

THE RECURRING STAIN OF HISTORY:  
A STUDY OF INTERTEXTUAL DRAMATIZATION  
INSCRIBED IN THE LIVES AND TEXTS  
OF NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE AND WILLIAM FAULKNER

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JOY BETH DAVIS

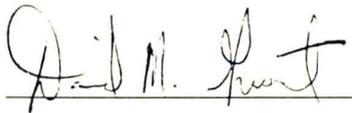
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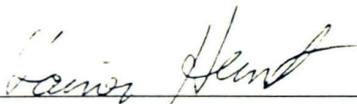
  
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The Recurring Stain of History:  
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Inscribed in the Lives and Texts  
of Nathaniel Hawthorne and William Faulkner

A Thesis  
Presented for the  
Master of Arts Degree  
at  
Austin Peay State University

Joy Beth Davis

December 1998

## Acknowledgments

I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation and gratitude to the members of my thesis committee, Dr. Steven Ryan, Dr. David Till, and Dr. David Guest, for their suggestions, guidance, and encouragement during the process of writing this thesis. I am grateful for the help I have received from these three professors, whom I respect as scholars, and who have set a wonderful example of how to engage in the academic community. I would like especially to thank Dr. Ryan for the invaluable role he has played in my undergraduate and graduate education, for his scholarly advice, and for being a good friend.

I would also like to thank my parents, Jean and Glen, and my brother Daniel for encouraging and supporting me during the months of research and revision. Much love and gratitude goes to them.

## Abstract

Both Nathaniel Hawthorne and William Faulkner believed that history can never be reduced to an object that occurs once and is over. History, for both men, is an ongoing, cyclical process, and, because of its nature, it impels us to actively participate in it, thus actively participating in its guilt and shame as well. This collective burden of shame can be transformed, when one inscribes difference in texts (both written and non-written), into an acceptance of history---which, nevertheless, remains stained.

Both authors engaged in acts of overthrowing their literary precursors, and this oedipal process mirrors the method they both enacted to silence, or castrate, their threatening forefathers, who, looming in their imaginations, appeared to promise that the writers would never live up to their expectations. In attempting to inscribe difference between, and distance from, their ancestors and themselves, Hawthorne and Faulkner were, oddly enough, participating in repetitions that aligned them even more with their ancestors.

Hawthorne and Faulkner, in actively engaging the shame of history and of their forefathers, built for themselves a space in which to live out their definition of masculinity, which was closely tied to sexual aggression. The construction of texts, in which such masculinity and sexual aggression are inscribed, is the (re)creation of the self and history. In almost constant “communication” with their ancestors, Hawthorne and Faulkner wrote their way back to those men to answer the oedipal challenges, to usurp their privileged positions in the patriarchal line, and to participate (somewhat unwittingly) in the eternal recurrence.

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And openly I pledged my heart  
to the grave and suffering land,  
and often in the consecrated night,  
I promised to love her faithfully until death,  
unafraid, with her heavy burden of fatality,  
and never to despise a single one of her enigmas.  
Thus did I join myself to her with a mortal cord.

---Hölderlin,

*The Death of Empedocles*

## Introduction

A book is the writer's secret life,  
the dark twin of a man.  
You can't reconcile them.  
---Faulkner, *Mosquitoes*

I will attempt a reconciliation of sorts between the seemingly disparate divisions in a writer, divisions which become various selves, and, as such, my study is concerned with the interplay between the lives and texts primarily of Nathaniel Hawthorne and William Faulkner and secondarily of Friedrich Nietzsche. My work is by necessity a construct, a fiction that forces questions with the design of seeing some larger, overall patterning of repetition that occurs within history, in the biographies of the writers, and outside of history, in their art. These repetitions demand that we reread their lives and texts in light of the others to attempt the discovery of a larger meaning, which, I will assert, deals with the circular nature of time and the construct of history being repeated *ad infinitum*. In this interpretation of the nature of time, meaning is found not in specific actions or in deeds performed, but in the very act of repetition.

In my first chapter, I begin my study with the exploration of the forces driving Hawthorne to succeed. One of these, which cannot be emphasized too much, was his determination to match, or excel, the many accomplishments attained by his forefathers, most notably, William and John Hathorne. Throughout his life, Hawthorne was bent under the weight of the presence of these ancestors in his family tree, and he feared that he could never live up to their expectations. In "The Custom House," Hawthorne imagines what the men might say could they know the chosen profession of their young descendent: "'What is he?' murmurs one gray shadow of my forefathers to the other. 'A

writer of story-books! What kind of a business in life,---what mode of glorifying God, or being serviceable to mankind in his day and generation,---may that be? Why the degenerate fellow might as well have been a fiddler!" (450). Although the tone is a bemused one, one of lightly laughing at himself for even considering his ancestors' reaction, it points to a very real concern for Hawthorne. Hawthorne ends his imagined dialogue by saying, "Such are the compliments bandied between my great-grandsires and myself, across the gulf of time!" (450). During this "gulf of time," the lives of the two men had grown into a mythology which embedded itself in the consciousness of the Hawthorne clan, the mythological proportions of which were accepted *a priori* by the Hawthornes. The myth had grown to such proportions that nothing could diminish the greatness of those early forefathers and no one could rival their accomplishments. The decline of the Hawthorne line was seen as inevitable.

"Let them scorn me as they will," Hawthorne declares, "strong traits of their nature have intertwined with mine" (450). With this bold declaration which belied the years of conflict during which Hawthorne struggled in the shadow of his forefathers, he ended the introduction to the novel that would make him the preeminent American writer of his time. The pressure from his ancestors would seem to have worked in making him successful; and yet Hawthorne was in constant, fretful communication with the men who both drew him to themselves and repelled him. Having grown up absorbing the countless stories of his forefathers' nearly mythical adventures, Hawthorne suffered severely ambivalent feelings. His pride in knowing that his ancestors had participated in shaping the American experience was tempered by his shame that they took part in certain

agendas, which, justified by the threat of a few rebellious individuals to the survival of the community, were nevertheless viewed as fanatical and senseless by Hawthorne's contemporaries. His forefathers were thrust into the necessity of destroying all that which threatened to throw the newcomers to America into a state of epistemological uncertainty: the difference found between the Puritan community and those outside of that community threatened to call into consciousness questions concerning the "rightness" of their actions, beliefs, and that with which they aligned themselves. Hawthorne's relationship with his forebears is compounded by a parallel ambivalence toward the region in which he was born. Because of the sins, in the name of God and truth, committed in Salem and other parts of New England, the land is seen as stained. Not only is the land blemished, but history is as well, for it is full of brave and immoral patriarchs who haunt the past with their authority and masculinity. Hawthorne's ambivalent relationship with his ancestors is parallel to the ambivalence he felt for the cursed land and history of New England and, specifically, Salem. The history, although distant, by necessity still forces those living in the present to acknowledge, and thereby participate in, the sins committed by the New England founding fathers. Unfortunately, history does not know the boundaries of time, and neither does evil, which transcends time in the form of Hawthorne's creative powers. His forefathers, seen as both brutal conquerors and potent redeemers, are given life again, and Hawthorne's writing is both the arena in which the long-dead men condemn him and his answer to them.

It is the overwhelming masculinity of these patriarchal figures that Hawthorne finds most disconcerting. Faced with the knowledge that the patrilineal line had declined

until it reached him and skeptical of his ability to halt the decline, Hawthorne found himself struggling to assert his masculinity above that of his ancestors. It was well accepted in his family that William and John Hathorne were the epitome of success, hard work, and courage, but if they were also considered the pinnacle of masculinity, as no doubt they were, Hawthorne would be thrown into the uncomfortable position of competing with long-dead rivals in an uncertain rivalry that could, by necessity, have no clear outcome during Hawthorne's lifetime. He entered into this lifelong (written) battle, vacillating between devotion and detestation. As with anyone who confronts a towering ancestor, Hawthorne's dilemma was how to posit his ancestors as figures of diminished importance and stature in his imagination and in his family history. He was threatened by the masculinity of his forefathers, one facet of which was their sexuality. Violently reacting against this overwhelming sexuality, Hawthorne, who on an unconscious level desired to castrate them, effecting their impotence, forcibly wrote his way into a relationship with them on *his* terms. Hawthorne's ambivalence toward his forefathers displayed itself in his impulse to relive (through his writing) the deplorable deeds they committed, enacting a repetition of those deeds. These deeds horrified Hawthorne primarily because of his awareness that he too might have engaged in such actions had he lived at the right time. Writing about the deeds of his ancestors allowed Hawthorne to participate vicariously in acts propelled into existence by a masculinity stamped with both sexuality and the desire to be autonomous, to achieve the impossibility of actually being the first in a line of descendents.

Faulkner experienced a similar ambivalence toward his forefathers, who helped

shape the southern experience and were notably brutal in doing so. His forefathers took on a mythology similar to that of Hawthorne's ancestors, which was compounded by his immortalization of them in his writing. Faulkner's great-grandfather, the Old Colonel, was well-known for his bravery in the Civil War and for the men he killed, not all of whom were slain in military service. Even as he was gaining influence and financial wealth in the ventures of law and railroads, it was rumored that shady, under-handed dealings were the foundation of the empire he was building. It was as both brutal conqueror and redeemer of southern land that the Colonel grew into a legend, and the figure of the Old Colonel was so monumental in the Falkner lineage that it was almost inevitable that the men born after him would be seen as a decline. From Faulkner's vantage point, the Old Colonel was simply biding his time in order to heap condemnation upon the young writer. The past for Faulkner was never laid to rest, becoming instead a part of his present and future, and, due partly to this, he was forced into participating *with* his ancestors in their acts of shame. Faulkner believed, as did Hawthorne, that his writings would move backwards in time to give an answer to what his ancestors demanded of him, and he took advantage of this communication to demand his place in the lineage, usurping for himself the established ground of his forefathers as the most authoritative patriarchal figures.

The Colonel's son, called the Young Colonel as a show of respect to his father, was successful in his business ventures, but he paled in comparison to the "original" Colonel: the son was just a copy, and not a very good one at that. The line continued its descent through Faulkner's father, who was seen as weak and ineffectual by his son. The

overly masculine ancestors, when viewed in the romantic light of hindsight, naturally diminished the father and, in turn, threatened to diminish Faulkner himself. The fear of such diminishment determined that Faulkner would harbor sexual aggression toward his forebears, manifesting itself in his desire to be the only figure of potency and masculinity left standing in the family history. Despite, or perhaps because of, his need to vanquish his ancestors from where they loomed in his imagination, Faulkner was never able to assign to the past a smaller than integral role in his life. He has been characterized as a man who was cursed with “the inability to forget” and this is due in part to his own acknowledgment that the “past is never dead. It’s not even past” (Morris 37, 13). In his stories, Faulkner “represents history as the interpenetration of the past and present; history is on-going dialogue, quotation, revision, appropriation, and interpretation” (Morris 210). It is through this active dialogue, the dynamic interpreting and revising of his forefathers which Faulkner effects, that he is able to appropriate for himself their place in the lineage.

In my second chapter, I continue my study by examining the relationship between Hawthorne's short story, "Alice Doane's Appeal," and Faulkner's much longer text, *Absalom, Absalom!* Hawthorne's story begins with a narrator leading two young girls up a hill on which atrocious acts were committed "that our history blushes to record" and telling them a gruesome Gothic tale with the purpose of touching their tender sensibilities (205). In the inner tale, Leonard Doane is concerned with the honor of his sister Alice, who has been seduced by a mysterious stranger, Walter Brome. As Leonard confronts Walter, with the purpose of discovering whether Alice's honor has been stained, he is

struck by the similarities he senses between Walter and himself. When Walter begins taunting Leonard with proof of Alice's shame, Leonard murders the man he comes to realize is his brother. While standing over his dead brother, Leonard then has a vision of his father, who has been dead for many years, and the reader is left with the suggestion that in killing his brother, Leonard has fulfilled his unconscious oedipal wish to murder his father. The reader also comes to understand that Leonard killed Walter not because he might have stained their sister's honor but because Walter's masculinity threatened Leonard, who is only half-aware of his own incestuous desire. Thus, that which motivated Leonard is the primal fear that Walter will claim as his the sister who is perceived in terms of possession: in the patriarchal society, it is the masculine element that is possessor land, of slaves, of women---and he who possesses the most effectively castrates the other men, that is, disarms them of their threatening strength and potency. In killing his brother, Leonard is both destroying the potency which threatens him in the form of his brother and is symbolically castrating his father; on a subconscious level, Leonard instinctively knows that he must kill his father or be killed by him, even though the father has been dead for many years. The long-dead father, even in death, is still a threat to him, for the symbolic element (brother symbolizing father) is transformed into reality for Leonard, and the domain that is still perceived to be the father's will continue to be possessed fully by the father, who has absolute possession of it in both life and death. It is only when the father is divested of his domain that the son is able to enter fully into his rights as the masculine element.

*Absalom, Absalom!*, like "Alice Doane's Appeal," contains an outer frame and an

inner kernel. The outer frame, in which the telling takes place, is fragmented and divided among the characters who relate the story: Rosa Coldfield, Quentin Compson, his father, and Quentin's roommate Shreve. Quentin, who at various times acts as both listener and story-teller, is ravished (in a similar way to the girls in "Alice Doane's Appeal") by the telling: at times he thinks, *I have heard too much* (168). In the story that is told by the narrators, Henry Sutpen becomes threatened when his sister Judith falls in love with the mysterious Charles Bon. Henry is ostensibly worried about his sister's honor and ends up killing Charles, who is discovered to be his brother, to prevent the marriage to their sister Judith. In his illogical manner of speaking, Mr. Compson says that "Henry had to kill Bon to keep them from marrying. So it must have been Henry who seduced Judith, not Bon" (79). Mr. Compson, however incoherent he may be at times, nevertheless has hit upon a truth: Henry kills Bon because Bon threatened to act upon Henry's own repressed incestuous urges. And in killing Bon, Henry symbolically castrates his father, who is the pinnacle of masculinity: as possessor, Thomas Sutpen possesses and controls all within his domain, which extends even to Henry and Judith. Only in fulfilling his oedipal wish, even symbolically, can Henry transform his father into an impotent force and enter fully into his birth rights as the possessor, the unthreatened masculine element.

Hawthorne and Faulkner were bound to the hyper-masculine figures of their ancestors and the accompanying status, which allowed a certain privileging, but at the same time they were threatened by that status. Both writers began inscribing oedipal fables in their texts at a young age, and these fictional family romances enacted in the safety of texts continued throughout their lives. The prominence and frequency with

which the fables appear suggests that they are linked to the authors' lives, and, indeed, they seem to reflect what we know of the circumstances and desires of their lives. There is enough evidence in the biographies of both Hawthorne and Faulkner to suggest, at the very least, that these men struggled with incestuous urges and that the urges were in some way related to their definition and understanding of the masculine, sexually potent element as it was defined within the realm of the family. The nature of such an inquiry is, of course, purely conjectural, but overwhelming evidence that points in one direction or another may help us understand the varying, often shaded and disguised forces driving writers, forces which may afford us only a glimpse of themselves as they swim the waters of the unconscious mind. What is significant for my study is less the nature of the claim that both writers may have suffered from incestuous desires and more the way in which the possibility of such desires might have informed the writing of two very different men in similar ways. The families of Hawthorne and Faulkner passed down stories of potency and desire from generation to generation, and these became reworked in their texts, which may be seen as avenues into the unconscious with their dream-logic. The different tellings of essentially the same kernel in "Alice Doane's Appeal" and *Absalom, Absalom!* become shared myths in their respective texts, myths which participate in more than merely structure and content and which act as mirrors pointing back to their authors' carefully disguised desires.

