THE CREATIVE SELF IN THE HAWTHORNIAN TRADITION

DISSERTATION

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

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

Gladys L. Kirsten, B. A., M. A.

Denton, Texas

December, 1983

In an era abandoning age-old traditions, morals, and beliefs, Nathaniel Hawthorne introduced symbolic fiction revealing the fragmentation of his artist/protagonists. Recognizing moral and artistic kinship with Hawthorne, American novelists of Calvinistic bent--Herman Melville, Henry James, William Faulkner, and Robert Penn Warren--followed Hawthorne's presentation of the self operating within the creative process. For these writers moral messages stem from the impressionism afforded by the romantic mode and the conviction that human effort is blighted by the innately evil human heart. Through narrations presenting juxtaposition of conditions and ambivalence of conclusions, writers in the Hawthornian tradition compel the reader to interpret for himself the destiny of the creative protagonist. In these works the creative self is often threatened with psychical annihilation by its internal conflicts between pragmatic needs and aesthetic goals, social responsibility and professional dedication, idealistic pursuits and materialistic desires.

Works in this tradition show creativity evolving from conflicting forces within the creative self. Female
characters in the novels function as the creative imagination, leading the self towards creative consummation, sometimes bearing the creation itself, and always suggesting mythical figures associated with creativity. Male characters represent either the withdrawn, sensitive, idealistic ego, or the active, materialistic will. Confrontation between these internal forces produces the apocalyptic revelation enabling the self to transcend its condition by renewing contact with the creative source, the unconscious psyche.

For these writers the unconscious has roots in myth, legend, dreams, and memory and is opposed to sterile conditions producing fragmentation of the creative self. In the Hawthornian tradition, the American Revolution separated the self from existence in the timeless universal givens and propelled it into assuming the determination of history. Bereft of traditional guidance and belief and burdened by moral responsibility, the creative self in this tradition is driven inward, continually seeking balance between its internal conflicts of idealism and materialism and finding the only means to immortality through the creative work itself.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. THE EMBROIDERED ARABESQUE</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. SOUNDED THE DEEP</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. THE ENCIRCLED EXPERIENCE</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. THE SOUTH, THE SELF, AND THE SYMBOLS OF HISTORY</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. CONCLUSION</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The American writer has found his most natural expression in the romantic tradition, which has encouraged him to explore the ambiguous regions of his mind and to relate his personal impressions to past experience. A focus upon personal experience, rather than upon society as a whole, has always been a part of the traditional American view; the American has a historic conception of the individual pitted against material and spiritual forces. The Calvinist spiritual idea, for instance, that the individual must have a personal confrontation with his God, became an important basis for American religious thought. As religious faith weakened, this image of the self confronting the unknown became an increasingly significant aesthetic and philosophical concept. In literature, newly imported Romantic emphasis upon the self was welcomed by the writer whose self-awareness and introspection stemmed from Calvinist origins. Because of his Calvinist fatalism, however, this writer was unable to accept the transcendental optimism of the European Romantic. Denied the enthusiasm of those like Emerson who could embrace without skepticism the European naturalism, the American writer
of Calvinist bias was driven for literary inspiration and expression into his own depths. Although he was emotionally disturbed by what he found there, this self-examination enabled him to reveal the pattern and character of his own creative mind. The subjective quality of this exploration into creativity provided the sustenance for the first profound American literature.

Both the psychical penetration and the fertile imagery of this new American literature were based on historic custom; the Calvinist writer had the advantage of a tradition of psychological probing, as well as a rich literary imagery with which to express his findings. Pictures and scenes, emblems and patterns came easily to minds reared on the pictorial literature of the seventeenth-century English moralists and Puritan writers. Nathaniel Hawthorne, descendant of Puritans and the first major American Romanticist, found such allegorical illustration very suitable to the expression of his own inner probings, although the focus of his allegory differed from that of his predecessors. The seventeenth-century allegorist never questioned the existence of God, Truth, and Salvation, only his own means of finding them. Hawthorne, on the other hand, makes his quests for truth as dark at the end of his journey as at the beginning. Although he reaches up towards the Platonic image as ardently as did
Edmund Spenser before him, he is never able to experience the transcendent moment.

However stark his metaphysical conclusions, Hawthorne's illumination of his own divided mind in the act of creating was the beginning of a new, psychologically powerful literature. He and those American writers who followed his tradition—Herman Melville, Henry James, William Faulkner, and Robert Penn Warren—imposed upon their work highly imaginative patterns defining the nature of their creative realms: a blazing emblem entwined with images of torture and beauty; a deep, softly lighted safety zone of nourishing waters churned by gestating mammals and protected by circling bull-whales; a circle of human relationships, turning this way, then that, so no view is lost; a kaleidoscope of folk who create and recreate themselves in an endlessly interrelated world; and a spider web which fatally vibrates to the least touch of any of its parts.

The imaginative realm these writers picture is one of conflicts: agony and joy, isolation and communion, sustenance and deprivation, invention and creative frustration. To illustrate the conflicts and conditions of the mind as it operates within the creative realm, the Hawthorians often use the image of the house. Hawthorne introduced this important image into the American novel;
placing his protagonists within a house symbolizes not only their natures but their distinction from the rest of the community. In the nineteenth century the house image enabled Hawthorne, Melville, and James to express the increasing division between the imaginative and material worlds, as well as the resultant discord within the creative psyche. In the twentieth century it became the method by which Southern writers like Faulkner and Warren could evoke the tragic Southern experience—th fate is the final architect of human history. For Hawthorne and those writers who shared his concern for the rapid disintegration of the bond between the artist and the external world, the house—with its divided interior and detached condition—was the perfect symbol for the schismatic creative mind.

Acting as the writer's self as he works within his creative realm is the protagonist who is characterized in these novels as a creator and functions as such—a writer, a storyteller, a painter, a sculptor, or an artisan. There is usually some reference within the text to his "creating" or "creativity," though he may be a creator solely as a mode of perceiving, as in James's novels. If the protagonist carries the role of storyteller, he may not be designated as a "creator"; nevertheless, this is obviously his task. This storyteller
does not present a sequential narration, but one that shifts back and forth in time and space. He gathers and arranges blocks of information and impressions, adds to these blocks his own reflections, and presents these multiple digressions to the reader. The reader must then enter into the creation of the novel because none of the information he is given is either complete or reliable—all is ambiguity.

This ambiguity is incorporated in the very nature of the protagonist himself: like a chameleon, he adopts the qualities of the various materials he offers the reader. He is best described as a creative fabulist or chronicler; he creates the structure of the novel, organizes the themes and even creates his own nature through his responses to the mythical or historical information he has gathered from the sources around him. He is the sensibility through which the past and the present meet and the meaning of the quest is clarified. For example, most of the cetological information in *Moby-Dick* is gathered and presented by Ishmael, who has identified with Ahab's obsessive quest and now is driven to find the "meaning" of the whale. He is not content with mere presentation, however; he must pit both mind and heart against this vast accumulation of fact and fancy much as Ahab does against the whale itself. Thus he is in turn agonized, solaced, amused, beguiled,
stimulated, and, finally, terrified by his conclusions. In Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* and *The Sound and the Fury*, this is the position and reaction of Quentin Compson, who seeks to understand the South. After sacrificing his life to his Christian ideals, Melville's Pierre Glendinning cannot understand why the beliefs he ardently serves are isolating, corrupting, and destructive. In James's *The Ambassadors* Lambert Strether is first confused by, and then forced to choose between, the aesthetic and moral values of two cultures; and with the help of history, Jack Burden in Warren's *All the King's Men* seeks some saving oasis between the warring worlds of idea and fact. The prototype for all these questions is Hawthorne's Custom-House narrator; like all the others, this protagonist tries to establish his creative selfhood amidst opposing aims, tormenting ghosts, and arid realities.

As a rule, these questing protagonists are idealistic, introverted, socially alienated, artistically isolated, morally concerned, obsessed with the question of evil. Their actions and conflicts are expressed through the symbols of time, history, and myth; their isolation in terms of rooms of confinement, attics, prisons, rotting mansions, or similar remote and inaccessible places. They are truth-seekers, and their search is ended in some apocalyptic vision. While experience shapes the
protagonist's intellectual and philosophical outlook, his deepest convictions are linked to the inherited past. His passion brings on punishment; his self-will, tragedy. He invariably expresses deep fear of sex, although he sees human love as his only salvation. He is a spectator rather than a participant, and his passivity is often commented upon within the text. He has many traditionally feminine characteristics: hypersensitivity, overemotionality, perceptibility, a tendency to be self-sacrificing. He is acutely aware of, and is part of, all human suffering. In a sense, he is close to a naturalistic figure, without any of its anti-intellectual qualities; he is under the control of the external forces, from which he unsuccessfully struggles to free himself. From the novels of Hawthorne to those of Warren, these figures are invariably the victims of fate.

The most intense of these agonized protagonists central to this study of the Hawthornian tradition appears in Hawthorne's major novel, The Scarlet Letter. This novel is Hawthorne's supremely unified depiction of the creativity theme, and in this work several of the characters portray the different aspects of the creator, as well as those of creativity and its product, the creation itself. Since novels provide the author with the broadest scope for the development of his themes, this examination of
the creativity theme—except in the case of Hawthorne—does not deal with other genres, either short stories or poetry. Moreover, as *The Scarlet Letter* is Hawthorne's most successful presentation of creativity, the other novels in which he portrays the artistic protagonist are not separately treated but are used only as support and clarification of an analysis of the creative self in his novel. For instance, because so many of its images have been adopted by other writers in the tradition, and because its central image—the house—is of such importance to the creativity theme, Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables* is used throughout all discussions of the house image.

As the examination of the creative self proceeds, it will be apparent that Hawthorne's novels repeat his previous treatments of the creativity theme: just as Dimmesdale shares creative aspects with Chillingworth, Hester, and Pearl, Clifford Pyncheon, the aesthetic center of *The House of the Seven Gables*, shares creative functions with Hepzibah, Holgrave, Phoebe, and even the house itself; the creative fantasies that exhilarate and torment Dimmesdale are much like those that tantalize Coverdale in *The Blithedale Romance*; and Dimmesdale's desperate attempt to unify and purify his creative mind resembles Kenyon's search, in *The Marble Faun*, for the reconciliation of his artistic oppositions.
This, then, is the procedure followed in the investigation of the protagonist/artist, a method that provides some practical focus in discussing the five authors in the Hawthornian tradition. For each of the five authors, that novel in which he best portrays the nature of the creative protagonist, or that in which he treats an image central to the creativity theme, serves as the nucleus for the separate study of that author. For instance, since creative oppositions within the protagonist are presented with the greatest force by Melville in Moby-Dick, this novel is the central focus of the chapter on Melville's work. Although in the much less artistically successful Pierre, Melville is as centrally concerned with presenting the divisive creative psyche, the examination of Pierre is limited to those images in which this novel illustrates the characteristics of the creative self.

Less dynamic but better disciplined in the matter of aesthetics than Melville, Henry James dealt with creativity in most of his novels. However, James's The Ambassadors has a peculiar aptness for this study of the Hawthornian creative self in that the central protagonist, Lambert Strether, shares the characteristics and experiences of the aging American consul of diminished creativity, Hawthorne himself. None of James's novels more perfectly illustrates that Hawthornian artistic dilemma--the creative
imagination both burdened with and intensified by the Calvinist sense of sin.

Like James, William Faulkner never acknowledged a literary kinship with Hawthorne, although the resemblances between his and Hawthorne's work even to small details are too striking to be entirely unconscious. Faulkner's novels *As I Lay Dying*, *The Sound and the Fury*, *Light in August*, and *Absalom, Absalom!* show a dependence upon the images through which Hawthorne illustrated the psychic divisions and oppressive inheritance of the creative self.

Although Faulkner seemed reluctant to acknowledge Hawthorne's influence, Robert Penn Warren more openly treats the Hawthornian themes in his work, and in *All the King's Men* and *World Enough and Time*, he shows, as do those in the tradition before him, the mental and moral plights of the artist.

In the chapter dealing with the two Southern novelists, Faulkner and Warren, the reasons for the increasing self-consciousness of the American creative protagonist are discussed, with the recognition that this self-consciousness was the direct result of history. As illustrated in Hawthorne's tale "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," the American Revolution was the event which first separated the self from timeless and universal traditions and customs. A deep concern for history as it
The creativity themes of the Hawthornian tradition primarily serve to define the nature of the artistic protagonist, as he makes his troubled way from the novels of Hawthorne to those of the two modern Southern writers. The study shows what has yet to be fully treated by the critics, the striking similarity in the characteristics, functions, attitudes, and destinies of this protagonist, as he appears in the novels of all five of these authors in the Hawthornian tradition. If indeed it can be shown that this protagonist represents homogeneous beliefs regarding creativity, this may provide an insight into the central concerns of the American Romantic novelist. If the categorization of the Romantic is that of dreamer and idealist, this American protagonist is a particularly poignant figure, for he is a dreamer who always wakes to a nightmare, and an idealist who invariably experiences disillusion.

All these novels in the Hawthornian tradition, then, reveal the nature of the creative psyche—disillusioned, divided, frustrated, anguished, and self-absorbed. The imagery in these works symbolizes the creative environment and experience. Around these artistic protagonists are images of narcissism representing their introspection—
water, mirrors, pictures, incestuous relationships. The central image of the house symbolizes the internal and external conditions of the protagonist. The romantic symbol of the journey, and, in fact, all the natural world--flood, rising and setting sun, stars, moon, trees and flowers, the seasons--carry out the motif of withdrawal and return of creative flow, the destruction and restoration of creative power. Art and art objects are used to reveal either the secret aspects of the creative self, or the self's development.

The symbol of the creative imagination is usually embodied in a woman, pregnant or holding a child, or a woman of experience and mystery--a Madonna, or ageless goddess. The creation itself may be an emblem, a child, an inscribed coffin, an Impressionist painting, a single letter, or a stack of journals. The Endymion motif, the anguished pursuit of creativity, is imaged in episodes like Dimmesdale's reunion with Hester, Ahab's pursuit of the whale, Pierre's sheltering of Isabel Glendinning, Byron Bunch's pursuit of Lena Grove, Charles Bon's pursuit of Judith Sutpen; Quentin Compson's, of his sister Caddy; Jack Burden's, of Anne Stanton.

The persistent image of time in these works may symbolize the protagonist's great desire to create at the peak of artistic ability, or may depict the optimum moment
for his creative perceptibility. Thus Dimmesdale is compelled to confess on the scaffold at high noon, Judge Pyncheon stands before Seven Gables in the noon sun, Ahab twice encounters Moby Dick at the zenith of the Southern sun, Lambert Strether is stirred into aesthetic perceptibility as the lunch tables are set at the river inn, Lena Grove walks into Jefferson as the noon whistles are blowing, and, at noon, Quentin Compson takes a Boston trolley to meet his watery fate.

The transcendence of time, the goal of immortality, may be realized in the apocalyptic moment, the climactic emancipation of the creative mind. Here, in either the Christian or the demonic imagery of fire, amidst symbols of blazing skies, burning roses, illuminated spaces, and shrouding waters, the protagonist envisions a time when there is no time. This vision remains obscure, however; the transcendental experience is never culminated, but is simply the aborted creation of the self.

The protagonist is constantly seeking a balance between opposing forces that threaten to leave his mind irreconcilably divided. These oppositions may be represented by light and dark women, the forest and the town, the land and the sea, Europe and America, the natural and the mechanical, the idea and the fact. The protagonist fights to preserve his integrity, and in *Moby-Dick*,

13
Ishmael's balancing act is the most compelling example of this artistic dilemma—he must fight against the lull of sea, the lure of fire, and the deception of hope. Artistic discord threatens on all sides, often driving the protagonist to suicide, like Dimmesdale, Pierre, Ahab, and Quentin; he may sicken, like Miles Coverdale; become insane, like Darl Bundren; weaken, like Clifford Pyncheon; or he may seek escape in sleep, like both Clifford and Jack Burden. Particularly in Hawthorne, the dreams of the protagonist may illustrate, among other things, the division of the creative mind. And the Biblical image of the Fall, used throughout these novels, symbolizes not only the divided nature of man, but also that of the creative mind.

The nature of the creative self is divided between materialism—Chillingworth, Judge Pyncheon, Ahab, Glen Glendinning, Chad Newsome, Anse Bundren, Thomas Sutpen, Willie Stark; and idealism—Dimmesdale, Ishmael, Strether, Darl Bundren, Quentin, Jack Burden, Jeremiah Beaumont. The psychologically crippled idealist—Dimmesdale, Pierre, Clifford, Coverdale, Darl Bundren, Gail Hightower, Quentin, Henry Sutpen, Adam Stanton—becomes creatively impotent through abstraction and introversion, while the perceptions of the successful creator—Kester, Holgrave, Ishmael, Strether, Jack Burden—are, or eventually become, open to full experience.
All the images involving the artistic self are as much psychological as literary, and a great many stem from the example of Hawthorne. He may be said to have set the psychological themes for his successors, not all of whom are willing to admit his influence. It is true, of course, that romantic symbolism is ages old and hardly the invention of Hawthorne. But Hawthorne used these symbols in his own peculiar way to depict the artistic mind in search of creative consummation. This consummation has also been the concern for all those who write in the Hawthornian tradition, depicting in their crowning triumphs their search for the unity of their divided minds.
1Joseph Crowley, ed., Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Introduction" (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975), p. 6. Crowley states that Hawthorne was the "first of our writers to give the house a special metaphorical status as symbol of individual consciousness and thus of the freedom of the mind and the imagination."
CHAPTER II

THE EMBROIDERED ARABESQUE

A rich imagination and a high moral seriousness are interlaced through Hawthorne's art, which he saw as inexorably concerned with exposing the conflicts within human nature and the consequences of human deeds. He also realized that, while the best source for this exposition was in representing his own fertile mind, he could not depict reality or be readily comprehended unless he presented that mind not as a whole but as separate and opposing aspects that appear whole. To achieve this psychic fragmentation, he adapted to his fiction an artistic method that goes back to Greek mythology, was later adopted by seventeenth-century allegorists, and then by the nineteenth-century psychologists and Romantic poets. Using this device, Hawthorne presents psychological oppositions in which the higher and lower human natures function as separate protagonists.

This psychical division permitted Hawthorne to address himself to the metaphysical and social problems of his time, a period of rampant materialism and individualism. Most importantly for this study, by examining the conflicts within his own mind Hawthorne was able to dramatize the
problems of the nineteenth-century artist, whose duties, as Hawthorne saw them, forced him both to participate in the human scene, in order to carry out an active social role, and to isolate himself from the external world in order to fulfill his creative function. Hawthorne saw the artistic role as both tortuous and sublime, one that was destructive in its conflict between social and artistic demands and elevating in the fulfillment of its creative and humanitarian functions.

In representing the fragmentation of his own psyche in order to illustrate the concerns and problems of the artist, Hawthorne initiated a literary practice that was followed, each in his own style, by Herman Melville, Henry James, William Faulkner, and Robert Penn Warren. Hawthorne's own style is one of classic detachment of manner and universality of viewpoint; his best fiction is controlled, balanced, and dignified. Beneath the orderly surface of his art, however, runs a turbulent current of concern with the manifold complexities of human existence. Hawthorne saw the pattern of this existence as one of antithetical strands of human traits intertwined in a fatal maze. In an age of lofty optimism, in which men saw a linear progression towards human perfection, for Hawthorne there was only an endless circling back to the somber reality of the human condition; there
could be little human progress until the individual human heart was perfected, and there was no hope for that, considering the inseverability of that heart from evil. He saw man following a circuitous route towards what he hoped was salvation, always being forced to return to the dark center of his being. The bonds of time and nature held man within this tortuous labyrinth from which he could only hope, perhaps erroneously, for release through the mystical experience of love and creativity. As an artist, Hawthorne felt his mission was to expose the dark condition that he knew he shared; however, his self-revelation came not as a Romantic confessional but as a means towards presenting psychological reality.

He was a writer who, as Melville said, could look at reality without flinching; he was the first to succeed in presenting the nineteenth-century American artist standing on the brink of a newly hostile and incomprehensible world. The fragmentation of the artistic view was a new experience for the American, who was still operating under the homogeneous concepts of eighteenth-century metaphysics. In England, artists of the time sought to portray a social norm and to attempt reconciliation within social precepts. Hawthorne, however, through the means of timeless artistic devices, exposed not only the separation of the nineteenth-century artist from his society but also the conflicts and
firmly of his own artistic nature. That Hawthorne himself was still partly in the eighteenth-century world is obvious from his frustrated attempt to impose some rational order upon this complex world. Reverence for rational order is evident in the works of all those writers in the Hawthornian tradition. Along with Hawthorne, however, Melville, James, Faulkner, and Warren indicate that the rational spirit is recessive; in their works those protagonists who represent the rational and idealistic viewpoint are easily dominated by their irrational, materialistic opponents.

While Hawthorne saw the conflict within the human spirit, he also recognized these oppositions within himself; he felt that it was the moral duty of the writer to present human dissent and error, but he had reservations about creative activity, especially in his own genre of fiction. Comparing his own work to the great theological poems of the seventeenth century which had so much influence on him, he questioned the moral effectiveness of his writings. He wondered whether he, as searcher into and expositor of human sin, was not the greatest sinner.

In *The Blithedale Romance* Miles Coverdale, in whose character Hawthorne embodied many of his own ideas, voices this concern:

*It is not, I apprehend, a healthy kind of mental occupation, to devote ourselves too exclusively*
to the study of individual men and women. If the person under examination be one's self, the result is pretty certain to be diseased action of the heart, almost before we can snatch a second glance. Or, if we take the freedom to put a friend under our microscope, we thereby insulate him from many of his true relations, magnify his peculiarities, inevitably tear him into parts, and, of course, patch him very clumsily together again.

To a great extent, then, writing for Hawthorne was a questionable activity. Over and over, this guilty association with creativity is shown in his characters who have an association with learning and the inner life. Like Faust, they seem to demonstrate that the power of knowledge, since it rivals divine power, can work harm as well as good. An equally great evil that Hawthorne associated with these figures of deeper knowledge was their solipsistic concern with their pursuits, a condition which invariably isolated them from the rest of mankind. In either their exploitation of others or their preoccupation with the self, these characters all manifest the error of pride. For Hawthorne, as well as for those in his tradition, the creative self was one that was of psychological necessity a destroyer of human relationships.

