequod_ the battle went, while the multitudes of sharks . . . rushed to the fresh blood that was spilled, thirstily drinking at every new gash, as the eager Israelites did at the new bursting fountains that poured from the smitten rock" (p. 314). This is allegory at its most naive level; it seems, almost, to be

self-parody. Finally, here is Ishmael's summary of the voyage of the <u>Pequod</u>; this passage can indeed serve as a microcosmic representation of the mode of Ishmael's entire work:

> Here, then was this grey-headed, ungodly old man, chasing with curses a Job's whale round the world, at the head of a crew, too, chiefly made up of mongrel renegades, and castaways, and cannibals-morally enfeebled also, by the incompetence of mere unaided virtue or right-mindedness in Starbuck, the invulnerable jollity of indifference and recklessness in Stubb, and the pervading mediocrity in Flask. Such a crew, so offered, seemed specially picked and packed by some infernal fatality to help him to his monomaniac revenge. How it was that they so aboundingly responded to the old man's ire-by what evil magic their souls were possessed, that at times his hate seemed almost theirs; the White whale as much their insufferable foe as his; . . . all this to explain, would be to dive deeper than Ishmael can go. The subterranean miner that works in us all, how can one tell whither leads his shaft by the ever shifting, muffled sound of his pick? Who does not feel the irresistible arm drag? . . . For one, I gave myself up to the abandonment of the time and the place; but while yet all a-rush to encounter the whale, could see naught in that brute but the deadliest ill. (p. 188)

Ishmael allegorizes (lines 1-10) in order to arrive at some understanding of human motivation, of purposeful human communication. Ultimately he comes to know only that he, like all others, is the victim of elusive, unanalyzable but incontrovertible forces.

To support his view that Ishmael's allegorizing is "discontinuous" at best, Brodtkorb implies that the bulky chapters dealing with the history of the whale, the procedures of whaling, etc., interrupt such obviously allegorical chapters like "Fast Fish and Loose-Fish," and "The

Monkey-rope." Now, copious description is not rare in allegory. Lists of names, articles of clothing, weapons, natural objects are part of the allegorical mode. In Pearl, the maiden is described in lengthy and minute detail by the dreamer. Acrasia's bower is also lavishly detailed. Fletcher notes that these lists of so-called realistic detail or of names so often found in allegories, especially in allegories of the encyclopedic type, like Jean de Meung's continuation of The Romance of the Rose, are, in themselves, rituals. By means of such rituals, the allegorist is attempting to "fix the magical value" of the object or place he is listing or naming,[21] to familiarize himself with all its details, to erase all hostility and strangeness from it, to make it his.

The so-called realistic chapters of Moby Dick are composed largely of lists. In "The Whiteness of the Whale," Ishmael lists all the natural and supernatural white phenomena he can think of--the white bear, the albatross, the "white steed of the Prairies," the white shark, the sacred white dog of the Iroquois--in an attempt to alleviate his profound discomfort in the face of this "terrible," "elusive" quality of whiteness. In the chapters "Of the Monstrous Pictures of Whales" and "Of the Less Erroneous Pictures of Whales, and the True Pictures of Whaling Scenes," the listing technique is also predominant. The lists of artifacts and procedures composing these and other chapters

dealing with the techniques and history of whaling are all part of Ishmael's ritualistic attempt to get at the mystery of Moby Dick; all these details form the clothing, the armor of the whale. Seemingly, the more Ishmael knows about the whale, the more intimately, he thinks, he should know it. Yet each one of these clothing chapters ends with an admission of defeat; "Dissect him how I may," Ishmael laments at one point, "I but go skin deep. I know him not and never will" (p. 363). Thus, Ishmael realizes he cannot capture the spirit of the whale; the more details he piles up, the further he travels from Moby Dick's mystical center, the core of his identity. Of course, Ishmael's attempts to pile protective details between himself and the whale are based on his terrifying premonition that the whale's identity is not translatable into human terms; man cannot, as Brodtkorb notes, "name the unnamable."[22] But Ishmael is compelled to try; he is driven to name the unnamable, and an artist who would do so is, by nature, an allegorist.

If Ishmael's tendency to allegorize is accepted as one of his predominant traits, I think we can disagree with the observation, frequently made, that Melville's treatment of Ishmael is not consistent. Ishmael is much more than an observer-narrator who appears and disappears at various points throughout the narrative. He is trying to achieve several objectives throughout Moby Dick and his preoccupation with his efforts often makes him appear inconsistent as

a narrator. He is attempting to know himself, act on the basis of this knowledge, interpret his environment, make contact with other individuals and, ultimately, distance himself from the fearful knowledge that none of these endeavours is possible for him. Ishmael seems to disappear, we pointed out, when he is busily probing and studying his environment, constructing walls of facts, moralizing and generalizing, or immersing himself in the concerns of those around him. He appears abruptly at times to express the painful realization that his efforts are getting no closer to his several goals. Ishmael often tells us that his journey has led to no positive sense of himself and no workable knowledge of his universe. He cannot confront such insights with the unflinching directness which would result in a clear, consistent narrative.

The whale, like Hawthorne's scarlet letter and Dante's multifoliate rose, is a cosmic symbol; he shadows forth, in his grand intangibility, allusiveness and isolation, his ungraspable ghastliness, the universe as it is represented in Moby Dick. Ahab's preparation for his final encounter with the whale evokes those powerful mythic moments, like Hester and Dimmesdale's temporary victory over the scarlet letter in the forest, like Reuben Bourne's terrible rediscovery of the scene of Roger Malvin's death, which ennoble all great allegories. These are instances when the veils of allegory suddenly become transparent and the fullest power of the

artist's vision is felt, unrationalized, unanalyzed. The presence of such moments indicates that the ritual of writing allegory has, seemingly, done its palliative work; if only fleetingly, the artist can express his troubling vision without shielding himself from its ambiguities, paradoxes and threats. We have such a moment when Ahab is observed by Starbuck as he is profoundly moved, momentarily, by the battle within him of humanity and demonism:

> But the lovely aromas in the enchanted air did at last seem to dispel, for a moment, the cankerous thing in his soul. That glad happy air, that winsome sky, did at last stroke and caress him; the stepmother world, so long cruel--forbidding--now threw affectionate arms around his stubborn neck, and did seem to joyously sob over him, as if over one, that however wilful and erring, she could yet find it in her heart to save and bless. From beneath his slouched hat Ahab dropped a tear into the sea; nor did all the Pacific contain such wealth as that one wee drop. (p. 506)

Another moment, similar to the preceding one in the mythic power of its effect, occurs just as Ahab is about to dart his harpoon at Moby Dick. Ahab declaims:

> 'Death-glorious ship! must ye then perish and without me? Am I cut off from the last fond pride of meanest shipwrecked captains? Oh, lonely death on lonely life! Oh, now I feel my topmost greatness lies in my topmost grief. . . . Towards thee I roll, thou all-destroying but unconquering whale; to the last I grapple with thee; from hell's heart I stab at thee; for hat's sake I spit my last breath at thee! (p. 534)

Each of these passages evokes a vision of loneliness. The first one represents the poignancy of man alone in a world of love, calm and beauty which he knows he cannot share although he dearly wants to. This beauty is, to him, mere appearance, the result of a stepmother's guile. The second

vision embodies the power of hatred such loneliness can engender in a being like Ahab. He forges moods of longing into moods of hate and destruction.

Ishmael's concern with Ahab and his whale is the major embodiment of his preoccupation with isolation in general. The great fact of man's essential isolation in his universe is one truth which Ishmael's experiences have cast no doubts upon. In addition to Ishmael's own isolation and Ahab's, minor but striking visions of isolation dot the narrative. There is Father Mapple, walled into his pulpit, delivering a sermon which is, ironically, unrelatable to the human condition as Melville perceives it. Mapple preaches supreme obedience to God as consistent with supreme self-reliance. This is a beautiful dream but it is unrealizable, as the events of Moby Dick make clear. There is Ishmael himself as a child, walled into his bed by terror, his loneliness assuming the form of a phantom hand bloodlessly grasping his. There is the barman Jonah of The Spouter-Inn, embedded within the simulated right whale's head which forms his "dark-looking den" of a bar. And, ultimately, there is Jonah himself, walled into the whale's stomach.

At only one point in his life, as he unfolds it for us, is Ishmael permitted a glimpse of the nature of human communication and mutual commitment--during the time he and Queequeg share the brief interlude of bedroom brotherhood. The brevity ot this strange companionship must be stressed.

Once they are on board the *Pequod*, Ishmael and Queequeg go their separate ways, in spite of Ishmael's determination to cling to Queequeg "like a barnacle" until Queequeg's death. Also, Ishmael constantly stresses the "unconsciousness" of Queequeg; he is a being to whom the process of rationalization and analysis is alien--the supreme man of instinct. Can Ishmael, the man for whom being is thinking, really be said to have communicated with Queequeg? Rather, his temporary physical nearness to Queequeg gives him a teasing sense of the pleasures a real belonging to another could bring. That he is profoundly affected by his interlude with Queequeg is undeniable. During the chapters devoted to Queequeg, the ironic stridency of Ishmael's voice becomes much more marked. He constantly stresses the ludicrousness, the unreality of Queequeg. Frantically, he is attempting to distance himself from an incident which, by comparison, makes the present loneliness of the teller of the *Pequod*'s tale that much more terrible. Disturbed by the unsubstantiality of this moment of human warmth, Ishmael subjects Queequeg, like almost every other phenomenon he confronts but cannot possess, to the allegorizing process. Queequeg becomes "the sign and symbol of a man without faith, hopelessly holding up hope in the midst of despair" (p. 225).

As an allegorist, Melville has already been compared with Conrad and Dostoevsky, especially in his use of the technique of doubling; we discovered how much more harshly

the American treats his characters, how he strips them of almost every shred of hope, whether for communication or even self-knowledge. How much kinder is Conrad to his Marlow than Melville is to Ishmael! It must be granted that there are many similarities between the two narrators. In his study, The Vision of Conrad and Melville, Leon Seltzer discusses many of them. Both Ishmael and Marlow may speak out "for the cause of human brotherhood," but neither can quench his feelings of isolation. Both must repeatedly tell their stories to others if they would alleviate the pressure of isolation.[23] But I believe their differences are as important as their similarities; the most obvious difference is one of tone. Marlow's voice is much calmer, much more orderly, much more dignified. He presents us with hardly any lists, hardly any digressions. As he details, with careful precision, the terrible journey to the core of human darkness, he seems much more capable than Ishmael of confronting and coping with the burden of his revelations. And at the conclusion of his journey, he is able to make a commitment and to act upon this commitment. With full knowledge of the demonic blackness of Kurtz' existence in the jungle, Marlow yet elects to help preserve the untarnished image of Kurtz as a gifted, humane idealist. Marlow has come to know Kurtz completely; he has participated spiritually and to some extent physically in Kurtz' experience. The wisdom and self-knowledge gleaned from this experience enable Marlow to make

his commitment. Marlow has developed a core of selfhood which makes his isolation one of dignity rather than one of fear as Ishmael's is, fear that his experiences are reducible to meaninglessness because he harbors a void within him, a lack of selfhood with which to give meaning to his world. In his isolation, Marlow is like "a Buddha preaching in European clothes and without a lotus flower."[24] Ishmael resembles a child running away from home. Marlow allegorizes his experiences and tells his tale to all who will hear because he feels he has something of great significance to relate about the very nature of reality and man's ability to interpret it. Also, I believe, Marlow relates his experiences in order to reassure himself that his commitment to Kurtz is justifiable, that his belief that Kurtz' dying stare "was wide enough to embrace the whole universe, piercing enough to penetrate all the hearts that beat in the darkness" (p. 116) can stand up under close and repeated scrutiny and analysis. Marlow had to falsify Kurtz' last words to his Intended; Kurtz' acknowledgement of "the horror" of what his degradation allowed him to see could not possibly have been fathomed by the unfallen, shallow, civilized world of the Intended. However, the lie, no matter how necessary, undoubtedly makes him uneasy. Marlow states, during the course of his narrative, that "there is a taint of death, a flavour of mortality in lies--which is exactly what I hate and detest in the world--what I want to forget. It makes me

miserable and sick, like biting something rotten would do" (p. 58). I believe that the retelling of his tale, the rationalizing, the probing of his experiences, reaffirms his belief in the rightness of his decision to lie for Kurtz. Ishmael retells and allegorizes to diminish his horror at the premonition that he has consciously come to no understanding.

If Ishmael is allowed to hold off horror, however precariously, by his allegorizing, Pierre is not. From the moment of his introduction, he is treated with derision and scorn: "Now Pierre stands on this noble pedestal; we shall see if he keeps that fine footing; we shall see if Fate hath not just a little bit of a small word or two to say in this world."[25] It is Melville's inability to control his scorn, his detailed, strident dwelling on every aspect of his hero's suffering, that turns this work into an example of melodrama. Of all Melville's works, this is perhaps most similar to the pattern set by Spenser in his Bower of Bliss episode. A young man is presented with a world of false visibilia he cannot understand but to which he feels attracted physically, against his wishes. Ultimately, the sensual drives, denied natural expression, result in violence and destruction. But Melville, unlike Spenser, does not redeem his hero--Pierre is forced to destroy himself; his suffering becomes too great a load for him to bear.

Pierre is Melville's most naive and helpless hero. As a writer, he is a failure. He cannot subject his

misgivings to the palliative analysis of symbolic art. He cannot even focus his fear and hatred on something outside of himself, as Ahab does. He has nothing to create and only himself to destroy. _Pierre_, rather than _Moby Dick_, is a "wicked book" and a brutal one. Its vision is excoriating; it tells of a being who would tear down the walls of the world but who does not have the ability to put veils of his own construction between himself and the void beyond the pasteboard masks. Consequently, Pierre is mercilessly tortured by the naked ambiguities which enclose him.

As he is first presented to us, Pierre, unlike Ishmael, is very much a part of his environment--which is as mild and nurturing as any environment can be. Saddle Meadows, as opposed to Ishmael's gloomy, damp New Bedford, is Arcadia--a kind of balmy rural nursery. Pierre has a beautiful mother with whom he enjoys a sanctified but blatantly oedipal relationship, memories of a respected father and a fair, ethereal blond sweetheart, Lucy. In his innocence, Melville tell us, "Pierre little foresaw that this world hath a secret deeper than beauty, and Life some burdens heavier than death" (p. 27). Pierre has never felt isolation and he has not learned how to shield or distance himself from terror. When he is apprised of the existence of the alluring Isabel, his father's illegitimate daughter, Pierre finds that the structure of his carefully cultured, sunny existence utterly collapses.

Insofar as it is heavily dependent on the doubling technique, Pierre is similar, structurally, to the other works of Melville we have discussed. However, we shall find some variations on Melville's usual doubling techniques here. Melville works in Pierre, as in Benito Cereno, with three rather than two character fragments: Isabel, Lucy, and Pierre. In Benito Cereno, it will be remembered, we had Babo, Benito Cereno, and Amasa Delano. Lucy and Isabel are, as Henry Murray has noted, Pierre's light and dark animae. Lucy is representative of Agape, Christian love. She is the Apollonian force. His love for her is "rational," undemanding, "culturally encouraged" and acceptable.[26] Isabel is Eros, the Dionysian force, the troubling dark side. She is to Pierre what Bartleby is to his employer, what Ahab is to Ishmael. Pierre confuses Eros with Agape. Learning of Isabel's existence, he flees with her to the city, ostensibly for moral reasons. She is his rejected sister; he will accept and provide for her; he will atone for his father's sin.

If Lucy is accepted as representative of rationality, it is not difficult to understand why Pierre is unable to cope with his surroundings when he leaves her at Saddle Meadows. He is without his rational component. By interpreting his attachment to Isabel, his emotional, passionate component, as a moral, rational one, he compounds his confusion. Although driven by the dark, irrational forces of passion, he conceives of himself as rationally motivated.

Pierre's rapid progress toward madness and self destruction appears very similar to Wieland's. He too trusted implicitly in his powers of reason. He too was driven by an incestuous passion--his desire for his sister--which he failed to come to grips with. When Pierre realizes the nature of his passion for the beautiful Isabel, as he takes her in his arms impulsively soon after Lucy's appearance at his lodgings in the city, the necessity of his death becomes clear to him immediately. He rejects Isabel in horror; he can no longer make even vain attempts at his book and "a general and nameless torpor-some horrible foretaste of death itself" (p. 383) overcomes him. The death of Lucy and the suicides of Isabel and Pierre follow almost immediately.

Pierre's rejection of Isabel recalls Amasa Delano's inability to understand Benito Cereno and the lawyer's fleeing from Bartleby. Neither Delano nor the lawyer, as we discussed, wishes to fathom the dark, negative aspects of his nature. However, both Delano and the lawyer survive. Pierre does not. I think Delano and Bartleby's employer do not disintegrate because they are still in possession of their reason, as shallow as that may be. They can look at the seemingly incomprehensible visibilia around them and rationalize, however clumsily. The lawyer can equate Bartleby with deprived humanity. Amasa Delano can accept Benito Cereno as hopelessly deranged because he cannot be consoled by the bright sun, the sea and the sky. Delano

and the lawyer are in effect being allegorists--subjecting their environment to reason--however naively. They survive because they can force their surroundings to make sense to them, to have meaning. That their interpretations are ludicrously shallow is not important; that their interpretations enable them to keep their sanity is of supreme importance to them. They are able to continue living. Deprived of his reason, mistaking passion for reason, deprived of his security in a hostile urban environment, Pierre finds himself unable to cope. He can neither understand what he sees around him nor can he even rationalize his inability to understand.

Pierre fails as a work of art because it is so blatantly sadistic, because Pierre is created stripped of all defenses only to be pounded into the dust by his creator. The novel is completely transparent; Melville does not embody, in imaginative, ameliorating creative vision, his hatred of a universe which presents only one possibility to righteous innocence--violent defeat. He merely allows this hatred naked expression. Melville's next novel, *The Confidence Man*, fails because now he constructs so many walls, drapes so many veils, that the reader is lost in a maze of opacity.

Between *Pierre* (1852) and *The Confidence Man* (1857), Melville wrote his shorter works of fiction, of which "Bartleby" and "Benito Cereno" are examples. In these, an

effort is made to bring transparency and opacity into creative harmony again--the kind of creative harmony which resulted in Moby Dick. Great allegory depends on this harmony; the moments of transparency, during which the artist's vision momentarily emerges unveiled, must be earned by the steady progress, the probing which is the stuff of allegory. Dante's overwhelming vision of the rose is paid for by the suffering endured and observed in hell. Christian's vision of the City of Gold is earned by his painful journey, his encounters with and triumphs over life's despair, guilt, fear and corruption. Emily Dickinson, although not primarily concerned with allegory, captures the psychological process demanded by the allegorical mode with beautiful precision:

> For each ecstatic instant
> We must an anguish pay
> In keen and quivering ratio
> To the ecstasy.

The vision of Ahab shedding his one tear, the vision of Ahab giving himself, with all the passion of hatred within him, to his whale--these are such moments of ecstacy. They are paid for, so to speak, with Ishmael's anguish--his premonition that each of his forays of discovery might lead him to that confrontation with annihilation which he is trying so valiantly to avoid or, at least, to delay. In Pierre, statements of so-called revelation, each more stridently passionate than its predecessor, are piled, one upon the

other, until they annihilate each other, and we are left only with so much noise.

In The Confidence Man, there are no revelations; that is the major lack of this work. The attempts at balance which make some of Melville's shorter fictions quite successful seem to have been abandoned. We have a work of anguish without ecstacy. Fragmentation is carried out to an uncontrollable extent: the many character-types, both confidence men and victims, seem not like so many parts of a whole but so many parts seeking a whole. The tableaus seem often not only unrelated to each other but offering no valuable comments upon each other. The disembodied voice behind the many masks is uneasy and nervous; it is working too hard at those jaunty ironic tones, so hard that it is often driven to utter the most shallow of platitudes. Here, for instance, is Melville defending inconsistency of characterization:

> But if the acutest sage be often at his wits' ends to understand living character, shall those who are not sages expect to run and read character in those mere phantoms which flit along a page, like shadows along a wall? That fiction, where every character can, by reason of its consistency, be comprehended at a glance, either exhibits but sections of character, making them appear for wholes, or else is very untrue to reality; while, on the other hand, the author who draws a character, even though to common view incongruous in its parts, as the flying-squirrel, and at different periods, as much at variance with itself as the butterfly is with the caterpillar into which it changes, may yet, in so doing, be not false but faithful to facts.[27]

This passage reveals the distance between aim and accomplishment in the novel. The Confidence Man seems to present us with "sections of character." At his best, Melville creates

whole characters "incongruous on their parts." When for instance, Ishmael demands, "Call me Ishmael," he is revealing himself as a whole made up of warring, incongruous parts. He is willing into being an identity that, we later learn, he is at the same time running away from. To be Ishmael is not only to be the father of princes and to live securely among his people. To be Ishmael also implies to be isolated and alone. In willing himself Ishmael, Melville's hero must accept the negative as well as the positive aspects of Ishmaelness. His struggles with the complex nature of his assumed identity produce extremely ironic effects. Irony thrives on just such a balance created among incongruous parts; it is destroyed by imbalance. If the complexity of being Ishmael should be simplified for any length of time; if to be Ishmael were only to imply to live securely, the ironic effect would be nullified; the appearance and the reality would become identical. In _The Confidence Man_, there is really no incongruity; they become one shallow, single-layered unit.

A creative vision which conceives of reality and appearance as essentially identical, which posits a universe offering the human seeker only completely unresolvable ambiguity can result in notable art. Such a vision is Franz Kafka's. He cannot be accused of either inconsistency, shallowness, or of presenting the reader with works of unrelieved anguish and no revelation. For Kafka, the ambiguity, the enigma of existence, is its own revelation. Kafka's

irony arises not from the disparity between appearance and reality but from the struggle between the reader's hope for some positive outcome of the action, some ameliorative statement from the author, some glimpse of hope, and the author's inexorable rejection of these prayers. Kafka ultimately accepts hopelessness, disaster, and ambiguity as factors of life. Against these factors, his characters struggle, by them they perish. The revelation arising from this anguish is the revelation of the nature of anxiety. Melville could never rest with an acceptance of anxiety as the crowning factor of existence. The yearning for some kind of stability, however unorthodox and however unrealized, is the driving force of his greatest works.

Melville's posthumously published masterpiece, Billy Budd, emanates neither the hysterical shallowness of The Confidence Man nor the righteous bombast of Pierre. Yet, of his greatest works, it is perhaps his most ambiguous and troubling piece. The wealth of contradictory critical commentary can attest to this. The story has been accepted as a statement of Melville's ultimate tolerance of Christian myth, as his final statement about evil--his acceptance of evil as tragic necessity. It has also been accepted as Melville's ultimate statement of denial, in Thompson's opinion, Melville's misanthropic masterpiece--his final statement of his conviction that "the world was put together wrong, that God was a scoundrel, that human beings were motivated

entirely by selfish and depraved desires to prolong their own existence at any cost."[28] Many modern critics tend to look upon Billy Budd as social commentary: it "analyzes the problem of a human society which . . . cannot put into practice those moral concepts which it values most highly."[29] On this level, Billy Budd can be accepted as social protest--Melville's judgment against Captain Vere,[30] or as his sanction of moral pragmatism, his acceptance of Vere's handling of the Budd-Claggart affair.[31]

Although Billy Budd bristles with paradox and ambiguity, the base conflict within it can be identified. I believe it is a result of the disparity between the spirit or mood the author wished to embody in this story and the form, the structure of the work. The mythical moment of Billy Budd, the gentle, lyrical taking up of Billy or the idea of Billy by the dawn, seems not to issue organically from the basic nature of the materials the narrator is exploring. It is true that the ecstasy of an allegorist's mythical flights proceeds from the anguish of his systematic probing. But the moments of ecstasy must result from the probing, must be insights gleaned directly from the investigation. Dante's vision of the rose is earned by his suffering in hell and purgatory but it does not occur in hell or purgatory. The understanding of heaven must follow the sounding of hell and purgatory and precede the final vision of divine joy and perfection if this vision is to issue organically from its

allegorical framework. Ishmael's view of Ahab's final meeting with the whale is a culmination of his discussion of Ahab's attitude toward Moby Dick throughout the narrative. If Ahab were to suddenly confront the whale passively or with a show of love, if he were to say anything but "for hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee," the final vision would be inconsistent with the framework of annihilation which supports it.

The effortless, lyrical, sympathetic rendering of Billy's last moments and especially the description of the moments following his death seem different in quality from the parable of annihilation the narrator is analyzing and which he continues to analyze after his description of Billy's death. The vision of Billy ascending embodies a myth of acceptance whereas the narrator has been working with a parable of fragmentation, annihilation: Billy kills Claggart; Vere kills Billy and subsequently Vere himself is killed. This is very similar to the situation in which Pierre, Lucy and Isabel are involved. Yet the narrator refuses to accept this myth of annihilation--he works it, distorts it, forces it to emerge as a myth of redemption:

> The hull, deliberately recovering from the periodic roll to the leeward, was just regaining an even keel, when the last signal, the preconcerted dumb one, was given. At the same moment it chanced that the vapoury fleece hanging low in the east was shot through with a soft glory as of the fleece of the Lamb of God seen in mystical vision, and simultaneously therewith, watched by the wedged mass of upturned faces, Billy ascended; and ascending, took the full rose of the dawn.[32]

At every opportunity he has been padding and disguising the harsh directness of his core parable with political, technological, and scientific detail. He has been trying to disguise the metaphysical significance of the parable with realistic detail. The discussion of Nelson is a significant example of this confusion of two realms. Nelson is a historical figure; a real human being, however exalted, has nothing to do with Billy, Claggart and even Vere, just as humanity has nothing to do with Bartleby. Billy and Claggart are not actors in a drama of realism; they are allegorical subcharacters, maintaining only a semblance of human personality, generated by Vere--they are aspects of Vere.[33] Claggart and Billy are embodiments of the captain's moral, spiritual qualities. Divorced from these properties, Vere himself is an embodiment of rationality, intellect. He cannot be compared with Nelson, as a partial being should not be expected to perform as if he were a complete individual. By making comparisons between Vere and Nelson, the narrator is forcing Vere into a role he cannot, because of his very nature, fulfill.

Upon witnessing Billy's lethal response to Claggart's evil charge, Vere reacts instantly, unambiguously, rationally: immediately he exclaims, "Struck dead by an angel of God. Yet the angel must hang!" (p. 252). Subsequently, Vere deliberates over the means of administering death; the idea of death is never questioned. He deliberates not over the moral

issue but over the issue of proper expediency. It is the narrator who accepts Vere as a realistically complex being with a fully developed moral sense. It is he who imagines that final moving encounter between Vere and Billy: "Captain Vere in the end _may_ have developed the passion _sometimes_ latent under an exterior stoical or indifferent. . . . The first to encounter Captain Vere in the act of leaving the compartment was the senior lieutenant. The face he beheld, for the moment one expressive of the agony of the strong was to that officer, . . . a startling revelation" (p. 265). The narrator is accepting Vere as a sensitive moral being; who would not see agony reflected on the face of such an individual faced with a dilemma of this magnitude? Also, his description of Vere's expression is not a first-hand one; it is based on the interpretation of an onlooker, the lieutenant. The narrator seems so intent on drenching this parable of moral and rational incompatibility with every realistic trapping at his command. He would see human wholeness where there is only fragmentation; he would seek political and historical explanations for a mythic phenomenon.

Now, as I stated earlier, the subjection of myth to rationality or explication results in allegory, mediated vision. This indeed is Ishmael's procedure. He takes the myth of Ahab and the white whale, a myth of annihilation, and mediates it, subjects it to interpretation. But his interpretation does not destroy, mutilate, or permanently

rearrange the components of this myth. After each attempt to clothe the myth in so-called realistic detail, Ishmael, as we illustrated, comes face to face again with its full annihilative power. In "Billy Budd" we have the subjection of a myth of annihilation to a mediative process which forces it to yield a vision of redemption.

I feel we have this discontinuity between the material of annihilation and the spirit of redemption because Melville was attempting, in _Billy Budd_, to embody a new mood--a mood of acceptance or at least toleration--in factional materials he had used throughout his creative life, materials developed to express his myth of annihilation and fragmentation. The allegorical materials Melville used to mediate his myth of annihilation have already been explored. These include the technique of doubling which, as Melville develops it, demands that, at best, the doubles can but destroy each other. There are also the peculiar Melvillean battle form in which opponents move away from each other at the crucial moment and the typical Melvillean narrator who allegorizes in order to survive and, most important, a creator, Melville himself, who functions as a demonic allegorist, preventing his characters from indulging in any purposeful interaction with their environment.

One must be cautious when discussing the mood of toleration which emerges from Melville's late poetry and from _Billy Budd_. It is not, at any point, an acceptance of

the Christian vision of a beneficent God or of the Christian promise of salvation. At the most, it is redemptive only because it expresses Melville's final capacity to look at nature, at the world around him, and not feel pain. For him, this must have been quite a positive accomplishment. This feeling is found throughout the poems he wrote late in his life and is perhaps best expressed in "Pontoosuce." As he observes the autumn lushness around him, the poet is struck by the aura of impending death:

> All dies! and not alone
> The aspiring trees and men and grass;
> The poet's forms of beauty pass,
> And noblest deeds they are undone
> Even truth itself decays, and lo,
> From truth's sad ashes fraud and flasehood grow.[34]

Suddenly, an embodiment of the natural world appears before him and addresses him. She tells him that all dies only to begin again:

> Summer and winter, and pleasure and pain
> And everything everywhere in God's reign,
> They end, and anon they begin again . . .
>
> With that, her warm lips thrilled me through,
> She kissed me, while her chaplet cold
> Its rootlets brushed against my brow,
> With all their humid clinging mold.
> She vanished, leaving fragrant breath
> And warmth and chill of wedded life and death.[35]

Melville's final vision involved a toleration of the "warmth and chill of wedded life and death."

Inklings of this quiet acceptance of natural process can be found in works like "Bartleby" and "Benito Cereno." But, in these works, this mood seems not quite fully

digested; it does not seem to extend far beyond the statements which contain it. Just before Bartleby's death, the lawyer, upon visiting him in the Tombs, says to him: "Nothing reproachful attaches to you by being here. And see, it is not so sad a place as one might think. Look, there is the sky, and here is the grass" (p. 38). But to Bartleby, acceptance has no place in his world of rejection. In "Benito Cereno" we have a similar occurrence when Amasa Delano consoles the stricken Don Beniot with the observation, "See, yon bright sun has forgotten it all, and the blue sea and the blue sky; these have turned over new leaves" (p. 192). At these points, however, Melville himself was not yet prepared to accept the validity of a stepmother world.

This acceptance, as we said, came not until the end of his life. It is manifested not only in "Pontoosuce," but in the rose poems and in a poem like "Rip Van Winkle's Lilac" and its prose preface. Returning confused and disconsolate from his long sleep, Rip Van Winkle is pictured as finding solace in the beauty of a lilac bush which grows near the moldy ruins of his house. "Boon Nature" seems to be gently telling him that if one ceases to regard life as a threat of annihilation for however brief a moment, he will find a semblance of peace and a glimpse of gentle, earthly beauty.

It is this mood of mild acceptance, of gentle cessation of pain, which Melville wanted to express in Billy Budd. However, having developed his major works as vehicles for

the myth of annihilation, he was now, at this late period in his life, faced with a new task--the embodiment of a myth of acceptance in a literary work larger than a poem or a short preface. However, he used his old techniques and tried to force them to express this new mood. As a result, we have the brief but powerful moment of serenity as Billy takes "the full rose of the dawn," forcibly made to serve as the mythical crown of yet another one of Melville's allegories of annihilation. The narrator seems inconsistent as he gropes in the world of darkness toward a vision of light. That Melville was aware of a basic discontinuity is obvious; he rewrote *Billy Budd* many times over a period of five years, whereas *Moby Dick* was the product of a brief but sustained burst of creative energy. However, *Billy Budd* is moving and successful as a work of art because it is an organic expression of its creator's inability to reconcile mood and technique. In other words, Melville converts this inability into artistic expression by positing a universe in which this inability to reconcile spirit and form becomes a moral law, a universe in which a man must die because he is good. The narrator's inconsistent groping is the only possible reaction a seeker of truth can manifest in such a universe.