What occurs when one writer seeks to respond to another writer, and the nature of the response is almost an exact copy, a repetition of a story---but with an important difference? The second writer is attempting to forget, or even deny, the breach of time,

and, indeed, is making a fierce statement about the nature of time and about his desire to have been the first one in the pairing of writers. By inscribing difference, the second author insists that his work be taken on equal footing with that of his predecessor, and he insists that his work be interpreted, while the first is *reinterpreted*. What is created, the end product, is no longer two separate works that have no relation to each other, but two works which must be studied together in order to reach the fullest, most complete meaning. In an early essay, Tzvetan Todorov insisted that the "meaning of a work (as opposed to its interpretation) derives from its relation to other works in literary history" (Lechte 153). Because a text may always take on additional meanings in relation to other texts, even ones not yet created, this process is never-ending. In the retrospective nature of time, Hawthorne's "Alice Doane's Appeal" and Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* come to us together, so they must be studied and reinterpreted as a pair, as together they participate more fully in an act of creation that is left wanting when one text or the other is not included.

In my third and last chapter, I will balance the intertextuality of the tales and lives of Hawthorne and Faulkner, to uncover the message not from an isolated work or life, but to discover the new message that is proclaimed from the conjoining of these elements. Not only are the written works of authors texts, but, in the Nietzschean view, lives themselves are texts, inscribed and shaped by history in much the same way that an author painstakingly shapes his creation. Both kinds of texts have the power to transcend time and history. If Hawthorne's writings and life are successful in speaking to his ancestors, then they must be equally successful in speaking to those of Faulkner: if their

relevance can move backwards in time, as Hawthorne seemed to think they could do, then they can move forwards in time. Similarly, if Faulkner's stories and life are successful in speaking to his ancestors, then we must believe that they are equally successful in speaking to Hawthorne's texts. If such interaction between texts may occur, then the boundaries guiding such interaction are not limited to merely two authors or their works or lives, but may cross cultures and generations. Such interaction occurs within the boundaries of an ever-expanding, fluid "conversation," if you will, that occurs repeatedly both in new ways and in the same way.

Under such a hypothesis in this chapter will I bring in a third figure, Friedrich Nietzsche, whose theory of eternal recurrence has great relevance in a study in which repetition is a main theme. Nietzsche's theory claims that every moment of any given life will recur over and over *ad infinitum*, down to the smallest detail. The individual will return, in Nietzsche's words, "to the self-same life" (and same moments), the details of which will flow on endlessly. If anything which occurs is truly to have meaning, then the meaning it has must be infinite; if the meaning itself is not infinite, then it is too fleeting when compared to the weight of eternity, which negates all meaning save that which is infinite. Repetition imbues all things with more emphasis, more weight, more meaning. The eternal recurrence, however, is more subtle and complex than simply mere repetition. What is important in the repetition which occurs in the eternal recurrence is primeval feelings, and the actual happenings or actions which force the feelings to occur are secondary. In the eternal recurrence, basic, fundamental life forces are repeated over and over, and thus the meaning of being human can be reduced to the swirling eddies of

possibilities with which the individual is faced and from which he or she chooses action, which changes the future into something permanent, no longer in flux. It is this change from *Becoming* to *Being* that Nietzsche strives to halt: when we are no longer in a state of becoming and are in a state of being, then freedom and possibilities are lost.

(Nietzsche, unlike Hawthorne and Faulkner, does not desire and seek a resolution.) More important than helping us understand the metaphysics of personal choice, his theory, on a personal level, expresses the attitude with which we should approach life. And on a collective level, the repetition that occurs is a very deep kind, one that is sewn into the very fabric of our beings and the structure of the world because it is intimately concerned with the ocean of the unconscious.

In light of Nietzsche's theory, we should not be surprised that such repetition exists not only between the texts of Hawthorne and Faulkner, but in innumerable instances between other writers. It is the purpose of this project to point out instances of repetition in only a few limited areas occurring between Hawthorne and Faulkner and to explain the way in which those instances may constitute a case of the eternal recurrence. Writers have been described as having the "desire or compulsion to project the shape of one's own unique consciousness against the imprisoning shapes of the external world" (Kerr 6). This, I believe, is what motivates, in part, Hawthorne, Faulkner, and Nietzsche, all of whom seek to overthrow their respective predecessors in their search for liberation in the very act of writing, in their search for freedom from history. This desire "to project the shape of one's own unique consciousness" onto the outer world is, of course, what directs my own writing as well, for all writing is intimately concerned with the author's

inner landscape. And it is part of the inner landscapes of these writers, their “dark twins,” that I seek as I uncover the intertextuality woven into and between their lives and texts and attempt the melding of their various, fragmented selves into more coherent selves, ones that will, nevertheless, allow gaps and inconsistencies in written and nonwritten texts to persist, rather than demanding a resolution.

## Chapter One: "Heavy Burden of Fatality": Inescapable Heritage

A physical curse may be said to have blasted the spot,  
 where guilt and phrenzy consummated the most execrable scene,  
 that our history blushes to record. For this was the field  
 where superstition won her darkest triumph;  
 the high place where our fathers set up their shame,  
 to the mournful gaze of generations far remote.

---Hawthorne, "Alice Doane's Appeal"

Their writing careers separated by almost a century, Nathaniel Hawthorne and William Faulkner are linked by similar heritages, which have been noted by numerous critics as wielding a weighty influence upon their fiction. It is widely accepted that both men were haunted by overpowering patriarchal figures and struggled with defining themselves apart from the potent characters of their forefathers. Their stories and novels are replete with direct references and subtle allusions to the men who dominated their creative imaginations and helped to determine the course of their lives. In the drive to match or exceed the status of their forefathers, both Hawthorne and Faulkner wound up writing their prominent place into a history that, ironically, remembers the Hawthornes and Faulkners only in relation to the two story-tellers.

The early Hawthornes, particularly the first two generations, played a fundamental role in shaping the young society and defining the American experience as related to, but still distinct from, the European one. Young William Hawthorne (1607-1681), the first in the line of Hawthornes in America, became a member of the Massachusetts Bay Company when he was 27 years of age and that same year became a member of the General Court which "not only passed laws but constituted a tribunal of justice" (Loggins 28). The

colonists of Dorchester were impressed with young William, who believed that he was an instrument of God in the war being waged between the forces of light and the forces of darkness. It is reported that William rejoiced when he saw idlers and triflers being tortured in the stocks and at the whipping posts; he believed only the strictest discipline could enable "God's State" to rise in the wilderness (Loggins 27). Two years after William was made a freeman he moved to Salem, where he continued to enforce public discipline. Many colonists in Salem believed that William had been chosen by God to make their town worthy of being God's State, and soon he was "endowed with the power of magistrate in Essex County": as magistrate, "he was an arbiter of conduct, a moral adviser, a confessor, and a conciliator; he was a director of police, and above all a prosecutor with informers ever moving among the people in search of criminals" (Loggins 40). In God's State, the magistrates were considered infallible, and after thirteen years as an assistant, William occupied first place on the bench. During this time, he grew more resolute in stamping out evil in Salem, and the punishments he ordered for even petty crimes reflected his determination: for the punishment of one particular convicted burglar, William and his fellow magistrates "ordered a constable to cut off [his] ear and brand the letter B on his forehead" (Loggins 42). In 1662 William was made a member of the governor's advisory council, became known as "the worshipful Major," and, although his body was beginning to weaken from age, fought the Quakers from gaining prominence in Salem. The Major attained prominence in history by pronouncing judgments on the Quakers and by never losing the will to do anything in his power to bring about what he deemed to be moral perfection in Salem.

The Major's last-born son, John Hathorne (1641-1717), was the key player in the second generation of Hathornes that would later influence the novelist, and the Major's rigorous training produced in John the desired effect, the will to fight for godliness in the New World. When he was forty-two, John was chosen "to represent Salem as a deputy in the General Court"; in this position he must have satisfied the electorate, for the next year he "was voted into the high office of assistant . . . and found himself the full inheritor of his father's privileges---and responsibilities" (Loggins 104). And so it was in this position that John (later to be known as the Colonel) played a major role in the infamous Salem witch trials of 1692. At many of the preliminary hearings, the Colonel himself conducted the examination of the accused witches and, although he often "tried to trap the women into a confession of guilt by asking leading questions," the damage he committed was not nearly as severe as that committed by the judges who led hearings after this preliminary stage (Loggins 121). Despite the absence of the Colonel as a judge in the trials, his authority in the town enabled him to play a large enough role in the affair that the Hathorne name would be linked with the Salem trials for years after. To fulfill his duty as magistrate, the Colonel witnessed the executions. He was among the viewers of the first mass execution, in which five women were hanged; before it was all over, he would see twenty people hanged (Loggins 134). From (and in spite of) this pinnacle of success, later in his life the Colonel was forced to watch his family fortune change as his wealth and lands began to shrink.

The Hathorne fortune continued to decline, right up until the novelist's birth.

That the first two generations of Hathornes had seen great prosperity and each succeeding

generation a continuing dwindling of the family name and fortune was widely acknowledged, even though the novelist's father and grandfather were not failures. William Hawthorne's grandfather was a privateersman during the Revolution and his father was captain of a ship, but these occupations were still viewed as a decline, the decline from the upper class to the middle class. Although Hawthorne said he took shame upon himself for their actions ["I, the present writer, as their representative, hereby take shame upon myself for their sakes, and pray that any curse incurred by them . . . may be now and henceforth removed" (450)], he proudly pointed to his early ancestors as "men of station and accomplishment" and repeatedly said that his "achievement was slight in comparison to theirs" (450). After those illustrious ancestors, Hawthorne said, "the line had dimmed steadily until it approached oblivion with him" (450).

Hawthorne's many attempts to understand his ancestors are evidenced in his tales, but on a personal level he rebelled against the idea that cruelty and goodness can coexist in individuals. His forefathers displayed great cruelty in their quest to turn Salem into God's State, but Hawthorne also acknowledged that these men displayed great endurance and strength in the face of unimaginable odds. Repeated instances of Hawthorne's ambivalence can be found in his writing. In an early sketch, "Dr. Bullivant," Hawthorne decides that "we are perhaps accustomed to employ too sombre a pencil in picturing the earlier times among the Puritans, because, at our cold distance, we form our ideas almost wholly from their severest features" (34). Hawthorne offers extenuation, at least in part, for his ancestors in many of his stories. In "The Gentle Boy," he points out that the first generation of colonists in New England saw it necessary to discipline harshly in matters

of the church and government any deviants who might compromise the survival of all (131). Not only was physical survival at stake, but spiritual survival was threatened as well. The necessity to be uncompromising was understood by Hawthorne and is seen in his dubious tributes to his forefathers. Such was his identification with those earlier Hathornes that in “The Custom-House” he describes the Major, “his grave, bearded, sable-cloaked and steeple-crowned progenitor, ---who came so early, with his Bible and his sword, and trode the unworn streets with such a stately port, and made so large a figure, as a man of war and peace,” as giving him “a sort of home-feeling with the past” (449). In the historical accounts he read<sup>1</sup>, Hawthorne saw kindred spirits who had “all the Puritanic traits, both good and evil” (449). It must have been with a mixture of awe and fear at what he himself might have been had he lived at an earlier time that he wrote of his ancestors in “The Custom-House”: William Hathorne was “a bitter persecutor; as witness the Quakers, who have remembered him in their histories, and relate an incident of his hard severity towards a woman of their sect, which will last longer, it is feared, than any record of his better deeds, although these were many” (449). The passage continues: “His son, too, inherited the persecuting spirit, and made himself so conspicuous in the martyrdom of the witches, that their blood may fairly be said to have left a stain upon him” (449). Hawthorne does not shy away from these meaner incidents in the record of his ancestors’ lives, nor does he shy away from the complexity that such accounts hold for him, his region, and his writings; he is, in fact, able to admire the nobility and strength of those early ancestors.

The account of his ancestors’ deeds in Hawthorne’s tales, though often couched in

unflattering terms, testifies to his fascination of, and admiration for, those unyielding men. *The Body of Liberties*, the code of laws governing the colony at Salem, prescribed for a convicted thief a public whipping and the wearing of the letter *T* on outer clothing for no less than one month (Loggins 42). It is not far-fetched to suppose that this supplied the author with the seed that would later blossom into *The Scarlet Letter*. And, similarly, “The Maypole of Merry Mount” was based on a historical event. John Endecott and a group of soldiers traveled to Merry Mount, ordered Thomas Morton and his followers to chop down their Maypole, and then lectured them about their ways (Loggins 24). Loggins declares that Richard Davenport must certainly have been in the company of soldiers accompanying Endecott (24), and, if so, the incident would have held even more meaning for Hawthorne, for Davenport was the husband of William Hathorne’s sister Elizabeth. The historical event on which the story is based illustrates the way in which the American character was established by denying new experiences and punishing those who ventured too far over onto the unorthodox side. Although America later became known as a melting pot in which various cultures, traditions, and rituals were absorbed, in colonial Salem a few powerful men decided what standard of behavior was acceptable, and all else was excluded; and so exclusionary standards reinforced those very practices.

In his willingness to explore the complexity of his ancestors’ lives, Hawthorne undertook the arduous task of attempting to assess guilt and innocence both on the part of his tyrannical ancestors and the ones oppressed. Psychologically, it was much too simplistic for Hawthorne to automatically assign guilt either to those punishing the

crimes or to those committing the crimes. He understood the frailty of his ancestors, a frailty which David Owen describes in discussing prehistoric groups of people, and which applies as well to the Puritans in the New World:

The destruction of the stranger and the destruction of [alien] customs . . . ---these represent (at individual and social levels) the necessary response of a community to the threat of the Other, the Other whose manner of being calls into question not simply one's actions but one's very identity. (Owen 38)

Hawthorne's ancestors were incapable of compromise, and it was this very inability that guaranteed the survival of the community. By placing the origin of their refusal to compromise in God, the Salemites ensured that they would not have to face unsettling questions. In understanding the belief systems and anomalies caused by faulty spiritual thinking, Hawthorne began to understand the motives driving his ancestors. As such, Hawthorne needed a span of time in which to digest facts and assess guilt, and the years spent under the eaves afforded him the time to be as impartial a judge as possible. Surely the irony of him judging his ancestors did not escape Hawthorne, and his final verdict was that his ancestors were full of the human traits that shape the rest of us: anger, frailty, goodness, righteousness. In "Young Goodman Brown," the person accompanying Brown through the forest announces, "I helped your grandfather, the constable, when he lashed the Quaker woman so smartly through the streets of Salem; and it was I that brought your father a pitch-pine knot, kindled at my own hearth, to set fire to an Indian village, in King Philip's war" (299). The announcement horrifies Brown, but in the speaker's voice we are able to detect a touch of authorial pride. Hawthorne, himself a mixture of conflicting

desires, at times toyed with the history of his ancestors and seemed to enjoy his own playfulness. In "Main-street" he observed, "Let us thank God for having given us such ancestors; and let each successive generation thank him, not less fervently, for being one step further from them in the march of the ages" (1039). Hawthorne's wit and humor gave him the distance that the years could not from the brutal, sadistic men. Surely Hawthorne the writer was able to distance himself long enough from Hawthorne the descendent to relish (with perhaps a bit of the old inherited sadism) the masterful description he penned in the same sketch: "The crimson trail goes wavering along the Main-street; but Heaven grant, that as the rain of so many years has wept upon it, time after time, and washed it all away, so there may have been a dew of mercy to cleanse this cruel blood-stain out of the record of the persecutor's life!" (1041). Hawthorne flinches neither from acknowledging the burden of guilt his forefathers have accumulated nor from positing part of the guilt onto other parties. In "The Gentle Boy" Hawthorne attacks the subject of Quakers with obvious enthusiasm, describing them as "wandering enthusiasts" who nurtured "vengeful feelings" and were "eager to testify against an oppression which they hoped to share" (131). Instead of easily placing blame with the Puritans, as others of his contemporaries had done<sup>2</sup>, Hawthorne examined the rigidity and prejudice, self-righteousness and intolerance on both sides. Consumed with his desire to understand that first Hawthorne from England, in the 1832 version of "The Gentle Boy," he "apologized for the Puritans," who "feared that admitting divergent religious sects would destroy the unity that would be necessary for their survival" (Turner 62). Hawthorne, as uncompromising judge of his ancestors, in a later version retracted his apology. "The

family, be it observed," Hawthorne says in *The Marble Faun* in an oblique reference to his family history, "were both proud and ashamed of these legends" (272). Nevertheless, as Turner notes, Hawthorne no doubt found his ancestors to be not only men he could admire but also men about whom there were worthy and noble characteristics to emulate. Never, Hawthorne declared in the introduction to *The Scarlet Letter*, had the Hawthorne family been "disgraced by a single unworthy member" (450). Nevertheless, "the figure of that first ancestor," Hawthorne admitted, "still haunts me" (467). And it was not merely the deeds his ancestors lay claim to; it was a sensibility between like minds and spirits, between shared pride and guilt, that continued to haunt Hawthorne throughout his life. He recognized the "sexual dimensions of power, influenced no doubt by the wanton acts of his forebears and by his intuitive awareness of his own lusts and the compelling attractiveness of incestuous and deviant sexual desires" (Miller 110). Hawthorne understood intimately the interlinking of sexual domination and power, and in his fiction he was able to participate vicariously in the acts committed by his two surrogate fathers, William and John Hathorne, even working out some of the tension he must have felt in his own life as he explored sexual undercurrents in works such as "Alice Doane's Appeal." In this story, the father figure is Cotton Mather:

In the rear of the procession rode a figure on horseback, so darkly conspicuous, so sternly triumphant, that my hearers mistook him for the visible presence of the fiend himself; but it was only his good friend, Cotton Mather, proud of his well won dignity, as the representative of all the hateful features of his time; the one blood-thirsty man, in whom were concentrated those vices of spirit and errors of

opinion, that sufficed to madden the whole surrounding multitude. (216)

Just as the "blood-thirsty" Cotton Mather is obsessed with "the innocent who were to die" (216) and with breaking their will, the narrator of the story (and, one could argue, Hawthorne) is preoccupied with breaking, but of a different sort: he becomes upset when his first story sends his audience, two young girls, into fits of giggles and determines to tell a second story and this time succeed. And succeed he does: "But here my companions seized an arm on each side; their nerves were trembling; and, sweeter victory still, I had reached the seldom trodden places of their hearts, and found the well-spring of their tears" (216). The sexual overtones of this passage suggest a desire (which remains hidden to a lesser degree for the reader than it does for the narrator and, one could presume, the author) that will be explored further in the following chapter.