These antithetical conditions of creativity are portrayed in Hawthorne's second novel, The Scarlet Letter, written in 1850, in which he shows the opposition of the material world to the creative imagination, and the strife within the mind itself as it seeks to create. As shown in
this novel, Hawthorne concluded that the creative life, and human existence as a whole, was a maze from whose entrapment only the creative act itself can offer release. Hawthorne's belief concerning the creative act would also be held by those writers who followed his tradition; Melville, James, Faulkner, and Warren show that the creative effort is the only possible existential transcendence.

In order to show the creative potentials of the human condition, as well as its fatal convolutions, Hawthorne chose the arabesque for the central image of the novel, illustrating the intricate relationship between the creative imagination and the natural, social, and spiritual world. Because of its symbolic interrelationships, the arabesque was a favored design of the Romantics; it was praised by Friedrich Schlegel for "its original, inimitable, and frankly inexplicable element, which, after all the transformations, still makes it possible for the old nature and power to shine through. . . ."² In The Scarlet Letter this artfully ordered symbol with its suggestion of endless convolutions of elements embodies all that is vital and meaningful in rigidly-organized Boston, but nevertheless brings its bearer torture and isolation. In order to lend the arabesqued letter another dimension of time, Hawthorne suggests its association with a symbol from ancient mythology, the snake-entwined aegis of the
goddess Athena, who transformed for mankind the weird dirge of the Gorgon into the first music. With its manifold implications, the labyrinthian letter serves as both the central image and thematic link between Hawthorne's preface and The Scarlet Letter itself.

At the time he wrote The Scarlet Letter, Hawthorne's personal problems intensified his normally somber views of human existence. Insufficient income from his previous writing forced him to take a position as surveyor in the mundane and stultifying atmosphere of the Salem Custom House. Unfortunate publicity following his political removal from office made him react with bitterness towards the townsmen. In this period of psychological turmoil, his mother died, an event which so strongly affected him that he questioned the point of human existence without the promise of redemption. Worried about supporting his family, concerned whether his creative faculties, unused for three years, could be revitalized, it seems likely that, more than at any other time in his life, Hawthorne felt the deep schism between himself and the society that he had hoped to serve as literary prophet and guide. It was an emotionally dangerous crisis for a man of such keen sensibilities, one that has close parallels to his protagonist Dimmesdale's rack of conscience, and it would be hard to believe that Hawthorne did not see the unfolding
of his novel as an analogue to his own dark journey into the soul. He himself saw the correlation between the work and his own mental condition when he was writing it; in the preface he states that

"it wears, to my eye, a stern and sombre aspect; too much ungladdened by genial sunshine; too little relieved by the tender and familiar influences which soften almost every scene of nature and real life, and undoubtedly, should soften every picture of them. This uncaptivating effect is perhaps due to the period of hardly accomplished revolution, and still seething turmoil, in which the story shaped itself."

Showing the close relationship of preface and novel, and that Hawthorne intended that both, in their different ways, represent his own condition, his character Hester recognizes that her mental turbulence while pregnant with Pearl has had an effect on the child's nature:

The mother's impassioned state had been the medium through which were transmitted to the unborn infant the rays of its moral life; and however white and clear originally, they had taken the deep strains of crimson and gold, the fiery lustre, the black shadow, the untempered light, of the intervening substance. Above all, the warfare of Hester's spirit, at that epoch, was perpetuated in Pearl. She could recognize her wild, desperate, defiant mood, the flightiness of her temper, and even some of the very cloud-shapes of gloom and despondency that had brooded in her heart. (p. 91)

The turmoil Hawthorne felt within himself undoubtedly enabled him to reach in this novel a depth and intensity of dramatic power that he had not previously, nor would again, achieve. Reflecting a search into the meaning of existence, The Scarlet Letter is a personal allegory
of the soul's night journey. All the writers influenced by Hawthorne describe similar allegorical journeys, and since the term allegory varies with the use each author makes of it, Northrop Frye's description of the form may be helpful:

We have actual allegory when a poet explicitly indicates the relationship of his images to examples and precepts, and so tries to indicate how a commentary on him should proceed. A writer is being allegorical whenever it is clear that he is saying "by this I also . . . mean that." If this seems to be done continuously, we may say . . . . that what he is writing "is" an allegory. . . . Allegory, then, is a contrapuntal technique, like canonical imitation in music. Dante, Spenser, Tasso, and Bunyan use it throughout: their works are the masses and oratorios of literature. Ariosto, Goethe, Ibsen, Hawthorne write in freistimmige style in which allegory may be picked up and dropped again at pleasure.6

The question as to whether Hawthorne intended an allegorical pattern with clearly defined stages confirming accepted theological and moral values is answered by his own freedom from any doctrinal commitment.7 His moral values and religious beliefs were personal rather than doctrinal; they evolved from long years of private study into human nature, for which his own psyche and experience served as a pattern. Unlike writers in times of greater moral and religious accord, Hawthorne and his readers had insufficient mutual theological beliefs to allow him to use a correspondent allegorical pattern. In the Romantic period, the shared structure of theological values had
dissipated, and allegory began to serve the author's personal commitments:

In this new world of questioned values . . . the author cannot portray a hero whose victory, along with its moral meaning, is presupposed. Rather, armed with the particular values to which he personally, and perhaps alone, is committed, he places himself squarely before the reader and proceeds to share with him a test of the worth of his values by testing his own spirit in the creation of the story.  

In his preface to *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne does indeed place himself "squarely before the reader"; he makes it clear that his concerns involve his own creativity in its relationship to the indifferent, material world. His problems in the story proper, however, are different; therefore, his procedures must be different. In the introductory essay, he is, as he keeps insisting, the Decapitated Surveyor; in the story proper, he is the Fragmented Artist. His problem in the novel is one of psychological representation; he had knowledge of psychology, of course, but the science was too new for its symbols to serve as communication between author and general reader. In order to fulfill his poet's need for universal expression, in *The Scarlet Letter* Hawthorne went beyond the historical allegory implied in his chosen setting to suggest parallels to Greek mythology. He had always been aware of the value of the classic myths in establishing the element of timelessness, and he believed that they were a universal gift, to be used by the writer as he wished:
They are the immemorial birthright of mankind . . . the common property of the world, and of all time. The ancient poets remodelled them at pleasure, and held them plastic in their hands; and why should they not be plastic in my hands as well?" 

Assuming the poetic license of adapting myths to his needs, he used them throughout his works and was well enough versed in Greek mythology to write two children's books on the subject. In his novels *The House of the Seven Gables*, *The Blithedale Romance*, and *The Marble Faun*, the allusions to Greek mythology are numerous; in fact, his later novels more openly refer to myth than do the earlier ones. In *The House of the Seven Gables*, for instance, the house, the elm branch, and the heroine Phoebe take on aspects of, respectively, Hades, the Golden Bough, and Persephone; in *The Blithedale Romance*, a more direct allusion involving the Greek gods creates the mystical undertones of this work; and in the last novel, *The Marble Faun*, mythology clearly dominates theme and plot. Hawthorne's use of mythology for psychological purpose was one of his great contributions to the American romantic novel, and a method through which he and the writers he influenced symbolized their own artistic complexity.

In Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, an earlier novel than those above, the use of myth is far less obvious. The search for any continuous mythological structure in the novel is as frustrating as trying to capture images
in a shattered mirror. The protean quality of myth, however, served Hawthorne as it served those who followed his tradition, and here Hawthorne's myth is his own, adapted to his own view of the human mind in conflict with itself. The classical patterns and figures are still there, reshaped and reorganized; the opposing forces are aligned in their timeless positions, and the classic journey toward regeneration must, of necessity, go through the dark abyss of the soul. In this novel the narrator serves as a disillusioned guide in a search through a shackled and decadent land. And much like the hoary cripple who misdirects Childe Roland, he is very apt to lead the questor astray.

The direct link between the introductory essay "The Custom-House" and the novel is the misleading passage in which the narrator tells of having discovered in the Salem Custom-House the faded scarlet letter A and the parchment sheets containing the facts which he says he used as the basis for his novel. In the lightly playful manner in which he addresses the reader throughout the essay, the narrator takes great pains to establish the "reality" of the letter, stating that its limbs are precisely "three inches and a quarter in length" (p. 31). This narrator, whose genius has been tied to what now seems to him the questionable and unprofitable genre of romance, sadly pretends to try his hand at realism. He has lost so much faith in himself
and what he has accomplished that he chides himself for not having had the skill to turn his Custom-House experience into a realistic account. He cannot forgive himself for not having been able to adopt the Inspector's gift for story-telling, along with the man's style and humor, into "something new in literature" (p. 37). In measuring himself and his literary work against those who have an honored place in American society, he jokingly notes that now his name is being spread throughout the world imprinted on Custom-House wares, instead of book covers. His apologetic pose, however, is not to be trusted any more than his claim to have discovered the Puritan document and emblem, or that he is the mere editor of the story of The Scarlet Letter. Like Hawthorne in this caustic apology, the authors in his tradition, from Melville to Faulkner, mock their own presentation of basic human truths through the genre of romance; "truth" for all these authors has a highly ambiguous quality.

The truth of the Custom-House matter, however, is that the narrator is the real hero of his story of moral exploration. His heroism is demonstrated by his devotion to a career which he, in spite of years of sacrifice, has considered a failure, and by his pursuit of a project which would for months bring no ease to his family's financial strain, and by his continuation in an occupation that he
himself deplores as socially isolating and morally impairing.

It is, of course, doubtful that Hawthorne saw himself as a hero; in fact, the poignant undertone of the essay suggests that here, in spite of his urbane wit, Hawthorne was suffering from an excruciating lack of self-esteem. His persistent comparison of his foes to beasts implies the unconsciously savage response of his sorely wounded ego, and his constant references to his ancestral claims to the soil hint at his own deep fear of uprootedness. And, in fact, this theme of necessary ties of person to place is carried into the story proper; in The Scarlet Letter the soul must undergo its regeneration at the scene of its deepest suffering; Dimmesdale cannot leave his purgatory, and Hester must return to it. This moral necessity of a purgatorial return is carried out in later works in the Hawthornian tradition as Holgrave returns to the scene of Pyncheon's death, as Coverdale returns to Blithedale and its ultimate tragedy, as Ishmael redirects the Pequod towards its doomed quest, as Strether returns alone and undefended to a vindictive Woollett, and as Quentin enters Sutpen's Hundred to purge himself and his region of a psychologically crippling human error.

From the beginning of "The Custom-House," as in almost all the novels in the Hawthornian mode, a purgatory
is implied. The eagle at the entrance of the Custom-House has all the ferocious qualities of a monster guarding Hades, warning all citizens "against intruding on the premises. . . ." (p. 5). Within the Custom-House is the land of the dead, filled with aged employees who are deteriorating along with the chairs in which they sit. Their minds and imaginations have long since atrophied. Only the memory of past meals stimulates them, and women, who would normally inspire creativity, are banished from even the cleaning chores of the House.

Predictably, the artistic imagination cannot survive in this place of the spiritually dead. The narrator no longer cares for literature or delights in nature. He finds his literary reputation has died along with his aspirations; none here have read a page of what he has written; all he has achieved and aimed at is "utterly devoid of significance . . . ." (p. 27). Just as the Puritan world has no place for the passion and vitality of Hester, so does the Custom-House dismiss the creativity of the narrator.

His creative imagination, however, will be the salvation of the narrator, as Hester's will be for her. In the deserted, upper-story room--obviously the symbol for the imagination since it is unused by the other occupants--the narrator discovers a link with the past and becomes
absorbed in the contemplation of the scarlet letter. In his contemplation the narrator disturbs the occupants of the Custom-House much as Hester, who becomes "like a possessed one" (p. 71), disturbs the occupants of the Puritan prison. His reveries take him back and forth in time, and, repeating the pattern, his "unmercifully lengthened tramp of . . . passing footsteps" (p. 34) awakens the dozing Custom-House officials.

But the idealistic narrator, as distrustful of the world of experience as is Dimmesdale, is lost in introspective solitude in which the "tarnished mirror" (p. 34) of his imagination rejects the reflection of his everyday life. He is still unable to learn the lesson suggested by the magic package of the ancient Surveyor Pue that history can provide the key for the release of imaginative powers, that through the past we can better understand the present, and, in the process, better know ourselves. In order to renew their creativity, all the artist/protagonists in the Hawthornian tradition must accept the lesson of history. Through his divergence from a historical pattern, Holgrave avoids an ancestral curse; through his study of prehistory, Ishmael comes closer to the mystery of the whale; in the historical milieu of Paris, Strether increasingly recognizes the provinciality of New England; through his recreation of historical events,
Quentin discovers the tyranny of pride; and as an unwilling witness to history, Jack Burden accepts the moral necessity of involvement in the events of time. In the "Custom-House" preface, the resigned narrator concludes that he must accept the past, that "everything was for the best" (p. 43), and remembering the charge of Surveyor Pue's ghost, he prepares to recreate history. Investing in ink, paper, and pens, opening his "long-disused" (p. 43) desk, the narrator again becomes "a literary man" (p. 43).

He is, unfortunately, a literary man without a head, and he certainly does not want us to ignore his "headless" state, a condition which anticipates Jeremiah Beaumont's fate in Warren's World Enough and Time. "Guillotined" (p. 41) by the vengeful Whigs, whose custom it is "ignominiously to kick the head which they have just struck off" (p. 41), the narrator, whose "own head was the first that fell. . . ." (p. 41) is in a state of unease, for the moment 'when a man's head drops off is seldom . . . precisely the most agreeable of his life" (p. 41). In this mutilated state, he has "won the crown of martyrdom . . . though with no longer a head to wear it on. . . ." (p. 42), and he is kept "careering through the public press in his decapitated state, like Irving's Headless Horseman, ghostly and grim, and longing to be
The sacrificed narrator has ruefully assumed the mask of the mythological poet and minstrel Orpheus, who, leaving behind his lost love in Purgatory and falling among the vengeful Maenads, loses his head in a barbaric sacrifice. The orphic allusion adds yet another dimension of time to the story of the scarlet letter; the emblem has already been connected, through Surveyor Pue and the ancient package itself, to the past two hundred years of American history; and now, with a mythological reference, it symbolizes a ritualistic role dating back into the dim reaches of western civilization. The nineteenth-century narrator, charged by his eighteenth-century predecessor with transforming into literature a seventeenth-century matter, is about to begin an ancient purgatorial journey in which he hopes to regain not only his full creative powers but his purpose and place in contemporary American society.

In the brief first chapter of *The Scarlet Letter*, the narrator merely presents a tableau of the forbidding Boston prison-house, the neighboring cemetery, the drab throng of Puritans, and in striking incongruity, the beautiful rose-bush before the prison door. In a gesture implying that it is entirely his to give, the narrator offers one of the flowers from the rose-bush, in hopes that "it may serve . . . to symbolize some sweet
moral blossom" (p. 48). In this Puritan neighborhood of suppression, sin, and death, the narrator, who has seen another such in Salem, is formally presenting a gift of love, the delicate issue of his own creative mind. Later, Pearl, another love-child, will deny having a "heavenly father" (p. 98), insisting, instead, that she was "plucked from the rose-bush" (p. 112).

In the second chapter, wearing the same lettered emblem that, in "The Custom-House," the narrator had placed on his own breast, Hester Prynne, with her baby, briefly emerges from the prison into the Puritan Waste-Land like a mythical figure from a Stygian underworld. This Boston Waste-Land is the prototype for those at the beginning of all the novels in the Hawthornian mode, with the exception of James's The Ambassadors. While the beginning of James's novel is also the renewal of the protagonist's creativity, the loss of creativity in the other works in the tradition is symbolized by the sterile environment of the opening chapters. Thus, The Blithedale Romance, The House of the Seven Gables, Moby-Dick, Absalom, Absalom!, Light in August, and All the King's Men all begin either in dry, late summer or barren, frigid winter.

The land that Hester Prynne steps into is as sterile as the narrator's Custom-House; its only touch of color and beauty is radiated by herself and the elaborately
embroidered emblem on her breast. The embellishment of the emblem arouses the ire of the already hostile crowd; it was

so fantastically embroidered and illuminated upon her bosom that it had the effect of a spell, taking her out of her ordinary relations with humanity, and inclosing her in a sphere by herself. (pp. 53-54)

As Hawthorne makes abundantly clear, Hester is indeed in a sphere by herself; in many ways, she is completely set off from the community. While the Puritans seek to degrade her, and succeed, at least to a degree, in subduing her, Hester takes on the mien and deportment of a divinity whose sumptuously creative nature is a threat and an irritant to these somber and materialistic people.

She is not a Puritan either by conviction or inclination; she has joined the community only to await her husband's arrival from Europe. She comes from a mysterious background on the Continent, from cities "ancient in date and quaint in architecture" (p. 58). Her lineage is noble, for her parents, though poor, were of "antique gentility" (p. 58), and her family home retained "a half-oblit erated shield of arms over the portal" (p. 58). She has the appearance of a divinity—tall, with a figure of "perfect elegance" (p. 53), and with a manner "characterized by a certain state and dignity" (p. 53); she is genteel "after the antique interpretation of the term" (p. 53).
Hester has in her nature something exotic, a "rich, voluptuous, Oriental characteristic . . . a taste for the gorgeously beautiful. . . ." (p. 83). Significantly, she is skilled in needlecraft, and her artistry is used in embellishing state robes. She also functions as a benefactress in her community, bestowing "all her superfluous means in charity" (p. 83). She has contact with civic leaders, and it is she who officiates at Governor Winthrop's death. She is concerned with the welfare of women and with reforms that would allow them a "fair and suitable portion" (p. 165).

Hester's characteristics are those which Hawthorne usually associated with civilization and the creative function. In The Blithedale Romance and The Marble Faun, the characters Zenobia and Miriam greatly resemble Hester in their association with artistic and moral concerns. And in all three of these characters reside the qualities symbolized by the mythical Athena, patroness of the Greek city-state of Athens, the goddess whom the Romans called Minerva, who presided over the arts and crafts, the civic concerns, and the just wars and merciful laws of the State.12 Athena was also the goddess of the moon and the memory, both inspiration for imaginative creation.

As a rule in The Scarlet Letter Hester is associated with the moon. Sunlight does not touch her, except in a
few dramatically important episodes: her sentence at noon on the pillory, the climactic meeting in the forest with Dimmesdale, and her union with him at the final scaffold scene. Normally, the sun seems to recognize that Hester's scarlet letter marks her as the moon's property—"not a "shining lock of her hair ever once gushed into the sunshine" (p. 163); and as she stretches out her hand to "grasp some of it . . . the sunshine vanished. . . ." (p. 184). Pearl realizes that "the sunshine does not love [Hester]" (p. 183), and, in Hester's service to the community, "it was only the darkened house that could contain her. When the sunshine came again, she was not there" (p. 161).

In the moonlight, on the other hand, Hester, along with Pearl, is able to join Dimmesdale in his midnight vigil, during which she is able to think of a way to help him out of his plight. In this hour she has also witnessed the death of the Puritan saint Winthrop, as well as the mystical configurations in the sky. It is in the moonlight that the imagination best operates, and night is a time that belongs to Hester. As the narrator states in "The Custom-House," the moon is the inspiration for literary activity, since the "moonlight . . . making every object so minutely visible, yet so unlike a morning or noontide visibility . . . is a medium most suitable for a [writer]" (p. 35).
As the divinity of human creativeness, Hester cherishes the things of the memory. To ease the pain of her humiliation on the scaffold, she retreats into her past, much as the humiliated "Custom-House" narrator imagines a future retreat into his memory. To Hester, reminiscences, the most trifling and immaterial . . . came swarming back upon her. . . . [I]t was an instinctive device of her spirit, to relieve itself, by the exhibition of these phantasmagoric forms, from the cruel weight and hardness of the reality. (p. 57)

In order to mitigate his own hard reality, the narrator, in "The Custom-House," bitterly projects into the future his memories of a town where for hundreds of years his ancestors' roots have been "planted deep" (p. 10), and from where he, humiliated by an unjust political removal, will be the first of his line to leave:

My old native town will loom upon me through the haze of memory, a mist brooding over and around it; as if it were no portion of the real earth, but an overgrown village in cloudland, with only imaginary inhabitants to people its wooden houses, and walk its homely lanes, and the unpicturesque prolixity of its main street. (p. 44)

Both the narrator and Hester experience human injustice, and just as one of the functions of Athena is to wage righteous war against inequities, so does Hester speculate upon reforms. In her bitter loneliness, she decides "[t]he world's law was no law for her mind" (p. 164), and that, to correct injustice, "the whole system of society [needs] to be torn down, and built anew"
(p. 165). The scar of punishment has marked Hester for life; her resistance now forces her into social and religious rebelliousness. At this bitter time in her life, if it had not been for the responsibility of Pearl, Hester might have come down to us in history, hand in hand with Ann Hutchinson, as the foundress of a religious sect. She might, and not improbably would, have suffered death from the stern tribunals of the period, for attempting to undermine the foundations of the Puritan establishment.

But again like the narrator, Hester finds that the art by which she first expressed her defiance of the Puritans is the only viable medium for communication with the citizens. Her art becomes a necessary decoration for all manner of public ceremony, much as the narrator's Salem must have capitalized on Hawthorne's public recognition. And now, just as will the narrator vindicate the memory of his persecuted character, so will Hester, the invention of his imagination, vindicate the maltreated narrator. She will incorporate the qualities that make up the creative imagination, and in the unfolding of her story, exemplify the tragic isolation of the nineteenth-century artist. Her child, beautiful yet unruly, is the creation itself. Hester feels, as would any creator, that her work was often beyond her control:

the mother felt like one who has evoked a spirit, but, by some irregularity in the process of conjuration, has failed to win the master-word that
should control this new and incomprehensible intelligence. (p. 93)

Hester's purgatory, the suppression and isolation of the imaginative spirit, is also undergone by the narrator himself, but his journey towards creative release must be carried forth in the opposing elements of his mind, represented by the contrasting characterizations of Dimmesdale and Chillingworth. These characters represent many of Hawthorne's own conflicts: that conflict between his eighteenth-century orthodoxy and his nineteenth-century skepticism, that between his reason and his will, and, finally, that between his ideas of good and evil. In all the novels influenced by Hawthorne, from Melville's Moby-Dick to Warren's All the King's Men, psychical oppositions continue to be dramatized by separate and contrasting characters.