Notes to Chapter III

[1]"Bartleby the Scrivener," in *Herman Melville: Four Short Novels* (New York: Bantam, 1959), p. 3. Subsequent references to this work will be followed in the text by page numbers.

[2]*The Ways of Nihilism: Herman Melville's Short Stories* (San Diego: California State Colleges, 1970), p. 112. Melville's split characters are also mentioned by Newton Arvin in his *Herman Melville: A Critical Biography* (New York: Sloane, 1950), p. 243; Richard Chase, *Herman Melville: A Critical Study* (New York: Macmillan, 1949), p. 143; and by Mordecai Marcus, "Melville's 'Bartleby' as a Psychological Double," *College English*, 23 (February, 1962), 365-368. Doubling as a literary principle is treated by Ralph Tymms in his *Doubles in Literary Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1949).

[3]R. H. Fogle, *Melville's Shorter Tales* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960), p. 17.

[4]The sections devoted to Bartleby and to the attorney are delineated but not really explored by Leo Marx in his "Melville's Parable of the Walls," *Sewanee Review*, 61 (Autumn, 1953), 602-627. However, his discussion of the final section and his conclusions differ from mine.

[5]Chase, pp. 147-148; Arvin, pp. 242-244; Marx.

[6]Charles G. Hoffman, "The Shorter Fiction of Herman Melville," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 52 (1953), 420-421.

[7]R. G. Fogle, "Melville's 'Bartleby': Absolutism, Predestination and Free Will," *Tulane Studies in English*, 4 (1954), 125-135. W. R. Patrick, "Melville's 'Bartleby' and the Doctrine of Necessity," *American Literature*, 41, No. 1 (March, 1969), 39-54.

[8]In *Herman Melville: Four Short Novels*. Subsequent references to this work will be followed in the text by page numbers.

[9]*Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1964), p. 185.

[10]*Pierre, or The Ambiguities* (New York: New American Library, 1964), p. 199.

[11]*Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode*, p. 339.

[12]In Dostoevsky, Three Short Novels, Andrew R. MacAndrew, tr. (New York: Bantam, 1966).

[13]In his Tales of Land and Sea (New York: Hanover House, 1953).

[14]Moby Dick, or The White Whale (New York: New American Library, 1961), p. 419. Subsequent references to this work will be followed in the text by page numbers.

[15]Quoted and discussed in American Thought and Religious Typology, John Hooglund, tr. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1970), p. 182.

[16]New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1965, p. 113.

[17]Ibid., p. 148.

[18]Brodtkorb comments on this opening line but maintains that it reveals Ishmael's desire not to betray himself, to hide behind the mask of Ishmael, to keep his true identity from the reader. I see it as his attempt to create an identity, because his greatest fear is that he has none.

[19]Ishmael's White World, p. 56.

[20]Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 224.

[21]Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode, p. 161.

[22]Ishmael's White World, p. 147.

[23]Athens: Ohio University Press, 1970, pp. 98, 110.

[24]"Heart of Darkness," in Three Tales by Joseph Conrad (New York: Dell, 1960), p. 31. Subsequent references to this work will be followed in the text by page numbers.

[25]Pierre, p. 32. Subsequent references to this work will be followed in the text by page numbers.

[26]Henry Murray, Introduction to Pierre (New York: Hendricks, 1962), p. xlix.

[27]The Confidence Man (New York: New American Library, 1964), p. 75.

[28]Melville's Quarrel with God (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1952), p. 356.

[29]Roland Duerkson, "The Deep Quandry in Billy Budd," New England Quarterly, 41 (March, 1968), 51-66.

[30]This view is developed by Evelyn Schroth in "Melville's Judgment on Captain Vere," Midwest Quarterly, 10 (January, 1969), 189-200.

[31]Duerkson supports this view.

[32]"Billy Budd, Foretopman," in Herman Melville: Four Short Novels, p. 273. Subsequent references to this work will be followed in the text by page numbers.

[33]Allegorical subcharacters are discussed by Fletcher on pp. 36-38.

[34]"Pontoosuce," in Howard P. Vincent, ed., Collected Poems of Herman Melville (Chicago, Ill.: Hendricks, 1947), p. 396.

[35]Ibid., pp. 397-398.

CHAPTER IV

JAMES

One hopes the discussions of Brown, Hawthorne and Melville have established the contention that allegory is primarily a state of mind, a mode of perception, a preoccupation with the ambiguity of experience. Henry James's overwhelmingly sensitive mode of perception and his ability to envelop his creative concern with the ambiguities of experience in shifting and many-shaded layers of irony have driven his critics into a fine state of frenzy. As one critic has aptly noted, "James is widely regarded with an admiration bordering on reverence. Zealous exegesis of his fiction is notoriously one of the main occupations of students of American literature."[1] He is often accepted as a moralist, as are Hawthorne, Melville and Brown, as one who affirms the redemptive power of love and self-sacrifice by creating exemplary characters with whom he is in complete sympathy. Other critics accept him as one who acclaims a life of detached spectatorship at the expense of love by tacitly praising his many renunciatory characters.[2] Frequently, James's stylistic complexities and seemingly ungraspable ambiguities have forced critics to recognize that what appears to be profound complexity is very often confusion, that, especially in a late work like The Golden Bowl,

"the moral issues upon which the events turn" are "so delicate . . . that it is exasperatingly difficult, if not impossible, to determine what the events reveal about the characters who enact them. Between the subtlety of the characters and the indirections, ironies, condescensions, and evasions of the author it is close to impossible to know what is morally happening."[3]

However one chooses to tackle the protean complexity of Henry James, it can be said with some certainty that his works reveal a preoccupation with the nature of evil, innocence, and worldliness as all encompassing as any Puritan's. In his study of evil in James's fiction, The Imagination of Disaster, J. A. Ward notes that "though James alters the traditional Puritan consideration of evil by focusing on the sinned-against rather than the sinner, he perhaps even more than Hawthorne reflects a Puritan view of life in the dominant pattern of his novels, his view of life as a kind of pilgrimage."[4]

Like Hawthorne's, Melville's, and Brown's, James's major works are quests which lead the pilgrim to the discovery that experience implies disaster and that self-knowledge implies the awareness of evil latent in oneself. Finally, and most disturbing, the seeker discovers that an intimate relationship between two human beings necessitates that one act the part of possessor and the other of the object possessed. For in the Jamesian universe, the only

possibility for self-knowledge and self-fulfillment is presented as residing within the sphere of personal relationships. The external world is a purposeless wasteland offering the seeker either a surface in perpetual flux--America--or depths which lure the onlooker with the promise of stasis but which prove to be fathomable only to those indigenous to them--Europe. There is no deity, malignant or benign, who regulates or in any way is responsible for the physical world. As one critic put it very succinctly, "no one cared less than James that 'God was dead.'"[5] There is ultimately but one constant in a universe which can comfortably be called an absurdist one in that it is constructed to resist all efforts to discover its design. This is the human constant. There are for each human seeker other human seekers who appear useful for his purposes. The attempt is always to make others the means by which one comes to know and fulfill himself, to demand from living creatures the depth and stability which I think can reside only in systems of tradition, belief, conduct and morality which are not to be relied upon in James's universe. Hence we often have the procedure by which one finds life by taking it from others, by converting being into meaning to be used in one's own self-defining procedure. In James's works, human relationships are rarely benign, mutually supportive relationships. They most usually become confrontations between assailant and prey.

This process of using or possessing others is evident even in a work as early as An International Episode (1878). Basically, this is the story of Mrs. Westgate's attempt to find herself a perspective, an ordered system, a world which will make sense and be knowable--so she can define herself against it. Mrs. Westgate is the product of a society with no stable leisured class. She is one of those wealthy American ladies who lives alone "uptown" while her husband is busily making money "downtown." Our first introduction to her is to several pages of monologue during which we learn that she finds America, especially Newport, "a most charming" place and that she's been to England several times but doesn't know much about it except "the most frightful fog."[6] She seems, in this first part of the tale, to consist of just so many words, so many perceptions searching for order, for meaning. A startling transformation occurs when Mrs. Westgate arrives in London. The voluble, even giddy, lady becomes laconic and cynically knowing, seemingly pained by a society that makes her feel so insignificant, patronized, and excluded. She speaks curtly and guardedly. The reader feels her intense desire to get back at this society which makes her feel so homeless, to hurt someone who is a member of it at any cost. The reader also feels that the trip to England has resulted in a fragmentation. Mrs. Westgate has become two individuals--one represented by the giddy, unorganized, surfacey Newport verbiage, the other by the

knowing, bitter London laconicism. Mrs. Westgate can enjoy but not understand Newport; she can understand but dislike London. She would like a situation which would make possible a joyful understanding; she would like to possess a world which she could understand and which would also be a source of contentment. She would like to be whole, not fragmented.

To put herself together, she attempts to use her sister, Bessie Alden. If Bessie were to marry Lord Lambeth, Mrs. Westgate would obtain her triumph. She would get back at the restrictive society which pained her by witnessing the discomfort of Lambeth's noble family at his marriage to the very "ordinary" Bessie, and she would also obtain a place for herself in that society. In attempting to coerce Bessie into enacting her dream, Mrs. Westgate neglects to observe that Bessie already has her own protective dream; she does not need Mrs. Westgate's. Bessie lives in a world of the romantic past, in a dream of a "splendid" England of "reverberating greatness" in which the mundane, uninformed Lord Lambeth could have no place. Therefore, safe in her dream world, she repels Mrs. Westgate's attempts to manipulate her, to turn her into a passport to belonging, and Mrs. Westgate is left unsatisfied, cynical, alone, and fragmented.

This is the story of an <u>attempt</u> at entrapment; the sacrifice does not occur. The pain of renunciation--Bessie's renunciation of Lambeth--is barely felt. Bessie's dream remains triumphant; Mrs. Westgate's cynical reality does not

collapse it. Kitty Westgate does not succeed in her attempt to use Bessie as a tool with which to forge a solid, unified, comfortable identity for herself.

The allegorical components of An International Episode are just barely perceptible. Mrs. Westgate's struggle for self-unity does not reverberate very profoundly. The reader does not sense the urgent presence of the author; the relationship of dream to reality, as it is depicted in this tale, is not perceived by James as deeply ambiguous. Even the external reality--for instance, descriptions of ladies shopping in Newport or the fashionable strollers in Hyde Park--has a palpable sense of its own; it does not serve predominantly as an embodiment of the characters' inner selves as it does in James's more mature works and in allegorical fiction generally. Yet the allegorical ingredient of this tale is evident in the aura of determinism which it radiates. Bessie is determined, shaped by the strength of her dream; Mrs. Westgate is determined by the desire of her being, fragmented into so many aimless phrases, for meaning. These characters lack fullness. One can sense that they exist primarily as vehicles for ideas.

Daisy Miller is much more blatantly a work of symbolic fiction. It is "A Study," an exploration of the effect of homelessness on the human psyche. All the major characters are types of exiles. Winterbourne, whose soul is very wintry indeed, is an observer, an outsider. He

possesses no sense of self, no stable code of manners and beliefs upon which he can rely. He mistrusts his instincts and is presented with an object, Daisy, which cannot be conquered from his usual vantage point of objective rationality. Like Winterbourne, Daisy is also homeless, a seeker after "society" who is actually selfless in that she is not really a person but an embodiment of caprice. She is propelled by a flitting desire to be loved or at least accepted, taken seriously. In his Preface to Daisy Miller, James admits to Daisy's unreality, maintaining that his "little figure was . . . pure poetry, and had never been anything else."[7] Mrs. Costello, Winterbourne's aunt, embodies another reaction to the pressures of homelessness; she has reacted to the threats inherent in a life of vast, empty, purposeless freedom by imprisoning herself with the tower of her own self-conceived, "exclusive," rigid social stratification.

Instantly, upon his first encounter with Daisy, Winterbourne is attracted to her; he sees in her, perhaps, what he would like to possess, the freedom, however capricious, to disregard social boundaries. He envies her, as an adult envies a child, for her lack of self-consciousness. He is also repelled by her sexual attractiveness; he is afraid of her sexuality as much as Hawthorne's Giovanni Guasconti is afraid of Beatrice's. He finds her "oppressively striking" and thinks that "she is the sort of young lady who expects a man sooner or later to carry her off."[8]

It must be granted that Daisy is a frightening being; her capriciousness is cold, unfeeling, and not infrequently cruel. Winterbourne struggles to comprehend the phenomenon of Daisy throughout the tale. The struggle is a many-layered one. Instinctively, he is both attracted and repelled by her. And his reason, warning him of the harsh social consequences of alignment with such a moral outcaste, attempts to influence his instinct as it attempts to ascertain her "guilt" or "innocence." He wavers between acceptance and rejection, between involvement and observation, until the fateful night he comes upon Daisy, with an Italian admirer, standing among the ruins of the Colosseum. Instantly, "a sudden illumination" flashes "upon the ambiguity of Daisy's behavior, and the riddle . . . [becomes] easy to read. She was a young lady," he observes, "whom a gentleman need no longer be at pains to respect" (p. 148). He makes Daisy aware of his turning away from her; she promptly succumbs to "Roman fever," and Winterbourne becomes aware of his misjudgment. She had been, he is informed by her Italian cavalier, "most innocent." Thus, on one level, this story is an attempt to document and understand the method by which exile, homelessness, warps human beings into antagonistic types, into human fragments who prey upon each other in their attempts to find wholeness.

Daisy Miller can also be accepted as Winterbourne's search for identity, a search which is momentarily successful

but which demands a human sacrifice. Just prior to Winterbourne's final rejection of Daisy, as he is standing among the moon-drenched ruins of Roman civilization, he begins "to murmur Byron's famous lines, out of 'Manfred.'" Undoubtedly, the lines referred to are those spoken by Manfred just prior to his death as he is reminiscing about a night, in his youth, spent within "the chief relics of almighty Rome."[9] The specific lines are unimportant, but the persona Manfred is quite significant. During this moon-struck moment among the ruins, Winterbourne attempts, however subconsciously, to become Manfred. Subsequently, he forces Daisy to play the role of the Beloved, Astarte, whom Manfred causes to die of what appears to be a broken heart. Like the soul-scorched Manfred, Winterbourne too is demanding forgetfulness, oblivion, cessation from the constant inner struggle which is making his hitherto carefully-manicured pose of nonchalant observer harder and harder to maintain. Winterbourne wants to forget Daisy. The colosseum scene makes this possible. At this point, the tale loses all pretense of realism; it becomes blatantly and nakedly symbolic: to ward off the threat of Daisy, Winterbourne wills himself an identity; he says, in effect, "Call me Manfred." His wish brings into being a universe of magic and fantasy where damsels are handily disposed of by being exposed to mythic miasmas.

Magic, as we have observed, mainly during the discussion of Brown's _Wieland_, is a prime agent of causation in

allegories. What we see in operation in Daisy Miller is a curious blend of imitative and contagious magic, the two major agents of allegorical causation identified by Fletcher. Winterbourne wills Manfred's universe into being; Daisy's history becomes the history of Manfred's Astarte. Contagious magic is the principle by which allegorical characters "infect" each other with various virtues and vices, according to Fletcher. Often, especially in Christian allegory, moral infection or sin takes the form of physical disease, especially plague.[10] Here, Winterbourne's conceiving of Daisy as morally tainted causes her to succumb to Roman fever by the principle of magical contagion. With Daisy's death, Winterbourne returns to normal; he becomes again the perpetual student who is reported to be quite "interested in a very clever foreign lady" (p. 152). He becomes again the man without self. The human sacrifice appears in retrospect to have been performed in vain.

Indeed, in this tale, James does not seem to take his heroine very seriously. As Wayne Booth notes, Winterbourne is such a "chilly" individual that the world we observe reflected through his consciousness does not seem very intense.[11] James seems to be playing with the notion of sacrifice. When the feeble, sexually-fearful Winterbourne imagines himself as the demonically potent Manfred, the reader smiles. However, it must be recognized that a sacrifice does take place. Winterbourne does succeed in possessing

Daisy, in converting her into an object, a toy for his imagination. And it must also be noted that Winterbourne's response to Daisy is an allegorical one. Presented with the perplexing force of her ambiguous nature, Winterbourne becomes compulsive. He tries constantly to keep her within sight, using any excuse. He has her constantly in mind, pondering her troublesome nature; he wavers constantly, as I've already noted, in his view of her: at one moment he thinks her innocent, at another, guilty. Constantly he is trying to read her, to possess her, as Ishmael does Moby Dick, as Chillingworth does Dimmesdale, as Edgar Huntley does Clithero Edny. He desires, it would appear, to define himself, to obtain a sense of himself through his understanding of her. This process of revealing oneself through an involvement with another has been observed in other works we have studied. Chillingworth revealed the nature of his evil self by mining evil in Dimmesdale, and Edgar Huntley freed his own obsessions by frantically investigating Clithero Edny's. However, Winterbourne misjudges Daisy and gains a momentarily satisfactory but ultimately no workable sense of self. Ironically, Daisy must pay for this momentary feeling of potency; Winterbourne's solution to her puzzle is quickly followed by her death. That Daisy is representative of ambiguity itself to Winterbourne is made clear by his ultimate reaction to her. As soon as he forces her to harden into a simple, clear idea, to become unambiguous, he deprives her of being.

In this story, James presents a much more heavily emblematic environment than in An International Episode. We find several images that he uses repeatedly in his fiction: the garden, the castle, ruins. Winterbourne is introduced to Daisy in the garden of the "Trois Couronnes" in Vevey. She seems at her freest and most alive in gardens, whether with Winterbourne or later, in Rome, with Giovanelli. This freedom is, of course, illusory as these gardens are not without their serpents; it is Winterbourne and Giovanelli who result in Daisy's destruction, as we observed. Her name, Daisy, suggests that a garden is her natural locale. Edifices of any kind are anathema to Daisy. By nature she is uninterested in them. During their tour of the Castle of Chillon, Winterbourne finds that she cares "very little for feudal antiquities and that the dusky traditions of Chillon [make] but a slight impression on her" (p. 118). While enclosed, Daisy appears at a disadvantage and is often made to feel uncomfortable. At Mrs. Walker's party, Daisy behaves crudely and is ultimately "cut" by her hostess. The houses and castles are thus emblematic of the rigid social structure which is a threat to Daisy's existence.

The most ominously significant emblem in Daisy Miller is the ruin. The two scenes in which ruins form the background can really be termed the mythic moments of this tale. In both cases, the ruins are emblematic of Winterbourne's state of mind; in both instances it is Daisy whom he sees

among the ruins. The first scene occurs in Rome. Winterbourne has, as yet, been unable to solve the riddle of Daisy. James tells the reader of Winterbourne's perplexity:

> He said to himself that she was too light and childish, too uncultivated and unreasoning, too provincial, to have reflected upon her ostracism, or even to have perceived it. Then at other moments he believed that she carried about in her elegant and irresponsible little organism a defiant, passionate, perfectly observant consciousness of the impression she produced. He asked himself whether Daisy's defiance came from the consciousness of innocence, or from her being, essentially, a young person of the reckless class. (p. 144)

Winterbourne is described as being "vexed at his want of certitude as to how far her eccentricities were generic, national, and how far they were personal" (p. 144).

In this disturbed frame of mind, Winterbourne comes upon Daisy unexpectedly while visiting the Palace of the Caesars. James describes his reaction to the scene in this manner:

> The early Roman spring had filled the air with bloom and perfume, and the rugged surface of the Palatine was muffled with tender verdure. Daisy was strolling along the top of one of those great mounds of ruin that are embanked with mossy marble and paved with monumental inscriptions. It seemed to him that Rome had never been so lovely as just then. He stood, looking off at the enchanting harmony of line and color that remotely encircles the city, inhaling the softly humid odors, and feeling the freshness of the year and the antiquity of the place reaffirm themselves in mysterious interfusion. (pp. 144-145)

This image of the blending of opposites, the garden and the edifice, is the objective correlative of Winterbourne's conception of Daisy at this moment. For this one instant only, he accepts his perception of her nature as

ambiguous, and he does not, at this moment, accept ambiguity as disharmonious and severely troubling. But it is Winterbourne's nature to reject ambiguity, to resolve it. The acceptance of ambiguity seems to reinforce his sense of loneliness and alienation; he loses the identity he has chosen for himself, the identity of an observer, a person whose isolation is justifiable and desirable because it enables him freely to exercise his analytical prowess. To accept ambiguity is to cease trying to resolve it, to cease rationalizing and compartmentalizing. It is significant that Daisy, upon observing Winterbourne in the vicinity, turns to him and says, "I should think you would be lonesome! . . . You are always going round by yourself. Can't you get anyone to walk with you?" (p. 145). This negative awareness of loneliness cannot but be disturbing to Winterbourne, who has lived alone much of his life. He cannot but be resentful at Daisy for making him so sharply aware of his apartness.

The next time Winterbourne sights Daisy among ruins, at night with Giovanelli, he accepts her not as a threat, a disturbing bundle of ambiguities, but simply as a young lady not worthy of his respect. This time there are no flowers among the ruins of the Colosseum. Seemingly, we have Eden after the fall; the ground has been cursed; it is evocative only of darkness and sorrow. The "historic atmosphere" is "no better than a villainous miasma." There is "a waning moon in the sky" and "the great cross in the center [is]

covered with shadow" (p. 147). There is no mercy in Winterbourne's heart at this point; Daisy's demise is no longer avoidable.

In these two early works, we can observe James relying on several of the allegorical techniques previously discussed. He uses fragmentation in both works. In both works, we can identify the compulsiveness which is characteristic of the allegorical hero. Mrs. Westgate's desire to use Bessie Alden is, of course, much less potent than Winterbourne's involvement with Daisy. And the emblematic environment is very much in evidence in Daisy Miller, although much less so in An International Episode. The sense that James is metaphysically oriented, that his characters are idea determined, is palpable in both works. The characters are either possessors or objects to be possessed, aggressors or prey.

In The Portrait of a Lady, the several allegorical techniques present in the two earlier stories are used much more extensively and with great finesse. Isabel Archer is a grander, more complex, more profound Daisy Miller. Daisy can be seen as "a parcel of vain strivings tied/By a chance bond together," as Thoreau writes of himself in his poem "Sic Vita." She possesses no unity of self, no sense of self strong enough to ensure survival in a world of predators. Isabel Archer is also a "parcel of vain strivings," but the parcel is much larger; there are many more warring vain strivings, yet the "chance bond" is not proportionally

stronger. Isabel, as James quickly informs us, is just so much chaos which thinks itself ordered and harmonious. Her thoughts, he writes, are "a tangle of vague outlines. . . . In matters of opinion she had had her own way, and it had led her into a thousand ridiculous zigzags."[12] On the one hand, she is a hopelessly romantic idealist who spends much time thinking about "beauty and bravery, and magnanimity," and who has "a fixed determination to regard the world as a place of brightness, of free expansion, of irresistible action" (p. 55). On the other hand, as several critics have observed, Isabel likes nothing better than to avoid any commitment, physical, intellectual, or emotional, since she is afraid of anything that might arrest her development, that might diminish her airy hopes for self-enlargement. Isabel's desire to avoid direct and, to her, restrictive, contact is aptly rendered by James when he tells us of the pleasure she takes in receiving calling cards: "For what is usually called social intercourse she had very little relish; but nothing pleased her more than to find her hall-table whitened with oblong morsels of symbolic pasteboard" (p. 55).

Instinctively, Isabel prefers the symbol to the thing itself. The word "specimen," as James informs us, plays a "considerable part in her vocabulary." And she makes Lord Warburton understand that she wishes "to see English society illustrated by figures" (p. 61). Yet at the same time that she is a believer in her power to interpret symbols, Isabel

denies anyone the right to accept her as a symbol. She believes that she possesses a core of absolute self-hood, a supreme mystical self which defies representation in any material form and which perpetuates itself mysteriously in solitude and isolation. In reply to Madame Merle's statement that "One's self--for other people--is one's expression of one's self; and one's house, one's clothes, the books one reads, the company one keeps--these things are all expressive," Isabel maintains, "I don't agree with you, . . . I don't know whether I succeed in expressing myself, but I know that nothing else expresses me. Nothing that belongs to me is any measure of me; on the contrary, it's a limit, a barrier, and a perfectly arbitrary one" (p. 187). At herself, Isabel looks with the hazy eye of a mystic, at everyone else, with the cold, keen eye of a symbolist. Isabel's lack of self-knowledge, her supremely egotistical confidence in her ability to read the world and her concern with abstract morality, her "infinite hope that she should never do anything wrong" (p. 48), evoke memories of Pierre. Melville's misbegotten knight errant is destroyed by the dark glimmers of self-awareness which finally pierce his armor of abstract morality. Like Pierre's, Isabel's doomed quest for self-knowledge begins with a fragmentation of the self. The struggle with Pierre between the forces of rationality and irrationality, order and chaos, agape and eros is represented by the struggle between his light and dark animae,

Lucy and Isabel, for possession of him. As soon as Isabel lands in England, the "chance bond" gently containing all the contradictions which compose her appears to loosen and she literally fragments into many possibilities of selfhood which are embodied by the several men who vie for her attention. Fragmentation is a very widespread and significant component of this novel.

Lord Warburton, handsome, healthy, solid, actively involved in life, with what Tony Tanner calls "his complex social relations and obligations,"[13] is the perfect image of the social self. To Warburton, Isabel represents the feminine counterpart of himself, his "idea of an interesting woman" (p. 20). It is not difficult to accept Isabel's renunciation of him. Her social instincts are rudimentary; her preference for calling cards and "specimens" rather than actual human individuals has already been mentioned. She is wary of social commitment, fearful that it may restrict her expansion. Ironically, of her admirers, Warburton seems least destructive, yet he is the most quickly dispensed with.

Isabel's cousin Ralph Touchett is the detached observer of life, the ailing interpreter who prides himself on and enjoys his ability to analyze the goings on of life's active participants but who is not, at the same time, a little envious of them. Ralph is intensely attracted to Isabel and she to him. As we noted, the inclination to observe life from a safe, uncommitted distance is a powerful component of

Isabel's character. She, like Ralph, is a seeker of the darkness and of solitude, "preferring the places where the vague lamplight expired" (p. 30). Like him, she, as he aptly notes, wants "to see, but not to feel" (p. 139). The destructiveness latent in the aspect of Isabel's make-up that Ralph embodies is profoundly depicted as the reader observes the devastating outcome of Ralph's meddling in Isabel's life--his generous bequest, which helps her destroy herself. We are rapidly made aware that Ralph's attitude toward Isabel is not entirely benevolent. Immediately after meeting her, he tells his mother of his envy of her health and her unimpeded activity. He secretly hopes that she is capable of beoming disagreeable so that, seemingly, he can use her for his sport without pricks of conscience; Isabel too is accused by Warburton of causing others to suffer for her amusement. Ralph's envy of the active is not restricted to Isabel. He expresses envy of Warburton and it becomes obvious that he dislikes the busy career woman, Henrietta Stackpole. She, at one point, remarks to Ralph that "she supposed he hated her--he would like to drown her."

"'Ah, no,' said Ralph, 'I keep my victims for a slower torture'" (p. 82).

In one sense, Isabel definitely becomes Ralph's victim. His vicarious involvement in her life adds activity and stimulation to his previously bland and limited existence, and she benefits financially from his involvement. He must

keep her in action so he also can live; he must prevent stasis at any cost. For this reason primarily he gives Isabel part of his inheritance, so that her active expansion would be completely unhindered. It is only after her marriage, her grounding, that Ralph dies.

Ralph is definitely an embodiment of darkness, stasis, death. Isabel's love for him is her longing for death, renunciation, as much as his passion for her is a longing for activity, life. It is a strange, unhealthy relationship, but it is a powerful one. One of the moments of strongest passion in this work occurs as Ralph is dying. Isabel tells him that "Here on my knees, with you dying in my arms, I am happier than I have been for a long time" (p. 531). Her greatest moment of happiness is linked with suffering and death. The mythic force of this tearful, anguished moment cries out that love is death: Ralph and Isabel's proclamation of devotion to and involvement with each other, their proclamation of love, occurs as Ralph is dying. Seemingly, the presence of death has stimulated the full revelation of mutual love. Yet, strangely, Ralph maintains that "life is better; for in life there is love." Isabel's life and Ralph's have been devoid of passionately-expressed love until the moment of death!

That Caspar Goodwood is representative of sexuality and that Isabel is fearful of and finally rejects this aspect of life has been noticed by several critics. The second

moment of highly passionate turmoil in this novel occurs during Goodwood's final meeting with Isabel. This meeting is climaxed when he kisses her: "His kiss was like a flash of lightning; when it was dark again she was free. She never looked about her; she only darted away from the spot. . . . There was a very straight path" (p. 544)--back to Osmond. Isabel's passionate moment of acceptance is an acceptance of death. Her passionate moment of rejection is a rejection of physical love. The life of social commitment, represented by Warburton, is rejected without much passion. Osmond remains as the last refuge.

Osmond is, as he himself notes, "convention itself" (p. 288). He is effete, "delicate," sterile, pretentious. Most important, he is a collector--glorying in nothing so much as the possession of valuable objets d'art. Of all the characters, Isabel is the only one who appears to be taken in by Osmond. In reality, Isabel is similar to Osmond in many ways. Like him, she too is very much concerned with appearance, with the figure she makes, and she is constantly judging people by their surface markings. Upon hearing Madame Merle utter a short French phrase, Isabel hastily concludes, "She is a Frenchwoman," only to be subsequently puzzled that "an American should so strongly resemble a foreign woman" (p. 160). Henrietta Stackpole interests her because "she is a kind of emanation of the great democracy--of the continent, the country, the nation" (p. 86).

Like Osmond, Isabel is also a collector. This unpleasant aspect of her character is most clearly brought out by her reaction to Pansy Osmond. Pansy is, basically, a little puppet, one of Osmond's objects--the demure, innocent little daughter who has been raised in the old European fashion. She has in fact been ludicrously dehumanized, prattling and prancing around at sixteen as if she were a child of eight. Isabel finds her fascinating--"like a sheet of blank paper--the ideal _jeune fille_ of foreign fiction" (p. 257). Isabel takes an interest in Pansy that is not always benevolent. She encourages Pansy's affection for Edward Rosier, a minor collector of bibelots whose interest in Pansy is not dissimilar to Osmond's original interest in Isabel--Rosier thinks Pansy would add nicely to his collection, and he is not unaware of her most probably ample dowry. Isabel encourages Rosier to his ruin--he sells his bibelots to no avail. And she encourages Pansy knowing that Osmond would do anything to prevent the union. Pansy does suffer as a result of Isabel's meddling.

Isabel chooses Osmond because he represents that fragment of her character which is perhaps the strongest: she too tends to regard her fellow mortals with the passionless, convention-fearing eye of the inveterate collector. It is to her love of collecting, of observing, and her desire for suffering and darkness that Isabel gives herself--to Osmond and to Ralph. They together are her Winterbourne, and her

future is a living death. Isabel's return to Osmond is but a continuation and a prolonging of the moment she and Ralph were united in their dark passion as he was dying.

If the men in this novel are representative of the several fragments which compose Isabel's character, the women seem embodiments of various female life styles open to the woman of that time. Henrietta Stackpole, the intense, crude, patriotic young journalist is someone James does not take very seriously. With her professed dedication to career and country, Henrietta is a perfect foil for Isabel, dedicated only to her own development. Yet, ironically, Isabel becomes more one-sided in her dedication to suffering and collecting than Henrietta ever is to her profession. And James allows Henrietta to speak some of the most perceptive words in this novel. Her attempt to reveal Isabel to herself results in a keenly correct analysis of her friend's dilemma. When Isabel asks Henrietta to enumerate her (Isabel's) illusions, Henrietta replies:

> . . . you think that you can lead a romantic life, that you can live by pleasing yourself and pleasing others. You will find you are mistaken. Whatever life you lead, you must put your soul into it--to make any sort of success of it; and from the moment you do that it ceases to be romance, . . . You think you can escape disagreeable duties by taking romantic views--that is your great illusion, my dear. But we can't. You must be prepared on many occasions in life to please no one at all--not even yourself. (p. 201)

Isabel learns to accept disagreeable duties but she never ceases to be overly fond of admiration and to be motivated by the desire to produce a dramatic impression.

