THE AMERICAN EVE: GENDER, TRAGEDY, AND
THE AMERICAN DREAM

DISSERATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
University of North Texas in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

Kim Martin Long, B.A., M.A.

Denton, Texas

May, 1993
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America has adopted as its own the Eden myth, which has provided the mythology of the American dream. This New Garden of America, consequently, has been a masculine garden because of its dependence on the myth of the Fall. Implied in the American dream is the idea of a garden without Eve, or at least without Eve's sin, traditionally associated with sexuality. Our canonical literature has reflected these attitudes of devaluing feminine power or making it a negative force: *The Scarlet Letter*, *Moby-Dick*, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *The Great Gatsby*, and *The Sound and the Fury*.

To recreate the Garden myth, Americans have had to reimagine Eve as the idealized virgin, earth mother and life-giver, or as Adam's loyal helpmeet, the silent figurehead. But Eve resists her new roles: Hester Prynne embellishes her scarlet letter and does not leave Boston; the feminine forces in *Moby-Dick* defeat the monomanaical masculinity of Ahab; Miss Watson, the Widow Douglas, and Aunt Sally's threat of civilization chase Huck off to the territory despite the beckoning of the feminine river; Daisy retreats unscathed into her "white palace" after Gatsby's
death; and Caddy tours Europe on the arm of a Nazi officer long after Quentin's suicide, Benjy's betrayal, and Jason's condemnation.

Each of these male writers--Hawthorne, Melville, Twain, Fitzgerald, and Faulkner--deals with the American dream differently; however, in each case the dream fails because Eve will not go away, refusing to be the Other, the scapegoat, or the muse to man's dreams. These works all deal in some way with the notion of the masculine American dream of perfection in the Garden at the expense of a fully realized feminine presence. This failure of the American dream accounts for the decidedly tragic tone of these culturally significant American novels.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The American Eve: Her Role as Other

"It is debilitating to be any woman in a society where women are warned that if they do not behave like angels they must be monsters." Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar¹

"Western culture from the start has swerved from femaleness." Camille Paglia²

The phrase "the American Dream" conjures up different images for everyone, with concepts like prosperity and material wealth, individualism and self-worth, the frontier ideal of the new Eden, democracy in the purest forms, and, of course, freedom. These characteristics of what make up the American dream or the American myth,³ all possessing positive connotations, arise from the notion that the American experience involves something new, something ideal, what Scott Donaldson and Ann Massa simply call the "possibility of a good and great life for everyone" (81). Terence Martin claims that "the argument of Common Sense led Thomas Paine to define the nation-to-be as a blank sheet on
which the future could be written" (10). R. W. B. Lewis, in his *The American Adam*, claims that "the American myth saw life and history as just beginning," and he describes this American dream as "a divinely granted second chance for the human race, after the first chance had been so disastrously fumbled in the darkening Old World" (5). Henry Nash Smith, in another seminal work dealing with the theme of the new world garden, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth*, discusses the frontier as a symbol of the "Garden of the World," a symbol which embodied a poetic idea that "defined the promise of American life" (124). He claims that the whole idea of the American possibility for recreating society began during the time of the Revolution "by insisting that the society of the new nation was a concrete embodiment of what had been in Europe but a utopian dream" (129). Donaldson and Massa also see the American experience as the "sense of a fresh start of gigantic potential and proportions, the chance to create the world over again, an Eden without a Fall, without Eve," a "chance to retell the human story sinlessly" (9-12). Andrew Walkover, in his book *The Dialectics of Eden* asserts that the "pristine Lockean State, as benign mixture of agrarian and technological sensibilities, found root in an understanding that America was a repository of innocence; both a culmination of and a new beginning in the history of man"(3). What these views of America have in common is
their reliance on the myth of the Garden and the Fall as a way to imagine the American experience and to experience another paradise, which is itself "a universal human longing to re-enter the garden and to seek out whatever lies at the center" (Davis 383). American writers like Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Philip Freneau, St. John de Crevecoeur, Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper, and Walt Whitman drew on the themes of the new garden and the second chance for some of their greatest works.

Indeed, America has adopted the Eden myth as its own, and its incorporation into our national mythological identity has defined our sense of what the American Dream means--reinforced by Lewis, Smith, and even Frederick Jackson Turner--until it has become the definitive myth of the American experience. The New Garden of America, however, has been a masculine garden because of its dependence on the myth of the Fall. Implied in the American dream is the idea of a garden without Eve, or at least without Eve's sin, which has been associated with sexuality and death. Books such as Lewis's, Smith's, and even Leslie Fiedler's *Love and Death in the American Novel* have shown that the goal of the New World was to eliminate the debilitating feminine presence from the American experience --to recreate the Garden of Eden without Eve. The American landscape offered "a virgin gift to the immigrants," and it was to them "Eden with pastoral, religious and anti-feminist
connotations" (Donaldson and Massa 10). The male drive for power and productivity would carve out an unspoiled land where the male would have a second chance to create his own perfection. To realize this perfection, the American Adam would have to assert his own independence, seek his own freedom, while at the same time limiting and marginalizing the harmful and threatening female; he would have to control Eve.

This was a description of the newly imagined Eve in the nineteenth century:

See, she sits, she walks, she speaks, she looks—unutterable things! Inspiration springs up in her very paths—it follows her foot-steps. A Halo of glory encircles her, and illumines her whole orbit. With her, man not only feels safe but is actually renovated. For he approaches her with an awe, a reverence, and an affection which before he knew not he possessed. (qtd. in Douglas 46)

This image of the ideal woman presented in Ladies Magazine in 1830 was created not only by the nineteenth-century ministers, who, according to Ann Douglas, were mostly responsible for dictating how a lady should act, but also by centuries of living in the shadow of the myth of the Garden of Eden, "Western Patriarchy's central cultural myth" (Gilbert and Gubar 201). In this story, Eve became subservient to Adam because of her sin and therefore became
the scapegoat for humanity's problems. According to Kate Millett in *Sexual Politics*, the "mythic version of the female as the cause of all human suffering, knowledge, and sin is still the foundation of sexual attitudes" (52). As Camille Paglia puts it, for men "[m]enstrual blood is the stain, the birthmark of original sin" (11). Western man has refused to accept responsibility for his own Fall, has refused to acknowledge and adjust to an imperfect world. The problems of the world must be somebody's fault, and there must be a better way.

Milton, of course, had tremendous influence in this view of woman as the bringer of evil into the Garden with *Paradise Lost*. As Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar claim,

The story that Milton, "the first of the masculinists," most notably tells to women is of course the story of woman's secondness, her otherness, and how that otherness leads inexorably to her demonic anger, her sin, her fall, and her exclusion from that garden of the gods. (191)

Milton's Eve is the one in the story associated most closely with Satan as a rebel against God's great hierarchy of power set forth so carefully in *Paradise Lost*. As Gilbert and Gubar note,

Her bond with the fiend is strengthened not only by the striking similarities that link her to him, but also by the ways in which she resembles Sin,
his female avatar and, indeed--with the exception of Urania, who is a kind of angel in the poet's head--the only other female who graces (or, rather, disgraces) *Paradise Lost*. (197)

Milton portrays Eve not only as the passive and submissive wife to Adam, but also as a Promethean figure concerned with equality with God and who falls because of pride, while Adam "falls out of uxorious 'fondness,' out of a self-sacrificing love for Eve" (Gilbert and Gubar 196). As Gilbert and Gubar point out, "Eve is the only character in *Paradise Lost* for whom a rebellion against the hierarchical status quo is as necessary as it is for Satan" (202). In their interpretation of Milton's influential work, God is equated with Adam; Eve, therefore, is equated with Satan and his daughter Sin. No wonder that in the cultural mythology Eve is to blame for the problems of the race.5

To recreate the Garden myth, therefore, the American experience has had to reimagine Eve. She is not in American literature, as Milton presented her and as Kim Churnin describes her, the rebel in the Garden, "the first woman to challenge the subjugation of woman in the patriarchal garden" (xvi), the woman who craved more knowledge and more power. Rather she is the idealized virgin, earth mother and life-giver, or Adam's loyal helpmeet, the silent figurehead—all roles that are "safe," free from the taint of sexuality, sin, and death. Our traditionally most acclaimed
literature has reflected these attitudes of devaluing feminine power, even making it a negative force: no woman sails aboard the Pequod or witnesses Ahab's tragic quest; Huck and Jim's idyllic journey is overshadowed by Miss Watson, who represents repression for both of them; and Daisy, in The Great Gatsby, causes Gatsby's dream to crumble with her feminine mortality. In fact, in The Great Gatsby one of the best images of this ideal Eve appears, on the last page in the image of the "green breast of the New World." This breast is green--virginal--and a breast--nurturing. The New World offered this kind of hope to the Dutch sailors: a Garden with a "safe" Eve, either virgin or mother.

Probably more than the image of the nurturing mother as Eve, the image of the unspoiled virgin has provided a powerful enticement for males in American literature, the idealized representation of femininity in all of its positive characteristics, as the magazine description set forth above. For America, in fact, the idea of the virgin has become an obsession: Henry Nash Smith's Virgin Land, R. W. B. Lewis's The American Adam, and Annette Kolodny's The Lay of the Land all deal with this idea that America has traditionally seen itself as the virgin country--a place where society has a chance to perfect itself in a new garden. Archetypally, virginity represents "the possibility of the existence of a virgin space within which one can
still be first, within which one can have authority through originality" (Irwin 111). According to John Irwin, "there is no possibility of that originality from which authority springs if there is no virgin space within which one can be first" (112). For America and the American hero, the lure and seduction of the virgin, literally and as represented by the virgin landscape, has permeated American literature, as has the image of the lone American hero who seeks individuality and freedom in a place free from the curse of human sexuality.

According to Leslie Fiedler in his often-quoted book *Love and Death in the American Novel*,

the typical male protagonist of our fiction has been a man on the run, harried into the forest and out to sea, down to the river or into combat--anywhere to avoid "civilization," which is to say, the confrontation of a man and a woman which leads to the fall and sex, marriage, and responsibility. (134)

He claims that our great novels "turn from society to nature or nightmare out of a desperate need to avoid the facts of wooing, marriage, and child-bearing" (133). Fiedler indicts the great male novelists in our literature who though experts on indignity and assault, on loneliness and terror, tend to avoid treating the passionate encounter of a man and woman, which one
expects at the center of a novel. Indeed, they rather shy away from permitting in their fictions the presence of any full-fledged mature women, giving us instead monsters of virtue or bitchery, symbols of the rejection or fear of sexuality.

(132)

Fiedler claims that American writers turned to the novel because it was the only form that would accommodate "the dark vision of the American—his obsession with violence and his embarrassment before love" (130).

While Leslie Fiedler may have possessed a bias and even an exaggeration concerning America's most famous novelists—Melville, Twain, Cooper—he is not the only critic to express sentiments that our literature is essentially male. Judith Fetterley asserts in the introduction to her book The Resistant Reader that American literature "insists on universality at the same time that it defines that universality in specifically male terms" (xii). She claims that "America is female; to be American is male; and the quintessential American experience is betrayal by woman" (xiii). Fetterley, drawing on the same literature that Fiedler discusses, claims that "to be male—to be universal, to be American—is to be not female" (xiii). Rather than implying, however, that the woman is to blame for the weakness of American males, Fetterley proposes that the problem in American literature has been not emasculation of
men by women, but immasculation of women by men (xx). The American experience, then, is by her definition, a male experience, and male writers have tried to impose an exclusively male view of the American experience on the entire culture. To read the most widely read American novels "correctly," according to Fetterley, one has had to read them as males. Fetterley discusses the romantic roles of women in American literature, noting "the multiple uses of the mythology of romantic love in the maintenance of male power" (xxiv). She claims that to "elevate woman as sexual object is to elevate woman at her most dependent, derivative, and powerless" (92). Fetterley reaches some of the same conclusions that Leslie Fiedler does about the lack of strong women characters in our literature; however, she blames the patriarchal system and male fears of true sexuality rather than the castrating female portrayed by Fiedler, or as Nina Baym claims, the woman who "has entered literary history as the enemy" ("Melodramas" 69).

Similarly, Joyce Warren in The American Narcissus: Individualism and Women in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction claims that it is the man who has been encouraged to achieve, who has sought the expansion and development of the self. The role of the woman was not to be the achiever but to be available to be used by the achiever for his advancement. (6)⁶
Warren asserts that, like "Indians and blacks in nineteenth-century America, women as a group [have been] excluded from participation in the American Dream" (17). She notes that in "the American Dream, woman figures not as a dreamer but as an object in the dream" (6). Also Nina Baym, referring to traditional works of American literature (Cooper's The Pioneers, Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby for example), claims that the problem is . . . not to be located in the protagonist or his gender per se; the problem is with the other participants in his story--the entrammeling society and the promising landscape. For both of these are depicted in unmistakably feminine terms and this gives a sexual character to the protagonist's story which does, indeed, limit its applicability to women. And this sexual definition has melodramatic, misogynist implications. ("Melodramas" 72)

Baym continues that male protagonists in American fiction have consistently cast woman "in the melodramatic role of temptress, antagonist, obstacle--a character whose mission in life seems to be to ensnare him and deflect him from life's important purposes of self-discovery and self-assertion" ("Melodramas" 73).

What all these critics of American literature and culture have in common is that they agree that American
literature has been, at least in the firmly canonized works, dominated by males and lacking strong, fully developed females. The essential American experience—to forge a new path in the wilderness seeking to find a new Eden—demanded that woman be categorized as Other and be placed outside the experience. Terry Eagleton observes that the woman is both "inside" and "outside" male society, both romantically idealized member of it and a victimized outcast. She is sometimes what stands between man and chaos, and sometimes the embodiment of chaos itself. (190)

Woman has been blamed with limiting the masculine American hero. As Nina Baym observes, "although not all women are engaged in socializing the young, the young do not encounter women who are not. So from the point of view of the young man, the only kind of women who exist are entrappers and domesticators" ("Melodramas" 73). As Nancy Chodorow explains, a male must "learn his gender identity as being not-female, or not-mother" because "learning what it is to be masculine comes to mean learning to be not-feminine, or not-womanly" (109). The American myth and the American dream, then, have been inherently male because of this desire to escape the corruption associated with the feminine. Ann Douglas suggests that it "was as if America's finest authors refused to redeem the virgin, the child, and the home from the isolation imposed precisely by their
status as cult objects; they abandoned them to unreality" (6). Limited by male expectation of domination, woman and all she represents has been marginalized in American literature, kept outside the boundaries of the truly American experience. She has been allowed to be the muse, perhaps, but never allowed to sing her own song.

This dream of perfection in the garden the second time around, by its very implications, however, was bound to fail. Many American writers prepared us for the darker side of human nature, determined to fall in any situation. Melville said of Hawthorne:

this great power of blackness in him derives its force from its appeals to that Calvinistic sense of Innate Depravity and Original Sin, from whose visitations... no deeply thinking mind is always and wholly free. ("Hawthorne" 540)

The handwriting was on the wall that utopian perfection to be found in the world by limiting the feminine presence was only a vain dream and that man was inherently imperfect. Blaming Eve would not make the problems go away. Woman has interfered historically and literarily with man's desire to limit her or to use her as the Other; she has resisted man's categories and has thwarted his attempts to marginalize her. This failure of man's attempts to restrict the feminine because of her refusal to remain within the imposed boundaries has led to the failure, then, of the American
dream, illustrated by some of the most prominent works of
American literature: The Scarlet Letter, Moby-Dick,
Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, The Great Gatsby, and the
Sound and the Fury. 7

In these "great American novels," however, Eve often
functions more as an archetypal figure than as a real flesh-
and-blood character. Sometimes, however, she becomes a
vague feminine presence, that pervading force of the
feminine that spoils that dreams of the males who attempt to
dominate her. In some works, however, such as The Scarlet
Letter, The Sound and the Fury and The Great Gatsby, a real
female character appears that we can designate as an Eve
figure. Hester Prynne refuses to fit the mold the Puritan
Boston imagines for her; she will not go away and therefore
upsets the New Garden in New England. Caddy Compson
provides parallels to the "real" Eve in her fall from
innocence and her desire to acquire knowledge from the tree.
The three brothers define their experiences of "sin" from
their responses to Caddy-Eve. Daisy Buchanan, as Gatsby's
idealized version of Eve, represents purity in her whiteness
and unapproachability. She is a good example of the
tendency in many works of American literature to attempt to
recreate Eve in some idealized vision--to make her sinless.
In this work, then, Daisy embodies the dream for Gatsby of
union of the spiritual with the physical; however, as in the
real Eve story, when Gatsby joins himself with her
(symbolized by the first kiss), his mind can no longer "romp
like the mind of God." Gatsby sacrifices his own dream for
a vision of what could be. In this work, also, the land
itself (like in *Huck Finn*) is described in feminine terms
(the "green breast of the new world") to emphasize the
comprehensive American dream of a new garden.

In *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, the Eve figures may
be real characters, like Miss Watson, who ruin Huck's and
Jim's attempts to escape and thwart their attempts for
perfect freedom. But in this work, especially, the most
pervasive feminine presence seems to be the river. The
nurturing, symbolic nature of the feminine river suggests
the prelapsarian condition that Huck and Jim seem to find on
the raft. As Leslie Fiedler claims, Huck and Jim in this
way represent the "lovers in the garden." *Huck Finn* shows
both how a prelapsarian Eve (symbolized in the river) tempts
Huck with an ideal existence and how a fallen world (the
shore) makes staying in the garden an impossibility. Also
in the novel, the American dream of freedom and
individuality keeps Huck seeking escape and eventually is
what sends him off to the West. The American dream is
defeated in *Huck Finn* with the appearance of Tom Sawyer, who
represents the repression and conformity that Huck wants to
avoid, ironically the role of the female. Giving in to
Tom's plan for Jim, Huck forfeits his advances toward
individuality and therefore admits the defeat of his American dream.

_Moby-Dick_ is full of feminine presences: Ishmael, Queequeg, ironically Moby Dick himself, the other ships, and the sea. In this novel, Ahab, who symbolizes or represents the angry and embittered male who has been limited or ruined by the castrating female (ironically in the form of a sperm whale) tries to thrust his masculine male dream onto the feminine, and she crushes him. The androgynous Ishmael survives because he is able to balance the forces of male and female: he accepts his feminine side and finds community in Queequeg rather than lashing out as the lone male warrior as Ahab does. Ahab's masculine dream fails as he defiantly jabs his harpoon into the whale. Moby Dick, as an ironically feminine force in the novel, brings him and his exclusive masculinity down.

The key to reading these works within the context of the new garden is not to see Eve as a real person, but more as a balancing force. Lewis uses real male characters to represent Adam in his book _The American Adam_; however, in these works of American literature that I want to explore, there is not always a physical Eve to deal with: the attempt to deny Eve's presence in establishing the new garden often precludes her appearance in the flesh. What I intend to show, therefore, in this study is that the greatest works of American literature (what have been for decades in the
classroom considered the greatest works of American literature) have all dealt archetypally in some way with the notion of the masculine American dream of perfection in the Garden at the expense of a fully realized feminine presence, and the failure of that dream is what gives these works their tragic overtones.

This continual quest for the perfect and unstained garden has been the central movement of Western civilization, and it ended with the last best frontier in America, manifesting itself in the American dream. This dream would provide the best for everyone, a place where the self could establish its individualism, where dreams of progress and accomplishment could be fulfilled, and where spiritual purity and sinlessness could flourish in an unspoiled landscape. According to David Mogen, symbolically, much of our literature examines that most peculiar of American institutions--the conviction that as a nation we embody, or should embody, a unique and fateful mission, that as Americans we are manifestly destined not just to achieve prosperity and power but to represent the best hope of mankind. ("Frontier Archetype," 22)

The aspect of the American dream or the American myth, more broadly, that I am most concerned with in this study involves spirituality, not materiality. While part of the American dream reflected a yearning for material prosperity,
underlying the entire fantasy of the New World garden is a desire for something more lasting and more personal, a quest even for individual immortality. The American dream as it is metaphorized in the American landscape is something that everyone understands, but understands differently, depending upon what he wants. Nina Baym observes that the American landscape "has the attributes simultaneously of a virginal bride and a non-threatening mother; its female qualities are articulated with respect to a male angle of vision" ("Melodramas" 75). For some, America is the nurturing mother who encourages and supports the son's dreams; for others, it is the loving partner, who submits to the will of the male; and for others, it is woman as enemy: an object to fear and conquer in the quest for the perfect garden. All these are the American dream, and all these are in the most popular and famous of our literature--The Scarlet Letter, in which the American Eve attempts to exert her own individuality while trapped in a patriarchal garden; Moby-Dick, which demonstrates the male avenger in quest of a femaleless garden; Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, a book in which a male character seeks the solace and comfort of a feminine landscape but who desires to escape from the confinement of a feminine socialization; The Great Gatsby, a work in which the male dreamer seeks to transcend the limits of mortality by recapturing the past; and The Sound and the Fury, in which the male protagonist is obsessed with the
sinless Eve and tries to reimagine her pure again. All these views of the American dream are equally valid and all share one common characteristic: woman as contrary to the accomplishment of the male American dream.

I have chosen these works for several reasons. They all deal in some way with the American dream. They all are written by males who have more in common than one would normally think. They are all works that are seminal in the American canon; no matter how much we continue to expand it, no one will seriously advocate throwing these out. And all these works are, for different reasons and admittedly by different definitions, tragic. I contend that their inherent tragic vision lies in their relationship to the American dream and its failure for the male characters in each one. While I could have examined other works in a study such as this—works such as Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*, and even an American epic like *Leaves of Grass*—I have chosen these works because of their lasting impression in the American literary mythology and because of the comparisons among the works. Clyde Griffith's desire to find his dream of success ends in miserable failure in Dreiser's naturalistic setting; Willy Loman's quest to find his American dream of American business and become "well-liked" results in his failure and suicide. Other works, such as Hart Crane's *The Bridge*, an epic of the American dream, or Eliot's *The Waste Land*,
surely a chronicle of the failure of the American dream, might be good candidates for a study such as this. What prompted me to deal with these seminal works of American literature came from the classroom; a student once asked, "What makes American literature so tragic?" Because these works—The Scarlet Letter, Moby-Dick, The Great Gatsby, Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, and The Sound and the Fury—make their way into American classrooms more than many other works, they and their characters—Hester Prynne, Ahab and Ishmael, Huck, Gatsby, and Quentin and Caddy Compson—have captured the American imagination. They have achieved mythic status as symbols of the American quest for individuality, freedom, achievement, tragedy, and other facets of the American dream. Because they fail some way in their endeavors, because they reach tragic status, I have chosen these works to represent the tendency in American literature to be obsessed with the American dream and its marginalization of the female.

My primary concern in this study (as opposed to applying a single literary theory) is for an accurate and undistorted reading of these works in light of my thesis that the American dream has failed because Eve will not disappear or fit into her American Adam's mold; whatever critics help me to elucidate the works and my argument I have used. I do not see a problem with being eclectic in examining these works; I do not pretend to be offering a
study in theory. I have drawn from what I believe is a wide spectrum of critical schools; the reader is certainly free to judge whether I have achieved my purpose. Overall, I suppose my approach has been a feminist/archetypal/psychoanalytic one with occasional vestiges of New Critical/formalist attention to the text. A post-structuralist look at these works would be anti-productive since I am assuming at the outset that they are traditional and valid as standard texts, important for their contribution to the canon of American literature.

I also do not propose to offer in this study the definitive way to read these works. Each of these novels, ever alive and changing, is so rich that it belongs to all students of American literature. I am reading these works, then, through a sub-text, what Terry Eagleton calls "a text which runs within [the work of literature], visible at certain 'symptomatic' points of ambiguity, evasion or overemphasis, and which we as readers are able to 'write' even if the novel does not" (178). What I propose to do is to provide one way to view these works, one sub-text--the failure of the American dream because of the marginalization of women--a way that accounts for their tragic nature. I believe that these novels deserve their solid place in the canon; however, I do recognize the need occasionally to reevaluate them in light of current thought. I believe they can take the heat.
"Every act of the free intelligence, including the poetic intelligence, is an attempt to return to Eden, a world in the human form of a garden, where we may wander as we please but cannot lose our way." Northrop Frye

Before exploring the implications of the garden myth and the treatment of Eve as it relates to the failure of the American dream in these works of American literature, however, we need to establish some definitions and concepts central to this study. We need to look at the idea of paradise in the Western, and especially American, consciousness, at the concept of the landscape as feminine, at the American dream as an inherently male ideal, and at the idea of tragedy as it relates to these works. This background examination of these sometimes confusing and ambiguous ideas will hopefully provide consistency and focus for the paper. Most people have their own ideas about what the American dream is, how the garden of Eden myth figures into their own experience, and what tragedy is. I want to clarify my usage of these sometimes slippery notions. Two works that deal with the idea of paradise and the landscape as feminine deserve to be discussed in detail in this context since they provide some comprehensive definitions of
these concepts and since they have helped me formulate my own ideas about how these ideas relate to these works of American literature. They are Charles Sanford's *In Search of Paradise: Europe and the American Moral Imagination* and Annette Kolodny's *The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters*.

In his work, which is basically an anatomy of the concept of paradise through a discussion of myth, history, and religion, Charles Sanford makes bold claims: the "Edenic myth . . . , has been the most powerful and comprehensive organizing force in American culture" (vi). It has provided the common mythological base for our definition of selfhood. He observes that the great poetry of Western literature rehearses symbolically the universal human impulse to return to origins. The image of paradise comprehends both the beginning and the end of striving. (4)

Sanford delineates two kinds of paradise in this book: worldly and spiritual (8-9). The American dream encompasses both—a physical garden (the agrarian myth, material prosperity) and a spiritual renewal (a sinless existence, fresh inspiration, and the quest for immortality). Both of these ideas of paradise become extremely important in understanding the American dream.