In The Scarlet Letter the most psychologically interesting of Hawthorne's characters is the evil Chillingworth, who represents the obsessively materialistic aspect of the narrator's mind. Chillingworth's qualities are not purely the invention of Hawthorne, for this type of character appears in Romantic poetry and in the early American novels of Charles Brockden Brown. Although he did not originate this character, in The Scarlet Letter Hawthorne endows it with a dramatic veracity never before achieved in the American novel. He succeeds in incorporating into
this antagonist Chillingworth many of the elements later
described by Carl Jung as identifying one of the most dis-
turbing archetypes of the unconscious; it is the shadow,
which is produced, says Jung, by a moral problem that chal-
lenges the entire weakened ego-personality and results in
a projection upon the "other," or within the projecting
personality, of a threatening nature, displaying an emo-
tional, autonomous, obsessive, and possessive aspect. With psychological realism, Chillingworth forces himself
upon the vulnerable Dimmesdale, eventually driving the
minister into creative and spiritual consummation. Like
Chillingworth, those characters for whom he served as pro-
totype--Melville's Ahab, Faulkner's Thomas Sutpen,
Warren's Willie Stark--all carry out the role of catalyst
for the creative self.

It is significant that, at this tumultuous time in
his life--out of work, with personal sorrows, and with
loss of faith in his fellow townsmen--Hawthorne was able
to capture in Chillingworth some of the frustrations
and impotent fury which, in some part of psyche, he him-
self undoubtedly experienced. But whatever the connection
between author and character, Chillingworth reveals much
of what Hawthorne knew about the creative process, and,
in many ways, the demonic Chillingworth proves to be the
very source of creativity.
In his pursuit of materialism, Chillingworth seems far removed from the creative realm; his condition resembles that of the narrator of "The Custom-House," who has forfeited his writing career for the assured salary of a government employee. Chillingworth has abandoned his bonds to the highest human ideals, and now his destiny has entrapped him into a situation in which he will retaliate for his loss of love and beauty. Inextricably involved in the fates of two guilty and suffering beings, his relentless exacerbation of that suffering brings about his enemy's only possible emancipation, the escape from the fatal coil through the transcendence of the creative spirit. Dimmesdale recognizes that his final freedom is due to the agency of Chillingworth; he thanks God for sending him "yonder dark and terrible old man, to keep the torture always at red-heat!" (p. 256).

Paradoxically, the evil Chillingworth acts as a kind of redeemer. He has many of the qualities of the demiurge, the autonomous will, the power that drives the creative spirit towards regeneration. Hawthorne's religious ancestors believed that new life evolved from the fertile darkness of the lower nature, and Shelley, who treats the subject in his Prometheus Unbound, shows that the resurgence of the creative imagination is due to the dark struggles of the human will. For the Romantic sensibility, such a struggle was a
dramatic and personal necessity on each separate occasion when a work of art was undertaken. The Fall became . . . that necessary, obsessive moment which must precede the accomplishment of a work of art. Quite rightly the romantic artist sought to be possessed by his "Daemon." Anderson

Appropriately, Chillingworth carries out this demonic, yet regenerative, function; he gathers weeds from graves and converts them into healing potions, and although he drives the minister to his fatal decision, Chillingworth shares with him his store of learning. The physician's wisdom and breadth of experience momentarily release Dimmesdale from his own rigid orthodoxy.

Not the less, however, though with a tremulous enjoyment, did he feel the occasional relief of looking at the universe through the medium of another kind of intellect than those with which he habitually held converse. It was as if a window were thrown open, admitting a freer atmosphere into the close and stifled study, where his life was wasting itself away, amid lamp-light, or obstructed day-beams, and the musty fragrance, be it sensual or moral, that exhales from books. But the air was too fresh and chill to be long breathed, with comfort. (p. 123)

After this brief exposure, Hawthorne goes on to say, the minister and the physician with him, "withdrew again within the limits of what their church defined as orthodox" (pp. 123-24). The passage is a fleeting but provocative view of Chillingworth; here, he is no longer the evil exploiter, but the purveyor of wisdom as well as the physician. He is the Archetypal Savior—Aesculapius, Mithra, Dionysus—redemptive, dynamic, and revolutionary.
serve as the dionysiac force that will drive Dimmesdale on his redemptive journey.

If Chillingworth represents the dionysiac force, it is natural to look to Dimmesdale for the apollonian opposition. Dimmesdale does indeed represent Apollo, but here, as are all his positions in *The Scarlet Letter*, his role is ironic; he is the diminished god, as he is also the diminished hero and moral leader. As described in *The Iliad*, Apollo was universally regarded as the god of truth, whose word all might trust. However, Dimmesdale

had spoken the very truth, and transformed it into the veriest falsehood. And yet, by the constitution of his nature, he loved the truth, and loathed the lie, as few men ever did. (p. 144)

Apollo was the god of prophecy, the god of a "purely beneficent power, a direct link between gods and men, guiding them to know the divine will." Dimmesdale's prophecy, however, is aimed at what his congregation wishes to think, rather than what it needs to know in order to follow God's will:

a spirit as of prophecy had come upon him, constraining him to its purpose as mightily as the old prophets. . . . only with this difference, that, whereas the old seers had denounced judgments and ruin on their country, it was his mission to foretell of the high and glorious destiny for the newly gathered people of the Lord. (p. 249)
Apollo was the god of the sun, of purification, of light and expiation. Dimmesdale, however, seeks introspection, secrecy, and the dark: 17

In Mr. Dimmesdale's secret closet, under lock and key, there was a bloody scourge. Oftentimes, . . . he plied it on his own shoulders; laughing bitterly at himself the while, and smiting so much the more pitilessly, because of that bitter laugh. . . . He kept vigils, likewise, night after night, sometimes in utter darkness. . . . He thus typified the constant introspection wherewith he tortured, but could not purify, himself. (pp. 144 - 45)

Instead of the traditional journey of reconciliation, the redemption which Dimmesdale undergoes is also highly ironic, for it achieves a very qualified salvation. Instead of the tragic hero, who normally has had "an extraordinary, often a nearly divine, destiny almost within his grasp, and the glory of that original vision never quite fades out . . ." 18 Dimmesdale is the ironic hero. In appearance he is the opposite of the traditional hero; he is pale, physically delicate, passive, with large, melancholy eyes, and a tremulous mouth suggesting both weakness and great sensitivity. Confusedly following the maze of his destiny, Dimmesdale shows none of the fortitude of the iron-nerved, who can either endure or defiantly dismiss their crime. An untraditionally nervous hero, Dimmesdale set the pattern for the passive, cautious, moody, sensitive, and prophetic protagonists of those novels influenced by Hawthorne; Melville's Ishmael,
James's Strether, Faulkner's Darl Bundren and Quentin Compson, and Warren's Jack Burden all share the unheroic qualities of Dimmesdale. Describing Dimmesdale's inability to cope with his guilt, either to endure or dismiss his sin, Hawthorne says,

this feeble and most sensitive of spirits could do neither, yet continually did one thing or another, which intertwined, in the same inextricable knot, the agony of heaven-defying guilt and vain repentance. (p. 148)

Painfully uncertain as to his direction, Dimmesdale has a childlike quality and a modest bearing. Indeed, he has many of the characteristics of Spenser's Red-Cross Knight, whose shield is suggestive of Dimmesdale's persistent hand-over-heart pose, and whose virtue is also flawed. The Knight is assertive, however, while Dimmesdale is pathetically passive; in this quality, he resembles even more closely the sad Clifford in Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables*, who steps from prison ill, ruined, and unable to speak, feel, or even think for himself.

Like Clifford with Hepzibah, Dimmesdale allows Hester to do his thinking for him. Such dependency upon their feminine counterparts is characteristic of all the creative selves in the Hawthornian tradition: Pierre Glen-dinning is dominated by his mother and Isabel; Strether, by Maria Gostrey and Marie de Vionnet; Quentin, by his sister Caddy; Jack Burden, by his mother and Anne Stanton;
Jeremiah Beaumont, by Rachel Jordan. Dismayed by Dimmesdale's intellectual and spiritual paralysis, Hester is even driven to nagging him.

Preach! Write! Act! Do anything, save to lie down and die. . . . Why shouldst thou tarry so much as one other day in the torments that have so gnawed into thy life!—that have made thee feeble to will and to do--that will leave thee powerless even to repent. Up, and away! (p. 198)

But the ineffectual Dimmesdale is indeed too weak to stand alone; he can find regeneration only through the agency of others, a Chillingworth to make a retreat into anonymity impossible, a Hester to guide him towards salvation. But this inability of the hero to take charge of his own life, to overcome spiritual and creative malaise was a trait that was to an increasing degree characteristic of the protagonists in late Romantic and Victorian poetry. This condition can be seen in the poems of Arthur Hugh Clough and Matthew Arnold, who depict the disabled protagonist/artist unable to cope with outward confusions and inner uncertainties. This situation was not only symptomatic of the era, but it was also a valid literary device for Hawthorne's chosen genre; Edwin M. Eigner states that

The passive hero . . . was a thematic necessity in the metaphysical novel. His troubled lassitude offered the best symbol for the typical nineteenth-century moral paralysis. He wants desperately to break out, to find his Arnoldian vent in action, but the spiritual forces of his era seem to prevent him. The business of the metaphysical novel is to alter these forces by changing the world view, but the terrible passivity, though it is
undramatic, must be reported before it can be dealt with.¹⁹

Like Dimmesdale, Hawthorne saw himself as both prophet and moral guide for his society; this had been the role of the artist for centuries. Now, for both minister and author, there is a sudden change of role. No longer does either feel competent to represent the accepted values of the community, nor can either provide an ethical alternative. In following directions that were ultimately personal, they are alike in being alienated from society; each is forced to live a lie. In the observation of the narrator, "It is remarkable, that persons who speculate the most boldly often conform with the most perfect quietude to the external regulations of society" (p. 164).

Neither Dimmesdale nor his creator is specific in the criticism of the society that is unaware, or indifferent, to the fact that it has broken the moral codes; both generalize, and what is worse for their ability to communicate, both thwart their creativity by paralyzing self-blame and self-punishment. Through Dimmesdale, Hawthorne is able to dramatize his own feelings of creative impotency and cultural isolation; for the first time in the American novel, the cultural outsider is presented. Previous heroes, like James Fenimore Cooper's Natty Bumppo, are alienated only from civilized, not natural, society,
while Dimmesdale is isolated from both worlds. Even the persecuted Hester is not permanently exiled; she is eventually able to rejoin the community and render valuable service. Dimmesdale, however, has seemingly forever lost his role of prophet and moral legislator, the role that the eighteenth-century world, of which Hawthorne was still a part, saw as the true function of the artist.

But just as Hawthorne was driven to seek a valid role and purpose for his art, so is Dimmesdale driven towards regeneration. He knows that it is only through Hester, his creative imagination, that he will be saved, but dreads her boldness and vitality. Dimmesdale's ambiguous view of the creative imagination--his love and dread of Hester--is an attitude shared by all the artist/protagonists of the novels in the Hawthornian mode: Ishmael fears, yet reveres, the sea; Strether admires, yet disapproves of, Mme. de Vionnet; Quentin Compson, Jack Burden, and Jeremiah Beaumont all love, yet condemn, those women who represent their imaginations.

Dimmesdale recognizes that experience has been Hester's liberator, but he fears to leave the path of orthodoxy. This paradox was also Hawthorne's, and just as Dimmesdale is frightened by Hester's suggestion that they leave the country together, so was Hawthorne disturbed by the demands of his creative selfhood for ethical and moral direction.
He was forced to seek some reconciliation for his inner conflicts, and therefore, the journey which Dimmesdale takes toward regeneration is one on which he is accompanied by the narrator. Although the narrator comments upon Dimmesdale's actions, these observations are ambiguous, leaving the reader to draw his own conclusions and exercise his own judgments.

The ambiguity of Dimmesdale's redemptive journey is that, for the most part, it is a failed quest, although perhaps an appropriate one for an ironic hero. Although, on the moonlit scaffold and in the forest labyrinth, Dimmesdale makes an exploration of the darkness of his own soul, and though he recognizes the menacing forces within himself, he remains passive. It is a question of whether he stays with the community in response to courage or compliance--certainly, he delivers to his congregation an optimistic prophecy that Hawthorne could not have wholly accepted; and certainly, his final expiation is on such generalized terms that it can be interpreted in innumerable ways. But whatever his tragic fate, it is obvious that Dimmesdale does not prove that he fulfilled the hero's mission—to demonstrate his success in controlling the dark conflicts within, and to apply this regained power in solving the community problems. Instead of finding the means of acting creatively, Dimmesdale is completely
destroyed by his conflicts. The ideal apollonian world that he represents, the world of established religions and moral concepts of dedicated pursuit of the common good, has seemingly died with him. Not that the dionysiac Will triumphs; it, too, in the figure of Chillingworth, "positively withered up, shrivelled away, and almost vanished from mortal sight. . . " (p. 260).

The survivors of this tragic story are Hester and Pearl--the creative imagination and the creation itself--and, of course, the narrator, who is as important a character as any in the novel. It must be assumed that the narrator, in the view of Hawthorne, is appalled to see that eighteenth-century humanism, as represented by Dimmesdale, is insufficiently strong to withstand the powerful nineteenth-century materialistic will symbolized by Chillingworth. The narrator concludes, however, that both are too obsessed with their own positions to serve the needs of the contemporary artist and the society he reflects. What remains is the artist's own creativity and the creative wellspring of his own mind and experiences; through his selfhood the artist reflects the common human nature. That point of light that glows "gloomier than the shadows" (p. 264)--the red center of Hester's emblem, like the red Gorgon centered on Athena's shield--is humanity's one remaining point of hope: in Hester's words, "the one point that gave it unity" (p. 244).
ENDNOTES


11 Anthon, pp. 939-41.
12 Anthon, pp. 848-49.
16 Hamilton, p. 31.
17 Anthon, pp. 159-61.
CHAPTER III

SOUNDOING THE DEEP

Herman Melville was first among those American novelists who accepted Hawthorne's method of psychical revelation, rather than attempting to communicate with an indifferent society through a more conventional, less introspective novel form. Unlike Hawthorne, Melville did not begin his writing career with a tragic view of human destiny compelling him to reveal his own creative spirit and thereby enhancing the dramatic power of his work. Only after Melville learned to appreciate the philosophical and psychological depths of Hawthorne's vision could he successfully represent in his finest work the spiritual paradoxes—idealism and worldliness, nobility and baseness, rationality and dementia, love and hate—that are part of all human existence. In order to illuminate and universalize his concept of this paradoxical existence, Melville adapted to his own expression Hawthorne's symbolic method, along with the Biblical and classical references that so effectively dramatized Hawthorne's writings. Most importantly of all, Melville's brief association with Hawthorne was to give him the professional confidence, personal excitement, and spiritual inspiration that would urge him
to reveal in his work the aims and conflicts, despairs and triumphs of his creative selfhood.

The two writers were to meet at the crucial midpoint of their lives; Melville was about to start the productive and highly imaginative second half of his writing career, and Hawthorne was ending the first, and most creative, part of his lifework. Following the publication of *The Scarlet Letter* in 1850, Hawthorne left his ancestral Salem for Lenox in the Massachusetts Berkshires. There he worked on his next novel, although he was never again to exercise as much control or to express as much passion as he did in *The Scarlet Letter*. In the summer of 1850, however, Lenox became the birthplace of the Hawthorne-Melville relationship, an event which contributed to the unfolding of Melville's imagination, one of the most exciting in American literary history. Six miles from Hawthorne's red farmhouse, Melville temporarily shelved the almost completed manuscript of what he then called his "romance of adventure," *Moby-Dick*, while he settled his family into his newly purchased farm, Arrowhead. Back in New York, he had planned to finish *Moby-Dick* in August, but in July he had met Hawthorne on a summer visit to Lenox, and shortly after, Melville arranged for the purchase of Arrowhead and wrote his fervently admiring article for *The Literary World*, "Hawthorne and His Mosses." The publication date
for his *Moby-Dick* was to be postponed for a year, and he began to enlarge and rewrite his book. According to Leon Howard, "Nothing that had ever happened to Melville in his travels was more important than the activities of his mind between August 1850 and August 1851."  

In the library of his friend and literary agent, Evert Duyckinck, Melville had read some of Hawthorne's work and had not expressed any particular enthusiasm for it. Meeting Hawthorne, however, affected him differently, for Hawthorne's quiet presence and powerful intellect captivated Melville. Hawthorne in turn was undoubtedly intrigued with the exuberant young author, whose exotic adventures so contrasted with his own sequestered background. As much as anything else, Melville must have been professionally stimulated by the friendly acceptance shown by the entire Lenox colony of literary notables. Although he had been included in Duyckinck's literary gatherings in New York, Melville had felt hurt after his experimental *Mardi* had been spurned by both critics and public. He detested being known for his autobiographical sea adventures alone, and, understandably, the new friendship with the distinguished Hawthorne served as both psychical balm and literary catalyst. Melville was at the most receptive point of his career; he was reading and absorbing into his own rich imagination the works of past and present literary
greats—Thomas Browne, Shakespeare, Goethe, Carlyle, the Romantic poets. Hawthorne, however, gave him an actual presence against whom to measure himself intellectually and artistically; he became the fuse to ignite the second phase of Melville’s literary career. Now, just as Hawthorne had been spurred by the imagined jeers of his ancestors to write his second and finest novel, The Scarlet Letter, so was Melville driven by an indifferent public to prove through Moby-Dick that he, as well as Hawthorne, was capable of matching his artistic skills to significant matters.

Sharing a similar theological background, Melville admired Hawthorne’s Calvinistic probing into universal uncertainties—the question of evil and immortality, and the confusion between appearance and reality. Melville revered men who were driven to know both themselves and their God. For instance, though he strongly disagreed with Ralph Waldo Emerson on his optimistic conclusions, Melville once expressed a pleased surprise at Emerson’s philosophical depths. He praised Emerson because he loved "all men who dive," and he said that Hawthorne had a "great, deep intellect," which "drops down into the universe like a plummet." This tribute is acknowledged in Hawthorne’s The House of the Seven Gables, a novel that shares many images with Melville’s Moby-Dick; Holgrave, an artist/protagonist in The House of the Seven Gables,
admits to the disapproving Phoebe that "no scruples would prevent me from fathoming Clifford to the full-depth of my plummet-line."

The character of Clifford, a devastating portrayal of obsessiveness and debility, was praised by Melville for its truthfulness. As Melville understood, Hawthorne authenticated Clifford's portrayal by projecting into the character some of his own qualities—his fastidiousness, his distaste for feminine ugliness, his fear of intrusions, his preoccupation with aesthetics. True to their Calvinist commitment to self-knowledge, both Melville and Hawthorne agreed that the artist must explore the depths of his own soul in order to portray common human nature. In spite of his own large experience in the world of men, Melville believed that the self was the most fertile source for the writer, and that the reader could almost always find that the author himself has somewhere furnished his self-portrait.

Although both writers subscribed to self-conscious presentation, each chose a different range within which to carry out this method. While Hawthorne was able to accept the limitations of human knowledge and the elusive nature of truth, Melville was compelled to the fullest extent of his abilities to delve into the very source of reality. In the course of their novels, both writers seek
out their creative matrix, but the metaphysical limits to which each was willing to go are evident in the schematic elements of the novels themselves. To go from The Scarlet Letter to Moby-Dick is to move from a scheme of sensual artifice and masterly control to a design of infinite dimensions and possibilities. Hawthorne carefully reworked the materials of the world at hand; Melville impulsively encompassed the worlds beyond sensory reach.

While the range and schemes of The Scarlet Letter and Moby-Dick reflect the major differences between these works, their similarities rest in the important areas of imagery, allusion, function of characters, narration, and themes. The themes, of course, were those which both authors inherited from their Calvinist forebears: the nature of truth and creativity, the confusion between appearance and reality, and the question of natural evil and human error. The narrations in both novels are carried forward by a self-conscious commentator who directly involves the reader in the unfolding of the story by transferring to him the burden of evaluating, comparing, witnessing, and judging. The characters in both are fragmented rather than fully developed; each represents some particular function or psychological condition of the artistic mind. In the two novels the imagery—highly romantic and dealing with creativity—involves natural and artificial reflections,
enclosing and towering structures, historical and mytholog-
ical allusions, godlike and demonic figures, hourly and
seasonal apexes. There are in both rituals of sacrament
and creativity, phases of sterility and propagation, places
of freedom and danger, sanctuaries of peace and contempla-
tion, patterns of repression and release, glimpses of hell,
epiphanyes of ultimate truths, apocalyptic visions.

In addition, the mythological quests in the novels are
similar; the Custom-House narrator's journey into the self
is emulated by Ishmael, as, in his voyage of self-discovery,
he also seeks both to regenerate his creativity and explore
the nature of its origin. In many other ways the two nar-
rators resemble one another, although Ishmael's moods are
far more mercurial. At the beginning of their quests, both
narrators feel rejected, isolated, and depressed; both
are passive, receptive, and introspective; both feel threat-
ened by demands upon their time and emotions; both celebrate,
yet at the same time depreciate their creative abilities;
both are wary of fixed ideas; both see the human savagery
under the masks of religious orthodoxy. At the end of their
quests, neither arrives at a reconciliation of his psycho-
logical and spiritual problems, although both find salva-
tion through human love, and both accept creativity as the
only means to immortality.

Many of these shared qualities, of course, can be
found in other writers, for they are traits that
characterize artists who are driven by the conditions of their times from accepted literary, social, and religious values. It is undoubtedly true that through Hawthorne's influence Melville was encouraged to develop more fully his Romantic expression. After the failure of Mardi, Melville had returned to fictionalized autobiography, but all his inclinations suited him for the Romantic mode. Both writers shared the Romantic propensity for looking inward for creative inspiration. This inwardness, of course, led to depression and despair, but both Hawthorne and Melville also shared with other Romantics an optimistic belief in the future. In *The Scarlet Letter* the subject is touched upon briefly and unconvincingly in Dimmesdale's Election Day sermon. However, *The House of the Seven Gables*, a novel strongly admired by Melville, forecasts an optimistic future for American materialism, a conclusion for which Hawthorne has often been criticized. In *Moby-Dick* Melville is equally enthusiastic over the exploits of the whaling industry and the aggressiveness of American commercial sea power. Neither writer, of course, was in the position to know to what problems American expansionism might give birth.  