Ralph's mother is very much an image of what Isabel could, under certain circumstances, become. Mrs. Touchett has shut herself off from direct participation in human affairs. She lives a life of solitude and separateness in a world of efficient servants and intense punctuality, embracing even her son with gloved hands. Like Winterbourne's aunt, Mrs. Costello, Mrs. Touchett has protected herself against a painful world by hiding behind a wall of self-imposed, rigid social forms and keeping herself aloof from emotional involvement with others. Mrs. Touchett has managed to survive but, as Isabel notes, she faced the future of "an old woman without memories" (p. 526).

Serena Merle, on the other hand, will always have painful memories of the penalties the Jamesian universe inflicts on those who do not maintain their separateness. Involvement necessitates suffering. A passionate woman who loved unwisely, Madame Merle dedicates her life to obtaining a suitable sacrifice for the god--Gilbert Osmond--who annihilated her love. She finds him Isabel. In many respects Isabel is like Madame Merle, intelligent, refined, appreciative. Seemingly, both women have great potential yet both become victims of a man who is, in his own words, convention itself.

As we look at the two other women in the novel who are older than Isabel, Mme. Merle and Mrs. Touchett, we are forced to conclude that James offered Isabel little hope for

a future devoid of pain. We are offered no major female example of the fulfilled life. Either a woman grows old in crotchety solitude or she allows a man to determine the course of her life; even the fiercely independent Henrietta Stackpole is married ultimately. I think that James's view that women rarely possess a viable identity is bluntly represented by the technique of allowing men--Warburton, Goodwood, Osmond, Ralph Touchett--to embody the various traits of a fragmented Isabel Archer. Serena Merle sums up the position of women, especially American expatriate women, quite succinctly when she notes, "We are mere parasites, crawling over the surface; we haven't our feet in the soil" (p. 181). Most American expatriates have a difficult time in James's fiction, but there are men like Ralph's father who do forge an identity for themselves. No Jamesian woman fronts the world with the honest, massive solidity of Ralph's father, Mr. Touchett.

The question of why Isabel returns to Osmond has often been discussed, and various answers have been offered, many of which are quite valid: Isabel must bear the consequences of a choice she has freely made; she has promised Pansy she would return; she runs from Goodwood's fierce sexuality back to the sterile, asexual Osmond with whom she is, physically, more comfortable. I think that Isabel returns also because she is afraid that, were she to remain alone, she too might become an old woman without memories like Mrs. Touchett. E. A. Robinson treats a dilemma remarkably

similar to Isabel's in his fine poem "Eros Turannos." The first stanza is particularly applicable to this discussion:

> She fears him, and will always ask
>   What fated her to choose him;
> She meets in his engaging mask
>   All reasons to refuse him;
> But what she meets and what she fears
> Are less than are the downward years,
> Drawn slowly to the foamless weirs
> Of age, were she to lose him.

In this novel as in all his major works, James relies heavily on emblems, especially various forms of the house and the garden. The house is, as has often been noted, one of James's very favorite images, probably because of his overwhelming concern with homelessness in his fiction. In _The Portrait of a Lady_, the house is a preeminent emblem. Isabel, Lord Warburton, Ralph Touchett, and Gilbert Osmond are each identified emblematically with a house.

Isabel's house-emblem is her grandmother's Boston mansion where she had spent most of her childhood and young girlhood. Specifically, she can be identified with a room called a study, a room full of books with "an echo and a pleasant musty smell, . . . a chamber of disgrace for old pieces of furniture" (p. 23). Here Isabel read and dreamed, confiding "a hundred childish sorrows" to an old haircloth sofa. This room was at one time entered from the outside by a door, now sealed, whose side-lights are filled with green paper. Isabel, writes James, was satisfied with the locked door and the green paper. She had "no wish to look

out, for this would have interfered with her theory that there was a strange, unseen place on the other side--a place which became, to the child's imagination, according to its different moods, a region of delight or of terror" (p. 24). This room is perfectly emblematic of the many contradictory characteristics which compose Isabel: her love of dim, musty enclosures, her desire for knowledge and expansion (the books), her wish that doors remain shut, her desire to superimpose her dream on a bleak and often threatening reality.

Gardencourt is Ralph's house. He shares it with the ghost of suffering and deprivation whose presence Isabel doesn't feel until she marries Osmond and discovers his true nature. She feels the presence of this ghost just as Ralph dies--it is Ralph who has led her to suffering and renunication; he enables her to sense the ghost. Gardencourt, for all its beauty and lushness, is a house of death. Ralph dies here and, before him, his father. Isabel, at Ralph's bedside, embraces death and negation as we observed, and Mrs. Touchett, after witnessing her son's death, realizes the empty future without memories which awaits her.

Warburton's moated home, Lockleigh, appears to Isabel as "a castle in a fairy-tale" wherein a princess could become imprisoned. Since we see Warburton's house only through Isabel's eyes, we also accept it as an emblem of imprisonment, as embodying the threat Warburton poses to her, the locked garden, if we accept the name etymologically.[14]

The most menacing house in The Portrait of a Lady is Osmond's Palazzo Roccanera, the Black Rock Palace. This edifice is the perfect emblem of Gilbert Osmond. It is "a dark and massive structure" which wears a mask; its "ancient, solid weather-worn, yet imposing front" is not its true face. "The house in reality looked another way--looked off behind . . ." (p. 209). In this dungeon, Isabel becomes truly imprisoned.

Ruins and gardens are two additional emblems which figure strongly in this novel. Isabel meets Warburton among the ruins in Rome just as she is about to decide to marry Osmond. She also meets Rosier among the ruins after he has sold his bibelots, with Isabel's encouragement, to tell him that Pansy can never be his. Thus, ruins appear to embody the failure of hope, Warburton's, Rosier's and also Isabel's--her decision to marry Osmond initiates the reign of her despair. Significantly, the Palazzo Roccanero is also a ruin; it bears "a stern old Roman name"; it smells of historic deeds, "of crime and craft and violence." It is visited by tourists who look "disappointed and depressed."

Gardens are predominant images in Portrait also. They are lush, green, beautiful, airy, and spacious, especially the garden which gives Gardencourt its name. Yet Isabel, for all her professed love of freedom and expansiveness, always moves from the garden to the house. She rejects experiences which offer themselves to her in a garden setting, notably

Warburton's proposal and ultimately Goodwood's impassioned entreaty that she leave Osmond and accept the "freedom" which he (Goodwood) offers. Significantly, Isabel meets and accepts Osmond in a house, not a garden; his Palazzo has a very narrow garden, "productive chiefly of tangles of wild roses and old stone benches" (p. 209). In her constant search for darkness and containment, her running away from openness and sunshine, Isabel seems very much the serpent in the garden of her mind; the houses she seeks always become prisons. A character who turns from innocence to experience, from Eden to the world, is not unusual. What is noteworthy about Isabel's journey is that it concludes when experience is equated with unabated suffering, life with darkness and death. James has created a small nocturnal animal, placed her in bright, blinding sunlight and then observed her as she scurried for shelter and, confused, ran into a trap.

Like Goodman Brown, Pierre, Wieland, Edgar Huntley, Isabel Archer has been created to search and suffer. Like Edgar Huntley, she appears to have come to some form of self-awareness or awakening at the conclusion of her story. Edgar, it will be remembered, finally realizes that Clithero is hopelessly mad. What he does not realize is the extent to which madness has overwhelmed him, the extent to which he has become Clithero Edny. Isabel realizes that she has erred in marrying Osmond; she realizes his destructive potential. What she does not appear to realize is the extent

to which she has become like Osmond; she is rushing back to a life of sterility and the cruel manipulation of others (Pansy, for instance). Like Goodman Brown, she has fallen into the trap formed by those darker elements of her nature which have become predominant.

It can be seen, thus, that James relies heavily upon many allegorical techniques: doubling, especially in the case of Isabel and Osmond, emblematic imagery, the quest and battle forms. The story of Isabel Archer takes the form of a quest with battles interspersed. Like all great allegorists, James is able to create a great illusion of reality. We believe in his characters, especially Isabel, as human beings. Her experiences involve the reader as all human experiences do. And to use Charles Walcutt's words, "the scenery comes to life miraculously shining, glamorous, soaked in tradition, bathed in culture."[15] Yet in The Portrait of a Lady, the surface reality is an illusion. James is conducting an experiment to help him answer a question with which he is preoccupied: to what extent are one's dreams, one's illusions, compatible with reality? In a universe where illusions are blinding and reality is sinister, the answer to such a question can only be bleakly negative. Isabel Archer is the sacrifice his experiment demands.

In none of James's major works is the sacrifice he requires more remorseless than in The Wings of the Dove.[16] In her penetrating study of James's art, The Negative

Imagination, Sallie Sears writes that "the effect [of The Wings of the Dove] is not merely dramatic; it is almost diabolic. There is something reminiscent of a hellish chess game in the book's presentation of the mathematics of narrowing alternatives, in which the loser of the game not only does not know she is losing, she does not even know she is playing. James has an almost Satanic instinct for situation; indeed much of his power as a novelist lies in his remorselessness in this respect."[17] Here there is little illusion of free will; this idea is violently rejected. The Wings of the Dove is the story of a young woman who is given everything only to have to give it all up. A pilgrim wanting more than anything to live, Milly Theale is sent in quest of death. The certainty of death grows proportionally with the desire for life. The economic demand for Milly as a valuable golden object grows proportionally with her desire for love. This is a work of raw, jagged discontinuities, noteworthy as a tale of doom even in a literature dominated by tales of doom.

Wings has been accepted as James's most heavily allegorical novel because, seemingly, the moral and sacramental overtones are so preponderant. Quentin Anderson's acceptance of the work as a Swedenborgian allegory seems, on the surface, quite logical and correct. "The action of the novel," writes Anderson, "consists in the movement of the redeeming love to the point at which Milly is exposed to the

'lusts of personal aggrandizement.' Endowed with money as Christ had been endowed with the title to rule over the kingdom, she rejects every lure that the world can offer and determines that the best mode of expressing her love for mankind and her forgiveness for its selfishness and greed is to die for it."[18] Dorothea Krook also gives us a moralistic reading of Wings. In The Ordeal of Consciousness in Henry James, she maintains that Milly, the Dove, triumphs "by injecting into [the unredeemed world] its first knowledge of an order of goodness and power greater than any this world by itself can show. As the religious might put it: by the holy life and holy death of one Milly Theale, God has too evidently made foolish the wisdom of the world; and Lancaster Gate, being as intelligent as it is, does not fail to grasp the point."[19]

Several flaws can be pinpointed in such moralistic interpretations, as we shall see, but it must be admitted that James does bait the reader typologically in this novel.[20] The title of this novel and the imagery associated with Milly suggest that a religious tradition is definitely being evoked. The title refers to a portion of Psalm 55:

> My heart is sore pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon me, and in wrath they hate me.
>
> Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me.
>
> And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest.

In her paper, "The dream of Being possessed and possessing: Henry James's The Wings of the Dove,"[21] Millicent Bell discusses Milly as a type of Christ. Milly's looking down over "the kingdoms of the earth" from the mountain in Switzerland is representative, Ms. Bell maintains, of a portion of Christ's temptation in the wilderness. Satan takes Christ to the top of a mountain from which he shows him "all the kingdoms of the world" (Matt. 4:8). Christ's refusal to cast himself down from the mountain to prove his divinity is reflected in Susan Stringham's reassuring discovery that meditation, not suicide, was Milly's intention. Also, the deification of the dying Milly in Venice is, Ms. Bell maintains, typologically suggestive of Christ's death and transfiguration. To extend this typological reading even further, I would maintain that, like Christ, Milly, because of her seemingly selfless bestowal of blessings on those knowingly unworthy, intensifies the pains of guilt of which they are already cognizant. For is not the notion that salvation must be the result of suffering a prime component of Christian mythology?

Insofar as Milly's fate is remorselessly determined by James as Christ's was by God, she can be accepted typologically. Yet there are aspects of Milly's character which are not Christ-like in any respect. In her fervent desire to grasp life--she loathes and is afraid of the idea of death to her last living moments--she is certainly not divinely

unselfish. Milly's love is not for mankind but for a man--it is a human, sexual love. Simply, she desires Merton Densher. And there is certainly something spiteful and even petulant in her giving up after Lord Mark informs her of the concealed bond between Densher and Kate Croy. Her action resembles a spoiled child's refusal to eat or take a nap.

Henry James was not unaware of the difficulty he faced in The Wings of the Dove, that of creating a character who could function as a redeemer and, at the same time, as a confused and homeless American girl. This difficulty becomes especially apparent in the latter half of Wings--in which Milly must become the Dove and yet still remain Milly. This section, notes James in his Preface to Wings, "bristles with 'dodges' . . . for disguising the reduced scale of the exhibition, for foreshortening at any cost, for imparting to patches the value of presences, for dressing objects in an air as of the dimensions they can't possibly have."[22] As she languishes brilliantly in her grandly-ornate Venetian palace, Milly flies away from the reader; she loses credibility. Her suffering is not felt as Isabel Archer's certainly is and as Christ's is as he cries out in torment, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" We are not given glimpses of Milly's last moments. Her presence becomes dim as James turns again to the grovelings of the Lancaster Gate set.

The grandiose, unconvincing, spiritually weighty aspects of Milly's final renunciation are belittled by the

paltry effect this renunciation produces. One Merton Densher, a weak, dependent individual, a pawn of strong, scheming women, Kate Croy and Maud Lowder, is bedazzled by Milly's magnificent bequest to him and decides, on Christmas Day, to devote his life to the worship of her memory. He had previously devoted himself to worshipping Kate Croy while she seemed to him potent and invincible, while she refused to yield to him. Once she did, she became defiled in his eyes--more, I think, because of her sexual transgression than because of her brutal, conniving nature. He had then, seemingly, to find another woman strong and undefiled at whose shrine he could dally without physical commitment. Densher's conversion is hardly miraculous; it is merely convenient. Milly proves stronger than her rival and he becomes her disciple instead of Kate's. For such a disciple, James need hardly have attempted to create a deity!

Ultimately lacking in epic grandeur as she is, Milly Theale must yet be considered as Henry James's most dramatic attempt to create a truly cosmic image, an embodiment of the universe, the cosmos of The Wings of the Dove. Great examples in our literature of such allegorical symbols are, as has previously been mentioned, Moby Dick, the scarlet letter, Natty Bummpo, Jay Gatsby. Each of these images reflects the ambivalence with which its creator regarded the experience of being an American, an experience which James astutely termed a "complex fate." The talismanic significance of

Natty Bummpo is discussed perceptively by Marius Bewley in his The Eccentric Design. He is, Bewley notes, "a symbol thrown up from the depths of Cooper's own response to America, a response that involved both love and revulsion. Natty's love for the land of America is mystical in its proportions, and yet the civilization she was producing seemed a violation of that love itself. Natty's flight across the continent is an unconscious but profoundly realized symbol of Cooper's own recoil."[23] Jay Gatsby too is an embodiment of Fitzgerald's worship of and contempt for the American dream of success.

Like Gatsby, Milly Theale also embodies the failure of a dream, of the illusion that life can be a fulfilling, loving experience during which the individual can freely exercise his will and remain unhampered by the rigid restrictions of convention. Initially, Milly appears to be marvelously free, immensely wealthy. The world seems hers; no restrictions bind her. However, her fairy-tale naivete and mysterious mortal illness contain her more completely than the narrowest prison cell. She appears, to me, to be the objective correlative of a fear of freedom, an equation of love with death and an expression of the rigid demand that there be boundaries, restrictions to human movement and choice. Again and again, James's characters run, either forcibly or willingly but surely compulsively, from freedom into containment: Daisy Miller, Isabel Archer and now Milly

Theale. The kingdoms of earth seem to offer themselves completely as objects to be collected by Milly, yet no one is more completely collected than she. If Daisy becomes a figment of Winterbourne's fantasy and Isabel a living bibelot, Milly hardens into the image of the Dove of Grace. If this image is somewhat flat and spiritless, it is because James is too hasty in constructing it. Milly, as we observed, is too rough and imperfect a stone to be placed in such a hallowed setting.

The flaw in The Wings of the Dove is similar to that in Billy Budd. In the latter work, Melville forges a myth of acceptance and limited salvation out of materials used previously by him to embody the myth of rejection. Briefly, at Billy's death, nature, previously hostile or indifferent, becomes lovingly responsive for some reason. The world of The Wings of the Dove is completely beyond redemption. People do not associate and relate but work and possess each other. Mammon is universally worshipped. Even within the family unit, greed, rapacity, inhuman coldness predominate. Kate Croy's father rejects all ties but monetary ones, banishing his daughter in disgust when she offers him filial affection instead of payment. Her Aunt Maud, "Brittania of the Marketplace," intends to use Kate as a pawn, payment for a noble connection. Sexuality also is an emblem of possession as Densher demands that Kate spend a night with him as payment for his compliance with her rapacious desires. Images

of rapacity, artificiality, and the language of the market-place predominate. Kate is called a panther. People are grouped into two parties, the "working" and the "worked"; the worked are "taken" by the working. The world of this novel is a completely spiritless desert; all is, literally, vanity. Identities are bought and sold. Names like Manningham, Stringham, Croy (suggestive of Crow, perhaps?), invoke the working and the worked. Lord Mark's estate is aptly called Matcham; in it he tries to set up a match with Milly.

Milly Theale is too much a part of this society to be its redeemer. She too wants things for herself, and she works Susan Stringham just as she is worked by Kate Croy and Co. A mythic embodiment, a cosmic image, must reflect the universe which contains it. Nowhere in the cosmos of this work is there a trace of redemption, spirit, grace. Yet Milly is metamorphosed into an embodiment of grace. As such, she is no longer part of the universe she is meant to represent, and her mythic power to redeem it is very much dulled. Although magical causation is predominant in allegories, to be effective it should not produce a result so starkly improbable as Milly's transformation is. James has forged an image of redemption from materials composing a very fallible, very human figure.

In this novel, we can discover a motif strikingly apparent in James's works: the manifestation of erotic longing as some form of physical illness. This motif is to

be found in Daisy Miller, as we've observed briefly, as well as in The Wings of the Dove. James is drawing on a well-established allegorical tradition in representing what he conceives of as immoral by a physical illness. In Christian as well as in Greek thought, as Fletcher notes, moral perversion often takes the form of "inherited, uncontrolled, unwilled sickness."[24] Aeschylus likens the curse on the house of Atreus, for example, to a contagious pollution of the blood. In Christian allegories, the "treatment of morals as a war between virtue and vice" forms one of the main traditions. "This psychomachia is rendered most frequently as the struggle between two warring armies of moral germs, the good and evil viruses."[25] Fletcher indicates further that sin "came naturally to be identified with plague, since the plague was a reality in Europe well on into the eighteenth century."[26] In The Vision of Piers Plowman, Langland pictures conscience as invoking the plague in her revenge upon the sinners--to represent their true nature to them.

The Roman fever which kills Daisy Miller can be accepted as a physical manifestation of her and Winterbourne's unspoken sexual desires. The blight issuing from their, to James, undesirable attraction is also reflected in the ruined landscape against which their final meeting takes place. Milly's mortal illness is not caused by her involvement with Densher; the great doctor she has come abroad to seek proclaims her death sentence. However, Dr. Strett states that

her end is "far off" and he indicates that her involvement with life and love could perhaps gain her a stay of execution, however tenuous. Yet the life-denying strength of Milly's illness can be seen as growing treacherously in proportion to her desire for Merton Densher. Her involvement with him seems to hasten her death not prolong her life. The conclusion to be drawn from this fairly consistent linking of sexual love with mortal illness is, undeniably, that in these works, James is expressing a conviction that sexuality is sinful and life-denying.

Indeed, The Wings of the Dove is strikingly similar to Mann's masterly novella Death in Venice[27] in its representation of sexual longing as mortal illness. In this work, Mann relies heavily upon the allegorical tradition, representing the reduction to will-lessness of an aging artist by emotional forces which he had all his life brutally suppressed. These forces take the form of an overwhelming desire for a beautiful young boy whom the artist, Aschenbach, encounters at a seaside resort in Venice. As his desires grow in intensity, the city becomes engulfed by an outbreak of Asiatic cholera. Aschenbach, realizing the danger but unable to leave the presence of the youth, succumbs to the plague and dies. In this novella, Mann accomplishes what James attempted in The Wings of the Dove. He creates a figure, Gustave von Aschenbach, who is a fully achieved mythic embodiment.

In his excellent paper, "Myth Plus Psychology: A Stylistic Analysis of Death in Venice," Andre von Gronicka details the procedure Mann relied upon in creating his novella. It is a procedure which demands what von Gronicka calls a bifocal vision--a technique utilized by all great allegorists. This can be defined as the seemingly effortless combination of myth and what von Gronicka calls "psychology" and I have been calling rational analysis: allegory has been defined as the subjection of myth to rational analysis. This analysis takes the form of the orderly, ritualistic, explanatory attempt to deal with the problems of comprehension presented by the myth. For instance, Ishmael's attempt to explain Moby Dick can be accepted as his effort to subject a mythic force to analysis, to ground it in the understandable, the realistic. The analytic component of an allegory is its element of realism, its attempt to make myth knowable and graspable. The power of an allegory depends on the artist's ability to maintain these two elements in a symbiotic relationship.

In Death in Venice, Mann maintains these two elements, the mythic and the analytical, the symbolic and the realistic in such a productive proportion that each can be precisely delineated. Tadzio, the object of Aschenbach's desire, is at once a beautiful, rather pampered and egotistical young boy and yet "the inspiration and challenge to the artist's creative urge that measures and molds and bodies forth" and,

at the same time, the nemesis of this urge, "the tempter to lassitude, stupor, and final disintegration of body and mind."[28] At one point, Aschenbach creates a perfect piece of prose while inspired by Tadzio's classical beauty and at many other times he just longs lustfully for him, creatively idle. Gustave von Aschenbach himself is a masterly blend of mythic and realistic or analytical (psychological) elements. He is, as I've indicated, a pathetic aging artist suddenly engulfed by a perverse desire and, at the same time, "the symbol and mirror of the lot of creative man who follows the danger-beset path . . . which leads by the senses toward the goal of ultimate cognition and beauty."[29] As he dies, looking toward the sea at the wading Tadzio, Aschenbach is at once a ludicrously rouged and pomaded, lecherous old man and a seer who has encompassed the origins of beauty and creativity, a figure to be associated with Socrates and Saint Sebastian.

Mann maintains the same balanced polarity in his descriptions of Venice. This is a city of poverty, greed, sweltering heat, a city permeated with the stench of the canals, yet at the same time, it is a mythical city with fairy-tale palaces and temples, "Romantic Venice risen from the dreams of Byron, Platen, Wagner, and Nietzsche, that magical city of ruthless passions, or passions-unto-death, of the _Liebestod_."[30] How different is James's Venice! All we really see of it in detail is the castle within which

Milly imprisons herself. At this point, James has abandoned the analysis and is attempting to dazzle the reader with pure myth. Venice is a pristine tower of death and apotheosis; Milly is the Dove of Redemption. Densher and Kate Croy, however, fail to grow in mythic stature; the proportions of the novel become completely unbalanced. Why has James failed to create a great allegory? I think it is because of haste--haste to complete the sacrifice of Milly, on which his eye is constantly riveted. Mann, on the other hand, lets Aschenbach appear to work out his own fate, in his own time; his attitude toward his protagonist is much more detached than James's toward Milly. He is not so intent on collecting Aschenbach into a type at all costs. Mann's protagonist, as consumed by lust as he is, arouses more compassion than does Milly, who is punished merely for wanting a home. Mann, unlike James, maintains the illusion of free will necessary to create a bond between reader and protagonist. We find a similar illusion in all great allegories: Conrad's Heart of Darkness, Kafka's The Metamorphosis, and Pearl, for instance. In many great American works which rely heavily upon the allegorical mode like The Scarlet Letter, Moby Dick, The Portrait of a Lady, the illusion of free will is more preeminent than in The Wings of the Dove. However, none of these is marked by the graceful balancing of the mythic and analytical elements found in Heart of Darkness or Death in Venice. American authors seemingly

cannot maintain the detachment which is essential for the preservation of this balance.

In the hands of our American authors, allegory is too often a means of inflicting pain. Frequently, as we have observed, the artist can be seen to appear in the awesome form of Jonathan Edwards' Angry God, holding his struggling creatures over the pit of hell. Indeed, American allegory often posits a chain of suffering: an omnipotent author inflicts pain on his creatures and they, in turn, bait and torment each other. In Hawthorne's "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," for instance, the link between the allegorical process and human anguish is strikingly evident. Richard Poirier notes that "the narrator is full of shock and remorse at the brutality caused by the town's allegorical treatment of Robin's kinsman."[31] They accept a human being as a symbol of hated authority and treat him as such. Poirier also discovers that "Hawthorne investigates the allegorizing tendencies at work in the consciousness of his characters . . . and shows how life is hatefully confined by allegorical rigidities."[32] We have observed allegorical rigidity at work in The Scarlet Letter as Hester Prynne was accepted and treated as a type of sin. However, Poirier does not think, as I do, that Hawthorne is as much of an allegorical determinist as any of his characters.

This chain of despair is operative in Melville's works also. And here its strangulating, destructive quality

is particularly evident. We have merely to recall Ishmael's frantic efforts to reduce the universe to graspable size to sense the vibrating tautness the allegorical mode is capable of generating. By allegorizing, Ishmael attempts to reduce Ahab and Queequeg to ideas he can more easily grasp and relate to himself. He labors to know the unknowable by giving it form, by naming it and thereby reducing its annihilative potential. The power of Melville's irony, the devastating force of the ambiguity which animates the universe he creates, resides in the nature of those walls which so torment his creatures: dreadful in themselves, they are yet less dreadful than what they conceal.

As we have observed, James also constructs walls, but, seemingly, by tearing them down. The question he asks again and again in his works has been identified by Sallie Sears: what happens when the individual "is freed from the contingencies that ordinarily impinge upon our lives and seem to shape and determine our destiny?"[33] The answer is repeatedly tinged with tragedy. Equipped with a fairy-tale dream of self-fulfillment and boundlessly free of social restrictions, James's characters are forced to journey alone in a world of disguised and brutal contingencies. Ultimately, they become either victims or join the ranks of those who victimize. In any case, they lose all power of agency and become transformed, metamorphosed allegorically into images of types: Isabel into an image of suffering, Milly into an image of redemption.[34]

Notes to Chapter IV

[1]Charles T. Samuels, The Ambiguity of Henry James (Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 3.

[2]A cogent discussion of James's critics is offered by Elizabeth K. Cummins in her unpublished dissertation, "Henry James: Irony and the Limited Observer," Diss. Claremont Graduate School and Univ. Center, 1968.

[3]Charles C. Walcutt, "The Illusion of Action in Henry James," in his Man's Changing Mask: Modes and Methods of Characterization in Fiction (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1966), p. 203.

[4]Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961, p. 14.

[5]Naomi Lebowitz, The Imagination of Loving: Henry James's Legacy to the Novel (Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 1965), p. 148.

[6]In Henry James: The Turn of the Screw and Other Short Novels (New York: New American Library, 1962), p. 37.

[7]In The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces by Henry James (New York: Scribner's, 1962), p. 270.

[8]In Henry James: The Turn of the Screw and Other Short Novels, p. 107. Subsequent references to this work will be followed in the text by page numbers.

[9]In Leslie A. Marchand, ed., Selected Poetry of Lord Byron (New York: Random House, 1951), p. 635.

[10]Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1959), p. 199.

[11]The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 283.

[12]New York: New American Library, 1963, p. 47. Subsequent references to this work will be followed in the text by page numbers.

[13]"The Fearful Self," in Peter Buitenhuis, ed. Twentieth Century Interpretations of The Portrait of a Lady (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968), p. 70.

[14]Eben Bass studies the names of many of James's houses in his paper "Henry James and the English Country House," Markham Rev., 2, No. ii (Feb., 1970), 4-10.

[15]"The Illusion of Action in Henry James," p. 194.

[16]London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1957.

[17]Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1968, p. 74.

[18]The American Henry James (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1957), p. 237.

[19]Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962, p. 263.

[20]Analogical or typological baiting results, it will be remembered when the authors present an analogy which, as Honig points out, "dangles before the reader like an artificial bait," and "does not permit of extension." Dark Conceit: The Making of Allegory (Cambridge: Walker-DeBerry, 1960), p. 127.

[21]Mass. Review, 10 (Winter-Autumn, 1969), 97-114.

[22]In The Art of the Novel, p. 302.

[23]New York: Columbia University Press, 1959, p. 111.

[24]Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode, p. 199.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Ibid., p. 210.

[27]In Death in Venice and Seven Other Stories by Thomas Mann, H. T. Lowe-Porter, tr. (New York: Random House, 1963), pp. 3-75.

[28]In Henry Hatfield, ed., Thomas Mann: A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964), p. 56.

[29]Ibid., p. 59.

[30]Ibid., p. 50.

[31]A World Elsewhere: The Place of Style in American Literature (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 113.

[32]Ibid.

[33]The Negative Imagination, p. 166.

[34]The transformation of agency into imagery, a predominant allegorical technique, is discussed by Fletcher on pp. 86-87.

CHAPTER V

CATHER

It is not difficult to uncover and describe Willa Cather's literary weakness. Her moral vision is obscured by the failure to recognize human limitations. Not able in the long run to accept life as an indecipherable mixture of good and evil, she searches relentlessly for an imaginary locale in which the power of evil becomes negligible and life can be viewed through a mist of nostalgia and elegiac sentimentality. She finds this locale at times in her vision of the unfulfilled promise of America's rural past expressed in stories such as "Neighbor Rosicky," "The Old Beauty," "The Best Years." At other times, so completely overcome by what she considers to be the horror of the petty, materialistic present, she rejects the unfulfilled American experience altogether and celebrates the past of Canada (*Shadows on the Rock*, 1931) or the time-honored ritualism of religion (*Death Comes for the Archbishop*, 1927). Here, she finds, she is on stable and safe ground; in her own life, she is not constantly confronted with the unfulfilled present of these past experiences.

What Willa Cather attempts to capture in all of her major works is the quality of timelessness, permanence, stability. The most characteristic allegorical pattern

found in her novels is the quest--the quest in search of timelessness or immortality, the journey to a realm in which there are no barriers between human potential and human accomplishment--in which there are no human limitations. In this realm, death itself, the greatest human limitation, could be viewed as but another, perhaps the supreme, aspect of the eternal cycle of life. Willa Cather would most probably have liked to agree with Walt Whitman that "All goes onward and outward, nothing collapses,/ And to die is different from what anyone supposed, and luckier" (Song of Myself).

Walt Whitman was able to fully accept death, to annihilate his fear of it, by encompassing all aspects of life--the most violent and the most sordid--and transforming them into the poetry of acceptance and celebration. In her late works, Willa Cather was able to confront and accept death because she had in effect rejected life, its activity, impermanence, pain, and sorrow. Her late works are often devoid of conflict, since conflict between individual and environment or between individuals suggests the possibility of disappointment, degradation, and failure, those human limitations which Cather could face with less and less ease as her career progressed. The result is often a plotles, static novel with flat characters--a novel like Lucy Gayheart (1935).

In her best and most characteristic works, Cather attempts to create mythic embodiments, characters who, like

Cooper's Natty Bumppo, are symbolic of some aspect of the American experience as their creator conceives of it. Her mythic embodiments are individuals who encompass that special quality of permanence which is Cather's predominant creative concern. Alexandra Bergson of O Pioneers! (1913) is perhaps Cather's most outstanding symbolic character. Her qualities and values are enumerated almost immediately in Cather's first descriptive presentation of her. In the midst of the feeble human efforts to mold the wild, desolate Nebraskan Prairie to the human will, Alexandra stands, a pillar of endurance, brightness, comfort, and stability. She is a "tall, strong girl, and she walk[s] rapidly and resolutely, as if she [knows] exactly where she [is] going and what she [is] going to do next. . . . She [has] a serious, thoughtful face, and her clear, deep blue eyes [are] fixed intently on the distance. . . ."[1] Coupled with Alexandra's many strengths is a certain inability to understand the human need for emotional closeness, a quality which Cather also sketches immediately by describing Alexandra's reaction to a weather-beaten stranger's admiration of her brilliant hair: "She stabbed him with a glance of Amazonian fierceness and drew in her lower lip--a most unnecessary severity" (p. 8).