Sanford sees paradise existing on several planes: a physical plane, which suggests material ease and comfort; a
psychic plane, which involves regression to a womblike existence; a sexual plane, which desires frank and free sex; a moral plane, which seeks to recapture lost innocence; a religious plane, which involves a desire to transcend mere humanity and mortality; and a political plane, which Sanford sees as a desire for individual freedom from guilt (20). Looking at Sanford's categories, it is easy to see how these works of American literature that I am examining here qualify as paradisiacal works: Jay Gatsby seeks his paradise certainly on the physical plane with his ostentatious wealth but also paradise on a religious plane as he seeks to deny his mortality, Huck Finn desires a psychic return to the maternal river, Quentin Compson seeks some kind of sexual paradise in his demented way and also a moral paradise which would help him find the lost innocence of Caddy, Ahab seeks to transcend humanity by being his own god, and Dimmesdale wants to free himself from guilt in his political paradise. Sanford lists one more plane of paradise, what he calls the plane of "individual rhythms of temperament" in which the seeker rebels against any kind of restriction or established routine while searching out new experience. Huck Finn desires this kind of paradise as he says, "All I wanted was to go somewheres; all I wanted was a change, I warn't particular" (HF 4). Ahab, as well, seeks to escape restrictions when he breaks the compass and quadrant, relying solely on his powers to lead and navigate.
As Sanford asserts, the myth of Eden has not only shown itself capable of assimilating all the broad areas of human experience to which historians have commonly attributed causation, but it also expresses and organizes some of mankind's most imperative emotional needs. (34)

In other words, the myth of Eden has given humanity (and I say specifically male humanity) a place to go to escape from itself, to act out its needs and desires. Sanford proposes that the American Edenic dream, psychologically considered, expresses universal human impulses of self-assertion against restrictive environmental pressures in order to satisfy real or fancied needs which have been thwarted. (265)

America mythically has provided that place of a second chance. Bronson Alcott said that in America "'if anywhere, is the second Eden to be planted in which the divine seed is to bruise the head of Evil and restore Man to his rightful communion with God in the Paradise of Good.'" But, according to Sanford,

All the materials for a tragic view of life . . . have long been present in America: the classic sin of pride, the inevitable disjunction of ideal and reality, the guilt and shame of failure, the voids
of disillusionment. . . . But out of these materials Americans have been able to summon only anguish and nostalgia for a golden age, bewailing their expulsion from a paradise which existed only in their minds. (253-54)

He concludes that as "a result of the covenant promise, Americans collectively have taken for granted a rich inheritance of inward and outward life and have grown accustomed to making extravagant demands upon a radiant future" (176). In other words, Americans have expected too much, have put too much emphasis and faith in the American dream, whatever it means for them; thus believing that all their fantasies could come true has caused disillusionment and pessimism. The dream of perfection in the New World garden was doomed to failure. And although Sanford does not limit the American dream to males, it seems apparent that he has done what many male authors have done: assumed that the American experience is a male experience. Therefore it was the male dream of a second chance at perfection that was bound to fail. Woman has not been the American dreamer but rather part of the dream since males have equated her imagined purity with the "virgin land."

In The Lay of the Land, Annette Kolodny has done the most complete study on this concept of America-as-virgin and of the failure of this new garden of exploitation. The important metaphor Kolodny explores in this work is idea of
the landscape as female, and her work is important to this study because it explores the use of the feminine as metaphor—something that occurs in many of the works I will discuss later. She claims that when the explorers and writers needed a representation for the land, they "hailed the essential femininity of the terrain" and "took its metaphors as literal truths" (6). Exploring the idea of the landscape as woman in her effort to describe the American pastoral literature, she notes that

Colonization brought with it an inevitable paradox: the success of settlement depended on the ability to master the land, transforming the virgin territories into something else—a farm, a village, a road, a canal, a railway, a mine, a factory, a city, and finally, an urban nation.

(7)

Citing explorational and colonial writing in America in her chapter titled "Surveying the Virgin Land," Kolodny provides excerpts from accounts by John Smith, William Byrd, Governor Dudley, and John Woolman that refer to the colonies as Eden, Paradise, Canaan, and they describe this new world in sexual, female images (10-25). Her central thesis in the book is that the European explorers and settlers of the "new" continent referred to the landscape metaphorically as woman and this relationship of the male to the female became confusing in the mixed female archetypes of mother and
lover. Speaking of the writing of James Audobon, Kolodny claims that

If activity inevitably confers the cult of violation—and, even more threatening, the guilt of an incestuous violation—the desire to experience the natural world passively is similarly self-defeating. For all her promise, her bounty, her seductive beauty, nature must finally be made to provide for man; he dare not wait for all to be given. (87)

Because these explorers saw the landscape in feminine terms, they naturally felt the urges to rape and take her. The new garden of Eden was a place that was feminine, but would be mastered and perfected because the male would have the opportunity to recreate his paradise without the sin of the first garden—without the sin of Eve:

Eden, Paradise, the Golden Age, and the idyllic garden, in short, all the backdrops for European literary pastoral, were subsumed in the image of an America promising material ease without labor or hardship, as opposed to the grinding poverty of previous European existence. . . regression from the cares of adult life and a return to the primal warmth of womb or breast in a feminine landscape. (Kolodny, Lay 6)
Kolodny talks of John Hector St. John de Crevecoeur and his *Letters from an American Farmer*:

The landscape experience as feminine allowed, indeed invited, the newly arrived immigrant to feel himself reborn, transformed into something that had never been possibly in the bosom of a cruel "step-dame." (54)

Kolodny points out that de Crevecoeur's later letters show the disillusioned farmer who "'wants no neighbor, he rather hates them, because he dreads the competition' (LAF, III, 51-52)." She observes that what Farmer James has explicated here is the other side of his controlling image: the total female matrix of attraction and satisfaction offers not only protection and nurture, but also arouses sexuality and the desire for exclusive possession. (57-58)

According to Kolodny, de Crevecoeur charted what was to become the central, mythic movement of American history and literature; when the first paradise is stained with blood, one brother asserting his power over another, the American response is to move ever westward, constantly pursuing realms where '. . . God and nature reign; / Their works unsullied by the hands of men.'" (66)."
Through de Crevecoeur's letters, as Kolodny expertly analyzes, one can trace the death of the American dream of a pastoral garden: "all twelve letters dramatically duplicate the process of pastoral itself: the dream about to be fulfilled, the momentary grasping of its reality, and its inevitable disruption and destruction" (60).

Kolodny quotes Thomas Morton, who said in 1632 that "new England had suffered rude neglect on the part of colonists who had left her, 'Like a faire virgin, longing to be sped, / And meete her lover in a Nuptiall bed'" (12). Similarly John Hammond, in a treatise entitled "Leah and Rachel; or, the Two Fruitfull Sisters Virginia and Maryland," describes a sexual relationship in his feelings for these two places; he describes religious and political strife of the 1640s and 1650s: "'Twice hath she been deflowered by her own Inhabitants, stript, shorne and made deformed; but such a naturall fertility and comelinesse doth she retain that she cannot but be loved, but be pittied" (14). Kolodny asserts that the real dangers of the impulse to cast the landscape in feminine terms, to create an American pastoral that personifies the land as woman, is the potential "confusion of filial and erotic responses terminating in the horrors of incest" (14). Viewing the landscape as feminine inherently caused confusion and guilt: one kind of woman invites sexual advances; the other kind certainly does not. Kolodny claims that only
Kolodny discusses the poetry of Philip Freneau and Jefferson's *Notes on Virginia* as explorations of this pastoral paradox of being at the same time attracted to the land but guilty of deflowering it. Philip Freneau's poetry reinforces the association of the new land with both female erotic and maternal images, as seen in the lines of this Frenau poem:

"And the demons of murder her honours defaced, / With the blood of the worthy her mantle was stained, / And hardly a trace of her beauty remained. / Her genius, a female, reclined in the shade, / And seek of oppression, so mournfully played."  

(Kolodny, *Lav* 30)

The poetry of Philip Frenau, according to Kolodny, "gave lie to the myth that mankind had been reborn in the New World
paradise; not so, declared Freneau, he had simply brought
his European corruptions with him, and slowly but surely,
was laying waste the garden" (51). Likewise, she notes that
Jefferson's *Notes on Virginia* continually hints
at, but steadfastly refuses to make explicit, the
essence of the pastoral paradox: man might,
indeed, win mastery over the landscape, but only
at the cost of emotional and psychological
separation from it. (28)

And as Kolodny concludes, "it was not long before the
pastoral impulse found itself dangerously confused with the
myth of progress" (67). The confusion and the problem with
a feminine representation of the landscape occurs as the
land is seen as both Mother and as Virgin—to "finding an
effective response to the power of that invitation, with all
its awkward psychological implications, the nineteenth
century dedicated not only its artistic energies, but, in
the South, its political energies as well" (68). In an
insightful reading of the stories of Washington Irving,
Kolodny interprets Rip Van Winkle and Sleepy Hollow as the
two ways of viewing the feminine pastoral: Rip as "puer
aeternas" who fears and desires escape from the entrapping
power of the female and Brom Bones as the one who protects
Sleepy Hollow from the Connecticut yankee who "threatens to
intrude conscious thought and the feeble beginnings of art
and learning into the drowsing unconsciousness of maternal
containment" (68). She claims that with "just these two tales, Irving succeeded in preserving, intact, the maternal image of American pastoral at a time when the aggressive, sexually assertive aspect of the impulse was coming more and more to dominate"; he "consigned the maternally oriented pastoral" to the "landscape of the imagination," making the pastoral "the subject for a literature of nostalgia and regret" (69-70).

According to Kolodny, in the 19th century

the American literary imagination found itself forced to choose between a landscape that at once promised total gratifications in return for passive and even filial response and yet, also, apparently tempted, even invited, the more active responses of impregnation, alteration, and possession. (71)

She discusses the nineteenth century's fascination with incestuous implications of violating the virgin land in their drive for progress, noting, however, that if activity inevitably confers the guilt of violation--and, even more threatening, the guilt of an incestuous violation--the desire to experience the natural world passively is similarly self-defeating. For all her promise, her bounty, her seductive beauty, nature must
finally by made to provide for man; he dare not
wait for all to be given. (87)

Because of the guilt of those who were raping the land, "the
validity of masculine and civilizing activity, as incarnate
in the Christian deity, must be reasserted in order that
guilt not turn into insanity" (86). In other words,
patriarchy must justify its domination of the landscape in
order to absolve its guilt caused by that domination.

James Fenimore Cooper, according to Kolodny, was able
to create the first successful pastoral character who could
enjoy the recesses of the maternal landscape without
violating it—the lone hunter, not the white community was
able to carry this out (90). She claims that The Prairie,
then, chronicles the end of a dream:

Though Natty still insists upon the possibility of
experiencing a primal pastoral harmony between man
and the natural world, we realize that he himself
has abandoned the garden and chosen, instead, to
spend his last days on "the naked prairies,"
(101)

knowing that it is impossible to rape the land and then live
in guiltless peace with it.

Realizing, in the first novel of the series, that
the human social community, in its various forms
could not maintain a pastoral harmony, Cooper
turned, instead, to the single individual--Natty
Bumppo. But the precarious balance of independent, masculine activity and passive acceptance of nature's bounty proved impossible, and, in The Prairie, Cooper has Natty at first acknowledging his own complicity in the violation of nature's recesses and then disburdening himself of his guilt, in death. The fantasy of total gratification led, inevitably, to the specter of incest, and that, Cooper realized, could not be permitted. (114)

Natty Bumppo, then, is the embodiment of the American dream as it relates to the landscape; he was able to love her without suffering the guilt and punishment of spoiling the virgin or raping his mother, but only for a while. Cooper, as the romantic, can keep his hero above the dirty business of masculine domination. Kolodny discusses William Gilmore Simms briefly, saying that in his fiction "human beings move and act within a surrounding landscape described and experienced as feminine, the maternal aspect dominant" (120). She concludes her discussion of the nineteenth century with an assertion that the early "real" American writers were forced to remake history:

With the pastoral dream of a wholly gratifying return no longer able to make any claims upon the present, writers like Irving, Cooper, and Simms turned to an imaginatively restructured past, and
converted the pastoral possibility into the exclusive prerogative of a single male figure, living out a highly eroticalized and intimate relationship with a landscape at once suggestively sexual, but overwhelming maternal. (134)\(^\text{15}\)

Kolodny, then, in her excellent study establishes, using American historical and literary works, that the garden of Eden in the New World of America was a male garden, not only because of the desire to rid the garden of Eve's sin but also because the garden itself was viewed as feminine.

Why was the battle for a new garden misogynistic? Rosemary Ruether asserts that the struggle against the feminine is historical: denying the feminine, which is associated with the mortal body "'is rooted in an effort to deny one's own mortality, to identify essential (male) humanity with a transcendent divine sphere beyond the matrix of coming-to-be-and-passing-away'" (Donovan 178). The males who came to found this New World desired to undo all the evils of the old world, and since the myth of Eden dominates the relationships between men and women in Western civilization, they associated Eve's sin—a sin which issued in sex and death to the human experience—with all women.

Kate Millett has much to say about this:

Seduced by the phallic snake, Eve [was] convicted for Adam's participation in sex. . . . Eden was a fantasy world without either effort or activity,
which the entrance of the female, and her sexuality, has destroyed. (53)

For the masculine American dreamer, denying Eve was a way of denying sex and death in himself. Ann Donovan quotes Azizah Al-Hibri who relates that prehistoric men envied the woman's ability to bleed without dying and reproduce herself; he felt that she had a key to immortality that he lacked. Al-Hibri hypothesizes that males then turned to production rather than reproduction (Donovan 179). This idea is key to the desire to create a new garden: since men could not reproduce and bring forth life like the females, and since women's products of reproduction (other human beings) were inherently sinful, men's endeavors would be to produce something of their own hands that was perfect. Men would carve out a new existence with "the self-assertive, phallic, forward thrust" of progress (Sanford 174).

The new garden of Eden, therefore, was born out of insecurity and a feeling of insufficiency. The male thrust of progress was an effort to assert independence and individuality. As Nina Baym maintains, in "pursuit of the uniquely American, [critics] have arrived a place where Americanness has vanished into the depths of what is alleged to be the universal male psyche" ("Melodramas" 79). The male dream of founding and creating, of progress and revenge, overshadowed any female considerations of community and harmony. Judith Fetterley asserts that when
only one reality is encouraged, legitimized, and transmitted and when that limited vision endlessly insists on its comprehensiveness, then we have the conditions necessary for that confusion of consciousness in which impalpability flourishes. (xi)

In other words, throughout American literature, the male American dream has been taken for the American dream; the female voice has historically and literarily been silenced or devalued in favor of the more "universal" voice of the male in quest for his paradise. As R. W. B. Lewis talks of the American Adam, for instance, his sexist language and closed canon clearly signal the exclusion of woman in the new garden of America.

But this garden was bound to fail for the very reasons that it was sought; according to Charles Sanford, American society has attached considerable moral odium to the failure to rise in life. This odium, together with the frustrating of grandiose expectations induced in every area of experience by the national mythology, as in the cult of romantic love, has undoubtedly been a major source of unhappiness. (174)

With expectations so high—a sinless and immortal garden, complete individuality, a patriarchy that could bring about submission of women, and progress for good of all—the
American Adam set himself up for failure. The American dream failed because it expected too much and because Eve would not go away or submit. Man could not ignore the power and the necessity of the female voice. The Scarlet Letter shows an Eve who will not submit to the Puritan rules and deny her femininity; she boldly beautifies her very sin, represented by the letter on her bosom and by Pearl. Ahab tries so passionately to destroy the force that has unmanned him—what I contend is a female force—and is annihilated by his own masculine pride which has tried to obliterate the feminine in his revenge. Huck Finn tries desperately to shun the feminine influences of Miss Watson and the widow, but ironically finds solace in the feminine river, the source of all life. Jay Gatsby seeks immortality and transcendence from his mortal existence by trying to recapture a past has escaped, symbolized in the person of Daisy Buchanan; but his virgin has disappeared, and he cannot repeat the past that he knows will deify him. And Quentin Compson chooses to kill himself rather than admit the feminine force symbolized in his sister Caddy will not "fit" within the narrow confines of his imagination which dictate purity and virginity. Each of these male characters and seekers of the American dream reaches arguably tragic dimensions in the novels because they fail to transcend the limits of their mortality and humanity.
Certainly some discussion of the rather ambiguous term tragedy must accompany any study which attempts to attach the term to a literary work. Many would argue that American literature has produced no tragedies; therefore, I must define my term and establish its context within this study. If one goes back to Aristotle's famous definition, tragedy must represent the downfall of an important individual whose catastrophe elicits pity and terror from the audience. This tragedy must be "an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude," which "through pity and fear effect[s] the proper purgation of these emotions" (Kaplan 27). Oscar Mandel describes the tragic protagonist as one "who commands our earnest good will" undertakes an action which causes him or her to meet "with grave spiritual or physical suffering" (20). Mandel differentiates between tragic heroes and victims, however, and claims that

Faulkner's idiot, in The Sound and the Fury, or his Christmas, in Light in August, are stunted before they can begin life on their own. We pity them, we cry out against the world, but they do not obtain our good will. (105)

Mandel, however, does consider The Scarlet Letter and Moby-Dick tragedies unequivocally. Not surprisingly, he does not comment on Fitzgerald and certainly not Mark Twain.
Geoffrey Brereton, in *Principles of Tragedy*, offers the following definition:

A tragedy is a final and impressive disaster due to an unforeseen or unrealised failure involving people who command respect and sympathy. It often entails an ironical change of fortune and usually conveys a strong impression of waste. It always accompanied by misery and emotional distress.

(20)

Brereton claims that the word *tragedy* belongs to a select group of words that must be "'felt' more easily than they are defined," but that "the notion of tragedy involves a combination of the two elements, failure and unforeseeability" (5; 11). He discusses no American authors, and rather believes that the twentieth century has produced no tragedy (3); however, emphasizing his ideas of "unforeseeability" and failure, "accompanied by misery and emotional distress," one can see that these works in this study are not too far off the mark. Even *Huck Finn* in its constant introduction of violence into the pastoral world of the river has what Louise Cowan calls the "deathward pull" of tragedy (3) and certainly fits Brereton's definition in its focus on "an ironical change of fortune," and it conveys "a strong impression of waste" in Huck's continual flight from society and in Huck's and Jim's useless escape from his already dissolved slavery.
In his book *Modern Tragedy*, Marxist critic Raymond Williams admits that the modern world can produce tragedy, and he believes that the focus on modern tragedy is more personal, and that as an audience "our interest is directed not to the 'ethical vindication and necessity' but rather to 'the isolated individual and his conditions'" (34). Williams traces the development of the tragic "hero" into the tragic "victim," and he claims that the thrust of living energy in individual men, against limits which had once been composed into a confident order but which now, though still present and active, are questioned, fragmented, newly known and named, and are also confused by new experiences, new sources, or tragedy. (90)

Modern tragedy, what we have in this study of American writers, examines the individual fighting against an often unknown enemy. The worlds of Huck, Gatsby, and Quentin are certainly fragmented; the enemies against which they struggle are not easily named or identified.

Others, of course, have written on tragedy, and I make brief mention here. Karl Jaspers maintains that absolute "and radical tragedy means that there is no way out whatsoever," and he talks of the "bottomless pit" of tragedy. Miguel de Unamuno equates tragedy with consciousness and says that "since life is tragedy and the tragedy is perpetual struggle, without victory or the hope
of victory, life is contradiction" (14). John Barbour claims that tragedy "deals with the excellence of character human character, with virtue in its broadest sense, even when that virtue becomes corrupted" (1). And Richard B. Sewall claims that the "tragic vision impels the man of action to fight against his destiny, kick against the pricks, and state his case before God or his followers."

Sewall sees the tragic hero as the "questioner, naked, unaccommodated, alone, facing mysterious, demonic forces in his own nature and outside, and the irreducible facts of suffering and death" (5). One especially sees Hester Prynne standing before her community refusing to bow under their scrutiny or judgment, and Ahab, continuing on his mission of death in his desire to rebel against the forces he blames for his human limitations.

These are not the only thinkers, of course, to discuss tragedy; one could consult, for instance, Nietzsche, Hegel, Bergson, or Frye. The subject is a morass that I cannot fall into for my purposes here. To compile and simplify these definitions of tragedy, therefore, I apply a definition of tragedy to these works that involves a failure of some kind by a hero who takes action against his or her predicament. They all, to different degrees, elicit pity and fear from the audience and sympathy for their struggles. As I said earlier, this study of the failure of the American dream originated when a student once asked me, "Why are all
these works in American literature tragic?" I could not answer that question at first. I began to look at what they had in common, and I found that in each one the hero missed the mark somehow because he or she expected too much. Believing he can find freedom for himself and Jim, Huck takes to the river, not realizing or thinking about the fact that the river travels in a downward direction, farther and farther into slave country. Ahab stands on the deck of the Pequod with his fiery harpoon, believing that he can forge the weapon that will kill his nemesis. Gatsby really thinks he can repeat the past and realize his dream. And Quentin, in his deranged state, believes that his death in the waters will merge his sinfulness with "little sister death" and that he can be rid of his guilt and despair. All of these tragedies, I then realized, involve women or feminine forces in their idea to realize their American dream, another way of recreating the garden of Eden again in the new world.

Surely, this rather lengthy introductory chapter has presented and limited my thesis: the American dream—specifically the dream to recreate the garden of Eden in the new world by disregarding, limiting, or challenging the feminine presence, either literally in the form of woman or metaphorically in the feminine landscape or other forces in nature—has failed as it appears in the most canonically greatest novels of American literature. This male dream of perfection in the garden has failed because Eve (the term I
am applying to this feminine force) has refused to stay within her limits; she has prevented the male quester of the American dream from achieving his goal; she has limited his power, and as a result, made him a tragic figure in the eyes of his male narrators. Hester Prynne embellishes her scarlet letter and does not leave Boston; the feminine forces in *Moby-Dick* defeat the monomaniacal masculinity of Ahab; Miss Watson, the Widow Douglas, and Aunt Sally's threat of civilization chase Huck off to the territory despite the beckoning of the feminine river; Daisy retreats unscathed into her "white palace" after Gatsby's death; and Caddy tours Europe on the arm of a Nazi officer long after Quentin's suicide, Benjy's betrayal, and Jason's condemnation. These Eves of American literature refuse to be used by their male dreamers, whose dreams of being the new American Adam are, therefore, thwarted. The result of these "failures" is the tragic and often fatalistic tone of much of our greatest literature.
Notes

1 *The Madwoman in the Attic* 53.

2 *Sexual Personae* 8.

3 In this study I use the terms American dream and American myth interchangeably since I am not dealing here with what many think of the American dream as being: the acquisition of material wealth. Rather, as I explain later, I am dealing with that mythical apprehension of the American dream as it relates to the New World garden of Eden—a spiritual more than a material quest.

4 Gilbert and Gubar use the phrase "first of the masculinists" from Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* in which she says, "I scarcely feel that Milton lived or knew men and women; except for peevish personalities about marriage and the woman's duties. He was the first of the masculinists, but his disparagement rises from his own ill luck and seems even a spiteful last word in his domestic quarrels," (from *A Writer's Diary* [New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1954] pp. 5-6, quoted in Gilbert and Gubar on p. 190).

5 See chapter 6 of *The Madwoman in the Attic* for a complete and thorough discussion of Milton's influence in perpetuating the belief in Eve's culpability.
A good example of this in literature is the mother in Sherwood Anderson's "The Egg," a woman who has no dreams of her own but is available for her husband and son, a woman who seems to be both the force and the reason for their dreams' downfall.

In the chapter on The Sound and the Fury I also deal briefly with Absalom, Absalom! because of the importance of that novel in its development of Quentin Compson.

See his essay, "Come Back to the Raft Ag'in, Huck Honey," in the Fiedler Reader, pp. 3-12.

Many readers find it difficult to accept Moby Dick as a feminine presence, I realize; however, I am not the only one to see the white whale as a symbol, although I admit an ambiguous one, of the feminine presence associated with nature. Ishmael's "The Whiteness of the Whale" chapter should make it clear that attaching any definite meaning to the whale is dangerous; nevertheless, I interpret Moby Dick as Other. In this novel about the imbalanced masculinity of Ahab, the whale must be opposite, despite the violence caused by this feminine force. Camille Paglia has much to say about the cthonian feminine, for instance. See chapter III for a further discussion of the role of the whale in the novel.
These authors' maleness is an important factor in choosing them; thus, I have not chosen to examine, for instance Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, although it would be an excellent book in which to view the American dream from the feminine viewpoint, as would some works by Edith Wharton or Willa Cather, or even the poetry of Emily Dickinson. I have limited this study to five major male authors of novels that are equally major in the American canon.


Throughout this study, I will use the following abbreviations for the novels:

- **SL**: *The Scarlet Letter* (Centenary Edition)
- **MD**: *Moby-Dick* (Northwestern/Newberry)
- **HF**: *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (California Edition)
- **GG**: *The Great Gatsby* (Cambridge Edition)

Quoted by Alice Felt Tyler in Sanford 178.

Italics Kolodny's.

Kolodny followed *The Lay of the Land* with *The Land Before Her* in which she examines the same landscape from feminine writers this time. She desired to see if females who came to this new garden would see it the same way. Her
conclusion, briefly, is that women embraced the new world as a garden also, but not one to be conquered and tamed: "Avoiding for a time male assertions of a rediscovered Eden, women claimed the frontiers as a potential sanctuary for an idealized domesticity." She says that women "dreamed, more modestly, of locating a home and a familial human community within a cultivated garden" (Land xiii). But since my focus in this paper is the male American dream, that dream being the one that has come down to us through our most canonized literature, Kolodny's first book, The Lay of the Land, more completely demonstrates this tendency of males who "discovered" her to want to carve out a new garden for themselves, sometimes being forced to take the land when it did not yield readily. This new garden was not a place for Eve since this American Adam already had one: the land itself.

16 Italics are Baym's.


18 This is, of course, the account of what happens to Caddy in the appendix Faulkner appended to the novel much later in 1945.
CHAPTER II

THE SCARLET LETTER AND EVE'S STRUGGLE:

"IN THE DARK LABYRINTH"

"When a woman seriously asks herself what it means to be a woman she is pulling at a thread that can unravel an entire culture." Kim Chernin

If any female character can stand for Eve in American literature, then surely Hester Prynne can. Besides being in one of the first and greatest of American novels, she is one of the only women characters who has been allowed to stand on her own and even be considered to be the central protagonist. But as the American Eve, Hester cannot dominate the work, but must fit into the masculine American dream. Nina Baym claims that

in one work--The Scarlet Letter--a "fully developed woman of sexual age" who is the novel's protagonist has been admitted into the canon, but only by virtue of strenuous critical revisions of the text that remove Hester Prynne from the center of the novel and make her subordinate to Arthur Dimmesdale. ("Melodramas" 73)

David Leverenz claims, similarly, that Hawthorne is able to keep The Scarlet Letter a man's story by shadowing Hester's
story with the parallel stories of Dimmesdale and Chillingworth: "Considered as an American dream, Dimmesdale's success is made possible by his flight from woman and child" (274). Leverenz discusses the end of the novel and the death of the two men this way: "the cuckold and the lover rise together to an all-male paradise... the classic American fantasy, first described by Leslie Fiedler, of two men in flight from a strong woman" (275). As Fiedler claims,

Our great novelists, though experts on indignity and assault, on loneliness and terror, tend to avoid treating the passionate encounter of a man and woman, which we expect at the center of a novel. Indeed, they rather shy away from permitting in their fictions the presence of any full-fledged mature women, giving us instead monsters of virtue or bitchery, symbols of the rejection or fear of sexuality. (Love and Death 132)

But minus the "strenuous critical revisions of the text" claimed by Baym, Hester Prynne is without question the force behind the novel. Roy Male claims that

Never--not even in the exhortations of Emerson and Thoreau--has the vision of dawn, the promise of America, the dream of a second chance found more deeply felt utterance than in [Hester's] appeal,
as she urges the time-drenched man to recover himself, to put on a new name and leave the ruin behind him. (105)

Hester Prynne represents the fallen American dream of the reimagined Eve; she will not go away, she displays her sexuality openly, and she has "usurped the masculine prerogative of speculation" (Male 106). In Hester Prynne Hawthorne has created a woman who is fully developed and many-sided, but even in this novel that is so much about sex, the act itself is visibly absent. In this novel about a strong, real woman, the ending must reflect that patriarchal society is still struggling to win: even the dust of the two lovers is not allowed to mingle.