Characteristically Romantic, Hawthorne and Melville were less concerned with national issues than with their own creative selves. In the case of these two writers,
this meant that they were acutely aware that their creative efforts were inevitably to meet with misunderstanding and lack of appreciation. This awareness is indicated at the beginning of both The Scarlet Letter and Moby-Dick, and a sense of failure and a note of self-pity mark the introductions to these novels. The Custom-House narrator complains that

[n]o aim, that I have ever cherished would my Puritan ancestors recognize as laudable; no success of mine--if my life . . . had ever been brightened by success--would they deem otherwise than worthless, if not positively disgraceful. "What is he?" murmurs one gray shadow of my forefathers to the other. "A writer of story-books. . . ."

And under a deceptively light-hearted manner, the commentator of the Moby-Dick introduction hides his own wounded pride:

So fare thee well, poor devil of a Sub-Sub, . . . with whom one sometimes loves to sit, and feel poor-devilish, too; and grow convivial upon tears; and say to him bluntly, with full eyes and empty glasses . . . Give it up . . . ! For by how much the more pains ye take to please the world, by so much the more shall ye for ever go thankless!

A state of depression, emptiness, and alienation from the world's values exists in the Custom-House narration and the first two chapters of Moby-Dick. Both Hawthorne and Melville rightfully described their masterpieces as hell-inspired, for in The Scarlet Letter and Moby-Dick, the creative material is quarried from the very depths of their authors' being. Like the Custom-House narrator before
him, the desperate Ishmael is compelled to descend to the psychic underworld, a journey that takes place when the artist, seeking to express his creativity, has been separated from endorsed doctrines and has depleted the generative resources and energies of a given creative pattern.\(^6\)

In *Moby-Dick*, as in the highly symbolic but unsuccessful *Mardi*, Melville had the need to depart from his primarily realistic presentation of sea adventures and to reinterpret his own experiences and his vast accumulation of sea lore into the universal, archetypal theme of a night sea journey. In order to rejuvenate his creative energies, he tapped the resources of his own unconscious, and in *Moby-Dick*, he symbolized these through the fertility of the sea itself. In the infinitude and eternity of the sea, Melville found the symbol for the creative matrix. Just as Hawthorne used the forest to describe creative fecundity and freedom, so did Melville turn to the sea to describe the wellspring of his creative imagination. Poets have traditionally used the sea to express human sublimity and primeval chaos,\(^7\) but few are as well-qualified as Melville to recognize the full potentials of this symbol so important to the nineteenth-century American. As the new commercial masters of the universal seas, the Americans had a unique claim to sea imagery in meeting Melville's challenge to English literary sovereignty. In "Hawthorne and His
Mosses," Melville had stated that an American writer may soon rank with Shakespeare and that his country should be aware of its emerging culture: "It is for the nation's sake, and not for her authors' sake, that I would have America be heedful of the increasing greatness among her writers." 

In acknowledgment of his patriotic prophecy, in *Moby-Dick* Melville uses the sea not only as the symbol of his own emanating creativity but also that of the entire American people. Dramatizing the universality of the new American commercial and cultural expansion, Ishmael's voyage in search of creative selfhood encircles the world, and the whaling ship, mastered by representative aspects of the American psyche and manned by the diverse races of the universe, continually encounters the ships of other nations. In the whaling industry, as in other enterprises, "the native American liberally provides the brains, the rest of the world as generously supplying the muscle" (p. 110).

But Melville does not always respond to the sea with such buoyant optimism; he more often views it as the master and destroyer of men. For Melville the sea may be the analogy of the human imagination and the source of creative energy, but he also sees it as the bearer of human violence and error, the hiding place of ineffable terrors,
and a threat to sanity. Even at its most beautiful and tranquil, the sea is dangerous for those who do not guard their psychological balance and integrity; the water-gazer indulges in a hazardous venture, for if he is lulled into reverie "by the blending cadence of waves with thoughts," he "at last . . . loses his identity" (p. 156). Those who allow themselves to be absorbed into the undifferentiated vastness of nature will be annihilated. However, the story of Narcissus contains a "still deeper . . . meaning";

Because he could not grasp the tormenting, mild image he saw in the fountain, he plunged into it and was drowned. But that same image, we ourselves see in all rivers and oceans. It is the image of the ungraspable phantom of life; and this is the key to it all. (p. 3)

Man really has no choice; unless he plunges into the sea of unconsciousness, the truth is ungraspable, but if he does, he will probably be annihilated. The voyaging mind is unable to escape the perils of the deep.

Even for the experienced the prospect of a voyage into the unknown can be terrifying. Ishmael is frightened, although, like the Custom-House narrator, he hides his deep anxiety under a self-deprecating and falsely jovial manner. At the outset of his journey, death is on Ishmael's mind, and for him going to sea is a substitute for suicide. In the realistic sense, Ishmael's mood is most like Melville's
own at the outset of his initial voyage recalled in the autobiographical Redburn:

Yes, I will go to sea; cut my kind uncles and aunts, and sympathetic patrons, and leave no heavy hearts but those in my own home, and take along but the one which aches in my bosom. Cold, bitter cold as December, and bleak as its blasts, seemed the world then to me. . . .

But Ishmael's voyage is more than across the Atlantic, frightening as that must have been to the young and completely inexperienced Melville; Ishmael's hunt is not only for a whale, but it is also a journey into the depths of his own unconscious; like the narrator in The Scarlet Letter, Ishmael seeks creative regeneration. In the mythological tradition, his descent is to the underworld, and he fears it as much as another ancient descent was feared. Before Ulysses' voyage to Hades, he

sat up in bed and wept, and would gladly have lived no longer to see the light of the sun. . . . Who shall guide me upon this voyage—for the house of Hades is a port that no ship can reach.  

Ishmael also descends to Hades, and even before he boards the Pequod, he has a glimpse of hell.

Unlike the beginning of The Scarlet Letter in which the single image of hell is the prison, the beginning of Moby-Dick has many references to hell and death. To Ishmael, as he walks the New Bedford streets, carpet-bag in hand, houses look like tombs, and signs refer to coffins. It is December, the season of death; in myth, the month of
the winter solstice, or the death of vegetation. In the Bible, this season symbolizes the pre-dawn of Christianity, or the death of the spirit. For Melville, even Ishmael's carpet-bag is associated with death; in a letter to Hawthorne, he shows that connection:

For all men who say yes, lie; and all men who say no,—why, they are in the happy condition of judicious, unincumbered travellers in Europe; they cross the frontiers into Eternity with nothing but a carpet-bag,—that is to say, the Ego. 11

Ishmael, then, like Dimmesdale before him, can be associated with the ego, and the hell he is confronting is therefore psychological as well as mythological and Biblical. The emphasis on death and hell is the first stage of the descent into the unconscious, which, C. G. Jung states, takes place when the conscious, or ego, is driven to expel the darkness of the psyche. Concerning this process, Jung says,

[It]here have always been people who, not satisfied with the dominants of conscious life, set forth—under cover and by devious routes, to their destruction or salvation—to seek direct experience of the eternal roots, and, following the lure of the restless, unconscious psyche, found themselves in the wilderness where, like Jesus, they come up against the son of darkness. Thus an old alchemist prays, "Purge the horrible darkness of our mind." 1

Dimmesdale suffers this mental purgation on the pathway between the forest and the town—in psychological terms, between the id and superego. For Dimmesdale and Clifford Pyncheon, the unconscious at its darkest is far too dangerous
a place to endure, and both seek escape. Ishmael is more courageous, or simply, more foolhardy. He is compelled to seek out the experience, and now the darkness of his troubled id pervades his conscious, and in Chapter II of Moby-Dick, images synonymous with hell are everywhere about him. From the nightmarish streets of New Bedford, he mistakenly steps into what appears to be hell—"the great Black Parliament sitting in Tophet" (p. 8). Significantly, this infernal image also appears in Chapter II of The House of the Seven Gables; among the merchandise displayed in the shop window of the House—Hawthorne's own symbol of hell—is "a package of lucifer-matches, which, in old times, would have thought actually to borrow their instantaneous flame from the nether fires of Tophet." As indicated near the beginnings of both novels, before the creative spirits can be regenerated, hell must be confronted and conquered.

In these ways, and in varying degrees of significance, Moby-Dick and The House of the Seven Gables, written while their authors were close friends and neighbors, share imagery. The tone in which this imagery is conveyed, however, differs with each writer; Hawthorne's style is restrained and lightly ironic, while Melville is intensely dramatic. For instance, the story of Jonah dramatizes one of the great religious themes of Moby-Dick; Father Mapple says,
what depths of soul does Jonah's deep sea-line sound! what a pregnant lesson to us in this prophet! What a noble thing is that canticle in the fish's belly! How billow-like and boisterously grand. (pp. 40-41)

In The House of the Seven Gables, however, the Jonah story is parodied through the cookie-eating Ned Higgins.

Phoebe . . . put . . . into his hand a whale. The great fish--reversing his experience with the prophet of Nineveh--immediately began his process down the . . . red pathway of fate.16

Similarly, a classical figure is treated seriously in Moby-Dick and satirically in The House of the Seven Gables: Ishmael, "like another Ixion," is caught in the "slowly wheeling circle" (p. 567) of the sinking Pequod; Judge Pyncheon, trying to kiss Phoebe, becomes the "modern parallel to the case of Ixion embracing a cloud."17

Like Melville's narrator of the masthead, in quest of the "phantom of life," Clifford Pyncheon steps back from the arched window just in time to save his life. But Clifford is not sure he did the right thing, for he feels he needed an experience like Ishmael's.

He needed a shock; or perhaps he required to take a deep, deep plunge into the ocean of human life, and to sink down and be covered by its profoundness, and then to emerge, sobered, invigorated, restored to the world and to himself. Perhaps, again, he required nothing less than the great, final remedy--death!18

Another image, complete with revolving circles and black bubbles, marks both Judge Pyncheon's death and the sinking of the Pequod. In Moby-Dick Ishmael gains "the vital
centre, from which the black bubble upward burst; and now . . . the coffin life-buoy shot lengthwise from the sea" (p. 567). And in The House of the Seven Gables, at Judge Pyncheon's decease, there is only a vacancy, and a momentary eddy--very small, as compared with the apparent magnitude of the ingurgitated object--and a bubble or two, ascending out of the black depth, and bursting at the surface.¹⁹

Beyond a sharing of a variety of imagery, The House of the Seven Gables, The Scarlet Letter, and Moby-Dick all deal with similar themes. Each of these novels treats what Melville called the "pasteboard masks"--those appearances that continually deceive man's reason and perceptions. To man truth and falsehood are indiscernible; the evil Judge Pyncheon looks pleasant, the good Hepzibah does not; the honest Hester seems guilty, the guilty minister seems godly. The whales appear less monstrous than the humans who pursue them, and only the demented perceive the nature of God. And though the evil hidden in nature haunts the imagination, it cannot exceed in horror that which occurs through daily human action. With great irony, Hawthorne and Melville portrayed the human inability to perceive the truth: in their persecution of sin, the Puritans betray their Christian vows; in his pursuit of evil, Ahab destroys his claim to good; in reaching for more property, Judge Pyncheon loses his hold on life.
The two writers saw that because man's will exceeds his understanding, his inevitable path is towards error. Nevertheless, this tragic condition may give birth to human creativity and glory. Ahab's towering will drives him to his death, but in pursuit of his goal, he reaches his highest potential—"now I feel my topmost greatness lies in my topmost grief" (p. 565). Dimmesdale also finds his greatest creative moment when he discloses his sin:

The complaint of a human heart, sorrow-laden, perchance guilty, telling its secret, whether of guilt or sorrow, to the great heart of mankind; beseeching its sympathy or forgiveness . . . . It was this profound and continual undertone that gave the clergyman his most appropriate power. And so it is for the debilitated artist Clifford, who, according to critic Alfred Marks, caused Judge Pyncheon's death, and who must now run for his life; nevertheless, his mood "not a little resembled the exhilaration of wine." For all the artist/protagonists in the Hawthornian tradition, in the dark and troubled depths of the heart lie the means to creative and spiritual power.

Undoubtedly, from the most troubled hearts emerge works of the greatest creative power. From an artist for whom the writing of each of his books had an adverse effect on his sanity came one of the most original and profound American novels of the century. Completed after the unexpected, and for Melville, the devastating departure of
Hawthorne from Lenox, *Moby-Dick* was like no other novel yet produced in America. "What a book Melville has written!" extolled Hawthorne in a letter to Evert Duyckinck. George Duyckinck, though dismayed by the rest of the book, stated that it indeed began "capitally." And so it did, for "Call me Ishmael" is a consummately clever opening for a novel. With one boldly evocative stroke, Melville invites himself into his reader's confidence, while reminding him of the archetypal orphan, doomed to wander alone. Melville's Ishmael, however, is more than just another alienated figure, of whom the Romantic Age saw so many. He is an authentic participant on a voyage that is as real as it is symbolic. Ishmael is the sailor on the end of the monkey rope from which Queequeg is suspended. He is the helmsman who nearly capsizes the ship during the try-works operation. He is the look-out when the first sperm whale is sighted. He handles an oar when his boat is encircled by propagating whales, works the mat shuttle while Queequeg drives down the thread, squeezes out spermaceti lumps with his shipmates, mans the bow after Fedallah's death.

Ishmael is not always in the action, however, nor does he always act as the narrator. Using the method to which Henry James objected in Hawthorne's works, Melville was often the intrusive author. When the knowledge or responses were beyond the scope of the neophyte Ishmael, the narration
was removed from his control. Nevertheless, Ishmael is a vital part not only of the action of the novel, but also in forming the reader's impressions and judgments. Through Ishmael's forebodings, for instance, the reader senses not only the inevitable doom of the voyage, but also the workings of Ishmael's mind as he considers experiences, meditates on possibilities, explains events, and recalls impressions. He does all these things with gaiety, freshness, and great energy, and often in a flow of consciousness that is remarkably modern in literary method. Shifting his thoughts backwards and forwards in time, Ishmael shares with the reader his first impressions of Ahab.

I felt a sympathy and a sorrow for him, but for I don't know what, unless it was the cruel loss of his leg. And yet I also felt a strange awe of him; but that sort of awe, which I cannot at all describe, was not exactly awe; I do not know what it was. But I felt it; and it did not dis-incline me towards him; though I felt impatience at what seemed like mystery in him, so imperfectly as he was known to me then. However, my thoughts were at length carried in other directions, so that for the present dark Ahab slipped my mind. (p. 80)

Here, as he struggles to clarify and bring into focus his impressions from the past, Ishmael, in his deep sensitivity and empathy, is much like William Faulkner's Quentin Compson. As he is throughout his role as observer and commentator, Ishmael is intent upon having the reader relive with him his own experiences. He directly appeals to the reader, urging him to look, to see, to know, to judge. Yet,
despite his great determination to understand the people and events that crowd around him, Ishmael has the same strange passivity as Hawthorne's Dimmesdale and Clifford, Henry James's Lambert Strether, and Faulkner's Quentin Compson; like them, he is helplessly dominated by a stronger personality and overshadowed by the rush of events. Warner Berthoff explains that this is the characteristic of the narrator who speaks as the creative self:

A certain degree of absorbed passivity and reflective detachment marks off the Melvillean narrator from the Romantic hero of passion and energy or from the type of the quester after experience. His character, as recording witness, is to remain radically open to experience without being radically changed by it; he is to identify and judge matter without equivocation, yet not to show himself too overwhelmingly anxious to impose his outlook upon them. In this respect the part he plays goes according to the arch-Romantic conception of the poet or artist—the conception of the creative intelligence as the agent of a "negative capability," the source of whose power is in the free and sympathetic readiness of its responses to the phenomena of life.  

It was Melville's natural tolerance, which Hawthorne called his "freedom of view," that allowed him to give his narrator the necessary latitude in absorbing, then relating, the phenomena of the whaling life. There may be limits to Ishmael's knowledge—which he does everything in his power to rectify—but there are none to the function of his consciousness. The ship and its equipage, the seamen and their gear, the nature of the creatures and the elements—all are encompassed by the receptive awareness of Ishmael. He
goes beyond the material facts of the world to consider all
the effects the whaling universe has on the human mind and
spirit. And in the course of the novel, the world of the
Pequod broadens to include the question of human and divine
creativity and Ishmael becomes the universal whaleman,
the pursuer of eternal creativity. In a central chapter
he refers to himself in that archetypal sense.

Thus at the North have I chased Leviathan round
and round the Pole with the revolutions of the
bright points that first defined him to me. And
beneath the effulgent Antarctic skies I have
boarded the Argo-Navis, and joined the chase
against the starry Cetus far beyond the utmost
stretch of Hydrus and the Flying Fish. (pp.
271 - 72)

There is an expansiveness to Ishmael that is lacking
in Hawthorne's narrators, and Melville was well aware of
Hawthorne's deficiency. At a time when he was worn out
with the writing of Moby-Dick and possibly resentful of
Hawthorne's departure, he wrote to Duyckinck what was for
Melville a rare criticism of his former neighbor: "There
is something lacking--a good deal lacking--to the plump
sphericity of the man. . . . He needs roast beef, done
rare . . . ."27 Fortunately for Melville and the future
Moby-Dick, nothing was lacking in Hawthorne's choice of
words, and in his copy of "The Gentle Boy," Hawthorne's
tale of another outcast orphan, Melville checked the poi-
gnant phrase, "They call me Ilbrahim."28
Ishmael is not only more expansive than Hawthorne's narrators, but his first-person voice gives him more immediacy and vitality. However, as the voyage progresses he becomes less a fully developed character and more a symbol, serving as Ahab's opposition much as Dimmesdale does Chillingworth's. As the mythological opposition to the dionysiac Ahab, Ishmael can be seen as Apollo—in psychological terms, the higher nature, the ego. Apollo was traditionally connected with sea activities, once disguised himself as a giant dolphin, and was worshipped as the god of shores and embarkations by the Argonauts. As Apollo Ishmael is the god of prophecy, for in his analysis of the Spouter Inn Painting, in his interview with Elijah, as the sole witness to evil Fedallah's boarding, in his first impressions of Ahab, and in all his deep forebodings before the voyage, he forecasts the ultimate fate of the ship. He also warns against the water-gazers, the fire worshippers, and dreamy young Platonists. As the god of sun, light, and truth, he contrasts the ghastly fire of the try-works with the light of the natural sun:

Those who glared like devils in the forking flames, the morn will show in far other, at least gentler, relief; the glorious, golden, glad sun—the only true lamp—all others but liars! (p. 422)

As the god of truth, Ishmael gathers all the contemporary scientific and analytical methods as a means to the true understanding of the whale. Because Ahab refuses to think
beyond his own obsessive instincts, Ishmael must do this for him. This is the function of the apollonian self—the gathering of information with which to control the dionysiac id. According to Sigmund Freud, the ego takes over the task of representing the external world for the id, and so of saving it; for the id, blindly striving to gratify its instincts in complete disregard of the superior strength of outside forces, could not otherwise escape annihilation. In the fulfilment of this function, the ego has to observe the external world and preserve a true picture of it in the memory traces left by its perceptions. . . .

Ishmael knows that the whale is divine, and therefore humanly unknowable, and he dismisses with contempt man's arrogant efforts to measure it. Through the scientific measurements of the whale, Ishmael says, "I know him not, and never will" (p. 376). And as the apollonian god of the oracle, the link between the human and divine will, Ishmael attends Father Mapple's sermon, helps Queequeg worship his idol, considers the various religions of the universe, and ponders the mystical hieroglyphics on the whale. Ishmael's quest is for the primal secret, and he rationally examines all human means toward this ultimate goal.

Ishmael, then, represents man's higher, rational nature, that apollonian self that serves as a link between man and the deity in whom are invested all myths of primal creativity. Ishmael sees the phenomena and the events of
the whaling life in terms of fertility, procreation, and resurrection. In his dream whales appear to him in wedded pairs, his union with Queequeg is compared to wedded bliss, the harpooners are united to the mates in a kind of nuptial commitment; and as spawning whales are joined to their young by umbilical cords, so are the men on the ship joined by their monkey ropes. Looming over the entire quest for the creative secret is the monumental phallic symbol of the sperm whale, whose every part suggests endless symbols of fertility and procreation.

The rituals aboard the Pequod are in celebration of sacrifice and resurrection. In emulation of the Eucharist, Stubb and the sharks eat the whale; Ishmael and his shipmates extract the sperm membrane, and dressed in the skin of the whale's penis, the crew's high priest performs a dionysiac dissection on the whale. Ahab's injuries are suggestive of impotency and are constantly contrasted to the eternal fertility of the whale; and in the numerous phallic jokes of the doubloon episode, the men compare their own potency with the universal symbol depicted on the coin.

Such marvelously uninhibited symbols of procreation were beyond Hawthorne's means of expression; he deeply brooded and symbolized with great care, while Melville impulsively gave vent to his instincts and ideas. Even
before he personally knew him, however, Hawthorne was one of the few who defended Melville's references to the sexual and cannibalistic practices in *Typee*. Hawthorne was severely restrained but not priggish, and he made Dimmesdale, in his self-flagellation, a type of inverted sacrifice. None of Hawthorne's narrators has the imaginative range of Ishmael; nevertheless, Hawthorne's own deep insight into human psychology enabled him to devise those dark qualities in Ethan Brand and Chillingworth that had so much influence on Melville's most masterful character, Ahab.

While Ahab also shows a relationship to many other literary figures besides Ethan Brand and Chillingworth, it would be misleading to speak of borrowing in his case. He is one of the supreme creations in literature, a genuine myth peculiarly American in culture and idiom, and particularly revealing of Melville's own heretical self. Much of Ahab's demonic grandeur, of course, is attributable to the scope and setting of the novel itself; what would be mere melodrama ashore seems perfectly suitable to the omniscient master of a ship isolated in the vastness of a treacherous sea. For the duration of a voyage, the captain assumes the aspects of a deity, and Melville emphasizes this godlike quality in Ahab. There seems to have been a deliberate intention on the part of Melville to
associate Ahab with a Greek deity; Ahab calls himself "proud as a Greek god" (p. 468), and he is described as "grand, ungodly, god-like" (p. 79), and like a classic statue, "seemed made in solid bronze" (p. 120).