Like the mythic enbodiment in general, Alexandra is a figure drawn against the background of her author's ideas distinctly and palpably, but she is embedded in it, dependent

on it for her meaning. Essentially, she does not develop or change. Her relationships with various individuals serve to bring out qualities which are congenital. Her capability, her life-giving strength, is clearly brought out in her relationship with her dying father and her young brother, Emil. To her awkward brother she is a source of comfort and help as she discovers a way to rescue his tree-bound kitten, dries his tears and allows him to hide his face in her skirts. To her father, spent and broken from the life-consuming effort to make the land productive, she represents the promise of success. As she brings him his dinner, straightens his bedclothes, and reassures him of her future efforts to "keep the land," he feels "her youth and strength, how easily she move[s] and stoop[s] and lift[s] (p. 25). She becomes the light which shines through the winter twilight, the embodiment of hope: "The rattle of her wagon was lost in the howling of the wind, but her lantern, held firmly between her feet, made a moving point of light along the highway, going deeper and deeper into the dark country" (p. 18). The "dark country" is Alexandra's chief opponent and yet she is intimately related to it. It is as the forest is to Leatherstocking, the river to Huck Finn; her reaction to it defines her character most clearly.

Cather depicts Alexandra's situation as quickly as she presents Alexandra. The first paragraph of this novel

paints the scene of natural ferocity and desolation against which the human community is precariously set: the little town of Hanover is "anchored on a windy Nebraska tableland . . . trying not to be blown away" (p. 3). "The record of the plow [is] insignificant, like the feeble scratches on stone left by prehistoric races, so indeterminate that they may, after all, be only the markings of glaciers, and not a record of human strivings" (pp. 19-20). The land is repeatedly described as a living being. It wants "to be left alone, to preserve its own fierce strength, its peculiar savage kind of beauty, its uninterrupted mournfulness" (p. 15). It is compared to an unbroken horse, wild and destructive. It has a "Genius," the spirit of freedom which emanates from it. And when the land yields to Alexandra, to her love for it, her ability to handle it, it yields as does a lover: "It seemed beautiful to her, rich and strong and glorious. Her eyes drank in the breadth of it, until her tears blinded her. Then the Genius of the Divide . . . must have bent lower than it ever bent to a human will before" (p. 65).

In all of Willa Cather's Prairie works, the land itself seems the most important protagonist. We gain knowledge of human characters as we observe them in relation to the land. They embody their environment, as much as the environment serves to reflect aspects of their character. The spirit of the land is overwhelming in the first section

of this novel ("The Wild Land"); each human character can immediately be accepted as representative of some aspect of the natural environment. The dying father is part of the sterile winter which Alexandra will atone for with all the health and buoyancy of spring. Mrs. Bergson, plowing her garden and setting out fruit trees, is a kind of life-ordering, life-preserving principle and she follows in Alexandra's path, tending to things on a much smaller scale. Crazy Ivar is Cather's attempt at an incarnation of the Wordsworthian doctrine that "nature, being good, can teach man to be good if he will but live close to her."[2] His home is a cave as far from the "litter of human dwellings" (p. 37) as possible; his religion is a form of nature worship. Alexandra respects his individualism and relies on his intimate knowledge of the problems of husbandry. In this section of the novel, time itself is presented in terms of the changing face of the land. Alexandra's labors begin in winter; by spring, she has converted the wild desolation into a fruitful garden. Actually, several years have passed, but we are aware only of the natural cycle of death to rebirth, barrenness to fruitfulness.

Willa Cather's characterization of Alexandra, up to the time of her establishment of the garden, is mythically sound. She is Cather's "natural aristocrat,"[3] a being with strength, imagination, insight, the ability to transform the ideal into the real, the dream into actuality. She is

an impersonal entity rather than an individual human being. Up to this point, there is no distinction between her public and her private lives, no meaning or significance which depends on the fulfillment of her merely personal destiny. And it is noteworthy that at no point must Alexandra confront any crucial, morally significant choice or choices which would distinctly affect her life. She can no more choose to love and stay with the land than she can choose to be born or to breathe. Since she is primarily a vehicle for Cather's ideas, her choices are made for her, although the illusion of free choice is well maintained.

It is after the taming of the land that Cather introduces her second concern in this novel--the problems of personal relationships. And for a time she seems to forget her mythical concerns. Marie Shabata, Alexandra's co-protagonist, possesses many of the human qualities the dignified Alexandra seems to lack. She is introduced initially at a very early stage of the novel. Her vitality and spontaneity are stressed in Cather's description of her as a young child. Even as a young woman, she is constantly in motion, running instead of walking, exclaiming instead of merely discussing. Her main characteristic is the ability to participate fully in emotional situations, to seize life, as far as it means happiness, completely. Captivated by the suave good looks of Frank Shabata, she runs away with him, meeting his subsequent spells of

moroseness with seemingly implacable optimism. Her belief in the goodness and moral rightness of emotion is constantly revealed. She never fails to find meaning in her emotional reactions to various situations such as the shooting of wild ducks: "'They're too happy to kill. You can tell just how they felt when they flew up. They were scared, but they didn't really think anything could hurt them'" (p. 128). Her love for Emil Bergson is a natural reaction to the emotional wasteland her husband offers her. Yet because of their love, she and Emil are destroyed.

Both Marie and Emil are created as emblems of the promise of the future. They are the "second generation" meant to reap the benefits of the pioneer's struggle and at the same time to embody the brilliant spring-time radiance of the barren prairie turned fruitful garden. Alexandra herself attributes this value to Emil: "'I'm sure it was to have sons like Emil, and to give them a chance, that father left the old country . . . He is going to have a chance, a whole chance; that's what I've worked for'" (p. 117). The descriptions of Marie are obviously intended to relate her to the garden's spring-time. Her face is "like a poppy, round and brown" (p. 79). Her eyes, "curiously slashed with yellow," are the color of "sunflower honey, or of old amber" (pp. 135-136). She is joyous and young, like the "open face of the country" (p. 76).

In Cather's world, the second generation fails completely to fulfill the promise of the original pioneer's vision, in spite of the radiance which may originally surround them. They lack the first generation's imagination, strength, and insight; they can no longer equate dream and reality but spend their energy in aimlessness and frivolity, degrading the priceless legacy left them. When Emil and Marie are killed by Frank Shabata, Cather implies that death, the failure of fulfillment, was there from the onset, an idea strongly suggested by the image of Emil sharpening his scythe by the gate of the Norwegian graveyard. In Cather's novel, as in James's works, death is closely linked to sexual love. Marie and Emil are killed immediately after they have consummated their love.

In those sections of the novel devoted to Marie and Emil ("Neighboring Fields," "Winter Memories," "The White Mulberry Tree"), Alexandra has been gradually assuming the role of bystander. It is as if Cather did not know what to do with her once her mythical tasks were complete. Cooper allows Natty Bumppo to die gracefully, a venerable old man. Twain, not so successfully, implies that Huck will embark on another quest. However, Cather attempts to involve Alexandra in those personal relationships which her identity as a mythical embodiment dooms at the start. There is something incongruous in the vision of Alexandra bickering with her narrow-minded brothers.

Most ludicrous is Cather's attempt to present Alexandra's reaction to Carl Linstrum's flirtations. To his statement that he finds her physically attractive, she replies, "'I think, myself, it is more pleasant to do business with people who are clean and healthy looking'" (p. 132). Cather attempts to reinstate Alexandra as the chief protagonist after the deaths of Marie and Emil. However, the wake of destructiveness and pessisism which Cather accepts as the result of the lovers' rashness overwhelms Alexandra; oppressed by visions of death and feelings of disgust at life, she diminishes to a two-dimensional figure, who unquestioningly condones the damnation of the second generation and, consequently, the devaluation of human love. Thus she takes the side of the morose, unsympathetically-portrayed Frank Shabata: "'I understand how you did it, the shooting of Emil and Marie. I don't feel hard toward you. They were more to blame than you'" (p. 293). The conclusion of the novel is a mere contrivance. Cather arranges a marriage between Alexandra and the effete Carl Linstrum, a marriage based on Alexandra's need to be comforted and the winter's need for spring: "They went into the house together, leaving the Divide behind them, under the evening star. Fortunate country, that is one day to receive hearts like Alexandra's into its bosom, to give them out again in the yellow wheat, in the rustling corn, in the shining eyes of youth!" (p. 309). Linstrum is portrayed as retiring

and weak throughout the novel. By marrying him to Alexandra, Cather uses him as the means by which she hopes to sanction the only relationship which she ultimately sees as productive, Alexandra's relationship with the land.

As a mythic embodiment, Alexandra is flawed. Like James in The Wings of the Dove, Cather does not maintain the balance between realism and myth which is essential to a really first-rate allegory. Great mythic embodiments are the products of fine allegories, for instance, The Great Gatsby. In her depiction of Alexandra, Cather shifts back and forth between the two elements too eratically. Seemingly, she becomes so intent on punishing Marie for her transgression that she forgets about Alexandra for some time and then she demands that Alexandra condemn Marie as vehemently as she, Cather, does. Such a condemnation is inconsistent with the nature of one who understands and shelters "Crazy Ivar" against the wishes of her family, one who, generally, understands and accepts the vagaries of fallible humanity so readily.

In the evocation of her major protagonist, the land, Cather succeeds even if she had some difficulty with the land's foremost emblem, Alexandra. Destructive, cruel, yet overwhelmingly beautiful, the land emerges as realistically acceptable yet mythically potent. Like an omnipotent god, it eliminates the weak and rewards the strong, overwhelming all with the incontrovertible cycle of its seasons. This

novel can be accepted as the chornicle of the land's quest, its attempt to unite with Alexandra, just as readily as the story of Alexandra's struggle to claim the land, to tame it into a productive garden. Cather embodies the possessive spirit of the land in the figure of the corn-god[4] who appears to Alexandra in a recurring dream of her youth:

> . . . she used to have an illusion of being lifted up bodily and carried lightly by some one very strong. It was a man, certainly, who carried her, but he was like no man she knew; he was much larger and stronger and swifter, and he carried her as easily as if she were a sheaf of wheat. She never saw him, but with eyes closed, she could feel that he was yellow like the sunlight, and there was the smell of ripe corn-fields about him. . . . After such a reverie she would rise hastily, angry with herself, and go down to the bath-house . . . There she would stand in a tin tub and prosecute her bath with vigor, . . . (p. 206)

Alexandra fights to remain independent, to prevent herself from being overwhelmed by the land. Ultimately, though, after the deaths of Marie and Emil, the old dream returns, but quite metamorphosed:

> He was with her for a long while this time, and carried her very far, and in his arms she felt free from pain. When he laid her down on the bed again, she opened her eyes, and, for the first time in her life, she saw him, saw him clearly, though the room was dark and his face was covered. He was standing in the doorway of her room. His white cloak was thrown over his face, and his head was bent a little forward. His shoulders seemed as strong as the foundations of the world. His right arm, bare from the elbow, was dark and gleaming like bronze, and she knew at once that it was the arm of the mightiest of all lovers. She knew at last for whom it was she had waited, and where he would carry her. That, she told herself, was very well. Then she went to sleep. (pp. 282-283)

The corn-god has become a mighty figure, be it of love or death, and Alexandra is no longer struggling to remain unpossessed. Her wisdom would seem to consist of the discovery that only the land is immortal and that because she, like all human beings, is mortal, she will ultimately be united with the land; no earthly struggles can prevent this. The novel's closing line, quoted above, reiterates, in a happier mood, the land's incontrovertible victory: "Fortunate country, that is one day to receive hearts like Alexandra's into its bosom, to give them out again in the yellow wheat, in the rustling corn, in the shining eyes of youth!" Alexandra accepts Carl Linstrum, her stolid, passive, intellectual suitor, at this point, when she feels her mortality most strongly; she accepts him as her counterpart, rather than the land.

The most marked dissimilarity which _My Ántonia_ (1918) bears to its predecessor of five years is embodied in the fact that the action of the former is held at a distance in time and comes to the reader indirectly, reflected through a human lens, Jim Burden. Jim sifts through the events of his past in order to arrive at the organized value system which his interpretation of these events yields. This value system is embodied in Ántonia Shimerda, Jim's Ántonia. _My Ántonia_ details Jim's journey into his past, his quest for the values and the contentment and the stability which he feels he has lost and which his present life

is failing to yield him; the novel details Jim's quest for spiritual wholeness. This Ishmael is more fortunate than Melville's. He finds the oasis of stability and meaning for which he is searching.

Outlines of the character of Jim Burden are sketched for us in the introduction to the novel by his friend Willa Cather. A lawyer for a Western railway, he has spent the greater part of his life in a competitive urban environment. With an emotionally unsatisfactory marriage and no children, Jim is basically alone, like Ishmael. Although he "loves with a personal passion the great country through which his railway runs and branches,"[5] this love, seemingly, is not personal enough to sustain Jim. Thus he works, in his tract called My Ántonia, to create an embodiment of this love, to develop Ántonia Shimerda, a Bohemian girl who was a childhood playmate, into the cosmic talisman of "the country, the conditions, the whole adventure of [his] childhood" (Intro., p. 2).

The first section of this novel, "The Shimerdas," is perhaps the most successful in that Cather is able to keep in balance those two vital elements of allegory, the mythic and the realistic or rational. In this section, Jim emerges as both the searching self sifting the hoard of memory for ideals of beauty and value and as a sensitive child revelling in the living glory of his environment. Ántonia emerges both as a repository of values, the emblem

of life's mystic wholeness for which the adult Jim is searching and as Jim's childhood playmate, the sharer of his experiences.

Overwhelmed at first by the earth and sky between which he seems "erased, blotted out," Jim reacts instinctively to Ántonia's brightness, openness, and sensitivity, her seeming unity with herself. He grasps the values which his environment offers him through his acceptance of Ántonia's reactions to this same environment. He accepts the love of order exemplified by her love of homemaking, the respect for courage and prowess exemplified by her pride in his killing of a large snake. He learns to appreciate refinement, the influence of civilization, by accepting Ántonia's love for her weak but imaginative and genteel father; he confronts his companion's understanding of human frailty embodied in her regard for her grasping mother. What Jim ultimately partakes of is Ántonia's love of life, all life, as revealed by her reaction to the feeble insect waiting to be annihilated by the oncoming winter: "Tony made a warm nest for him in her hands; talked to him gaily and indulgently in Bohemian. Presently he began to sing for us--a thin, rusty little chirp. She held him close to her ear and laughed . . ." (p. 39). Jim learns, through his friendship with Ántonia, of the feeling that comes with the acceptance of the unity and beneficence of life: "The earth was warm under me, and warm as I

crumbled it through my fingers. . . . I was something that lay under the sun and felt it, like the pumpkins, and I did not want to be anything more . . . that is happiness; to be dissolved into something complete and great. When it comes to one, it comes as naturally as sleep" (p. 18).

The idea of the safety and productivity embodied in family solidarity is important in this novel. No longer is Cather celebrating the isolated conqueror. To be alone, like the adult Jim, is to be incomplete and unhappy. Jim's search for Ántonia is also the search for the family solidarity his adult life has not provided him with. In this section, the smooth productivity of the united Burdens is contrasted with the chaotic attempts of the divided Shimerdas. To the child Jim, his grandmother's "basement kitchen seemed heavenly safe and warm in those days--like a tight little boat in a winter sea" (p. 65). In the second section, "Ths Hired Girls," Cather steps up the development of Ántonia into mythic embodiment. We see less and less of the more human Ántonia as the author becomes involved in writing an elegy for the agrarian dream and developing Ántonia into its emblem.

The ideal of the agrarian aristocracy, the promise of which was never fulfilled, inspired many important chapters in American fiction. Henry Nash Smith's Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth depicts the development of the American agrarian dream:

> The myth of the garden affirmed that the dominant force in the future society of the Mississippi Valley would be agriculture. It is true that with the passage of time this symbol, like that of the Wild West, became in its turn a less and less accurate description of a society transformed by commerce and industry. . . . But the image of an agricultural paradise in the West, embodying group memories of an earlier, a simpler and, it was believed, a happier state of society, long survived as a force in American thought and politics.[6]

Garden imagery, so prevalent in _My Ántonia_, is prevalent in the earliest allegories, whether Christian or pagan. As H. M. Jones notes, "the garden may be the home of the Virgin and Child, or of a Chaste Maiden luring a unicorn or of Honor, Love, Fortitude, the Graces, the Christian virtues or any other dream concept. It does not snow in the garden, it is never cold there, the flowers bloom eternally, the birds sing, there are no weeds, no wild animals, no disease and no death."[7] The earliest descriptions of the New World are compounded of just such allegorical garden imagery. Here, for instance, is a fragment of Columbus' description of the New World as quoted by Jones:

> This island [Hispaniola, the modern Haiti] and all others are very fertile to a limitless degree, and this island is extremely so. . . . Its lands are high, and there are in it very many sierras and very lofty mountains, beyond comparison with the island of Teneriffe. All are most beautiful, of a thousand shapes, and all are accessible and filled with trees of a thousand kinds and tall, and they seem to touch the sky. And I am told that they never lose their foliage, as I can understand, for I saw them as green and lovely as they are in Spain in May. . . . And the nightingale was singing, and other birds of a thousand kinds in the month of November there where I went.[8]

It is toward her own image of the Garden of the World, found in the novel's last section, "Cuzak's Boys," that Cather works in <u>My Ántonia</u>. The process begins in earnest in "The Hired Girls."

In this section, as I previously mentioned, Ántonia's mythical component begins to take over the element of vital realism so evident in the novel's first section. She comes to town, Black Hawk, to work, but we see little of her. She is fragmented into Lena Lingard, Tiny Soderball, the three Bohemian Marys, Norwegian Anna--the other country girls working in Black Hawk--whose activities Jim becomes involved in observing. In this section, the town is tested by having the country girls placed within its confines. And they are looked down upon. Jim summarizes: "The daughters of Black Hawk merchants had a confident, unenquiring belief that they were 'refined,' and that the country girls, who 'worked out,' were not" (p. 199). The diminution, the stagnation and aimlessness of town life and the superiority of the country and its people are stressed with more and more vehemence as the chapter progresses. Here, in town, there is no exhilarating response to the seasonal cycle: "On the farm the weather was the great fact, and men's affairs went on underneath it, as the streams creep under the ice. But in Black Hawk the scene of human life was spread out shrunken and pinched, frozen down to the bare stalk" (pp. 180-181). Life itself seems made up of "evasions and

negations. . . . This guarded mode of existence" is "like living under a tyranny. People's speech, their voices, their very glances, become furtive and repressed. Every individual taste, every natural appetite, [is] bridled by caution. The people asleep in their houses . . . tr[y] to live like the mice in their own kitchens; to make no noise, to leave no trace, to slip over the surface of things in the dark" (p. 219). Amidst the gloom and hardening of this life, only the country girls provide a glimpse of beauty and vitality. The most severe indictment of the town is provoked by its extremely corruptive influence on rural innocence and simplicity. This idea is crystallized by Cather's presentation of the lecherous Wick Cutter, a figure emblematic of all the author deems deserving of the most severe scorn--greed, usury, hypocrisy--all those vices associated with urban materialism.

Throughout this section, Jim becomes a vehicle for Cather's moralistic urgency. What we feel is the overwhelming sense of reminiscence, of regret, as the elegiac mist of the past begins to obscure immediacy. In her ideological urgency, Cather forgets that her spokesman is an adolescent boy, and he becomes priggish and silly as the author struggles to find an approach to the girls' alluring physical beauty that would not obscure their symbolic value. This is one of the reasons for the creation of Lena Lingard, a languid, emotionally-passive beauty who

lets Jim kiss her occasionally, to take that burden from Ántonia as she becomes more exclusively mythic. Ultimately, both Jim and Ántonia are victimized by the spirit of urban materialism. Jim, overcome by the emptiness and smallness of town life, leaves Black Hawk and goes to Lincoln, Nebraska, to attend the university. It is here that he relies upon classical learning to reinforce and concretize the value of his rural past: "It came over me, as it had never done before, the relation between girls like those [the country girls] and the poetry of Virgil. If there were no girls like them in the world, there would be no poetry" (p. 270). The agrarian ideal thus receives the authenticity, the significance, of myth.

Fascinated by the surface gaiety of the town's amusements, Ántonia leaves the congenial but strict Harling household, where she has been employed, to seek a position that would give her more opportunity to dance and socialize. It is this step that results in her victimization by Larry Donovan, a town boy who lures her with promises of marriage and then abandons her, pregnant and unmarried. She turns, from this shock and grave disappointment, to cherish the original rural values of her childhood. At this point, all semblance of free will has been obscured. Jim leaves Black Hawk because Cather has damned the insipid imitation of life unfolding within its houses. Ántonia is ravaged because she represents rural innocence and credulousness. The evil

born of the town's petty, grasping materialistic concerns cannot leave such purity unsullied.

Ántonia's mythic stature is not diminished by the story of her degradation. Another pioneer woman, the Widow Steavens, tells Jim the tale, gracing it with her understanding and love for Ántonia. The Widow Steavens stresses Ántonia's lack of hysteria, her stoical acceptance of her unavoidable fate, her persistence in working hard to the last moment, her love for her child. These details enrich the mythic vision of Ántonia and bring Jim closer to her and to the mythic virtues of the agrarian past which he would have her embody. After listening to the Widow Steavens, Jim lies awake watching "the moonlight shining over the barn and the stocks and the pond, and the windmill making its old dark shadow against the blue sky" (p. 318). Ántonia's inability to find success and happiness as a lone individual reminds us of the stress placed on the safety stemming from family solidarity pictured in the novel's first section. This idea is picked up again in "Cuzak's Boys" by the vision of the large family Ántonia and her husband are raising and by the implication that now Ántonia and her ideals are safe from the evils of the urban environment and can thus exist safely and happily. Even if a single individual like Alexandra Bergson can tame the land, she is not strong enough, alone, to prevent it from being defiled. A lone individual can establish the garden, but it must have many

protectors as the destructive forces gain in strength. From O Pioneers! to My Ántonia, Cather's mythic embodiment changes in character. Alexandra is memorable for her heroic stamina; Ántonia evokes fruitfulness and family values, components of the agrarian ideal. If the land is accepted as Alexandra's counterpart, the plow, the tool with which the farmer grooms the land into productiveness, can be accepted as Ántonia's counterpart. While he is spending a day in the country with Ántonia, Jim has a vision which can be accepted as one of the prime mythic moments of this novel:

> Presently we saw a curious thing: There were no clouds, the sun was going down in a limpid, gold-washed sky. Just as the lower edge of the red disk rested on the high fields against the horizon, a great black figure suddenly appeared on the face of the sun. In a moment we realized what it was. On some upland farm, a plough had been left standing in the field. The sun was sinking just behind it. Magnified across the distance by the horizontal light, it stood out against the sun, was exactly contained within the circle of the disk; the handles, the tongue, the share--black against the molted red. There it was, heroic in size, a picture writing on the sun. (p. 245)

In "Cuzak's Boys," Cather depicts the adult Jim's rediscovery of Ántonia. Jim's rediscovery of Ántonia, the coming together of the intellect and the spirit, which had been united in an agrarian childhood, constitutes the most idyllic mythic moment of this novel. It also represents Cather's deification of the earth goddess in the fertile garden: "She [Ántonia] had only to stand in the orchard, to put her hand on a little crab tree and look up at the

apples, to make you feel the goodness of planting and harvesting at last. . . . It was no wonder that her sons stood tall and straight. She was a rich mine of life, like the founders of early races" (p. 353). An aura of sadness hovers over the rich imagery of "Cuzak's Boys"; and this mood is embodied in the Virgilian line found on the title page of this novel: "Optima dies . . . prima fugit." It is with this deep sense of loss that Willa Cather awakes to find that the agrarian dream has vanished and that she must turn to the emblem in her attempt to recapture the mood. The adult Jim, childless, unhappy in his urban surroundings and expecting only a bleak future, is as representative of Cather's sense of the American present as Ántonia is of her sense of the reclaimable past. Jim's dreaming of future trips with the Cuzak boys and his insistence that repeated visits with Ántonia will somehow revitalize "the precious, the incommunicable past," are representative of Cather's desire to reconstruct the standard garden of allegory--the locale of eternal spring where death has no dominion.

Willa Cather's mournful realization that the agrarian dream was never again to become reality resulted in a group of novels that Bernard Baum aptly calls the waste-land novels.[9] These include One of Ours (1922), A Lost Lady (1923), The Professor's House (1925), and My Mortal Enemy (1926). The unifying theme of all these works is the

degradation of the rural West and the triumph of the machine, materialism, and urban rapacity in general. The desecration of the land is accompanied by the enervation and ultimate destruction of the kind of individual celebrated in _O Pioneers!_, the natural aristocrat, the being with imagination and strength and the great will to convert dream into actuality. This individual, with his Adamic innocence, his inability to cope with the slimy corruption of the petty, money-making materialist, is doomed. Cather devotes her wasteland period to the story of the American Adam's fall into knowledge. But for her, as for Brown, Hawthorne, Melville, and James, this is not a fortunate fall as the knowledge of evil brings to the author and to her characters only incapacitation.

Cather's waste-land period is marked by her failure to create new mythic embodiments. As I observed during the discussion of Henry James, the mythic embodiment can function successfully only under certain very definite, controlled conditions. There must be a close relationship, a unity, between the character and his environment; the character must be able to react purposefully to his environment, and he must embody some or all of the ideals reflected in the environment. We need only think of Alexandra's relation to the land or of the image of Ántonia in the garden to grasp the significance of this relationship. A similar arrangement is depicted by Cooper in his presentation of

Leatherstocking's relationship to the forest or by Fitz-geral in his story of Gatsby's struggle to grasp his illusive and tarnished vision of the American Dream, a vision which he embodies. The vast potency of the mythical embodiment is equal to and emblematic of the potency of his environment. Alexandra's power reflects the power of the wild land; Ántonia's fertility is emblematic of the fer-tility of her garden. As materialism corrupts the land, as the machine ravages the garden, all natural potency is lost. The characters peopling this fallen world are as broken, weak, and aimless as their environment. They can still be regarded as emblems of their environment but not as mythic embodiments. The mythical character mirrors an ideal; when that ideal is no longer possible, neither is this kind of character. Natty Bumppo fades from the American scene along with the virgin forest. Jay Gatsby's death betrays the nature of the hopeless and empty illusion the American Dream had become. Willa Cather's garden is de-stroyed with the serpent's entrance. In the novel _One of Ours_, Cather provides a clear picture of the kind of indi-vidual she envisions the fallen Adam to be. Claude Wheeler is a hero for whom no heroic act is possible because there is no heroic potential in the environment he reflects.

Claude Wheeler's world is indeed sterile and diminished, completely controlled by the machine and the dollar: "The farmer raised and took to market things with

an intrinsic value. . . . In return he got manufactured articles of poor quality. . . . Most of his money was paid out for machinery,--and that, too, went to pieces. . . . The people themselves had changed . . . the farmers were continually having lawsuits. Their sons were either stingy and grasping, or extravagant and lazy, and they were always stirring up trouble."[10] The characters in this novel are all emblems of a sick society. Claude's father is a boisterous, mechanized farmer who often makes Claude the butt of his many practical jokes; his mother is sensitive but possesses a weak inclination to avoid responsibility by relying completely upon her "Saviour." The waste-land people have overrun the country. There is Claude's brother Bayliss, a physically-weak, mean, and miserly small-tradesman with a love only for figures and money. He is strongly reminiscent of _My Ántonia_'s miserly lecher, Wick Cutter, but he is so bloodless that even lechery is impossible for him. Another life-destroying product of mechanized America is Enid Royce, the girl Claude marries. The embodiment of physical and emotional frigidity, Enid fanatically spends her cold energy plastering barns with prohibition posters and dreaming of a life as a missionary in China. These people, writes Cather, are "captives dwelling in darkness. . . . Perfect financial security has killed all the best human qualities and developed only the mean ones" (pp. 102, 207).

Into this society Claude is born and against it, the author implies, he struggles, dreaming all the time that "there is something splendid about life, if he can but find it!" (p. 102). He cannot see the use of working for money, "when money buys nothing one wants" (p. 102). He attends a small denominational college for a while but is oppressed by the lack of any true scholarly spirit. He finds that his upbringing has made it impossible to enjoy a reflective, more intellectual life; he has the feeling of "being left out of it [the imaginative life], of being lost in another kind of life in which ideas played but little part . . . he belonged out in the big, lonely country, where people worked hard with their backs and got tired like horses. . . ." (pp. 83-84). He cannot find satisfaction in farming, presumably because of the mechanization it now involves. His animals die because of his carelessness, and the land itself means nothing to him--it has become mere property: "The people who had it were slaves to it, and the people who didn't were slaves to them" (p. 80). In this novel, the land reflects the fallen state of the people; it is pictured in terms of harsh artificiality and unyielding enmity: flocks of "greedy" crows feed on "shattered grain" under a "hard, polished blue sky" (p. 80).

To realize the scanty shred of power which Cather insists he possesses, Claude must become inspired by the patriotic zeal generated by the Great War, join the army,

go to France, and die heroically in battle. In this novel, Cather indicts present-day America completely for its failure to nourish the agrarian dream, but she has certainly not abandoned the dream itself as lost to humanity. In the second section of the novel ("The Voyage of the _Anchises_" and "Bidding the Eagles of the West Fly On") France becomes emblematic of the lost American agrarian ideal; Germany is accepted as representative of the ugly, mechanized American present. Unfortunately, this section of the work is quite unsatisfactory. Cather becomes didactic and sentimental. All the clichés of the war scene are here--disturbed, ragged children; calmly fatalistic but kind old people; overcharging shopkeepers; the maimed, the ill; the beautiful young woman who dispenses food and hope to soldiers and civilians alike even though crushed by poverty and sorrow herself. There is little understanding of the psychology of men at war; the language and the insights are shallow.

A Lost Lady presents another glimpse of a failing and ultimately fallen world. The structure of this novel is similar to that of _My Ántonia_. Details are reflected to the reader through the consciousness of Neil Herbert, a sensitive observer who is attempting to probe the lives and the surroundings of Marian and Daniel Forrester for mythic relevance. The individuals of this novel, as perceived by Neil Herbert, fall into several emblematic categories. Daniel Forrester, a wealthy railroad builder, is representative

of the old order of pioneers, men of strength and imagination. Like Alexandra and Ántonia, Forrester is able to respond intimately to the land; he is able to tame it and yet love it, preferring to leave his marsh land undrained and thus economically unproductive because "it looked beautiful to him, and he happened to like the way the creek wound through his pasture, with mint and joint-grass and twinkling willows along its banks."[11] Forrester's day is ending as the novel opens, and he dies before it is completed, one of the last of his breed. The new American, crass, cruel, blindly materialistic, is represented in A Lost Lady by Ivy Peters, one of the most unredeemably ugly minor figures in American fiction. A torturer of animals as a child, Ivy grows up to drain the Forrester's marsh and eventually take over the land so loved and cared for by Daniel Forrester:

> Men like Ivy Peters, who had never dared anything, never risked anything, . . . would drink up the mirage, dispel morning freshness, root out the great brooking spirit of freedom, the generous, easy life of the great land-holders. The space, the colour, the princely carelessness of the pioneer they would destroy and cut up into profitable bits, as the match factory splinters the primeval forest. All the way from the Missouri to the mountains, this generation of shrewd young men, trained to petty economics by hard times, would do exactly what Ivy Peters had done when he drained the Forrester marsh. (pp. 106-107)

Marian Forrester, the third significant emblematic character in this novel, is not presented with as much consistency as the other two. The young, beautiful, vivacious, and spirited wife of Daniel Forrester, she is in many ways

similar to Ántonia Shimerda. Candid and spontaneous, with an instinctive appreciation for all living things, she is as intimately related to the undrained marsh with its wild roses and silvery milkweed as Ántonia is to her garden. Like Ántonia, Marian Forrester too is betrayed. Her husband becomes crippled, loses his money, and finally dies, leaving her prey to Ivy Peters, who takes over the Forrester property and Marian Forrester herself, treating her with complete disrespect.