As Hester comes from the prison with her baby in her arms and the gold-embellished letter on her breast, however, all eyes are on her, and throughout the novel they do not leave her very often:

Stretching forth the official staff in his left, [the town-beadle] laid his right upon the shoulder of a young woman, whom he thus drew forward; until, on the threshold of the prison-door, she repelled him, by an action marked with natural dignity and force of character, and stepped into the open air, as if by her own free-will. (SL 56)

Even when the narrator takes us into the study of Roger Chillingworth and his interviews with Arthur Dimmesdale, the
implied subject of their conversations is Hester, her sin, and Dimmesdale's involvement in it. Providing a visual representation of Eve and her fall into knowledge and rebellion in the garden, Hester Prynne stands boldly on the scaffold in the novel to remind the American Adam that Eve will not disappear easily.

The point of view of The Scarlet Letter deserves some attention here because of the ambiguity in the novel, much of which can be attributed to Hawthorne's many layers of narration. Technically speaking, the novel is told in third person; nowhere in the actual text is the first-person "I" used. In the introductory sketch "The Custom-House," however, clearly a real person—supposedly Hawthorne himself—relates the events of his employment in the custom-house and his purported finding of the scarlet letter along with Surveyor Pue's account of Hester Prynne's fate among the Boston community. In the "Custom-House" the narrator tells us that he has gotten, therefore, Hester's story from someone else's account, not hers personally, and he admits to employing his romantic colorings upon it: "I have allowed myself, as to such points, nearly or altogether as much license as if the facts had been entirely of my own invention" (SL 440). So just how much is "real" as the novel goes, and how much does our narrator create from his imagination? We cannot know. We cannot even know if this same narrator, in first-person nineteenth-century
storytelling style, relates the novel that appears after the sketch, but it seems so. If another layer of narration is Hawthorne creating a narrator (not himself) who fictionally worked in the custom-house and who found the packet of letter and story and who relates his account of the story of Hester Prynne, then in fact we have a very complicated fiction, and the ambiguity in it comes understandably. Unlike Moby-Dick for instance, where we, despite its other ambiguities and inconsistencies, at least have a recognizable person relating another's story, in the Scarlet Letter, we do not have even that. We do not know for certain who this storyteller is, nor how he feels about his characters. He even admits that his "imagination was a tarnished mirror" (SL 45). Hence this novel has produced much critical dialogue about how we are to interpret its events.

Nina Baym, however, in an insightful and convincing essay, "Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Mother," claims that Hester Prynne is Elizabeth Manning Hathorne. She notes, therefore, that events

in The Scarlet Letter never work themselves free of the constant voice of the narrator. We are always aware that the character Hester depends for her reality on the act of narrative generosity which is creating her. Here, Hawthorne reverses
Baym claims that the death of Hawthorne's mother immediately preceding the writing of the novel and his reaction to her death, coupled with the guilt that he had symbolically killed his mother by marrying Sophia, provided the impetus for the furious and impassioned way in which he wrote the novel. Some biographical facts and speculation offered by Baym make this conjecture more than feasible.

Interestingly, Nathaniel's older sister Elizabeth (Ebe) was born after his parents had only been married seven months:

> The significance of this seven-month's child has escaped notice, or at least mention, by virtually all of Hawthorne's biographers. But it could hardly have escaped the notice of the three women with whom Elizabeth was now domiciled, nor could it have been insignificant to them. Perhaps they were models for the hostile chorus of women at the beginning of The Scarlet Letter. (Baym, "Nathaniel" 202)

It is an appealing thought that Hawthorne modeled the rebellious heroine of The Scarlet Letter on his mother, a woman whom most biographers have characterized as reclusive, eccentric, and conservative. To see the novel unquestioningly as Hester's book--and not by any kind of
revisionist feminist reading—gives it more power because it
does not have to go against the author's own feelings.
While the novel continues to be covered with a veil of
ambiguity, at least Hawthorne's feelings of support for the
mother in the novel's struggle alone against patriarchy
strengthen a feminist reading of the text.

Baym provides much interesting biographical support for
such a reading. She claims that the seven-month's child,
Elizabeth (Ebe) "grew up into a strikingly independent, only
partially socialized woman, much as though she had been
exempted from normal social expectations by those entrusted
with rearing her." Baym then makes the expected leap that
it "is not improbable that Hawthorne's depiction of the wild
Pearl had as much to do with his memory of Ebe as a child,
as it did with his observations of his own daughter Una"
(202). She notes that Nathaniel's father spent only seven
months at home in Salem in the seven years he was married;
Elizabeth was widowed at age 28 with children age six, four,
and only a few months (Louisa was born after the father
Nathaniel set sail for the last time): "We need hardly look
further for sources of the image of a socially stigmatized
woman abandoned to bear and rear her child alone" (202).
Baym observes that because of the ostracization of his
mother by the Hathornes, it is easy to see that in The
Scarlet Letter, the "Puritans versus a defenseless woman
equalled the Hathornes versus his mother" (203) when she bore her first child (a daughter) in shame.

In the essay, Baym cites an interesting letter from Hawthorne to his mother while he was only seventeen. Hawthorne wrote to his mother from college that he hoped she would continue to live on a farm instead of coming back to the Manning house as she did periodically; he said that,

"If you remain where you are, think how delightfully the time will pass with all your children around you, shut out from the world with nothing to disturb us. It will be a second garden of Eden."

She points out that Raymond (the location of the farm) was an untamed and rather wild region, and that "Hawthorne visualized Eden not as a garden but a forest, albeit that vision was often obscured by subsequent grief and loss in his fiction." She notices, too, that the "real" or "first" Garden of Eden had no children in it, while Hawthorne's second Eden conspicuously lacks an Adam. If Hawthorne secretly casts himself in Adam's role [he would have been the only male there], then he is his mother's son and lover both. For him, Eden is a benign matriarchy. (205)

Baym's last statement, that for him the Garden of Eden is a "benign matriarchy," sets up the pattern for understanding
The Scarlet Letter as a representation of the failure of the American male dream of recreating the Garden without sin. Hawthorne, as the defender of motherhood at least, if not a defender of womanhood in general, places Hester Prynne at the center of the novel as the tragic heroine (and maybe also the victim) of the Puritanical patriarchal criticism and control. Baym continues that ironically

The search for the lost mother, rather than the lost father, underlies much of the story patterning in his mature fiction, as does the scene of flight from the patriarchy. The idea of the matriarchy retained a powerful hold on his imagination throughout life, and he could only view patriarchal social organizations—the only kind he knew, though others could be imagined—with enmity. (206)

She claims, then, that Hawthorne wrote the novel in response to his mother's death and that his "consciously articulated intentions" were to "rescue its heroine from the oblivion of death and to rectify the injustices that were done to her in life" (214). By writing the novel about and for his mother, Hawthorne accomplished two wishes: "the wish to be free of lifelong dependency on maternal power" and "the wish to have one's mother all to oneself (even if that possession can be attained only after death)" (215). Baym's case certainly is a strong one, and seeing the novel as the representation of
his own mother's trials and shame keep it focused on Hester and her struggle as the American Eve in Adam's garden.

Clearly Hester's life-giving powers, the basis for her womanhood, are what cause her problems and what elicit responses from the community, Dimmesdale, and the narrator. In fact, David Leverenz sees Hester as victimized, a woman whose "dream of love forever framed by patriarchal punishment . . . allows the narrator to present her as more victim than rebel" (264). Judith Fryer, in *The Faces of Eve* claims about Hester that if

Eve was the cause of the original Adam's downfall,
the role of the New World Eve must be minimized.
This time she must be kept in her place so that in the American version of the myth there will be no fall. (6)

In this way Fryer accounts for the treatment of Hester in the novel by the Puritan community, also seeing her as a kind of victim of patriarchy rather than as a victorious rebel.

Hester Prynne, as the central figure in *The Scarlet Letter* as I am maintaining, primarily serves the function of a contrast or an Other both to the Puritan community at large, as symbolized in the red rose bush and in the fancifully embellished letter she wears, and to Dimmesdale in the revelation of her sin and strength of character. Hawthorne depicts the community in negative terms: sad,
gloomy attire; uncompassionate; severe. The women of the Puritan society are drawn almost in caricature, with "broad shoulders and well-developed busts,... round and ruddy cheeks" (SL 55). These Puritan women are the good, "safe" kind of women, who are happy with their roles as nurturers to the society. Hester instead is "tall, with a figure of perfect elegance" (SL 55). The narrator describes her in positive terms, at this point still characterizing her with one of the acceptable roles of woman, the idealized beauty.

Hester's sin, however, revealed in the symbol of the scarlet letter, dominates her portrait. The women, except one, react negatively to Hester's situation, even jealously, because Hester may remind them of their own womanhood in its natural state, outside Puritan patriarchal society:

"At the very least, they should have put the brand of a hot iron on Hester Prynne's forehead. madam Hester would have winced at that, I warrant me. But she,—the naughty baggage,—little will she care what they put upon the bodice of her gown! Why, look you, she may cover it with a brooch, or such like heathenish adornment, and so walk the streets as brave as ever!" (SL 56)

They claim that "[t]his woman was brought shame upon us all, and ought to die" (SL 56). The narrator, however, is not so critical as he describes Hester:
She had dark and abundant hair, so glossy that it threw off the sunshine with a gleam, and a face which, besides being beautiful from regularity of feature and richness of complexion, had the impressiveness belonging to a marked brow and deep black eyes. She was lady-like, too, after the manner of the feminine gentility of those days; characterized by a certain state and dignity

Hester's "beauty shone out, and made a halo of the misfortune and ignominy in which she was enveloped" (SL 57). The narrator compares Hester to the virgin Mary, "this beautiful woman, so picturesque in her attire and mien, and with the infant at her bosom, an object to remind him of the image of Divine Maternity" (SL 59). As a contrast the other women of the town, Hester stands out as different, even as the only real woman in the village, the others only caricatures or different versions of their male counterparts.

The magistrates view Hester as a threat to their authority. Their desire to take Pearl away from her reveals their uneasiness with a woman who gives her femininity free reign, who challenges the male-dominated order. They place her on the scaffold to punish her for her impudence, but also to stand as a negative example against rebellion and shameful behavior: above the platform of the pillory.
rose the framework of that instrument of discipline, so fashioned as to confine the human head in its tight grasp, and thus hold it up to the public gaze. The very idea of ignominy was embodied and made manifest in that contrivance of wood and iron. (SL 59)

Hester, of course, is allowed to stand on her own without being put in the stocks. She is allowed to face her public fully although not without pain: "she felt, at moments, as if she must needs shriek out with the full power of her lungs, and cast herself from the scaffold down upon the ground, or else go mad at once" (SL 60). The magistrates sit above her appropriately and question her about the father of her child.

For Hester not to have a father for her infant is the greatest crime she can commit in this community run by patriarchs. For to have a child without a father is to have a child ruled by the mother only, for certainly Pearl is her mother's child.

Pearl repudiates all patriarchs: God, the magistrates, her actual father . . . Pearl locates herself within a world inhabited entirely by woman, figuring her birth as an event that occurred without men. She confirms the conflict in Hester's case as one between a woman and a
patriarchal social structure. (Baym, "Major Phase" 139)

So Hester, as the mother of this human representation of sin, contrasts the Puritan community as the deviant dark lady, as Judith Fryer claims, clearly the Other, "with Hester's life-giving but threatening sexuality once again standing for the hazard which individuality poses to the very survival of the community" (72). They understandably seek, although in vain, to learn the name of Hester's child's father and thus subject her to patriarchy.

An important feminist article on The Scarlet Letter by Shari Benstock discusses in depth this first scene of the novel--an attempt by the patriarchs to bring Hester under their control by forcing her to give her child a name, a male name. She asserts that the "opening scene of The Scarlet Letter parades before the reader and the assembled Boston public the body of sin, or more accurately, woman's body as emblem of sin" (289). Since Eve has traditionally, as we have seen, been blamed for the sin in the world, naturally woman's body, especially woman's body holding a baby, provides a visual reminder of the problems of mankind brought on by the knowledge gained in the garden--sex, sin, death. Benstock claims that by embellishing the scarlet letter with gold thread and her own art, Hester "subverts the Puritan-patriarchal laws of meaning"; she causes the letter to make "a spectacle of femininity, of female
sexuality, of all that Puritan law hopes to repress." (289). Hester, then, throws the patriarchal laws back into their faces by seemingly glorying in her own shame, the shame of all of Adam's race. 

Despite all efforts by the Puritan community to bring mother and daughter under the authority of God and man, Hester and Pearl remain resolutely outside patriarchal conventions. (Benstock 289)

The Scarlet Letter itself, as Benstock claims, "focuses attention on representations of womanhood, with special emphasis on Puritan efforts to regulate female sexuality within religious, legal, and economic structures" (290). Interestingly, three "Adams" in the novel—Dimmesdale, Chillingworth, and Governor Bellingham—represent these aspects of Puritan society: the theologian, the politician, and the doctor/businessman.

Benstock's essay is influenced by semiotics and the linguistical need to signify; she emphasizes Hester's body as a text on which are written the male fantasies and fears of womanhood. As she claims,

    Fantasies of the feminine undergird classic Western models of narrative, which the textual feminine—represented in Hawthorne's text by the gilded letter A—elaborates, ornaments, embellishes, and seeks to undermine. (290)

Benstock continues:
The patriarchal construction of femininity, based on masculine fantasies of the female body, is the sign under which sexual difference parades itself in our culture. This spectacle of womanhood, the female body dressed as icon or effigy, wards off patriarchal fears of female sexuality. The Puritan community means to make Hester play such a role, but its efforts fail because she—like all women—embodies an 'other' femininity that cannot be fully controlled within the terms of phallic law. (291)

The characterization of woman as Eve in literature and myth is used to satisfy all men's visions of the ideal woman and the woman whom they blame for all their problems. But, just as Hester refuses to operate within those limits patriarchy has set by humbly accepting her shame and demurely wearing her emblem of shame, Eve consistently alludes the imagination and thwarts Adam's desire to recreate her.

Benstock also addresses the ambiguity of the A by saying that its failure to stand for one thing opens the novel up to a profusion of possible meanings that the author and seamstress elaborate. By their silence, Hawthorne and Hester undo traditional methods of interpretation: he refuses to assign the letter to a word (as she refuses to name her baby's father);
she embellishes the letter, making it an item of adornment, representation of an extravagant, excessive femininity. (291)

Hester is femininity which refuses to submit itself to patriarchal law, Eve who refuses to take the blame for the sins of the world. Hester is Hawthorne's "most perfect Eve," and, like Eve's, Hester's crime was not really in tempting Adam, but in disobeying God the Father" (Fryer, J. 78).

As a representation of sex, the "female body is also the locus of patriarchal fears and sexual longing, its fertile dark continent bound and cloaked. It is a space of shame, of castration" (Benstock 300), of "guilt-stained time that is the essence of . . . womanhood" (Male 106). The female body, then, Eve's body, reminds Adam that they have been cast out of the Garden, that sin and death have entered consciousness; the female, with her time-regular menstruation is a suitable and convenient symbol. Hester, as a contrast to the community, is a sound reminder that the snake has made its way into this garden of Eden, as she makes her way from the prison by the cemetery to the public square: ironically, the founders of a new colony, whatever Utopia of human virtue and happiness they might originally project, have invariably recognized it among their earliest practical necessities to allot a portion
of the virgin soil as a cemetery, and another portion as the site of a prison. (SL 53)

These magistrates did not even need Hester to remind them that their new world garden was bound to fail.

So, as Hester provides a contrast to the Puritan community at large in her outward signal of sin, she also provides a contrast to her Adams, Dimmesdale and Chillingworth. Instead of thinking on their act of passion with love, as Hester does, for Dimmesdale the "act with Hester almost immediately becomes loathsome to him. The part of him that is Puritan magistrate, and which he thinks of as his 'self,' condemns the sinful 'other'" (Baym, "Major Phase" 141). He cannot give up his position as patriarch of the community for womanly concerns, like wife and child, and as David Leverenz maintains, for considered "as an American dream, Dimmesdale's success is made possible by his flight from woman and child" (274). He shamefully hides his own scarlet letter, punishing himself only in secret. In the scene in the forest Dimmesdale comes closest to moving over to Hester's way of thinking as he contemplates leaving with her to start a new life. We remember that Hawthorne had mentioned in his letter to his mother that he wanted her to start a new Garden of Eden on her farm in Raymond, a forest-garden. In The Scarlet Letter, it is left to Eve-Hester to begin the new venture. And, as Roy Male claims
Never—not even in the exhortations of Emerson and Thoreau—has the vision of dawn, the promise of America, the dream of a second chance found more deeply felt utterance than in [Hester's] appeal, as she urges the time-drenched man to recover himself, to put on a new name and leave the ruin behind him. (105)

Ironically, in this novel, it is not the American Adam trying (without Eve) to carve out a new garden for himself that promises to be the best hope for happiness—the Puritan new world garden had already failed as evidence by the necessity of a prison and a cemetery—but it is the American Eve who seeks to go on with life and begin anew. The Scarlet Letter inverts the traditional paradigm to further emphasize the American dream's bankruptcy. Significantly, Hester and Dimmesdale are to go abroad to find their new happiness and begin their new futures, the "new world" already having lost its possibility for perfection.

Hester also provides a contrast for Chillingworth in her compassion and her youthful exuberance. He is the physician who brings the patient to ruin rather than recovery. His desire for revenge maddens him, blinding him to the chance for a life for himself and Pearl; that possibility of a renewed relationship with his wife never comes up. Hester's sin and the mystery of Pearl's paternity becomes an obsession, and he no longer seeks to do good for
others. Hester, conversely, becomes the Angel of the community, able to bring comfort and kindness wherever it is needed. As Eve to this Adam, Hester shows that life can go on despite sex and sin; this American Adam withers away in his own impotency, the ground turning brown under his feet. Hester, although ultimately the victim of the patriarchal community's scorn (the dust of her lover not being allowed to mingle with hers even in death), lives a satisfied, although lonely life.

The Scarlet Letter, if an allegory, is without doubt an ambiguous one. Almost any essay or book on this novel will provide another reading. Feminists—and even those who would not call themselves that—insist that it is Hester's book, while others cling to it as Dimmesdale's story of repentance and salvation. Hawthorne's many layers of narration prevent an easy interpretation. For instance, is the book's supposed moral, "Be true! Be true! Be true! Show freely to the world, if not your worst, yet some trait whereby the worst may be inferred!" (SL 198), to be taken seriously, or is it ironic? Are we to interpret Dimmesdale's final act of confession an act of heroism or one of cowardly resignation, an act too little too late? Is the narrator sympathetic to the fact that Hester had assumed the "freedom of speculation" (SL 133) normally reserved for males, or does he implicitly criticize her for this fault? All these questions depend upon the reader's further layer
of narration which is added to those already in the text, supplied by the "Custom-House" essay, by the hearsay in the text of the novel itself, and by the ambiguity of statements of inner revelation: are the character's thoughts necessarily those of the narrator? There is no certain answer; the novel, just like Eve, refuses to be pinned down and categorized. It is rich with beauty and meaning, many meanings. Just like Whitman could attest to the belief that all the religions are true, The Scarlet Letter continues to live many lives in the imaginations of its readers.

For me, however, the novel is Eve's story, one of the very few novels in which Eve gets center stage. She gets attention because she refuses to conform to Adam's expectations, and she resists being the scapegoat. Instead of accepting her punishment with humility, scolding herself for her transgression, Hester Prynne never in the novel admits wrongdoing and shows a penitent heart. She regrets that Pearl has to suffer and that Dimmesdale cannot share life with her, but she never wishes that she had not committed her sin with him. Instead of wearing shamefully the stigma of her sin, she recreates it with her art into a representation of her individuality and defiance. She refuses to live in this new world garden by Adam's rules. How Hawthorne himself felt about his heroine's rebellion we can't know. He did call it a "hell-fired" story into which he could "throw no cheering light," much like Melville
thought of *Moby-Dick* as a "wicked book"; however, he could have said this with a wicked grin. It could really be the story of his mother's imagined retribution for suffering as the outcast. It could really be his work that would work out all those repressed feelings of guilt about abandoning his mother to marry Sophia. If it is, although Hester never gets her own voice in the story, the novel stands as a powerful representation of the American Eve; her gender provides the tragedy in this romance of the American dream.
Notes

1From Reinventing Eve 25.

2Of course, many claim that Dimmesdale is the main character; however, Hawthorne did decide to call the book The Scarlet Letter presumably after the letter Hester wears on her bosom. Attempts to make anyone other than Hester the central figure require some strong justification.

Baym provides a footnote of the following biographers who have taken Hawthorne's own lead in his letters to Sophia about his mother's strange personality, what Baym claims was a rhetorical ruse to win Sophia's affection and make her feel like the only woman in his life: Mark Van Doren, Norman Holmes Pearson, Manning Hawthorne, Gloria Ehrlich, George Woodberry, Lloyd Morris, Herbert Gorman, Robert Cantwell, and Newton Arvin. Other biographers "wrote her out of his life altogether": Randall Stewart, Hubert Hoeltje, Arlin Turner, and James R. Mellow. See note and text on page 196 of "Hawthorne and His Mother" (American Literature 54 [March 1982]) for complete bibliographical information.

Baym quotes the letter from Manning Hawthorne's essay, "Nathaniel Hawthorne at Bowdoin" (New England Quarterly 13 [1940]: 246-79) on page 205 of her essay.

Bracketed comment mine.
All references to the text of *The Scarlet Letter* are from the reprinted Centenary Edition, established by the Ohio State University Center for Textual Studies as the approved and official text of Hawthorne's work. This edition is reprinted in Ross C. Murfin's *The Scarlet Letter* and will be abbreviated in the text as *SL*.

Fryer quotes at length from Hawthorne's biographical sketch of Anne Hutchinson and makes the case for Hutchinson as the model for Hester (74-75). Others have claimed that Hutchinson is the source for Hawthorne's heroine (see Michael J. Colacurcio, "Footsteps of Ann Hutchinson," in the Norton Critical Edition of *The Scarlet Letter*, pp. 213-31).

An even better visual representation of the Eve that reminds society of their corporate sin is Lena Grove, who certainly great with child, keeps walking toward Jefferson in Faulkner's *Light in August*.

Notice especially in the work of Faulkner, the association with the female menstrual cycle with sin and death: Joe Christmas's horror at Bobby's cycle and Mr. Compson's description of women as "periodic filth between two moons balanced."
See especially Hugh N. Maclean's 1955 essay "Hawthorne's Scarlet Letter: 'The Dark Problem of This Life,'" for a rather outdated reading of the novel. In it, for example, he says, "All Hester's strength, intelligence, devotion avail neither her lover nor herself. God alone saves the sinner, and Dimmesdale acknowledges this with his dying breath: 'Praised by his name! His Will be done!' He reserves for Hester the accents of fear and doubt" (53). He says that "central theme of God's saving power and man's futility" gives the complex novel unity (55). It is a pietistic diatribe demonstrating that Hester got what she deserved.

A recent article by T. Walter Herbert, who has studied the entries by Sophia Hawthorne in her husband's American notebooks, sheds new light on Hawthorne's demure wife. Herbert asserts that Sophia engaged in sexual politics of her own, understanding completely her role as Other, willing to allow her godlike husband have center stage but recognizing her own feelings of rage and bitterness at being second in his life to his art. This new view of Sophie suggests that she, like Hester, suffered silently but resolutely in the patriarchal garden.
"A 'pure' masculinity cannot be asserted except in relation to what is defined as its opposite. It depends upon the perpetual renunciation of 'femininity.' No one can be 'that male' without constantly doing violence to many of the most basic human attributes: the capacity for sensitivity... for tenderness and empathy, the reality of fear and weakness, the pleasures of passivity--all, of course, quintessentially 'feminine.'" Lynn Segal

"[T]he fundamental aggressive drive in Western culture that had led to great acts of daring... had also led to the destruction of entire peoples and the suppression of the entire feminine side of culture." Robert K. Martin

Since its composition, critics have continually reevaluated Moby-Dick, perhaps with Leaves of Grass the greatest product of American literature, as adventure story, epic, tragic quest, and failure. Critics have questioned as well as applauded its greatness, and they have sought to
impose unity on this sprawling work of genius. The quality that makes *Moby-Dick* great is that it stands up well to many interpretations: it can be seen as Ahab's tragic rebellion, as Ishmael's quest for knowledge, as a search for the self. It holds up to many kinds of critical interpretation: reader response works well because of the whale as text; deconstruction succeeds because of the constant questioning and distancing of Ishmael; even New Criticism still can accomplish something in this work because of the text itself, which contains sufficient internal evidence for almost any interpretation. Feminine criticism, however, may have overlooked this work somewhat, in comparison to the others, simply because of the apparent lack of females in the book. No woman sails aboard the *Pequod*, and only a few women are mentioned in the novel at all. As Paul Brodtkorb, Jr., notices, the world of *Moby-Dick* "is a stern, withholding, father-world rather than a yielding and loving mother-world. . . . [Its] purposive emotions are hate, despair, anxiety, and fear" (68). Ann Douglas asserts that *Moby-Dick* "was written for men, or at least from a self-consciously masculine viewpoint. . . . When they appear in *Moby-Dick*, women are the mourners and the losers: they have no other role" (304). I disagree, however, and maintain that a feminine presence pervades the novel and gives it its most important theme: the battle of the narcissistic male against the feminine in the ongoing search for the American
Dream of self-sufficiency and perfection in a new patriarchal garden, the battle of male against female in the ongoing search for the American dream.

The American dream, as we have seen, has traditionally been a masculine dream. The male drive for power and productivity would carve out an unspoiled land where man would have a second chance to create his own perfection. Gustaaf Van Cromphout describes the American dream as Faustian in a broad sense:

I regard "Faustian" as almost synonymous with "Western" in that Faust represents what is most characteristic of the Western psyche: its boundless aspirations, its expansionism, its identification of knowledge with power, its attempt to subdue nature, its yearning for control over its own destiny. (239)

Nina Baym, referring to traditional works of American literature, claims that

the entrammeling society and the promising landscape . . . are depicted in unmistakably feminine terms and this gives a sexual character to the protagonist's story which does, indeed, limit its applicability to women. And this sexual definition has melodramatic, misogynist implications. ("Melodramas" 73)
Baym continues that male protagonists in American fiction have consistently cast woman in the melodramatic role of temptress, antagonist, obstacle—a character whose mission in life seems to be to ensnare him and deflect him from life's important purposes of self-discovery and self-assertion. ("Melodramas" 73)

This, to me, seems to be an underlying, if not controlling, concept in Moby-Dick: Camille Paglia asserts in her controversial Sexual Personae that the male genital metaphor is "concentration and projection" (36). Ahab's quest then is to eliminate the force that has symbolically castrated him and reduced his manhood by concentrating and projecting his hatred and male power onto the White Whale. By destroying this ambiguous symbol of femininity, he can hope to avenge the loss of his masculinity.