A different type of breaking Hawthorne never achieved; despite his attempts to break free of the influence and sway his forefathers held over him, he was never able to accomplish such a separation. Perhaps to symbolize the attempt, to allow himself a fresh start without the Bad Fathers peering over his shoulder, determining his fate, Hawthorne added a *w* to his last name as a young man<sup>3</sup>. It is interesting to note, however, that not only was Hawthorne known by the surname with a *w*; in his tales, his ancestors also take on the name with the changed spelling<sup>4</sup>. By so doing, he readily accepted upon himself the sins of the fathers. This was one such way that Hawthorne "conversed" with his ancestors "for a lifetime in an attempt to prove himself worthy of their praise" (Miller xiii). The immense pressure to redeem the family name and fortune from its decline indelibly stamped almost all of his writing. In "The Custom-House," Hawthorne reveals

how he covets his ancestors' approval: "No aim, that I have ever cherished, would they recognize as laudable; no success of mine---if my life, beyond its domestic scope, had ever been brightened by success---they would deem otherwise than worthless, if not positively disgraceful" (450). This sentiment points to a writer who was damned to failure before he even embarked upon his writing career. The process of "conversing," in Miller's term, with his ancestors arose primarily out of Hawthorne's need to be as successful as those men who helped to shape the American experience, and, as Hawthorne was beginning to realize, the material to help him achieve that success could be found in part in the history of his ancestors. It is more than a bit ironic that the very tools with which Hawthorne would finally "best" his ancestors were the ancestors themselves and their lives. In retelling that history, Hawthorne himself helped to define the American experience, as his ancestors had done, both as the preeminent *American* writer and as a storyteller who, in dealing with history as *object*, could reshape the object into a new history. The driving force behind Hawthorne's determination was fear of failure, fear that he would be yet another step in the decline of the Hawthorne line, another man with the Hawthorne name, but one who was weak and ineffectual, a far step indeed from his rigid and prosperous ancestors.

Hawthorne's fear that he would abase his familial line betrayed his assumption that progress had been made since the days of his ancestors toward a more humane people. Hawthorne shared with his contemporaries "the tension between the patriotic impulse to praise and the liberal impulse to criticize" the Puritan founders of New England (Bell 17). Hawthorne was not the only one to point out the disparity between,

on one hand, the piety and nobility of the founding fathers and, on the other, their bigotry and superstition<sup>5</sup>. As Bell points out, the tension is "not so much within Puritanism itself as within the nineteenth century's *view* of Puritanism" (Bell 19). The result of such tension is two stock characters within much of the writing of Hawthorne's period: in one character, the nobility is played down while the fanaticism, repression, and evil are emphasized, and in the other character, the negative characteristics are suppressed while the nobility, endurance, and strength are emphasized. What this results in, Bell says, is writers who express at the same time belief in both progress and decline:

On the one hand, ancestor worship is clearly associated with a myth of decline--- from those ancestors. On the other hand, the myth of progress just as clearly requires some sort of repudiation, however clandestine, of one's ancestors. The figure of the noble founding father is ultimately a dramatic representation of a feeling that America has declined since the seventeenth century. The figure of the narrow Puritan represents the progressive century's criticism of an unenlightened earlier age. (Bell 23)

While Hawthorne, like his contemporaries, juxtaposes two contradictory beliefs in his stories, and usually in the same stories, he uses them in a more sophisticated manner: he knew the fanaticism was inseparable from the nobility, and the courage and virtues were not distinct from the bigotry. The decline from father to son is an inevitable one in which the son is merely a weaker, impotent version of the father. In "Main Street" Hawthorne describes the decline by saying that "the sons and grandchildren of the first settlers were a race of lower and narrower souls than their progenitors had been" (1038). The tension

involved in both belief in decline and belief in progress is not one that is easily resolved. Most minds tend toward simplicity, toward a necessarily reductive worldview, and this urge to reduce the amount of tension and the unwillingness to reduce complexity to simplicity must have been itself an area of tension for Hawthorne, one that probably slipped out in varying degrees in his writing. If this is true, then we would see different characterizations of the Puritans in his writing---and indeed we do. In "The Maypole of Merry Mount," we see the characterization of the stern, fanatical, often hypocritical Puritan---which signals progress, a move away from those characteristics in later generations; and in "Young Goodman Brown" we see the characterization of the weak, superstitious, ineffective Puritan descendent---which signals decline, a deterioration of godliness into superstition and fanaticism in later generations. These varying characterizations of the founding fathers and their descendents represent, I believe, not only Hawthorne's awareness of the complexity, but his struggle to maintain the tension while simultaneously desiring a more simplistic solution.

A glimpse of such a solution can be seen in an attitude revealed in Hawthorne's stories toward his ancestors, an attitude in which the admiration of the ancestors is purged so that the young threatened writer can overthrow them. In an unfinished work, Hawthorne seems to anticipate Freud's work with the Oedipal complex when he says that those who knew him "might have detected in the manner and matter of his talk, a certain hereditary reverence and awe, the growth of ages, mixed up with a newer hatred that impelled him to deface and destroy what, at the same time, his deepest impulse was to bow before" (Miller 22). In another work, an unfinished romance, Hawthorne asks

himself, "What is the crime? Each son murders his father at a certain age; or does each father try to accomplish the impossibility of murdering his successor?" (Miller 26).

Turner notes that even after the death of Hawthorne's father, there were enough of his *momentos* in the home that the father was given a "presence" within the family (Turner 9). Hawthorne had his father's journals in his possession, and the couplets and verses the father jotted down while on the *Perseverance* were copied over on the same page in his son's handwriting, with mistakes in spelling, capitalization, and punctuation corrected (Turner 9). This gesture at knowing his father is not without the old Puritan intolerance. Although not unsuccessful at sea, Hawthorne's father was viewed by his son as, if not a failure, then certainly a continuation of the decline in the patrilineal line. It was not with his dead father, then, who struggled with something as simple as the mechanics of the language, that Hawthorne was in battle. Because his father died when Hawthorne was a young boy, and because lack and absence dominated the father's position in the family prior to his death, he was seen as ineffective and passive. Even before his actual death, the father was dead to Hawthorne, an empty space, a lack. Because the father is essentially an unknown element to Hawthorne, the problem for Hawthorne is one of murdering his two ancestors, or allowing them to murder him.

What Hawthorne seeks in penning his tales is his forefathers; he wants to get at the root of what he sees as a reciprocal relationship between his forefathers and himself, with each member attempting to conquer the others' masculinity, which is, above all else, sexual. The passage of years has done nothing to dim the rivalry Hawthorne feels toward them and his frustration at being dominated; and he wants to destroy the long light of

legend his ancestors cast, supplanting them and in the process making them non-threatening and passive so that he, in effect, will be the only male left standing, the only one with any real (sexual) power in the patrilinear line. As has been noted, Hawthorne was quite aware of the way in which aggression and sexuality are intertwined, and on some level he welcomed the imagination which allowed him to be an active participant in the actions his forebears engaged in when "deal[ing] out harsh punishment to innocent women and frenzied girls on flimsy and often contrived evidence . . . [and] tyranniz[ing] over defenseless women" (Miller 22). Hawthorne's desire to seize the familial power and recognition from his ancestors (after all, *he* is the one who created them in his stories, and thus, *his* is the anterior existence, not theirs) is actually the desire to render them impotent and helpless, i.e., to conquer them sexually. In his tales concerned with incest, such as "Alice Doane's Appeal," the subject of incest works on two levels: as an unconscious working out of repressed desires for his sisters (as hinted at before, and which will be explored further), and as an indication of Hawthorne's displeasure with what he views as the threatening father-figures, who will destroy him (and with their mythology render him impotent) unless he is more effectual than they.

Just as Hawthorne had done in the century before him, Faulkner entered into the process of writing about his ancestors to know them, to rival them, and to bring back the patrilinear line to its former position of prominence and respect. Like his predecessor, Faulkner chose to write about his native region. His material, the stories he grew up hearing, became the battleground on which he dramatized his ambivalence toward his forefathers. Faulkner, even as a boy, knew that he was in a declining line and realized

that his great-grandfather, the Old Colonel, was the patriarchal figure to whom he had to prove himself and who, years later, would continue to haunt his writing.

By the time William Clark Falkner, great-grandfather of the novelist, had reached the age of twenty-five, he was a veteran of the Mexican War, was a slave-owner, had been indicted twice for murder in the town of Ripley, and was acquitted both times (Blotner 17). In one version, W.C. Falkner had left home years earlier as a young teenager after a violent quarrel with his brother in which he bloodied his brother's head with a hoe. Fearing he had killed his brother, he fled. "Violence, the suggestion of fratricide, echoes of the story of Cain and Abel are all a part of the Old Colonel's legend" (Morris 91). The rest of his life was no less action-filled. The Old Colonel dabbled in writing narrative verse and novels, in buying and selling slaves, in investing in land, and in politics, especially military politics, throughout his life. A passage from *The Unvanquished* suggests the Colonel's success with his unit, which he dubbed "The Magnolia Rifles":

"Who ain't heard about him in this country? Get the Yankees to tell you about him sometime. By Godfrey, he raised the first damn regiment in Mississippi out of his own pocket, and took 'em to Verginny and whipped the Yankees right and left with 'em before he found out that what he had bought and paid for wasn't a regiment of soldiers but a congress of politicians and fools . . .". (58)

Determined not to miss out on the action of the Civil War, the Colonel turned his disorderly group of men into a well-disciplined unit for the first battle of Manassas, and near a stream called Bull Run they saw their first action. By all accounts, Falkner fought

bravely and fiercely. According to one witness, General Beauregard, who had been "observing his gallant conduct" in losing two horses from beneath him, shouted to him as he continued with a third, 'Go ahead, you hero with the black plume; *history shall never forget you!*'" (Blotner 22). Colonel Falkner went home a hero, and, indeed, history has never forgotten him, although, ironically, that has as much to do with his great-grandson struggling to outdo him and, in the process, giving him immortality as it does with anything the Colonel achieved during his own lifetime. But not everyone was pleased with the Colonel; it became clear that disaffection was widespread among his soldiers: many said that he was "a martinet and greatly disliked by his men because of his harsh and ruthless disciplinary methods . . . [and] others resented his conduct . . . which they considered to be recklessness rather than courage" (Blotner 24). A passage from *Requiem for a Nun*, in which John Sartoris duplicates the Colonel's exploits, describes what happened next:

John Sartoris himself, deposed from his colonelcy by a regimental election after Second Manassas, came home and oversaw the making and harvesting of a crop on his plantation before he got bored and gathered up a small gang of irregular cavalry and carried it up into Tennessee to join Forrest . . . (231)

Although his detractors claimed he was a man prone to recklessness and violence, the Colonel gained even more respect from this third endeavor into war. After this final foray into fighting, the Colonel once again went home to Mississippi and kept himself busy in his law office, with the Ripley Railroad, of which he was elected president, and with public benefaction, deeding land to an academy and giving a sum of money to a

college (Blotner 34-5). Again, the events of his life are reproduced through Sartoris in *Requiem for a Nun*: ". . . Colonel Sartoris and General Compson had built a railroad from Jefferson north into Tennessee to connect with the one from Memphis to the Atlantic Ocean . . ." (238). Two anecdotes, both of which Faulkner would have heard while growing up, shed further light on the character of the Old Colonel as it was recreated for posterity: in one, he reportedly helped to keep a crowd of Negroes from voting<sup>6</sup>, and in the other, when confronted by the man who killed his son Henry, who was spending too much time with the man's wife, the Colonel is said to have replied, "That's all right; I'm afraid I would have had to do it myself anyway" (Blotner 37). The cruelty displayed in the two stories about the Colonel meshes with rumors that, as a railroad builder, he was accused of "coercing towns into contributions so he would not by-pass them and of helping to perpetuate slavery long after the Emancipation Proclamation" (Blotner 44). After buying out his embittered partner's share of the railroad and after winning a seat in the Mississippi legislature by an overwhelming majority, William Clark Falkner was gunned down in the street by a lifelong enemy. Falkner seemed to have sensed that death was imminent, for he told concerned friends that he would not carry a pistol because he had killed enough men and would not kill any more.

J.W.T. Falkner, the Young Colonel (the name is "inherited," not earned), followed his father into law and the railroad business and was a successful, stern man who ran his different business ventures well and required his children to do his bidding throughout their lives. He was elected to the state senate and appointed a trustee of the University of Mississippi. He continued to run the railroad, although he became increasingly frustrated

at the demands it made upon him, and his reputation as a politician and criminal lawyer continued to grow; reportedly, townspeople told each other, "If you want to kill somebody, kill him Saturday night, call [Falkner] on Sunday, and he'll get you off" (Blotner 55). Despite his accomplishments, a decline in the Falkner line became evident as the Young Colonel increasingly indulged in his legendary drinking bouts which often landed him in a local clinic. The apparent decline in the line can be symbolized in an event that took place one evening when the Young Colonel was drunk: while driving through town, he wound up in front of the bank of which he was president and threw a brick through the front window. When asked to explain his actions, he replied stubbornly, "It was my Buick, my brick, my bank" (Gray 66). This decline, from Faulkner's perspective, continued through his father, Murry Cuthbert Falkner, firstborn son of the Young Colonel, in more than simply strength of character. Murry's physical features were "somehow attenuated" from those of his father and grandfather (Blotner 53). As the Old Colonel's line continued, the male successors each seemed destined to be a weaker version of the original Falkner. This youngest Falkner was also prone to violence, to drinking heavily, and recognized that he had trouble expressing himself. Despite these drawbacks, Murry was by no means a failure and even succeeded well at a few business ventures. But his son could not help but view him as a failure when comparing his life to those of his more illustrious forebears. And young William Cuthbert, the future novelist, was surely aware that his father was never again quite the same after the Young Colonel signed away his shares of the railroad. "The railroad was his first and lasting love," one of his sons later said (Blotner 53). Between the Young

Colonel, who controlled almost all aspects of Murry's business ventures, and Maud Falkner, who understandably refused to uproot her family to move out West (but in so doing shattered her husband's dream), Murry was effectively emasculated. Although Murry was a force in the household, it was "Maud Falkner who assumed the fundamental responsibility . . . She was the steady force that exerted itself in all weathers" (Blotner 90). Murry and his wife switched traditional roles, he finally submitting to her domination. She even insisted on accompanying her husband and their sons on hunting trips because she feared what might happen if she were not at his side at all times. To the son who perceived all of this and the feuding between his parents, his father must have seemed a ghost of a Falkner at times. In *Light in August*, a character seems to speak for Faulkner in saying, "So it's no wonder that I skipped a generation. It's no wonder that I had no father" (527). No doubt Faulkner feared becoming the imitation of an imitation of a Falkner. Later in his writing career, when he was writing *The Mansion*, Faulkner seemed finally to understand the restrictions and resulting stagnation his father experienced:

It was as though he had not seen a railroad in thirty-eight years . . . But now it would be different. He could watch them, himself in freedom, as they fled past in freedom, the two of them mutual, in a way even interdependent: it to do the fleeing in smoke and noise and motion, he to do the watching . . . (405)

Despite understanding his father, Faulkner could not escape the fact that he was ashamed of him, ashamed of the man who should have been so much more because he was a Falkner. The shame he felt for his father was different from the shame he felt for

particularly the Old Colonel (Faulkner once described "the old shame" of slavery); the former was due to Murry's inadequacies, while the latter was the result of undying determination, his particular blend of heroism and guile, that overreached itself and, in the process, hurt others through "glamorous violence," as Faulkner once called it.