As Neil observes Mrs. Forrester, we feel the same mythic reverence that Jim Burden directed toward Ántonia. To Neil, Marian represents the life-giving spirit, the divine freshness of the agrarian myth, that Ántonia represents to Jim. As he observes the shrinking of the American Dream, the sacrifice of all beauty to materialism, Neil Herbert, alone and confused, like Jim Burden, attempts more and more strenuously to compel Marian Forrester to become the spirit of past glory and promise. Often, "when he was dull, dull and tired of everything, he used to think that if he could hear that longlost lady laugh again, he could be gay" (p. 71). However, Marian Forrester does not perform for Neil; she refuses to become a myth, and her overwhelming love of reality disappoints Neil repeatedly. At one point, overwhelmed by the beauty of summer and the thought of dawn "flaming gloriously over the Forresters' marsh," Neil sets out on an early morning pilgrimage. "He would make a bouquet

for a lovely lady; a bouquet gathered off the cheeks of morning . . . roses only half awake, in the defenselessness of utter beauty. He would leave them just outside one of the French windows of her bedroom"(p. 85). Creeping up to the house, he begins to place the flowers on the sill, only to hear "from within a woman's soft laughter, impatient, indulgent, teasing, eager. Then, another laugh, very different, a man's. And it was fat and lazy,--ended in something like a yawn" (p. 86). Knowing Mr. Forrester to be away, Neil is horrified, "his face hot, his temples beating, his eyes blind with anger." This day, he notes, "saw the end of that admiration and loyalty that had been like a bloom on his existence. He could never recapture it. It was gone, like the morning freshness of the flowers" (p. 86). Like Winterbourne, Herbert decides to banish the fallen lady from his heart.

Marian Forrester does not die, like Marie Shabata, for her sexual indescretions. However, she loses all claim to mythic potency; she ceases to represent the spirit for which Neil is searching: "It was what he most held against Mrs. Forrester; that she was not willing to immolate herself, like the widows of all these great men, and die with the pioneer period to which she belonged; that she preferred life on any terms. In the end, Neil went away without bidding her good-bye. He went away with weary contempt for her in his heart" (p. 169). Neil's last vision of

Marian Forrester, the one which drives him away, is of the lady standing at a table making pastry, completely unconcerned as Ivy Peters walks up to her from behind and puts both arms around her, "his hands meeting over her breast" (p. 169).

In this novel, the two essential components of allegory, myth and realism, are again at odds. In this instance, however, the realistic element predominates over the mythic. Marian Forrester, true to her comfort-and-life loving nature, refuses to become a mythic embodiment of the betrayed pioneer spirit because she refuses to die when Neil thinks she should--when her marsh is drained by Ivy Peters. Instead, she moves to California and marries another wealthy man. In none of Willa Cather's novels do we find a blend of myth and realism. She seems unable to tolerate even the slightest ambiguity. She cannot see evil blended with good. Either we are presented with towering mythic figures who renounce the petty meddlings of everyday concerns or figures like Claude Wheeler who sacrifices himself on the altar of his ideals or a Marian Forrester, who loses all mythic relevance because she gives in to her humanness. It must be said that because of her refusal to become a symbol, her refusal to be sacrificed, Marian Forrester, though a minor figure, shares a niche with a very limited number of American heroines.

The waste-land novels strengthened Cather's idea that the productive life and the productive individual were no

longer to be found in the present. She turned from the celebration of a strong individual intimately related to his environment to the portrayal of characters in whom the American rural scene aroused disgust--Claude Wheeler--or characters who refused to become identified with the agrarian dream--Marian Forrester. As her protagonists became less and less mythically motivated, because the American environment was no longer productive of mythic force, the author's strong antipathy to the present forced her to search for the lost ideals in distant and, to her, quite unfamiliar realms. In her last creative period, she deals with the remote past in Death Comes for the Archbishop, and in Shadows on the Rock, she rejects the American experience altogether and writes about old Quebec.

Death Comes for the Archbishop has stimulated more critical opinion and more varied attempts at explication than any other Cather novel. D. H. Stewart's essay, "Cather's Mortal Comedy," is an example of the search for the profound meaning behind the simple facts of this novel; he insists that the novel's symbolic structure is closely analogous to that of Dante's Divine Comedy.[12] C. Keeler, in his article "Narrative Without Accent," maintains that the absence of dramatic treatment is simply compensated for by the author's masterly use of light, the "westward movement" of which constitutes the action of this novel.[13] The understated vagueness of this novel leaves it open to the most

varied critical interpretations. Even though an author's evaluation of her own work must be approached cautiously, it seems to me that Cather's comments on Death Comes for the Archbishop are indeed relevant to this discussion:

> I had all my life wanted to do something in the style of legend, which is absolutely the reverse of dramatic treatment. Since I first saw the Puvis de Chavannes frescoes of the life of Saint Geneviève . . . I have wished that I could try something a little like that in prose; something without accent, with none of the artificial elements of composition . . . [something in which] all human experiences, measured against one supreme experience, [would be] of about the same importance. The essence of such writing is . . . to touch and pass on.[14]

The supreme spiritual experience Cather mentions is the acceptance of death.

In this novel, as D. H. Stewart notes, death takes the form of a "beatific vision that recaptures life itself."[15] The coming of death, the eternal permanence, the cessation of strife, is hailed as life's supreme climax. Muted in tone and often almost childlike in its simple treatment of humanity, this novel is Cather's paean to death, her turning from the pain of degradation and failure and the painful acknowledgement of human limitations to the elegiac acceptance of nonbeing. Willa Cather's search for permanence, for an unbroken oneness with something beyond the self, has seemingly ended with her discovery of the validity of death. If we look back to My Ántonia, for a moment, we can see that this courting of death has always been present. Here, again, is Jim Burden's expression of

contentment as he yields to the power of his surroundings: "I was something that lay under the sun and felt it, like the pumpkins, and I did not want to be anything more . . . that is happiness; to be dissolved into something complete and great. When it comes to one, it comes as naturally as sleep." Jim's definition of happiness is also a definition of dissolution.

Death Comes for the Archbishop is the chronicle of the efforts of two French missionary priests, Jean Marie Latour and Joseph Vaillant, to establish the diocese of New Mexico in the mid-nineteenth century. Their effort, as Cather conceives of it, is embodied in the attempt to impose an orderly, religious unity upon a large multiracial region in which the religion brought by the early Spanish priests has lost much of its purity. Of the two priests, Bishop Latour represents the intellectual, organizing, scholarly principle. To him, religion is order, obedience to inflexible rules, adherence to a strict, devotional code. His love for the artificiality of order is illustrated by his constant effort to maintain his delicate European garden against the harsh realities of the New Mexico climate. Father Vaillant, "homely, real, persistent, with the driving power of a dozen men in his poorly-built body,"[16] is meant to be the emotional, humanizing half of the Latour-Vaillant whole, the heart to the Latour head. As we have observed, especially during the discussion of My Ántonia and A Lost

Lady, the Cather novel generally takes the form of a quest--the quest of the intellect for a revitalizing spirit. Jim and his Ántonia do come together but, in A Lost Lady, we envision the failure of this quest. The searching intellect is deprived of spiritual fulfillment because there is no longer any to be found in an America rendered sterile by brutal materialistic forces.

Turning to an earlier era in Death Comes for the Archbishop, Cather again presents us with her familiar character fragments. Yet, in this novel, she doesn't seem concerned with unifying but with tracing the pilgrimage of each toward his own salvation--his beatific acceptance of death. Here we do not have a duality but a trinity, the intellect, the spirit, and death. The understanding is that unity is achieved only after death. Shortly after Father Vaillant dies, Bishop Latour writes to Vaillant's sister: "'Since your brother was called to his reward, . . . I feel nearer to him than before. For many years Duty separated us, but death has brought us together. The time is not far distant when I shall join him'" (p. 265). Latour's last earthly vision, as he is dying, is of Joseph Vaillant.

In spite of Cather's concerted effort to present Vaillant and Latour as active men, grappling with the difficulties faced by all pioneers, religious or secular, this novel affects the reader as passive. We are told that

Latour is constantly working to impose order on his restless environment, but we seldom see the changes in the process of being made--we are told of them after they have been completed. We do not witness Latour's struggles. One day, the author tells us, the Bishop has "one very keen worldly ambition; to build in Santa Fe a cathedral which would be worthy of a setting naturally beautiful" (p. 175). Almost immediately, we are presented with "the open, golden face of his Cathedral" (p. 271), the many years of active building and planning having silently elapsed. We are told that "The Bishop's middle years in New Mexico had been clouded by the persecution of the Navajos and their expulsion from their own country" (p. 292), after these years too have managed to slip by unnoticed. We do not see, we do not feel Latour imposing his will upon the environment.

If Latour can be called a mythic embodiment at all, he must be identified as representative of the ritual of order and the power of passivity. His two emblems in the novel are his garden and the rock. Bishop Latour's garden is a carefully cultivated European one which he maintains against the encroachment of the rugged Southwestern climate. This garden is not like Ántonia's lush, seemingly spontaneously-fertile oasis. The only components of Latour's garden which are indigenous to New Mexico are the tamarisks. The apple and cherry trees, the line of poplars, and the vegetables were brought in from elsewhere and nurtured by

the Bishop and a gardener. The other landmark of which the Bishop is particularly emblematic is the rock, the symbol of passive, permanent strength. It is out of a rock, or really a small mountain, that the Bishop has his cathedral hewn: "The steep carnelian hills drew up so close behind the church that the individual pine trees thinly wooding their slopes were clearly visible. From the end of the street where the Bishop's buggy stood, the tawny church seemed to start directly out of those rose-coloured hills-- . . . [it] lay against the pine-splashed slopes as against a curtain" (p. 272). In this novel, the rock emerges more powerfully than the garden as the emblem of Cather's "universal human yearning for something permanent, enduring, without shadow of change" (p. 98). This preoccupation with permanence is especially evident in the section entitled "The Mass at Àcoma," as the Bishop considers the lives of certain Indians who had lived on the Àcoma Mesa for centuries:

> . . . these Indians, born in fear and dying by violence for generations, had at last taken this leap away from the earth, and on that rock had found the hope of all suffering and tormented creatures--safety. . . . The rock, when one came to think of it, was the utmost expression of human need; even mere feeling yearned for it; it was the highest comparison of loyalty in love and friendship. Christ Himself had used that comparison for the disciple to whom He gave the keys of His Church. And the Hebrews of the Old Testament, always being carried captive into foreign lands,--their rock was an idea of God, the only thing their conquerors could not take from them. (pp. 97-98)

Indeed, the rock is the central symbol in <u>Shadows on the Rock</u> in which novel Cather celebrates the life of safety,

permanence, and inactivity, the life which appears to exclude time and its mutabilities.

It should be noted that Father Vaillant is also representative of a certain kind of security--not so much the security of order or passivity but that discovered by some individuals in the possession of many material things. All those incidents involving Joseph Vaillant stress his ability to accumulate material things. An incident such as "The White Mules," during which Father Joseph convinces a wealthy rancher to donate two white mules to the missionary cause, is amusing, but it certainly casts doubts on the validity of the priest's religious fervor and his strict adherence to the vow of poverty: "'Having seen these mules, I want nothing else. They are the color of pearls, really!'" (p. 62). The wordliness which constantly creeps into the pages of this supposedly religious novel is further exemplified by the frequent panoramas of gastronomic delight which the author presents in such careful detail. We have the Bishop and Father Latour rapturizing over their soup: "Father Joseph lifted the cover of the dish and ladled the soup into the plates, a dark onion soup with croutons. The Bishop tasted it critically and smiled at his companion. After the spoon had travelled to his lips a few times, he put it down and leaning back in his chair remarked, "Think of it, . . . in all this vast country . . . there is probably not another human being who can make soup like this'" (p. 38).

Father Joseph gives a long discourse on the proper way to roast lamb, and both priests are, of course, connoisseurs of wine, in the French tradition.

Cather's heroes are Catholic priests, yet in no portion of this novel does she dwell on the necessity that renunciation play a part in the truly religious life--a necessity which is the heart of the religious experience. Both missionaries never seem to lack material comfort; neither is ever depicted as being assailed by doubts or as having to make sacrifices. This state of affairs prompts Randall to write that "Willa Cather's interpretation of Catholicism is not a very profound one . . . she takes only what interests her and leaves the rest behind . . . although . . . she talks at considerable length about ritual, it is usually not religious ritual which she describes but the domestic kind."[17] Cather chooses a religious vocation for her heroes merely because of the safety it seems to offer them; she conceives of the church as a kind of permanent family which, because of its spiritual nature, appears to be immune to the ravages of commercialism.

Willa Cather's quest, as embodied in her works, has been a journey in search of changing ideals. She began her career celebrating the spirit that conquers and transforms by sheer force of will--the pioneer spirit, emblematic of the wild, potent land which is the pioneer's raw material. This phase ended with the transformation of wind-swept prairie

into fertile garden and the discovery that the individual who created the garden was not strong enough to defend it against the petty, destructive spirit of materialism which Cather accepted as characteristic of America after the closing of the frontier. Her characters, their wills eroded by the shrinking of their world, became progressively weaker until they ceased being mythic embodiments. They became emblems of the diminishing environment. Ultimately, Cather's dream of a locale forever safe from the erosion of materialism made her turn away from her country and create embodiments of her dream like Latour and Vaillant, embodiments of permanence, stability, passivity. In her late works, _Death Comes for the Archbishop_ and _Shadows on the Rock_, Willa Cather did create evocations of elegiac peace and immobility, but she did so at the cost of renouncing life--its sorrows, vicissitudes, ambiguities, and warmth.

Notes to Chapter V

[1]Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin, 1941, p. 6. Subsequent references to this work will be followed in the text by page numbers.

[2]John H. Randall, The Landscape and the Looking Glass: Willa Cather's Search for Value (Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin, 1960), p. 288.

[3]Randall discusses the idea of the natural aristocrat on pp. 69-70. He notes that "Willa Cather's natural aristocrat is not original with her; he is a familiar figure in nineteenth-century thought. He descends from the concept of the hero as outlined by such heroic vitalists as Nietzsche and Carlyle" (p. 70).

[4]In his paper, "Mythic Motivation in Willa Cather's O Pioneers!," J. Russell Reaver identifies this dream figure as a corn-god and discusses his several appearances in the novel. California Folklore Quarterly, 27 (1868), 19-25.

[5]Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin, 1954, Introduction, p. 22.

[6]New York: Random House, 1950, p. 139.

[7]O Strange New World: American Culture: The Formative Years (New York: Viking Press, 1968), p. 12.

[8]Ibid., pp. 14-15.

[9]"Willa Cather's Waste Land," South Atlantic Quarterly, 48 (October, 1949), 589-601.

[10]New York: Knopf, 1953, pp. 101-102. Subsequent references to this work will be followed in the text by page numbers.

[11]Vintage (New York: Random House, 1972), p. 11. Subsequent references to this work will be followed in the text by page numbers.

[12]Queens Quarterly, 73 (Summer, 1966), 244-259.

[13]"Narrative without Accent: Willa Cather and Puvis de Chavannes," American Quarterly, 17 (Spring, 1965), 119-126. Keeler maintains that light, which relates the events to the theme, is that correlative of religious belief "in which all objects and figures are suspended outside of time" (p. 124).

[14]"On *Death Comes for the Archbishop*," in her *On Writing* (New York: Knopf, 1949), p. 9.

[15]"Cather's Mortal Comedy," p. 250.

[16]*Vintage* (New York: Random House, 1971), p. 38. Subsequent references to this work will be followed in the text by page numbers.

[17]*The Landscape and the Looking Glass*, pp. 302-303.

CHAPTER VI

NATURALISM: LONDON AND DREISER

Charles Walcutt writes, in his American Literary Naturalism, A Divided Stream, that when the term naturalism is applied to a literary movement, it "indicates a philosophical orientation."[1] American literary naturalism, in brief, was the attempt to embody in a workable fictional form the assertion that man could be accounted for by physical, psychological, and social facts.[2] More significantly, it was yet another fictional quest for the American Dream, the belief that conquest of the physical world would ensure spiritual conquest, the assumption being that they are one.[3] We have observed some form of this quest for spiritual peace in most of the works discussed. Many characters in these works share the vain dream that knowledge or possession of the concrete or the material, whether object, animal, or human being, would lead to spiritual certainty. We have only to envision Ishmael stalking his whale, Jim Burden seeking his unfallen garden, or James's various collectors establishing their kingdoms of bibelots to perceive the preponderance in American fiction of this desire that material possessions bring spiritual fulfillment. All of these characters feel that their possessions will grant them intellectual certainty, spiritual peace.

Monism was the primary component of transcendentalism, a direct source of naturalism. Transcendentalism maintained the unity of nature and spirit: "Nature was the physical expression of divine reason, and in its laws revealed the forms and purposes of God. The scientific penetration of nature became a spiritual quest, therefore, into absolute Being."[4] Shaped by the works of Newton, Compte, Darwin, Spenser, naturalistic philosophy attempted to "affirm the idea of progress and provide a powerful impetus to scientific investigation."[5] Defensively monistic, naturalism excluded and frequently assailed the supernatural.

The deterioration of this monistic hope into a series of dualistic contradictions was inevitable: "When the Nature which was assumed to be a symbol and version of God and of Man's spirit grew under scientific analysis into a force which first controlled man's will and presently made it seem an illusion, then it became alien and terrifying; and man's nature too revealed, upon further exploration, depths that were repellent rather than godlike."[6] Again and again undertaken enthusiastically and confidently, "the demonstration that social forces operate to control human lives communicated grim pictures of physical deprivation, thwarted hopes, and human frustration."[7]

Naturalistic writing contains within itself a welter of contradictions and ambiguities: "There is always the tension between hope and despair, between rebellion and apathy,

between defying nature and submitting to it, between celebrating man's impulses and trying to educate them, between embracing the universe and regarding its dark abysses with terror."[8] Because of this very nature, naturalistic writing relies heavily upon the allegorical mode. It is idea-determined, deterministic, riddled with ambiguity; it is a type of fiction viewed by the practitioners themselves as "not a mode of casual amusement but an instrument for the discovery of truth."[9] American literary naturalism takes the form of yet another philosophical quest which led to disheartening discoveries.

To maintain that naturalistic writing relies heavily on the allegorical mode is not to offer a new or radical redefinition of naturalism. American literary naturalism has consistently been accepted as programmatic, dialectical, deterministic, contradictory. To accept naturalistic writing as heavily allegorical is merely to view it as very much in the mainstream of American fiction. The protagonists of naturalistic fiction, even though accepted by their creators as mechanisms, are no more determined than other allegorical heroes, although the agents of determination may differ. Clyde Griffiths is as driven by the desire to define himself as is Ishmael, though perhaps not as consciously. Wolf Larsen is as monomaniacal as Captain Ahab or Chillingworth. Crane's Maggie is as dominated and as tormented by the pull of desire against reality as James's Isabel Archer and Milly Theale.

Generally, major protagonists in American naturalistic fiction fall into two categories: the weak and the strong. The stories of floundering Everymen and Everywomen like Clyde Griffiths, Carrie Meeber, Jennie Gerhardt, Anderson's grotesques, Farrell's Studs Lonigan, for example, are poignant representations of helplessness before the forces of environment, passion, and instinct which invariably bring about some form of human disintegration in a mechanistic, godless universe which does not care. The strong protagonists--the superpeople and superbeasts of naturalistic fiction, Dreiser's Frank Cowperwood and, to a lesser degree, Eugene Witla and Solon Barnes, London's Wolf Larsen, Elam Harnish, Frona Welse, and the dogs, White Fang and Buck--are these authors' attempts to say NO to helplessness, disintegration and indeed, to the tragedy of an inevitable, merciless death which snuffs out a painful, unsatisfactory life.

The superman was constructed initially as an enthusiastic representation of American faith in the success of materialistic individualism in a world without God; he was the symbol of the monistic hope which fired our naturalists. However, the materialistic, godless universe proved unsatisfactory. It was devoid of the spiritual qualities envisioned and expected by our naturalists in their monistic universe. Consequently the superman was finally anaesthetized into oblivion by that injection of sentimentality and worn-out romanticism through which his creators endeavored to endow

him with spiritual significance and eternal life. The reaction to material progress in this country was rarely unaccompanied by a feeling of spiritual loss, no matter how successfully concealed, at first, by bursts of fervid enthusiasm. The superman reached maturity during such a burst of enthusiasm. But his failure to achieve spiritual fulfillment resulted in his dissolution.

The superman was the result of the last frantic effort, here on the part of the naturalists, to realize the American Dream. Although supported and enlivened by the doctrines of Darwin, Spencer and Nietzsche, as we will see, the superman, as he exists in the works of such authors as London and Dreiser, is an American phenomenon. His predecessor was born in the virgin forest and raised on the farm or the sea. Finally, as the superman of industrialism, the American mythic embodiment reached maturity and subsequent dissolution in the city. His long, eventful history is, in fact, the history of his country as it is represented in her literature. We have only to glance at the progression of American mythic embodiments from Leatherstocking through Ahab, Huck Finn, and Willa Cather's yeoman farmers to envision this history. We identified all such characters as larger than life, superior in degree to other men and women and able to relate meaningfully to their environment. They are characters who, as we've already observed, represent the essence of their environment, as their creators conceived of it. Frona Welse,

Wolf Larsen, and Frank Cowperwood belong to this group.

It is not necessary to refer the term superman at all times to the Nietzschean conception which, with all its ramifications, unfortunately makes itself manifest whenever this word is mentioned. The term is particularly applicable to the American mythic embodiment. The prenaturalistic embodiments are all super*people* in that they are superior to their fellows in degree, not kind; they function not as gods but as human beings. Interestingly enough, although they do not correspond to the Nietzschean definition on any major points, they relate to Nietzsche's concept because of their symbolic function; each is a reflection of his creator's wish to unite American ideals with American reality. For Nietzsche, his superman was also an attempt to realize a dream. He was the essence of a new morality that would allow man to fulfill his ideal potential for power and courage in a real world.

An allegorical mythic embodiment created to serve as the nexus between ideal and real creates certain problems, as we have previously observed--these are the problems of ambiguity resulting from the author's own uneasiness about yoking together two such dissimilar concepts. Henry James's struggle with these problems as he created his Milly Theale can be remembered at this point. This lady, presented as very human in her desire for love, her manifestations of jealousy, and her dissatisfaction with her perpetually homeless state, emerges suddenly as the dove of redemption, an

embodiment of spirituality in a world devoid of it. Milly is created to embody the power of redemption yet, as we observed, her power is limited and, ultimately, Milly becomes an embodiment of failure--the failure of will, freedom, life. Her failure is _real_; it does not correspond with the _ideal_ vision of her as the dove of redemption. Cather too, struggled to blend the real and the ideal characteristics of her protagonists; her unease while handling the details of Ántonia Shimerda's sexual downfall, her desire to spare the reader first-hand involvement with these details, is all too evident. Ideally, Ántonia is the embodiment of fruitfulness, plenty, order. The image of the poor young girl, seduced and abandoned, does not blend smoothly with that of the fertility goddess.

A brief discussion of Cooper can serve as a final illustration of this problem of ambiguity. His Natty Bumppo was meant to express a certain conflict in Cooper's mind between the ideals of aristocracy and the realities of democracy. Leatherstocking has the lofty sentiments of an aristocrat and yet exists in a locale where democracy often verges on barbarism. Cooper is, therefore, sometimes forced to extoll his refinement, sometimes to apologize for his backwoods crudity.[10] However, our belief in Leatherstocking's symbolic efficacy is very often unhampered by Cooper's ambivalent feelings toward him. He is successful because, on a plane higher than that which serves as the battleground of democracy and aristocracy, he does represent a union of matter

and spirit, nature and the God with Whom he communicates through nature. Ántonia Shimerda too, in spite of her gingerly-rendered sexual indiscretion, emerges as an embodiment of the poignant hope coupled with the sense of loss which composed the agrarian dream.

The problem of the naturalistic superman extends beyond a consideration of his creator's ambivalent attitude, or, it could be said, this problem of ambivalence now becomes tremendously magnified. The naturalists' superman exists in a world devoid of spiritual values, as I have indicated. He is meant to proclaim the ability of forceful, energetic matter to exist without God or the devil, to become divinely powerful in that it can be powerful without divine intervention and assistance. His creator is extremely ambivalent in his regard for his character because he is never comfortable while celebrating materialistic monism. The problem of ambivalence becomes much more complex when we observe that, while his author is extolling the superman as a successful materialist, he is undermining him by attempting to give him spiritual validity. There is no final union of matter and spirit, merely a conversion of solid matter into disembodied spirit.

The naturalistic superman and the particular yearnings he represents can, I think, be given additional dimension if we see them against the background of their era which, for the sake of clarity I will call, along with Alfred Kazin,

the Progressive period.[11] The years 1902 and 1917 can serve as the boundaries of this period. The confrontation, acceptance, and celebration of force, energy, individualism, largeness were characteristic of the era. The failure of Populism in the 1890's had heralded the death of the agrarian dream. Industrial and scientific progress were now to be accepted as towering facts of the American present. And they were accepted, with a vengeance. Even as early as 1893, Frederick Turner had indicated, after acknowledging the closing of the frontier, that the future mainstay of American democracy was to be found in science.[12] As Kazin notes, "everyone had gusto"in a period that was characterized by the worship of brute strength, talk of Anglo-Saxon supremacy and the general tendency to accept the city, the seat of industrial progress, as "the hope of democracy."[13] The titans of industry became the symbols of rugged individualism that the frontiersmen and yeoman farmers had been before them. The evil that had formerly been attributed to industrialism and wealth as a whole was now localized in improper use of wealth and corruption in industry, in the monopolies that prohibited the full expression of the individual will. Giving form and life to the worship of force and individualism was Theodore Roosevelt, the supreme symbol of this period. He was, writes Kazin, "a force in a day that yearned after force; he enlivened the air."[14]

It is not difficult to imagine the enthusiasm and interest with which Nietzsche's philosophy was accepted by

a period initially so devoted to a glorification of the individual and his ability to work his will in a materialistic universe. Nietzsche's superman is the ideal and the postulate of the Darwinian and Spencerian evolution theories dominant throughout the period. He is the being who can live successfully, completely, in the godless universe because he accepts it without illusions, without pretensions. He surrenders to the law of natural selection, lives fully by the force of instinct and will, unburdened by transcendental morality. The Nietzschean superman is supremely successful and, most important, supremely content in a monistic, materialistic universe.[15] The appeal of this aspect of the Nietzschean philosophy to writers of this era is self-evident. This is the very goal they were trying in vain to achieve, to create a mythic embodiment of materialism, to proclaim that the monistic universe could be a source of happiness and virtue for those who accepted it. As I indicated earlier, no American writer could accept a materialistic universe for itself, and thus he could not create a successful symbol of this universe. However, no American writer made a more energetic effort to create such a symbol of his era's force than Jack London. Although his supercharacters are not primarily Nietzschean,[16] many similarities to Nietzschean dicta can be found. Each of London's works is in some way devoted to the celebration of individualism. I have chosen to trace the development of his particular superman in three

novels, A Daughter of the Snows (1902), The Sea Wolf (1904), and Burning Daylight (1910). In each case, the supercharacter is initially presented with a burst of enthusiasm for rugged individualism, instinctual self-reliance, the undeceived asceptance of physicality, a defiance of the physical disintegration climaxed by death which forms the pattern of Everyman's life. In each case, however, the effort is undermined by London's loss of faith in his character's physical supremacy. He must give his hero a meaning beyond his physical self, even if this meaning is grounded in the old moral and sentimental conventions of the genteel tradition.

The preoccupation with morality is marked in Daughter of the Snows. What begins as the celebration of the individual will to accept, adapt, and survive, the celebration of vitality and strength, concludes as the moral equation of strength and daring with that which is good and therefore worthy of love; weakness is equated with evil and therefore becomes worthy of disdain. We are left, ultimately, with a very naive allegory. The faults of this first novel are the faults of crudity, oversimplification, over-statement, and the author's facile reliance upon conventional morality. Although London is not usually so blatantly derivative, the tendency to topple the supercharacter when he becomes too powerful, too self-sufficient, is characteristic of his works.

As the story begins, Frona Welse is traveling from civilization back to the White Alaskan wilderness where she

was born. This journey, upon which, unfortunately, London does not spend much time, is more successful than the remainder of the novel. Frona emerges initially as a superwoman whom not even Nietzsche would completely reject. She has the traditional Teutonic features, energy, endurance, fearlessness, strength, the desire to fully encompass a life of instinctual physicality unhampered by transcendental restrictions. Frona's pilgrimage, as it penetrates deeper and deeper into the Northland's frozen heart, provides some glimpses of the tightly-coiled, penetrating terseness that is characteristic of London at his best and with which he often depicts the interaction of man and white wilderness. The first episode in the brief parable of her return consists of Frona's meeting with the group of giant Scandinavians also traveling toward the heart of the country: "Their faces were as laughing suns, and the joy of life was in them."[17] They fall victims to a country mightier than they: "Frona looked at the five young giants lying in the mud, broken-boned, limp, uncaring. A dozen feet away the steady flood of life flowed by, and Frona melted into it and went on" (p. 29). Other pilgrims include a brave man who, lying in the frozen mud immobilized by his gear, is rescued by Frona and cheerfully continues the journey and a coward weeping over hardship and fatigue. This brief section is indeed a kind of pilgrim's progress. Some of the characters exemplify the virtues needed to survive in the face of a cold, austere, inviolable nature:

courage, integrity, adaptability. Others, the weak, the incapable, embody those qualities the environment will not tolerate; the road to success is littered with their bodies.

Unfortunately, London does not maintain this initial purity of presentation. It is not long before he becomes uncomfortable with the gloriously physical Frona and begins, incessantly, to stress her possession of spiritual values. Initially spirit is secondary to body: "Of all the creatures she was the last to be deaf and blind to the things of the spirit. But the things of the spirit she demanded should be . . . strong. . . . The mind and the soul must be as quick and definite and certain as the body" (pp. 69, 70). But as the novel progresses, the spirit becomes more and more predominant as the love-theme takes precedence. And it is not long before the spiritual, initially a symbol of the physical, the essence of Frona's sparkling physicality, becomes equated with the moral. Cowardice and unchastity become pitted against strength, endurance, chastity, and gentility. At the close of the novel, Frona is no longer a superwoman. She is a prim, although strong and capable young lady rejecting her cowardly lover with the words, "'Your kisses hurt me. The memory of them still burns my cheek, and my lips feel unclean . . . your kisses have cheapened me!'" (p. 254). She is no longer the mythic embodiment of the land she promised to be as the story began. It is as if Ahab were to resign himself to the life of a church-going citizen of some small town.

London's ambivalent attitude toward Frona in this novel manifests itself as a disparity between rhetoric and belief. The rhetoric gives us a will-working superwoman who is beyond conventional morality and who pioneers "on the edge of things." She agrees wholeheartedly with her father's statement: "'Conventions are worthless for such as we. They are for the swine who without them would wallow deeper. The weak must obey or be crushed . . . it is the individual, always, that rules the mass and gives the law. A fig for what the world says!'" (p. 141). But London does not really believe in Frona's supremacy; in this novel, her superwoman amorality is ultimately converted into sentimental, conventional morality.

Frona's failure to fulfill her mythic potential can be explained. A woman could never successfully embody the Northland because a woman by her very nature implied, to London, morality, warmth, civilization. In the North, nature is a white supulchre, a landscape that will not admit an embodiment beyond itself--all-encompassing, all-powerful, demanding of man a stripping down to raw life strivings which are then challenged and frequently mocked. This landscape is neither life-giving nor warm but anti-life:

> It is not the way of the Wild to like movement. Life is an offense to it, for life is movement; and the Wild aims always to destroy movement. It freezes the water to prevent it running to the sea; it drives the sap out of the trees till they are frozen to their mighty hearts, and most ferociously and terribly of all does the Wild harry and crush into sumission man--man, who is the most restless of life, ever in revolt against the dictum that all movement must in the end come to the cessation of movement.[18]

That neither woman nor man is compatible with the white wilderness is made dramatically clear by the failure of Malemute King, another of London's attempts to create a mythic embodiment, to come to life. As he appears in London's Northland stories, Malemute King is chivalrous, trail-wise, and humane; however, he remains embryonic. He does not acquire mythic stature because his environment cannot bear the weight of the human dignities London attributes to him. A frozen wasteland is not kind and yielding to those who would bend it to their wills; human virtues are not suitable emblems of its qualities. Any notable human virtue, be it courage, stamina, or compassion, implies movement, life. Since the Northland epitomizes the cessation of life, I doubt that it could serve as the successful setting or source of any such human attribute.