Freud made narcissism an important topic in psychoanalysis when he published his landmark essay on the subject in 1914. Called "On Narcissism," the essay deals with the kind of person "who treats his own body in the same way as otherwise the body of a sexual object is treated," and he claims that "narcissism has the significance of a perversion" (30, 31). Freud says that there are two fundamental characteristics of narcissists: "they suffer from megalomania and they have withdrawn their interest from the external world" (31). He claims that the narcissist may
love himself as he is, himself as what he would like to be, or someone who was once part of himself (47). Important in the concept of narcissism is the theory of object relations since the true narcissist does not send out his libido to an object (a lover, for example) but keeps his regard for himself. Freud claims that a neurotic's ego gets depleted when he spends his libido on objects by loving someone: "He then seeks a way back to narcissism from his prodigal expenditure of libido upon objects, by choosing a sexual ideal after the narcissistic type which shall possess the excellences to which he cannot attain" (58-59). And although trying to diagnose literary characters with some kind of psychological problem would be a never-ending exercise, certainly in futility, understanding how certain behavioral patterns exist in Melville's characters, especially Ahab, will emphasize my allegorical rendering of the novel: that Ahab represents the failed masculine narcissistic American dream. He has obviously chosen the white whale as the object of his libido but has been betrayed by his symbolic castration. He then has retreated into himself as the only one he can trust, resulting in what Otto Kernberg calls the pathological narcissist: "the image of a hungry, enraged, empty self, full of impotent anger at being frustrated, and fearful of a world which seems as hateful and revengeful as . . . himself" (219).
Arnold Modell, in talking about object relations, observes that loss "of an object is not fully distinguished from loss of the penis, and a superego anxiety may be manifested as a fear of death" (22). He discusses the idea of "magical thought," or the ability of some narcissists to imagine a world structure that allows them to cope with the anxieties brought on by the fear of castration and death. He claims that "the capacity for magical thought mitigates the danger of catastrophic anxiety through the creation of an illusion of lack of separateness between the self and the object" (23). In other words, these narcissists are able to make sense of their world by creating a personal mythology that answers and addresses all their questions, "a magical, created environment that serves to mitigate the danger of the experience of total helplessness" (23). He also claims that to "preserve the self, 'badness' must be extruded onto the object" (37). Kernberg also asserts that a disturbance in object relations and deprivation leads to aggression: "The narcissistic personality handles this aggression with primitive defenses including the splitting of self-and-object representations into all good and all bad" (White 159). Ahab demonstrates in Moby-Dick that he has created this mythical environment where he is the wronged one and Moby Dick is the incarnation of all evil; he is the all good, and Moby Dick is the all bad: "all this to crazy Ahab"
makes sense in his personal quest for the reason for his deficiencies of body and mind.

In order to understand my reading of the novel, one must understand the ways I am using the psychological information on narcissism. I am making a case for Ahab's being a person with a narcissistic personality disorder, someone who has not had successful relationships in his life and who turns inward for his self of worth, clinging to his mutilated self for his identity. As Masterson says, the narcissistic personality disorder often "aggressively coerce[s] the environment into resonating with his narcissistic projections" (16); I see Ahab as a narcissist who has surely suffered from unsuccessful relations with others, especially in his encounter with Moby Dick, and as a result has become a pathological narcissist, one who has become isolated from the world except as he conceives it—a world that exists only for his revenge. Modell observes that people with object relations problems—narcissists—have fundamental problems adapting to the external world; these people suffer from a "fundamental disturbance in their capacity to form love relationships" (4). Certainly, Ahab relates and defines the outside world only by his monomaniacal mission to destroy Moby Dick. The gams, or meetings with other ships, symbolize the outside world for the Pequod, and Ahab greets each one with, "Have you seen the White Whale?" Nothing else matters. His monomania is
clear and even exaggerated in the novel; what it
demonstrates is his complete dominance by narcissistic
tendencies, tendencies which I am calling male as they
relate to the novel and to the American Dream.⁹

As Joyce Warren notes in her thesis for The American
Narcissus: Individualism and Women in Nineteenth-Century
American Fiction, women and minority Americans
have been placed outside the American Dream. It
is not their dream, and to the dreamer they do not
count. Intent on the development of the self, the
American Narcissus thus denies the value—even the
existence—of the other and relegates to abstract
otherness the self that is unlike his own. (257)

Ahab represents Narcissus in Moby-Dick, one who seeks to
find himself, the self that he has lost to Moby Dick. In
his quest for his lost manhood, he represents ultimate
masculine power, with all the Freudian references to lances
and harpoons that are associated with him. Ahab is the
figure of the angry man striking out at a force that he
views as threatening and destructive, what I call a feminine
force. In the forging of Ahab's harpoon, he desires the
most destructively phallic weapon he knows how to construct:
"Here are my razors—the best of steel; here, and make the
barbs sharp as the needle-sleet of the Icy Sea" (MD 404).
He tempers his weapon with blood, the blood of his savage
harpooners, representative of the blood that he lost when
Moby Dick severed his leg, a symbolic castration. Richard Brodhead asks the following questions about Ahab's quest:

What is the hunt for the enormous sperm whale Moby Dick if not a quest for absolute potency, a quest in which the aggressive assertion of masculine strength calls up a fantastical version of that strength as its imagined nemesis?

("Trying" 10)

As Brodhead suggests, the whale has unmistakable masculine qualities, those Ahab seeks to recapture; however, the whale could also be viewed as feminine because Ahab seeks to pierce it with his harpoon, to force his masculinity into the inner regions of Moby Dick. Eve is suggested in the famous description of what the whale represents to Ahab: the whale can represent the feminine presence that has ruined all that is beautiful for man. Ahab as the embittered American Adam seeks to expel her from his garden. Notice the description of a castrated male who wants to rape and punish the female who has defeated him:

... [Ahab] pitted himself, all mutilated, against it. All that most maddens and tortures; all that stirs up the lees of things; all truth with malice in it; all that cracks the sinews and cakes the brain; all the subtle demonisms of life and thought; all evil, to crazy Ahab, were visibly personified, and made practically assailable in
Moby Dick. He piled upon the whale's white hump the sum of all the general rage and hate felt by his whole race from Adam down; and then, as if his chest had been a mortar, he burst his hot heart's shell upon it. [my emphasis] (MD 267)

Robert K. Martin calls Ahab the representative of Western man's Faustian drive for power. The imagery associated with him emphasizes his power, his isolation, his political authority, his antagonism to nature, and his aggressive phallicism. (83)

He also asserts that "Ahab is, in effect, Logos as rapist, the culmination of a historical myth that values human knowledge and power over self-sufficiency and human affection" (94). David Leverenz concurs: Ahab "claims to be empowered with a representative, redemptive mission to avenge all those who have been unmanned and who therefore feel simultaneously enslaved and murderous" (287). This force Ahab struggles against seems to me to be a feminine force.

Throughout the novel, Ahab rejects any semblance of the feminine, from his own wife and child to the maternal mission of the Rachel. As isolated and damaged manhood, Ahab vainly thrusts his phallic harpoon into Moby Dick, only to be dragged down into utter defeat. Leverenz humorously calls Moby-Dick "the most extravagant projection of male
penis envy in our literature" (294). Robert Martin similarly calls Ahab "all male power without the capacity for enjoyment, an erection that can never come" (84), as he goes down in defeat against the whale. Robert K. Martin discusses Ahab's masculine desires:

By eliminating the role of women in these novels, Melville can focus on the conflict between two erotic forces: a democratic eros strikingly similar to that of Whitman, finding its highest expression in male friendship and manifested in a masturbatory sexuality reflecting the celebration of a generalized seminal power not directed toward control or production; and a hierarchial eros expressed in social forms of male power as different as whaling, factory-owning, military conquest, and heterosexual marriage as it was largely practiced in the nineteenth century, all of which indicate the transformation of primal unformed (oceanic) sexuality, into a world of pure copulation. (4)

In Martin's rather excessive style, he maintains that Melville in Moby-Dick encompasses both these male sexual urges: in Ishmael he exemplifies the first (eros as enjoyment, homoerotic, masturbatory) and in Ahab, the second (eros as power, production, and domination).
Newton Arvin not only sees Moby Dick as feminine, but sees him as both phallic and womblike, calling him "the archetypal Parent" (212). According to his interpretation, "we are forced to confront a profound ambiguity in Moby Dick and to end by confessing that he embodies neither the father merely nor the mother but, by a process of condensation, the parental principle inclusively" (211). Similarly, David Leverenz claims that "Ahab rages to be beaten by an enormous symbol of both the father's and the mother's power, a sperm whale and milk-white breast, at once mutilating and abandoning" (290). In Leverenz's view, Ahab seeks his own total destruction, since his malehood is destroyed. Martin Leonard Pops believes that "Ahab's hidden sexual desire is to commit ... the grievous offense, 'primal' incest with the Mother" (84). He claims that Ahab wants to "plunge his harpoon into Moby Dick's inner sanctum where the Female Principle inheres" (84). Regardless, however, of whether Ahab sees Moby Dick as female, as parent, or even as God, he unquestionably considers him the force that destroyed his virility and blames him for all his problems. As Martin asserts, the "phallic jokes [in the novel] are always linked to power, not only the power of the phallus but the ways in which power employs the phallus" (80). For Ahab, the phallus represents his lost power, and he seeks to forge a new weapon with his supernaturally and demonically baptized harpoon.
Another force opposes the impotent male thrust of Ahab in *Moby-Dick*: the pervasive feminine forces in the novel, variously represented. In fact, the victory of the feminine would suggest that Melville's own attitude is that the feminine is more worth saving than the cult of male dominance. Melville's attitude about most issues is hard to pin down because of his ambiguity, especially in *Moby-Dick*; however, just as one can consult "Benito Cereno" to ascertain his feelings about slavery, one can go to the story "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids" to see his attitude about masculine power. In that story, the dominant symbols of the factory show Melville's sympathy with woman: "[Man] is the long, glittering scythe, an instrument which, by its position, indicates its antagonism to the female principle. He possesses no further identity" (Roland 169). According to Beryl Roland, Melville's narrator in the story bemoans the fact that woman has no identity, no meaning, beyond her physical function, and his deep-rooted fears based on a castration fantasy, his association of the sexual act with commercial exploitation, his repugnance for the inexorable nature of sex which turns the whole world of women into a brothel and lying-in-hospital simultaneously, result in his impotence. (170)
Ann Douglas expresses a similar point that what Melville's "society would not allow him to conceive--sexual equality, a non-oppressive economic system, an honest culture--he also included by making a recognition of the price of their loss" (329). In other words, Roland and Douglas believe that Melville mourned the way that male power tried to dominate the feminine presence, seeing the "tragic segregation of the sexes in America as evidence of a deeper and even more troubling bifurcation in their culture: that between what Edwards A. Park had called 'the intellect' and 'the feeling'" (Douglas 290). While Douglas does not consider Melville a feminist, she does see him as one who sought a balance somehow between the masculine drive for productivity and power and the feminine feelings of affection and nurturing. His story about the bachelors and the maids would seem to confirm that opinion.

In Moby-Dick nature represents one of the feminine forces subdued by male power, especially the whales in the chapter entitled "The Grand Armada":

But far beneath this wondrous world upon the surface, another and still stranger world met our eyes as we gazed over the side. For, suspended in those watery vaults, floated the forms of the nursing mothers of the whales, and those that by their enormous girth seemed shortly to become mothers. . . . Some of the subtlest secrets of the
seas seemed divulged to us in this enchanted pond. (325-26)

Ishmael is mesmerized by the view of nature that this scene affords him, a prelapsarian image of harmony in the garden; however, the chapter ends with images of harpoons and waifs disturbing this idyllic scene, a fallen condition. In the chapter called "Sunset," Ahab mourns in his soliloquy the fact that beauty surrounds him but that he lacks "the low, enjoying power; damned, most subtly and most malignantly! damned in the midst of Paradise" (MD 147). Just as Satan in Milton's Garden, Ahab recognizes his inability to appreciate life's beauty because of his own decision to rebel. As Robert Martin asserts,

Ahab's speech illustrates the connection between the capitalistic search for wealth and the patriarchal search for power; each represents an ultimate violation of the natural world that must in the end be avenged. (85)

Martin suggests the feminine, natural world will be victorious against the "fixed purpose" of Ahab's masculine quest. The chapter called "The Symphony" also shows an idyllic picture of nature, with male and female balanced and harmonious:

The firmaments of air and sea were hardly separable in that all-pervading azure; only, the
pensive air was transparently pure and soft, with a woman's look, and the robust and man-like sea heaved with long, strong, lingering swells, as Samson's chest in his sleep. (MD 442)

Melville describes a scene of male and female harmony, and this vision almost dissuades Ahab from his masculine quest for domination and revenge; "But Ahab's glance was averted; like a blighted fruit tree he shook, and cast his last, cindered apple to the soil" (MD 444). As Martin observes, "'The Symphony' is a wonderful vision of a harmonious universe in which masculine and feminine are reconciled; this divine androgyny is Ahab's last temptation, and he resists it to pursue the whale to the end" (93), choosing instead to continue his mission to obliterate the female castrating presence of the White Whale. As representative of the American male quester, Ahab must go ahead with his self-destructive mission to avenge the loss of his manhood by seeking to obliterate the harmful power of the feminine.

Ishmael becomes another feminine or at least androgynous force in the novel because of his feminine passivity, his sensitivity, and his relationship with the savage and masculine Queequeg. David Leverenz quotes Joseph Allen Boone who says that "Ishmael softens Ahab's rigid masculine self-hatred by accepting the 'maternal' or 'feminine' within himself, though not securely" (359n). Leverenz claims that
Ishmael moves from Ahab's male consciousness of power as dominance to a perception of relational female powers in the ocean, the whale, the self, and language. Female powers give birth to a womblike, fluid creativity that regenerates rather than destroys. (301)

If Ishmael represents a female force in his ability to find that which is regenerative and positive by merging with Queequeg and by resisting the Narcissistic urge to grasp the self, then he makes a suitable counterpart for Ahab in his totally selfish masculine quest. Clearly, throughout Moby-Dick Ishmael's questioning and searching, his hearty sense of humor even in the midst of so many dangers, and his "desperado" philosophy which allows him to muse about the existence of anything beyond the physical universe would qualify him for a suitable antithesis to Ahab's narcissism. Modell defines a person whose has avoided the pitfalls of narcissism and has good object relations: "the ego structure whose development permits the acceptance of painful reality is identical to that psychic structure whose development enables one to love maturely" (88). As Ishmael says of himself, there is a Catskill eagle in some souls that can alike dive down into the blackest gorges, and soar out of them again and become invisible in the sunny spaces. And even if he for ever flies
within the gorge, that gorge is in the mountains; so that even in his lowest swoop the mountain eagle is still higher than other birds upon the plain, even though they soar. (MP 355)

Ishmael can accept his own almost certain death and can find love in Queequeg, two actions that contrast him pointedly with Ahab. His willingness to embrace the savage, the unknowable, and the positive gives him the powers he needs to survive the destructive mission of the Pequod. As Robert Martin concludes,

The destruction of the Pequod and its crew is a sign of the social disaster that for Melville followed upon the imposition of exclusive white male power in its search for control over all that is nature or nonself, while the survival of Ishmael is made possible only through the example, love, and self-sacrifice of Queequeg. (70)

Even Queequeg himself can be seen as androgynous because of the many birth images associated with him: rescuing the insulting sailor on the shore, delivering Tashtego from the head of the whale, and also for the role he plays in giving Ishmael new birth as he finds love and community. "As [Queequeg] transcends the limits of gender, he unifies male and female and realizes the full potential of a creative force at once seminal and generative" (Martin 91). Ishmael is finally saved, after
all, on the coffin-lifebuoy of Queequeg, rising up out of the water to float to safety. "Ishmael's final vortex is his beginning: the Pequod becomes a coffin warehouse, and he brings up the rear of Ahab's funeral, an orphan in the wake of his disowned double" (Leverenz 28). He, like Bulkington and Ahab, takes a dive; however Ishmael's dive is not into himself but into someone else. He is saved by both the unselfish love of Queequeg and the persistent searching of the "devious-cruising" Rachel, another feminine force that represents the maternal, nurturing side of the universe.

In fact, Moby-Dick contains several subtle feminine representations in the names of ships. The Jungfrau represents the male view of the inexperienced virgin, who in the masculine enterprise of whaling, comes off as ignorant and worthless. Interestingly, it is in this chapter that Melville presents the most horrific view of the masculine violation of nature as represented in the whale, when Stubb kills the injured whale, who "helplessly rolled from the wreck he had made; lay panting on his side, impotently flapped with his stumped fin, then over and over slowly revolved like a waning world" (MD 301). Despite the imagery of impotent masculinity suggested by this whale, because of the pricking of him by Stubb's phallic lance, the resulting image is an assault on the natural, feminine world by the masculine whalenm. The Bachelor represents a contrast to the Jungfrau by being a ship that has had its fill of
manhood. It sails full of sperm, an image of male potency: "Sideways lashed in each of her three basketed tops were two barrels of sperm; above which, in her top-mast cross-trees, you saw slender breakers of the same precious fluid; and nailed to her main truck was a brazen lamp" (MD 407). The Bachelor flaunts its masculinity and does not even acknowledge belief in Moby-Dick, which, if he represents the feminine side of nature, shows how selfish the male dream has become. And again the Rachel with its unending search for "her children" represents the maternal desire to sustain unity and family in the midst of all the male power and domination in the book. It is appropriate that she should rescue Ishmael, the orphan, another feminine element in the novel who seeks completeness and harmony.

Robert Martin has viewed Ahab's and Ishmael's quests as linear and circular, what I see as masculine and feminine. He suggests that Ishmael's salvation is an indication, in one of the novel's symbolic patterns, of the emergence of the circle out of the straight line. It is also the restoration of the feminine and maternal to a world that has forsworn all softness and affection. Ishmael survives the cataclysm of the patriarchal aggression to be restored to the lost maternal principle from which he has been exiled. (70)
Ahab's linear mission, his course that is fixed "on iron rails" is bound to fail. The hard lines of the novel—the harpoons, the lances, the iron will of Ahab—are replaced and defeated by the circles—the rope which wraps around Ahab, the circling vortex of the sinking ship, and the "great shroud of the sea [which] rolled on as it rolled five thousand years ago" (MD 469). As Martin claims, the "circularity of the movement indicates its self-sufficiency. Whereas linear movement is always in need of the other to fulfill itself and is always bound with time, circular movement is complete in itself and timeless" (71). Ishmael survives because he is willing to change, to see the circles in the universe, and to adjust in order to have harmony, a feminine characteristic. Ahab goes down in defeat because his unswerving masculine quest for potency and revenge cannot negate the cyclical forces of the universe that must survive—the feminine forces of affection, regeneration, and life. What also saves Ishmael is his relationship to Queequeg, whose tomahawk pipe, while in itself a phallic symbol, also symbolizes harmony and fraternity. As Martin observes, the

tomahawk that is both pipe and weapon is equivalent to the phallus that can be either a source of pleasure or an aggressive instrument of power. The tomahawk is thus the novel's synecdochic presentation of the transformation
that is at its center: the rediscovery and reappropriation of the phallic. (79)

He continues:

If the figure associated with Queequeg is the tomahawk pipe, the figure associated with Ahab is the lance. . . . Like the pipe, the lance is an object of phallic dimension; but unlike the pipe, it can have no positive, fraternal use. (92)

Because Ishmael has joined with Queequeg, he can understand the double use of the male organ. His male being can embrace fraternity, enjoyment, and community by taking on the role of the female; Ahab only understands the phallus in terms of power and destruction. His one-sided, monomaniacal vision is doomed to failure because it burns itself out; there is no room in this kind of vision for growth, discovery, and life.

Ahab's quest in *Moby-Dick* then can represent the masculine quest for the recreation of the Garden, an elimination of the feminine in hopes of recovering some kind of power. As Martin asserts

America represented the last stage in the development and expansion of white European culture. That culture has permitted the regular rape of the land, which has been treated without respect or love in part because it has been
Moby Dick can personify that force of nature that is a threat to male power; in fact, the entire whaling industry has been described as a barbaric rape of nature, portrayed by Melville in portions of the novel like "The Grand Armada." Ahab, as the castrated captain, sails on board the Pequod (the ship named for the extermination of the Indians by the Puritans), which is owned by the hypocritical Quakers Peleg and Bildad, and he seeks the object of his hatred, the White Whale who had taken away his manhood. Melville's allegory, however hideous and intolerable it may be, draws a clear picture of industrialized male America that seeks to dominate the feminine land and recreate a world of power and potency, disregarding the harmonious and nurturing forces of nature. In Ahab's defeat and in Ishmael's victory or at least survival, Melville seems to be suggesting that male linear aggression will not succeed but that feminine circular harmony, represented by Queequeg's coffin floating in the vortex and the rescuing Rachel, will prevail. Life and hope will outlast death and destruction for those who seek it, for those who recognize the balanced forces of masculine and feminine in the world.

For the American Narcissus, the dream lies in the water, but not in the mere selfish reflection. It lies below the surface—Ishmael survives because he sees past his
reflection to what lives beneath the water: "so at nightfall, the Nantucketer, out of sight of land, furls his sails, and lays him to his rest, while under his very pillow rush herds of walruses and whales" (MD 63). Ishmael teaches us that perception is everything, even perceiving the unknowable that he sees in Moby Dick and what he represents. He may not be able to decipher the carvings on Queequeg's coffin, just as he does not know all the answers to his questions; however, he does know that survival depends upon grasping what we do understand, the part of humanity that binds us rather than isolates us from others. This feminine quality of connectedness and circularity contrasts the traditional masculine American Dream represented by Ahab in his individual quest for phallic power, in the by-products of his narcissism: isolation, masochism, and death. Ahab in his narcissistic rage—"a primitive defense against acknowledging the limitations of oneself as a separate, imperfect being in a world of imperfect people" (White 154) --represents, then, America in its quest for the new garden without Eve's sin, a quest doomed to failure because of its self-destructive narcissism. After all the fury of Ahab's attempt to puncture and destroy Moby Dick is over, the last chapter ends, "then all collapsed, and the great shroud of the sea rolled on as it rolled five thousand years ago" (MD 469). Nothing has changed. The American dream of a new male garden is over, and the feminine sea covers the traces
of the struggle. Only one "escaped alone to tell" the story: Ishmael, the outcast androgyne who chooses love and community over an isolated mission of destruction, "is saved by woman, not by one of flesh and blood . . . but by a ship named Rachel" (Miller, E., Melville 183).
Notes

1From Changing Masculinity 114.

2From the introduction to Hero, Captain, and Stranger, ix.


4See also Judith Fryer, The Faces of Eve for another view of the kind of women depicted in our literature.

5Sydney E. Pulver, in his essay "Narcissism: The Term and the Concept," gives a good historical summary of the evolution of the term narcissism before and after Freud's "On Narcissism" (1914). He covers everything from sexual perversion to self esteem and its relation to what we call narcissism. See Andrew P. Morrison, Essential Papers on Narcissism, (New York and London: New York UP, 1986), 91-111. He does says that all definitions of narcissism have one thing in common: "that state of the libido in which the self is taken as an object" (95).

6I apologize for the sexist terms; however, in discussing Freud's work, they seem necessary and almost appropriate.

7One of the best surveys of the theory of objects relations is Greenberg and Mitchell's Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory. They examine the contributions of Freud, Melanie Klein,
The definition of the narcissistic personality disorder from the American Psychiatric Association Manual, as quoted in Cooper is as follows: "Fantasies involving unrealistic goals may involve achieving unlimited ability, power, wealth, brilliance, beauty, or ideal love. Although these fantasies frequently substitute for realistic activity, when these goals are actually pursued, it is often with a 'driven,' pleasureless quality, and an ambition that cannot be satisfied." It goes on to say that "'abilities and achievements tend to be unrealistically overestimated,' and that "'a lack of empathy (inability to recognize and experience how others feel) is common.'" It also says that "'more is expected from people than is reasonable'" and that "'Interpersonal exploitativeness, in which others are taken advantage of in order to indulge one's own desires or for self-aggrandizement, is common; and the personal integrity and rights of others are disregarded.'" From the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 3rd ed. (OSM-111). (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 1980), as quoted in Cooper 127-28.

One kind of psychotic or "schizoid" individual E. Jones describes is the "god complex. These people maintain a belief that they are essentially self-sufficient, that they do not need others and indeed, what they have obtained in life has been
entirely the result of their own efforts—they are self-created" (quoted in Modell 39). Especially in his descriptions as a "grand ungodly, godlike man," Ahab fits this pattern of behavior. Just as he thinks he has created himself, he also must destroy himself in order to maintain his self-sufficiency. "'I'd strike the sun if it insulted me'" (MD 144).

I am of course aware of Lawrance Thompson's assertion that the whale is God; my interpretation in this paper does not necessarily disregard that view. I claim that the whale can be both: Melville could have viewed his antagonist as both a dominant power and a feminine power, and this view is borne out in his biography and in other works.

Robert K. Martin says that Melville's work points "such a homosexual relation as an alternative to the dominance of a heterosexuality founded upon the inequality of partners" (7). Personally, I think Martin pushes the homosexual issue too strongly at times; however, his points are valid, whether they are literal or symbolic. Melville is obviously against male domination, and mutual male relationships may have been his alternative, even if only in his mind.
CHAPTER IV

ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN

AND THE LOVERS IN THE GARDEN: "SOMETIMES WE'D HAVE
THAT WHOLE RIVER ALL TO OURSELVES"

"To depict America as a garden is to express
aspirations still considered utopian—aspirations, that
is, toward abundance, leisure, freedom, and a greater
harmony of existence." Leo Marx¹

"Is there any way of satisfying that malignant
invention which is called a conscience?" Mark Twain²

In this study of the American dream and its dependence
on the garden of Eden myth for its spiritual and
mythological base, we have seen how The Scarlet Letter and
Moby-Dick employ this myth to limit or marginalize the
feminine. Hester Prynne refused to "go away," however, and
the feminine forces in Melville's novel bring the masculine
quester Ahab down in defeat. Thus, the American dream in
these two novels fails, and they can rightly be seen as
tragedies. The next novel, however, Twain's Adventures of
Huckleberry Finn, is not usually thought of as tragic or
even very serious most of the time. Twain still exists in
the minds of many as a humorist whose sardonic wit may
occasionally produce satire. But clearly, Twain's later works--Pudd'n'head Wilson, A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court, and especially No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger--achieve something more nearly like the embittered pessimism of Melville in works like The Confidence-Man or Billy Budd: I contend that Adventures of Huckleberry Finn was the beginning of Mark Twain's preoccupation with the failure of the American dream. Although The Gilded Age deals with the subject also, the later Twain works explore the more serious, spiritual deficiency associated with the death of the American dream. And although Twain does not deal explicitly with the garden of Eden theme in this novel, it was a myth close to his heart as evidenced in his essays in Letters from the Earth and in his works like Eve's Diary, and if one looks carefully, he or she can see that even in his "boy's book," Huckleberry Finn, the dream of finding a new world garden and its attendant characteristics of freedom and individuality pervades Twain's masterpiece. The feminine forces in this novel are sometimes trickier to locate, but certainly not any more metaphorical than in Moby-Dick: Miss Watson, the Widow Douglas, and Tom's Aunt Sally become three ironic Eves; Mary Jane Wilkes is a female in the novel who awakens the sexuality in the innocent Adam; and the landscape of the novel, just as Annette Kolodny explored in The Lay of the Land, seems to suggest a feminine presence, one that in this novel betrays Huck by taking him
farther and farther south into danger. While, admittedly, this novel is different because of the innocent Adam, a prelapsarian hero, Huck Finn's version of the American dream fails because the American Eve—here as the civilizing and constricting women in the novel and the beautiful but deadly river—fails him.