In Ahab's opposition to Ishmael, the reflective apolonian self, he assumes dionysiac characteristics like those with which Chillingworth opposed Dimmesdale. Ahab is the id—rebellious, heretical, maddened by the fury of his relentless pursuit. Of his own irrationality, Ahab says:

Ahab never thinks; he only feels, feels; that's tingling enough for mortal man! to think's audacity. God only has that right and privilege. Thinking is, or ought to be a coolness and a calmness and our poor heart's throb, and our poor brains beat too much for that. (p. 555)

As Dionysus, the only Greek god born half human, half divine, Ahab has a "birth-mark on him from crown to sole" (p. 121). Associated as was Dionysus with the lion, Ahab calls out orders in his "old lion voice" (p. 315), and over "his ivory-inlaid table, he presided like a mute, maned sea-lion. . . ." (p. 147). Again like Dionysus, who assailed the giant Rhoetus in the form of a lion, Ahab is destined to confront Moby Dick at the zodiacal sign of the lion (p. 131).

Even more suggestive of Ahab and his quest are the circumstances surrounding the birth of Dionysus. When his mother, the mortal Semele, was killed by lightning,
his father Zeus, god of the thunderbolt, placed the unborn Dionysus in his thigh until the time of his birth; thus Dionysus was born of—in Ahab's words, "leaped out of"—his father. Dionysus was thereafter destined to pursue an eternal quest for his lost mother in the underworld. On a quest much like that of Dionysus—the return to the creative womb—Ahab sees a firebolt strike the storm-darkened Pequod, and in defiance of his divine father, cries:

Light though thou be, thou leapest out of darkness; but I am darkness leaping out of light, leaping out of thee! . . . . There burn the flames! Oh, thou magnanimous, now I do glory in my genealogy. But thou art but my fiery father; my sweet mother, I know not. Oh, cruel! what has thou done with her? (p. 500)

Most important for Melville's creativity theme is Dionysus' function as inspirer of the greatest poetry in Greece and the first tragic plays. He was the god of the vine and of its product, the intoxicating wine, the inspirer of great or terrible human deeds, and he was also associated with relentless, blood-thirsty pursuit of his foes. Edith Hamilton describes the characteristics of Dionysus which are so close to Ahab's:

This strange god . . . the cruel hunter, the lofty inspirer, was also the sufferer. He . . . was afflicted because of his own pain. He was the vine, which is always pruned as nothing else that bears fruit; every branch cut away, only the bare stock left; in the winter a dead thing to look at, only a gnarled stump seemingly incapable of ever putting forth leaves again.
Like Persephone, Dionysus died with the coming of the cold. Unlike her, his death was terrible; he was torn to pieces. He was always brought back to life; he died and rose again. It was his joyful resurrection they celebrated in his theater but the idea of the terrible deeds done to him and done by men under his influence was too closely associated with him ever to be forgotten. He was the tragic god.  

And like this tragic vegetation god, Ahab is continually associated with dormancy and regeneration. As the Pequod sails out of the Nantucket harbor, Ahab remains hidden below deck, but Bildad says the one-legged captain will reappear when the season is right:

I hope ye'll have fine weather now, so that Captain Ahab may soon be moving among ye—a pleasant sun is all he needs, and ye'll have plenty of them in the tropic voyage ye go. (p. 104)

When the ship runs southward, leaving the "biting Polar weather" (p. 120), Ishmael finally sees the resurrected Ahab, looking "like a man cut away from the stake, when the fire has overrunningly wasted all limbs without consuming them" (p. 120). South of the equator, when

the sky grew less gloomy; indeed began to grow a little genial, Ahab became still less and less a recluse; as if, when the ship had sailed from home, nothing but the dead wintry bleakness of the sea had then kept him so secluded. (p. 122)

Finally, after days of balmy weather, Ahab seems "to live in the open air" (p. 122); he begins to flourish, "even as the utmost thunder-cloven old oak will at least send forth some few green sprouts" (p. 122). This pattern of death and resurrection involving Ahab follows his first
encounter with Moby Dick. Near death as the ship rounds Cape Horn "in mid winter" (p. 182), his "torn body and gashed soul bled into one another; and so interfusing, made him mad" (p. 182). But again, when the ship runs "into more sufferable latitude," his "delirium seemed left behind him with the Cape Horn swells, and he came forth from his dark den into the blessed light and air" (p. 182).

Like an immolated Dionysus, the mad and suffering Ahab walks "on life, on death" (p. 600), and except for sighting whales, is secluded in his cabin, in what he calls his "tomb" (p. 123). Ahab's powers dwell in darkness, from which he brings intoxicating liquids and gold doubloons that lure men to his heroic, hopeless quest. For Ahab seeks reunion with the primal source of truth and that lost human potential that rests below Hotel de Cluny, where far beneath the fantastic towers of man's upper earth, his root of grandeur, his whole awful essence sits in bearded state; an antique buried beneath antiquities and throned on torsos. So with a broken throne, the great gods mock that captive king; so like a Caryatid, he patient sits, upholding on his frozen brow the piled entablatures of ages. Wind ye down there, ye prouder, sadder souls! question that proud, sad king! A family likeness! aye, he did beget ye, ye young exiled royalties; and from your grim sire only will the old State-secret come. (p. 183)

In defiance of the gods, Ahab seeks the old State-secret, the buried human essence and reconciliation with the maternal source, and he sees as the only obstacle to
this reunion that embodiment of natural evil, Moby Dick. With Moby Dick conquered and lashed to the Pequod, man is free to sail into the creative matrix, the lost paradise of procreation and immortality. Such was the ecstatic hope of all such suffering, sacrificial gods--Dionysus, Mithra, and Christ; and like Christ, Ahab has a "crucifixion in his face" (p. 122).

After the traditional three-day trial, and with the committed Ishmael close by, Ahab harpoons the monster that reflects his own mutilations, and with his foe plunges to a death that is also an ecstatic triumph.

To the thee I roll, thou all-destroying but unconquering whale; to the last I grapple with thee; for hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee... Let me then tow to pieces, while still chasing thee, though tied to thee, thou damned whale! Thus, I give up the spear! (p. 565)

And thus is Ahab the sacrificed victim in a ritualistic reunion with the primal source, and his last magnificent gesture epitomizes the artistic courage and sweeping imagination of his creator. Melville was aware of the audacity of his imagination, but permitted it, as Ishmael permitted Ahab, to take him on a defiant voyage into the creative wellspring. Hawthorne, much older than Melville and still a part of the classic tradition, was too restrained to take such literary license; however, in The House of the Seven Gables Hawthorne suggests through Clifford's moment of indecision his own great need for artistic
emancipation. As psychologically withdrawn as was Dimmesdale before him, Clifford teeters at the edge of the arched window, looking down upon an existential turbulence as symbolic of the primordial as the black depths into which Ahab plunges:

one broad mass of existence—-one great life—-one collected body of mankind, with a vast, homogeneous spirit animating it—a river of life, massive in its tide, and black with mystery, and out of its depths, calling to the kindred depth within him.\(^1\)

But Clifford is too long withdrawn into the aesthetic life to take chances, though he sees that "[h]ad I taken the plunge and survived it, methinks it would have made me another man!" (p. 166).

Ishmael, young and heretical, takes the plunge with Ahab, and becomes another and better man, surviving to create a great book in commemoration of Ahab, the hero of the tragic will. As the apollonian man of reason, Ishmael's role is that of the communicator of truth. He has examined the empirical, philosophical, and religious beliefs of the ages, and as a gift of love from his savage redeemer Queequeg, he has inherited the instinctual knowledge painstakingly inscribed on the lifebuoy-coffin. Only the rational Ishmael can be the creative self, the communicator of universal truth, for, as Karl Jaspers saw, only the man of reason remains open to the truth and in sympathy with the rest of humanity; he is not seduced
through belief in God to withdraw from men; through supposed knowledge of the absolute truth to justify one's isolation; through supposed possession of being itself to fall into a state of complacency that is in truth lovelessness. . . . Truth is what joins us together; and, truth has its origin in communication. The only reality with which man can reliably and in self-understanding ally himself in the world, is his fellow man. At all the levels of communication among men, companions in fate lovingly find the road to truth. This road is lost to the man who shuts himself off from others in stubborn self-will, who lives in a shell of solitude.  

Out of their solitude, Melville and Hawthorne wrote of the dangers of solitude; out of their commitment to truth, they wrote of the elusiveness of truth. For one summer in their paradoxical lives these two writers were to share an understanding that transcended that of ordinary men. Then they were both at the apex of their careers; after Lenox, there was one brief, sad meeting in Liverpool, from which Melville sailed with his mind "pretty much made up . . . to be annihilated." And like another voyaging Ishmael, Melville left his trunk behind at Hawthorne's consulate, "taking only a carpet-bag." Somewhere in the Pacific deep were giant creatures joyfully and creatively united, but such freedom was not for men.
ENDNOTES

1Leon Howard, _Herman Melville_ (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951), p. 162.

2Howard, p. 130.


7Herman Melville, _Moby-Dick_, ed. L. S. Mansfield and Howard P. Vincent (New York: Hendricks House, 1952), p. xxxiv. Henceforth all references to this novel will be made in the text.


15Hawthorne, The House of the Seven Gables, p. 36.

16Hawthorne, The House of the Seven Gables, p. 115.

17Hawthorne, The House of the Seven Gables, p. 118.

18Hawthorne, The House of the Seven Gables, p. 166.

19Hawthorne, The House of the Seven Gables, p. 309.

20Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter, pp. 243-244.


22Hawthorne, The House of the Seven Gables, p. 254.

23Leyda, p. 438.

24Leyda, p. 432.


26Leyda, p. 207.


28Leyda, p. 403.


31Leyda, p. 207.


33Edith Hamilton, Mythology, pp. 61-62.

34Hawthorne, The House of the Seven Gables, p. 165.

36 Leyda, p. 529.

37 Leyda, p. 531.
CHAPTER IV

THE ENCIRCLED EXPERIENCE

At the time of Melville's 1856 visit with him in England, Hawthorne was serving as United States consul at Liverpool; from this post he traveled to the Continent, where he spent another three years. Living in Europe removed Hawthorne for the first time from the provincial atmosphere in which he had spent most of his life. At fifty he finally had the opportunity to study the great masterpieces, to visit the architectural wonders of the Continent, and to enjoy a brilliant international society. With the dedication of a man long starved for culture, he tirelessly explored cathedrals and galleries, unable to suppress his puritanic reactions to their displays of religious iconography and female nudity. Arriving too late in life to overcome all of his provincialisms, Hawthorne nevertheless gave himself without reserve or pretense to the task of mastering a cosmopolitan culture. He tried to stay open to experience, to remain patient and compassionate; he learned to tolerate views, customs, and situations that would have shocked his native New England, and eventually he found a very pleasant existence among the
American expatriates of the art world, a society which he had previously avoided.

When the time came for his return home, Hawthorne discovered that he was reluctant to leave; Europe had aroused his sensibilities and reawakened his creative imagination. His European experience inspired the last two of his completed works, for he lived only a few more years after his return. In the opinion of his literary heir Henry James, this exposure to Continental culture came too late for Hawthorne; he was but superficially affected by it, "far less than would be the case with a mind of the same temper growing up among us today." With a mind of the "same temper," but one well adjusted to European ways, James created in his 1903 novel The Ambassadors a character highly suggestive of Hawthorne as European traveler—Lambert Strether, a middle-aged American romantic of sensitivity and imagination, who comes too late in life to reap the harvest of Europe's proffered culture. Strether, like so many of the Hawthornian artist/protagonists, is a man of paradoxes—passive, yet zealous; curious, yet detached; social, yet alienated. In these paradoxes, and in his exile to the periphery of human relationships, Strether greatly resembles Miles Coverdale, a character which Hawthorne patterned after many of his own traits.

While the source for the character of Strether has been a matter of much critical speculation, it is generally
known that a central theme for *The Ambassadors* stemmed from advice given to a young artist by William Dean Howells, James's friend and literary consultant. In his "Project of Novel" James records that Howells, sitting with Jonathan Sturges in a Parisian garden, and brooding over personal problems, gave vent to the original of Strether's poignant outcry: "Live all you can; it's a mistake not to. . . . I haven't done so enough before--and now I'm too old; too old at any rate for what I see. . . . It's too late."\(^2\) This emotional message suggested two of the central themes in the novel, the lost opportunity and the relentlessness of time. Strether, however, is vastly different from the American editor whose confession inspired the story. Howells was not a romantic but a confirmed realist; he was not a repressed New Englander but a somewhat philistine Middle Westerner. And while he was in many ways as provincial, he did not have Strether's deep sensitivity and imagination. Moreover, James made it clear in a letter to Howells that only his friend's remark, not his personality, had become "the mere point of the start, of a subject."\(^3\)

At times James saw himself in the portrait of Strether. In a letter to a friend to whom he had presented a copy of *The Ambassadors*, he closed by referring to the "poor old hero, in whom you will perhaps find a vague resemblance
(though not facial!) to yours always[,] Henry James." When James wrote the novel, he was about the same age as Strether and certainly shared his character's compassion and imagination; he did not, however, suffer from the social, cultural, and aesthetic uncertainties that are the chief ingredients of Strether's condition. It is "poor Hawthorne," as James rather condescendingly describes him in his criticisms, who most clearly resembles "poor old" Strether, the repressed idealist. Although James never mentions Hawthorne in connection with his novel, The Ambassadors contains themes, imagery, and characterizations similar to those in Hawthorne's own works, as well as to James's criticisms of these works and comments on Hawthorne's European experience.

James, however, was always more willing to be associated with the European realists than with American writers like Hawthorne, whom he considered an "exquisite provincial." He admired Gustave Flaubert, Émile Zola, Alphonse Daudet, and Prosper Mérimée, and particularly saw himself as a disciple of Ivan Turgenev, who shared his condition as an expatriate alienated from his native culture. Unlike Turgenev, however, James transformed that alienation into the dominant theme of his work, the dichotomy between American materialism and moral rectitude and European aestheticism and social perception. James could not entirely free himself, any more than could his Lambert
Strether, from the burden of puritanic moral consciousness; but neither could he transcend a certain filial sense of shame for his American literary predecessor's parochialism and old-fashioned romanticism. At one point in *The Ambassadors* John Little Bilham chides Strether for his belonging to a previous century, and James himself, although deeply indebted to Hawthorne for many of his techniques, felt that the earlier writer was outdated by the contemporary European novelists.

James's ambiguous attitude toward his predecessor Hawthorne was like that of a rebellious son towards an antiquated yet disturbingly influential father. At twenty-one, when James learned of Hawthorne's death, he "yielded to the pang that made him positively and loyally cry." However, some years later, he criticized Hawthorne's notebooks with a degree of condescension and depreciation. Although he was as professionally obliged to Hawthorne as was Melville, who openly revered the older writer, James consistently emphasized the differences between his works and Hawthorne's. He pointed out that Hawthorne's limitations were due to his withdrawal into his insular New England world, and his lack of acquaintance with European realism.

In all James's earlier criticism of Hawthorne, he stressed his insularity and romanticism. In his 1872
review of Hawthorne's French and Italian Notebooks, James rebukes Hawthorne for his "leisure of attention," amounting to a "blessed intellectual irresponsibility." He describes him as being "excessively detached . . . from Continental life, touching it . . . distrustfully, shrinkingly." He believed that Hawthorne's preoccupation with romantic fantasy caused him to ignore the "dense realities" of the Continental world. In his 1879 biography of Hawthorne, James states that his attempt towards greater realism in The House of the Seven Gables and The Blithedale Romance had failed because, in his adherence to the romantic mode, Hawthorne did not render "exactly or closely the actual facts of the society that surrounded him. . . . His shadowy style of portraiture never suggests a rigid sense of accuracy." The errors that James saw in Hawthorne's social and aesthetic judgments are those that lead his own character Strether into his tragic-comic dilemma. Like the Hawthorne of James's criticisms, Strether cloaks the "dense realities" of Continental society with romantic fantasy and fails to perceive the "actual facts" behind the European social veneer. As a romantic, Strether has, in Chad Newsome's words, too much imagination; and he is, as in James's description of Hawthorne, "not in the least a realist--he was not to [his] mind enough of one."
Just as Hawthorne's characters strike James as picturesquely arranged representations of a single state of mind, so does Strether force upon his European experience a one-sided application of moral terms; he seeks in the beauty of Europe the moral conscience of America. Unable to perceive the faults and complexities of their characters, Strether romanticizes his friends: a goddess icon in the place of the humanly fallible Mme. de Vionnet, a model gentleman in the stead of the shallow Chad Newsome, a strait-laced Puritan in lieu of the backsliding Waymarsh, a noble matriarch rather than the monstrous Mrs. Newsome. For Strether, even the European countryside is fixed within an idealistic, gilt-framed picture from his past, until an emotional shock forces him to rearrange the landscape and its human figures according to the realities of the moment.

Strether gradually learns to take into account the present and the real. As he moves beyond the confinement of his New England moral consciousness into the widening circle of cosmopolitan experience, he develops a more creative perception. This perception forms the content and shapes the events of The Ambassadors, for Strether is the central consciousness of this novel, whose every detail must be observed and then analyzed by him. In a notebook entry describing the "germ" of The Ambassadors, James sees the idea of the tale being the revolution that takes place in the poor man, the impression made
on him by the particular experience, the incident in which this revolution and this impression embody themselves. . . . They are determined by certain circumstances, and they produce a situation, his issue from which is the little drama. 

The Ambassadors, then, is the drama of Strether's experiences; the novel is encompassed by his consciousness and intelligence, encounters and relationships, the narrative belonging almost entirely to his sphere of thought. Because Strether's point of view is the angle of vision through which the story is told, the reader is convinced that the change in Strether's values stems from the change in his vision. The reader's focus on Strether's expanding vision is just what James intended; as he wrote in his Preface: "The business of my tale, and the march of my action, not to say the precious moral of everything, is just my demonstration of this process of vision."  

From a confined background that has limited his vision, Strether brings to Europe a set of aesthetic and moral values that must be proved and validated in terms of his experience. In the Jamesian view, life must prove itself in the living; therefore, while living in Europe, Strether is forced to reexamine his native values and prejudices. In the enchantment of the artist Gloriani's garden, for instance, Strether recalls the failures and mediocrities of his New England life, and although he wants to remain true to his New England moral conscience,
he recognizes that the rigidity of his past environment has deprived him of personal and creative fulfillment. He understands that he can profit by his Parisian experience, and that, given the "consciousness of personal freedom as he hadn't known for years" (XXI, 4), he may find his way back into fulfilling the dreams of his youth.

In this lovely garden and among these fascinating people, he longs to shake off the gray conformity of his personality and exchange roles with those in the creative center of life. Strether yearns to be like Chad, to love without conscience—or to be like Gloriani, to create without conformity.

In his envy of those who are ruthless and vital, rather than, like himself, mild and passive spectators of life, Strether resembles Miles Coverdale in Hawthorne's The Blithedale Romance. James said that Coverdale is as "much Hawthorne as he is any one else..." and describes this character in words that could also apply to Strether.

He is a portrait of a man... whose passions are slender, whose imagination is active, and whose happiness lies, not in doing, but in perceiving—half a poet, half a critic, and all a spectator. In contrast, James calls Hollingsworth, Coverdale's opposition, "barbarous," and says his "omnivorous egotism" has a fatal attraction for the beautiful Zenobia, whose
passionate exchanges with Hollingsworth are both watched and dreamed of by an envious Coverdale. Coverdale relates, in what James considered the best scene in the novel, how Hollingsworth "would glare upon us from the thick shrubbery of his meditations, like a tiger out of a jungle."\textsuperscript{18} Significantly, James applies this imagery to his character Gloriani. Strether sees the magnetic Gloriani approach a responsively waiting Mme. de Vionnet. Curious as Coverdale, Strether secretly watches the pair and wonders if their obvious sexual attraction is indicative of the social freedom in the "great world," and if so,

> there was something in the great world covertly tigerish, which came to him, across the lawn, in the charming air, as a waft from the jungle. Yet it made him admire . . . made him envy, the glossy male tiger, magnificently marked. (XXI, 219)

Strether and Coverdale, like the other Hawthornian artist/protagonists, are fated to remain on the periphery of passion, mesmerized by their opposites, those tiger-like egotists who dwell within its pulsating center. As the perennial bystanders to life, they are compelled to witness and analyze, rather than experience, the raw emotions. "Where there is emotion, there am I,"\textsuperscript{19} James was once reported to have said, explaining why an artist's professional curiosity must take precedence over his finer human sympathies.
To satisfy his own curiosity, Strether learns to depend upon his visual sense. In Europe he finds that direct questions are useless. Although he asks questions from the moment he arrives, he finds he cannot trust the answers he receives; they seem to serve the demands of social etiquette rather than truth. Little Bilham finally cautions Strether, "Don't put any question; wait, rather--it will be much more fun--to judge for yourself" (XXI, 208).