In attempting to create his supercharacters, London incorporates certain very un-Nietzschean qualities that Walcutt identifies. These qualities are a result of London's enchantment with the concepts of atavism and primordialism, concepts inherent in his individualism, his preoccupation with intense experience in which impulse or instinct is given full sway.[19] Primordialism and atavism are developments of primitivism, the notion that the more uncivilized man is, the more noble. This is a favorite American myth; we need merely to think of Huck Finn to understand its charm. Primordialism and atavism, concepts maintaining, as Walcutt noves, that "civilization is

a thin veneer and that the primitive brute is close to the surface in every human being,"[20] are adaptations of the primitivism of the Progressive period with its materialistic, evolutionary outlook. These concepts, along with some notions extracted from Nietzsche's philosophy, make up the skeleton of the industrial era's superman as primitivism and its kindred idea that nature is a pathway to God serve as supports of the mythic embodiments or earlier eras.

The most successful embodiments of the Northland London creates are understandably not human; they are the dogs and wolf-dogs--atavistic, primordial, instinctive, and unhampered by the moral code of civilization. In some of London's best Northland stories, dogs carry the symbolic weight of their environment with ease. In "To Build a Fire," for instance, the man and his dog are perfect embodiments of civilization and the Northern wilderness, respectively. The naive fiery-bearded man makes a pilgrimage into the land of ice, accompanied by the land's emissary, the dog-wary, distant, and as uncommitted to the man's welfare as is the environment. Silently he watches the man attempt to build his fire, to maintain the warmth of life. Just as silently he watches him fail and yield to the ice. The man's frantic, vain attempt to grasp and kill the dog--in order to crawl inside his warm carcass--is a manifestation of his failure to grasp and master his environment which, like the dog, maintains itself despite his death. In this parable of fire and ice, ice prevails.

The relationship between man and dog in this story is characterized by indifference, as I mentioned, and, at its deepest, the dog's grudging respect--when the man succeeds briefly in maintaining his fire. This kind of relationship, uncomplicated by love, is characteristic of man and dog in London's most successful stories. When love does enter, the dog's freedom, his atavistic primordialism, is threatened with extinction. White Fang, for instance, yielding to his love-master Weedon Scott, becomes a curious outcast when Scott takes him to California from the North. His atavistic ruggedness is out of place in this warm land, and to justify his existence, London makes him perform the trick of saving his master's family from a murderous prowler at a great risk to his health--White Fang is severely wounded; he is broken of his wild robustness and domesticated. London makes the wolf into an instrument of morality--something he never was--he unburdens him of his original symbolic weight to make him conform to his new environment. Needless to say, the last section of the story is contrived and disappointing; the ties of love imply the bonds of conventional morality in a world dominated by the female; it is Scott's wife who allows the wolf, "not a house dog," to sleep in the house and thus confront the prowler. And our last view of the creature of the Northland is of a feeble convalescent drowsing in the sun surrounded by his mate and "a half-dozen pudgy puppies." The Northland has yielded to civilization.

A less disappointing resolution of the problem of love is offered in The Call of the Wild. When Buck becomes threatened by the civilizing ties of his affection for Jim Thornton, Jim is killed by a band of Indians and Buck is restored to the environment he embodies, free to run "at the head of the pack through the pale moonlight or glimmering borealis, leaping gigantic above his fellows, his great throat a-bellow as he sings a song of the younger world, which is the song of the pack."

A love which implies conventionality, civilization, cannot maintain itself in the Northland, but hatred does very well. Some of London's most satisfying Alaskan tales are studies of relationships cemented by hatred. "Diable--a Dog" deals with the powerful hate-pact between Black Leclère and his dog, Diable--a pact which results in a mutual murder. "In A Far Country" is an excellent depiction of the Northland's ability to turn a benign relationship into a malignant one. Stranded together in a small cabin during the Northland winter, Carter Weatherbee and Percy Cuthfert sicken from poor nutrition and grow mutually malevolent as each one's constant, greedy presence enrages the other. Ultimately, each falls victim to the other's murderous madness and our final view of the two corpses, one clutching the other by the throat in the freezing cabin, brings to mind Dante's depiction of Count Ugolino and Archbishop Ruggieri cemented in their act of malevolence by the frozen lake.

London's Northland is also an inferno. Like Dante's it prohibits movement and life, encouraging predominantly negative emotions to proliferate. Unlike Dante's inferno, however, London's betokens no immorality but amorality; it opposes civilization's self-annihilating ties of conventional morality and love with the promise of a vigorous selfhood to those who are worthy. Paradoxically, this discovery of self is often equated with death.

That the Northland could never be embodied successfully by a living man or woman should now be quite evident. The Northland's greatest gift is death--death by freezing. Whether weak and unfit, like the two fortune seekers in "In A Far Country," or strongly atavistic like the survivor of "Love of Life," men are treated alike by the Northland. And, as she claims her victims with her spectral grip, she offers them, fit and unfit, the same insight: to die means "cessation, rest." To die is "to sleep." There is "no hurt in death." Only life pains. Furthermore, the process of dying by freezing is a process of self-liberation. As men pass into "the most comfortable and satisfaying sleep" they ever knew, they repeatedly find themselves conscious of passing out of themselves--of becoming their own passive observers. For instance, the hero of "To Build a Fire": "He pictured the boys finding his body next day. Suddenly he found himself with them, coming along the trail and looking for himself. And, still with them, he came around a turn in the trail and found himself

lying in the snow. He did not belong with himself any more, for even then he was out of himself, standing with the boys and looking at himself in the snow."[20] Again, Percy Cuthfert, as he is dying "In A Far Country": "How would his friends take it? They would read it over their coffee, most likely, and talk it over at the clubs. He could see them very clearly. 'Poor Old Cuthfert,' they murmured, 'not such a bad sort of chap, after all.' . . . It was the same old crowd upon the streets. Strange, they did not notice his moosehide moccasins and tattered German socks. He would take a cab. And after a bath a shave would not be bad."[21]

Death by freezing, as London depicts it, is nothing less than the cessation of pain, fruitless striving, and, surprisingly, the finding of the self. It seems to offer what life should but never does. This land of frozen serenity is similar to Cather's fruitful garden in that both locales are images of the goals of their respective creators, the spiritual homes they were in quest of. Both locales reflect the ambiguities of their creators' thought: in the garden as in the Northland, the desired permanence and serenity imply non-feeling, non-thinking, and, ultimately, non-being.

If, as we observed, Frona fails as a superwoman because she ultimately shuns amorality and espouses the mores of conventional society, Wolf Larsen fails because he denies London's ideal of brotherhood. This ideal, ultimately embodied in London's avowal of socialism, often conflicts, in

his works, with his strongly individualistic tendencies. Wolf Larsen is London's most arresting if most problematic superman. He is the very essence of glorious, potent physical life, a compound of atavistic brutality and perceptive intellectuality. He is a complete deterministic materialist, believing that "might is right" and that life is "like yeast, a ferment. . . . The big eat the little that they may continue to move, the strong eat the weak that they may retain their strength. The lucky eat the most and move the longest, that is all."[22] Wolf Larsen dominates the first half of this novel and captures the reader's attention completely. The idealist Humphrey Van Weyden fades into inarticulateness before him and must content himself with gaping, open-mouthed, at Larsen's perfect physique. Here seems to be the mythic embodiment of the Progressive era, emblematic of the materialistic universe and very faithful to the Nietzschean ideals of instinctuality and will-to-power.

But no. Wolf Larsen is divided and contradictory. He maintains that man has no soul, that the will to live is all, but he seems at times very unhappy about all this. He suffers fits of "primal melancholy" and bemoans the determined patterns of his life: "When the sun was up I was scorched, and because I had no root I withered away" (p. 70). And his body only appears invincible. Actually, he is gradually degenerating from syphilis. His brutality, his lack of regard for his fellow men revolts Humphrey Van Weyden whose

Darwinian despair becomes a dominant force in this novel: "Where was the grandeur of life that it should permit such wanton destruction of human souls?" (p. 107). So, Wolf Larsen must be disposed of. London noted later that the superman is "antisocial in his tendencies, and in these days of our complex society and sociology he cannot be successful in his hostile aloofness . . . he acts like an irritant in the social body."[23] This view is evident in The Sea Wolf. However, Larsen's less negative qualities, his potency, strength, and endurance are not completely obliterated. Instead of killing his superman off immediately, London allows Humphrey and, later, Maud Brewster, to assume his positive qualities while they maintain their idealism. They become stronger physically, able to endure under primitive conditions, but at the same time, they remain compassionate, never reflecting Wolf's brutal disregard for his fellow men.

Fragmentation and doubling are dominant techniques in this novel. Humphrey gradually assumes Wolf's positive qualities during his stay aboard the Ghost. While maintaining his idealistic regard for humanity, the feeble Humphrey becomes strong, capable, self-assured, efficacious as Wolf becomes weaker, more prone to his syphilitic headaches; finally, he is left with nothing but his asocial brutality. With the advent of Maud, the process of fragmentation is intensified. She too gains health, strength, and endurance from Wolf Larsen, via Humphrey Van Weyden. As Humphrey is

the man of ideals, she represents pure spirituality. During the second half of this novel, London strips Wolf Larsen's strengths and combines them with the idealism and spirituality represented by Humphrey and Maud. Brutality, in the form of the empty shell, the ghost, Larsen becomes by the end of the novel, finally fades away into complete paralysis and oblivion. Another superman has been destroyed. Unfortunately, the second part of this novel, devoted to the love story of Humphrey and Maud, is sentimental and sophomoric. As paradoxical and contradictory as Wolf Larsen is, his vitality, however primitive, is of more interest to the reader than the flirtations of a pair of sentimentalized lovers.

In _A Daughter of the Snows_, _White Fang_, and _The Sea Wolf_, the progress is first away from society and then back to it. The qualities of the supercharacter are transformed in some way, so that they can conform to London's ideal of altruism or brotherhood and so that they can be acceptable to society. Love becomes the agent of civilization and emasculation. It is always a brotherly love, expressed in terms of the lovers' mutual desire to serve each other and maintain each other's well being. At the end of _The Sea Wolf_, Maud and Humphrey are returning to civilization, bringing back with them an unconvincing combination of idealism and renewed physicality, the energy stolen from Wolf Larsen. White Fang is civilized by his loving desire to serve Weedon Scott; Frona Welse and Vance Corliss return eagerly to Dawson,

away from the open country inhabited by immoral individuals like Gregory St. Vincent. London annihilates the power of his supercharacters and weakens his novels so that he can express his message: in a society regulated by the principle of brotherly love, natural impulses of the human animal can be expressed without brutality or selfishness.[24] In these works, the conflict between altruism, or socialistic idealism, and individualism is resolved artificially to what can be called individualistic socialism. London would have the best of two possible worlds. He wants his characters to maintain potency and capability, the will-to-power, and at the same time to express an altruistic regard for their fellow human beings. This resolution is not only unconvincing but inherently unworkable.

The North, which is the setting of _A Daughter of the Snows_, _White Fang_ and _The Sea Wolf_, is ultimately rejected by London as a spiritual homeland; it would appear that the permanence, the cessation of life's processes of decay and mutability, too clearly takes the form of a frozen grave. London's Northland works are very often quests which lead to a startling and disquieting revelation: to really know oneself, the reader is informed in so many of these tales, is to die! The stasis, the stopping of time which occurs just before death by freezing is generally accompanied by a full self-realization, as we have observed. Instinctively, it would appear, London turns away from such a revelation. It

is much more comfortable to objectify oneself, to hide behind such ideals as altruism and brotherhood than to confront such a naked truth, or so it appears.

Toward the end of his career, London attempted once more to create a landscape which could embody his longing for spiritual fulfillment and stability--a landscape as unlike the frozen Northland as could be possible. If ice and snow implied the permanence of non-being, the lush ripeness of the Southland, California's Sonoma Valley, could imply the richness of a fully realized being--happiness, stability, emotional satiety, or so it appears London could have reasoned. The transference of the spiritual homeland occurs directly in Burning Daylight (1910), although it had been tested previously in White Fang. What happens to the wolf in this novel is a dour indication of what happens to all London's characters who are moved to this locale.

Elam Harnish, "Burning Daylight," is initially drawn, as are Frona Welse and Wolf Larsen, as a mythic embodiment of the strenuous life, the symbolic representation of the spirit of the Northland. Elam is more flamboyantly depicted and is less convincing than Wolf or even Frona. He does not seem to need food or rest, and the name Burning Daylight is descriptive of his supernatural ability to generate his own heat: "Deep in his life-processes Life itself sang the siren song of its own majesty ever a-whisper and urgent, counselling him that he could achieve more than other men, win out where

they failed, ride to success where they perished. It was the urge of Life healthy and strong, unaware of frailty and decay, drunken with sublime complacence, ego-mad, enchanted by its own mighty optimism."[25] But Elam strikes it rich during the Gold Rush, goes to San Francisco, where he begins to fall apart physically and mentally, and is finally redeemed through love. He, no longer a superman, of course, and his wife then abandon the city and return to the land, not the Alaskan wilderness but the benevolent agricultural countryside of the Southland. In this novel, London's rejection of the superman and his locale is final. Love again, as in White Fang, has been the instrument of subjugation. Not only is individualism rejected for love, but London puts his lovers, a pair of sentimentalized yeoman farmers, in a mythical garden, similar to Cather's, in which the spirit of a benevolent deity almost communes again, in true romantic fashion, with the spirit of man.

The four novels in which London develops the Sonoma Valley as the embodiment of his final effort to find a spiritual home are, beside Burning Daylight, The Iron Heel (1908), The Valley of the Moon (1913), and The Little Lady of the Big House (1916). In his article, "Jack London's Sonoma Novels," Clell T. Peterson identifies the ideals which characterize London's final creative phase: "Belief in a return to the land and to nature, in freedom and individualism, in the possibility of the good life, and in the reality and worth of human love."[26]

London had always believed in freedom and individualism. His particular problem arose when he tried to find freedom and individualism a permanent home--a permanent representation. The Northland was rejected because it was by nature anti-life. Gradually, London's heroes exchanged the values of the North for those of civilization--love, companionship, morality. Frona Welse rejects the amoral powers of individualism by accepting Vance Corliss, and Wolf Larsen's more civilized assets pass, by the transfusion of the doubling process, to the Humphrey Van Weyden-Maud Brewster duo. Ultimately, however, civilization proves as destructive to the London hero as did the frozen North. Materialism, greed, cultism, phoney idealism--all of these sins of civilization make the progress of the honest individualist extremely painful, if not impossible. Martin Eden is completely destroyed by civilization--success and indeed life itself become meaningless to him, and suicide is his only alternative. Elam Harnish is confronted with the same dilemma but he makes the move which introduces London's last attempt to find a spiritual home, as we observed. Reclaimed by the love of a woman, he returns to a benevolent nature.

The return to the soil is the theme of _The Valley of the Moon_, a novel which damns the city as the place "where the beautiful things of the spirit perished and the beast bared its fangs."[27] Billy Roberts and his wife, Saxon, reject all civilized values totally and embark on a quest for

immortality and the promised land. They settle eventually on a farm in the Sonoma Valley (Valley of the Moon). Our final view of the pair, passive recipients of nature's bounty, is not unlike our final glimpse of White Fang, weakened and rendered powerless by a warm, benevolent environment. The characters who people the locale of London's last creative phase are emasculated, foolish and sentimentalized. Certainly, the adjective super can in no way be applied to them.

The Little Lady of the Big House[28] gives us the broadest view of the realm of London's last imagining and its inhabitants. Dick and Paula Forrest have indeed returned to a benevolent nature and are living the good life. Forrest, an extremely prosperous rancher, a self-made man, is seemingly master of his environment. London's description of Forrest's awakening, which opens this novel, appears to present us with a clear view of the rancher's life style:

> He awoke in the dark. His awakening was simple, easy, without movement save for the eyes that opened and made him aware of darkness. Unlike most, who must feel and grope and listen to, and contact with, the world about them, he knew himself in time and place and personality. After the lapsed hours of sleep, he took up, without effort, the interrupted tale of his days. He knew himself to be Dick Forrest, the master of broad acres, who had fallen asleep hours before after drowsily putting a match between the pages of 'Road Town' and pressing off the electic reading lamp.

This passage, positive, straight-forward in tone, would seem to indicate London's belief in his character's success. Forrest and his wife, devoted to each other and professing a shared belief in freedom and individualism, would seem to

exemplify the dignity and worth of human love. We appear to be presented with a successful finale to London's quest for a locale which would be supportive of the noblest human virtues.

However, almost at every point in this novel, the credibility of the Forrests is undercut. Forrest lives as mechanized and artificial a life as any urban dweller. Machines perform the labors of farming; oriental servants with names like Oh My, Oh Joy, and Oh Ho, perform the tasks of living. His natural environment communicates with him through a series of gadgets; his is a world of automation in which the time, temperature, and air pressure are relayed to him upon awakening along with his morning coffee and a journal detailing the lastest developments in technological farming. Undercutting the love of Paula and Dick is the worst kind of sentimentality, and, more significantly, the destructiveness London had always sensed lurked behind the strong hetero-sexual relationship. As Peterson notes, "Dick and Paula actually achieve the good life Billy and Saxon dream of, but the dream has turned sour and the good life is sterile and frustrating."[29] The Forrests seemingly do nothing productive. They entertain, admire their virile livestock, all the while calling each other sentimental nicknames and chanting Indian fertility songs. In the midst of all the fecundity, their childlessness sets them apart from their environment. Ultimately Paula, unable to choose between her husband and a guest with whom she has become infatuated, commits suicide.

The realm of love and benevolent nature grants the individual the same reward--death--as does the Northland. "The death of Paula Forrest," notes Peterson, "is the final failure of the individual to escape from the pressures of society and to find new, real values in individualism and in nature and the return to the soil."[30]

The Little Lady of the Big House is a dismal failure. The unpleasant, silly facts of the Forrest's lives undercut the vision of them as successful and strong individuals to a point at which the ideal becomes ludicrous; the reader is left with feelings of disgust and hopelessness. The real serves to annihilate, not mediate, the ideal in this novel. There is no ambiguity or paradox, merely mediocrity. We have the ingredients of allegory, but the myth--Dick and Paula Forrest as successful yeoman farmers--is not mediated by the facts, the reality of their lives.

Peterson observes that London uses the horse as his symbol of the final escape from civilization to a benevolent nature. In Burning Daylight and The Valley of the Moon, the horse is used imaginatively to embody the characters' love of nature--they all ride or at least admire horses--and to connect the love of nature--escape from civilization theme with the "worth of human love" motif. Billy, for instance, compares Saxon to a "'thorough-bred mare.'" In The Little Lady of the Big House, the stallion Mountain Lad occupies a central symbolic position; he is an emblem of the fertility

and vigor of the ranch and its inhabitants--a kind of Buck or White Fang of the Sonoma Valley. Since the ranch is a model of mechanized artificiality and its chief inhabitants effete shadows, the horse becomes an unconvincing parody of its intended self--London's attempts to force a grotesque embodiment of potent fertility on a sour, stagnant world are similar to James's attempts in _The Wings of the Dove_ to transform a very mortal girl into a redeemer. Of course, James fails more gloriously; London's is a sophomoric, sentimental, if painfully wistful novel. His quest for a spiritual homeland has been unsuccessful; it was not to be found in North or South.

That London would naturally gravitate toward the allegorical method is understandable. His state of mind was never unambiguous. Individualism vs. community, Nietzschean anarchy vs. democracy, atavism vs. the refinements of civilization--these are some of the dualities which plagued him. In his least successful works, the attempt to resolve these ambiguities with shallow philosophizing and sentimental moralizing is evident. In his best works, _The Call of the Wild_ and the better Alaskan stories, London, holding the ambiguities in an electric balance, is able to express the wish that pressed upon him all his life but that was constantly repressed by his sense of himself as a responsible, rational human being, his wish for his "own individualistic liberation from the pack of men in their competitive society."[31]

London's canon, as we have observed, takes the form of a quest for permanence and invincibility. His seekers, especially characters like Martin Eden and Wolf Larsen, are unquestionably demonic. Larsen, like Ahab, is driven by an _idée fixe_--his desire for success in seal hunting. His energy seems at first enormous and he, like Ahab, eschews conscience in favor of unrelenting will in his furious rush toward self-destruction.[32] London's characters, however, instead of mythically embodying their environment, as Natty Bumppo does the virgin forest, find their environment ultimately destructive. It is this striking disparity between character and environment which results in the character's failure to survive successfully. Initially, as the story begins, the character seems in perfect accord with his environment. Larsen and his locale, for instance, are mutually reflective. The Northern sea and his state of mind can be termed brutal, lawless, ungovernable. Dick Forrest, the gentleman farmer, and his locale, the mechanized super ranch, also seem to be in accord. However, in both cases, the character and his environment become disparate. When the desire for love enters Larsen's world, in the figure of Maud Brewster, a rift appears between him and his environment--a locale which cannot support the civilizing tendencies of love--and he is destroyed. When Paula Forrest, by turning to another man, makes Dick aware of the failure of his marriage--the only barren union in his ludicrously fertile

environment--his efficient pattern of existence breaks down.

Like London, Theodore Dreiser was also searching for liberation from the oppressiveness of living in a commercial, materialistic universe. London, as we have observed, turned almost immediately to the celebration of forcefulness and individuality as he knew that the undersized, the timid, and the cowardly man, with whom he really did not sympathize, did not have a chance. Dreiser, on the other hand, tried painstakingly, painfully, and compassionately to see if something could be salvaged from the semi-conscious struggles of average men and women to define themselves and to act purposefully in a universe that was, at best, indifferent. Dreiser wanted to believe wholeheartedly in man's potential to find spiritual as well as material fulfillment; and he could not live comfortably with the knowledge that his world would not allow man the realization of this potential. This contradiction between longing and knowledge is reflected in all of Dreiser's writings: his essays, his poetry, his novels, and his stories. In one section of Hey-Rub-A-Dub-Dub, he writes: "History teaches me little save that nothing is really dependable or assured, but all inexplicable and all shot through with a great desire on the part of many to . . . escape the unutterable confusion of time." Yet, a few lines below this, Dreiser continues: "I look out at the river flowing by now, after hundreds of millions of years of loneliness where there was nothing but silence and waste . . . and say to myself: 'Well,

where there is much order and love of order in everyone and everywhere, there must be some elemental spirit holding for order of sorts . . . Stars do not swing in orbits for nothing, surely.'"[33] The Dreiser canon is an effort to reconcile longing and knowledge, to assuage the pain of contradiction caused by the opposition between the two. This attempt to reconcile the discontinuity between the natural world of experience and the world of ideas and ideals alerts us to an author's reliance on the allegorical mode, as we have observed.

The duality in Dreiser has certainly been recognized. Ellen Moers, for instance, entitled her study of Dreiser _Two Dreisers_. The introduction to her work includes a summary of the contradictions composing Dreiser's background: "The product of a marriage between a German immigrant and the daughter of a frontier Mennonite family, Dreiser was country boy and cosmopolitan, Quaker and Communist, stern materialist and religious philosopher--disciple of Herbert Spencer, of Tolstoy through Howells, of Chicago realism through George Ade; of Elmer Gates, the eccentric forgotten psychologist; and later of Freud through A. A. Brill and of the biologist Jacques Loeb."[34] Dreiser's work has generally been identified with reality because, like all great artists, he depicts his world in a manner which we recognize as real--true to the human experience. However, he does not accept the world of experience as at peace with the ideals it embodies. Like the other writers we have discussed, he is concerned to show that

the world of nature and that of ideas are at variance. Dreiser himself indicated his involvement with symbolic fiction in an interview given in 1921, the year of a Dante centenary:

> . . . what we miss in American fiction is power of imagination. . . . If there are all the chain cigar stores, chain drug stores, haberdasheries, movie theatres, and big hotels in Manhattan, here are also Hell, Heaven and Purgatory of the soul, which Dante would have found. . . . He would have gone beyond mere realistic description and shown us the half-monstrous proportions of our city like a giant sphinx with wings. . . .
>
> Vigor our novelists possess, but little exaltation. . . . They are content to examine the inside of a boarding house or chronicle the mere number of windows in the colossal stone and steel shells of our buildings. They stick close to the curbstone. They rarely climb any such heights as Dante climbed to look out over the tremendous waste of lives. . . .[35]

"What absorbed Dreiser as a novelist," notes Moers, "was . . . the spectacle of the human moth trapped in the flame of desire: outside evolution, outside history and society."[36] His novels are quests in search of a belief which could sustain a pilgrim attempting to define himself in a mechanistic, indifferent universe.

Charles Walcutt identifies four stages in Dreiser's search for belief: "In the first stage Dreiser was expounding his conviction of the essential purposelessness of life and attacking the conventional ethical codes which to him seemed to hold men to standards of conduct that had no basis in fact, while they condemned others without regard to what Dreiser thought might be the real merits of their situations."[37] <u>Sister Carrie</u> (1900) embodies the "first half of this

program-expounding the purposelessness of life. . . ."[38] Jennie Gerhardt (1911) is meant "to show how utterly inadequate are standard Christian ethics for the judgment or guidance of conduct in a world that does not . . . correspond to the notion of reality upon which that ethical system is based."[39] The second stage is that of the superman--the attempt to subject hope to force--to create a figure, the financier Frank Cowperwood, large enough to withstand the pressures of a materialistic universe. Stage three, notes Walcutt, is "marked by [Dreiser's] conversion to socialism,"[40] and is best represented by An American Tragedy (1925). The last stage, embodied in The Bulwark (1946) and The Stoic (1947) is an appeal to all those elements, religion, spirituality, eschewed so strongly in stage one. Ultimately, this final appeal is also left largely unfulfilled. The beautiful Quaker faith which sustained Solon Barnes proves unable to withstand the caustic pressures of the mechanistic society which engulfs his children. No belief, as it appears, can be maintained successfully against the annihilating emptiness of American life--neither a scientific nor a political nor a spiritual credo.

Dreiser's superman stage is, as has already been noted, his attempt to pit against the materialistic universe a creature who is of it in his every attribute--strength, adaptability, amorality. However, if we look closely, we can see that Dreiser is as uncomfortable with his superman

"without spiritual or religious feeling" as London is with Wolf Larsen, even though he holds on to Cowperwood much longer than London does Larsen. Cowperwood and his financial cohorts are repeatedly likened to beasts. Describing a meeting of financiers in The Titan, Dreiser writes: "There were short and long men, lean and stout, dark and blond men, with eyes and jaws which varied from those of the tiger, lynx, and bear to those of the fox, the tolerant mastiff, and the surly bulldog."[41] Cowperwood and Aileen Butler are said to run together "like two leopards." It is as if Dreiser is constantly reminding the reader of that scene in which the young Cowperwood ponders the battle between the lobster and the squid which took place in a tank in the fish-market window. The outcome of this battle provides Cowperwood with an answer to his question, "How is life organized?" Lobsters live on squid; strong men on weaker ones. At one point in The Titan, Cowperwood himself is spoken of as a monstrous octopus, reaching to enfold Chicago in his tentacles.[42] Cowperwood reveals those traits which have been observed as characteristic of the allegorical hero. His mind is possessed by idea--he wants only to amass a fortune. Toward this one goal he is demonically driven. He does things regularly, meticulously. Nothing can stand in the way of his single-mindedness and his potent energy. He is The Materialist.

Dreiser does not remain satisfied with his materialist for long. He increasingly stresses Cowperwood's need for the

values represented by things other than cold cash: art objects, magnificent homes, women. In The Financier, Dreiser writes that Cowperwood desires money "for money's sake," not for what it will buy in the way of comforts, but "for what it will represent in the way of dignity, force, power."[43] Cowperwood's mind is described as essentially apoetic, aphilosophical. By the middle of The Titan, however, Dreiser is writing: "The man's greatest love was for art. It was hypnotic to him, it was the center of his iron personality."[44] Dreiser notes further that if his hero had not been a great financier, he would certainly have been a great philosopher. As the trilogy progresses, the accumulation of paintings and other art objects becomes one of Cowperwood's major goals. Dreiser seems to be trying very hard to give him the spiritual and ideological identity he was formerly denied. The establishment of magnificent homes is evidence of his quest for identity, the desire to establish a tradition and a reality beyond materialism. Dreiser's hero is increasingly bedazzled by the American dream; material wealth becomes for him not merely a power in itself but the source of spiritual identity.

Cowperwood's excessive philandering is, I think, meant to express his forceful individuality, his Nietzschean will-to-power that cannot be restrained by a conventional code of morality. As Dreiser converts Cowperwood from a conscious materialist to a semi-conscious idealist, his philandering becomes increasingly more frantic. His women become less

and less physical, more and more the incarnations of his need for spiritual reality. A brief discussion of the three women who play major roles in Cowperwood's life can serve to illustrate this point.

Of the reserved and classically beautiful Lillian Semple, Cowperwood's first wife, Dreiser writes that his hero "wanted her physically. He felt a keen, primitive interest in the children they would have. He wanted to find out if he could make her love him vigorously and could rout out the memory of her former life. . . . Her prettiness, wax-like in its quality, fascinated him; her indifference aroused perhaps his combative soul."[45] Lillian is neither intellectual nor spiritual, and when her physical beauty begins to fade and Cowperwood realizes that he is "likely to have a sickly wife on his hands later," his interest in her begins to decline. Lillian Semple is a challenge to the young Cowperwood wanting only to make everything bend to his will. Aileen Butler, Cowperwood's second major romantic interest, answers the needs of Cowperwood at the height of his materialistic power. Flashy, willful, pagan, Aileen has the emotional force, the passion Lillian lacks. She can respond to Cowperwood's passion with an energy equal to his own. Eileen is the perfect female image of Cowperwood's financial success; she offers herself to him sexually as the material world does financially; he is the victor and she--the spoils. She is the avatar of his conscious materialism.

As Cowperwood's spiritual needs become more predominant, he loses interest in Aileen; she appears too gaudy, too fleshy, too material. Cowperwood begins again to search for his talisman, the one woman who could embody the spiritual certainty he lacks. He comes to rest only after he discovers Berenice Fleming, and she is intended by Dreiser to represent the satisfaction of Cowperwood's spiritual cravings: "'What, after all,'" muses Cowperwood, "'were life, wealth, fame, if you couldn't have the woman you wanted--love, that indefinable, unnamable coddling of the spirit which the strongest as well as the weakest crave?' At last he saw clearly . . . that the ultimate end of fame, power, vigor was beauty, and that beauty was a compound of the taste, the emotion, the innate culture, passion and dreams of a woman like Berenice Fleming."[46] At the close of _The Titan_, Cowperwood sustains a financial defeat but is discovering spiritual meaning in his union with Berenice. He is no longer the scintillating, materialistic superman of _The Financier_, but he still retains some vitality.

The _coup de grâce_ is given the superman in _The Stoic_. As Cowperwood grows older, he begins to reflect and rationalize, identifying his past mainly with his interest in art and his efforts to convert his New York mansion into a museum, something that would attest to his desire for immortality. At one point he says to his wife, Aileen, "'This house has helped me live through the endless practical problems to which I have had to devote myself. In building it and buying things

for it, I have tried to bring into my life and yours the beauty which is entirely outside of cities and business.'"[47] This statement is, I think, evidence of Dreiser's ultimate rejection of the materialistic philosophy and of Cowperwood as he appears initially in The Financier. Cowperwood becomes just another one of Dreiser's seekers, toyed with by the amoral life forces and wishing dreamily for some assurance of immortality. He establishes one last mansion, his tomb. Fatally stricken by an attack of Bright's disease, he awaits death semi-consciously, "at last admitting to himself that neither he nor any man knew anything about life or its Creator" (p. 247).[48] The complete dissolution of Cowperwood's fortune after his death is Dreiser's negation of Spencerian optimism and the Nietzschean idea that the superman can affect a positive change in his society.