Scott Donaldson and Ann Massa characterize American Adamic/Edenic writing as literature that

1. "yearns for a perpetual nature idyll"—the American version of the pastoral;
2. "celebrates and explores the concept of freedom"; and literature that
3. contains a noticeable "absence of flesh-and-blood women and adult, heterosexual love" (15).

Certainly Adventures of Huckleberry Finn fits this description in its depiction of the defeat of the American dream, and Donaldson and Massa's three-part description of Edenic writing provides a good schematic in which to view Twain's book.

The "Territory," alluded to at the end of the book, suggests an important characteristic of the American Dream—the frontier, the West, the uncharted reaches of the new land. The entire premise behind books like Henry Nash Smith's Virgin Land and R. W. B. Lewis's The American Adam is that America provided possibilities for perfection for an entire nation in a pastoral setting. Smith explains that
the idea of civilization "is pernicious because it interposes a veil of artificiality between the individual and the natural objects of experience" (Virgin Land 78). The dream of a new and unspoiled land would provide a place where the individual could recreate a new garden, ever moving to new areas. As Frederick Jackson Turner proposed in 1893, "the existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward explain American development" (qtd. in Smith, Virgin 291).

Annette Kolodny's book, as discussed earlier, chronicles the response of early settlers to the beauty and promise of the virgin landscape. David Mogen, Mark Busby, and Paul Bryant have edited a recent book on the frontier experience in America called The Frontier Experience and the American Dream: Essays on American Literature. In "The Frontier Archetype and the Myth of America: Patterns that Shape the American Dream," Mogen claims that

Our national mythology based on frontier experience is the vehicle with which we examine the ironies and contradictory values expressed in that curious phrase, "The American Dream"--which, after all, has been the implicit subject of many of our best writers since our diverse ancestors arrived on their many different errands into the wilderness. (21)
Jonathan Culler asserts that women have traditionally hated the frontier because they perceived the "attempt by men to make the frontier an escape from everything women represent to them: an escape from renunciation to a paradise of male comraderie" (45). As Leo Marx notes, the "landscape thus becomes [for the male] the symbolic repository of value of all kinds--economic political, aesthetic, religious." It represents "a separation from the world, a penetration to some source of power, and a life-enhancing return" (*Machine 228*). Leslie Fiedler puts it this way:

> The American writer inhabits a country at once the dream of Europe and a fact of history; he lives on the last horizon of an endlessly retreating vision of innocence--on the frontier, which is to say, the margin where the theory or original goodness and the fact of original sin come face to face. (*Love and Death* 135)

All these critics note that the idea of the frontier, the idea of a virgin landscape where human dreams, what I call male dreams, of success, freedom, and power, haunted and motivated the explorers and settlers to seek and dominate their new garden. Of course, this idea would permeate the literature produced in our country, and Mark Twain was one of the most obsessed by this idea of perfection in another place.
According to Robert Spiller, the "incurable optimism and humor of the frontier was written into [Twain's] earliest work, and the dark dismay of its failure into his latest" (151). \textit{Huck Finn}, especially chapter 31 in which Huck makes his monumental decision of conscience, is precisely the turning point between this optimism and fatalism. At the heart of \textit{Adventures of Huckleberry Finn} is the hoped-for idea of an unspoiled place in nature where Huck and Jim can escape their problems and restrictions, where Huck can escape from the responsibilities of society and the impositions of conscience. The river and the raft on which they float provides one such garden image where they do not have to do anything they do not want to; these males can avoid the pressures of the world, and, in effect, can escape the results of the fall. The raft becomes a substitute for Jackson's Island, a celestial playground wherein the boy and the man might exist as friends, without the impingements of an imperfect world where real people have real differences, and where it becomes necessary to curtail one's own desires in order to get along. (Johnson 105)

The river and the beauty associated with it suggest an unfallen garden in the novel, contrasted with the fallen condition of the society on the shore. Throughout \textit{Adventures of Huckleberry Finn}, but especially in the
chapter after the Grangerford-Shepherdson feud, images of peace and contentment associated with Huck and Jim's life together on the raft suggest the lovers in the garden. "Huck's instinctive search for comfort somehow touches on the prelapsarian, as though it were a casual conversation with God" (Johnson 87). As Adam and Eve walked through the garden discussing the beauties of nature and speculating on its wonders, Huck and Jim discuss the moon and the stars and how they were made:

It's lovely to live on a raft. We had the sky, up there, all speckled with stars, and we used to lay on our backs and look up at them, and discuss about whether they was made, or only just happened—Jim allowed they was made, but allowed they happened; I judged it would have took too long to make so many. Jim said the moon could a laid them; well, that looked kind of reasonable, so I didn't say nothing against, because I've seen a frog lay most as many, so of course it could be done. (HF 158)

Although the actual female figures in the novel—Widow Douglas, Miss Watson, and Aunt Sally—are not prelapsarian Eves, but rather Eves after the fall, the nurturing landscape of the river in Huckleberry Finn contrasts the greed and corruption of the shore that is archetypally masculine and thus it becomes, as Kolodny would agree,
feminine. In this novel, the image of Huck and Jim on the raft amid the beauty of the unspoiled nature of the river opposes the image of civilized and inhumane life on the shore, characterized by such things as the family feud, the killing of Boggs by Colonel Sherburn, the Duke and the King, and the slave traders. Huck and Jim try to avoid the civilized world and desire to remain as far out in the middle of the unspoiled feminine nurturing river as they can. Part of what makes their relationship, at least at times, so attractive to Huck is the fact that Huck desires companionship and freedom simultaneously:

[Jim] not only fills Huck's need for company, but he does so without raising the spectre of an Other for whom Huck must modify his own pleasures. Jim's status as slave insures that he will impose no troubling restrictions on Huck, no rules and regulations. (Johnson 95)

This is, of course, how Huck feels at the beginning of the novel before his relationship with Jim also entangles him in moral decisions and quandaries. At this point in the novel, Jim is like Eve before the fall; he affords him companionship but does not present him with the problems that Eve did Adam in the garden, much like the relationship of Milton's couple before the problems began.

_Huck Finn_ explores another aspect of the American dream that is familiar to everyone: the individual who desires
freedom from all constrictions, even those of the conscience.

The widow Douglas, she took me for her son, and allowed she would sivilize me; but it was rough living in the house all the time, considering how dismal regular and decent the widow was in all her ways; and so when I couldn't stand it no longer, I lit out. (HF 1)

Huck strives to get away from the civilizing influence of the Widow Douglas and Miss Watson and finds, temporarily, peace and happiness on the raft with Jim. He epitomizes the American hero that Leslie Fiedler describes, "harried into the forest and out to sea, down the river or into combat—anywhere to avoid 'civilization'" (Love and Death 134).

David Mogen observes that

our traditional hero is this self-made figure who knows no tradition. ... whole tribes descended from the nineteenth-century Adam [and] populate both our most formulaic visions of cowboys and space travelers and our most ironic literary creations. (23)

Huck Finn's desire for escape and new beginnings resonates with that tendency of the American dream to offer "the sense of a fresh start of gigantic potential and proportions, the chance to create the world over again, an Eden without a Fall, without an Eve" (Donaldson and Massa 9).
Freedom, as a theme and object of Huck Finn's journey down the Mississippi, dominates the novel and certainly represents almost anyone's idea of a concept central to the American dream. Failed freedom, more appropriately, lies behind most of the adventures Huck experiences. His lies and his disguises take him from one risky situation to another; seeking freedom, he instead finds another trap time after time. Hamlin Hill, in fact, claims that the "entire structure of the novel is one of frustrated attempts to escape from restrictions only to find the refuge susceptible to invasion and destruction" (302). When Huck leaves the Widow's for the "freedom" of living with Pap, he admits that he liked being where he was, with Pap, "all but the cowhide part" (HF 30). He has given up social bondage, therefore, for physical slavery. Huck and Jim's dream of freedom on Jackson's Island disappears after Huck's visit to Judith Loftis's: "Git up and hump yourself, Jim! There ain't a minute to lose. They're after us!" (HF 75). This cry, ironically, becomes the theme of this book normally associated with freedom.

In fact, Huck seems not to want freedom as much as he wants an escape from tyranny, as James Cox contends ("Ending" 350). Freedom, to Huck, means the absence of restrictions; it finds its definition only negatively in terms of what it is not--the Widow, Pap, society. Huck represents one of those characters in American literature
that Terence Martin discusses in his article, "The Negative Structures of American Literature": these negative characters "tend to play the role of original American in a constricting environment and thus to precipitate by collision or contrast the torrent of our history" (15). He claims that "none of them has any idea of founding a better society...; their function is to define the world in which they live by showing us the worlds in which they are unable to live" (15-16). Clearly, Huck is this kind of character; he does not so much want to find something new as he wants to escape what he already knows. He often does not find happiness in his freedom; even when he is alone, Huck feels unfulfilled: "I felt so lonesome I most wished I was dead" (HF 4).

James L. Johnson's book *Mark Twain and the Limits of Power: Emerson's God in Ruins* has much to say about this idea of Huck's desire to be totally himself, free from restrictions of any kind. Johnson's thesis is that "Twain's writings are profoundly reliant on the prospect of a free Self--a Self who, like Emerson's, is capable of both creating and controlling his human environment" (vii). He makes a strong case for an affinity between Emerson and Twain, as strange as that may seem given their personalities and temperaments. He points out that, like Emerson, "Twain retained throughout his career an emotional commitment to the nineteenth-century notion that man could dominate and
even create his human environment" (3). As Johnson maintains, Emerson established himself as "the American prophet of possibility. He perceived in man the ability to achieve the right 'axis' of being, and thereby to assert his mastery over the world of time and circumstance" (5). Emerson's optimism in the essential divinity of human beings committed him to proclaim that the self must control his environment and rise above circumstances. As Johnson claims,

> For both men [Twain and Emerson], the strength of the empowered Self lies not so much in his ability to adjust to the world, as in his ability to make world adjust to him. He does not manage in the world so much as he manages the world itself. He is able to dominate experience in an almost magical way. (5)

Johnson would have Twain almost a disciple of Emerson, not in direct influence, however, but in their similarity of belief in the Self and in freedom.

Of course, Huck has many enemies of this essential self that would be autonomous and free even from guilt and responsibility. Miss Watson and the Widow, as Eve figures who have ruined the garden, are the first to impose their control of the American Adam Huck by making him wash, dress, study, and pray. Although it may be difficult to consider these two women paradigms of Eve because of their sterile
condition (one widow and a spinster), they introduce sin into the existence of the American Adam, who like R. W. B. Lewis explains is almost a Wordsworthian innocent: "the first, the archetypal, man. His moral position was prior to experience, and in his very newness he was fundamentally innocent" (5). Even Tom has rules that he imposes on Huck when he wants to join the robber band: he must say an oath and must offer up someone to be killed as family. The family-less Huck is not allowed to function in this society of children without someone else. Then when Pap comes back to town, Huck knows real bondage: he is trapped in the cabin, exposed to verbal and physical abuse. In order to protect the autonomy of the Self, Huck must deny his paternity and in essence father himself. His "suicide" allows him to begin his new life as his own guide. As Johnson claims, this act of killing his old identity as son of Pap and foster child of the Widow and Miss Watson amounts to a vernacular dramatization of Emerson's call for men to loose all ties and to trust in the aboriginal Self. In taking to the river and Jackson's Island, Huck disclaims all social ties and launches himself into a psychological wilderness, where the essential Self may blossom and become the final moral arbiter of experience. (86)
Huck's dream of pure freedom from everything and everybody starts to die on Jackson's Island, however, when he sees the ashes of another's fire. Even though he is relieved to find that the intruder is Jim, also a seeker of freedom, their relationship begins to be the end of Huck's totally individual life. When Huck first finds that Jim is a human being to whom he should apologize for the prank about being lost in the fog, he finds himself enmeshed in a human relationship that will complicate his life. "Huck's recognition of Jim as Other entangles him in commitment and responsibility, both of which contradict his intuitive desire to remain a child" (Johnson 98). Huck's apology has limited his freedom because he now has someone outside himself that he must accommodate, and this spells the beginning of the end of his masculine American dream of perfect freedom. "It made me feel so mean I could almost kissed his foot to get him to take it back" (HF 105).

Throughout the novel, Twain takes Huck on one adventure after another, back and forth between freedom and captivity, between entanglement with others and individuality. When Huck is freed from Jim by the raft wreck, he finds himself in the middle of a family feud, eventually in a relationship with Buck Grangerford (who shows Huck what it is like to be involved with people and their problems by getting killed). As soon as he is reunited with Jim—a relationship less complicated that the Grangerford-Shepherdson one—they meet
up with the King and the Duke, slaves again. Soon Huck is emotionally involved with Mary Jane, an innocent Eve in the novel, and has a moral dilemma about how to help her get her inheritance back. He cannot remain free from human relationships and their inherent emotional entanglements.

Of course, the climactic chapter 31 where Huck must decide "between two things" about whether to stay loyal to Jim or to free himself of the commitment to him by turning him in (whether to be slave to his conscience or attempt to break free from it), provides the most dramatic view of the struggle within Huck to really be himself. Huck, of course, does not know himself as well as the readers do at this point, and what he thinks is a bad and sinful act actually is the "right" thing to do. This scene is the climax for Huck's struggle with his conscience all through the book: he had worn the "right" clothes, tried prayer, and followed Tom's rules to try to do the proper thing. Huck equates trouble with his conscience with "uncomfortableness" and constantly opts for the thing that will not hurt anyone and keep everything "comfortable." He says of the Duke and the Dauphin: "If I never learnt nothing else out of pap, I learnt that the best way to get along with his kind of people is to let them have their own way" (HF 165).

According to James Cox, Huck remains the fugitive in the novel, "in flight from the old conscience and evading the development of a new one." Cox explains that the reason "he
evades it is clear—the conscience is uncomfortable. Indeed, comfort and satisfaction are the value terms in *Huckleberry Finn*" ("Ending" 354). As Huck escapes from the Grangerford feud and its death and is reunited with Jim on the raft, he makes an understatement, considering all his has been through: "Other places do seem so cramped up and smothery, but a raft don't. You feel mighty free and easy and comfortable on a raft" (HF 155).

When Huck comes to chapter 31 and the painful decision whether to give up Jim (and regain his freedom) or free Jim (and keep himself under the bondage of human relationships and even the bondage of his imagined hell) we can see the pain with which Huck makes his decision to tear up the letter:

It was a close place. I took it up, and held it in my hand. I was a trembling, because I'd got to decide, forever, betwixt two things, and I knowed it. I studied a minute, sort of holding my breath, and then says to myself: 'All right, then, I'll go to hell'--and tore it up. (HF 270-71)

Hamlin Hill has much to say about the climactic chapter 31. He claims that at the statement "all right, then, I'll go to hell,"

We cheer, and if we are optimistic ourselves we believe Huck has succeeded. But his 'identities' throughout the novel are constantly devious.
strategies that invent dead parents and tragic circumstances; and finally, after the triumph of Chapter 31, [Huck] becomes Tom Sawyer—the nemesis of his attempt to free himself from external control. (303)

It is in Huck's desire to be free from his conscience that he gives up his new-found autonomous but morally encumbered identity, symbolically and literally becoming Tom Sawyer at the end. He seeks the paradise that Charles Sanford calls the paradise of the political plane—freedom from guilt (18). The agony of making his own hard decisions, like the one in Chapter 31, causes Huck's rebirth as Tom at the end and the disappearance of Huck's self-made identity. James Cox agrees with this notion about Huck's identity dissolving after the important chapter. He asserts that in

the very act of choosing to go to hell he has surrendered to the notion of the principle of right and wrong. He has forsaken the world of pleasure to make a moral choice. Precisely here is where Huck is about to negate himself.

("Ending" 356)

Huck's individuality, an important characteristic of the American Dream, disappears as Huck faces the conflict of his societal values. Huck has struggled all the way through the novel to find out who he is; after "killing" himself in the cabin, he becomes Sarah Mary Williams, George Jaxon, and
the "Wilks' brothers' valley." But when he takes on the identity of Tom Sawyer at the end, Huck exclaims, "it was like being born again, I was so glad to find out who I was" (HF 282). Being Tom is, after all, much easier for Huck than being Huck; his problems are little boy's problems, and society has already planned out his behavior. As Johnson observes, "Huck approaches the Phelps' farm thinking and wishing for death, and death is precisely what he gets: not in terms of an initiation into adulthood, but in terms of a regression to childhood" (113). Tom's amoral loyalty only to his own pleasure appeals more to Huck's dream of freedom from conscience even though he must sacrifice his own newly found identity. Just as Hemingway's Harold Krebs desires to live his life free from any "consequences," Huck is relieved to be able to regress to a childish persona who is not expected to make moral decisions.

Cox claims in his essay "Remarks on the Sad Initiation of Huck Finn" that Huck and Tom cannot exist in the same world: "When Huck regains his own identity . . . he immediately feels the compulsion to 'light out for the territory' because he knows that to be Huck Finn is to be the outcast beyond the paling fences" (151). Cox believes that the essential self that is Huck cannot abide civilization. He cannot be Huck Finn and be a part of civilization, with its restrictions and bondage. Roy Harvey Pearce claims that Huck "will seek the freedom of the
Territory just because it is an uncivilized freedom. . . . It is, indeed, the only true freedom for the authentic human being which Huck eventually comes to be" (359). As Johnson would say, this self that Huck comes to be is the self described by Emerson, a self that dominates and controls his environment, constricted by nothing from the outside.  

Throughout the novel, however, Twain seems to suggest that freedom is only an illusion; in fact, the controversial ending chapters attest to Twain's acknowledgment that his vision was doomed to failure. Smith claims that in order to write [the final] chapters [Twain] had to abandon the compelling image of the happiness of Huck and Jim on the raft and thus to acknowledge that the vernacular values embodied in his story were mere figments of the imagination, not capable of being reconciled with social reality. ("Sound Heart" 381)  

In other words, the drifting of the raft must come to an end. Huck and Jim could not continue to drift aimlessly deeper into the South, hoping for better tomorrows: "Through the symbols [of the raft's aimless drifting and the vulnerability of Huck and Jim], we reach a truth which the ending obscures: the quest cannot succeed" (Marx "Mr. Eliot," 345). Twain had a dilemma not only with the practicality of ending the novel, but also with the
practicality of his vision of freedom for an orphan white boy and a hunted black man in the South in the 1840s.

But *Huck Finn* foreshadows the death of this part of the American dream, too. Huck, in his naive mode of storytelling, appeals to our desire to find an innocent hero in the wild, like Natty Bumppo; but when he becomes Tom Sawyer at the end of the novel, giving in to "the pervasive determinism of Tom Sawyer's world" (Cox, "Some Sad Remarks" 142), the journey of Huckleberry Finn turns toward the tragic and is inevitably doomed to failure. In his essay "A Sound Heart and a Deformed Conscience," Henry Nash Smith explains this inevitable failure of the novel's vision:

The vernacular persona is an essentially comic figure; the character we glimpse in Huck's meditation is potentially tragic. Mark Twain's discoveries in the buried strata of Huck's mind point in the same direction as does his intuitive recognition that Huck's and Jim's quest for freedom must end in failure. (373)

By allowing Tom—the representation of tradition and adherence to life "by the book," albeit a romantic book—to dominate the ending, Mark Twain, in a way, negates everything Huck has accomplished, revealing the deterministic failure of the American dream and its components of freedom, individualism, and the new world garden. As Johnson asserts, in Twain's "efforts to portray
characters so gifted, however, he repeatedly found himself
confronting moral and philosophical issues that called into
question the benevolence, and eventually the sanity, of the
characters he created and loved" (3). Twain knew that he
was imagining a world that could not be: unfettered
innocence in the garden.

Mark Twain's partial shift of identification from
Huck to Tom in the final sequence was one response
to his recognition that Huck's and Jim's quest for
freedom was only a dream; he attempted to cover
with a veil of parody and farce the harsh facts
that condemned it to failure. (Smith, "Sound
Heart" 383)

Both Huck and Tom are characters that exist outside the
adult responsibilities of guilt and conscience and seek to
avoid the tragic consequences of the human condition:
If Tom's goal is to live in a dream world of
robber bands and pirates, Huck's goal is to live
in a dream world of easy living, where 'Other'
will not impinge itself upon him with collars and
rules that are foreign to his own self-enjoying
soul. (Johnson 86)

But Other will not go away just as Eve will not go away.
The American Adam is not free to roam in the garden free of
responsibility of sin, free of the knowledge of good and
evil, of sex and death. These are the realities of the
human experience. The snake of reason and knowledge is in the garden, and both woman and man must face the consequences of the human condition. Mark Twain knew, then, that his dream for Huck the innocent would fail. Whether Eve ruined the garden or not—and certainly in the "real world" she is only the scapegoat—perfection was bound to die with the nature of life itself, and Mark Twain was able to capture the failure of the dream in *Huck Finn*.

As James Cox notes,

Huck Finn may escape to the territory, [but] the whole outline of the frontier is receding westward before the surge of small town culture, and it is indeed doomed country into which Huck must retreat. ("Ending" 239-40).

Although Huck and Jim's experience on the raft together is seen as idyllic, and although Huck wants to "light out for the territory" which seems to him freedom, the absurd ending of the novel coupled with all the deterministic references to the failed quest leave no optimism for Huck's future out West; of the idyllic hope of Jim and Huck on the raft, Robert Shulman notes that perhaps "like any vision of a green world or a golden age, it is simultaneously indispensable as a reminder of human possibility and perennially beyond our grasp" (41). Besides snakes in Jim's bed and Jim's cabin, undoubtedly there will be snakes in
this new garden as well. Shulman summarizes this idea of Huck's failed quest and Mark Twain's awareness of it:

No one, least of all the Twain of the final chapters, believes that the style of individualism and the sense of community Huck and Jim develop has triumphed, either in the novel or in the restlessly changing market society it grows from and illuminates. The triumph is that, knowing as intimately as he did the divisive of acquisitive individualism, Twain nonetheless managed to sustain for as long as he did a life-affirming myth of cohesion and genuine individuality undercut by the dominant tendencies of that world of the diseased he both exposed and continued to live in. (49)

In other words, Twain himself knew better than anyone, that the American dream in the image of Huck and Jim on the raft was doomed to fail because he himself had tried harder than anyone to realize that dream and found that it betrayed him. So coming to the Phelps farm to carry out his noble duty of freeing Jim, the "Huck who comes to save Jim, the adult who would accept human commitment and its obligations, dies painlessly and with little fuss when Aunt Sally christens him with a new name" (Johnson 113). He effortlessly gives up his new-found freedom.

Mark Twain said in Following the Equator that
it is by the goodness of God that in our country we have those three unspeakably precious things: freedom of speech, freedom of conscience, and the prudence never to practice either of them. (qtd. in J. Smith 94)

Twain's later works undoubtedly display his disillusionment with his country and with his race in general. It seems that with Chapter 31 of *Huck Finn*, Twain reached the peak of his aspirations for mankind and for the American dream. Many critics have defended the ending of the novel because of its appropriateness. Lionel Trilling, who praises the novel for its perfection, especially for its presentation of the "river-god," claims the ending is necessary "to permit Huck to return to his anonymity, to give up the role of hero, to fall into the background which he prefers" (326). T. S. Eliot asserts that Huck "has no beginning and no end. Hence, he can only disappear; and his disappearance can only be accomplished by bringing forward another performer to obscure the disappearance in a cloud of whimsicalities" (335). James Cox claims that there "is an inexorable and crushing logic inherent in the ending"; he goes on to call Tom's reappearance in the book "not only vital but inevitable" ("Some Sad Remarks" 154). Huck's attempts all through the novel to find his identity—his freedom—only lead him to more problems, more death. Robert Shulman says that when Twain came
to write the last third of *Huck Finn*, [he] had finally became too aware of the fragmenting power of his society to be willing or able to keep alive his vision of freedom and community. He apparently came to feel that his most precious ideals were too far removed from their roots in a vital social world. (42)

George C. Carrington, Jr., asserts that the "novel is full of premonitions of disaster; the ending is that disaster." He believes in the circularity of the novel, that "Huck remains what he was in Chapter 1, . . . doomed to be pushed around by the Tom Sawyers" (185). Huck's innocent trusting of Tom and his "rules," his admiration of Tom's knowledge fround in books, and his pitifully low self-image keep him Tom's inferior.

Hamlin Hill discusses in deterministic language why Huck fails and thus why the book has to end as it does:

Huck's imagination . . . provides no escape, offers no possibility of waking up in better circumstances. Huck is, to use his own words, too "ornery" to believe in an idealistic universe. [He] represents the typically helpless victim of a world in which nightmare, absurd quests for identity, alienation, and apocalypse are the facts of daily life. (301; 307)
All these critics agree on at least one thing: the ending of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* does not carry on the dream of freedom that the first part of the book anticipates.

Huck describes Eden on the raft:

> Sometimes we'd have that whole river all to ourselves for the longest time. Yonder was the banks and the islands, across the water; and maybe a spark—which was a candle in a cabin window—and sometimes on the water you could a see a spark or two--on raft or a scow, you know; and maybe you could hear a fiddle or a song coming over from one of them crafts. It's lovely to live on a raft.

(HF 158)

Huck and Jim's garden experience, however, is short-lived. In the same chapter as this description, they become the prisoners of the Duke and the King, just as Twain becomes the prisoner of the plot of his novel, needing the Duke and King to continue with the trip farther south. Certainly something has gone wrong with Mark Twain's vision of Eden. The novel, however, must reflect the realism of Huck and Jim's situation; the dream they seek is a myth. When the outcome begins to look tragic, Mark Twain retreats to the humor which, for him, was much more "comfortable."

Huck and Jim may represent the failed American Dream, but this interpretation does not ruin the book's fun or make it less the Great American Novel that many have claimed it
to be. In fact, Huck's vision in the novel is not really destroyed by Tom's humor, even if the vision cannot be realized. There is some victory at the end when Jim gives himself for Tom, and Huck exclaims, "I knewed he was white inside" (HF 341). After all he and Jim had been through together, and even after the fiasco that Tom's reappearance has brought about, Huck and Jim still share a knowledge that humanity has triumphed in spite of everything, if only temporarily. But, as W. H. Auden observes, "There hangs over the book a kind of sadness, as if freedom and love were incompatible" (134). Huck and Jim have found love while looking for freedom because neither are taking the traditional "male" role of domination; theirs becomes a relationship of mutual respect and mutual innocence, although both remain rooted in the stark realities of their fallen society.