Faulkner was proud of his heritage, as far back as he could trace it. He was fond of telling his friends, "My ancestors came from Inverness, Scotland," although his lineage "prior to the settling in America finally eludes research" (Blotner 3-4, 6). Among his principal family lines, Hawthorne believed, were the Camerons in Culloden, who participated in a rebellion in 1745 and then fled for North America when it was crushed. Some of the ships carrying the fleeing Scotsmen landed in Charleston, South Carolina (Blotner 5). As Blotner notes, this route ---from Culloden to Carolina---is identical to the journey of the progenitor of Faulkner's well-known family: Quentin MacLachan Compson was the great-great-great-great-grandfather of Quentin, Caddy, Jason, and Benjy Compson (Blotner 5)<sup>7</sup>. In *The Sound and the Fury* Faulkner tells his history: "Quentin MacLachan...fled to Carolina from Culloden Moor with a claymore and the tartan he wore by day and slept under by night, and little else" (404). In an early sketch edited from the final version of *Sartoris*, Colonel Sartoris says that the man "who professes to care nothing about his forefathers is only a little less vain than he who bases all his actions on blood precedent. And a Sartoris is entitled to a little vanity and poppycock, if he so chooses" (Blotner 6). Faulkner so chose, it would seem, as he struggled to achieve his two-fold purpose in the act of writing: to understand the men who gave him such a glorious history, and to supplant them as the most successful male

in their line.

In their biographies of Faulkner, critics often admit the difficulty of distinguishing fact from fiction in his life and in the lives of his forefathers because he so enjoyed blurring the line between them. For some years, due to Faulkner's pose in his British uniform as an injured war veteran, it was reported as fact that Faulkner had seen the war and had received an injury. He even parodies himself, lightly poking fun at what was real pain, in *Soldier's Pay*; describing himself in third person, he says,

. . . [T]hey had stopped the war on him. So he sat in a smoldering of disgusted sorrow, not even enjoying his Pullman prerogatives . . . he rose and met a young face with a dreadful scar across his brow. My God he thought, turning sick. He saluted and the other peered at him with strained distraction . . . Had I been old enough or lucky enough, this might have been me, he thought jealously. (7, 25)

The humor in his posing does not escape Faulkner; it was a source of amusement that he could have so much fun confusing facts and fiction. Smiling, he once told a group of people, "I don't have much patience with facts, and any writer is a congenital liar to begin with or he wouldn't take up writing. And so I couldn't tell the truth even about history.

That's why I'll never write a biography. I couldn't tell the truth about Faulkner, I'm sure"

(Blotner 6). Faulkner's twisting of facts comes from a sense of playfulness, and the stories he told others, though not true, evidently pleased him a great deal. Part of the pleasure of story-telling, Faulkner realized, comes from the power it gives the story-teller.

In *Absalom, Absalom!*, Rosa Coldfield tells Quentin,

"So maybe you will enter the literary profession as so many Southern gentlemen

and gentlewomen too are doing now and maybe some day you will remember this and write about it. You will be married then I expect and perhaps your wife will want a new gown or a new chair for the house and you can write this and submit it to the magazines." (10)

In this quote Faulkner is playfully mirroring his own experiences, and he is aware of something that Quentin is not: the role of story-teller is one of power, and part of the joke (or, perhaps, tragedy, since Quentin never caught it) is that Faulkner is giving Quentin the power to tell us what happened, and if he exaggerates or shades things, as Faulkner was fond of doing, we, the audience, will never be the wiser. For Faulkner, the element of truth comes in the process of telling, in the act of telling itself, not in what is told. The act of telling shapes into truth whatever is told, and we, the audience, actively participate in the creation of truth because we perceive it.

Richard Gray argues that the past "does constitute an alien reality," one which we can know and understand only if we are willing to interpret it (Gray 54). As Gray notes, so often in Faulkner's stories "the act of telling---'old tales and talking'---becomes a paradigm of the way we reconstitute history and situate ourselves as historical beings" (Gray 55). Faulkner realized this and knew that he was participating in a construction of truth that, although distinct from the entity (history as object) which occurred before his lifetime, was nevertheless still truth; this newly created truth helped to define who he was and to determine his actions, for the mythical Colonel Falkner, modeled on the real one, commanded as much of his imagination and respect. Just as Hawthorne several generations before him had played with masking himself, so Faulkner discovered that the

process of masking himself aided in the process of writing about his ancestors. J. Hillis Miller notes that Hawthorne's stories "do not communicate the secret mind and heart of Hawthorne to his readers," and it is this quality that constitutes what Miller calls "the failure of his work" (57-58). His work fails finally because it does not allow us to know Hawthorne, and, indeed, Miller says that this "incommunicability of selfhood" is a central theme to his work (57). Where Hawthorne hid behind an impenetrable mask, Faulkner tried on different personalities: "Faulkner measured himself in the public sphere in images; he was constantly about recreating himself" (Morris 140). In this process of reinventing and (re)presenting himself to the public, Morris says Faulkner "seemed to stumble upon an insight that fascinated and frightened him" (140). Because Faulkner composed a printed self, and this printed self had more validity with the public than his actual self, "all the old voices of authority and authentic heroic stature had ceased to speak, although their words reverberated within his voice [and] threatened to silence him" (Morris 141). The power and authority of composing printed selves and printed voices also afforded him, paradoxically, the freedom he needed to escape the shadow of the symbolic father while at the same time it "threatened to silence him":

Narrativizing the repressed is a tactic that Faulkner turns on the oedipal authority of his personal world, the symbolic father, W.C. Falkner. He narrates him; better stated: since the Old Colonel was already a narrative, Faulkner renarrates him, revises him, perverts him. Hence the myth is demythologized into history, the hero dispersed into multiple voices. (Morris 143)

The masks the writers don are related directly to their ability to recreate their father

figures in print, thus diminishing their ancestors' hold over them. Just as Hawthorne several generations before him had recreated his ancestors, giving them life separate from the one they lived, so Faulkner engendered his ancestors, giving them a history that, finally, was more lasting than the one that had actually been theirs. A peculiar retroactive quality to history decrees that it becomes authentic only when there exists someone later in time to acknowledge it, and in the same way, Hawthorne's and Faulkner's ancestors continued to live, firstly, insofar as the Hawthorne and Faulkner families created and perpetuated a mythology around them and, secondly, as long as the authors' texts in which the men live continue to be read.

In actions that recall those of the Old Colonel, Faulkner began to actively create a mythology about himself. It is not a far stretch to suggest that Faulkner suffered from narcissistic tendencies: he was fascinated with his own idea of himself and during different stages in his life, he was obsessed with presenting to others a self that did not coincide with who he was. Critics have explored the idea of the different selves of Faulkner, and it is not difficult to see that he may have been involved in a narcissistic relationship with the story-teller self and with the stories it produced, which, instead of being mere products, actually take on a life similar to the author's. It is in this sense that his obsession with the Old Colonel becomes significant, for in his great-grandson's eyes, the Old Colonel

was a person who managed to incorporate many regional legends. He was the Cavalier, an adventurer, whose heroic journey into a new world had initiated an heroic line; he was the Planter, who had presided over a patriarchal idyll; he was

the Knight of the Black Plume, who had fought with bravery and even recklessness before going down to inevitable defeat; he was the Redeemer who had brought back life to a dead land, the world that the Yankees had laid waste . . . He was an inexhaustible supply of imaginative sustenance, a vividly personal equivalent for the larger public myths as well as an unusually powerful focus for the intersecting forces of history. (Gray 64)

In addition to these things, the Old Colonel was also an occasional writer, and in grade school Faulkner regularly announced, "I want to be a writer like my great-granddaddy" (Gray 63). By choosing to imitate his great-grandfather in one of the least significant areas of his life, Gray believes, Faulkner was "slyly---if, no doubt, intuitively---measuring a distance between himself and the man who incorporated so much of the regional story: inscribing likeness, certainly, but also difference" (Gray 64). Part of the distance Faulkner measured was to bring himself more into the orbit his great-grandfather created; after all, it was his great-grandfather he decided to imitate, not his own father. Never in the young novelist's imagination was his own father the father-figure; it was always the Old Colonel who seemed more vividly alive and, therefore, the surrogate father. But as surrogate father, the Old Colonel was very much a *masculine* force, so much so, in fact, that Faulkner could not help but be threatened and on some level could not accept the idea of a force more masculine than his own into his consciousness. Faulkner's desire was to castrate his forefathers, to deprive them of their power and claim it as his own. His determination that he be dominant in the patrilineal line in terms of masculinity and sexuality controlled his depiction of his forefathers in his writings: they are portrayed in

terms of their masculinity and sexuality, but Faulkner controls these defining characteristics; it is only under his terms, not under their own, that they continue to be defined in such a way.

As Hawthorne struggled with his complex, ambivalent relationship with the Bad Fathers, so Faulkner struggled; Faulkner's struggle is essentially sexual in nature, for the masculinity and aggression of his ancestors were closely linked to their sexuality. Even the power being fought over was primarily sexual in nature; hence the novelist's desire not only to conquer his forefathers but to castrate them. In a gesture which, ironically, both distanced him further and drew him closer to his forebears, Faulkner renamed himself by adding a *u* to the family name. This gesture recalls Hawthorne's attempt to distance himself from his ancestors; in this oedipal challenge Faulkner renames himself to achieve distance from the legendary fame. As Gray notes, the family name before the Old Colonel was "Faulkner," but the Old Colonel exercised authority by renaming himself "Falkner." So his great-grandson "was at once imitating his great-grandfather, by initiating a small but significant alteration in the family title, and defying him, by reinventing the vowel which that great-grandfather had dropped . . . By this simple act of the word, the father figure had been resisted and copied" (Gray 65). And the ambivalence was to continue: for most of his life, Faulkner would be wrapped in the dual struggles of defiance and imitation, in spite of himself<sup>6</sup>.

As in the inculcation of members into cults, neither Hawthorne nor Faulkner was ever allowed to experience doubt about the greatness of their ancestors while growing up. It was accepted *a priori* that the forefathers were magnificent examples of what men

should be. Gray explains that Faulkner was living in

a culture that granted immense weight to the father, as head of a society that could only receive justification in *his* terms---according to the claims, that is, of paternalistic nurture and care. A shadowy patriarchal figure hovers over the action of so many of Faulkner's novels, not just for reasons of family history, but, related to this, because his society saw itself presided over by just such an admonitory absent presence: for that reason, in short, it identified its legitimacy and authority with the law of the father. (Gray 32)

One obvious consequence of this is that, due to the presupposition of ancestral greatness, neither writer was able to be objective or critical, and, hence, their thinking was not their own during their early lives. It was only when they became older that both men allowed doubt and complexity to enter their understanding of their forefathers, and it is my belief that, because the doubt did not creep in until they were past childhood, their selves became divided more deeply. As a result, it became even more difficult to bridge the gulf between their polarized feelings. Both men attempted to cope with their divided selves by reinventing the past and the history of their families, and, in the process, by inventing themselves as heads of their respective patriarchal lines.

Although there are some obvious differences between the writers (Hawthorne with his Puritan stoicism and Faulkner with his Southern fatalism), both responded with ambivalence to their respective regions because both viewed their land as being cursed. Not only was the land seen as cursed due to the evil and sins the forefathers had committed on it; the land might even have played a passive role in the sins. Randall

Stewart was one of the first critics to notice the similarities between the condition of the land at the time each writer lived:

The South in the second quarter of the present century . . . resembled in many ways New England a century earlier. In both cases, a rampant industrialism was transforming the traditional social structure. A marked progressivism was in the air. Making money had become very important . . . Both [Hawthorne and Faulkner] are loyal sons, inheritors, patriots . . . If Faulkner relived the Civil War, Hawthorne relived the Witch Trials . . . Both, too, are sensitively aware of the sin and the wrong---the sin of Negro slavery, the crime of Salem in 1692 . . .

(Stewart 127-9)

Because of this "sin," the land must atone to the ones who have been wronged. For the writers, it seemed that the only atonement they could experience could come through their writing. And the amends they made were merely superficial, for they both saw the past as inescapable, as one's inevitable inheritance. It was a romantic fallacy to suppose that the past could be brushed aside, a fresh start made, the world's great age begun anew . . . The inheritance . . . is an inexorable thing. In these writers, the past is not dead, it is not even past, it is a continuous living force.

(Stewart 130)

Both men carried on a dialogue with their ancestors through their stories; Hawthorne especially believed that he was speaking to them in reality, not merely in his imagination.

"Is Sin, then, like sorrow," Kenyon asks in *The Marble Faun*, "an element of human education, through which we struggle to a higher and purer state than we could otherwise

have attained" (1236). It is a question that Hawthorne seems to pose to the ancestors who bequeathed him a lifetime of sorrow and questions through which to sort.

Believing it was inevitable that he spend his life in dialogue with his ancestors, Hawthorne once said that New England was "quite as large a lump of earth" as his heart could take in (Turner 3). Conscious of what he called the "deep and aged roots" his ancestors had cultivated in his native soil, he believed it was "a matter of destiny to make his home in Salem, and he had a feeling for the town which, he said, for lack of a better word he would call affection" (Turner 3). Even though his sister Ebe believed he needed to be in Salem to write great literature, he said he was "invariably happiest elsewhere" and had never found in his hometown the "genial atmosphere which a literary man requires, in order to ripen the best harvest of his mind" (Turner 3). Throughout his life Hawthorne nurtured this dual relationship of devotion and repulsion to a land which had seen great acts of courage and heroism as well as terrible deeds of prejudice and fanaticism. The relationship with the land paralleled his relationship with the patriarchs in his lineage, exposing deep divisions within the writer.