Interestingly enough, Dreiser's machinations toward the end of The Stoic are similar to London's in The Sea Wolf. As I mentioned earlier, London does not kill off Wolf Larsen without salvaging his more positive strengths through the techniques of doubling. Maud Brewster and Humphrey Van Weyden assume Larsen's health and adaptability, to add these physical attributes to the spiritual qualities they already possess. Thus, in this novel, London is able to satisfy his craving for the spiritual and the ideal without completely dispensing with those of Wolf Larsen's qualities that fascinated him most. Of course, as we have observed, that portion of the

book devoted to the story of Humphrey and Maud is nowhere near as successful as the portion devoted to Wolf Larsen. Dreiser attempts to extend Cowperwood's influence beyond his death also. He attempts to make his spirit live on in the person of Berenice who, with the aid of money left to her by Cowperwood, goes to India to study Yoga, to prove to herself that "death is but an aspect of life, and that the destruction of one material form is but a prelude to the building up of another."[49] She returns, builds a hospital in Cowperwood's memory, and devotes her life to nursing. Dreiser too forces the material, Cowperwood's wealth, to have spiritual meaning but at the expense of his superman and literary success.

The Financier, although not one of Dreiser's best novels, is interesting at times because he attempts seriously to come to grips with those industrial realities of America that London rejects as productive of his hero's dissipation in *Burning Daylight*. Dreiser experiments with his hero, seeing if he could not, perhaps, provide the answers to those questions Dreiser is always asking: Why is there so much suffering in the world? What is the nature of a creative, overruling power that could allow such misery? By *The Titan* and *definitely* by *The Stoic*, Dreiser knows that Cowperwood will not provide satisfactory answers, that he too will only ask questions. These are tired and almost helpless books, at times. The spiritual solution to *The Stoic* is pathetically

contrived, as Walcutt points out.[50] It tells us a lot about Dreiser but nothing about Cowperwood. Dreiser, like London, is at his worst when he philosophizes. He is at his best when he forms his questions into his novels' actions, when he expresses his yearning for spiritual certitude in terms of understanding, compassion and tenderness for his characters as he documents their quests for certainty and their battles with the ruthless forces of their environment.

We have seen in the discussion of London's and Dreiser's supermen, how complex the problem of the author's ambiguous regard for his character could be. Both London and Dreiser vacillate between celebrating the materialistic self-sufficiency of their characters and undercutting this self-sufficiency with heavy doses of spirituality. Ultimately, material body dissolves into very thin spiritual vapor. Both men finally conceived of altruism as an alternative to the cold, materialistic void, but they could not translate the steadily changing shift in ethical perspective into coherent literary development. A mythic embodiment can have no real life of its own; it is built upon the stable superstructure provided by its creator's beliefs. The stronger the belief, the more valid its emblem, the character, is. Cather believed in the desirableness of the Agrarian Dream; Cooper believed in the spiritual validity of the virgin land. Even though these beliefs are regarded from various angles in their novels, neither Cather nor Cooper abandoned them

while in the process of expressing them artistically. Both London and Dreiser clutched frantically at the validity of individualistic materialism, only to realize, while yet in the process of expressing their initial acceptance, that it could not really serve their respective purposes. The emblems of their beliefs, more dazzling than solid to begin with, are thus unsuccessful.

If we look at the progression of supercharacters from Frona Welse through Wolf Larsen, Elam Harnish and finally, Frank Cowperwood, we can envision the history of the attempted mythic embodiment of the industrial era. It forms an allegorical progress of its own. Frona Welse is the child, initially embodying the ideals of the Progressive period in their freshest, brightest, most optimistic form. For London has divorced the ideals from the sociological reality of finance and industry. In A Daughter of the Snows, civilization enters in the form of the vapor of morality that painlessly engulfs Frona's validity as a superwoman. Wolf Larsen and Elam Harnish are the adolescents who struggle to assert the value of self against the values of civilization. Both fail; Larsen is destroyed by the very contradictions and paradoxes which compare him, and Harnish gives up self for brotherhood in the form of romantic love. Frank Cowperwood is the adult. Seemingly perfectly adjusted to the financial and industrial realities of his world, he confronts them squarely, attempting to conquer force with force. His failure denies the possibility

of a mythic embodiment of industrial America, the attempt to unite hope and knowledge by imparting spiritual validity to matter, which, by its very nature, could not sustain such validity. The steady progress of the naturalistic superman from birth to final annihilation is a curious manifestation of the Spencerian concept of dissolution. This force, combined with evolution, constitutes, in Spencer's words, "the entire process through which things pass."[51] When the evolutionary process reaches its climax, dissolution must set in. At its peak, it is again replaced by evolution. Although consciously expressing the spirit of optimism surrounding the Spencerian notion of evolution, the creators of the naturalistic superman actually present us with a chart of the process of dissolution. They seem to express an unconscious fascination with the statement, "an entire history of anything must include its appearance out of the imperceptible and its disappearance into the imperceptible."[52] This is indeed a succinct and accurate summary of the American superman's progress.

Notes to Chapter VI

[1]Minneapolis, Minn.: Univ. of Minessota Press, 1956, p. 22.

[2]Ibid., p. 8.

[3]Ibid., p. 11.

[4]Ibid., p. 12.

[5]Ibid., p. 19.

[6]Ibid., p. 12.

[7]Ibid., p. 15.

[8]Ibid., p. 17.

[9]Haskell M. Block, Naturalistic Tryptich: The Fictive and the Real in Zola, Mann and Dreiser (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 11.

[10]H. N. Smith discusses some of the literary problems created by the frontiersman hero in his Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth (New York: Random House, 1950), pp. 54-135.

[11]On Native Grounds (New York: Reynal and Hitchcok, 1942), pp. 69-132.

[12]Smith, p. 258.

[13]On Native Grounds, pp. 93, 95.

[14]Ibid., p. 103.

[15]Henry L. Mencken, The Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche (Boston, Mass.: Luce, 1913), pp. 100-117.

[16]Walcutt discusses this aspect of London on pp. 87-113.

[17]New York: Archer, 1963, p. 28. Subsequent references to this work will be followed in the text by page numbers.

[18]"White Fang," in White Fang and Other Stories (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1963), p. 4.

[19]In his essay, "Jack London's Quest for Salvation," Gordon Mills calls this preoccupation with individualism a desire to escape from responsibility. American Quarterly, 7 (Spring, 1955), 4.

[20]In White Fang and Other Stories, p. 157.

[21]In The Son of the Wolf (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1900), pp. 99-100.

[22]The Sea Wolf (New York: Bantam, 1963), p. 35. Subsequent references to this work will be followed in the text by page numbers.

[23]Walcutt, p. 112.

[24]Mills maintains that this is London's ultimate resolution of the conflict between altruism and individualism, p. 14.

[25]Burning Daylight (New York: Macmillan, 1952), p. 61.

[26]American Book Collector, 9, No. 2 (October, 1968), 15-16.

[27]New York: Review of Reviews, 1917, p. 418.

[28]New York: Macmillan, 1928.

[29]"Jack London's Sonoma Novels," 20.

[30]Ibid.

[31]Kazin, p. 116.

[32]Mary Kay Dodson discusses the London characters as demonic in her paper, "Naturalism in the Works of Jack London," Jack London Newsletter, 4, No. 3 (1971), 130-139.

[33]James T. Farrell, "Some Correspondence with Theodore Dreiser," in A. Kazin and C. Shapiro, eds., The Stature of Theodore Dreiser (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1958), p. 41.

[34]New York: Viking Press, 1969, front flap.

[35]Ibid., p. 277.

[36]Ibid., p. 241.

[37]American Literary Naturalism, A Divided Stream, p. 187.

[38]*American Literary Naturalism, A Divided Stream*, p. 187.

[39]Ibid., p. 194.

[40]Ibid., p. 206.

[41]New York: New American Library, 1965, p. 17.

[42]Ibid., p. 482.

[43]New York, New American Library, 1967, p. 182.

[44]*The Titan*, p. 195.

[45]*The Financier*, pp. 49, 45.

[46]*The Titan*, pp. 426, 427.

[47]Cleveland, Ohio: World, 1947, pp. 255, 256.

[48]Ibid., p. 247.

[49]Ibid., p. 296.

[50]*American Literary Naturalism*, p. 214.

[51]*First Principles* (New York: Burt, 1884), p. 470.

[52]Ibid., p. 241.

CHAPTER VII

FAULKNER

Faulkner's works bring us back to the relationship between allegory and myth. Faulkner's allegorizing, his particular attempt to subject myth to mediation, seems to be a deliberate effort to discover why myth fails, in America, to produce its desired effects. The subjection of myth to mediation is a process which we have observed in the other works we have discussed. In *The Wings of the Dove*, for example, James juggles the two aspects of Milly Theale, the ideal, the Redeemer, and the real, the lonely woman wanting only to be loved. In *My Ántonia*, Willa Cather attempts to relate the two aspects of Ántonia, the fertility goddess and the trusting young girl, seduced and abandoned by her lover. In his story "The Bear," Faulkner relates the image of Isaac McCaslin the Redeemer to that of Ike McCaslin the lonely, bitter, isolated man in an effort to discover the reasons for Ike's failure to redeem.

Myth, it will be remembered, can be defined as unmediated vision which usually takes the form of sacred scripture, prophesy, apocalypse. As Mircea Eliade notes, "Myth narrates a sacred history; it relates an event that took place in primordial Time, . . . myth tells how, through the deeds of Supernatural Beings, a reality came into

existence. . . ."[1] The function of myth is to explain origins, establish linkages between man and man, man and nature, man and the gods. By "'living'the myths . . . by ceremonially recounting the myth or by performing the ritual for which it is the justification . . . one emerges from profane, chronological time and enters a time that is of a different quality, a 'sacred' time at once primordial and indefinitely recoverable."[2] One is transported by the force of the ritual. The function of myth is nothing if not regenerative, unifying.

In his story "The Bear," Faulkner takes as close a look at the function of myth in American culture as can be found in our literature. The first three sections of this work present a myth along with its failure to produce the desired effects. Part four subjects the myth to mediation, analysis, rationalization in an attempt to uncover the origins of its failure. What we have is an allegory anatomized, broken down into its components, myth and mediation or analysis. The myth Faulkner is concerned with unfolding in the first three sections of "The Bear" is an initiation myth. A boy, Isaac McCaslin, enters manhood by participating in a ritual symbolic of death and a new birth.[3] By entering the forest, mastering and using new skills, and participating in an initiatory murder of a divine incarnation--a creative re-enaction of the first mythical murder which, as Eliade notes, "gave birth to everything that exists on Earth today,"[4] --McCaslin, the neophyte, should become a full-fledged member of his tribe.

The origin of initiatory rituals is found by Eliade to reside in a primordial violent murder of a divinity by man which is "periodically re-encated" in puberty ceremonies to "recall the fact that man's capacity to procreate derives from the first mythical murder, and at the same time show that mortality is inseparable from procreation."[5] Eliade reconstructs the origin and re-enaction of the first initiatory murder as follows:

> (1) A Supernatural Being kills men (to initiate them); (2) (not understanding the meaning of this initiatory death) men avenge themselves by slaying him; (3) but afterward they institute secret ceremonies related to this primordial drama; (4) the Supernatural Being is made present at these ceremonies through an image or sacred object supposed to represent his body or his voice.[6]

Whatever specific form these initiatory rituals assume, they all involve a "separation of the neophyte from his family, and a 'retreat' into the forest,"[7] ordeals and rituals symbolic of the death of the neophyte, and rites symbolic of rebirth and resurrection. "An Indian Boy's Initiation into Manhood in the Omaha Tribe," as outlined by A. C. Fletcher and F. LaFlesche, can serve as our example of the initiation ritual: the neophyte, forbidden to use the bow and arrows given to him by his father when he left home, had to fast and pray in the forest for four days and nights. "When he fell into a sleep or trance, if he saw or heard anything, that thing was to become a special medium through which the youth could receive supernatural aid." After the fasting period, "he might go to an old and worthy man who was known

to have had a similar vision" and describe his experience. His duty was then to seek out the animal or bird of his vision and slay it, preserving either the whole or part of its body as a trophy of his successfully completed initiation.[8] The experiences of Isaac McCaslin follow the outline of the composite initiation ritual quite faithfully--up to a point.

Ike's initiation takes six years. At ten years of age, he drives in a surrey with his cousin Carothers McCaslin, Major de Spain, and General Compson "through a slow drizzle of November rain" to penetrate "the tall and endless wall of dense November woods" and begin "his novitiate to the true Wilderness."[9] At ten, with his guide Sam Fathers beside him, Ike witnesses "his own birth." Slowly, under Sam's tutelage, he learns woodlore and the ritualistic art of the hunt. Gradually, he becomes aware of various meanings and relationships. Of the tribe's compulsion to hunt the massive, seemingly ageless bear "with one trap-ruined foot," he had long known. It seems to him that he had become aware of this ritual at the dawn of awareness itself. The presence of the doomed wilderness whose apotheosis the bear had become he had also already divined. His six-year trial is meant to turn dimly felt awareness into direct personal experience.

During his first November, Ike becomes aware of Sam's relationship to the bear--the relationship of a high priest to a god. Having been apprised of the bear's unseen presence by Sam during one foray into the woods, Ike looks up to find

in his mentor's "old man's eyes . . . a quality darkly and fiercely lambent, passionate and proud" (p. 198). Again with Sam, Ike is granted a vision of the bear's enormous two-toed footprint. At this point, he becomes aware, fleetingly, of "his own fragility and impotence against the timeless woods" (p. 200), the sense of mortality which is so vital a component of the fruitful initiation ritual.

A great moment of Ike's initiation experience occurs when he is granted his first sight of the bear--his vision. This occurs during a visit made to the camp in June to celebrate Major de Spain's and General Compson's birthdays. Leaving behind his gun and abandoning his watch and compass along the way, Ike journeys for nine hours, becoming lost and attempting to find his way again without the aid of instruments. At the moment he finds his way--he comes upon the spot where he had abandoned his watch and compass--the vision comes to him:

> It did not emerge, appear: it was just there, immobile, fixed in the green and windless noon's hot dappling, not as big as he had dreamed it but as big as he had expected, bigger, dimensionless against the dappled obscurity, looking at him. Then it moved. It crossed the glade without haste, . . . Then it was gone. It didn't walk into the woods. It faded, sank back into the wilderness without motion as he had watched a fish, a huge old bass, sink back into the dark depths of its pool and vanish without even any movement of its fins. (p. 209)

Ike has entered the realm of the timeless, joined the ranks of all neophytes who have ever been initiated--he, the wilderness and the bear have become a unity. Seemingly, the

initiation has been successful; Ike has realized his mortality and yet has partaken of timelessness, of a rebirth into sacred time. He returns to tell Sam his experience, and he has yet to kill the embodiment of his vision. Ike does kill a buck and a bear, and his face is marked with the blood by Sam. The successful initiation seems complete. Yet Faulkner's legend has barely begun to unfold. What climaxes "The Bear" is something perhaps unique in mythological literature. The vision, the divinity itself, is obliterated. Generally, an initiation ritual involves the slaying of an animal or bird that <u>resembles</u> the neophyte's vision in physical form. In "The Bear," the bear of Ike's vision is killed.

The killing performed during Ike's initiation ritual is not a re-enaction of the primordial murder of a supernatural being; it is the murder itself. This murder, writes Eliade, "ends an epoch . . . and opens that in which we live today," the epoch of "sexed and mortal beings."[10] The bear murdered by Boon Hogganbeck is certainly not an ordinary bear--a mere incarnation of the divinity. As Faulkner describes it, and as it is perceived by the beings who pursue it, it certainly partakes of the stature of divinity itself. It is huge and seemingly ageless, omniscient and omnipresent; it has a name, Old Ben, which places it in a class with supernatural beasts like Grendel and Moby Dick. A true cosmic symbol, the bear is the emblem of the doomed wilderness--it is not the embodiment or incarnation of divinity, but divinity

itself. It is the vision which Ike experiences; it is not the embodiment of the vision. When it is killed, one epoch passes and a new one begins.

The epoch which passes is the one which was doubly cursed--first by the white man's desecration of the land, the wilderness, by his usurpation of what was never his, for his profit, and second, by his dehumanization of the Indian and the Negro, again to satisfy his all-consuming greed for possession. In _Go Down, Moses_, this epoch is portrayed in "Was," a story set during the time of Buck and Buddy McCaslin (Buck is Ike's father). This story is centered around the hunt of a human being, just as "The Bear" details the hunt of a beast. The human is Tomey's Terrel, whose father is Carothers McCaslin, the father of Buck and Buddy. Also in this story, another human, Tennie Beauchamp, who becomes the wife of Tomey's Terrel, is won from her owner by Buddy McCaslin in a poker game. This epoch, tainted by greed, the loss of faith, and the complete denigration of human dignity, cannot support the continued existence of the bear--the emblem of a state uncorrupted by greed, materialism, dehumanization. The bear's death is willed by him as is Sam Fathers' willed by Sam. Like Cooper's Natty Bumppo, Sam knows he has no life outside of the wilderness which gave him life.

So far has the human tribe, here, the McCaslins, fallen beneath the dignity of the bear-divinity that they are not even permitted to take his life. Not even Sam can

do that; as the priest, he sets the stage and shapes Lion, the dog, into the necessary form. Like Lion, Boon Hogganbeck, who assists the dog in the kill, is removed from the order of humanity; he has "the mind of a child, the heart of a horse, and little hard shoe-button eyes without depth or meanness or generosity or viciousness or gentleness or anything else" (p. 227). Boon and Lion are amoral in that they perform without malice, without desire, without will, and so do not diminish the reality that the bear and Sam Fathers die of their own will--the doomed will they share. Ike, the neophyte whose initiation "The Bear" details is, in effect, denied manhood. His vision is obliterated; he does not become personally involved in the obliteration but stands helplessly by, a member of a petty band of scavengers, the inhabitants of a wasteland. The god is murdered not by men but by raw, will-less force.

The epoch which follows upon the death of the bear is, in many ways, more corrupt than the one which preceded. Boon also becomes degraded. Our last vision of him is of a being demented by greed menacing a tree full of squirrels with a dismembered gun--he has joined the ranks of humanity. The stories in _Go Down, Moses_ which are set in the new epoch picture a charred, parched wasteland peopled by trapped, paralyzed individuals very much like those who inhabit Joyce's Dublin. In "The Fire and the Heath," men spend their efforts in a hunt for buried treasure. In "Pantaloon in Black," a

man journeys frantically after emotional numbness and nonbeing. A world parched and fragmented by human hatred,in which the false promise of divine amelioration is a mockery to those who can yet feel deeply, renders such individuals anachronistic, like the bear. They must be annihilated as Rider is.

The powerful ambiguities present in the first three sections of "The Bear" have not escaped critical notice. In his study, "Nature Myth in Faulkner's The Bear," John Lydenburg identifies several of them. The hunters from Jefferson, for instance, are "gentlemen and sportsmen, representing the . . . honor, dignity, and courage of the South. . . . But as Southerners . . . they are part of that South that has bought and sold land and has held men as slaves. . . . Thus their conquest of Old Ben becomes a rape." Since Old Ben is not merely a great bear but the "totem animal, the god who can never be bested by men with their hounds and guns," he is killed by the "nonhuman" Boon and the dog whom Sam Fathers removes "from the order of nature." However, by participating in Old Ben's murder, Lion becomes quite mortal--he dies--and Boon, as we observed, assumes the very human sins of greed and rapacity. Sam's role as priest is also anomalous mythologically, Lydenberg notes. He fulfills his priestly function; "his magic makes the god vulnerable to the men." His reward--"the death he is content to accept." And to his tribe, "the deed brings neither jubilation nor mourning--only retribution."

A great amount of the story's ambiguity emanates from the coupling of the two words which, as Lydenberg notes, "are repeated so often that they constitute a major theme: pride and humility. Here conjoined are two apparently polar concepts: the quintessence of Christianity in the virtue of humility; and the greatest of sins, the sin of Satan." As Faulkner defines these concepts, "Humility becomes the proper attitude to the nature gods, . . . the pride rises out of the individual's realization of his manhood: his acquisition of the self-control which permits him to perform the rituals as he should."[11] Actually pride and humility are equivalent to the sense of power and the sense of mortality which are the products of a successful initiation. Only Sam Fathers possesses these qualities. Ike is denied them because of the failure of his initiation. The coupling of these qualities results in ambiguity because the fact that only Sam possesses them makes their coexistence seem almost humanly impossible within the framework of "The Bear." The same qualities are linked ambiguously in <u>Moby Dick</u>, it will be remembered. During his sermon on Jonah, Father Mapple stresses the necessity for the submission to God along with pride in one's personal power. Again no individual possessed of both these qualities except perhaps Queequeg--a being similar to Sam Fathers in his isolation from the others, in his nonhumanness--is found aboard the <u>Pequod</u>.

If Parts I-III detail the failure of myth, Part IV is an anatomy of this failure. Ike, like Ishmael, attempts to

probe and at the same time shield himself from the awful realization of his failure--his broken initiation. Part IV consists primarily of a dialogue between Ike McCaslin and his cousin McCaslin Edmonds which takes place in the commissary on Ike's twenty-first birthday. Having decided to relinquish his title to the McCaslin farm, Ike attempts to explain his reasons for this sacrifice to his cousin and, primarily, to himself. The turgid dialogue seems to obscure rather than throw light on the reasons for Ike's decision. We hear again and again that the land is cursed and that Ike wishes to be free, but his strained litany, composed of bits and pieces of Southern history, McCaslin family history, and biblical mythology, throws no light on the problem of the broken initiation--the source of the tension. In fact, just as Ishmael's relentlessly circular probing of the whale leads him away from an understanding of the whale's nature, Ike's discussion constructs a dense veil between himself and the object of his scrutiny--the bear and its failure to redeem a fallen world. He can ultimately say only that,"'I'm trying to explain to the head of my family something which I have got to do which I don't quite understand myself, not in justification of it but to explain it if I can. I could say I don't know why I must do it but that I do know I have got to because I have got myself to live with for the rest of my life and all I want is peace to do it in'" (p. 288). Just as the bear's death did not bring redemption, Ike's

relinquishment does not bring him peace but a sterile, loveless exile--an isolation as profound as Ishmael's.

It seems a happy circumstance that, according to Biblical mythology, Isaac and Ishmael are both sons of Abraham. Melville's Ishmael and Faulkner's Isaac seem very closely related indeed. Each, for instance, demands the privilege of creating or defining his own identity. Ishmael begins his narrative with his existential demand: "Call me Ishmael." Isaac makes a similar demand when he decides to become Isaac, a redeemer, a type of Christ, in order to erase the curse of possession from the land "'already accursed even as Ikkemotubbe and Ikkemotubbe's father old Issetibbina and old Issetibbeha's fathers . . . held it'" (pp. 258-259). God, Ike tells his cousin, "'saw that only by voiding the land for a time of Ikkemotubbe's blood and substituting for it another blood could He accomplish His purpose.'" The white men who "'had brought in the evil'" were thus used by God "'to destroy the evil as doctors use fever to burn up fever, poison to slay poison.'" Furthermore, Ike's grandfather, Carothers McCaslin, who possessed the land and fathered mulatto offspring was, his grandson notes, meant to serve God's purpose: God foresaw "'the descendants Grandfather would have maybe He saw already in Grandfather the seed progentive of the three generations He saw it would take to set at least some of his lovely people free--'" (p. 259). Isaac the Redeemer is, of course, to Isaac McCaslin the culmination of the McCaslin line.

Like Ishmael, Ike fails to fulfill his desire to engage positively with the world around him. As Ishmael alone of all the Pequod's men survives, so does Ike survive his clan. And the image of Ike old, loveless, isolated amidst his alien young relatives is as much a picture of desolation as the image of Ishmael floating alone in the ocean after the Pequod's disaster. Ike has redeemed no one; the bear has not touched him, and Ishmael has failed to come close to the mystery of the whale.

Ike and Ishmael are similar too in their desires to philosophize and to allegorize. Both Faulkner and Melville have created allegorical heroes who themselves rely upon the process of allegory. Both want to arrive at some understanding of human motivation and divine purpose. Isaac sees the history of the South, as illustrated by the history of the McCaslins, as a chronicle of the Dispossession of God; he accepts McCaslin history as a type of Old and New Testament history and himself as a type of Christ:

> He watched it. And let me say it. Dispossessed of Eden. Dispossessed of Canaan, and those who dispossessed him dispossessed, and the five hundred years of absentee landlords in the Roman bagnios, and the thousand years of wild men from the northern woods who dispossessed them and devoured their ravished substance ravished in turn again . . . blasphemous in His name until He used a simple egg to discover to them a new world where a nation of people could be founded in humility and pity and sufferance and pride of one to another. And Grandfather did own the land nevertheless and notwithstanding because He permitted it, not impotent and not condoning and not blind because He ordered it and watched it. (p. 258)

So, to fulfill the role of redeemer, Isaac relinquishes the farm he inherited, becomes a carpenter, and moves with his wife to Jefferson to live "in the little new jerrybuilt bungalow which his wife's father had given them" (p. 281). Like all those possessed by an idea, Ike demands that all around him accept his system and play those roles he thinks suit them. Like all men possessed by a vision, Isaac sees people as images not as agents, as types or figures, not as human beings. If they do not accept his universe, they are viewed by him as lost. When Fonsiba, the daughter of Tomey's Terrel, marries a man from Arkansas and leaves the McCaslin land to live with her husband, Ike is driven to seek her out: "'I will have to find her. _I will have to find her this time_'" (p. 277). Since Fonsiba is a black McCaslin, a descendant of Carothers McCaslin, to lose her would be to lose contact with a living embodiment of the sin Ike feels his renunciation should expiate. Finally, finding the couple settled on a sub-marginal farm in Arkansas, Ike lectures them: "'Don't you see? This whole land, the whole South, is cursed, and all of us . . . Don't you see?'" (p. 278). When Fonsiba refuses to return to the McCaslin land, maintaining that in her present condition she is "free," Isaac leaves, after making sure she received the inheritance originally left to her father, who refused it, by Carothers McCaslin. To Isaac, "no man is ever free and probably could not bear it if he were" (p. 281). When Fonsiba insists she is free, she implies

to Isaac that she will not accept his brotherhood of guilt and accursedness--she will deny the scarlet stigma which he feels all Southerners bear engraven on their breasts. She will also not give him the right to atone for her sins, to act as her savior.

Isaac's sense of mission forces him to reject another human being--his wife. The incident with which Part IV of "The Bear" concludes illustrates this rejection. In an attempt to induce Ike to abandon his exile, his wife offers herself to him with the stipulation that he will agree to return to the farm. Overcome by a passion stronger than any he has ever felt, Ike succumbs, finally, after strenuous attempts at resistance, and after denying his wife's request: ". . . and he said Yes, and he thought, _She is lost_. _She was born lost_ then he stopped thinking and even saying Yes, it was like nothing he had ever dreamed, . . . until after a no-time he returned and lay spent on the insatiate immemorial beach and again with a movement one time more older than man she turned and freed herself . . . lying on her side, her back to the empty room, laughing and laughing" (pp. 314-315).

Now it is true that Ike's wife tries to bribe him, but it can also be argued that she tries to reach him, to appeal to the mortal, the fallibie, the human part of him. To want to possess is a weakness, but it is a mortal weakness just as love is a mortal strength. To Ike, mortal desires, whether for freedom or property or love are sins, signs of

man's accursedness, his lostness. During his initiation, Ike was denied direct participation in the action--he was only an observer. Throughout his life, he can only observe others and comment on their actions--he does not enter into a meaningful relationship with any other human being; he reaches out to no one, whether it be in love or in hatred.

Isaac McCaslin bears a striking resemblance to many of Hawthorne's heroes--Parson Hooper of "The Minister's Black Veil" or the Man of Adamant, for instance. Characteristically, it will be remembered, Hawthorne's heroes are sent on journeys in quest of their selfhood. Generally, they do come to some understanding of themselves, but it is not an understanding which enables them to live purposeful lives. As they journey through worlds which reflect their own compulsive, divided selves, they become more and more absorbed by the dark side of things; they become and remain demonic allegorists; they accept the physical world as created expressly to embody ideas of darkness, perversion, evil.

Parson Hooper appears in church one day hiding his face behind a black veil. His sermon that day concerns "secret sin, and those sad mysteries which we hide from our nearest and dearest, and would fain conceal from our own consciousness, even forgetting that the Omniscient can detect them."[12] The Parson becomes separated from his fellowmen, an ambiguous object of dread and reverence who lives out his life in loneliness and isolation, refusing to remove the veil

even when the refusal means the termination of his betrothal. Isaac McCaslin's abdication is his veil. He too seemingly wishes to remind others of the hidden accursedness they share; he too separates himself from humanity by his fanatical, righteous certainty. He also refuses to remove his veil to another fallible mortal's demand for recognition. He ultimately lives out his life in loneliness and isolation, frozen, like the Man of Adamant, into his belief.

Like Hawthorne, Faulkner is not primarily a moralist. He provides no easy answers to the question as to how life should be lived. Perhaps he merely poses the question and reveals its profundity. Ike McCaslin's gesture, his abdication, is highly ambiguous. The wealth and variety of critical interpretation attest to its ambiguity. Some critics, like R. W. B. Lewis, consider Ike's course essentially positive: "This is not to say that Ike is intended to represent Christ in a second coming, but only that Ike moves in a world of light--a light still meagre but definite; a new world in which values have been confirmed by being raised to a higher power; not the new world beyond the frontier . . . but a world so perpetually new that Ike sometimes seems to be its only living inhabitant."[13] Others look upon Ike's achievements as highly questionable. David H. Stewart maintains that Ike achieves "little more than cheap self-satisfaction, cheap because his basic urge is to gain peace and to escape, which prevents him from finding solutions that really satisfy or

that are really meaningful. . . . Isaac is in many ways an unattractive creature. . . . His acts are usually inconclusive, his ideas always autocathartic."[14] Most critical positions, like Herbert A. Perluck's, tend to keep in balance both negative and positive judgments: "If Isaac McCaslin is a saint at all, it is not in the traditional ascetic sense of a successful renunciation of the world and the flesh in atonement and expiation; it is rather a 'sainthood' of unsuccess, an unwitting, unwilled elevation produced in the tragic <u>defeat</u> of spirit and soul in the 'uncontrollable mystery' of the world which men and saints must live in perforce."[15]

Accepted as one of our outstanding American allegorical heroes, Isaac McCaslin is not difficult to understand. He is compulsive, doing things regularly, meticulously, blindly. He is idea-possessed, idea-determined; his will can certainly not be called free. His world is full of ambivalent imagery which is a reflection of his own divided state of mind. Ike's wife, for instance, is both repulsive and sexually attractive to him. Generally, the imagery in "The Bear," like that in other allegorical works, is talismanic, reflective of Ike's inner reality. We have the compass and watch he has to abandon before he can envision the bear; these are apt symbols of the correlatives of space and time applicable to the world he must abandon in order to enter the realm of timelessness. The forest itself functions as it does in the works of Hawthorne and Brown--it represents the wilderness of

the mind, the wilderness which engulfs Ike as it does Edgar Huntley and Goodman Brown. Our hero is profoundly alone in the universe and he will stop at nothing to maintain this aloneness. One can even imagine that he, like James's Winterbourne, could commit murder to maintain his essential separateness and to exclude human love from his world. Finally, like our other heroes, Ike is unable to interact purposefully with his environment. Because of his incomplete initiation, he cannot accept the validity of ambiguity, demanding to maintain a position of heroic certainty in the face of the world's uncertainty.

"The Bear" concludes with a mythic moment beautifully representative of Ike's deluded state of mind. About eighteen months after Old Ben's death, Ike revisits the locale of his initiation, ostensibly planning to meet Boon by the Gum Tree near which he first became aware of Old Ben's presence. Instead of going toward the tree, he is inadvertently driven away from it toward the burial ground of Old Ben, Lion, and Sam Fathers. His journey toward the burial ground is similar to Reuben Bourne's journey to the spot where he abandoned Roger Malvin; both travelers are compulsively, subconsciously driven toward these destinations. The first passage to follow is a portion of Hawthorne's description of Reuben's journey; the second is an account of Ike's:

> His steps were imperceptibly led almost in a circle; nor did he observe that he was on the verge of a tract of land heavily timbered, but not with pine-trees. . . . He was musing on the strange influence

> that had led him away from his premeditated course, and so far into the depths of the wilderness. . . . he believed that a supernatural voice had called him onward, . . . He trusted that it was Heaven's intent to afford him an opportunity of expiating his sin. . . .[16]
>
> He was not going toward the Gum Tree. Actually he was getting farther from it. . . . Now he did not even use the compass but merely the sun and that only subconsciously, yet he could have taken a scaled map and plotted at any time to within a hundred feet of where he actually was. (pp. 326-327)

Both voyagers revisit graveyards; both come to complete unfinished tasks which have been demanding completion. Reuben does "bury" Roger Malvin by sacrificing his son. His burden of guilt is lifted, and he is free. Isaac McCaslin returns, I think, to complete his initiation, to search for that binding link with mortals who were and mortals who will be with which a successful initiation provides the candidate. Having observed rather than participated in the death of Old Ben, Ike feels isolated, unsure, alone. He has felt the grandeur of the bear and the holiness of Sam Fathers but fleetingly, only, and passively. He wants to recapture these feelings and make them his. He wants to find himself.