Strether finds that cosmopolitans like Bilham use their visual sense almost to the exclusion of the moral sense. Miss Barrace admits that

we all do here, run too much to mere eye. But how can it be helped? We're all looking at each other--and in the light of Paris one sees what things resemble. . . . It's the fault of the light of Paris--dear old light! (XXI, 207)

In the clear light of Paris which lends beauty to all forms, only the most attentive can discriminate between the genuine and the tawdry. Experience develops Strether's perceptions, however, and he begins to understand the meanings behind the social and artistic forms which he sees. He only falters in his understanding of social forms when he judges Europeans by New England moral values, and only fails in his appreciation of art when he measures it by New England aesthetic standards. Showing an attitude that would do credit to a much younger man--in fact, Bilham points out his timeless youth--Strether applies himself
to his European experience with every ounce of his considerable charm and decency. His eager and unstinting application to his learning process, amidst melancholy reminders of his advancing age and limited background, recalls James's comments on the diaries of another reflective European traveler, Nathaniel Hawthorne:

The tone of his European Diaries is often so fresh and unsophisticated that we find ourselves thinking of the writer as a young man, and it is only a certain final sense of something reflective and a trifle melancholy that reminds us that the simplicity which is, on the whole, the leading characteristic of their pages is, though the simplicity of inexperience, not that of youth. . . . I know nothing more remarkable, more touching, than the sight of this odd, youthful-elderly mind, contending so late in the day with new opportunities for learning old things, and, on the whole, profiting by them so freely and gracefully.20

Profiting as well as did Hawthorne by his experience, Strether comes to appreciate the European concept of subjecting all life to beauty and to recoil from philistinic ideas such as Chad Newsome's proposal to subject art to New World advertising. The conflict between the increasing refinement of Strether and the materialistic cynicism that he finally sees in Chad is suggestive of Hawthorne's persistent dichotomy between aestheticism and materialism. In his tale "The Artist of the Beautiful," the artist-outcast Owen Warland, much like Strether, is condescended to by his employer's family, the Hovendens. The Hovendens' association with clock-making symbolizes their
practicality and materialism, and in James's *The Ambassadors*, clocks have the same association. The constant references to time, watches, and clocks in James's novel, according to R. W. Stallman, indicate that Strether's materialistic employer, Mrs. Newsome, must own a clock factory. Though it appears that James's deliberate intention not to name the clock as the Woollett product was for purposes of ambiguity, Stallman believes that

the identity of "the little nameless object" informs the meaning of the whole novel--it correlates with the dominant time-theme, promotes it, manifests it. The tell-tale clue to its identity is provided in the final scene of the book by the fact that Miss Gostrey's question about it juxtaposed with Strether's image of himself as an old Berne clock. Clocks are the only thing Woollett could possibly produce, considering the dominating clock time-sense of the American mind represented by Mrs. Newsome and her ambassadors. . . .

To illustrate the opposing philosophies of time--the materialistic versus the aesthetic--both writers use images of time in much the same way; the theme of Hawthorne's tale associates measured time with practicality and materialism, and timelessness with spiritual beauty; in *The Ambassadors* the time-oriented Woollett materialism is contrasted to Parisian freedom from time. And Hawthorne and James both show that, in a materialistic world, even the creative are prisoners of time; dominated by their clock-making employers, Owen Warland and Lambert Strether become associated with the mechanized figures that march across the face of old clocks. Strether sees himself
like one of the figures of the old clock at Berne. They came out, on one side, at their hour, jigged along their little course in the public eye, and went in on the other side. He too had jigged his little course--him too a modest retreat awaited. (XXII, 322)

As much imprisoned by the "clock time-sense" of Peter Hovenden as is Strether by Mrs. Newsome's, Owen Warland seeks creative release through the manipulation of the figures on an old clock:

He would take upon himself to arrange a dance or funeral procession of figures across its venerable face, representing twelve mirthful or melancholy hours. Several freaks of this kind quite destroyed the young watchmaker's credit with that steady and matter-of-fact class of people who hold the opinion that time is not to be trifled with, whether considered as the medium of advancement and prosperity in this world or preparation for the next.22

The peculiarly American viewpoint that time is to be harnessed, that it is "money" and invariably wasted by the creative, is satirized by both Hawthorne and James. In a time-dominated chapter of The House of the Seven Gables, Hawthorne mocks the dead Judge Pyncheon whose supposed mastery of time was to net him the financial control of Salem. And, at the beginning of his Parisian experience, Strether thinks of time in terms of money: "He had not for years so rich a consciousness of time--a bag of gold into which he constantly dipped for a handful" (XXI, 112).

An extension of the time-theme, the motif of aesthetic detachment versus creative production, is also treated in
both Hawthorne's "The Artist of the Beautiful" and James's The Ambassadors. In The Ambassadors this motif is crystallized in Strether's relationship with "Little Bilham," the small "artist-man" who reminds Strether of his younger days. Both Strether and Bilham are artists in temperament, but both have despaired of producing works of art. Strether has always regretted his failure, but Bilham has discovered an aesthetic truth beyond creativity itself, and "his productive powers faltered as his knowledge grew" (XXI, 126). Content with his cultivated perception of beauty, Bilham abstains from any occupation other than living through his intelligence and imagination.

Bilham's discovery that ultimate beauty resides within the artist's imagination rather than through his creation is the central message of Hawthorne's "The Artist of the Beautiful." Owen Warland contentedly watches his exquisite creation destroyed knowing that his spirit still possesses its essence. Like Bilham, he

looked placidly at what seemed the ruin of his life's labor, and which was yet no ruin. He had caught a far other butterfly than this. When the artist rose high enough to achieve the beautiful, the symbol by which he made it perceptible to mortal senses became of little value in his eyes while his spirit possessed itself in the enjoyment of the reality.  

Through Bilham and Warland, the two writers illustrate their shared belief that the beauty of the artist's concept was often beyond that of his rendition. Hawthorne
once said that he held more beautiful stories within his imagination than he could ever commit to paper, while in his late works, James's highly imaginative language often exceeds the understanding of the ordinary reader. For both writers, the artist dwells apart in a rarefied atmosphere beyond the normal perceptions, and in their artist/protagonists, this uniqueness is often symbolized through psycho-physical characteristics. For instance, Owen Warland and Little Bilham are physically as light, delicate, and sensitive as the art with which they are involved, and they are both hesitant about asserting their normal human desires. Both are intimidated by the prospect of marriage, letting such opportunities slip by rather than sacrifice their aesthetic preoccupations.

In contrast to the delicate aestheticism of the artists Bilham and Warland, the materialistic Newsomes and Hoven-dens are portrayed as domineering, unfeeling, and destructive in nature, and solidly imposing in physique. In Hawthorne's tale, the practical Hovenden family, from the skeptical grandfather to the fat baby, bring on the destruction of all of Warland's creative efforts. The frustrated Warland realizes that ideas, which grow up within the imagination and appear so lovely to it and of a value beyond whatever men call valuable, are exposed to be shattered and annihilated by contact with the practical. It is requisite for the ideal artist to possess a force of character that seems hardly compatible with its
delicacy; he must keep his faith in himself while
the incredulous world assails him with its utter
disbelief."

Just as Owen Warland is humiliated by the Hovendens,
Strether suffers under the disapproval of the Newsomes.
Nevertheless, like Owen, Strether is eager to present to
his employer's daughter what he considers a masterpiece; for
Owen, it is a magic butterfly; for Strether, it is Mme. de
Vionnet, who symbolizes for his newly awakened perceptions
all the rare beauty and grace of old Paris. In Strether's
mind, Marie de Vionnet is not only exquisite in herself,
but she had the magic to create a new Chad, a polished
gentleman in the stead of the "brute" who had left Ameri-
can shores. To Strether's dismay, Mrs. Newsome's daughter,
Sarah Pocock, is unimpressed; she refuses to believe that
Chad has been changed for the better, and she considers
Mme. de Vionnet to be an indecent woman. Furthermore,
she demands that Strether submit to her mother's will and
immediately return to New England. In short, Sarah seeks
to destroy Strether's ideal of beauty much as the Hoven-
dens try to destroy Owen's. After his disastrous confron-
tation with the Pococks, Strether dreams of Sarah, who
seemingly carries with her the full weight of American
materialism and moral principle.

She loomed at him larger than life; she increased
in volume as she came. She so met his eyes that,
his imagination taking, after the first step,
all, and more than all, the strides, he already
felt her come down on him; already burned, under her reprobation, with the blush of guilt; al-ready consented, by way of penance, to the instant forfeiture of everything. (XXII, 61)

But Strether finds that Americans abroad are a capri-cious lot, quite ready to abandon moral principles for a brief Continental fling. The formidable Sarah allows herself a flirtation with the strait-laced Waymarsh, leaving Strether to reflect upon an experience that now encompasses the Woollett emissaries as well as his European encounters.

With the inclusion of the Woollett ambassadors, the circle of experience in which his own consciousness serves as the hub becomes as much a test of Strether's integrity as any knightly trial. In fact, the comedy of the situa-tion rests on Strether's reversal of the fairy-tale stereotype. Promised the hand of the Woollett princess, Mrs. Newsome, if he will rescue her son from the spell of an evil enchantress, Strether has not only dallied in his mission but has fallen under the same spell. By the arrival of the new ambassadors, he is now forced to consider the expense of the world of imagination and color that Mme. de Vionnet has opened up for him. But for Strether, Marie de Vionnet is the only thing—in the words of James—that "supremely matters"; she is for him what Hester Prynne is for Dimmesdale, and the sea for Melville—the creative imagination, profoundly mysterious, endlessly suggestive. And significantly, the precise hour in which
he falls completely under Marie's spell is noon—at lunch along the Seine—the hour in which Hester joins Dimmesdale on the scaffold, and Ahab sights Moby Dick; the hour, in fact, in which all the Hawthornian artist/protagonists meet their destiny. In Paris the hour is noon, and the time is spring—the reawakening of all creativity. Strether and Marie seat themselves at a small table, by a window adjusted to the busy quay and the shining, barge-burdened Seine; where, for an hour, in the matter of letting himself go, Strether was to feel that he had touched bottom. . . . How could he wish it to be lucid for others, for anyone, that he, for the hour, saw reasons enough in the mere way the bright, clean, ordered water-side life came in at the open window?—the mere way Mme. de Vionnet, opposite him over their intensely white table-linen, their omelette aux tomates, their bottle of straw-coloured Chablis, thanked him for everything almost with the smile of a child, while her gray eyes moved in and out of their talk, back to the quarter of the warm spring air, in which early summer had already begun to throb, and then back again to his face and their human questions. (XXII, 13-14)

Strether asks questions as much from misgivings about his European quest as curiosity about human relationships. He is lost and puzzled in Europe because he cannot decide where to place his commitments—in the culture of his allegiance or in the culture of his growing esteem. Maria Gostrey is aware of this duality in Strether, that he is not enjoying Europe as much as he wants so, yet more than he feels he should. Maria is so clairvoyant that, in many ways, she seems Strether's mirror image, a role which
James suggests by making her a physical, as well as a mental, reflection of Strether. They resemble each other so much that it would not have been altogether insupposable that, each so finely brown and so sharply spare, each confessing so to dents of surface and aid of sight, to a disproportionate note and a head delicately or grossly grizzled, they might have been brother and sister. (XXI, 10)

While Maria most obviously resembles Strether, Waymarsh and Little Bilham reflect aspects of Strether's consciousness. This technique, the revelation of the protagonist through his relationships with two or more characters reflecting aspects of his psyche, was used by Hawthorne to depict the "deeper psychology," a development deeply admired by James. In The Ambassadors Maria Gostrey, Waymarsh, and Bilham relate to Strether in a way that is intended to illuminate his consciousness, much as Dimmesdale is fully developed through his relationship with Hester, his creative self, and Chillingworth, his will. Maria monitors Strether's judgment; she discerns his failures and corrects his views—that the play he admires is actually "dreadful," that the employer he reveres is really "just a moral swell," and that the woman he has not yet met may be "charming" rather than "off the streets."

While Maria serves as his judgment, Waymarsh reminds Strether of his Puritan conscience—that his mission is degrading, that Catholicism is dangerous, that Europe is
disillusioning, that Mme. de Vionnet is corrupting. John Little Bilham suggests the youth Strether missed—the joy, the culture, the creativity he had never experienced. Each of these three characters stirs some part of Strether's inner life, involving his thoughts, feelings, and responses.

Because *The Ambassadors* is essentially the record of the protagonist's inner life, the internal narrative passages read much like thought processes—sensations, memories, associations, and reflections. It is through these thought processes of Strether that past and present are connected, characters revealed, emotions recalled, and sensations recorded. Moreover, by the use of unconventional syntax, James suggests the illogical sequence of actual thought, a technique which his brother William called "stream of consciousness," and one that would immensely influence later writers like Faulkner. Although James's syntax was a precedent, there is a suggestion of Hawthorne in the haunting tone and poetic impressionism of James's internal narrations. While Hawthorne relied upon conventional syntax and formal language, he was a master at suggesting the flow of inner consciousness; and since James, as a small boy, was so profoundly affected by *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables* and so strongly influenced by these works throughout his life, it may well be that he unconsciously absorbed Hawthorne's
inner-narrative method, transposing it later into the varied, imagistic language of his own novels. At any rate, James, like Hawthorne before him, mastered the technique of so effectively projecting the narration through the central consciousness that the reader is able to share its emotions, perceptions, and recollections.

In order to draw the reader close to the central protagonist's experience, Hawthorne and James used in their language the elements of lyrical poetry—imagination, subjectivity, heightened emotion, and strong rhythm. For instance, in Hester Prynne's response to Dimmesdale's last sermon, these elements heighten the drama of Hawthorne's passage:

Now she caught the low undertone, as of the wind sinking down to repose itself; then ascended with it, as it rose through progressive gradations of sweetness and power, until its volume seemed to envelop her with an atmosphere of awe and solemn grandeur. And yet, majestic as the voice sometimes became, there was for ever in it an essential character of plaintiveness. A loud or low expression of anguish,—the whisper, or the shriek, as it might be conceived, of suffering humanity. . . . But even when the minister's voice grew high and commanding,—when it gushed irrepressibly upward,—when it assumed its utmost breadth and power, so overfilling the church as to burst its way through the solid walls, and diffuse itself in the open air . . . the auditor . . . could detect the same cry of pain."

And in The Ambassadors, in the rendition of Strether's last visit to Mme. de Vionnet, there is a suggestion of Hawthorne's passage in James's quiet introduction with
its slow, heavy rhythm, and the acceleration of the lyrical
movement into the final crescendo of cosmic drama. Both
writers focus upon the shifting sequence of the protagon-
ists's impressions and the mounting emotions associated
with these.

The light in her beautiful, formal room was dim
... the hot night had kept out lamps, but there
was a pair of clusters or candles that glimmered
over the chimney-piece like the tall tapers of an
altar. The windows were all open, the redundant
hangings swaying a little, and he heard once more,
from the empty court, the small plash of the foun-
tain. From beyond this, and as from a great dis-
tance--beyond the court ... came, as if excited
and exciting, the vague voice of Paris. [He] had
all along been subject to sudden gusts of fancy in
connection with such matters as these--odd starts
of the historic sense, suppositions, and divina-
tions with no warrant but their intensity. Thus
and so, on the eve of the great recorded dates,
the days and nights of revolution, the sounds had
come in, the omens, the beginnings broken out.
They were the smell of revolution, the smell of
the public temper--or perhaps simply the smell of
blood. (XXII, 274)

Hawthorne and James present the recollections of the
central consciousness in mental-emotional passages of sharp
images and free association. As Hester stands alone on
the scaffold, she seeks to escape the pain of the present
by returning to the past:

Her mind ... kept bringing up other scenes
... other faces ... Reminiscences, the most
 trifling and immaterial, passages of infancy and
school-days, sports, childish quarrels, and the
little domestic traits of her maiden years, came
swarming back upon her, intermingled with recol-
lections of whatever was gravest in her subse-
quently life; one picture precisely as vivid as
another; as if all were of similar importance,
or all alike a play. 25
In *The Ambassadors* Strether, uneasy about his continued dependence upon Mrs. Newsome and reviewing the events that led to this association, seeks, like Hester, answers in the past:

> Old ghosts of experiments came back to him, old drudgeries and delusions and disgusts, old recoveries with their relapses, old fevers with their chills, broken moments of good faith, others of still better doubt; adventures, for the most part, of the sort qualified as lessons. (XXI, 85)

In all these ways—through language, theme, imagery, and characterization—James explored the creative self, keeping very much in the Hawthornian tradition. In Marius Bewley's words, "In the end one can say that Hawthorne literally gave James a tradition, for it was through Hawthorne that James found New England artistically accessible." This is particularly so in *The Ambassadors*, for in this novel James evokes the New England consciousness of Hawthorne—his moral concern, his uncertainties in cosmopolitan society, his discontent with his own creativity, his disillusionment with human aims, and most of all—his personal sacrifice in the cause of human sympathy.


7 Henry James, The American Essays of Henry James, p. 5.

8 Henry James, The American Essays of Henry James, pp. 7-8.


11 Henry James, Nathaniel Hawthorne, p. 5.

12 Henry James, Nathaniel Hawthorne, p. 111.


15 Henry James, Nathaniel Hawthorne, p. 84.
16 James, Nathaniel Hawthorne, p. 129.

17 James, Nathaniel Hawthorne, p. 132.

18 James, quoting Hawthorne, in Nathaniel Hawthorne, p. 131.


20 James, Nathaniel Hawthorne, p. 142.


26 James, Nathaniel Hawthorne, p. 63.

27 James, Notes of a Son and Brother, p. 423.


CHAPTER V

THE SOUTH, THE SELF, AND THE SYMBOLS OF HISTORY

Reflected in the fate of his native region, with its involuted history of strife and resignation, rebellion and sacrifice, the contemporary Southern writer saw what Hawthorne had found mirrored in the Puritan past—the psychological pattern of his own creative mind. The image of a regional past in which abstract idealism, arbitrary will, and passive fatalism are conflicting aspects of a historical whole is echoed by the subjective writer's psychic condition as he pursues, and is consumed by, his creative goal. Both Cleanth Brooks and Lewis P. Simpson recognize that this equation of history and creativity, as well as the pervasive subjectivity of contemporary Southern writing, originated in the replacement of the traditional values of the community by the materialistic concerns of the public will. Brooks states that the "sense of community has all but disappeared from modern fiction and the disappearance accounts for the terrifying self-consciousness and subjectivity of a good deal of modern writing."\(^1\)

In a recent study Simpson analyzes the relationship between history and creativity in American literature and
probes the causes for the radical displacement of the American creative self from its base in the community of custom, tradition, and hierarchy, and its relocation in the consciousness of self-existence.² He believes that the self-consciousness of the American writer was the result of the insurrectionary social changes that took place upon the advent of the American Revolution, and that American writers were aware of and were able to articulate the effects of these changes upon their creativity long before the political leaders understood their full psychological effects upon the people. According to Simpson the "archetypal story of the American Revolution," one that explains how the creative self was driven into the "internalization of history," is Hawthorne's enigmatic tale "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," published in 1832.³ Briefly, the story depicts young Robin's pre-Revolutionary quest for the patronage of his elderly Royalist cousin, Major Molineux. During one long, tortuous night Robin is psychologically divested of all his previous social, moral, and religious beliefs. Freed of his old values by the actions of the insurgent mob, Robin can now establish his self-identity without traditional aid. There is, however, a dark side to Robin's liberation; he can now freely express his consciousness, but since it is no longer tied to cosmic ideals, it must now respond to the specifics of history and the will of
a public newly committed to rationalism. Simpson points out that

at the moment when [Robin] has presumably become free, his dependence on a vestigial patriarchy ended, he has become isolated in and bonded to history. Although he finds himself in a society that expresses a new equality of condition, . . . Robin's liberation is darkly qualified by the means of that liberation—the fearful passion engendered in the people in the name of their rational rights. Becoming a rational entity, a discrete self, Robin has also irrevocably become identified with public mind or public opinion. ¹

The emergence of Robin's selfhood out of the pastoral community of custom and tradition into a consciously historic society is, in Simpson's mind, the first "symbolic representation and evaluation of the significance of the Revolution in our literature." ⁵ As a society that had risen on the basis of an intensely intellectual social criticism, and with the utmost faith in the cognitive processes of the consciousness, the new nation felt its historical identity was dependent on the individual use of rational intelligence. Ideas and convictions of every kind were "taken out of their location in custom and tradition and relocated in the activities of the mind." ⁶ Since history became identified with the processes of consciousness, the rational American fell under the illusion that man controls his own history. The American became the first person in history to identify his sense of being with the sense of being in history. ⁷
The consequences of the internalization of history in the self were the devastating loneliness of a consciousness separated from the solace of cosmic beliefs and thrust into responsibility for the historical process. In Hawthorne's story Robin experiences such isolation in history. Looking into the interior of a deserted church, he can no longer identify with its traditional faith. Instead, he has a feeling of great desolation alleviated only by the nostalgic memories of his father conducting the family prayer service. As he pictures his family going into the house for the daily service, he sees the door shut and hears the latch drop, and realizes his exclusion from these last vestiges of traditional communion. Dispossessed from cosmic existence, Robin finds himself exiled in history, the events in time. This echo of the Adamic Fall produces great anxiety, not only in Robin but also in those Simpson terms Robin's anxiety-ridden "kinsmen"—Melville's Ishmael, William Faulkner's Quentin Compson, and Robert Penn Warren's Jack Burden. Although these protagonists are manifold in appearance and personality, they all represent the singular legend of a people who originated in their displacement in mind. Like Robin, they are cut off from any genuine contact with a world of custom and tradition; like Robin, they are in one way or another ironic and admonitory emblems of the increasing isolation of self and the ever-growing burden of self-consciousness in a society existing in and constantly being transformed by the cognitive processes of the human mind; like Robin, they symbolize the final evolvement of the individual into a historical creature.
As Simpson has shown, the isolation of the self in history is a psychological condition that connects the creative self in the nineteenth-century novel with the protagonists of the contemporary Southern novel. William Faulkner, the finest of the Southern writers, conceived the self as a summation of the past:

There is no such thing really as was, because the past is. It is part of every man, every woman, and every moment. All of his or her ancestry, background, is all part of himself or herself at any moment. And so a man, a character in a story at any moment in action, is not just himself as he is then, he is all that made him.¹⁹

As it was for Hawthorne, history was for the South the very basis of its literature. C. Hugh Holman says that the imagination of the southerner for over one hundred and seventy-five years has been historical. . . . The southerner has always had his imaginative faculties excited by events in time and has found the most profound truths of the present and the future in the interpretation of the past. . . . History—the pattern events make in time . . . has been a persistent and obsessive element in southern thought.¹¹

Because of the South's deep commitment to the process of history, its contemporary writers sought new ways of considering man in the events of time, and clearly, their ways were influenced by the same psychological awareness that Hawthorne had brought into his explorations of the Puritan past. According to Holman, the Southern writer was
overburdened by the presence [in the South] of the black man and by the courses of action which the South has taken toward the black man from 1620 to the present. Out of this consideration has emerged a sense of deep guilt and an awareness of the persistence of evil in the world, a sense of . . . inevitable culpability in the affairs of man, a knowledge that whatever we inherit, like the inheritance of Ike McCaslin in Faulkner’s "The Bear," is tainted by the means by which it was originally earned. These awarenesses have made the southern writer seek upon the altar of art a means of expiating the guilt of his society. He has attempted in many and various ways to fashion out of his acknowledgment of guilt and his pervasive sense of evil . . . some catharsis for his fear and pity and some sense of man's responsibility to others.  