Faulkner's relationship with the South, a land of similar valor and horror, was no less ambivalent. The duality in his relationship can be glimpsed through Quentin's too-strong outburst in *Absalom, Absalom!*, "*I don't hate it! I don't hate it!*" (303). Although it is too simplistic to view Quentin as merely a veiled Faulkner, it is true that Faulkner's ambivalence for his land sometimes moved toward hatred. A distortion of Faulkner's view of the land, however slight it may be, can be seen in Shreve's nagging questions: "Tell about the South. What's it like there. What do they do there. Why do they live

there. Why do they live at all" (142). As Gray has noted, Faulkner wanted "to be in history and outside of it at one and the same time. He wanted to be able to participate in the processes of social and historical change *and* be able to gauge and judge them from a critical vantage point" (Gray 13). But as someone who tried and was unable to separate himself from his past and his past from his consciousness, he was "torn between identification with a region that had given him birth and helped shape his consciousness, his structure of feeling, and detestation of the daily acts of subjection and violence on which that region and consciousness were partly founded" (Gray 37). In *Absalom Absalom!*, Rosa Coldfield describes the "fatality and curse on the South," which, she says, is a "land primed for fatality and already cursed with it" (14). Even though he at times admitted to hating "part of the South," Faulkner also was determined to defend it:

As long as there's a middle road, all right. I'll be on it. But if it came to fighting I'd fight for Mississippi against the United States even if it meant going out into the street and shooting Negroes . . . I will go on saying that the Southerners are wrong and that their position is untenable, but if I have to make the same choice Robert E. Lee made then I'll make it. (Gray 37)

This stance, full of bravado and a sense of helpless anguish, is only one of the many masks Faulkner chose to wear when confronted with the possibility of losing the land he both cherished and cursed. In an expression of similar sentiment, when asked if he loved the South, Faulkner did not hide his conflicting emotions: "Well, I love it and I hate it . . . I will still defend it even if I hate it" (Meriwether 101). Gray points out that Quentin Compson, "one of Faulkner's most autobiographical characters," also had an ambivalent

relationship to the South, which "divided him into 'two separate people': one living 'then', in some disinterred regional past, and another living 'now'" (Gray 55). Faulkner, torn by his feelings, ironically achieved two purposes at odds with each other: by writing about the horrors of the South, he attempted to free himself of the burden on his consciousness, thereby flaunting the constraints of history and proclaiming that other Southerners too could be unencumbered by the terrible collective memory; and yet at the same time, by creating his "own little postage stamp of native soil," his own "cosmos" (Fowler vii, 11), he invariably imputed a permanence to his creation, a permanence which places immovable chains on the horrors of the South and its image (despite differences, however minute, between its created image and its history). After all, the act of writing is the ultimate act of power and possession: it calls into existence truths and untruths and does not necessarily discriminate between the two. The idea of writing as power is presupposed in the famously Faulknerian assertion that his characters were created partly of what they were in real life and partly "from what they should have been and were not: thus I improved on God" (Gray 127). In the act of writing, Faulkner indicted the land of the South with its history of shame, and in so doing the truth became what was written and the actual history became irrelevant. In his stories, Faulkner's land "is never immutable or dead; motion still inhabits it and is potentially present . . . as in a dream or nightmare, the shadows tremble and bulge monstrously, and the landscape slowly alters" (Kerr 26-7). Caught between stagnation and response, the land is an embodiment of the consciousness of its inhabitants (including Faulkner) as they attempt to purge their collective, inherited guilt and shame and are unable to do so.

The temptation for Faulkner, and Hawthorne too, is that of "identity or difference": the "urge either blankly to identify with the people and events of yesterday or, alternatively, to see the intervening accumulations of history as an impenetrable barrier" (Gray 218). Both processes, identification and difference, involve degrees of courage and nobility *and* degrees of fanaticism and cruelty, and this is the crux of the dilemma for both men, who see in the images of their forefathers, images both mythologized and inscribed in their texts, likenesses of themselves. They must, therefore, maintain a tension in which they neither fully accept nor fully reject their forefathers (and, in turn, the corresponding parts of themselves). This is what Robert H. Fossum names "the burden of memory": "the past affects a man's psychological state [and] his sense of identity" (Fossum 2-3), and indeed the fundamental problem for Hawthorne, Faulkner, and their characters is their relationship to the past. It is the past that neither writer is able to transcend and all too often neither are their characters. Certain psychological responses are determined by this ability or inability to transcend the past: "If the creation of a self is dependent upon the psychological integration of the past with the present, then only by confronting the past can one gain a sense of continuity and unity among the apparently disparate moments of personal experience" (Fossum 4). Not being able to transcend the past would result in a fragmenting of the self, the act of the self unconsciously dividing itself into varying pieces that would correspond to what the consciousness allows itself to know at any given moment. The division of the self is a helpful tool in understanding the question of identification or difference in relation to forebears. The writers experienced both, moving cyclically from a protestation that their

natures differed from those of their ancestors, to acknowledgment of the same sinful desires hidden in their own hearts, and back again. Hawthorne and Faulkner could control only their conscious (albeit ambivalent) responses to their forefathers, not their unconscious ones, and they suspected as much. Both men were aware that their responses in large part were determined by the *Zeitgeist* of their respective ages and that they were unable to break free of personal and regional history in order to pass impartial judgment upon the deeds of their forefathers. Hawthorne and Faulkner were doomed to stay within time; they were both painfully aware that just as history and time intersect, so do good and evil. In many of their stories, particularly "Alice Doane's Appeal" and *Absalom, Absalom!*, the "author, characters, and readers are made to share both the guilt and the righteousness of their nation's history. They are asked to see, in other words, that the good inherited from the past is inextricably intertwined with the evil violence necessary to bring about that good" (Fossum 172). Unavoidable was the conclusion that both the good and evil were necessary catalysts to achieve their forefathers' accomplishments, and so, despite their attempts to exorcise their demons, both writers were left, finally, with unanswered questions and undefined relationships with their forebears. Their tales bear the imprint of their struggle to understand the men who played such important roles in their lives, and this struggle to understand is both an attempt at communication and, in this process, an attempt to understand the secret similarities in their own nature.

## Chapter Two: Inscribing Masculinity and Identity

What is Guilt? A stain upon the soul.  
 And it is a point of vast interest,  
 whether the soul may contract such stains,  
 in all their depth and flagrancy,  
 from deeds which may have been plotted and resolved upon  
 but which, physically, have never had existence.  
 ---Hawthorne, "Fancy's Showbox: A Morality"

Faulkner's texts have often left readers wondering from where he was drawing ideas, although he usually denied the influence of all outside sources. John T. Irwin notes that in one of the conferences he gave at the University of Virginia, Faulkner said, "What little of psychology I know the characters I have invented and playing poker taught me. Freud I'm not familiar with" (Irwin 5). Later, when asked about some "coincidences" between his work and that of Hawthorne, Faulkner replied in a similar fashion. Faulkner, like all artists, may have desired to be the first one to tell his tales, but his assertions have done little to keep critics from drawing their own parallels.

The initial linking of Faulkner with Hawthorne occurred in George Marion O'Donnell's *Faulkner's Mythology* in 1939, when O'Donnell compared the creative sensibilities of the two men. In the more than half-century since then, other critics, notably Malcolm Cowley and Randall Stewart, have offered their own interpretations of the relationship between Hawthorne and Faulkner. There is, however, a significant absence of criticism noting the striking correlation between *Absalom, Absalom!* and Hawthorne's short story, "Alice Doane's Appeal." The gothic core, identical in both texts, allows each author to express, through the act of writing as recreating the self, his

profound ambivalence for his land's history as he confronts the blackness within the human soul, while forcing the reader into a similar encounter. Gothicism explores the evil omnipresent in human nature, and does so in a relatively safe manner, so that the deeply suppressed fears and anxieties of humans are allowed to find harmless expression. Because the “gothic create[s], and then perpetuate[s], a myth necessary to its time” (Kerr 5), Hawthorne and Faulkner are able to participate in the construction of a myth that exhibits the necessity of the traditional taboo on incest, while their very participation in that myth allows them to displace their own (incestuous) desires and fears onto an innocent object.

The essential triangular core of incest and fratricide in "Alice Doane's Appeal" is duplicated in *Absalom, Absalom!*: the sister is pure and desirable; the known brother possesses the seed of evil but has the sister's positive influence; the unknown brother, a mysterious cosmopolitan, enters and wins his sister's heart through the evil of seduction; what exists in the unknown brother is the lack of his sister's influence upon him; the known brother kills his sister's lover to prevent the evil; the murder is motivated at two levels: the socially condoned and the socially taboo; and the known brother is persecuted by his act of fratricide and by his own incestuous urge. In addition to these striking similarities, a further likeness between "Alice Doane's Appeal" and *Absalom, Absalom!* is each author's experimental narrative techniques, which, by their very structure, lead to an exploration of the willingness within human nature to disregard history. Wagner describes the structure of *Absalom, Absalom!*, but his description could serve for "Alice Doane's Appeal" as well:

Only the reader has a full view of the stage. He sees, as it were, two tragedies on a single theme, simultaneously enacted. The curtain lifts on a play within a play: on the inner stage, the Sutpen drama; on the outer, the larger social tragedy involving the narrators. The second creates the first, and the first serves to convey the second. (Wagner 280)

Neither story allows the reader to sit back quietly and observe the tragedy unfolding; at the insistence of each author, the text and its reader participate in producing a metaphorical collapse of the human ability to endure history.

The dreamlike quality of the kernel stories in "Alice Doane's Appeal" and *Absalom, Absalom!* is characteristic of the surreal world, suspended between the real and the fantastic, in gothicism. Following the tradition, both stories are gothic in content and form (sensationalism in the kernels and structural techniques of second- and third-hand narration) and both stories incorporate the traditional themes of gothicism: the setting in the midst of decay, the consecrated relationship between brother and sister, the doubling imagery, the violence and sexuality, the ambivalence in the known brother's actions, the hidden identity of the lost sibling, the implication of incest, the descent into irrationality and a dreamlike experience, and knowledgeable characters who withhold information. These internal characteristics of the stories are matched by the language the narrators (and hence Hawthorne and Faulkner) employ, which has been called "the language of emotion" (Easton 94). Such elements of gothicism, Neal Frank says, were "constantly, repetitively used; and that repetition was for readers a large part of the charm of the Gothic" (Frank 55). Both inner gothic stories are, however, given a new twist, one

examined by Steven T. Ryan in an essay exploring the origins of *Absalom, Absalom!*:

. . . [T]here is a tentative movement away from Old World gothicism and an attempt to reshape the gothic tradition for a uniquely American experience.

*Absalom, Absalom!* progresses far beyond the 'prearranged nightmare' of gothicism as it becomes an American story of New World innocence and loss of innocence. (Ryan 57)

American writers turned to the gothic convention to express fears and worries shaped out of American materials, which were considered still too new to be used alone<sup>1</sup>. The gothic was able to express

the ambiguities and anxieties of a rapidly changing society whose dominant rationalist, realist ideology had difficulty in accomodating many hidden fears, alienation, fragmentation, and a disconnection with its past---fears to which the new United States must have been as susceptible as industrializing Europe.

(Easton 14)

Only in the New World, that land of unexplored potential and unknown dangers, could such a genuine loss of innocence occur. Other ways in which the gothic is adopted to the New World are explored by Kerr, who takes the initiative from Leslie Fiedler:

The iniquities of the Old World authoritarian church and state and corrupt social institutions were matched by New World exploitation of nature, by Negro slavery, and by frontier roughness and violence . . . The vast New World [is set] as the stage for the drama of superhuman ambition . . . In a society founded by rebels, rebels and outcasts could be redeemed in the general Romantic revolt against the

past and its values. (17)

In their transformation of Old World gothicism into gothicism suited specifically for the New World, Hawthorne and Faulkner capitalized upon the dream element; their technique draws us into an element that at first seems surprisingly reassuring, and then becomes increasingly unrecognizable and frightening. The Salem witch trials and the Civil War are some “vague nightmare in the distance” (Kerr 30). Because “innocence is a traditional ingredient in the Gothic sauce” (Kerr 29), their tales are about the innocence of their protagonists, the innocence of the childlike characters that are strangely passive, and even *our* innocence. In the stories of the two writers, the element of initiation into irrationality and loss of innocence is three-fold: certain characters within the inner story (most notably, Leonard Doane and Henry Sutpen), the audience of the inner stories (the two young girls in “Alice Doane’s Appeal” and Quentin and Shreve in *Absalom, Absalom!*), and the audience of the outer stories (the reader of each text) all experience an abrupt induction into the twin horrors of confronting the past and of attempting to discover a stable foundation for truth.

Hawthorne and Faulkner are aware that the “grotesque and extravagant” (Hawthorne 215) kernels of their texts demand our involvement; they are intrigued in the telling process of a narrative which itself tells such a sensational and tawdry story that the very narrative process gives the gothic story new significance as the readers discover meaning in the act of imagining. Both texts reveal a reflexive quality as the authors (as narrators) of the outer story watch themselves weave the tales and watch their twin audiences (the audience of the inner tale and the readers) react to the tale:

The mimetic text must maintain the reader's happy ignorance of the illusion---that the text does not mediate between reader and world---in which he is enmeshed, and not disrupt his intuitive belief that it is permitting a linear transmission of reality to him . . . In effect, the text ceases to transmit the exterior world, and interrogates its own medium of transmission instead. This self-reflexive moment . . . calls attention to its artifice. It is a maneuvering that demands the reader's creative interplay with the text. (Stoicheff 91)

The texts, which demand our "creative interplay" with them, force us into the position of witnessing a ravishing (both ours and the girls'), and hence make us active participants, even voyeurs, in the process. Both Hawthorne and Faulkner are interested in the reaction that occurs when innocent minds (of the two girls in "Alice Doane's Appeal," of Quentin in *Absalom, Absalom!*, and of their readers) are exposed to history and the evils it contains. The authors and narrators are self-conscious enough of their artifice that the outer tale does not allow us much vicarious participation, but they do allow, and watch, our reaction as the inner tale draws us closer to experiencing its center of evil.

Cowley and Stewart, among others, have examined the fascination Hawthorne and Faulkner share concerning the indelible stain upon innocence and the impossibility of a historical move toward progress, but none have noted that these perspectives are identical in the two texts and are used to shape the twin kernel stories. "Alice Doane's Appeal" begins with the narrator leading the two young girls up a small hill for the purpose of making "a trial whether truth were more powerful than fiction" (215). There he tells them a story of a brother and sister who had an unusual "closeness of tie" uniting them

"because they only of their race" had survived death as children, generating "the concentrated fervor of their affection from childhood upwards, their sense of lonely sufficiency to each other" (209). Early in the story the narrator tells his audience that the brother, Leonard Doane, is "characterized by a diseased imagination and morbid feelings," while his sister Alice is "beautiful and virtuous," instilling "something of her own excellence into the wild heart of her brother, but not enough to cure the deep taint of his nature" (208). When Walter Brome, a cosmopolitan man who had received his education "in the cities of the old world," begins to seek Alice's love, Leonard cannot bear the thought of losing her to a man who seems his "very counterpart" (209), indeed, who seems to share with him one "individual nature, which could not become wholly the property of one, unless by the extinction of the other" (210). When by chance the two meet on a "lonely road," Leonard kills Walter after being taunted with "indubitable proofs of the shame of Alice," but even in death the corpse wears a "triumphant sneer" (210).

The true identity of Walter Brome, who is the unknown brother, is not the only thing hidden in the story. The narrator hints at an unconscious incestuous urge, an urge Leonard cannot admit to himself, as the overriding motivation for the murder of Walter. Although Leonard acknowledges the instinct for protecting his sister, his only living kin, he nevertheless shudders "with a deeper sense of some unutterable crime, perpetrated, as he imagined, in madness or a dream" and recoils in his impression that it was he who made Alice impure in a moment of "dark impulses" (211). It is again in the "sensation of one who struggles through a dream" that Leonard understands that the dead man---whose "face still wore a likeness of my father" (211), the features of which seemed Leonard's

own, the man with whom Leonard shared "a hateful sympathy in our secret souls" (209)--is his own brother. He is haunted not only by his act of fratricide but also by the idea of his sister's guilt, although "sometimes yielding to a conviction of her purity" (211). Leonard is further tormented by the possibility of evil within the nature of Alice, for it is under the assumption of her pure, untainted nature that he defines himself, constructs the world around him, and, indeed, even builds his epistemology: all knowledge is useful only in relation to Alice. Although readily acknowledging the twin "germs" of evil within himself and Walter, Leonard seems to simultaneously deny and accept the possibility of the seed of evil within his sister by describing her nature as first "gentle and holy" (209) and then as an "impure" nature which "betrayed" him (210). Leonard "transfers his own feelings of guilt onto the outside world," which includes Alice, and the next step is the now-understandable contemplation of killing her, "for Alice has been to Leonard the forbidden sexual object who has unwittingly impelled him to wish his father dead and now to murder Brome" (Bell 79, Fossum 17). This recalls Hawthorne's assertion that the sons (in this case, Leonard, who is a second generation New England Puritan) become lesser men than their fathers; the further removal of each generation from that first generation transforms the nobility into a morbidity. Because the narrator's characterization is based freely upon Hawthorne's life, and because the narrator himself seems to share a secret sympathy with Leonard, Leonard may be seen as the manifestation of Hawthorne's fear that he too will become his forefathers' mere shadow, impotent and ineffective.