Cox describes the strength of the American dream on our imaginations, despite the obstructions; he claims that the novel retains

the primitive power and immediacy of the myth which it recreates; it impacts us in the profoundest areas of our consciousness, and we are reminded of the darkness and the terror and the violence which stalk the virgin forest where the American dream lies waiting, aware and unaware. ("Some Sad Remarks" 154)
The dream may be dead in reality, but it lives in the imagination. What we cannot see in society, we see in our minds, still believing in the indestructible power of the American myth. As long as rafts exist, we will continue to drift on them to see where they lead. As long as territories exist, even in our minds, we will seek them for their potential for the freedom that must be out there somewhere.

Just as in The Scarlet Letter and Moby-Dick, the male American dreamer in Adventures of Huckleberry Finn fails in his quest to remake the garden of Eden in the New World. Unlike Arthur Dimmesdale, who seeks to hide his sin and live out his life unscathed by the fall and who is content to let Hester as Eve take the blame, or like Ahab, who seeks to avenge the loss of his manhood which had been caused by the feminine forces of the whale representing nature, Huck Finn wants only to experience that kind of freedom that only exists in the mind. He wants to drift forever going anywhere and nowhere. What Huck wants is not to exert his male power or to make the female pay for the sin of the garden; he simply wants to live in the garden free of restrictions of society and restriction of his conscience, forever the Wordsworthian innocent, the Roussean child. He wants to be cut loose of identity, past, and the binding forces of civilization. Like his author, Huck Finn was
ashamed of the "damned human race," and he just wanted to be free of it. As James Johnson claims, Twain's deepest imagination lay in loyalty to the character who could retain his infancy and not have to submit to things external to him. Tom, Huck, Hank, and Satan are all boys at heart, and each longs to retain an essentially infantile vision of the world, in which the ego is the center of existence. . . . In such a vision there is a radical innocence. It is prelapsarian; there is in it no knowledge of good or evil, and whatever actions flow from it avoid the neat labels of "satanic" or "angelic." From such a perspective, things are only what they are. (190)

Huck and Tom, according to Johnson, are really more alike than different because they are both American Adams (in Lewis's sense of the term) who want to escape the restricting pressures of adulthood.  

Both Huck and Tom seek to act in the world without reference to time and without reference to others; both seek a life of total freedom, uncluttered with the hard choices and maturing experiences that daily confirm the limitations of human beings and their necessary submission to the world of fact. (Johnson 116)
But just as Arthur Dimmesdale found out--that our human acts carry consequences with them--and just as Ahab found out--that the inevitable feminine influences of responsibility and community cannot be ignored--Huck Finn discovers that his dream of completely male selfhood is only a dream as he vainly vows to escape to the territory, leaving all his Eves behind but taking his conscience and his knowledge with him. For this American Adam, he must hope to carry his dream to some other virgin space. And all of us, male and female, hope that he finds it.
Notes

1From The Machine in the Garden 43.


3I realize that Billy Budd continues to be debated and interpreted; some see it as Melville's reconciliation with God while others believe that the apotheosis of Billy is ironic, that he is sacrificed to a stern father-figure's unyielding justice. I concur with those who see the novel as Melville's final statement on the unfairness of the human condition.

Although I do not agree with Leslie Fiedler's reading of the novel in its homosexual overtones, I do agree that the presentation of Huck and Jim may represent a prelapsarian garden of Eden.

5See the beginning of chapter 32: as Huck approaches the Phelps farm, he says that "there was them kind of faint dronings of bugs and flies in the air that makes it seem so lonesome and like everybody's dead and gone. . . As a general thing it makes a body wish he was dead, too, and done with it all" (HF 276).

6Jim's idea of freedom differs significantly from Huck's; he wants the freedom that any slave wants: free to
live with his family and free to exist without a price on his head. His idea of freedom is membership in society while Huck's is exclusion from it. R. W. B. Lewis says about the American idea of the hero: "the valid rite of initiation for the individual in the new world is not an initiation into society, but, given the character of society, an initiation away from it" (116). According to Leo Marx, though, both Huck's and Jim's quests for freedom do have Miss Watson in common: "The freedom which Jim seeks, and which Huck and Jim temporarily enjoy aboard the raft, is accordingly freedom from everything for which Miss Watson stands" ("Mr. Eliot, Mr. Trilling . . . " 339). She, in fact, is one of the "Eves" in the story who helps to ruin the masculine American dream for Huck and Jim--the "Adams." She represents the confining tendency woman imposes on man; she restricts freedom.

Although the Adam of the Bible was indeed created as an adult and therefore ready for sexuality, R. W. B. Lewis describes the "American Adam" as a figure who represented the "ideal of newborn innocence," one who was "the hero of a new kind of tragedy," "the tragedy inherent in his innocence and newness" (6). For American literature, Lewis contends and I concur in this paper, the figures of Adam and Eve represent respectively innocence and knowledge. He claims that the American Adam becomes a tragic figure when he
understands the failure of his dream (see the prologue to his book), and I maintain that the American Adam blames the female Eve for its disappointment.

For an interesting "version" of Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, see John Seelye's The True Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. In Seelye's story, Huck is not the innocent Adam but one who curses and peeks at Mary Jane Wilkes's naked body. Jim drowns at the end, and Huck floats aimlessly, not much caring "if the goddamn sun never come up again" (339). Seelye proposes that if Mark Twain had not been censored and constrained so much, this is the way he would have told the story.
CHAPTER V

THE GREAT GATSBY AND THE TRANSCENDENTAL DREAMER:

"THE LAST AND GREATEST OF ALL HUMAN DREAMS"

"Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what's a heaven for?" Robert Browning

"[T]he test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability
to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time
and still retain the ability to function. One should,
for example, be able to see that things are hopeless
and yet be determined to make them otherwise." F.
Scott Fitzgerald

Charles Hearn asserts that Fitzgerald's Jay Gatsby is
"the American Adam thrown out of the garden into a distorted
and grotesque world of materialism and decadence" (46). He
calls The Great Gatsby "the most suggestive and artistically
satisfying treatment of the American dream in all of
American fiction" (43). Marius Bewley claims that "The
Great Gatsby offers some of the severest and closest
criticism of the American dream that our literature affords"
(37). Robert Ornstein asserts that The Great Gatsby's theme
"is the unending quest of the romantic dream, which is
forever betrayed in fact and yet redeemed in men's minds"
Lionel Trilling, possibly the first to equate Gatsby with America and its dream, asserts that

For Gatsby, divided between power and dream, comes inevitably to stand for America itself. Ours is the only nation that prides itself upon a dream and gives its name to one, "the American dream."

Leslie Fiedler expresses the same idea, although more colorfully: "Daisy, rich and elegant and clear and sweet-smelling, represents to her status-hungry provincial lover, not the corruption and death she really embodies, but success—which is to say, America itself" (Love and Death 315). Scores of other critics have discussed the book from the point of view of the American dream turned into nightmare, and these kinds of comments are echoed by almost everyone who writes on the Great Gatsby; therefore, it would be almost silly to examine the American dream without considering Fitzgerald's book. Although Fitzgerald has gotten short shrift from recent critics, as compared with writers like Melville and Faulkner, his novel is still one of the most firmly established classics in our literature, and one of the best representations of the male quest for the American dream.

The focus of the attention concerning the American dream and Gatsby has been primarily from the point of view of materialism: the traditional view of the American dream
as a get-rich fantasy. Certainly the discussion of Gatsby's dream--his mansion, pink suit, and cream-colored car--make this kind of attention necessary. Gatsby's imitation of Ben Franklin's personal improvement schedule and his self-made image, his "Platonic image of himself," make Jay Gatsby the epitome of Horatio Alger's rags-to-riches hero.

Fitzgerald's entire oeuvre deals primarily with the same ideas of the desire for success, from This Side of Paradise to The Last Tycoon. In fact, the tendency of many critics to dismiss Fitzgerald results from their perception of his being shallow and limited. Maybe he is; however, in The Great Gatsby, Fitzgerald accomplished so much more than the story of a man's material dream gone sour. In this novel, Fitzgerald has created a new garden of Eden, with Jay as the American Adam and Daisy Buchanan as the American Eve, again blamed for the failure of the ideal. As Matthew Bruccoli has said, much of the endurance of The Great Gatsby results from its investigation of the American Dream as Fitzgerald enlarged a Horatio Alger story into a meditation on the New World myth. . . . Gatsby becomes an archetypal figure who betrays and is betrayed by the promises of America. (Some Kind 223)

These promises of America are represented by a woman--Daisy Buchanan.
Fitzgerald knew he was doing something special with *Gatsby*. Nobody would deny that it is his masterpiece.³ The novel combines theme, language, and form brilliantly. The point of view of *Gatsby*, like that of *Moby-Dick* and *Huck Finn*, is crucial to its success; the way the story is told may even overshadow the story itself. Diligently working and reworking on it, Fitzgerald managed, with Maxwell Perkins's help, to organize the novel in such a way that the facts of Gatsby and Daisy's past are revealed slowly. Because of the first person point of view, Fitzgerald had to be careful to have Nick Carraway only relate certain events at certain times because, of course, when he begins telling the story of Gatsby's tragedy, he already knows everything that will happen. For instance, it is chapter 3 before we as readers get to "see" Gatsby firsthand, at the party Nick attends. Daisy and Gatsby's past relationship is kept secret from the readers until Jordan Baker relates it to Nick in chapter 4 and when Gatsby reveals more of it to Nick in chapter 8. Slowly, the pieces of Gatsby's dream fall into place, and we as readers have the advantage of learning and judging with Nick as he both participates in the action of the novel and becomes its narrator, shaper, and interpreter, like Ishmael the "one escaped to tell" the story of its tragic hero.

The layering of the first person narrator in *Gatsby* is crucial because of the subjective nature in which Gatsby and
his dream are received. Arthur Mizener, one of Fitzgerald's first biographers, observes that in contrast to the corruption which underlies Daisy's world, Gatsby's essential incorruptibility is heroic. Because of the skilful [sic] construction of The Great Gatsby the eloquence and invention with which Fitzgerald gradually reveals this heroism are given a concentration and therefore power he was never able to achieve again. The art of the book is nearly perfect. (Far Side 177)

Mizener interprets Nick's telling of the story just as Nick interprets Jay Gatsby's vision; a different, less sympathetic, narrator would give the story quite a different coloring, and Jay Gatsby would come off looking much worse, possibly the way Tom Buchanan sees him, as a two-bit bootlegger. As Judith Fetterley notes, Gatsby is not the only one who possesses "some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life" (GG 6):

It is Nick who registers the emotions implicit in Gatsby's experience and psychology that Gatsby himself could not express without losing the unself-consciousness which saves him from the moral indictment consuming the rest of his world. The strategic brilliance of The Great Gatsby lies in this division of the psychological action of
investment/divestment between Gatsby and Nick. It is this strategy that allows Fitzgerald to eat his cake and have it too. (81)

In other words, Gatsby can be the stable object of the novel, achieving a kind of mythic stature, while Nick can change and flow with the action, revealing his inconsistencies and limitations. Fetterley realizes that it is Nick as interpreter who makes Jay Gatsby's actions heroic or not. It is important in *The Great Gatsby* that Fitzgerald have an imperfect storyteller—one who while claiming to be "one of the truly honest" people he knows, who "reserves judgment," lies to us by continually making judgments—because the American dream found in this novel itself is flawed: Gatsby's obsession with Daisy as the representation of his dream and his goal to create a new garden of Eden in West Egg, Long Island, prevents Daisy from being a real human woman and instead turns her into the symbol, Eve. As Eve, Daisy is both the prelapsarian representation of the ideal state of human existence for Gatsby, much as the river is for Huck, and the fallen Eve who is responsible for the failure of the dream of perfection and the reason for this Adam's downfall and death, as Hester Prynne is for Dimmesdale. Nick Carraway is the chosen one to tell this story because he adds ambiguity and doubt, leaving the reader to decide on the worth of Gatsby's dream and to interpret the significance of its failure.
Most critics are complimentary of Nick Carraway's role in the novel and seem to believe that as both character and narrator he is a stroke of genius. Charles Samuels claims that Gatsby pursues his quest because of discipline, but through

the great discipline of art, Nick is able to see the real landscape and affirm the glory of life. He can see Gatsby's vulgarity as well as his greatness. Words save Nick from Gatsby's catastrophe for they hold life at bay and permit contemplation, but Gatsby gives Nick a life worth celebrating in language and therefore the will to write as well as the will to live. (790)

Ernest Lookridge concludes that "Nick affirms the value of Gatsby's failed dream, because Gatsby so fully asserts human meaning against the 'winds of chaos,' while the rest ... become all but indistinguishable from it" by being called "foul dust" (17). James E. Miller claims that Fitzgerald makes

The Great Gatsby in some sense the observer's story, and this he does by portraying Nick Carraway's gradual penetration to the corruption at the heart of the fabulous life of the rich Tom and Daisy Buchanan and, simultaneously, his gradual discovery of the fundamental innocence and the measureless vitality of Gatsby's dream. (30)
David Minter asserts that "Gatsby is great only because of the greatness of Carraway's art, which orders his story and mythologizes it" ("Dream" 89). Gale Carrithers would have Nick as the centerpiece of the novel:

For the structure of the whole book is focussed not on Gatsby's tragic world, but on Nick's world and ours. Someone we know may have made tragic decisions, and may have died for them, but we remain alive, trying like Nick to make sense out of the somber, El Gechoish distortions and proportions of our world. (320)

To these critics, the real focus of The Great Gatsby is Nick Carraway, whose sensitive, artistic spirit embellishes Gatsby's desire to break up a marriage in his worship of a "vast and vulgar meretricious beauty" and transforms it through art into myth. Nick raises Gatsby's search for Daisy into an idealistic and romantic grail quest—"but now he found that he had committed himself to the following of a grail" (GG 156)—sanctioning Gatsby's actions through his language. This has been the traditional reading of Gatsby's dream by readers who either been male or have, like most of us, have read as males.

Feminist critics, however, have reacted differently to Nick's rendering of Gatsby's dream and its symbol, Daisy Buchanan. Judith Fetterley criticizes Fitzgerald's using Nick to minimize Daisy's importance as woman, claiming that
magnifying her as a symbol gives her worth only as she relates to someone else's dream, the traditional role of the Other. Nick's interpretation of Gatsby's dream denies Daisy the freedom she needs to develop into something more than a symbol, more than the Eve that ruins everything for Gatsby. Fetterley claims that

men are legitimate subjects for romantic investment and women are not. . . . Daisy must fail Gatsby but Gatsby need not fail Nick. This is the double standard which produces the disparate judgments in the book; which makes Daisy's narcissism a reason for damning her . . ., yet makes Gatsby's utter solipsism the occasion for a muted romantic overture. (95)

Nick apotheosizes Gatsby's dreams with phrases like "romantic readiness," "the last and greatest of all human dreams," and "capacity for wonder." In the car and driving metaphors used in the novel, Fetterley complains that Nick "excuses Gatsby's crimes as part of his great design, yet damned Daisy utterly as a careless driver" (95). Daisy becomes part of the "foul dust that floated in the wake of his dreams," while Gatsby is raised to the level of tragic hero:

And so we have the absurdity and the dishonesty of Nick romanticizing Gatsby for his heroic though misguided romanticization of Daisy, who becomes,
of course, the excluded middle in the love story of Nick Carraway and Jay Gatsby. (96)

In summarizing her feminist criticism of the treatment of this Eve in *The Great Gatsby*, Fetterley concludes that "high in a white palace" is precisely where the romantic imagination of Gatsby/Carraway/Fitzgerald wants to keep "the king's daughter, the golden girl," because finally that imagination wants women to be kept outside so that they can remain forever available as occasions for the heroic gestures of men and as scapegoats for the failure of men's dreams. (98)

Simply put, in "being seized as the incarnation of his dream, Daisy is annihilated as a separate person and is solipsized into Gatsby, becoming an extension of him" (Fetterley 98). Because Nick Carraway is the one who interprets Daisy's role in Gatsby's vision, it is he (and his author) whom she criticizes for reducing Daisy from the status of true woman and independent self to symbol and Other.

Suzanne Fryer also rejects this one-dimensional view of Daisy in her book *Fitzgerald's New Women*. She claims that since Nick is the narrator of the story, his failure to perceive what makes Daisy behave as she does makes it easy for readers to jump to the conclusion that
she is "shallow"—that she acts as she does for no good reason at all, either because she is incapable of genuine feeling or because she just doesn't care. (44)

She contends that "Nick's confusion about what motivates Daisy is rooted in Fitzgerald's own uncertainty about his development of her character" (45). In fact, Fitzgerald himself admitted that he felt that the "BIG FAULT" of the book was the lack of the development of the "real" relationship of Gatsby and Daisy. He felt that he had omitted enough detail on the motivations for their love, and he feared that if the book did not sell well, it would be because there were no real woman characters of much importance in the book: "the book contains no important woman character and the women control the fiction market at present." The feminists have not let him get away with that. In fact, Fitzgerald himself in his notebooks describes the beauty of his ideal woman as Other as

not mere formal beauty but the beholder's unique discovery, so that it evoked different images to every man, of the mother, of the nurse, of the lost childhood sweetheart or whatever had formed his first conception of beauty--anyone looking at her would have conceded her a bisque on her last remark. (133)
While Fitzgerald had great respect for women's beauty, he did see them for what they could do for men, as his obsessive pursuit and capturing of Zelda bears out, as the validation of his success, the proof that he had achieved his dream.

And because the subject of Fitzgerald's masterpiece is Gatsby's dream—a dream which because it is also the male American dream—it should not be surprising that females are marginalized in the book. Archetypally, Daisy is the air-headed and conspiratory "maiden," Jordan is the snobbish and dishonest androgyne, and Myrtle is the sensual yet troublesome earthmother. Their presence in the scheme of the design is as the role of Other—either the unreal symbol of perfection when the dream is still hoped for or the scapegoat for the failure once the dream is lost. All the women in the book, although Nick Carraway/Fitzgerald draws them with care and detail, fit stereotypes of women while clearly Gatsby is portrayed as an enigmatic and tragic figure who is allowed to dream. His quest is given validity by Nick Carraway, who raises Gatsby's dream for Daisy to mythic levels:

Out of the corner of his eye Gatsby saw that the blocks of the sidewalk really formed a ladder and mounted to a secret place above the trees—he could climb to it, if he climbed alone, and once
there he could suck on the pap of life, gulp down
the incomparable milk of wonder. (GG 117)

But what exactly is Gatsby's dream? What is it that he expects to find in that "secret place above the trees"?
Simply put, he wants to reverse time, relive and even remake the past, by creating a new garden of Eden on West Egg. He hopes to go back to the time when he lost Daisy, his Eve, and unite with her, this time in perfection and immortality. Like the other Adams of our literature, Gatsby needs Eve to validate his dream of sinlessness since it was Eve who sinned first in the garden. Because Adam was forced to join her in transgression, he needs her to undo her sin before he can undo his. Gatsby needs Daisy to go back to her "white girlhood" again so that he can take her all over again, this time permanently, sanctioned by his wealth and status. As Fetterley notes, in "the quintessentially male drama of poor boy's becoming rich boy, ownership of women is invoked as the index of power: he who possesses Daisy Fay is the most powerful boy" (xvi). Just as Fitzgerald himself felt he had to possess Zelda Sayre in order to give validity to his success in writing and to his status in society, Gatsby needs an Eve to share his garden. He needs to throw the beautiful shirts on the bed and have her baptize them with her tears. Gatsby "does not wish to see her but rather for her to see what he has done for her, as if only through her eyes will his vision of himself he had real" (Fetterley
Gatsby's dream is to possess Daisy, his Eve, so like the other American dreamers he can recreate the garden without all its problems of humanity. D. S. Savage describes the quest for paradise the following way:

the paradisal condition is to be attained by a three-fold legerdemain comprising the transformation of space, the suspension of time, and the negation of Experience with its distinctions of good-and-evil. (151)

Gatsby wants, through Daisy, to recapture, and even better, to remake his past to the image in his mind, to change "the sad thing that happened" to him long ago (GG 72). He transforms his space by glamorizing his "ancestral home" into an amusement park, he seeks to suspend time by repeating the past, and he wants to negate his experiences that were unpleasant as well as minimize the "evil" that he is engaged in to make his money. In short, he wants to, like the other American dreamers, recapture the myth of the garden in its sinless condition by appropriating woman to serve his dreams.

Another side of Gatsby's dream is voiced by Carmine Sarracino, in his article "The Last Transcendentalist," who examines Gatsby's desire to transcend the boundaries of his existence, to be like Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman—limitless in potential and imagination:
Jay Gatsby is a portrait of an American transcendentalist, a visionary who literally believes what Emerson insisted upon: that the possibilities of human existence are infinite, divine in fact; that the past is not by necessity a limiting factor in self-definition; that a man can, as Fitzgerald tells us Gatsby has done, spring "from his Platonic conception of himself." Gatsby is, as any transcendentalist might say, "a son of God." (37)

Malcolm Cowley puts it this way: Gatsby's "real dream was that of achieving a new status and a new essence, of rising to a loftier place in the mysterious hierarchy of human worth" (143). Gatsby's dream is, then, not material at all; it is spiritual. When he gives his "unutterable visions to [Daisy's] perishable breath," he gives her his spiritual virginity; he takes the oath of celibacy to what she represents for him—a new self. Gatsby as a transcendentalist seeks to go beyond Daisy as a woman, denying her limits as a symbol as he denies limits on his own human potential to create himself in his image, delivered "from the womb of his purposeless splendor" (GG 83).

This son of God needs nourishment, however, which comes from his dream, symbolized in the female breast:
At the close of the novel, we are told that the Dutch sailors gazed upon the 'green breast' of the new world. From this green breast, or 'pap,' of exalted promise, Gatsby desires to feed upon the transcedent stuff of creation itself, "the incomparable milk of wonder." (Sarracino 40)

According to Nina Baym, the "fresh greenness is the virginity that offers itself to the sailors, but the breast promises maternal solace and delight" ("Melodramas" 75). In Nick's description of Gatsby's account of the conception of his dream in the image of the sidewalk as ladder, this sidewalk is Daisy's sidewalk; he has a decision to make whether to be the self-made man or the partner in her corruption. Like Huck in his moral struggle to "go to hell," Gatsby must make his decision about something that he will not be able to undo. This action, like Huck's words that "would stay said forever," will change his life: "Then he kissed her. At his lips' touch she blossomed for him like a flower and the incarnation was complete." He is incarnated, like Christ, with the aid of a woman, the symbol of death and mortality. His "mind would never romp again like the mind of God" (GG 117).

With that kiss, Jay Gatsby's American dream begins to fail because Daisy (Eve) will not conform to his image of her; she is not perfect, and mortality cannot give him immortality. This Eve refuses to be the Other to his
dreams. She will not say that she never loved Tom; she does not call after the accident; she does not even attend his funeral.

Sarracino sees Gatsby as the "doomed transcendentalist," and he compares him with Melville, Hawthorne, and James, who had to admit the existence of evil and the limited abilities of human beings:

Gatsby's failure, like the failures of his literary forebears just mentioned, is by implication America's: it is the failure of the naive optimism that emphasizes, in Sartre's terms, the transcendent over the factical, the future to the exclusion of the past. (44)

Sarracino ties the failure of Gatsby's dream with the inherent failure of transcendentalism: the limitless mind is forever bounded up in the limited body. It must merge with the real and tangible in order to complete any action. Just thinking about his dreams were not enough for Gatsby; yet when he needed flesh in which to embody them, he needed a woman. To quote Sarracino:

The ladder of Gatsby's transcendent vision is the Platonic ladder of love, the highest rung of which goes beyond romantic, earthly love to celestial, to divinity, to the star upon which Gatsby has struck his tuning fork. However, love at these sublime heights, desire for union with such
celestial harmonies, becomes completely abstract, noncorporeal, unbounded. Gatsby, then, must enact a sacrament of communion that, after all, is rooted in the human urge to consume the intangible in a tangible embodiment. He presses his mouth to hers, and "the incarnation" is complete; his abstract "unutterable visions" are incorporated in her "perishable breath." (40)

What Gatsby does here by kissing Daisy is what Ahab does by baptizing his harpoon "in nomine diaboli" and what Huck does when he tears up the letter to Miss Watson: these American dreamers make a decision to pit themselves against a feminine force and go on their quests as males to establish their gardens. Gatsby kisses Daisy to "take" her and use her; instead she begins to diminish as his ritual symbol of immortality at that moment. She ceases to be in his incorruptible mind and becomes part of his corruptible body.

Gatsby, then, uses Daisy as a means to his dream not as the end. She is not really the object of his ambition but the implementation. As Gatsby gets closer to Daisy in the novel, as he spends time with her, he becomes more unhappy: "Possibly it had occurred to him that the colossal significance of that light had now vanished forever. . . . His count of enchanted objects had diminished by one" (GG 98). Sarracino observes that
Gatsby's attempt to create a pursuable concrete object for his ethereal desire will result in the debasement of his desire, in its trivialization. The pure desire of this "son of God" will lose itself in its material objects. The ritual of communion is the turning point in Gatsby's deliberate process of self-definition. From here on, he declines into self-deception and corruption. (41)

In this view of Gatsby's dream, Gatsby's error is in trying to realize his dream instead of living with it as a dream. By trying to make his dream real, he kills it. Like the flower for which she is named and the virgin (however ironically) that she represents, as "a creature of the present, Daisy is nothing, for Daisy possessed is Daisy lost" (Fetterley 78). The green light has lost its magic.

Of course, Gatsby's dream is impossible:

At some level there is a recognition of the fact that the worth that Gatsby's imagination brings to bear on Daisy is unbearable and that the failure of the dream is not in Daisy herself but is rather the inevitable result of the internal dynamics of the imagination which seizes her as the object of its dreaming. (Fetterley 100)

Nobody could live up to the expectations Gatsby placed on Daisy. His idealism could never be realized; no human woman
could fulfill the demands his dream of perfection and immortality placed on her. In fact, "Gatsby's attempt to create a pursuable concrete object for his ethereal desire will result in the debasement of his desire, in its trivialization" (Sarracino 40-41), rather than a perfected and etherealized object.

Edwin Fussell claims that Fitzgerald discovers that the dream is "universally seductive and perpetually damned" (44), and Fussell calls the American dream a "great mass neurosis," saying that Gatsby "was doomed by demanding the impossible" (49). Nick even speculates that Gatsby himself has realized when they finally come together that Daisy as a person cannot measure up to his dreams:

There must have been moments even that afternoon when Daisy tumbled short of his dreams—-not through her own fault but because of the colossal vitality of his illusion. It had gone beyond her, beyond everything. (GG 101).

Gatsby has constructed an idealistic dream from Daisy:

He built around her the dreams and fervors of his youth: adolescent, self-centered, fantastic, yet also untroubled by doubt, and therefore strong; attracting to themselves the best as well as the worst of his qualities, and eventually becoming an obsession of the most intractable kind. (Dyson 118)
Gatsby's dream has become an obsession, so tied up with his identity—which itself is part of the dream—that the death of the dream must bring about the death of the dreamer.