Alone at the burial ground, Ike feels the presence of Sam and the bear. He feels the unity of natural process:

> . . . he had not stopped, he had only paused, quitting the knoll which was no abode of the dead because there was no death, not Lion and not Sam: not held fast in earth but free in earth and not in earth but of earth, myriad yet undiffused of every myriad part, leaf and twig and particle, air and sun and rain and dew and night, acorn oak and leaf and acorn again, dark and dawn and dark and dawn again in their immutable progression and, being myriad one: and Old Ben too. (pp. 328-329)

At this point, we are inclined to say that Ike is successful in completing his initiation: he knows the meaning of mortality and feels immortal in his knowledge. Like Reuben Bourne, he has arrived at his destination, his home; he is no longer an outsider. However, what occurs at this moment makes us question the depth of Ike's experience. His meditations are crowned with a vision, but it is not the vision which he was deprived of and which he has come to regain--the vision of the bear. This time he sees a huge snake, "the old one, the ancient and accursed about the earth, fatal and solitary and he could smell it now: the thin sick smell of rotting cucumbers and something else which had no name, evocative of all knowledge and an old weariness and of pariah-hood and death. . . . even now he could not quite believe that all that shift and flow of shadow behind that walking head could have been one snake . . ." (pp. 229-230). Ike responds to the snake just as Sam Fathers had responded to the great deer in "The Old People": ". . . he put the other foot down at last and didn't know it, standing with one hand raised as Sam had stood that afternoon six years ago when Sam had led him into the wilderness and showed him and he ceased to be a child, speaking the old tongue which Sam had spoken that day without premeditation either: 'Chief,' he said: 'Grandfather'" (p. 330). Just at this moment Ike hears the sound of Boon Hogganbeck hammering at the breech of his dismembered gun with the barrel, in the frantic effort to possess the tree

full of squirrels. "The Bear" concludes with this vision of Boon.

The vision Ike is given on this return to his "birthplace" is quite different from the one he had of the bear. To describe the snake, Faulkner chooses words like "accursed," "fatal and solitary," "sick." These words are not found in his description of Ike's last vision of the bear. Here we find words expressive of grandeur and unity. The visions of the snake and of Boon are visions of a fallen, diminished world. That Ike acknowledges the snake's greatness as Sam did that of the great buck is indicative of his fallen state. He too is fatal and solitary; he too is a pariah. His search for identity has ended, like Young Goodman Brown's, with a negative, doomed comprehension of the universe and of himself. Ironically, he finds the demented, passion-mad Boon at the same location, the Gum Tree, where he first envisioned the bear.

Ike has not understood why his initiation failed--his allegorizing has served not to enlighten him but to remove him completely from the truth, to blind him. As an old man in "Delta Autumn," Isaac McCaslin is a figure of pathos. He still undertakes the annual journey to the Delta but now in a car, "driving faster and faster each year because the roads were better and they had farther and farther to drive, the territory in which game still existed drawing yearly inward as his life was drawing inward. . . ."[17] Now Uncle Ike is accompanied by ruthless, patronizing young kinsmen who shoot

does, and he spends his time drinking watered whiskey and lying in the cabin. The sin of miscegenation which he has relinquished his land to atone for confronts him again. His young kinsman Roth Edmonds has an illegitimate child with a granddaughter of Tennie's Jim and then abandons her.

Ike's reaction to Edmonds' mistress is similar to his reaction to his wife and the married Sophonsiba. Appalled at the discovery of her identity, he gives her money and advises, "'Go back North. Marry: a man in your own race. That's the only salvation for you--for a while yet maybe a long while yet'" (p. 363).

The young woman's response to him embodies his failure: "'Old man,' she said, 'have you forgotten so much that you don't remember anything you ever knew or felt or even heard about love?'" (p. 363). Ike cannot love; he cannot reach out to humanity except in contempt. His final meditation is an indictment of his fellow mortals:

> This land which man has deswamped and denuded and derivered in two generations so that white men can own plantations and commute every night to Memphis and black men own plantations and ride in jim crow cars to Chicago to live in Millionaires' mansions on Lakeshore Drive, where white men rent farms and live like niggers and niggers crop on shares and live like animals, . . . Chinese and African and Aryan and Jew, all breed and spawn together until no man has time to say which one is which nor cares. (p. 364)

Ike has become a crabbed, muttering, grotesque old man reminiscent of some of E. A. Robinson's charred New Englanders.

Structurally, "The Bear" fulfills the demands of allegorical form. Parts I through III constitute Ike's

incomplete journey to maturity and completeness. Part IV is primarily a battle, Ike's struggle to come to grips with the nature of his failure. Part V completes the circle discontinued in Part III. Ike returns to the locale of his rebirth to confront a scene of desperation and despair. The bear is as potent a cosmic symbol as Hawthorne's scarlet letter or Melville's whale, and it is as laden with ambiguities. It is at the same time an emblem of immortal power, a god itself, a powerful animal adversary. Its ambiguous nature is reflected in the attitudes of those who track it. They revere it and wish to preserve it at the same time that they are driven to kill it.

Faulkner's view of the world as fallen, of man as diminished, generally ineffectual, and often pathetic is not exclusively American, of course. It is a vision he shares with the great moderns like Eliot, Joyce, Mann, Proust, Kafka and others. Many of the characteristics of modern writers, as noted by Irving Howe in his _The Idea of the Modern in Literature and the Arts_, indicate exactly why allegory is a technique the modernist would favor. Many of these traits have already been accepted as applicable to the writers we have discussed. Howe maintains that "At certain points in the development of a culture, usually points of dismay and restlessness, writers find themselves affronting their audience, and not from decision or whim but from some deep moral and psychological necessity."[18] I think writers like Brown,

Hawthorne, Melville, James, as well as Faulkner, can be said to affront their audience, to challenge its preoccupations and prejudices whether about the validity of sensory perceptions, as Brown does, or the validity of God, as Melville does. Hawthorne's works reflect his doubt that self-knowledge can lead to salvation and James disrupts the very human dream that freedom from the contingencies of daily life can lead to fulfillment. Faulkner, of course, challenges the belief in the validity and efficacy of myth. The white Southerner, because of greed and rapacity, his desecration of the land and his unhumanity toward the Indian and the Negro, has robbed myth of its revitalizing magic. His beliefs in the glory of a vanished Southern past are empty; too much blood stains the glory; too much selfishness dims the dream of valor.

All of these artists share with the modernists the conception that man is "mired . . . [whether] in the mass, in the machine, in the city, in his loss of faith, in the hopelessness of a life without anterior intention or terminal value." They view "the human lot . . . [as] inescapably problematic."[19] In their presentation of myopic man groping about in a world which is at best indifferent to his dreams, American writers have, seemingly, always revealed a vision which has much in common with that of the modernists. That allegorical techniques are readily apparent in much modern fiction, in the works of Kafka, Mann and Joyce, for example, is not surprising. Their literary endeavors are metaphysical;

they are probing the nature of a problematical world; they regard "settled assumptions as a mask of death and literature as an agent of metaphysical revolt."[20]

Another modernist document which has much in common with Faulkner's Go Down, Moses both structurally and thematically is Joyce's Dubliners. Joyce is concerned with depicting the moral paralysis of Ireland as Faulkner is with depicting that of the South. Joyce's stories, like Faulkner's, are stories of failure--failure to communicate, failure to love, failure to grow, failure to live. Allegorical techniques are prevalent in all of the stories, and Joyce is preoccupied, as is Faulkner, with the failure of myth to order and revitalize modern life. A comparison of Joyce's use of the devices of allegory to Faulkner's can, I think, prove interesting in that we can see, again, how uniquely American Faulkner's use of certain allegorical techniques is. The story "Araby" seems to me most intimately analogous to "The Bear" as does "The Dead" to "Delta Autumn." So, generally, the comparison will be centered on these four works.

Joyce presents Dublin, the "centre of paralysis," to the reader under four aspects: "Childhood, adolescence, maturity and public life."[21] "Araby" concludes the group of stories dealing with childhood, the other two being "The Sisters" and "An Encounter." It is one of the most powerful stories in Dubliners; myth and ritual are depicted as powerless and unable to revitalize human hope in a devastatingly

empty, paralyzed society. "Araby" takes the form of a grail quest. The knight, or rather squire, is a young boy verging on adolescence, the grail a token of what he conceives of as his sublime love for a divine being, his friend Mangan's older sister. Like Mann in _Death in Venice_, Joyce in "Araby" maintains a bifocal vision throughout. The mythical and literal levels coexist in harmony, reinforcing each other. Here, for instance, is the description of the garden behind the house in which the boy lives: "The wild garden behind the house contained a central apple-tree and a few straggling bushes under one of which I found the late tenant's rusty bicycle pump."[22] The suggestion here is of another, unfallen garden. But this world, the world of "Araby," is long fallen and unredeemable, dead even to the potency of the serpent's evils, as the rusty, discarded bibycle pump suggests. This imagery is talismanic; it is the boy who sees the scraggly garden behind the house; it is he who shapes it into the image of the garden he would like to see: if an earthly paradise were yet possible, the grail could yet be found.

Joyce's description of Mangan's sister, the object of the boy's love, is another example of his ability to maintain a bifocal vision. Again we have a vision of what the boy wants to see coexisting with what actually is. Addressing the boy for the first time, the girl is standing on the porch of her house:

> While she spoke she turned a silver bracelet round and round her wrist. . . . She held one of the

> spokes [of the porch railing], bowing her head towards me. The light from the lamp opposite our door caught the white curve of her neck, lit up her hair that rested there and, falling, lit up the hand upon the railing. It fell over one side of her dress and caught the white border of a petticoat just visible as she stood at ease. (p. 32)

As Ben L. Collins notes, the boy is looking at the woman through the eyes of "the knight errant, the courtly lover, coursing through throngs of imaginary foes in places 'hostile to romance'--where patriotic songs are sung--as well as Mariolater where the 'shrill litanies of shopboys' are heard and whence 'her name sprang to my lips at moments in strange prayers and praises which I myself did not understand.'"[23] At the same time, Joyce tells us that Mangan's sister is very much a part of a sterile, materialistic, cruel society. She holds a spike and twirls a silver bracelet. Earlier, her hair is described as forming a "soft rope." These allusions to the betrayal of Christ tell us that the boy's vision will betray him.

The Bazaar, "Araby," where the boy experiences his epiphany, presents another ambiguous image. To him the place is holy, the repository of the grail: "Nearly all the stalls were closed and the greater part of the hall was in darkness. I recognized a silence like that which pervades a church after a service" (P. 34). However, he finds, instead of his grail, "porcelain vases and flowered teasets." Instead of priests and priestesses, attendants upon the divine, he is confronted with flippant, indifferent people discussing

the trivia of their lives in banal tones. At this point, Joyce allows the boy's vision of his world and his vision of it, hitherto held in suspension, to diverge; the boy's vision becomes totally inappropriate and he is forced to confront the author's--he confronts a vision unmediated by his illusion. Turning away from the stall of the unencouraging, banal young woman, the boy describes his departure from the bazaar: ". . . I turned away slowly and walked down the middle of the bazaar. I allowed the two pennies to fall against the sixpence in my pocket. I heard a voice call from one end of the gallery that the light was out. The upper part of the hall was now completely dark.

"Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger" (p. 35). The boy's epiphany, his realization of his folly, constitutes the tale's mythic moment, the moment toward which it has been steadily building from the opening paragraph, in which we are told that we are dealing with a society which will not submit itself to the transforming power of illusion: "North Richmond Street, being blind, was a quiet street except at the hour when the Christian Brothers' School set the boys free. An uninhabited house of two storeys stood at the blind end, . . . The other houses of the street . . . gazed at one another with brown imperturbable faces." Joyce's bifocal vision in "Araby" prepares us for the boy's ultimate disillusionment; the dark,

literal version of things is always before us along with the boy's mythical, dream version. He merely isn't aware of it until he is forced to become so, at the bazaar.

Although Ike McCaslin is also a squire in quest of experience which would confer knighthood upon him, and although he also believes in the essential holiness of his mission, Faulkner's point of view in "The Bear" differs from Joyce's in "Araby." Faulkner does not maintain a bifocal vision. The ironic effect that arises in "Araby" from the convergence of two disparate visions is not to be found in "The Bear," which is really not ironic but straightforward. The bear and the wilderness he embodies are never spoken of except with grandeur; Sam Fathers' priestly activities are never disparaged. Faulkner's vision seems to coincide with Ike McCaslin's; it does not seem broader than his protagonist's. This is why it appears difficult at times to evaluate Ike's career and why there are so many varied critical opinions of Ike's actions, whereas most commentators agree on the nature of Joyce's acolyte's disillusionment. Faulkner, I think it can be safely said, is as intent as Ike on capturing and knowing the past. Therefore he participates fully in Ike's desire for initiation. Joyce knows that the barren and mediocre present will not bear the weight of the boy's desire for glory, and he sees that boy as initiated when he can share this tragic knowledge.

Ike, as we've observed, is never fully initiated. He is granted no epiphany which can be likened to the boy's.

His final vision of the snake reveals his uninitiated condition. He makes no distinction between the serpent and the bear, nor can he understand the degeneration of Boon as he observes him possessing the tree full of squirrels. He merely sees Boon; it is not revealed to us that he understands what has happened to him. Ike has become locked within his illusory view of himself and of his universe. Although both Joyce and Faulkner reveal the inability of myth and ritual to revitalize a wasteland, they stress different aspects of this failure. The Joycean hero abandons myth when it proves ineffectual and confronts the painful, naked vision of reality shared by all his fellow mortals. Faulkner's hero is locked up within his solipsistic mythical vision and abandons the world.

Ike McCaslin never reenters the world, as we discover in "Delta Autumn." He remains locked within his ivory tower of prophecy and denial, even though he is given another chance at sympathy and understanding by his young kinsman's mulatto mistress. Our last vision of Ike is of a pathetic, sour old man alone with his fanaticism and his derisiveness, yet uninitiated. Our last view of the mature hero of _Dubliners_ is quite different. Gabriel Conroy of "The Dead" has an experience similar to Ike's in "Delta Autumn." He too is given an opportunity to reach out to another with empathy, a reaction to which he has long been unaccustomed. Moving among people he accepts as beneath him intellectually, he

feels uneasy and alone, performing the rituals of polite behavior during his aunts' annual dance, aware of their meaninglessness and not hoping to make them meaningful. Seemingly, he is no longer the illusion-ridden boy of "Araby." Gabriel's eyes are "irritated" by the heavily waxed floors of his aunts' house; he finds that the piano piece his aunts' niece plays has "no melody for him"; and he is annoyed by the "indelicate clattering" of the dancers. Ultimately, pondering the toast he has been asked to make, he reflects that his aunts are "only two ignorant old women." His toast itself, condescending and obsequious, reveals a person as isolated by the sense of his own special worth as Isaac McCaslin. Repeatedly, he takes refuge in the contemplation of a snow-covered landscape, which includes Wellington Monument, where the air is "pure" and to which he, alone with his superiority, could retreat as Isaac does to his vision of the unspoiled wilderness and its great bear. The snow-covered Wellington Monument is a vision emblematic of Gabriel's desire to re-enter a heroic past just as Ike's vision of the wilderness is of his desire that his initiation be finally completed.

Isaac's secure superiority is jolted somewhat by the self-possessed young woman who comes looking for her lover; he becomes aware that his messiahship has not produced the desired effects; the very sin he has hoped to expiate stands before him, robust and vital. However, the shock is light; Isaac retreats quickly back to his ivory tower. Gabriel, on

the other hand, receives a much more violent jolt. Preparing to leave his aunts' home, he suddenly becomes aware of his wife as she stands near the top of a staircase listening to a guest singing. At first, he is aware only of the "grace and mystery" of her attitude, "as if she were a symbol of something." He sees her with the eyes of an artist: "Distant Music he would call the picture if he were a painter."[24] As they proceed on their journey homeward, he becomes aware of her as a woman: "the blood went bounding along his veins; and the thoughts went rioting through his brain, proud, joyful, tender, valorous" (p. 213). He feels a powerful desire for her, and shared moments of past tenderness crowd his mind: "He longed to recall to her those moments, to make her forget the years of their dull existence together and remember only their moments of ecstasy" (p. 214). The past is becoming personal and immediate to him as it does to Isaac. However, Gabriel does not withdraw of his own accord as does Isaac. At the hotel where they are spending the night, he calls to his wife with the intention of making her share his awakening. She turns to him with tears in her eyes and reveals a preoccupation with the past deeper than Gabriel's had been; her memory stimulated by the song she had been listening to on the staircase, she is overcome by the vision of a boy, Michael Furey, who had once loved her and who had died because of this love.

Gabriel is stunned: "While he had been full of memories of their secret life together, full of tenderness and joy and

desire, she had been comparing him in her mind with another. A shameful consciousness of his own person assailed him. He saw himself as a ludicrous figure, acting as a penny boy for his aunts, a nervous well-meaning sentimentalist, orating to vulgarians and idealising his own clownish lusts" (p. 220). Illusions of which he thought he was free are dispelled with a burst of anger and self-derision not unlike that manifested by the boy as he stood among the darkened stalls at "Araby." However, Gabriel Conroy is not abandoned raving at an indifferent sky. Lying down beside his wife, Gabriel imagines he sees the form of her young man "standing under a dripping tree. Other forms were near. His soul had approached that region where dwell the vast hosts of the dead. . . . His own identity was fading out into a grey impalpable world: the solid world itself which these dead had one time reared and lived in was dissolving and dwindling" (p. 223). At this moment, Gabriel experiences his epiphany:

> A few light taps upon the pane made him turn to the window. It had begun to snow again. He watched sleepily the flakes, silver and dark, falling obliquely against the lamplight. The time had come for him to set out on his journey westward. Yes, the newspapers were right: snow was general all over Ireland. It was falling on every part of the dark central plain, on the treeless hills, falling softly into the Bog of Allen and, farther westward, softly falling into the dark mutinous Shannon waves. It was falling, too, upon every part of the lonely churchyard, where Michael Furey lay buried. It lay thickly drifted on the crooked crosses and headstones, on the spears of the little gate, on the barren thorns. His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead. (pp. 223-224)

The snowy vision becomes a new emblem--an emblem of a selfless empathy which unites Gabriel with all doomed human souls of the past and the present. He has escaped the solipsistic entrapment of the Wellington Monument to join humanity--if in defeat than in a defeat characterized by dignity and peace. He has accomplished what Isaac McCaslin has not--he has been initiated into a timeless communion with humanity. So free of hatred and jealousy is Gabriel at this point that he is able to regard Michael Furey, the boy whose image deprived him of his wife's love, as a type of Christ. Gabriel's vision of Michael's grave is adorned with crosses, spears and thorns, the symbols of Christ's sacrifice.[25]

This vision which closes "The Dead" contains the most outstanding cosmic symbol of Dubliners, the graveyard. Gabriel Conroy is permitted to offer it to the reader; his insight is the crowning epiphany of Dubliners. If there is any resolution in Go Down, Moses, it occurs in the last, the title story, in which Ike McCaslin does not appear. In "Go, Down, Moses," Samuel Worsham Beauchamp, a descendant of Eunice and Carothers McCaslin, a second cousin of the unnamed mistress of Roth Edmonds, is executed for manslaughter. To appease his grandmother, Mollie Beauchamp, who believes that her grandson was betrayed by Roth Edmonds as was his mistress, the inhabitants of the town, prompted by lawyer Gavin Stevens, donate money to pay for Samuel's funeral and turn up en masse, black and white, to witness the funeral. "Go Down, Moses"

has been called prophetic. It stands apart from the other stories because there is an absence of the hunt around which they are organized. And the white community performs what Stanley Tick terms "an act of expiation." They atone for "sins" against Eunice and her descendants.[26] I cannot help but remember the several monetary acts of expiation performed by Carothers McCaslin, Buck and Buddy McCaslin, Isaac McCaslin. This final act does not appear different in quality from those others, and Gavin Stevens, that loquacious, moralizing, rationalizing, observing presence in so many of Faulkner's tales, is merely a more modern version of Ike McCaslin. If he is a "new" Southerner, then the new South is suspiciously similar to the old. Considered apart from the other stories in Go Down, Moses, this final story might seem prophetic and expiatory. However, when the other events of the McCaslin family history are remembered, the prophetic note in "Go Down, Moses" becomes heavily tinged with irony. The story presents us yet another appearance of the McCaslin delusion--the belief in the efficacy of blood money. We have come full circle but we have not come to rest. The journey, Faulkner indicates, is endless.

From his ability to confront his failure, the Joycean hero manages to achieve a definite if limited success. He is, if we accept Irving Howe's definitions a true modern hero. He begins with the expectation of changing the world, of altering it to fit his needs and desires. However, he soon

discovers that the world is beyond changing: "The modern hero moves from the heroic deed to the heroism of consciousness, a heroism often available only in defeat. He comes as a conqueror and stays as a pilgrim. And in consciousness he seeks those moral ends which the hero is traditionally said to have found through the deed. . . . The modern hero discovers that he cannot be a hero. Yet only through his readiness to face the consequences of this discovery can he salvage a portion of the heroic."[27] Gabriel Conroy is granted his vision, his epiphany, because of his readiness to accept himself as unheroic, as ordinary, as mortal. Isaac McCaslin regards himself as heroic, as special even when his failure is blatantly obvious, when he is old, ineffectual and patronized.

No American hero that I can think of is modern in the sense of being able to accept failure and diminishment. He demands against all odds that the grail exist and that his quest have validity and heroic stature. He may die rather than confront defeat like Jay Gatsby or Willy Loman, or he may keep on searching for that locale that will maintain his dream like Huck Finn, or he may, like the heroes of Hemingway, "create an hermetic world of his own in which an unhappy few live by a self-willed code that makes possible--they tell themselves--struggle, renewal, and honorable defeat."[28]

Notes to Chapter VII

[1]Myth and Reality (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 5.

[2]Ibid., pp. 18, 19.

[3]Mircea Eliade, "The Pattern of Initiation," in Utley, Bloom, Kinney, eds., Bear, Man, and God: Seven Approaches to William Faulkner's The Bear (New York: Random House, 1964), pp. 190-193.

[4]Myth and Reality, p. 106.

[5]Ibid., pp. 106, 107.

[6]Ibid., p. 103.

[7]Eliade, "The Pattern of Initiation," p. 190.

[8]Bear, Man, and God, pp. 193-196.

[9]In Go Down, Moses (New York: Random House, 1942), pp. 194-195. Subsequent references to this work will be followed in the text by page numbers.

[10]Eliade, Myth and Reality, p. 105.

[11]In Bear, Man, and God, pp. 280-289.

[12]In Nathaniel Hawthorne: Selected Tales and Sketches (New York: Rinehart, 1950), p. 125.

[13]"The Hero in the New World," in Bear, Man, and God, p. 323.

[14]"The Purpose of Faulkner's Ike," in Bear, Man, and God, pp. 332, 335.

[15]"The Heart's Driving Complexity: An Unromantic Reading of Faulkner's 'The Bear,'" in Bear, Man, and God, p. 302.

[16]"Roger Malvin's Burial," in Nathaniel Hawthorne: Selected Tales and Sketches, pp. 50-51.

[17]In Go Down, Moses. Subsequent references to this work will be followed in the text by page numbers.

[18]New York: Horizon Press, 1967.

[19]Ibid., pp. 15, 18.

[20]Ibid., p. 19.

[21]Quoted in Peter K. Garrett's Introduction to the essays in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Dubliners* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1968), p. 3.

[22]In *Dubliners* (New York: Viking, 1968), p. 29. Subsequent references to this work will be followed in the text by page numbers.

[23]"'Araby' and the 'Extended Simile,'" in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Dubliners*, p. 96.

[24]In *Dubliners*, p. 210. Subsequent references to this work will be followed in the text by page numbers.

[25]This observation is made by Phillip Damon in his article, "Symphasis of Antipaties in *The Dead*," *Modern Language Notes*, 74 (Feb., 1959), p. 112.

[26]Stanley Tick discusses "Go Down, Moses" as prophetic in his paper, "The Unity of *Go Down, Moses*," *Twentieth Century Literature*, 8 (July, 1962), 67-73.

[27]*The Idea of the Modern*, p. 36.

[28]Ibid.

SUMMARY

That American writers have always favored allegory is, I hope, no longer in question. The American experience was and is a metaphysical experience, or rather, experiment. America could not ever merely be; she had always to mean. Thus, our writers have been preoccupied with balancing this ideal significance of our country against her actual being. Their struggle to achieve some kind of equilibrium between the ideal and the actual induced American authors to consider allegory a very congenial medium. We find in our works of fiction most of those techniques characteristic of the allegorical method: battle and/or quest form, the demonic agent or hero, talismanic imagery, magical causation, fragmentation and doubling. However, I wish in this summary to stress not the American reliance on the techniques of allegory but the peculiarly American adaptations of them.

We have, for example, the quest form, but the American quest often ends in no discovery for the pilgrim, at best, or the discovery of negativity--which so overwhelms the quester that his ability to function positively in his world is permanently hampered; the heroes of Brown, Melville, James, and Faulkner can serve to illustrate this point. The American environment, our writers appear to tell us, offers the questioning mind no ameliorative answers and some very

disturbing ones. Our environment offers us not a spiritual home but homelessness, a permanent apartness and selflessness, a permanent void. If our writers rely on the battle device in their fiction, they depict battles which often end in neither victory nor defeat. The battlers, often fragmented selves like Bartleby and his employer, Edgar Huntley and Clithero Edny, Benito Cereno and Amasa Delano, Ahab and Ishmael, Hester and Dimmesdale, come very near to one another but their creators rarely allow a productive union. Usually, they drift apart, like Bartleby and his employer, to either shrivel away or continue leading half lives. Our doubles rarely join to make a whole. We seem, in our literature, a nation of fragmented selves flitting along the surface of our environment for a brief time and then disappearing, leaving behind nothing more than some vain hopes that were never realized.

The history of our writers' struggle to create an American mythic embodiment is again sadly evocative of their inability to flesh the ideal with the concrete. Some authors, like James, produce characters who do not accurately embody their environment, like Milly Theale. Others, like Willa Cather, produce characters who are successful mythically but not realistically, like Alexandra Bergson. They lose potency because their creators build mythic stature at the expense of credibility on the human level. These characters express their authors' hopes, their dreams, but they obscure reality. Our writers seem unable to sustain the bifocal

vision necessary for the creation of a Gustave von Aschenbach or a Joseph K., for instance, characters who truly, credibly, embody their environment. The power of our American dreams helped create memorable figures like Natty Bumppo and Antonia Shimerda. However, we must be willing to dream along with their authors, as most of us, fortunately, are, to accept the plausibility of their creations. Our naturalists created a seemingly superb representation of their world only to see him fall victim to the same contradictions and longings which destroyed their lesser mortals. Our most successful mythic embodiments are nonhuman--Moby Dick, London's dogs, the scarlet A, Cather's Prairie, Faulkner's bear--our authors created these cosmic symbols and then let them be. They seemingly did not feel compelled to diminish or alter them, but regarded them bifocally--as emblems and as objects or creatures.

The naturalists' treatment of their superman reveals another tendency of our authors--the desire to inflict pain on their characters, to create them and seemingly fault them for their creation. Melville's treatment of Pierre is an apt illustration of this American tendency to find fault and to inflict pain. Is this a reflection of our tendency to blame or excoriate ourselves for the slightest deviation from the dream of perfection? We seem for long periods to close our eyes to our deviation from perfectibility. When we do open them to see, we often want to put them out for

seeing! The era of Salem or the era of Watergate can serve to illustrate this kind of reaction.

William Faulkner studies another important aspect of our culture in Go Down, Moses; not even the power of myth can give us unity, identity, and purpose, he discovers. What have we done to become so accursed? Faulkner implies, I think, that we have denied ourselves the beneficial effects of myth because of our sins--greed, possessiveness, the desecration of the land, inhumanity toward the Negro and the Indian. We have banished Belief and so must live in a wasteland. That we as a people have few meaningful rites of passage has often been remarked. Coming of age is neglected in our culture. Marriage ceremonies, scenes of material indulgence, are becoming suspect, and funerals are being recognized as helping mourners to disguise rather than to confront the fact of death.[1] Consequently, our lives often pass meaninglessly and unhappily. American childhood can be seen as a period of spiritual neglect and, again, material indulgence, adolescence a frantic lashing out for certainty which just cannot be found, adulthood a defensive hardening into non-feeling and non-caring, and old age the frightening span of time during which we sit, unwanted and patronized, waiting in fear for death.

The tendency of our writers to be questioning and critical of our culture has recently been discussed by Robert Penn Warren in his article, "Bearers of Bad Tidings:

Writers and the American Dream."[2] Penn Warren notes, as I have, that our writers have generally "explored the crisis of the American spirit grappling with its destiny" (p. 17). And they have all confronted "the tragic ambiguity of the fact that the spirit of the nation we had promised to create has often been the victim of our astonishing objective success, and that, in our success, we have put at pawn the very essence of the nation we had promised to create--that essence being the concept of the free man, the responsible self" (p. 17). Our writers have told us that "we are driving toward the destruction of the very assumption on which our nation is presumably founded" (p. 18). Believing in the necessity of a free, responsible self, we have ironically created an environment which denies freedom and denies selfhood. In one way or another, each of our writers, as we have observed, has been a bearer of bad tidings. And yet, surprisingly, they have not been able to deny hope.

During our discussion of Faulkner, we observed that Ike could never give up his role of redeemer, even when it became clear that he would redeem no one--when the sin he was atoning for confronted him anew in his old age. He would not give up; he would not view his society as unredeemable as Gabriel Conroy did his. This clinging to the belief in the grail and in the validity of the quest was identified as prevalent among our knights, be they Ishmael, Huck Finn, Hemingway's heroes, or Isaac McCaslin.

Penn Warren discusses this undying American hope also. The American writer, he writes, quarreled not with his world as "with what had been made of his world. He was not alienated from the premise of his world, from what might be thought of as the spiritual reality of his world, and even when alienated from its actuality, he managed to cling to some hope that it might be redeemed" (p. 18). If it is our writers' probing, metaphysical orientation that made allegory useful and congenial to them, it is their hope of reconciling the ideal with the real that resulted in the American adaptations of the allegorical mode. The anger of frustration caused the constant inflicting of pain on the luckless heroes; the unwillingness to accept defeat resulted in the constant auctorial interventions--in the hope of avoiding disaster. It is the inability to accept an amoral universe that toppled the superman; it is Cather's inability to accept the death of the agrarian dream that forced her to search in distant lands for a congenial locale for this dream and that forced her to eliminate human weaknesses from the character of her mythic embodiments. It is Faulkner's horror of his discovery--of the failure of myth--that prevented him from allowing Ike to share his knowledge; there is hope, not only in bliss, but in ignorance. It is this hope--that what they see is not there--that prevents American authors from maintaining a controlled bifocal vision; they tend always to sacrifice mortal failings to mythic grandeur, reality to the dream.

Allegory is widespread in our literature; every one of our important writers has relied on the mode: Hemingway, Twain, Crane, O'Neill, Fitzgerald, our black writers from Frederick Douglas to Wright, Baldwin and Ellison, and other contemporary writers like Malamud, Bellow, Cheever, to name just a few more. As long as our culture is marked by what Penn Warren terms a "quaint, sneaking hope of reconciliation," as long as our authors remain critical of our American reality and committed to American ideals, they will continue to adapt the allegorical mode to their needs.

Notes to Summary

[1]Peter and Jane Davison discuss our lack of meaningful rituals in their article, "Coming of age in America," _New York Times Magazine_, March 9, 1975, pp. 65-70.

[2]New York Review of Books, 22, No. 4 (March 20, 1975), 12-19. Subsequent references to this work will be followed in the text by page numbers.

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