If the Southern writer has been compelled to seek penance for the crimes of history committed in his region, he has also sought ways to express his need to stop time, to halt the rush of historical process. For those writers of the South who have become disassociated from their old communities of hierarchy and kinship, tradition and custom, moments of timelessness can be found only in the regions of the memory and the creative imagination. Commenting upon the manipulation of time by modern fiction writers, Eudora Welty says that

Faulkner has crowded chronology out of the way many times to make way for memory and the life of the past, as we know, and we know for what reason. "Memory believes before knowing remember," he says. Remembering is so basic and vital a part of staying alive that it takes on the strength of an instinct of survival, and acquires the power of an art. Remembering is done through the blood, it is a bequeathment, it takes account of what happens before a man is born as if he were there taking part. It is a physical absorption through the living body, it is a spiritual heritage. It is also a life's work.
Memory is an inexorable part of creativity for the Southern writer; it is his means of resisting historical change. Repeatedly in Faulkner's novels the suffering self--Darl Bundren, Quentin Compson, Rosa Coldfield, Henry Sutpen, Joe Christmas, Gail Hightower--is seized with undefinable anguish when, in Simpson's words, "he realizes that an arrangement of human relations that seemed to his childhood vision to embody both a natural and mystical permanence in truth embodies the process of historical alteration." For the Southern self, then, truth seems to lie in the memory rather than in the specifics of historical events. This resistance to historical change is also true of Warren's Jack Burden and Jeremiah Beaumont, for both of these protagonists cling to the cosmic ideals that were shaped in their youth. Faulkner's and Warren's creative protagonists retreat to childhood relationships in nature or humanity in order to escape historical time. This use of memory to oppose historical process was, of course, a device that Hawthorne used in The Scarlet Letter, as on the scaffold Hester withdraws into her childhood to escape the events of the present, and in The House of the Seven Gables, as Clifford, gazing down from his window upon the present, retreats into the memories of childhood pleasures.

The juxtaposition of the eternity of art to the historical process of time appears throughout Southern
fiction in the Hawthornian tradition. To dramatize the temporal transcendence of art, Faulkner repeatedly refers to Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn." In Sartoris (1956) Horace Benbow's "one almost perfect vase of clear amber" is associated with Keats's line, "Thou still unravished bride of quietness." In Light in August (1932) even the structure of Faulkner's novel, as it revolves around the timeless figure of Lena Grove, repeats that of Keats's poem. Throughout Absalom, Absalom! (1936), Faulkner describes Judith Sutpen as a Keatsian "widowed bride," and Warren's Jack Burden, watching Anne Stanton play tennis, imaginatively fixes her upon a Grecian frieze. One of Quentin Compson's most anguished moments in Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury (1929) is the vision of Caddy in bridal attire, running out of the mirror of his mind.

The equation of art and virginity, as Louis D. Rubin's study of Quentin Compson reveals, is another means by which the Southern writer seeks to stay the flux of historical time, for in the image of immaculateness is represented the inviolability of art to the destruction of time. Thus, in Light in August Faulkner suggests what Hawthorne suggested in The Scarlet Letter with Hester Prynne, the resemblance of the pregnant Lena Grove to the Holy Virgin, and in his unconsummated love for Lena, Byron Bunch plays the role of a modern Joseph. In their dedication to art
the creative selves in Faulkner's and Warren's novels give
their lives and loves, safety and sanity to preserving the
beauty and sanctity of their creative imaginations. In
order to do so they must first impose upon history those
symbols by which they can explore the meaning and signifi-
cance of the temporal process and the relationship of this
process to their creative existence.

The symbols of history through which the Southern
writer is able to examine the nature of temporal events,
as well as exorcise his guilt related to these events, are,
like those suggested to Hawthorne by the Puritan sermons,
images of moral relationship and existential concern: the
kaleidoscope, showing the ambiguity of the human condi-
tion and the continually shifting faces of history; the
spider web, exemplifying the endless connectiveness of all
human acts; and the house, encompassing the eternal legacy
of human guilt, the continuity of generations, and the con-
flicting yet inextricably related extensions of the creative
self.

All these symbols of history stem from Hawthorne's
transmission of Calvinist moral explorations into fiction
and his own investigations into the psychological truths
of the human heart. Hawthorne, like all writers with a
Calvinistic bent, believed that every human act had its
endless consequences, beginning with the eternal human fate
that resulted from the fall of Adam. In *The House of the Seven Gables* he wrote that

> the act of the passing generation is the germ which may and must produce good or evil fruit in a far-distant time; that, together with the seed of the merely temporary crop, which mortals term expediency, they inevitably sow the acorns of a more enduring growth, which may darkly overshadow their posterity. *(HSG, 6)*

Like Hawthorne, both Faulkner and Warren emphasize man's unchanging social, moral, and psychological nature; all show that though man's environment may change, his basic nature remains the same. In the preface to *The House of the Seven Gables*, Hawthorne insists that the writer attend to the basics of human nature, the "truth of the human heart" *(HSG, 1)*, and in his Nobel Prize speech Faulkner repeats Hawthorne's counsel, stating that an author must concern himself with "the old verities and truths of the heart, the old universal truths lacking which any story is ephemeral and doomed."* Like Faulkner and Hawthorne, Warren also shows the perpetuity of human sin; his protagonists invariably fight a losing battle against ancient, inherited evils.

To stress the universal and psychological basis of their works, Warren and Faulkner create stylized characters in the Hawthornian tradition with functions that are symbolic or allegorical.* In order to emphasize the connection of these characters to all human history, these
writers, like Hawthorne, associate their characters with Biblical or mythological (often both) names, figures, situations, and events. Thus, a contemporary human sin is connected to its model in the Civil War, its paradigm in ancient history, and its archetype in prehistory. This circular pattern, so much a part of Hawthorne's symbolic method, and so suggestive of historic continuum, is repeated in these two Southern novelists in many ways—in the circular paths of journeys, the cycles of nature, the repetition of events, the reiteration of stories and legends, the echo of statements, the duplication of names, and the doubling of characters. The purpose of this emphasis on the cyclical nature of the human condition is to make clear that, while these writers are ostensibly presenting their creative psyche in the milieu of their native region, they are really portraying what is universally and eternally true of all mankind.

In Hawthorne and the two Southern writers, this universality and eternality is epitomized in the feminine character around whom the structure of their novels usually revolves. In these characters' transcendent yet static qualities, they are as suggestive as Hawthorne's Hester Prynne of the classic Greek goddesses associated with creativity—Minerva, Persephone, or Aphrodite. Since these women represent the artist's creative imagination,
their defilement, or their protection from defilement, is usually the central concern of the idealistic aspect of the creative self. Like the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century idealistic creative selves—Dimmesdale, Ishmael, Pierre, and Strether—Faulkner's Darl Bundren, Quentin Compson, and Byron Bunch, and Warren's Jack Burden and Jeremiah Beaumont seek to preserve, defend, shelter, or sacrifice themselves to the inviolability of their creative power.

The idealistic creative self in these works strives both to save the imaginative power from violation and to preserve it from the flux of time. Just as Hawthorne's Clifford Pyncheon is offended by the aging of Hepzibah, so are the creative selves in the Southern novels appalled by time's destruction of their creative imagination. In Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* (1930) Darl Bundren anguishes over the rotting evidence of Addie's body; Quentin Compson, in *The Sound and the Fury*, seeks through a suicide pact to preserve for eternity Caddy's beauty and purity; Quentin's most haunting visions in *Absalom, Absalom!* are those involving the aging and death of Judith and Henry Sutpen, a relationship he equates with his and Caddy's. Warren's creative protagonists are also disturbed by the debilitation of their imaginations; in *All the King's Men* (1946) Jack Burden is upset by the wrinkles on the maturing Anne
Stanton's neck; and Jeremiah Beaumont, in *World Enough and Time* (1950), is driven into moral degradation by the sight of Rachel Jordan's decaying beauty.

Like the earlier Hawthornian works, these Southern novels show that the idealistic creative self conflicts with the dark, willful self threatening to destroy the pursuit of the creative ideal. Darl Bundren seeks to give Addie a quick and decent burial; his passionate brother Jewel is committed to carry out her arbitrary, disastrous last wish; Quentin Compson wishes to defend Caddy's virginity; the dark, mindlessly passionate forces of the world defeat his purpose; Henry Sutpen sacrifices his freedom to defend his sister against the dark usurper, his half-brother Bon; and in *Light in August* (1932) Byron Bunch shelters Lena Grove, while evil skirts the perimeter of her sanctuary. Jack Burden declines to despoil Anne Stanton, but Willie Stark, his pragmatic, passionately committed counterpart, makes Anne his mistress. And Jeremiah Beaumont, much like Melville's Pierre, destroys himself and Rachel in fulfilling a lofty quest opposed by dark legions of human passion and cynicism.

Faulkner's and Warren's novels, like Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables*, not only show the conflict between the idealistic and materialistic selves, but portray them as inextricably involved in sins committed by previous
generations. Just as Judge Pyncheon meets the exact fate of his two ancestors, and Holgrave is tempted by his inherited mesmeric power, so do Faulkner's and Warren's creative selves suffer from inherited burdens. Faulkner's Quentin Compson is emotionally crippled by his father's ineffectuality and defeatism inherited in turn from General Compson. The psychological problems of Joanna Burden, Joe Christmas, and Gail Hightower were initiated by their grandfathers' postures, prejudices, or exploits. Henry Sutpen dies in the same isolated state of his grandfather Coldfield; Charles Bon is rejected in the same way as was his father, and in turn, similarly rejects his own part-Negro son; and Quentin sees his own incestuous longing for his sister Caddy reflected in Bon's and Henry's long-ago love for their sister Judith. Warren's Jack Burden is the illegitimate result of a liaison exactly echoed with all its disastrous consequences in Cass Mastern's Civil War confessions. And three generations of uncompromising pride and egoism lead to Jeremiah Beaumont's final dissolution.

Illustrating the multitudinous and endlessly interrelated human generations, Hawthorne and the Southern writers employ the kaleidoscopic image with its infinite variety of shifting patterns, either reflected on the rippled surface of a pool or mirror, distorted by the motion of a moving vehicle, or deformed through the impressions
of a dream, nightmare, or emotional trauma. In *The House of the Seven Gables* Hawthorne uses the kaleidoscopic images in Maule's Well and the Seven Gables mirror to reproduce the density of human existence. In one of the rooms in Seven Gables was "a large, dim looking-glass . . . which was fabled to contain within its depths all the shades that had ever been reflected there; the old Colonel himself, and his many descendents" (HSG, 20); beside the Seven Gables was a well, in which

was a fountain, set round with a rim of old, mossy stones, and paved, in its bed, with what appeared to be a sort of variously colored pebbles. The play and slight agitation of the water, in its upward gush, wrought magically with these variously colored pebbles, and made a continually shifting apparition of quaint figures, vanishing too suddenly to be definable. (HSG, 88)

Clifford, the excessively sensitive creative self, had a singular propensity . . . to hang over Maule's Well, and look at the constantly shifting phantasmagoria of figures, produced by the agitation of the water over the mosaic-work of colored pebbles, at the bottom. He said that faces looked upward to him there--beautiful faces . . . . But sometimes he would suddenly cry out--"the dark face gazes at me"--and be miserable the whole day afterwards. (HSG, 153-54)

The presence of evil paralyzes Clifford, as in Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* it also does the morbidly sensitive Quentin Compson. Quentin, like Clifford, is able to see, but not accept, the truth reflected in the water—that human events and relationships, good and evil, belong
to, and are the responsibility of, the human succession. Brooding over the Sutpen tragedy, Quentin concludes that

maybe nothing ever happens once and is finished. Maybe happen is never once but like ripples maybe on water after the pebble sinks, the ripples moving on, spreading, the pool attached by a narrow umbilical water-cord to the next pool which the first pool feeds, has fed, did feed . . . that pebble's watery echo whose fall it did not even see moves across its surface too at the original ripple-space, to the old ineradicable rhythm thinking Yes, we are both Father. Or maybe Father and I are both Shreve, maybe it took Father and me both to make Shreve or Shreve and me both to make Father or maybe Thomas Sutpen to make all of us.

Almost every work of Hawthorne's contains a sequence of kaleidoscopic imagery in which figures, settings, situations, and periods become altered, reversed, compounded, and distorted in a supernatural way: Goodman Brown's forest trial; Robin's Boston nightmare; Dimmesdale's return to the town; Clifford's and Hepzibah's railroad journey; the Pyncheon ancestral parade; Clifford's view from his window; the Blithedaler's masque; Kenyon's carnival experience. In these sequences space and time become telescoped, and good and evil, ancient and modern, doom and hope become blended; for an instant, human history in its profuse variation becomes united within the creative consciousness. For Southern writers in the Hawthornian tradition the kaleidoscopic image dramatizes the historic continuity that is so much a part of their regional literature. Thus, in Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom! Quentin and
Shreve, as they reenact the Sutpen tragedy, find that they become emotionally identified with their subjects; they too are ragged Civil War soldiers, as well as twentieth-century Harvard students:

They were both in Carolina and the time was forty-six years ago, and it was not even four now but compounded still further, since now both of them were Henry Sutpen and both were Bon, compounded each of both yet either neither, smelling the very smoke which had blown and faded away forty-six years ago. . . . (AA, 351)

Warren's Jack Burden returns from the West, haunted by past memories that are blended with present impressions. Jack has gone west to escape the present; as he drives back east, he reviews his own past history, which mixes with the history of the pioneers who long ago were also compelled westward:

That was why I came to lie on a bed in a hotel in Long Beach, California, on the last coast amid the grandeurs of nature. For that is where you come, after you have crossed oceans and eaten stale biscuits while prisoned forty days and nights in a stormy-tossed rat-trap, after you have sweated in the greenery and heard the savage whoop, after you have built cabins and cities and bridged rivers, after you have lain with women and scattered children like millet seed in a high wind, after you have composed resonant documents, made noble speeches, and bathed your arms in blood to the elbows, after you have shaken with malaria in the marshes and in the icy wind across the high plains. That is where you come, to lie alone on a bed in a hotel room in Long Beach, California.²

In All the King's Men Warren draws from nature for his central metaphor illustrating the universal bondage of
guilt. The lesson that Jack Burden must learn about innate 
guilt and human responsibility comes down to him from the 
past, through the confessional letters of a Civil War 
soldier, Cass Mastern. Cass learned that 

the world is like an enormous spider web and 
if you touch it, however lightly, at any point, 
the vibration ripples to the remotest perimeter 
and the drowsy spider feels the tingle and is 
drowsy no more but springs out to fling the gos-
samer coils about you who have touched the web 
and then injects the black, numbing poison under 
your hide. It does not matter whether nor not 
you meant to brush the web of things. Your happy 
foot or your gay wing may have brushed it ever so 
lightly, but what happens always happens and there 
is the spider, bearded black and with his great 
glittering facet- 

Jack had not meant to touch the web, but he has and is 
now indirectly responsible for three deaths; to live fully--
to face the world as it is--is to share in all human evil. 
Like Clifford, Quentin, and Henry Sutpen, Jack will not ac-
cept the bond of guilt until he is forced to do so; again 
like them, he seeks an escape from the house of history, 
only to find he must return and confront its ghosts. 

In the Hawthornian tradition the house is a most ef-
flective symbol to illustrate the legacy of human guilt, 
the bequest of sin to the succeeding generations, and the 
fragmentation of the creative psyche. Following Haw-
thorne's use of this symbol for both psychological and 
philosophical themes, the Southerner employed the house
with its interior divisions and exterior separateness to delineate the disintegration and alienation of the creative self. The disintegration of the creative self into conflicting components of abstract idealism and compulsive willfulness is, in the minds of the Hawthornians, brought about through the collapse of the idealistic dream caused in turn by evidence of evil inexorably connected to all human effort. The shocked recognition of this fact sets the creative self adrift from its psychic center and those traditional values that are associated with the ancestral home. In *The House of the Seven Gables* Hawthorne speaks for all those set adrift from their identity, traditions, and ideals.

> Where is our universe? All crumbled away from us; and we, adrift in chaos, may hearken to the gusts of homeless winds, that go sighing and murmuring about, in quest of what was once a world! (HSG, 276-77)

Like Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables*, Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* and Warren's *All the King's Men* clearly demonstrate the effectiveness of the Hawthornian house image. In these three novels, the idealistic creative selves—Clifford Pyncheon, Quentin Compson, and Jack Burden—seek reconciliation with the present through their pragmatic and realistic counterparts, Holgrave, Shreve McCannon, and Willie Stark. The schizoid tendencies of these characters are further complicated
by additional projections of the creative self; for in-
stance, Hepzibah Pyncheon and Rosa Coldfield represent
the feminine element in Clifford's and Quentin's romanti-
cism, while Adam Stanton and Henry Sutpen express the ab-
stract, destructive quality in Jack's and Quentin's ideal-
ism. Hepzibah and Rosa, each described as "rusty" and
"ancient" spinsters, are spiritual symbols of their archaic
house and representatives of a sterile morality. Adam,
with his icy blue "abstract" eyes, and Henry, with his
abstract dedication to racial purity, symbolize idealism
completely divorced from the real world; they are extrem-
ists who believe, along with Hepzibah and Rosa, that "there
was a time a long time back when everything was run by
high-minded, handsome men" (AKM, 247).

Hawthorne and Faulkner show, however, that the houses
from which "everything was run" were built by men who were
anything but "high-minded," and Warren sees that the needs
of the house itself may corrupt the good intentions of its
occupant. In The House of the Seven Gables the ancestral
Colonel Pyncheon, the "iron-hearted Puritan--the relent-
less persecutor--the grasping and strong-willed man
. . . ." (HSG, 15), built his house on the property of a
man later executed largely through Pyncheon's efforts.
In Absalom, Absalom! the "iron" Thomas Sutpen cheats the
Indians out of the land for his plantation, forcibly
restricts his architect to the building site, and so over-
works his slaves that they eventually desert him. Both
Pyncheon's and Sutpen's houses reflect the builders'
rigidity, obsessiveness, and lack of prophetic imagina-
tion. Pyncheon's was

endowed with common-sense, as massive and hard
of block of granite, fastened together by stern
rigidity of purpose, as with iron clamps, he fol-
lowed out his original design, probably without
so much as imagining an objection to it. (HSG,
9)

Sutpen's house is also a symbol of ruthless purpose. His

presence alone compelled that house to accept
and retain human life; as though houses actually
possess a sentience, a personality and charac-
ter acquired, not so much from the people who
breathe or have breathed in them inherent in
the wood and brick or begotten upon the wood
and brick by the man or men who conceived and
built them—in this house an incontrovertible
affirmation for emptiness, desertion; an insur-
mountable resistance to occupancy save when sanc-
tioned and protected by the ruthless and strong.
(AA, 85)

While Pyncheon and Sutpen commit crimes to establish
their houses, in All the King's Men Judge Irwin commits
one to save his. The aristocratic Irwin's appearance of
unassailable veracity does not deter Willie Stark from
ordering Jack Burden to get something on the judge, be-
cause "there is always something" (AKM, 49). Jack finds
that Irwin had once taken a bribe to pay off the mortgage
on his Burden's Landing home, and as a consequence, had
driven a man to suicide. At the end of his story, Jack
meditates on the tragic fate of the man who has turned out to be his father:

A good man had committed a crime to save [a house]. I should not be too complacent because I am not prepared to commit a crime to save the house. Perhaps my unwillingness to commit a crime to save the house . . . is simply a way of saying that I do not love the house as much as Judge Irwin loved it and a man's virtue may be but the defect of his desire, as his crime may be but a function of his virtue. (AKM, 437)

In Hawthorne and Faulkner the house is built by the damned, and in Warren saved by the corrupt, and all three authors show that the house also serves as an artificial womb for the imaginative self. In some secluded corner of Seven Gables, Sutpen's Hundred, and Burden's Landing, the idealistic imagination hides in torpid withdrawal from the external world. Both Clifford Pyncheon and Henry Sutpen return home after serving decades in prison or exile, seeking escape from reality in infantile sleep.

At Seven Gables

in the morning, very shortly after breakfast, it was Clifford's custom to fall asleep in his chair; nor, unless accidentally disturbed, would he emerge from a dense cloud of slumber, or the thinner mists that flitted to-and-fro, until well towards noon day. (HSC, 144)

Since Clifford's nap extends to noon, it is dangerously close to death, for in mythology noon is the hour when the hero meets his fate; Actaeon

chanced to see Diana at noon: that fateful moment when the sun breaks in its youthful, strong ascent, balances, and begins the mighty plunge to death.  


In Henry Sutpen's "bare, stale room," his sleep is hardly distinguishable from death:

waking and sleeping it was the same: the bed, the yellow sheets and pillow, the wasted yellow face with closed, almost transparent eyelids on the pillow, the wasted hands crossed on the breast as if he were already a corpse; waking or sleeping it was the same and would be the same forever as long as he lived. (AA, 373)

Jack Burden removes himself from the blighted world by going into what he terms The Great Sleep. Jack believes that one must regard sleep as a serious and complete thing, so that one gets up only in order to go back to bed. It is a response to life in which the death wish is implicit and the bed wherein Jack hides becomes a substitute womb:

You don't dream in that kind of sleep, but you are aware of it every minute you are asleep, as though you were having a long dream of sleep itself, and in that sleep you were dreaming of sleep, sleeping and dreaming of sleep infinitely inward into the center. (AKM, 100)

At the time his father shoots himself, Jack is asleep. When his mother learns of Judge Irwin's suicide, she screams, and with the imagery of birth, Jack recalls:

I came out of sleep and popped straight up in bed. I was wide awake . . . . I bounced off the bed . . . , realized that I was buck naked . . . and ran out. (AKM, 348)

For Jack the death of his father brings about his own moral and creative rebirth, and ironically, the suicide that Jack has indirectly caused gives him the father for whom he is searching; in her grief, his mother confesses that Jack is
the natural son of the man who opposed Jack's association with Willie Stark. Forced by a series of tragic events into the recognition that all humans share the burden of guilt, Jack is able to enter the real world.