Henry and Judith Sutpen in *Absalom, Absalom!* possess an intimate bond similar

to that of Leonard and Alice Doane. Prevented from developing any normal bonds with outsiders, the "two accursed" (108) Sutpen children have only each other, and this isolation encourages the development of Henry's jealous attachment for Judith. When Henry brings home from college his classmate, Charles Bon, Judith falls in love with him. Charles is a mysterious cosmopolitan man and yet so resembles Henry that at times Henry must struggle with defining and knowing himself apart from Charles. Judith is seduced, just as Alice Doane found herself under the worldly Walter's spell of evil. When Charles insists upon marrying Judith, Henry kills him, preventing the match and preventing his sister from being possessed by another man. As narrator, Mr. Compson says, ". . . Henry had to kill Bon to keep them from marrying. So it must have been Henry who seduced Judith, not Bon" (79). Henry's act of murder is seen as a protective gesture, but, more importantly, as an act motivated by his own incestuous urge. When Judith begins writing letters to Bon, Mr. Compson says, "That's when the letters came, and Henry reading them all, without jealousy, with that complete abnegant transference, metamorphosis into the body which was to become his sister's lover" (83). When he and Bon become indistinguishable in Henry's mind, Henry becomes more conscious of his sexual interest in Judith but attempts to repress it. Mr. Compson says that Judith succumbed to Bon's spell "as though it actually were the brother (Henry) who had put the spell on the sister, seduced her to his own vicarious image which walked and breathed with Bon's body" (85). If anyone is to possess Judith fully and completely, Henry insists that it is his right. And in the outer frame, Quentin is reluctantly reminded of his own repressed desire. "Aroused by the question of incest which the Bon-Henry-Judith

relationship poses, Quentin shapes the story in terms of his own vicarious incest wishes and creates the doomed Henry as an image of himself' (Wagner 277). The telling of the kernel is traumatic for Henry, a participant in the outer frame, because it forces him to confront his own repressed sexual desires for his sister Caddy. Henry's incestuous desire is simply a mirror for Quentin of Quentin's own repressed desires. It is significant that Henry's strong incestual urge is revealed through the thoughts of Quentin, the narrator:

Henry...may have been conscious that his fierce provincial's pride in his sister's virginity was a false quantity which must incorporate in itself an inability to endure in order to be precious, to exist, and so must depend upon its loss, absence, to have existed at all. In fact, perhaps this is the pure and perfect incest: the brother realising that the sister's virginity must be destroyed in order to have existed at all, *taking that virginity in the person of the brother-in-law, the man whom he would be if he could become, metamorphose into, the lover, the husband* . . . (76-7; italics mine)

Without being conscious of the process, Quentin's own repressed incestuous desire is addressed, forcing him into the affinity with Henry that allows Quentin to understand and explain the actions of Henry. Quentin realizes that Henry kills Bon as a protective gesture toward his sister, but also because Bon threatens to act on Henry's own repressed sexual urges. Plagued by his act of fratricide and by his incestuous urges, Henry apparently disappears, leaving no trace behind for the curious townspeople; it is not until after the deaths of Judith and Henry that the townspeople discover he had lived out his life, hiding, in the house in which Judith lived.

The question of whether Hawthorne and Faulkner were inscribing autobiographical material into their family romances is one from which many, but not all, critics have recoiled. Mary Ventura is one such critic who has broached the possibility that Hawthorne and Faulkner were not simply telling tales unconnected to their personal lives, but, in voicing the conflict of incestuous desire, were engaging in a cathartic release inscribed in those tales in the form of the exploration of such desire. She notes that the many thematic links between Hawthorne's life and the narrator of "Alice Doane's Appeal" "preclude the assumption of an absolute rift between [author and narrator]" (Ventura 27). The narrator will not let the girls "leave until he has had his way with them" (Ventura 28). Of this insistence that the girls be forced to listen to tales until they break down Mark Hennelly has said, "The Artist's sexual repressions . . . take their revenge in a kind of verbal or aesthetic rape of the girls" (Smith 79). Ventura notes that the girls weep at the end of the second tale,

but we might not agree with the narrator's assessment of why they do so. He feels that his story has touched them at last and that they are all now of one mind in understanding and valuing the impact of history. We, on the other hand, suspect that he has taught the girls a darker lesson than he will admit and that they cry because they are tired, hungry, and frightened. And because they have been violated. (Ventura 29)

The narrator does not realize how much of his motivation he has revealed to us, and in his insistence that his contemporaries are unmindful of history and such an unfortunate situation should be corrected, he is attempting to hide his ultimate desire to force the

young girls into an awareness of their sexuality. Hennelly claims that such a desire is not shared by the author alone:

The narrator equates his own sexual potency with the success of the tale he tells . . . . The text is certainly a revelation of the unconscious desire of its narrator, but it may equally be the site (the potentially consummate meeting place) of the working through of our own desires as readers. (Smith 80)

Such tension that might follow arises from “the power relationship between the writer and himself, as well as between the writer and his audience” (Ventura 38), and, more specifically, from our knowledge of the desire Hawthorne is inscribing in his tale. If the two young girls, whose sensibilities are symbolically “raped,” are modeled on Hawthorne’s two sisters [Brodwin suggests that the two young ladies are “fictional portraits” of his sisters (Brodwin 117)], as seems likely, perhaps it should be argued that Hawthorne himself struggled with the urge of incest. And in inscribing such a desire in his tale, not only does “Leonard kill an unconscious, or latent, or suppressed part of himself” (Easton 14-15), Hawthorne does as well. Read this way, as an enactment of a familial romance, the tale resonates, mirrorlike, with Hawthorne’s own repressed urges. This idea is, of course, nothing new. Not long after Hawthorne’s death, in the course of an interview Herman Melville told Julian Hawthorne that he knew his father’s “secret,” hinting that the secret was sexual in nature. “Because of the recurrence of incest in Hawthorne’s tales and romances, between brothers and sisters, fathers and daughters, and sisters, a number of commentators have suspected that the ‘secret’ is an incestuous relationship between Nathaniel and Elizabeth” (Miller 35). Miller is not the first critic to

suggest that Hawthorne struggled with incestuous desires, and he coins the phrase "Bad Fathers" to describe the "sadistic men" who "secretly lust to destroy innocent women" and who "tower over Hawthorne's landscape" (Miller 110). Hawthorne did not manage to inscribe as much difference as he wanted between the lives of his forefathers and his own, for such a preoccupation with his ancestors' sexual aggression simply points back to his own, hinting at repressed urges. Miller continues:

In the most recent attempt to unravel the "secret," Philip Young . . . has argued that the incestuous bond of Nathaniel and Elizabeth is the veiled subject of *The Scarlet Letter*, Arthur Dimmesdale and Hester Prynne being brother and sister, the *A* substituting for *I*, or incest, and the situation in the romance replicating an incestuous episode in the Manning family in the late seventeenth century. Two sisters had carnal relations with their brother . . . and in the words of the court clerk had to sit in "the meeting house with a paper upon each of their heads, written in Capital Letters, 'This is for whorish carriage with my naturall Brother'." Hawthorne, it is proposed, over a century later assumed the burden of guilt, this Manning stain. (Miller 35)

Miller notes that the "theme of incest appears with some frequency in his fiction . . . [but] the subject poses difficulties: as several critics have noted, Elizabeth is the name of his mother and older sister" and Hawthorne usually deals with such controversial matters "by displacement, which veils the fantasies except from prying biographers" (Miller 35-36). Elizabeth is also the name of the fiancée in "The Minister's Black Veil," in which the veil clearly is a sexual symbol in the story; and such sexual imagery is found in most of

Hawthorne's gothic tales. Easton explains that the gothic is a socially acceptable "way of imagining the unimaginable [and is] the classic mode of gaining access to areas" society is not willing to accept in other forms of fiction; "Hawthorne's use [in 'Alice Doane's Appeal'] unleashes barely comprehended unconscious impulses" (Easton 14).

The possibility of Hawthorne inscribing "barely comprehended unconscious impulses" in his tales links him once again to Faulkner, who too in *Absalom, Absalom!* has assembled a story, the structure of which dictates that we as readers participate simultaneously in the process of ravishing and in the state of being ravished. Faulkner's tale is the site of ambivalent desire:

The erotic tensions and generational conflicts generated by the South's tendency to see itself as an extended family were something that Faulkner experienced in his life and explored in his work. And, of these, not the least was the strange pattern by which, fleeing the father, the hero embraced the sister; mastered by the paternal word, he discovered refuge, and release, in incest. (33)

In fleeing the "father," Faulkner was, ironically, running back to him in a simultaneous rebellion from, and inevitable confirmation of, the paternal law, for the son can never escape the father's taboo on incest. Gray notes that in the Faulknerian pattern the "hero," suffering from feelings of inadequacy and impotency, flees the father and embraces the sister, where he discovers "refuge, and release, in incest" (Gray 33). If a written text is another self of the author, then Faulkner's stories may stand in as the sister in an incestuous relationship, as the sister Faulkner never had; and as Kerr notes, the incestuous desire for the sister is often a displacement of incestuous longing for the mother (Kerr

16). In Faulkner's stories, the mother is often an absent figure to whom other characters long to return. Read in this manner, the mother herself is an undetermined site of desire and longing. When confronted with the shadowy patriarchal forms who figured so prominently in his consciousness and stories, Faulkner may have naturally displaced his incestuous urges onto those stories, hence his stories as the "dark twins" of a man.

In his seminal 1975 study, *Doubling and Incest / Repetition and Revenge*, John T. Irwin argues that there are three levels to the incestuous suicidal struggle found within *Absalom, Absalom!*: between Henry and Bon; between narrator Quentin and his "dark twin," the story he narrates; and between the story and Faulkner as writer who invokes incestuous doubling and oblique repetition as he "seeks revenge against time" (Irwin 20). Irwin claims that the double, Bon, "evokes the ego's love because it is a copy of the ego [Henry], but it evokes the ego's fear and hatred as well because it is a copy with a difference" (Irwin 33). The ego kills the double in order to protect itself, but then discovers it is actually a suicidal act. Irwin shows a vein of homoeroticism that runs through the story; Henry is suspected of being in love with Bon, and this doubling brings with it another layer of incestuous urges (for his half-brother). The crux of the problem for Quentin (and for Henry), Irwin says, is

repetition, the temporal form of doubling, for it is those inevitable repetitions inherent in the cyclic nature of time that seem to rob the individual will of all potency. Yet it is not just repetition that is involved here, it is recollection as well---that *awareness* of repetition. (Irwin 69; italics mine)

This repetition, with its overtones of the Nietzschean eternal recurrence, signals a will

that is impotent. The repetition necessarily reconstitutes the original situation and *recreates* the original individual, even as it repeats the original situation and individual. The repetition demands that the first occurrence be reinterpreted accordingly; the second occurrence derives its meaning from the first. Faulkner's repetition of Hawthorne's narration requires that we look again at "Alice Doane's Appeal," for Faulkner's repetition reconstitutes Hawthorne's narration and forces us to recollect it. In this way are the two narrations related, but the relation is seen only by us looking backwards through time: only then is the reciprocal relationship between the two texts, which help to recreate and define each other, made clear.

In following Hawthorne's gothic tale with his own interpretation of that gothic tale in *Absalom, Absalom!*, Faulkner has locked his authorial voice into an odd pairing of sameness and difference: the sameness is seen in the identical core story and framing technique, and the primary difference (which may be an indication of his need to separate himself from Hawthorne, who begins to resemble a father-figure) is Bon's color. In Hawthorne's story, the sister and two brothers are white; in Faulkner's story the unknown brother becomes black. Traditionally, the color white has been associated with goodness, purity, and innocence, the color black with evil, mystery, and even the darker, tainted side of a good man's nature: indeed, part of the surreal nightmare effect of gothicism is created both by the revelation that humans possess evil in the very depths of their being, and by the incongruity of good and evil within one person. Kerr explains the significance of Bon's racial heritage:

In *Love and Death [in the American Novel]* Leslie Fiedler explained the "gothic

mode” as “essentially a form of parody, a way of assailing clichés by exaggerating them to the limit of grotesqueness”: in *Absalom, Absalom!* Faulkner mocked “the banal harsh taunt ‘Would you want a nigger to sleep with your sister!’” (16)

Fiedler continues his study of parody by saying that it is “a kind of *necessary* final act of destroying the past, required of all who belong to the tradition of the New” (16).

Faulkner both copies and “destroys” Hawthorne’s story in the attempt to thrust his own story into a tradition that is still relatively new but which favors such acts of authority.

The result serves to establish his tale firmly in the tradition of uniquely American gothicism.

The relationship of the repetition of the narration to the individually repeated pieces, which make up the whole of the authorial act of repetition, is clarified by understanding the recurrence of the social and unconscious forces at work in the murders of Walter and Bon. The relationship between the brothers in Hawthorne’s story is delineated along moral lines: Leonard is the good brother, Walter the dark, evil twin. The dark seed in Walter becomes a physical mark of racial identity (Bon’s mother was black, his father white) in Faulkner’s retelling of the story. Gray says that “like many writers from the South, Faulkner tended to associate the idea of evil, so potent in the region, with the black man’s or black woman’s shadowy figure . . . The victims of evil become the messengers of evil and therefore the emblems of evil” (Gray 40). For Gray, blacks are “transmuted into vivid icons of Original Sin” in the eyes of all white Southerners, simply because blacks serve to stand as “reminders of a crime committed not so very long ago by some mythic, communal ancestor” (Gray 40). “The guilt is

there,” says Gray, “ingrained in the texture of [Faulkner’s] books: more specifically, the association of blacks and evil is part of their mythological framework, their structures of thought and feeling” (Gray 40). Gray believes that the culture of the South inevitably inscribed racism into Faulkner’s stories. But Faulkner inscribed difference in the form of Bon’s racial identity in his story, not as a reflection of racism, but as a declaration of independence from his literary precursor. Faulkner’s “racism” might be explained by reference to his penchant for masking himself: the “instinctive racist,” as he is called by Gray, could simply be a part of the good ole’ boy mask he wore sometimes. It is too easy to simply repeat the charge of racism against Faulkner and to ignore the instances in his writing that refute such a charge: in *The Sound and the Fury* Dilsey is a symbol of redemption from the madness pervading the rest of the text. Not only is it ironic that the symbol of redemption is seen in the very symbol of the white man’s cruelty and hatred, it shatters the charge that Faulkner’s complex understanding of black-white relations can be reduced to simple, old-fashioned racism. So why the difference between the race of the unknown brother in “Alice Doane’s Appeal” and the one in *Absalom, Absalom!*? As many critics have noted, Faulkner was historically and socially minded, and his depiction of the struggles in the South is able to transcend the boundaries of the specificity of the South; such a depiction is not limited by his inscription of racial difference. Wagner notes that Charles Bon’s “sudden determination to marry Judith against Henry’s command . . . is touched off by the realization that he has been rejected by Sutpen and Henry, not as a man, or even as Judith’s brother but *in toto*---as Negro” (Wagner 289). Wagner quotes Bon’s response to Henry as proof (“So it’s the miscegenation, not the

incest, that you can't bear"), but he glosses over the fact that Bon's response is actually what Quentin and Shreve *imagine* his response to be. Gray explains that

In extenuating incest, consequently, or rather have Henry extenuate it, Quentin is (however unknowingly) assuaging his own incipient guilt, and so making it possible for him, for a while, to live with himself. And, almost as an act of over-compensation, miscegenation becomes by his reckoning the determining factor in the destruction of the house of Sutpen . . . pictured as the one forbidden fruit in this feudal Eden---the original and the ultimate taboo. (Gray 222)

Because it is safer to imagine that Henry is concerned with Bon's color, rather than with his biological relation to their sister, Quentin so imagines---and is able to keep hidden his own incestuous desires. Changing the race of the unknown brother thus allows Quentin a safety mechanism, enabling him to deny his incestuous urges.