Gatsby's dream of perfection in the garden of the blue lawn was doomed to failure, however, just like Ahab's and Huck's. Because his union with Daisy will require contact with mortality, he can no longer in his imagination "romp with the mind of God." Gatsby knows, however, what he is doing:

It is significant that Gatsby's commitment to Daisy is not merely the result of passion but rather one he makes deliberately, with the full knowledge that in so doing he will compromise his dream. (Parr 65)

But just as Ahab must go on with his quest because the course is laid out on iron rails and Huck must go to the Territory rather than be confined to civilization, Gatsby must carry through with his dream and its inevitable failure. His entire identity as a tragic hero depends on its completion, merging with Daisy in his attempt to recapture the garden.

Through Nick Carraway and his rendering of Gatsby's search for "his incorruptible dream," (GG 162) Gatsby's defeat reaches the level of tragedy. "The tragedy—for it is a tragic novel, though of an unorthodox kind--lies in the fact that Gatsby can go only so far and no further" (Dyson
I would argue that Gatsby, like Ahab and even Huck (or at least his author), knew that following his dream would end in disaster; however, as a tragic hero, he must continue its pursuit. The inevitability of tragedy makes the running up against the wall of human potential necessary—kicking against the pricks. The tragic figure is trapped inside himself as his own worse enemy.

Annette Kolodny observes that

"The colossal vitality of [Gatsby's] illusion," which had kept his image of Daisy inviolate in his heart for five years, stands, at the end of the novel, as a kind of miniature American history itself, with its pastoral longings both to return and to master the beautiful and bountiful femininity of the new continent. (Lav 139)

Comparing Gatsby's dream to the American dream, the same paradox of inevitable failure exists: by trying to realize the American dream of perfection in the new world garden, by trying to conquer her physically, by trying to deny the real existence of Eve, not as some means to achieving a male dream based on a living separate person, the American dream has also failed. Eve will not be categorized or diminished. She will not go away. She cannot "un-sin" or "un-learn" the knowledge that she acquired in picking the fruit from the tree. As much as the male dream may want to preserve, admire, and keep the "golden girl" "high in the white
palace," she will still escape to live out her life in autonomy. She will, like Daisy, drive too fast and rip off Myrtle Wilson's breast of the new world. Daisy, by rejecting Jay Gatsby's dream of recreating the past, directs her own path and makes a future: she kills her husband's mistress and conspires with him to do away with hers, "safe and proud above the hot struggles of the poor" (GG 157). Whether by accident or by intention, Daisy—the rarefied object of Jay Gatsby's illusions, the Eve that he wanted to "take" and lend credence to his own self-creativity—significantly becomes the actor instead of the object in the novel. Her actions at the end of the novel have more of an effect on people's lives than all of Gatsby's transcendental dreaming.

In The Great Gatsby, Fitzgerald created an allegory for America, the country that was founded on its own "Platonic conception" of itself. Its male dreamers, in trying to conquer a new land that they saw metaphorically as female, desired to take her and preserve her at the same time, an impossibility. As Judith Fetterley maintains, the background for the experience of disillusionment and betrayal revealed in the novel is the discovery of America, and Daisy's failure to live up to the expectations of Gatsby is symbolic of the failure of America to live up to
the expectations of the imagination of the men who "discovered" it. (xiii)

The novel's last page has, since the book's publication, been one of the most beautiful and tragic passages in American literature. It can serve as a conclusion and as a eulogy for the failed American dream in *The Great Gatsby*:

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, the trees that made way for Gatsby's house, had once pandered and whispered to the last and greatest of all human dreams; for a transitory and enchanted moment man must have held his breath in this 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 with his capacity for wonder.

And as I sat there, brooding on the old unknown world, I thought of Gatsby's wonder when he 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.

Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter—tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther . . . . And one fine morning—

So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past. (GG 189)⁶

Nick realizes, although Gatsby never does, that his dream of transcending his mortal bounds was impossible to reach. The green light of Daisy's dock and the green land that the Dutch sailors saw was not a fresh, virginal woman waiting to be taken and appropriated into their images of themselves; their American dreams fail tragically because of the resistance of the American Eve to pander to their wishes.
Notes

1"Andrea Del Sarto," 11. 97-98.

2From "The Crack-Up," 69.

3Many feel that if Fitzgerald had lived long enough to complete The Last Tycoon, it might have surpassed Gatsby in its complexity, depth, and language.

4The word orgastic in this passage is interesting because in most of the copies of the novel, which use Edmund Wilson's re-edited text of 1941, it appears as orgiastic. Wilson assumed that Fitzgerald misspelled the word—a fact that would not have been surprising. However, Fitzgerald in a letter to Maxwell Perkins made clear that orgastic is the world he intended because "'Orgastic' is the adjective from 'orgasm' and it expresses exactly the intended ecstasy" (quoted in Bruccoli's biography, Some Kind of Epic Grandeur 218-19). The new Cambridge edition of The Great Gatsby, edited by Bruccoli, restores Fitzgerald's spelling of the word, as well as much of his original, although idiosyncratic, punctuation. Clearly, with all the sexual imagery contained in the book, especially the last page, orgastic clearly captures the intensity of Gatsby's dream.
CHAPTER VI

THE FALLEN GARDEN AND THE SOUND AND THE FURY:
"LIKE A RUIN OR A LANDMARK"

"The will cannot will backwards; and that he cannot break time and time's covetousness, that is the will's loneliest melancholy." Frederick Nietzsche

"Treasure, prey, sport and danger, nurse, guide, judge, mediatrix, mirror, woman is the Other in whom the subject transcends himself without being limited, who opposes him without denying him; she is the Other who lets herself be taken without ceasing to be the Other, and therein she is so necessary to man's happiness and to his triumph that it can be said that if she did not exist, men would have invented her." Philip Weinstein

A Faulkner woman, Caddy Compson of The Sound and the Fury, can take us back full circle to Hester, the Eve who would not fit the mold society made for her. She is a "turbulent little Eve, rash and defiant, perched on a pear tree, and already significantly associated with the Edenic innocence of trees and with mud, symbol of guilt and sin" (Bleikasten, Most Splendid 55). Caddy is a the definitive
Other to her three brothers, and their reactions to her provide the novel's organization:

Like everything in the novel's field of symbolic forces, [Caddy] carries a double valence. She is Little sister Death, representing both the injury and its symbolic transformation into, respectively, a feminine comforter (for Benjy), a chivalric object (for Quentin), and an object of revenge (for Jason). She is passion and death given the elusive intimacy of a sister, as a sister is her brothers' own close relation but finally unpossessable. (Wadlington, Reading 98-99)

Caddy is expected by her three brothers, however, to fit their images of Eve: earth mother (Benjy), idealized virgin (Quentin), and scapegoat for all the world's problems and ills (Jason). Caddy, with her shadowiness in the novel, represents the deathly alienation of experience for each brother, the passions that should be theirs rather than inflicted on them. Yet Caddy embodies not only this mortal threat to their self-esteem but the desired promise of a remedy. (Wadlington, Reading 98)

However, she will not perform these roles. She will not fit Benjy's image of the comforting earth mother who constantly
nurtures him; she leaves him to find her own life. She will not fit into Quentin's image of the pure sister who carries the responsibility of the fall of humanity; she sins and deserts him. She will not fit Jason's image of the scapegoat for his misfortunes; although she leaves him with the responsibility of another fallen Eve, he must face the truth of his own greedy stupidity after Quentin takes what has really been hers all along. She will not be the Eve that these three men, these "composite" Adams, need.

Faulkner himself was greatly interested in the American dream and the Eden myth; he even planned a book called The American Dream (Meriwether vii). He remarks in an essay intended for that book:

This was the American Dream: a sanctuary on the earth for individual man: a condition in which he could be free not only of the old established closed-corporation hierarchies of arbitrary power which had oppressed him as a mass, but free of that mass into which the hierarchies of church and state had compressed and held him individually thralled and individually impotent. ("On Privacy" 62)

As Frederick Karl, one of Faulkner's most recent biographers, claims, Faulkner's childhood experiences make him aware of the loss of Eden, or of a possibly recoverable Eden which
once existed and which no longer functions for him. . . . His entire body of work, with its explicit hatred of modern life and its attendant culture, bespeaks nostalgia for Eden which he yearns for and yet knows can hardly be regained. (21)

Many of Faulkner's works "demonstrate an emotional commitment to the paradigm of the Fall as a means of representing the human sense of isolation and alienation" (Fletcher 142). Faulkner saw in the myth of Eden an image for the myth of the South, which was to him America.³ Their similar fates of lost innocence and the introduction of evil made them to Faulkner suitable counterparts; the myth of the Fall being so enmeshed in Western consciousness broadened and enriched his tales of the South by giving them the same serious and tragic tone. According to Herman E. Spivey, Faulkner did not believe in the possibility for a second chance for mankind in the New World garden:

Faulkner was too acutely aware of debasing human conduct, the omnipresence and force of evil, to accept the image of the American as a new Adam with a new opportunity in a new country, an innocent man with a second chance. (504)

He asserts that, however, Faulkner "does not escape the power of one aspect of the Adamic vision of life, lonely man occasionally achieving strength and maturity through contact
with evil" (505). For Faulkner, then, the myth of Eden is not something he personally believes is possible; however, many of his male characters, especially the three in *The Sound and the Fury* meet tragedy when they try to recreate the Garden at the Compson house. Their Eve, Caddy, refuses to offer them that second chance that a return to the garden implies.

Well documented also is Faulkner's desire to create in *The Sound and the Fury* a "tragic little girl," a fallen Eve: Around this central image—that of the little girl in the tree—are clustered other Edenic allusions and images that form a leitmotif: the innocent Benjy; the bright, flower-filled garden through which a stream runs; and finally, the frog, snake, and bird in the pattern of action leading up to the tree. (Fletcher 142)

Clearly in Faulkner's mind, Caddy is at the center of the novel although she is not allowed to tell her own version of the story that Faulkner tried four times to tell and still could not get it right. Faulkner relates that "I, who had three brothers and no sisters and was destined to lose my first daughter in infancy, began to write about a little girl" (Intro. 222).

The four parts of the novel represent the four different views of Caddy, or the Eve of this novel. Faulkner even wrote the appendix sixteen years after the
original publication to give a fifth view of his "heart's darling." Each one tries to "get at" Caddy's essence, the magnitude of her sin, the manifestations of her unvirginity. As Catherine B. Baum claims, "the main function of the other characters [in The Sound and the Fury] is to reveal something about Caddy" (33). David Minter sees Caddy's role as a surrogate for failed parents: "Like Benjy, Quentin and Jason also turn toward Caddy, seeking to find in her some way of meeting needs ignored or thwarted by their parents" (125). As André Bleikasten proposes, Caddy is in turn sister and mother, virgin and whore, angel and demon; she at once embodies fecundity and foulness, the nostalgia for innocence and the call to corruption, the promise of life and the vertigo of death. She is in fact what woman has been in man's imagination: the figure par excellence of the Other, a blank screen onto which he projects both his desires and his fears, his love and his hate. . . a myth and a mirage, a mere fantasy of the Self. (Most Splendid 62)

I do not think that Bleikasten over-emphasizes Caddy's importance to this novel, as she struggles to be herself instead of the Eve as savior (Benjy and Quentin) or the Eve as scapegoat (Jason).

Benjy views Caddy possibly the most selfishly because he is totally sensual; because he cannot think rationally,
she is only important to him for what she can do for him—give him comfort, peace, and warmth. He does not see Caddy as a separate person, just as he does not see the fire as anything separate in itself, just a "bright shape of sleep."

Benjy has not gone through Freud's Oedipal separation; therefore, Caddy remains forever part of himself. Hence he bellows at the fence on Sundays when men play golf in Caddy's field and he cries when he looks at the wall where the mirror used to be.

Just as Nick Carraway is Fitzgerald's master narrator because of his combination of subjectivity and objectivity, Benjy Compson is Faulkner's because of simultaneous subjective reactions to Caddy and the Compson situation and his total objective rendering of time and space because of his mental deficiencies. As Irving Howe observes, of "all the Compsons, Benjy alone is able to retain the past; he alone has not suffered it in conscious experience" (158). He can be the most effective narrator because of his ability to reveal everything and nothing at the same time. As Howe claims, "Benjy, precisely because he lacks formed personality and has no need for detachment, can reveal the Compsons in both intimacy and distance, completeness and chaos" (160). He "embodies a kind of purity that is very much this side of good and evil, yet he never presumes, for he has not even learned, to judge or reject" (161). As a result of Benjy's narration, the reader gets to "see" the
Compsons and their tragic struggle to make sense of their world; Faulkner's modernism comes through in Benjy's existentialism: "By making the past seem simultaneous with the present, Faulkner gains remarkable moments of pathos, moments sounding the irrevocable sadness that comes from a recognition of decline and failure" (Howe 164).

Benjy is a prelapsarian Adam who exists in a post-lapsarian world under the influence of the fall: Benjy is "Faulkner's human equivalent of innocence, and in his lack of knowledge of good and evil, he represents the kind of blissful prelapsarian state that Milton dramatizes in Paradise Lost" (Fletcher 143). As Constance Hill Hall notes, it surely is a "blighted garden where he dwells" (38). His misery, also, points to the Fall and the anguish it brings into the world. His intrapment in the physical world of the idiot . . . suggests Adam's grief at the news that he must quit Paradise: the 'sorrow' that 'all his senses bound' (SF, 344-45; PL XI. 264-65)" (Hall 60).

He is truly the idiot (or at least one of them) who tells this tale "full of sound and fury," certainly signifying more than nothing. We must also look at another Adam who renders Eve and her sin differently.

Jason simply blames Caddy for all that is wrong with the Compson household, and we as readers can blame her for
his views about all women. He clearly has no respect for any of the women with whom he has contact; not his mother whom he tolerates, nor Dilsey, whom he fears. His niece he loathes but needs for her money, and his girlfriend he does not respect but needs for sex. "Once a bitch, always a bitch" pretty much sums up Jason's feelings for all women:

Woman became for Jason the supreme enemy, the first object of his hatred and resentment: she is to him the most perverse embodiment of irrationality, and therefore a permanent challenge to his schemes and calculations, an ever-present threat impossible to avert. (Bleikasten, Most Splendid 156-57)

But Caddy is his easiest target: she is the one who because of her promiscuity has left him the responsibility of rearing her daughter, and her money for Quentin becomes an important part of his livelihood. David Minter remarks that "[l]usting after an inheritance, and believing his parents to have sold his birthright, Jason tries to make Caddy the instrument of a substitute fortune" ("Childhood" 118). He treats her, characteristically, as a commodity. His cruelty to her is evident in the scene when he hold the baby Quentin out the window of the buggy as he drives by her, so that she can see her "for a minute." He threatens her with possible permanent isolation from her daughter if she comes around the place again. Clearly, Jason resents his sister who
abandoned the family; however, he needs her to keep sending the checks. This Adam blames Eve for the problems in his garden, but he needs her financially to keep him comfortable.

Quentin, of course, has the most obsessive view toward Caddy, as his sinful Eve. Trying to recapture her virginity through reimagining the past becomes his interior quest, partly because he needs for her to be pure and partly because he is impotent himself of healthy sexual relations: the "preoccupation with incest is connected both with a veneration of virginity and, less demonstrably, with a dread of normal intercourse" (Guerard 117). The text suggests that Quentin dies a virgin. Although Faulkner stated that Quentin wanted to salvage some sense of Compson honor by remaking Caddy a virgin, Quentin wants not so much Compson honor as he does personal salvation. His immortality, like Jay Gatsby's, depends on Caddy's being a virgin--on her being the sinless Eve that will preserve his garden in prelapsarian perfection. In Quentin's obsessed imagination, his desire to unite with his sister bodily would be a way both to absolve her of guilt and to make him equally guilty. As Constance Hall asserts, incest "results, in part, from a yearning for wholeness and oneness, but it can never satisfy this desire. Rather, it insures the very isolation it seeks to cure" (45). She believes that
incest also appeals to Quentin as a way of halting time—of stopping the clock or even turning it back. It will, paradoxically, provide the means by which he will restore to Caddy the lost innocence of childhood; he will transform her moral transgressions into the sin of incest, assume himself the burden of guilt, and then wipe the slate clean. (45)

According to Hall, then, incest will provide Quentin with a way to achieve oneness with his sister; although she will not be sinless, he will be just as sinful, and they will share the guilt. The virgin may not be redeemed but she will not be damned alone. As Hall concludes, "incest, then, provides the nearperfect vehicle for the effort to possess absolutely and to achieve complete oneness" (49). Quentin can merge Caddy's sin with himself in order to possess her and control her. He can expose himself to the worst sin he can imagine, in effect overdose on sin:

In order to persuade man to recognize his culpability and to assume the burden of this responsibility, Faulkner like Milton feels it necessary first to impress upon him the ugliness of evil; and Faulkner too finds in incest the best metaphor for the horror of sin. (Hall 35)

Similarly, Robert Penn Warren notes that in
Quentin's attempt in *The Sound and the Fury* to persuade his sister Caddy... to confess that she has committed incest with him, we find among other things the idea that "the horror" of the crime and the "clean flame" of guilt would be preferable to the meaninglessness of the "loud world." (104)

As the typical modernist hero, Quentin finds unpleasant meaning preferable to no meaning; he could understand Caddy's guilt if he were responsible for it. As Warwick Wadlington observes, if

Quentin cannot have his exclusive One, Caddy, then he desires a permanent grief over the loss, for at least grief preserves feeling. He has had to learn that feeling is suffering, but then to be faced with the loss of suffering too is unthinkable. ("Logic of Tragedy" 418)

According to him, Quentin kills himself to preserve himself in his state of suffering in order to at least be experiencing something in response to her fall; to think about possibly sinking into indifference is unbearable for him. David Minter says simply that Quentin kills himself because he can't stand the prospect of failing at everything—the seducer, the avenger, the mourner. "What he cannot abide is the prospect of a moment when Caddy's corruption no longer matters to him" ("Childhood" 121).

According to Gladys Milliner, then, "Quentin, the Adam
concerned with sin, is tormented by thoughts of the innocent Eve in the tree and the fallen Eve with the muddy drawers" (272). Her actions of climbing the tree with her dirty drawers to gain knowledge is mixed up in his mind with her participation in sex, sin, and death.

Important to Quentin's personality is seeing him in his other novel, *Absalom, Absalom!*. If we are to consider Faulkner's plots and characters among novels and stories about Yoknapatawpha consistent, Quentin has already heard the story of Sutpen's tragic failure when he kills himself in *The Sound and the Fury* (regardless of the order of composition). Faulkner himself said that the "two Quentins" are the same: "To me he's consistent.... Quentin was still trying to get God to tell him why, in *Absalom, Absalom!* as he was in *The Sound and the Fury*" (Gwynn and Blotner 275). In *Absalom* Faulkner employs Greek tragedy and epic in a fatalistic rendering of the South to create a sombre atmosphere for the working out of the Eden myth in this novel. Here fate and the curse offer no hope for a new covenant; the blood sacrifice in this case only brings further ruin, not salvation. Faulkner's Eve, or the closest thing to it, is Rosa Coldfield, her name even suggesting the barrenness of a garden with this Eve tending it. Quentin describes her engulfed in "the rank smell of female old flesh long embattled in virginity" (*AA* 8). Rosa herself (provided we accept these words as her own) gives us the
most complete description of her unfulfilled femaleness, and hence failure as Eve:

 But root and urge I do insist and claim, for had I not heired too from all the unsistered Eves since the snake? . . . I waited not for light but for that doom which we call female victory which is: endure and then endure, without rhyme or reason or hope of reward--and then endure. (AA 144)

She even notices that all three women inhabiting the Sutpen house--Clytie, Judith, and Rosa--form a kind of composite Eve, a female counterpart for Sutpen as Adam: "It was as though we were one being, interchangeable and indiscriminate, which kept that garden growing . . . '" (AA 155). In this story, however, the male dream of self-sufficiency in the person of Thomas Sutpen and his garden of Sutpen's Hundred comes to ruin because of its fated destruction and the absence of the feminine:

 He lived out there, eight miles from any neighbor in masculine solitude . . . . in the Spartan shell of the largest edifice in the country, not excepting the courthouse itself, whose threshold no woman had so much as seen, without any feminized softness. . . . (AA 39)

When Sutpen "proposes" to Rosa, she claims that her "presence was to him only the absence of black morass and snarled vine and creeper to that man who had struggled
through a swamp with nothing to guide or drive him—no hope, no light" (AA 166). She knows that she can offer him nothing, and she imagines herself telling him, "'O furious mad old man, I hold no substance that will fit your dream but I can give you airy space and scope for your delirium'" (AA 168). Faulkner evokes images of both the tragic figure and the epic hero for Sutpen. His description suggests the image of Prometheus, who possesses not even madness but solitary despair in titan conflict with the lonely and foredoomed and indomitable iron spirit: but no ogre, because it was dead, vanished, consumed somewhere in flame and sulphur-reek perhaps among the lonely craggy peaks of . . . childhood's solitary remembering—or forgetting. (AA 167)

The novel goes even beyond tragedy to the epic with Sutpen's complete history/legend unfolding through the work, a personal story which is tied so closely to the story of the South and even to the story of all humanity: he "seemed to gather all misfortune and defeat that the human race ever suffered into a little pinch in his fingers like dust and fling it backward over his head" (AA 258). In Sutpen's story, the myth of Eden is complicated by the myth of Agamemnon, who rejected the feminine in his quest for male power and sacrificed his own child for his dream, only to be destroyed by that implacable feminine power. Sutpen
violates the feminine in many ways in this book: with Ellen, Judith, the mother of Clytie, Clytie herself, and Wash's granddaughter. He meets his death because of this violation, much the same way Agamemnon does, Wash Jones carrying out the blood-vengeance in place of Clytemnestra, who, ironically, in *Absalom, Absalom!* stoically goes on with life, surviving. Contradicting what Bon calls woman's sole purpose to white men—"to love, to be beautiful, to divert" (117)—women have invaded Sutpen's Hundred. His dream, like the American dream, has been defeated because he has failed to acknowledge the importance of the union of masculine and feminine and to understand that there is no "untroubled code in which females [are] ladies or whores or slaves," as Henry thinks (AA 114). In this novel, the dream of the new garden fails just as miserably when the three Eves inhabit the garden alone, without Adam. Either way, with gender dominance and not gender harmony, Sutpen's hundred, like the garden of Eden, remains tainted and fallen.

What is important about the story of Thomas Sutpen is that it is a story enmeshed in Quentin's consciousness; it helps to define what he is as a man in the South. The story of Sutpen's failed dream becomes a motivation for Quentin's own dreams and part of the reason he kills himself: he knows that the South is not a place for dreamers, and he knows that, like Sutpen, his own dream of remaking Caddy into the virgin he needs for his own salvation is a wasted cause. As
Quentin ends *Absalom* with "I don't hate the South," he, in fact, expresses his deep love/hate relationship for the place of his birth, so much a part of his identity. He recognizes that his dreams of a new Eden have failed as Sutpen's have.

Quentin knows that remaking his own past in his imaginative efforts to commit incest with Caddy is impossible, but in his imaginative effort to remake the past, he hopes that he can recreate the situation that will save him. Of course, when his section of *The Sound and the Fury* begins, Quentin has already decided to commit suicide; he knows that masculine American dream of a second Eden has failed, just as Thomas Sutpen's does. Sacrificing himself or executing himself is his only recourse; he cannot live in the spoiled garden, but he has no place into which he can be expelled like Adam. The garden is ruined in his mind; he must destroy himself as the only way he can undo what has been done.

Clearly, in Faulkner as in many writers of American literature, virginity is an obsession. As in the feelings for the virgin land and the paradox of desiring yet unable to possess the unviolated femininity, the virgin in Faulkner's fiction figures prominently as an ideal—sometimes even unsexed as in *Mosquitoes* and *Sartoris*. Gordon in *Mosquitoes*, like many of Faulkner's men "devotes his life as well as his art to pursuing the figure which
exists perfectly only in thought and imagination" (Minter, "Faulkner, Childhood" 131). As Cleanth Brooks claims, "Quentin is not really in love with his sister's body, only in love with a notion of virginity that he associates with her" (327). André Bleikasten suggests, however, that Caddy's virginity is of vital interest to [Quentin] in that it guarantees both Caddy's inaccessibility to another's desire and the innocence of his own as long as this double insurance works, Quentin feels safe and pure, and can love his sister as his undisputed property. (Most Splendid 108)

She, like Daisy in The Great Gatsby, is not woman for herself, Caddy for Caddy, but woman for property, for symbol, for Other. She must embody purity and sinlessness; she must deny sex and death in order to go back to Eden and recapture perfection because, as Warwick Wadlington notes, "Quentin is both fascinated and nauseated by sexuality" (Reading 75).

David Minter observes that "Quentin seeks to turn his fair and beautiful sister into a fair, unravished, and unravishable maiden" ("Faulkner" 125), just as Gatsby seeks to go back to a past in which Daisy is the pure symbol of his immortality. Quentin wants Caddy, not for Caddy but for Quentin: "At the heart of Quentin's incestuous feelings is his narcissistic love of self" (Hall 42). Possessing Caddy
will somehow appropriate salvation to Quentin. He believes he can incorporate sex, sin, and death into himself and then sacrifice himself in the river, just as Christ took all the sins of the world upon himself then gave himself to death. Quentin wants to become sin in order to kill it. What Quentin cannot have in incest he seeks in death: "When the figure in the water merges with that of Caddy to become Little Sister Death, the incestuous union is truly death's embrace" (Hall 50), and Quentin's sacrificial act is complete. As Constance Hall notes, in "contrast to Benjy, Quentin is clearly the postlapsarian Adam, a man trapped in the hiatus between the Fall and redemption" (50). Quentin pushes himself over the edge and symbolically takes Caddy with him. Because she represents for him Eve and her sin for all mankind, it is necessary that he envision her in the water with him. As John Irwin asserts in *Doubling and Incest*,

Quentin's drowning of his shadow, then, is not only the punishment, upon his own person, of the brother seducer by the brother avenger, it is as well the union of the brother seducer with the sister, the union of Quentin's shadow with the mirror image in the water. (43)

They must die together, this Adam and Eve, in order for the ruined garden to be destroyed.
The final section of the novel, the "objective" section, the one focused on Dilsey (although she, like Caddy, never gets to tell her own story), also presents a limited view of Caddy. Although she is not present in this section, her absence is felt more strongly than her presence would be. Her daughter Quentin escapes down the tree that Caddy had climbed up, meaning that the bedroom that Quentin has sex in is the same one that Damuddy has lain dead in, further emphasizing the connection with sin and death in the novel. When Dilsey and Mrs. Compson enter Quentin's room, the text describes it as having a "dead and stereotyped transience" to it (SF 168). Benjy is still suffering from Caddy's absence, as Luster shouts "Caddy! Caddy! Caddy!" to him just to set him off (SF 188). Jason is suffering from his being "outwitted by a woman" (SF 183).