Similarly, the death of Judge Pyncheon results in Clifford's moral awakening, and again, the creative self indirectly causes the death of his opposition. The ghost-like Clifford, entering the parlor to take his daily nap, may have fatally surprised the seated judge. According to Alfred H. Marks, Clifford's wraithlike appearance must have frightened Judge Pyncheon into a heart attack, and like Jack Burden by Judge Irwin's death, Clifford is morally and artistically reborn through Judge Pyncheon's death. Marks believes that

when Judge Pyncheon, the living symbol of the curse Clifford's artistic spirit inherited at the moment of his birth into the Pyncheon's family, dies, Clifford is set free of this . . . confining prison--if organic, at best an "outworn shell"--that is the Seven Gables. He is ready to take his place in the dynamic world outside.2 3

Far less optimistic than Hawthorne and Warren about the release of the creative imagination from bondage to the house of human history, perhaps Faulkner arrives at the most profound conclusions concerning the nature of the imagination. In Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom! Quentin Compson is able to unravel the mystery of the Sutpen-Bon connection through the dying Henry Sutpen, who is hidden
in the ruins of the Sutpen house. Later, Quentin and Shreve will imaginatively reconstruct the family tragedy that ends with the death of Henry and his guardian Clytie in the burning house. The Sutpen family history, then, is Henry's bequest to Quentin, who is also heir to the excessive sensibility that drove Henry to his self-sacrifice. Henry's death by fire and Quentin's eventual death by water are timeless images of purgation; however, in Faulkner the Southern imagination, though purged of its excessive romanticism, is still irrevocably bonded to its house of tragic history. In the apocalyptic concluding chapter of the novel, Jim Bond, the blighted heir to the Sutpen ruins, howls in grief and terror before his burning home, and Faulkner's implication is that the irrational element of the Southern creative imagination is committed to mourn beyond the limits of time and space for the world it once loved and lost. Just as in Hawthorne's ironic eulogy to the Pyncheon Eden, in which the "homeless winds . . . go sighing and murmuring about in quest of what was once a world," Jim Bond howls his dirge to the lost Sutpen world:

Jim Bond, the scion, the last of his race, seeing it too now and howling with human reason now since now even he could have known what he was howling about. But they couldn't catch him. They could hear him; he didn't seem to ever get any further away but they couldn't get any nearer and maybe in time they could not even locate the direction any more of the howling. (AA, 376)
In the belief of the writer in the Hawthornian tradition, all imaginations should respond whenever an Eden is lost; for the world is of a piece, and the effects of human events cannot be confined to a particular era or region. Whenever and wherever human error is committed, the consequences reverberate through time and space, and from Hawthorne to Faulkner, universal interrelationships and shared responsibility are emphasized. In order to accept, and assume responsibility for, all past and present human error, the creative self in the Hawthornian tradition must first experience love, the bond to his fellow men.

In *The House of the Seven Gables* Hawthorne shows that the discovery of love coincides with the reawakening of moral responsibility and artistic creativity, and Hawthorne's Southern followers also show love's power to renew moral and creative perceptions. Through love, Jack Burden finds the strength to leave the house of the past; he will--like Clifford and Holgrave--seek a place in the future, for

soon now [he will] go out of the house and go into the convulsion of the world, out of history into history and the awful responsibility of Time.

*(AKM, 438)*

Through his experience Jack Burden learns to cherish a creative ideal he once considered tainted, and to love the mother he had loathed; through his, Quentin Compson can deny he hates the South; and through theirs, Clifford
and Holgrave can plan to place Phoebe—the figure of creative beauty and truth—in the center of their new society. While hope is still green, implies the Dantesque epigram to *All the King's Men*, the creative self—after more than a century of traumatic division—may yet serve as the redeeming bond between the house of art and the house of history.

With the themes that Hawthorne used—time, history, and the tyranny of human error—Southern writers produced a literature that almost equals Hawthorne's in tortured intensity. Just as did Hawthorne in expressing his response to the far less devastating Salem witch trials, the Southern writers constructed myths to explain their region's "dark night of the soul," for realistic expression could not encompass the psychological depths and epic scope of its tragedy. Like those of Hawthorne's Puritan history,

the motifs of Southern history are in their very irrationality the stuff of tragedy: the reality of the dream, the unshakable hold of the past, the Lost Cause, the sense of personal and social guilt. For well over a century the South has been struggling with these demons in an epic search for identity, for "a stone, a leaf, a door," for a spiritual liberation from the tyrannies of the past.²

The Southern writers' search for identity and spiritual unity was—like Hawthorne's own search—expressed through their tragic, mythical literature. For these writers in
the Hawthornian tradition the success of the quest for self-identity and integration with the present depends upon the self's acceptance of innate human evil, while yet assuming moral responsibility for all past and present errors in human judgment. For the Southern Hawthornian the acceptance of this moral burden is only possible through his transcendent creative self, which is able to integrate through its consciousness the possibility of hope as well as doom.
ENDNOTES


3Simpson, p. 62.

4Simpson, p. 60.

5Simpson, p. 62.

6Simpson, p. 61.

7Simpson, p. 64.

8Simpson, p. 62.

9Simpson, p. 63.


12Holman, pp. 91-92.


14Simpson, p. 198.


20 William Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom! (New York: Vintage books, 1936), p. 261. All parenthetical title abbreviation and page references are to this edition; text will be referred to as AA.

21 Robert Penn Warren, All the King's Men (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1946), p. 309. All parenthetical title abbreviation and page references are to this edition; text will be referred to as AKM.


CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The writers in the tradition examined in this study--Hawthorne, Melville, James, Faulkner, and Warren--greatly enriched American fiction through their symbolic expression. They added their own psychical responses and divisions to the conventional areas of plot, character, and action; they showed how the creative mind transcended the limits of ordinary thought and imagination; they revealed the deep mysteries of their unconscious, and through the various devices of ambiguity, they suggested the complexity of human motives and the inscrutable ways of nature and God. The writers in this tradition showed a deep moral commitment to humanity; they believed that participation in the world of art must include responsibility to the world of men. In order to illuminate their concept of the responsible creative life, the writers in the Hawthornian mode projected their ideas through a concentrated and objective exposure of their own psyches. By means of this projection of mind and spirit, they strengthened their contact with their creative unconscious, reconciled the inner conflicts that inhibited their creative expression,
and reestablished their communication with the rest of society.

Seeking freedom for their subjective analysis of the creative existence, these writers in the tradition turned from the strict rules of the novel for verisimilitude, development, and continuity to the fluid, expansive method of romance. According to Richard Chase,

[Hawthorne's writings] romance was made for the first time to respond to the particular demands of an American imagination and to mirror, in certain limited ways, the American mind. In order to accomplish this Hawthorne had to bring into play his considerable talent for psychology. . . . Hawthorne, Melville, James, . . . Faulkner, . . . and others . . . have found that romance offers certain qualities of thought and imagination which the American fiction writers need but which are outside the province of the novel proper. These are writers who each in his own way have followed Hawthorne both in thinking the imagination of romance necessary and in knowing that it must not "swerve aside from the truth of the human heart."

Hawthorne led the way to the American psychological romance, developing his subjective method in the spirit of his Calvinist forebears. The Calvinists, whose religious extremes Hawthorne bitterly criticized, believed that the relentless examination of one's own sinful nature is necessary for psychic integration. Receptive to this view intellectually, if not religiously, Melville saw that Hawthorne's connection with Calvinism enriched the content and deepened the shadows of his creative work. Hawthorne, he said, had that
great power of blackness which derives its force from its appeals to that Calvinistic sense of Innate Depravity and Original Sin, from whose visitation, in some shape or other, no deeply thinking mind is always and wholly free. 2

The Hawthornian writer, bred in the Calvinist spirit, explored his private landscape of doubt and despair in search of creative and spiritual renewal. From The Scarlet Letter to All the King's Men, the novels in the Hawthornian mode begin in a wasteland setting symbolizing the total absence of creativity: a bleak, gray Boston; a frigid, tomb-like Nantucket; a dry-as-dust Jefferson; a steaming, oppressive Mason City. Only Liverpool, Strether's point of entry into the European imagination, shows the fluid green promise of creative renewal. If these novels begin with the suggested death of creativity, they nevertheless end by reaffirming the commemorative function of art: the "ever-glowing" red letter of the Boston lovers; the exalted Election Day sermon of Dimmesdale; the mythical coffin inscriptions of Queequeg; the poignant Civil War records of Charles Bon and Cass Mastern; the emotionally wrenching story of Quentin Compson.

From Hawthorne to Faulkner the protagonists in this tradition yearn to transcend their human limitations, to preserve their identity through some creative effort. In these novels the creative achievement is associated with the advent of death; just before they die Dimmesdale,
Queequeg, Quentin Compson, Charles Bon, and Cass Mastern create their memorial. The artist's fear that without a creative record his mark on earth will vanish forever is eloquently expressed in Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* As Judith Sutpen hands Mrs. Compson the dead Charles Bon's last letter, she says,

> Read it if you like or don't read it if you like. Because you make so little impression, you see . . . . [Y]ou keep on trying or having to keep on trying and then all of a sudden it's over and all you have left is a block of stone with scratches on it . . . and after a while they don't even remember the name and what the scratches were trying to tell, and it doesn't matter. And so maybe if you could go to someone, the stranger the better and give them something—a scrap of paper—something, anything, it not to mean anything in itself and them not even to read it or keep it . . . at least it would be something just because it would have happened, be remembered even if only from passing from one hand to another, one mind to another. . . . (*AA*, 127)

In all these novels, the creative work is a monument and link to the past, the expiation and redemption for human error, and the salvation of its recipient: the scarlet letter reflects both Hester's past sin and her present distinction; Queequeg's inscribed coffin saves both ancient myth and modern storyteller; the Lambinet landscape frames both Strether's delusional romanticism and his newborn realism; Charles Bon's letter links a forgotten shadow to the tangible present; and Cass Mastern's journals redeem both Civil War soldier and present-day historian.
In the Hawthornian tradition man's individual experience and his creative expression form a timeless and inexorable bond.

The creative work is both a monument to individual experience and the creative self's most powerful weapon against the varied disguises of death; Cornel Lengyel states that it represents the individual's effort to devise enduring and meaningful symbols against the destructive flux of things. An affirmation of man's will to humanity, it is a promethean gesture of defiance against the erosion of time, the invasions of chaos, the tyranny of the irrational or the meaningless. The creative work represents concrete statements and symbolic acts of man's will to know, to understand, endure, overcome, to transmute and transcend his brute limitations. ... a symbol of creativity, the artist represents a most concentrated type of the individual and his work is a most concentrated expression of individualism. At the same time, as a work of art may represent the acme of organization, so the artist may represent a most highly organized form of awareness. Individualism and organization, often at odds in society, may paradoxically attain their highest synthesis in a great work of art. 3

As shown in Hawthorne's prophetic work, the rational self not only resists chaos and the erosion of time, but upon the advent of the American Revolution, participates in the historical process. In a society based on rationalism, everything, including history itself, became subject to the relentless processes of consciousness. From Hawthorne's "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," to "Young Goodman Brown," in which Brown goes out of his rational Puritan community into the wilderness of his unconscious, to
Warren's *All the King's Men*, the Hawthornian creative protagonist demonstrates his acute awareness of his autonomous self. Lewis Simpson sees that these protagonists repeat the American legend of origination in mind: the displacement of the sacramental community in the planting of the European colonies, the disappearance of the old modes of action and ritual, and the appearance of a hero whose heroism is to be gauged by the intensity of his response to the consciousness of his self-existence.

For the creative self, however, it is imperative to resist the rationalists' diminution of the universal unconscious, the maternal source of creative imagery. According to Edward G. Edinger, although western patriarchal communities encourage the severance of the personality from its material source, the productive artist maintains access to the unconscious, without which his creativity would cease:

The conscious personality must separate itself from its origins if it is to achieve some measure of autonomy. This is the goal of all patriarchial initiations. The artist seems to have never completed this. To him, the door to the maternal unconscious with its rich store of images that feed the imagination remains open.

The artist in the Hawthornian mode retains access to the creative unconscious, as well as to the historical process, by suggesting that his imagined world belongs to both the events in time and the universal psyche of classical myth and Old Testament writ. Thus, Ahab and Ishmael, and Thomas Sutpen and his sons, reflect the
traits and destinies of their Biblical prototypes, and, at the same time, are part of the events of history. In the novels of this mode the allusions to classical myth further suggest multileveled human experience. As Richard Brodhead points out, Ahab's quest is "authentically mythic in its dimensions, but when he is out of sight, the cruise becomes a busy occupational venture with occasional scientific inquiry." Similarly, the House of the Seven Gables is a mythical Hades, as well as a picturesque relic of Salem; Priscilla is Persephone to Westervelt's Pluto, but also a feeble waif escaping a Massachusetts spring storm; Hester is Athena holding the fiery shield of the Gorgon, or a Boston seamstress wearing the symbol of Puritan mortification; Lena Grove is Aphrodite, as well as a pregnant Alabama orphan; Judith Sutpen is Iphigenia, but the defender of the fallen House of Sutpen, not Atreus, and the protector of her brother Henry, not Orestes.

The richly suggestive blend of historical time and mythical timelessness is just one element in the ambiguity that lies near the center of all the Hawthornian works. This ambiguity is used to heighten the reader's awareness of the imaginative activity of the writer and to engage him in the creative process. Although all of the writers in this tradition depend upon this polysemous device, each uses it in a different way. F. O. Matthiessen says that
Melville's [bitter] tone [in *Pierre*] suggests the difference between his [sometimes uncontrolled] ambiguity and Hawthorne's. Although Hawthorne often left his reader with several choices as to the reasons for his characters' acts, this was a device to heighten our sense of the complexity of human motives. At crucial points he was generally careful not to allow uncertainty. . . . It is necessary to stress the deliberate intention of Hawthorne's device, since James developed it to greater lengths than he did any other. . . . [His ambiguity was] a desire to create the dense illusions of the passage of life itself, the alternate disclosures and bafflements that you sense in your inevitably partial knowledge of any person or situation.

Like James, the other Hawthornians forced this sense of partial and contradictory knowledge upon their readers. Few of the creative protagonists, for instance, suggest so many ambiguous conclusions as does Hawthorne's Coverdale, who is completely unreliable in explaining his own nature. In Melville's *Pierre*, as well as in Warren's *World Enough and Time*, the protagonists function in a veritable sea of ambiguity. The *Scarlet Letter* suggests an almost endless number of meanings to the letter that marks Hester and Dimmesdale, to the scaffold that is their place of judgment, and to the child who personifies their sin. The huge expanse of *Moby-Dick* is suggested through the variety of ambiguities which Ishmael finds in the objects, ideas, sciences, customs, and positions by means of which he tries to understand the whale. Lambert Strether is completely baffled by the social paradoxes of the Europeans, and Darl Bundren is repulsed by the duplicity of his family.
The destinies of the creative selves at the conclusions to the novels in the Hawthornian tradition are deliberately ambiguous: Lambert Strether returns to America on a note that commits him to nothing, or perhaps, to everything; Kenyon will, or will not, abandon creativity on his return with Hilda to America; Byron Bunch may, or may not, consummate his love for Lena Grove. Does Gail Hightower die for trying to save Joe Christmas? Are Dimmesdale and Hester redeemed, or damned, by their love? Did Quentin finally learn that Bon was part Negro from Henry, Clytie, or Rosa? Why does Coverdale so insistently, and yet so unconvincingly, claim he really loved Priscilla? Did Clifford really cause Judge Pyncheon's death? All the creative selves in the Hawthornian tradition operate in an atmosphere that has many elements of the mystery story.

If the Hawthornian self is baffled by the ambiguous aspects of human existence, it is nevertheless certain that he is predestined for evil and its inevitable consequences: Dimmesdale, Hester, Miriam, Quentin, Jeremiah Beaumont, Joe Christmas, Charles Bon, Coverdale, Pierre, Willie Stark, Chillingworth, Goodman Brown, Ahab, and Zenobia form a fraternity of guilt, in which their sin is the proof of their humanity. Other characters, like Clifford, Judith Sutpen, Ishmael, Lambert Strether, Owen Warland, Gail
Hightower, and Jack Burden passively allow themselves to be driven toward their fates by the dionysiac will of the materialistic selves.

The resemblances among the protagonists of these various novels show the undeniable influence of Hawthorne. Once asked if he consciously or unconsciously paralleled his *As I Lay Dying* with Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*, Faulkner answered:

No, a writer doesn't have to consciously parallel because he robs and steals from everything he ever wrote or read or saw. ... I took whatever I needed wherever I could find it. ... Of course we don't know just who Hawthorne took his from. ...

Of course, Hawthorne did take some of his most important imagery from the seventeenth-century allegorists, but his memorable art—like Faulkner's own—went far beyond any imitation of literary predecessors. Apart from the English allegorists, Hawthorne did not depend upon other writers for his work. Instead, he converted what he knew about Calvinist introspection and self-awareness into his own psychological quest—the exploration of the creative mind. The labyrinthian psychic pattern that is woven into *The Scarlet Letter* is Hawthorne's representation of his creative self, with its dark and involuted nature and its brilliant center of imagination. Other writers, sharing Hawthorne's concern for self-knowledge, followed his psychological pattern.
Melville had attempted a similar description of the creative life in *Mardi*, but the failure of its symbolism discouraged him from further psychological studies. His friendship with Hawthorne, however, gave Melville new artistic direction; he adopted Hawthorne's method of setting psychological themes within the context of familiar incidents and ordinary lives, of a reality that is deliberately heightened for dramatic effect. In *Moby-Dick* Ishmael is both the higher nature of the creative self and an ordinary young seaman who convincingly carries out his various duties aboard an authentic whaling ship. Just as Hawthorne dramatized the common life and history of the Puritans he knew so well to lend authenticity to his allegorical tale, Melville transposed his sea experience into a highly imaginative drama of the inner life. Like Hawthorne Melville showed the double nature of the creative self, and Hawthorne's demonic characters Ethan Brand and Chillingworth influenced Melville's portrayal of the lower nature, the defiant Captain Ahab. In addition, Melville—like Hawthorne before him—used classical and Biblical allusions to add depth, timelessness, and universality to his dramatic themes.

Henry James recognized that Hawthorne's special gift was the rendering of ordinary New England life. The realist in James enjoyed the authenticity of Hawthorne's
descriptions, but James deplored Hawthorne's narrow background and the romantic mode in which he wrote. The alternation of praise and censure that appears in James's criticisms of Hawthorne is reflected in James's *The Ambassadors*, whose romantic protagonist must learn to modify his aesthetic and moral principles. James used many of Hawthorne's images and also adopted Hawthorne's device of presenting various aspects of the psyche through separate characters; in *The Ambassadors* Strether is guided through his European experience by characters representing different aspects of his perception and imagination.

Hawthorne's techniques were of particular value to contemporary Southern novelists Faulkner and Warren, who appropriated Hawthorne's method of letting the conditions and culture of a historically unique region provide the impressionistic background for his psychological quest. In the Southern novels, as in Hawthorne's, the creative self is divided into separate functions of the disintegrated psyche. For these writers Hawthorne's image of the house was particularly suitable for depicting the artist's communal and psychic disintegration, as well as his irrevocable bond to his inherited past. Since the fallen house is the symbol for the destroyed dream, through this image the Southern novelist could portray what Hawthorne implied in his *The House of the Seven Gables*—that fate
straddles the rift between man's aspirations and his accomplishments.

The Hawthornian writers agree on the characteristics and functions of the double-natured creative self. The two sides of the creative psyche are polarized into feminine and masculine qualities. The higher, idealistic, and traditionally feminine nature (Dimmesdale, Ishmael, Strether, Clifford, Coverdale, Quentin, Henry Sutpen, Darl Bundren, Owen Warland, and Jack Burden) shows sensitivity, passivity, caution, curiosity, self-effacement, human sympathy, low energy drive, prophetic imagination, and asceticism. The lower, materialistic, and masculine nature (Chillingworth, Ahab, Chad Newsome, Thomas Sutpen, Judge Pyncheon, and Willie Stark) displays insensitivity, egotism, cynicism, energetic drive, obsessiveness, cruelty, lack of imagination, and an implied lasciviousness. In the case of Chillingworth, Ahab, and Thomas Sutpen, there is a suggestion of sexual impotency or reproductive failure that cripples mind and body.

In the novels the role of the creative imagination is represented by the richly feminine and self-sacrificing Hester, Phoebe, Isabel Glendinning, Mme. de Vionnet, Judith Sutpen, Lena Grove, Anne Stanton, and Jack Burden's mother. These characters carry out the traditional role of leading the artist to his fulfillment or destruction. Lena Grove
and Judith Sutpen, for instance, suggest the timelessness of the Grecian muse; they repeatedly evoke the "unravished bride" in John Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn." Similar universality and agelessness are associated with Hester, Isabel, Mme. de Vionnet, and Jack Burden's mother. In these novels the ultra-feminine characters inspire love and creativity in the Hawthornian self.

Creativity is exercised by the higher, or apollonian nature, which acts as the begetter, or maternal source of the creation itself. The creation cannot reach fruition without the powerful drive of the lower, dionysiac, and paternal nature. Chillingworth, Ahab, Thomas Sutpen, Judge Pyncheon, and Willie Stark drive their respective higher natures into creative fulfillment, suicide, or in the case of Dimmesdale, Ishmael, Clifford, and Jack Burden, force these higher natures into some involvement in the death of their relentless persecutors.

In few places in literature is there such a multi-leveled analysis of the tumultuous inner life as in those writings created by, or inspired by, Hawthorne. The writers who have been under discussion—Melville, James, Faulkner, and Warren—would have been famous novelists without Hawthorne's influence, but their genius may not have been as fully realized without the pattern set by Hawthorne's tortuous search into his creative self, a
quest that marks the real beginning of the American psychological romance.
ENDNOTES


2Herman Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses," p. 125.


4Lewis P. Simpson, The Brazen Face of History, p. 64.


BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources


Secondary Sources

Books


**Articles**


Marks, Alfred H. "Who Killed Judge Pyncheon?: The Role of the Imagination in *The House of the Seven Gables.*" *PMLA,* 71 (June 1956), 335-69.