But the fourth section of the novel is not as much about Caddy as it is about Dilsey, the other Eve in the novel who endures and survives despite all the confusion and despair around her. The description at the beginning of the chapter mythologizes her and places her in the role of tragic matriarch:

The gown fell gauntly from her shoulders, across her fallen breasts, then tightened upon her paunch and fell again, ballooning a little above the nether garments which she would remove layer
by layer as the spring accomplished and the warm
days, in color regal and moribund. (SF 158)

It is this Eve, the truly Other Eve, who takes on the
suffering of this family and holds them together, "like a
run or a landmark" (SF 159). In her role as the Other Eve,
Dilsey provides a contrast to Caddy (in her righteousness)
and especially to Mrs. Compson (in her role as matriarch).
She is the stabilizing element of the household, this
rotting paradise. She loves and gives, but because she is
an Other—black, poor, and woman—she cannot save it from
its ultimate doom. She has no Adam to balance her strength,
and it is not her paradise in the first place. She can only
sing the dirge for the death of the American dream on the
"Old Compson place." Faulkner based Dilsey on his own Mammy
Cally, about whom he said that she provided "a fount of
authority over my conduct and of security for my physical
welfare, and of active and constant affection and love"
("Funeral" 117). He said that she "went through
vicissitudes which she had not caused; she assumed cares and
grievances which were not even her cares and grievances" ("Funeral"
117).

The appendix, although written later, has been taken by
many critics as part of the novel, as they mention Caddy's
vocation as the mistress to the Nazi officer. It affords a
view of Eve as the practical one, making out any way she can
without regard to her reputation. She is damned already,
thrown out of paradise, but she refuses to hide in shame. She rides in the staff car with her head held high. Maybe this view of Faulkner's tragic and doomed Eve is why he loved her so much: as a woman Caddy does what she has to do; she does not wail like Benjy, self-destruct like Quentin, or torture others like Jason. She accepts her fate and endures, like Dilsey but in a different way.

According to André Bleikasten, "Caddy is a pathetic emblem of that desired other life, while her fate poignantly confirms its impossibility in a world of alienation and disease" (Most Splendid 66). She is "the presence of what is not there, the imperious call of absence, and it is from her tantalizing remoteness that she holds her uncanny power over those she has left" (Most Splendid 59). In other words, Caddy as the desired Eve fails her incompetent Adams, and she demonstrates that the dream of the perfect garden has also failed. As Frederick Karl asserts,

[Faulkner's] childhood experiences made him aware of the loss of Eden, or of a possibly recoverable Eden which once existed and which no longer functions for him. . . . His entire body of work, with its explicit hatred of modern life and its attendant culture, bespeaks nostalgia for Eden which he yearns for and yet knows can hardly be regained. (21)

Caddy is not-Eve, the desired-for Eve, the ideal.
Monique Pruvot, in an interesting article called "Faulkner and the Voices of Orphism," makes a strong case for Caddy Compson as Eurydice, who, mythologically, is very similar to Eve, and she discusses at some length the idea of the Orphic myth as an important underlying construct for the relationships between Faulkner's men and women. In the myth, of course, the woman, Eurydice, represents the absent one, the one that is longed for but can never be reached. Pruvot suggests that "the descent into the underworld is a psychic experience which is undertaken in order to recover the feminine part of the Androgynous mind" (128). Much like Ishmael in Moby-Dick who acknowledges his androgyny, which in the end saves him, Faulkner's male characters often must make the journey to find the lost part of themselves, usually symbolized in woman. Because this woman is the absent one or the woman that can never be realized, like Eurydice in the myth and like sinless Eve as well, she becomes for Faulkner's men the femme purge (130). Pruvot accounts for the intensity of Faulkner's writing in his being "inordinately aware of the impossibility of recovering Eurydice, or achieving his dream, of writing the perfect book--and yet has untiringly made the attempt" (131). Caddy as Eurydice: "She is the presence of what is not there, the imperious call of absence, and it is from her tantalizing remoteness that she holds her uncanny power over those she has left" (Bleikestan, Most Splendid 59).
Just as Faulkner's males search for the new garden in hopes of realizing their dreams, Faulkner himself strived to perfect his craft, surely evident in his writing of *The Sound and the Fury*. Pruvot explains that the flight of Faulkner's male characters before some female characters can be ascribed to the fear of castration; it is also linked, in a way, to the terror felt by a writer who has decided to pit himself against the absolute. (132)

Pruvot claims that writing "is the celebration of the Orphic death of the poet, exchanging himself, word after word, for a work of gold; a poet whose fusion with the mythical Helen is precisely conditioned by his own symbolical castration" (135). While this may sound a bit dramatic to equate the process of composition with the author's loss of manhood, in Faulkner's case because of his obsessive nature, it is not too far off the mark. According to Pruvot, in "Faulkner's novels, love is metaphorized by a fire which is akin to an ordeal; Orpheus will be fatally consumed by it" (132).

Certainly in *The Sound and the Fury*, Caddy is often characterized by a flame. In the Benjy section Benjy narrates in his collage-like way his loss of Caddy:

> I could hear the clock, and I could hear Caddy standing behind me, and I could hear the roof. It's still raining, Caddy said. I hate rain. I hate everything. And then her came into my lap
and she was crying, holding me, and I began to cry. Then I looked at the fire again and the bright, smooth shapes went again. I could hear the clock and the roof and Caddy. (SF 35)

Just as Quentin knows that his imaginary union with Caddy—Eurydice or Eve—will cause his own downfall and damnation, Faulkner, according to Pruvot, viewed his writing as an experience like the descent into the underworld, an experience which he must embrace but which would destroy some of his masculinity in the process. André Bleikasten observes that Caddy in Sound illustrates perfectly this concept of the absent Eve—Eurydice. "She is the presence of what is not there, the imperious call of absence, and it is from her tantalizing remoteness that she holds her uncanny power over those she has left" (Most Splendid 59). She eludes her Orpheuses—Benjy, Quentin, and Jason—when they try to use her to fulfill their dreams and becomes their destruction. Benjy is left staring at a fire or a golf course, Quentin finds death in the merging with Caddy in the water, and Jason is left in the house with his whining mother and bellowing brother, aural reminders of Eve's sin and betrayal.

As Monique Pruvot concludes,

Although the relationships between men and women are often antagonistic in the novels of Faulkner, it is possible to find in that universe traces of
the immemorial aspiration of mankind, a dream which can be found in Gnosticism, in orphism, in Plato: the dream of Oneness, or fusion. (136)

Pruvot suggests, therefore, that Faulkner's males seek wholeness in the female, although wholeness (male and female) requires lessening of the male side of the psyche. The males like the Compson boys need Caddy in order to complete themselves; however, the "joining up with the feminine part of the androgynous soul is always conveyed in Faulkner's works by a descent and by an acceptance of the night—or of death" (Pruvot 139). Faulkner's males are not often satisfied with their struggle toward wholeness. As Adam blamed Eve in the garden, so the composite Adams in Faulkner's works fear and scorn women who seem to hold the keys to a higher knowledge, of which *The Sound and the Fury* provides an interesting and vivid example.

Throughout Faulkner's work the tenuous relationship between men and women makes frequent use of the garden of Eden myth. Just as Sutpen's Hundred paints an ironic picture of the garden as a place of sterility and death, the Compson place sets three impotent Adams who depend on their fallen Eve to give them what they need psychically. Cleanth Brooks provides some valid and useful observations about Faulkner's ambiguous view of women. As he claims,

Faulkner may indeed have had a rather romantic idea of woman. He certainly had an old-fashioned
idea of her. In the Faulknerian world men have to lose their innocence, confront the hard choice, and through a process of initiation discover reality. But women are already in possession of this knowledge, naturally and instinctively. That is why in moments of bitterness Faulkner's male characters . . . assert that women are not innocent and have a natural affinity for evil.

(68)

If we believe Brooks, Faulkner's women are superior in that they do not need to undergo an initiation to come to the knowledge of sex and death. Faulkner's men blame the women for possessing this knowledge and, therefore, accuse them of evil. Quentin's obsession with Caddy and her sin demonstrates this tendency to pile upon woman the responsibility for imperfection and sorrow, just as Ahab piled upon the whale's back "all the general rage and hate felt by his whole race from Adam down," and "burst his hot heart's shell upon it" (MD 267). Just as Ahab knows that the whale possesses a knowledge and therefore a power that he lacks, Quentin, and all Faulkner's men, feel inferior to women who take their sexuality casually. Faulkner's men, and especially his Adam figures--Benjy, Jason, Quentin--are powerless as men because they cannot acknowledge the power of women. Instead they blame them for their own inadequacies:
Faulkner says to us that a man is filled with fear and outrage and bafflement by women, that he blames them for his predicament, that he yearns for a world in which they are sinless and he is nobled, that his heart is filled both with the need for love and the aspiration toward perfection, with guilt and hatred for his own failures and the need to blame somebody else. In this sense woman is wilderness, is South, is lost innocence, is failed and sinful humanity. Of course, Faulkner hates women. Of course, Quentin hates the South. (Blotner 4)

In *The Sound and the Fury*, Caddy as Eve is the object of the hatred (Jason), longing (Benjy), and obsession (Quentin) of her three Adams in this fallen garden of Faulkner's novel. She is not afraid to climb up the tree and muddy her drawers for the knowledge of sin and death—"Caddy climbs up her tree to seek the knowledge of human relationships and experiences which her family tries to deny her any part in: love, death, sexuality, suffering and growth" (Davis 393)—but she refuses to live her brothers' lives for them. "Needing to conceal even as he disclosed her, Faulkner created in Caddy Compson a heroine who perfectly corresponds to her world: like it, she was born of regression and evasion, and like it, she transcends them" (Minter, "Faulkner, Childhood" 135). Just as Hawthorne's Hester
Prynne refuses to accept her punishment and become the sacrifice for men's sins, Caddy refuses to stay in the ruined garden. The tragedy in *The Sound and the Fury* is not the tragedy of Quentin's suicide or Benjy's pain, it is the tragedy of the inevitable doom of Caddy—representing the fall of all of us who seek knowledge up the tree in the patriarchal garden but who must escape the garden to maintain any kind of individuality.
Notes

1 Quoted in Irwin 102.

2 From "Meditations on the Other: Faulkner's Rendering of Women" *Faulkner and Women*, 97.

3 Vernon L. Parrington, in *Main Currents in American Thought*, equates the Southern dream of the agrarian lifestyle with the dream of Greek democracy in a kind of utopian pastoral, not unlike the American dream of perfection in the garden.


5 All references to *Absalom, Absalom!* are from the Modern Library Edition (1964) and will be cited in the text by AA.

6 Interestingly, in the *Sound and the Fury*, as we have seen, we have three Adams to one Eve, Caddy.
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

"[B]oth the Myth of America and the American Dream express the simple conviction that America represents an ideal, that we as a people are unique in both our aspirations and our accomplishments." David Mogen

A surprising number of similarities exists among these works of American literature—The Scarlet Letter, Moby-Dick, Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, The Great Gatsby, and The Sound and the Fury—commonly named among "the greatest" of all American novels. Besides dealing directly or indirectly with the American dream, they all possess some commonalities which bear some discussion and which help to justify their being brought together in this study. Each of these male authors attempted to break from his past, each wrote what many have called the Great American Novel, and each had troubled relationships with women. It is not coincidental that these are the men who created these American Adams who seek a second chance in the new world garden.

One such similarity is that all these novels can be viewed as allegories, a fact which has helped them to endure as lasting literary accomplishments and which strengthens the interpretation as works that portray the American dream.
They can exist on two levels, then, as individual works of genius and as allegorical statements about the American and human experience. *The Scarlet Letter* can be the representation of the female who refuses to succumb to the patriarchal system of suppression of femininity but who must pay the price for her rebellion. *Moby-Dick* shows the bitter male American dreamer seeking revenge for the castrating effect of the female forces of nature. *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* pits the innocent lone American male against the sinful environment and the confining civilization of females in the context of the sinful shore and the nurturing and maternal river. *The Great Gatsby* allegorically chronicles the quest for immortality through recapturing the past. And *The Sound and the Fury* explores the different views of the American Eve in her role as mother, whore, and lover and her eventual escape from the ruined patriarchal garden. All these works move from their place and time to some more universal world of the imagination. The male heroes in these works achieve tragic status as they seek to accomplish the impossible: negating the power of the female.² Bainard Cowan, in *Exiled Waters: Moby-Dick and the Crisis of Allegory*, defines allegory as a "cultural activity that arises at moments of crisis in the history of a literate people, when a text central to a people's identity can neither command belief any longer nor be entirely abandoned" (7). I propose that these works of
American literature can be read as allegories because they contain the central mythology of the American dream at the recognition of its failure, as Cowan says, an idea or a "text" that "neither command belief any longer nor be entirely abandoned."

Another common ingredient in these works is the presence of the mad character—someone who is unbalanced or who has lost contact with reality. In the context of the American dreamer, these mad characters seem to provide a warning of what happens to the dreamer who holds on to a dream for so long. Although there was no mad character in the Biblical story of the Fall and, therefore, seemingly no parallel for finding one in these works, this is, after all, a study of the American dream, whose failure seemed the last, best hope for humankind to realize a second chance. Chillingworth in *The Scarlet Letter* qualifies for this character as he monomaniacally puts everything aside in his quest for revenge against Dimmesdale, the man who turns this American Eve into the whore. While *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* has no certifiably mad character, Pap comes close in his outbursts and harangues against the "gov'mint" that would grant some kind of equality to blacks, and Huck is surely afraid of Pap and plans his escape because of his behavior. While Huck is the innocent American dreamer, Pap personifies the dream's corruption with his ignorance, greed, and bigotry. In *The Great Gatsby*, Wilson, obviously
a man whom the American dream has passed by, seems to lose his mind when he finds out that Myrtle has been having an affair with someone, and it is this jealous rage that brings about both Gatsby's and Wilson's own deaths. Quentin in The Sound and the Fury obviously is the mad quester, looking for some lost purity in his sister; he kills himself because he cannot accept living in a fallen world. And certainly Ahab, the crazy captain, brings down the entire crew of the Pequod because of his mad quest for the white whale that had "unmanned him." As Ishmael says at the end of the "Try-Works" chapter, "Give not thyself up, then, to fire, lest it invert thee, deaden thee; as for the time it did me. There is a wisdom that is woe; but there is a woe that is madness" (MD 612). In the quest for the American dream, the woe of its failure can turn to madness.

All these works have a fool or an innocent who acts as a control or as a foil to the dreams of the protagonist. Pearl, although maybe not a real innocent because of her supposed supernatural knowledge and intuition, is a seemingly innocent elf-like character who is the first to notice Dimmesdale's hand over his heart; she instinctively knows the significance of her mother's scarlet letter and will not allow her to remove it. In Moby-Dick Pip becomes the companion of the equally insane Ahab and reminds readers that perception is everything: "I look, you look, we look." He reminds us and Ahab that, as Emily Dickinson writes,
"much madness is divinest sense." Jim, in Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, provides the contrast to the evil forces in society and he also becomes the measuring stick of Huck's own morality; Jim is the sinless innocent who forces Huck to an emotional climax of choosing between his head and his heart. In Gatsby possibly the Wilsons are the fools or innocents who get caught up in the larger conflicts of the story played out by the more important characters of Gatsby and Tom. The Wilsons are caught in the middle; however, Myrtle's death and her husband's revenge force the novel to its climax. Benjy, of course, is Faulkner's fool in The Sound and the Fury. Like Pearl, Benjy knows instinctively the significance of Caddy's sin; he observes and senses the conflicts of this novel and provides an honest and immediate response to them.

Initiation is also an important theme in each of these works; it is often necessary for the male characters to undergo some kind of trial or revelation in their search for the American dream. In some of the novels, the one going through initiation is the dreamer, as in the case of Quentin and Huck, but in others, the one who learns the most is the chronicler of his story, such as Ishmael and Nick. In The Scarlet Letter Dimmesdale must be initiated to the possibilities of the power of the scarlet letter; he must see what Hester sees in the forest in order to be able to give himself to it and her. His initiation fails because he
waited too late to claim the letter's power. Huck must be
initiated into the evils of society; he must also be
initiated into the world of Jim and humanity so that he has
a choice to make in the novel, needing something in the
novel to contrast with Tom's world of imagination and
romance. Nick Carraway in *the Great Gatsby* undergoes an
initiation, in his "riotous excursions with privileged
glimpses" into human hearts; he witnesses the truth of life
in the East or of life of exploitation and manipulation.
Quentin undergoes an initiation into the life of Thomas
Sutpen (albeit in another novel) whose life and the life of
his children provide a mirror of Quentin's own situation of
living in the South amid a decaying and dishonored culture;
in *The Sound and the Fury* he appropriates this knowledge in
his suicide. And Ishmael is initiated into the world of the
human will through witnessing Ahab's struggle and into the
world of love and community through Queequeg. For those
like Nick and Ishmael, witnessing another's failure gives
them hope and promise for their own versions of the dream.

Interestingly, all the books in this study have a close
association with water, which is often a feminine symbol or
a symbol of consciousness and therefore an important element
in works that seek to repress or restrict the feminine.
Quentin, Gatsby, and Ahab go down into watery graves as if
the feminine power brings down these masculine dreamers.
Quentin and Ahab, however, die of their own monomaniacal
hands, Quentin in a premeditated suicide and Ahab in a self-destructive struggle with the white whale. Gatsby, while he does not kill himself, is killed by someone whom Gatsby had disregarded as unimportant in his own monomaniacal quest for his dream, and he dies in a swimming pool. In *Huck Finn*, of course, water is important as it provides the safety and security Huck needs to escape the evils of the shore; as long as he is on the raft in the middle of the river—a feminine force—he is safe. Trouble begins when he is forced to confront the corrupt society on the shore. At the novel's end, Huck is forced by society's restrictions even to flee the safety of the river and head West, where all kinds of dangers and uncertainties lie. And even in *The Scarlet Letter* water is important in the forest scene, as the babbling brook symbolizes the boundary between the life of the spirit and the life of the flesh, between the life of the feminine love and community and the masculine one of rules and restrictions.

Biographically, the authors of these works have some surprising similarities, and conceivably these commonalities help explain why these men wrote these works. They may also have helped shape their attitudes toward women and the American dream. All five men were married; however, in every case, their marriages provided some conflicts with their work. Hawthorne and Twain were both married to women who attempted and many times succeeded in censoring their
works, women who were somewhat embarrassed by their husbands' bold and often rebellious works. Melville's wife did not understand his work, and although her father helped to support his son-in-law's work, she could not in any way share in the work of his imagination. Fitzgerald was married, of course, to a wife whom he viewed as a prize and a wife who caused him possibly to compromise his genius for money, as Hemingway and others claimed. Faulkner's wife was someone with whom he felt doomed to be with, since Estelle Oldham was his childhood sweetheart; while she was supportive, he did not find happiness with her, evidenced by his affairs. While these biographical details may not have any direct bearing on the works themselves, they do seem to reflect the attitudes in the works toward the independence of the self and toward women. These facts may account in part for the ambivalence toward strong women and for the tragic tones of the novels as their male questers fail to realize their American dreams of independence, immortality, and success.

Another important biographical fact is that all of these authors changed in some way after writing these masterpieces. Hawthorne was an unquestioned master of his fiction after The Scarlet Letter; he could no longer be a mere storyteller; he had found his place as a writer of tragic romances. Mark Twain's bitterness escalated after the writing of Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, as if after
chapter 31 of the novel, he shared in the failure of Huck's American dream for freedom, realizing the odds against which he fought. Fitzgerald, conversely, felt that after *The Great Gatsby* he had found his niche; he told his daughter in later years that he wished he had maintained the fictional power that *Gatsby* had given him:

"What little I've accomplished has been the most laborious and uphill work, and I wish now I'd never relaxed or looked back—but said at the end of *The Great Gatsby*: 'I've found my line--from now on this comes first. This is my immediate duty--without this I am nothing'" ("Letter to Scottie" 172)

Faulkner, as he claims in the introduction to *The Sound and the Fury*, was never to feel the same way again after writing this *tour de force*. He, many years later in interviews and in class lectures, would muse that *Sound* was his favorite book, a "splendid failure." He felt that his creation of the little girl with the muddy drawers was something that he could die with:

"It's fine to think that you will leave something behind you when you die, but it's better to have made something you can die with. Much better the muddy bottom of a little doomed girl climbing a blooming pear tree in April to look in the window at the funeral." (Wadlington, *Reading* 100)
And Melville, like Twain, became more bitter and cynical after *Moby-Dick*, going on to write *Pierre* and *The Confidence-Man* with their negative view of humanity.\(^3\)

Another important and interesting similarity between these works involves the narration; point of view becomes crucial in these works in their interpretation of the American dream. In four of the five works, a first-person narrator relates the tragic story of the American dreamer. *Huck Finn*, in a masterful use of the first person, tells his own story of the conflict with his conscience. *Twain* achieves a subjectivity and a reliability (not of the events but of the emotions) that enables readers to experience the dilemma Huck confronts. *Nick Carraway* tells the story of *Jay Gatsby* since Gatsby cannot tell his own; *Nick's* combined subjectivity and objectivity gives the novel what it needs simultaneously to create sympathy and distance in the reader. *Quentin* tells his own story in his section of *The Sound and the Fury*, as do *Benjy* and *Jason* as they all attempt to "get at" Caddy, the real focus of the novel. As *Faulkner* himself said, he did not want to risk language on Caddy but to keep her above the fray of words that the males in the novel engage. And, of course, *Ishmael* narrates *Moby-Dick*, the "one escaped" to tell Ahab's story. Like *Nick Carraway*, he is both an insider and an outsider and can provide for readers the kind of sympathy and criticism
needed to examine these tragic heroes and share in their pain.

Mistaken identity is also a factor in some way in each of these works, another element that may be significant in these stories about the American dream. In each case, someone makes an error in judgment that reveals that he misinterprets evidence around him just as the American dreamer misjudges his mission. Important to the theme of *Moby-Dick* is the interpretation of the white whale; while Ahab sees him as the force that is responsible for all his problem, much like Eve is seen as the source of all male human misery, Starbuck sees him as a "brute beast." This disagreement about the meaning of the white whale reveals their different points of view and inherent conflict. In *Huck Finn*, of course, Huck's own identity is questioned throughout the book. He first kills himself symbolically in order to negate "Huck"; then he take on numerous other identities throughout his journey to the freedom he seeks. His rebirth as Tom at the end is crucial as I have said to the entire movement of the novel and gives it its tragic tone and pessimistic tenor. In *The Scarlet Letter* the mysterious identity of Pearl's father creates the suspense and the conflict in the novel, and Hester's pact to keep Chillingworth's identity as her husband a secret brings the novel to its climax as his and Dimmesdale's antagonistic relationship is played out on the scaffold on Election Day.
In *The Great Gatsby*, the scene after Myrtle's death has Michaelis, the Greek neighbor reminding Wilson that Dr. T. J. Eckleburg's eyes represent only an advertisement, not God. This idea of misinterpreting symbols, of course, takes on greater meaning in the novel as Gatsby imagines Daisy as the Eve who can grant all his dreams and help him to overcome mortality. And in *The Sound and the Fury* this same kind of identity confusion happens to Benjy when he mistakenly confuses "caddy" on the golf course with "Caddy" his sister, in whom rests all his safety and security. Benjy's innocent confusion foreshadows Quentin's psychotic imaginings of Caddy as the one responsible for his well-being and mental health. He misidentifies her as the one who is to blame for all his unhappiness and defeat.

What has happened since the death of the American dream? Have authors ceased writing about it? Certainly not. Norman Mailer's book *The American Dream* shows that the topic is not dead. Other works have appeared in the last fifty years that continue the tradition of the failed American dream. But the focus of the last two decades has changed from the central, male focus of the American dream to a more diversified and fragmented vision of America. Part of this may be attributed to the death, or at least the weakening, of New Criticism with its emphasis on the unified text; modern critical theory—feminism, psychoanalysis, deconstruction, and reader-response—reveals a more
fragmented and imperfect text. There is less emphasis on the logocentric world of the masculine American dream; currently, the attention is on factions and groups within the American experience. Finally, all are getting their voices heard—women, minorities, those who have not dreamed the American dream. The American dream is not dead; it still lives in the literature that dominates the canon.

Without question, however, the Eden myth and its theme of the loss of innocence pervades the work of America's most familiar literature. All these novels—from *The Scarlet Letter*'s virtual allegorical rendering of Hester Prynne as the indomitable Eve to *The Sound and the Fury*'s interior monologue of the desperate attempt of Quentin Compson to preserve Caddy's virginity and his immortality—demonstrate the failure of that dream: woman will not be excluded from the garden or made to fit the desired function of Eve. Instead of reimagining the Eden myth without the fall or reimagining a safe, unthreatening feminine power, the new American experience should involve working within the myth that more accurately reflects the view a society has of itself. The literature of a people, more broadly the art of a people, mirrors the culture. As Lewis observes,

when the results of a rational inquiry are transformed into conscious and coherent narrative by the best-attuned artists of the time, the
culture has finally yielded up its own special and identifying "myth," (3)
in the case of America, the myth of the transformed Garden. The male-dominated myth of Americanness—flight from responsibility, sexuality, intimacy, weakness, and all the other facets of life commonly associated with the feminine—has failed, however. Eve refuses to be what she is not. "Eden was a fantasy world without either effort or activity, which the entrance of the female, and with her sexuality, has destroyed" (Millett 53). With the death of the reimagined Garden comes the death of the American dream of male-dominated perfection, and only by adopting a new myth or by incorporating the feminine into the myth can wholeness and resolution be achieved. Only when Hester, Daisy, and Caddy are allowed to speak, telling their own stories, and to participate in their destinies will Dimmesdale stop hiding his sin, will Jay Gatsby accept his mortality, and will Quentin accept sexual revelation.

Only through union of male and female will any kind of productive, fertile, and life-affirming cultural concept take shape. We must acknowledge that Eve is not to blame for all of humanity's problems. In her acquiring knowledge through her fall, however, she brought sex and death; in other words, she brought mortality, which we all would like to deny, but which is what makes us human. The American dream, then, has attempted to polarize the genders, and as a
result both have lost something; American literature has thus given us victimized females and weak males. Only by reimagining the union of the sexes—accepting sexuality, responsibility, and death—can either of the sexes find any kind of wholeness. Arthur Dimmesdale must acknowledge his own scarlet letter, Ahab must learn to get along with only one leg, Huck must stop trying to escape love and community, Gatsby must learn to live in his own house and stop looking across the bay at Daisy's light, and the Compson boys must stop looking up the tree at Caddy's muddy drawers and climb up there with her to look into the window of knowledge.
Notes

1From "The Frontier Archetype and the Myth of America: Patterns that Shape the American Dream," 22.

2The possible exception to this statement is Quentin Compson, who is probably not the tragic hero of this novel, which is far more than merely his story. Faulkner himself said that the novel was the story of the tragedy of two lost women—Caddy and her daughter. Others have called the novel the tragedy of Benjy and Dilsey, the enduring ones. I consider it a tragedy of human existence, of human beings missing the mark, going to their ultimate limits but short of their dreams.

3All five authors altered their names in some way, possibly as a way to break from their own pasts: Hawthorne, Melville, and Faulkner added a letter to the family name; Samuel Clemens created an entirely new name for himself, and Scott Fitzgerald signed his name F. Scott, minimizing the family name, Frances. All these authors, then, were very much interested in their personal identities and the importance of the signifier. The name changes also demonstrate their desires to escape their pasts and remake themselves in their own images, itself a characteristic of the American dream.
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