The element of Bon's racial heritage adds complexity, and a resulting coherency, to Faulkner's story that some critics claim is lacking in Hawthorne's story; most critics have been more than willing to dismiss "Alice Doane's Appeal" on the grounds that its composition of framing devices is "clumsy," "fragmentary and chaotic"<sup>2</sup>. Stanley Brodwin is one of the few critics who argues that

the framework device gives structural meaning to the 'Oedipal' triangle between Leonard Doane, his sister, Alice, and Leonard's twin-brother, Walter Brome, as well as the horror visions of the guilt surrounding the Salem witch trials, and serves to dramatize Hawthorne's concept of the function of history. (Brodwin

In fact, the structural meaning allows Hawthorne to dramatize not only the fantastical qualities of history, but the nightmarish character of the inner workings of Leonard's mind as well, as he is forced to confront his motives. In killing his brother, Leonard fears that he is

[a]s guilty of that primordial crime [parricide] as the one he has just committed.

Hence, the murder of Brome is, first, a reenactment of Doane's psychological past, and, second, an attempt to annihilate it, to shatter once and for all the mirror of his youthful guilt. Furthermore, the once-desired crime which he has now symbolically perpetrated was in itself an attempt to destroy the past, represented by his father. (Fossum 17)

In the classic psychoanalytic reading, in slaying Brome, Leonard "is slaying both his father and the personification of his own wish to commit incest with his sister" (Bell 71). Leonard is not the only one unaware of certain repressed desires; we, as readers, are also forced to look at ourselves and question the desires we have suppressed beneath consciousness. Hawthorne explores the transformation of the human heart when an individual must relive historical events he has previously chosen to ignore or forget. If the goal of changing the human heart is to be accomplished, the texts must confront individuals as witnesses to the awful truths buried in history. The form of "Alice Doane's Appeal" becomes "that of a strategy of conversion," both for the young girls and for its readers (Brodwin 118). Through the function of narrative boxes, both writers force their characters and their readers to become simultaneous emotional witnesses. As the two young ladies in "Alice Doane's Appeal" and Quentin and Shreve in *Absalom*,

*Absalom!* enter a greater awareness of the impact of history upon their lives, so does the reader, who is compelled to invent the meaning of the fragmented text and even the meaning of his own personal fragmented history (history always appears to consciousness in the form of fragmentation). The technique each author employs of allowing a narrator to tell a story within a story serves not to distance us further from the horror, but to lure the reader closer to the center of evil, for it is the story-telling urge that assists "the imagination in appealing to the heart" (216), as the narrator in "Alice Doane's Appeal" discovers. This self-conscious intention begins to mirror the reader's own self-consciousness with which he regards the story and the meaning it has for him. The problem is that history lacks authentic meaning for most individuals [the "noble intolerance of the fathers became the superstitious intolerance of the sons" (Bell 75)], and, in hoping to rectify the problem, both authors give their readers the chance to identify with both perpetrator and innocent, with shame and virtue, through an actualized, recreated historical landscape in their art. Hawthorne's purpose in "Alice Doane's Appeal" is "to show these 'people of the present,' by an exercise of the historical imagination, that they are a people of the past as well, morally involved in the history which has made them what they are, and secret sharers in all the guilt and glory of their cultural heritage" (Fossum 14). By extension, Hawthorne and Faulkner are more guilty than the average person of the sin of their forebears due to their painful awareness of personal history. History must be used to achieve an involvement in readers who, as illustrated by the two young ladies in the former story, often have no relationship, or only an inauthentic one, with history, and especially American history. This historical

involvement, with the inevitable inclusion of guilt, must be infused with an aesthetic vitality that will endow the individually deadened heart with a more enlivened nature; the structural form of the stories is the visual design of that process<sup>3</sup>.

In the frame of "Alice Doane's Appeal," the narrator paints a symbolic picture of history and the sins it enacts. The unexpiated sins of history are symbolically presented as a "deceitful verdure," a "vile and ineradicable weed" that has destroyed "every thing that should nourish man or beast," so that nothing is permitted to "vegetate" among the weed (205). The narrator is conscious of the "most execrable scene," occurring in that very spot, which "our history blushes to record" (205), but of which the two girls accompanying him are not aware because, the narrator says, "we are not a people of legend or tradition," for "we are a people of the present" (206). The dark, sin-riddled story the narrator tells is of inhabitants in a town who have "just sensation enough in their frozen hearts to shiver at each other's presence" (212). Parallel imagery in the frame of *Absalom, Absalom!* representing unatoned historical sins is revealed through the aging Miss Coldfield, whose "rank smell of . . . old flesh" (3) sickens Quentin as they sit in her "dim hot airless room with the blinds all closed" during the "long still hot weary dead September afternoon" (4). Miss Coldfield possesses a "character cold, implacable, and even ruthless" and a house stifled with "gloom" and "a quality of grim endurance," as if there were "[im]prisoned in it like a tomb all the suspiration of slow heat-laden time" (6). She tells Quentin a story of "fatality and curse on the South and on our family" (7) because "the land or the earth or whatever it was got tired of [Henry Sutpen's sins] and turned and destroyed him" (14). But it was not only Sutpen's sins the land expiated: the

land was already

primed for fatality and already cursed with it, even if it had not rather been our family, our father's progenitors, who had incurred the curse long years before and had been coerced by Heaven into establishing itself in the land and the time already cursed. (14)

Just as the "weed" in Hawthorne's story represents the fouled Edenic America that cannot transcend the transgressions of its past, so the quality of stifled timelessness about Miss Coldfield suggests that America will remain stagnant, denying or ignoring history, until willingly entering into an authentic confrontation with "the sins of the fathers."

Beyond recognizing a similar unwillingness in their respective audiences to face the nightmarish historical context of their tales, both authors use narrative techniques to suggest the inevitable limitations of awareness. The narrative technique of each author reveals the nature of the epistemological problem that truth is too elusive to know. Narration in "Alice Doane's Appeal" shifts rapidly between the frame and inner story, between realism and gothicism, and between direct discourse of the narrator to the first-person narration of Leonard Doane to the narrator quoting Leonard. The quickly changing pattern of narrative form and genre leaves the reader suspended between the story within a story and on unstable ground in his search for truth. Allene Cooper has pointed out that "what has struck some critics as inconsistency in Hawthorne's point of view often contributes to a blurring of perspective and produces in the reader an uneasiness, an unresolved anxiety"<sup>4</sup>. The emotions produced in the reader are similar to those of Leonard as he struggles in his own search for truth. While relating his tale to the

wizard, a man "with fiendish ingenuity in devising evil and superhuman power to execute it, but senseless as an idiot," Leonard fears he has been deceived (208-9). He is even unable to discern if the noise he hears is a gust of wind coming down the chimney or the laughter of the wizard. Leonard continues his narration and refers to the moments after his act of fratricide, again saying that he felt he moved in a dream<sup>5</sup>. Hawthorne suggests truth is uncertain and that people have only their individual, subjective experiences on which to rely when constructing their concept of reality. For Leonard, this mad descent into a dreamlike experience begins with his inability to know if his sister is pure and blameless.

Faulkner's story, presenting an illusory quality to its readers and to the characters in the outer frame through its disjointed shifting between narrative perspectives, is also intended to imply that truth is fragmented and only partially knowable. Quentin is described as hearing in a dreamlike state the inner tale:

It (the talking, the telling) seemed (to him, to Quentin) to partake of that logic- and reason-flouting quality of a dream which the sleeper knows must have occurred, stillborn and complete, in a second . . . (15)

At times Quentin seems to know and understand the truth and then, with the elusive quality of a dream, it slips away from him. The nature of truth, Hawthorne and Faulkner claim, forces the individual into the position of *choosing* to believe what he will believe; the individual believes something to be true not because he knows it to be true but because he himself must inevitably determine what is true. Hawthorne's tale begins with the two women sitting down on a rock "close by the spot where *we chose to believe* that

the death-tree had stood" (207; italics mine). Faulkner too requires his characters to be faced with the uncertainty of truth, and this is echoed in Henry's "struggling and suffocating heart . . . saying *I will believe! I will! I will! Whether it is true or not, I will believe!*" (88). The story Quentin and Shreve narrate is inevitably speculative; it is what they choose to believe actually happened.

The initiation of the known brothers and the audience of the inner tale becomes the initiation of the readers, drawn against their will into irrationality and madness; the readers simultaneously are forced to construct their own reality in determining truth and are implicated in the unexpiated sins by confronting the knowledge of the destructive seed of evil within themselves. Smith takes this even further by saying that when readers/critics

actually *produce* a literary text (by the assigning of a 'true meaning'), then the original text (bafflingly resistant to meaning) has effected a successful seduction. Textual analysis has become a form of self analysis when a reader projects an explicative closure, a fulfillment, into a 'void in the narrative.' (Smith 80)

We are not the only ones who must resist filling the "void in the narrative": the two female listeners and their narrator in "Alice Doane's Appeal" and Quentin and Shreve in *Absalom, Absalom!* must resist the temptation as well. We are left on unstable ground to experience the imagined *nowness* of each moment with the characters: the psychic import of Leonard's discovery that Walter "was my very counterpart . . . There was a resemblance from which I shrank with sickness, and loathing, and horror . . ." (209) becomes the reader's own regained knowledge of the evil within himself. Thus Leonard

(and by implication the reader) knows to what degree his proclivity for evil has been tempered by his environment; Leonard says,

The evil of [Walter's] character, also, had been strengthened and rendered prominent by a reckless and ungoverned life, while mine had been softened and purified by the gentle and holy nature of Alice. But my soul had been conscious of the germ of all the fierce and deep passions, and of all the many varieties of wickedness, which accident had brought to their full maturity in him. (209)

The reader, now fully initiated with the newly recovered knowledge of evil and the loss of innocence, is thrown into an ontological realm of horror and uncertainty, immediate acknowledgment joining instinctual denial. The structure of both stories, with its shifting narrators, its story within a story, and its lack of narrative boundaries, implicates the reader in the inner tale and causes the resulting feelings of disorientation and confusion. According to Smith, "If the reader desires a satisfactory closure within this unsatisfactory reading experience, then the solution is obvious: one simple explanatory 'true meaning' is assigned, the narrative disjunctions smoothed away. . ." (Smith 80). But Smith goes on to say that searching for meaning with the purpose of ending the questioning (and thereby the discovering) process is undesirable. The textual designs of "Alice Doane's Appeal" and *Absalom, Absalom!*, purposely open-ended, force the reader to be satisfied with only the *search* for truth and meaning within the story kernels and, in turn, within history itself (for "truth" itself is never knowable); this design allows the authors (and coerces the readers) to question cultural blindness: how the *lack* of historical knowledge (especially of repetition and doubling) plays a role in our own lives and acts of evil.

The blurring of narrative boundaries and the merging of characters (Who is it that commits incest with Alice and Judith? Does Quentin confuse himself with Henry as he begins to fear he has committed incest with Caddy?) symbolizes the breakdown between historical fact and gothic speculation. History and gothicism become inseparable in both stories as history grows into a more fully known and understood consciousness through the use of gothic techniques. The gothic fiction story even became inseparable from Faulkner's life, for the gothic

theme of sibling intimacy and rivalry had been a recurring one in [Faulkner's] fiction up until 1935, and in particular the idea of the dead brother-rival. After that, it largely disappeared from his work . . . Faulkner himself had struggled with his own 'dark twin' in story after story. But now he did no more: the death of his youngest and dearest brother had shaken him to his foundations, but also released him. (Gray 84)

History becomes the essential gothic cliché and, with Quentin, the reader realizes that the knowledge is too profoundly real and brutal for him and so thinks, "*Yes, I have had to listen too long . . . Yes. I have heard too much, I have been told too much; I have had to listen to too much, too long*" (168). Gothicism is no longer an artifice creating vicarious horror in the reader but a force present in historical lives. Oddly, it is through gothic clichés that the reader discovers history and experiences it. When the narrator in "Alice Doane's Appeal" begins to blend his gothic tale of horror with the actual horrors committed in the past, it is through no accident that he describes "an indistinctness" which had begun "to creep" in (215). Gothicism has been transformed into realism, and

the two young ladies soon can bear to hear no more; the horrors normally kept at a safe distance in gothicism have become too real, too near for them. The reader's natural response, with the two young ladies, is to distance himself from such garish reality. Although that is the reader's tendency---to drive toward the security and stability of establishing meaning in history and coherence in a text---it is his responsibility to remain willingly open to meaninglessness and inconsistencies he may encounter through the dynamic relationship of author, text, and reader.

Hawthorne and Faulkner successfully resisted the temptation of embedding fixed meaning in their texts, yet their narrative voices reveal an extreme ambivalence toward their cultural pasts. They are torn between a history that claims them as their own, due in part to their ancestors' participation in historical crimes, and a history symbolic of the evil within the human heart against which they struggle. Neither writer could escape his inheritance, and both bore their knowledge of the land and the sins hidden deep within, even as they embraced their personal and cultural legacy. The insistence with which the past claims the narrator in "Alice Doane's Appeal" can be seen in his musings as he and the two young women climb to "the high place where our fathers set up their shame, to the mournful gaze of generations far remote" (205). The narrator finds it remarkable how many people "spend their lives almost at its base, and never once obey the summons of the shadowy past, as it beckons them to the summit" (205-6). Conscious of "those who died so wrongfully," the narrator nevertheless prepares to tell "a wondrous tale of those old times," inspired by "that better wisdom, which draws the moral while it tells the tale" (206-7). Hawthorne's narrator argues that history can be redemptive: the artist can fulfill

the function of history by causing it to penetrate deeply with an essential reality into the consciousness of listeners/readers, thus expiating the sins that lie beneath their indifference. Hawthorne's concern is clearly more for Americans who have forgotten or never learned their history than it is for the audience of his inner tale; thus, his tale becomes a "monument, sadly commemorative of the errors of an earlier race," and as such, it is "not to be cast down, while the human heart has one infirmity that may result in crime" (216). The final image Hawthorne leaves the reader is the enduring stain within the human heart. Faulkner too leaves the reader with his own image of the human heart, overrun as it is with blind, persisting, dumb evil:

. . . in time the Jim Bonds are going to conquer the western hemisphere. Of course it wont quite be in our time and of course as they spread toward the poles they will bleach out again like the rabbits and the birds do, so they wont show up so sharp against the snow. But it will still be Jim Bond; and so in a few thousand years, I who regard you will also have sprung from the loins of African kings.  
(302)

In his disconnection from reality, Jim Bond, the "idiot Negro," is symbolic of the evil in each individual. Faulkner, through Quentin, replies to Shreve's question, "Why do you hate the south?" (303) and his conflicting passions are transparent in the answer: "I dont hate it," Quentin said, quickly, at once, immediately; 'I don't hate it,' he said. *I dont hate it* he thought, panting in the cold air, the iron New England dark: *I dont. I dont! I dont hate it! I dont hate it!*" (303). Faulkner once described his text as "incidentally the story of Quentin Compson's hatred of the bad qualities in the country he loves" (Irwin 27). As

it is about Quentin's hatred, so it is about Faulkner's hatred of "the bad qualities in the country he loves." Although each author (and narrator) bears the burden of that hatred/love and although each is resigned to believing the human heart will always be stained, each nevertheless chooses to believe that the brutal historical reality they portray in their stories may in part atone for the knowledge that the impetus for evil in their ancestors' hearts dwells as well in their own in the form of repressed desires. Indeed, perhaps the catalyst for the telling of these real gothic stories is the desire to still the demons within the artists themselves who wrestle with their ambivalent feelings for the history (including acts of writing) which so defined them, and continues to define them as their works are recreated through the act of repetition.

### Chapter Three: The Recurrence of Authorial Violence

To put the myth of the eternal return negatively,  
 a life that disappears once and for all which does not return  
 is like a shadow, without weight, dead in advance,  
 and whether it was horrible, beautiful, or sublime,  
 its horror, sublimity, and beauty mean nothing.

---Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*

Harold Bloom's 1973 essay, *The Anxiety of Influence*, explores the relationships between individual authors and their literary "precursors" who are "overthrown" by the contemporary author's competitive desire. Terry Eagleton describes this oedipal relationship:

The poet, locked in Oedipal rivalry with his castrating "precursor," will seek to disarm [the latter's] strength by entering it from within, writing in a way which revises, displaces and recasts the precursor poem; in this sense, all poems [and other texts] can be read as rewritings of other poems [and texts], and as "misreadings" or "misprisions" of them, attempts to fend off their overwhelming force so that the poet can clear a space for his own imaginative originality.

(Eagleton 183)

For Bloom, a writer cannot begin to write without wishing "to have named something first," but this task is impossible because other writers have "always already named that something" (Bloom 78). "Formerly construed as ideals the new writer should imitate, these canonical masters now assume . . . the role of threatening Freudian fathers . . . A later writer cannot help but unconsciously perceive his precursor as a paternal figure" (Renza 188). This later writer inevitably is thrown into oedipal conflict with his

precursor, and the precursor must be “overthrown” so that the later writer is free to reinterpret and rewrite what has already been written. “The interpretation of a poem necessarily is always interpretation of that poem’s interpretation of other [precursor] poems,” Bloom says (*Map* 75), and the outcome of the oedipal conflict (always in favor of the later writer) gives that writer the freedom to write his own interpretation, which, as it seems to him, involves the process of naming something for the first time. This process gives the writer “the illusion of having fathered one’s own fathers” (*Kabbalah* 20), and although this mitigates some of the anxiety the writer feels, he still harbors the desire to have killed the precursor, so as to negate any influence he might have felt.

The oedipal combat that exists between a writer and his precursor is aligned with the oedipal combat Hawthorne and Faulkner enacted toward their respective father figures, both of whom, as it has been noted, were writers in their own right. (And for Faulkner, a double oedipal conflict occurs in relation to Hawthorne.) In more than one sense is it true that writers can father their own fathers: in the form of written ideas, but also in the form of recreating or reinventing fathers in a text. Because the dilemma writers find themselves in reenacts (is a repetition of) that same dilemma felt by all other writers, and because each writer must clear a space for himself by overthrowing his precursor, this process necessarily recurs eternally. Hawthorne and Faulkner participate in this eternal process by experiencing Bloom’s “anxiety” and desiring that their interpretation be the first interpretation, rather than a mere repetition of a text already written.

The repetition from Hawthorne to Faulkner occurs in numerous instances: in

"Alice Doane's Appeal," Hawthorne constructs a story, framed by the act of telling, of incestuous urges among a sister and two brothers, and Faulkner presents us with the same kernel and frame in *Absalom, Absalom!*; in his novel *The Marble Faun*, Hawthorne poses questions concerning the nature of innocence, the beginning of consciousness, and a yearning to return to a lost world through the character of Donatello, and in a book of poetry with the same title, *The Marble Faun*, Faulkner examines those same questions with an emphasis on the faun's burden of his "sense of the recurrence and repetition of all things, good and evil" (Wagner 46)<sup>1</sup>. Even in an abstract sense can it be said that repetition occurs from one writer to the other in the shape of their biographies: both men changed their family names; both struggled with ambivalent feelings toward ancestors who played pivotal roles in defining and shaping American culture. In both cases, the forefathers' peculiar blend of naïvete and righteousness led to patriarchal brutality, rigidity, and a proud American sense of achievement, which was, nevertheless, combined with malaise. Many more instances of repetition may be pointed out, but they will remain mere repetitions---and ultimately meaningless, good only for momentary entertainment---unless there is some meaning beyond them, unless a pattern of repetition pointing to an instance of the eternal recurrence can be found.

In *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, Nietzsche describes the eternal recurrence in ecstatic terms:

Sing and bubble over, O Zarathustra, heal your soul with new songs, so that you may bear your great destiny . . . behold, *you are the teacher of the eternal recurrence* . . . And if you should die now, O Zarathustra: behold, we know too

what you would then say to yourself . . . “Now I die and decay . . . and in an instant I shall be nothingness . . . But the complex of causes in which I am entangled will recur---it will create me again! . . . I shall return . . . *not* to a new life or a better life or a similar life: I shall return eternally to this identical and self-same life, in the greatest things and in the smallest . . .”. (237; italics in original)

In a different passage, Nietzsche once again lyrically describes his theory:

Behold this moment! . . . From this gateway moment a long, eternal lane runs *back*: an eternity lies behind us. Must not all things that *can* run have already run along this lane? Must not all things that *can* happen *have* already happened, been done, run past? . . . And are not all things bound fast together in such a way that this moment draws after it all future things? *Therefore*---draws itself too? For all things that *can* run *must* also run once again forward along this long lane. And this slow spider that creeps along in the moonlight, and this moonlight itself, and I and you at this gateway whispering together, whispering of eternal things---must we not all have been here before?---and must we not return and run down that other lane out before us, down that long, terrible lane---must we not return eternally? (179; italics in original)

For Nietzsche, the goal of the eternal recurrence, which he often refers to as “the heaviest of burdens,” was that one learn to embrace “every pain and every joy,” every agony and suffering and humiliation that will be returned to him over and over again, eternally. In such a theory, the universe is shut in upon itself, an incestuous relationship in which

suffering breeds only more of itself. Critics have noted that the interpretation of such a theory must necessarily remain open because it is impossible to determine from Nietzsche's tone the degree to which he invested himself in, and believed, his own theory. But one thing is certain, and it is that Nietzsche viewed his theory as a test of strength in which the individual could choose to affirm life by welcoming the recurrence; in this gesture of *willing*, human value is found "in the idea of the self as a work of art" (Owen 221). In this reading of Nietzsche's theory, history, which is unconscious, creates each individual as a text, and when this text is read, the self is seen as a work of art. This work of art, the self, is divested of meaning when it is not able to encounter, over and over again, the recurrence of emotions which define it.

In the Nietzschean system, individuals are merely conductors for the eternal recurrence. An interesting site at which to see this belief in practice is in Faulkner's father figure's life. The Old Colonel was, among his other endeavors, a writer, as noted earlier. Among his writings were two novels, one being "a melodramatic work *which was based on his own life* . . . Both . . . novels depict a curious incestuous brother-sister relationship" (Morris 90; italics mine). Is it a mere coincidence that Faulkner's predecessor wrote about "curious incestuous brother-sister relationships", or is it an indication of something else working<sup>2</sup>? Humans are mere conduits, Nietzschean works of art, through which pass the forces of the universe in a never-ending parade; they participate in the constructs created by the eternal recurrence without the knowledge that they are doing so. Kundera correctly understands Nietzsche's theory to mean that if life is to have meaning, if things are *truly* to have meaning, then the meaning things have

must be infinite; to have meaning, the self must remain a conduit, a piece of art shaped by recurring history. To put it abstractly, repetition is desirable because it bears more emphasis. In *Absalom, Absalom!* the history of the rise and fall of Sutpen is told and then repeated again and again by various narrators; such repetition endows to the history the quality of a familiar legend. Compared to the immense weight of eternity, all things without the eternal recurrence are too weightless to retain meaning in the face of never-ending time.

Nietzsche's theory, then, dictates that the individual will return, repeatedly, to his self-same life to live out what he has already experienced. In the texts in which he describes his theory, Nietzsche's emphasis is always on the feelings and emotions incurred from life's events playing out, rather than on the events themselves. Over and over he asks himself the question: will he be strong enough to welcome back into his life the humiliation, the pain, the suffering? In *Absalom, Absalom!* Quentin is not strong enough to face the prospect of welcoming into his life the pain and suffering he has been narrating: when he begins to think that his life will be a repetition of the Judith-Henry-Bon tragedy, he commits suicide. (He and Shreve narrate the last half of Sutpen's story in January of 1910, and he kills himself six months later.) To Quentin, Irwin notes, "the triangle of Candace, Dalton Ames, and himself appears as a repetition of the earlier triangle of Judith, Bon, and Henry" (Irwin 50). Irwin correctly declares that it is not mere repetition, but "awareness of repetition" that "paralyzes the will, that awareness that the memory of what has occurred in the past is at the same time the foreknowledge of what will be repeated in the future, the debilitating sense that time is a circular street and that

recollection is prophecy" (Irwin 70). Irwin describes this "retrospective character of repetition":

If an action that has been performed once is repeated and the previous occurrence is remembered, then the second performance of that action reconstitutes the previous performance as the first time---reconstitutes it as the first time not just by the act of repeating it but by a third action, an act of recollection, in which the second action and the first action are seen as related. (Irwin 70-71)

Irwin describes the paradox of memory "treating the second act as primary and the first act as secondary" (Irwin 71), and, similarly, the Bloomian literary precursor is reconstructed as the second writer when his tale is rewritten by a later writer. It is within this context that Faulkner successfully rewrites Hawthorne. Within this paradox of memory, the self as text and written texts are constantly being redefined, recreated, reconstructed. When Quentin accuses Shreve of sounding like his father, Shreve pointedly informs Quentin that he too sounds like his own father. Quentin thinks to himself, "*Yes. Maybe we are both Father. Maybe nothing ever happens once and is finished . . . 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*" (261-262). In his neurotic, suicidal illogic, Quentin fears a *literal* repetition of the Judith-Bon-Henry triangle, but he has nevertheless hit upon a facet of Nietzschean thought: how else to explain the repetitions, even between the lives of various people, but by the eternal recurrence?

Thus it is that the repetition compulsion in its very inability to achieve a true

repetition in the content of a repeated event because the repeated event is always different does achieve through the eternal recurrence of that difference a sameness which constitutes a true repetition. This simultaneous sameness and difference is, obviously, the very essence of time. (Irwin 81)

These dialectical moments in history afford us merely the *appearance* of difference.

Thus it is that the repetitions from Hawthorne's life and texts to Faulkner's life and texts constitute an instance of the eternal recurrence.

In the same way that Faulkner violently cleared a space for himself by overthrowing his literary precursor with his tale of repetition inscribing difference, so Nietzsche had to clear a space for himself to present his theory of the eternal recurrence, which had been thought before, and which had been reinterpreted by various thinkers, among them Sigmund Freud. Elizabeth Kerr describes the Freudian "insight that recurrent myths and stories embody a kind of collective dreaming process" (Kerr 5). This "collective dreaming process" may be a modified version of Nietzsche's theory: everyone is forced into the confrontation of welcoming back his life and its events eternally, and thus everyone experiences the same humiliation, the same pain and suffering, which, when displaced onto and embedded in the myths of a culture, allow the individual a space in which to accept the fact that such myths are inevitable and are the individual's fate. Just as Hawthorne<sup>3</sup> and Faulkner attempted to hide sources of influence upon their writing (and, in particular, Faulkner denied Hawthorne's influence), so Freud denied that Nietzsche had influenced him (Irwin 5). In the Bloomian sense of one writer "overthrowing" a predecessor, so Freud overthrew Nietzsche by inscribing the original

theory with difference, which nevertheless does not rid his theory of all elements of sameness. So Freud and Faulkner commit the same action, the denial that any literary precursor existed before them, and, like Faulkner, Freud inscribes difference into his theory, which (unlike Nietzsche's theory) held that an end to the cycle is possible. Freud's denial of Nietzsche's influence becomes outrageous when we view Nietzsche's theory of eternal recurrence as metamorphosing into Freud's "collective dreaming process." Despite Freud's denial, there is record of Nietzsche's influence upon him: in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud, quoting Nietzsche, described "this 'perpetual recurrence of the same thing'," the way in which the "repressed by continually being different continually reconstitutes itself as the same" (Freud 173). The theories of Nietzsche and Freud are so similar that, given Freud's denial of Nietzsche's influence, one is left with Bloom's suggestion that the later writer, who has reinterpreted the first writer, believes the illusion that his interpretation is the first.

Such a theory of eternal repetition can be seen as well in Faulkner's novels.

*Absalom, Absalom!*

is "about" the making of history and enforces just such a making not only on its characters but also on its audience, each member of which consequently becomes a part of what Mary McCarthy termed "infinite regression." With its recurring characters, its constant repetition and revision of familiar stories, and its slow, circuitous accumulation of argument and incident, it ends up by offering us a paradigm of history and historical knowledge: a model in which "nothing ever happens once and is finished" either for the characters or for the reader. (Gray

Not only does *Absalom, Absalom!* as written object participate in the eternal recurrence, it offers us a paradigm of that participation. Gray explains why some stories seem familiar to us, even when we're hearing them for the first time:

It is easy to forget just how powerful the stories of *Absalom, Absalom!* are on a simple human level: stories of incest, miscegenation, fratricide, patriarchal power and filial obsession, the fatally linked encounters of sex and death---all of which, and more, give the arguments of the narrative their living tissue. (Gray 205)

Such stories comprise our lives with their fundamental qualities, and in this way participate in the eternal recurrence; it is for this reason that all humans instinctively know or feel certain things, for "the very essence of the instincts is the compulsion to repeat" (Irwin 86). Individuals and groups of people know things, not because they are innate or because they are taught to them, but because such knowledge is recurrent knowledge; and this collective repetition, in both the Nietzschean and Freudian sense, comprises true knowledge (of suffering and pain) that is more real than other types of knowledge.

Because one element in this knowledge which participates in the eternal recurrence is brother-sister incest, it is not surprising that it appears in many of the oldest recorded stories. Faulkner picked the title of *Absalom, Absalom!* for his story of brother-sister incest from the story of Amnon and Tamar in the Old Testament, a source with which Hawthorne would have been familiar. The story Faulkner narrates "has been told many times, and his novels are partly commentaries on those tellings as well as critical

interpretations of the act of retelling” (Morris 5), and, as such, the stories inevitably enter into relationships with other stories, the precursors of those myths. As Morris notes, the prominence and repetition of the taboo of incest in “the myths of the world” indicates its fundamental relation to an understanding of human nature. Repetition and prominence in myths of all cultures occur as well with names and the process of naming. Bakhtin describes “the Word of the Father” as a process of naming that already occurs before we are aware of it; it is

a *prior* discourse. It is given (it sounds) in lofty spheres, not those of familiar contact. Its language is a special (as it were, hieratic) language. It can be profaned. It is akin to taboo, i.e. a name that must not be taken in vain. (Bakhtin 42)

This “word” attempts to dictate our relationship with all else. The most intimate “Word of the Father,” which is usually represented by the paternal figure, is his name. If the name of the father is considered more sacred than other names, what would be involved (unconsciously or otherwise) in the process of giving a child the sacred name of the father (or father figure)? On a conscious level, such a process would be honoring and paying homage to the dead father, of course, but on an unconscious level, there is the primeval wish for magic: the traits (both good and bad) of the father are desired for the child. Such a process is akin to asking the gods that the father be recreated in the form of the child. Lacan describes the process as “symbolic identification through which primitive man believes he reincarnates an ancestor with the same name” (Lacan 186). Faulkner’s first name, William, was a repetition of the name of that First Father, and his middle

name. Cuthbert, was a repetition of the name of his own father. Faulkner may have felt he was doomed to go to one extreme or the other: he was hyper-aware of the bad qualities in his First Father and of the dark, secret longings within himself, and he was equally aware of the qualities in his own father that seemed to portend his failure and the further decline of the lineage. Faulkner outlined a similar naming process in *The Sound and the Fury*: Quentin, who commits suicide, is invoked when his name is given to Caddy's little girl<sup>4</sup>. Hawthorne and Faulkner were intimately aware of the power involved when a person names himself: Hawthorne renamed himself, declaring his authority and autonomy, by re-adding the *w* that had been dropped generations before by an unknown ancestor. Faulkner followed Hawthorne's lead and the lead of his own ancestor, W.C. Falkner, by re-adding the *u* that the Old Colonel had dropped in the process of renaming himself: both Falkner and Faulkner, by this practice, symbolically declared their autonomy and claimed the position of head of their line, but because Faulkner's gesture occurred later in time, he was able to seize the position from the Old Colonel. Hawthorne and Faulkner were successful in establishing a new identity for themselves.

In repeating the gesture of naming themselves, Hawthorne and Faulkner were not, as it would seem, acting as independent agents; they were, rather, acting within the domain of the eternal recurrence. This domain naturally impels and uncovers repetitions, and when what is repressed---the possibility of incest, for example, in the lives of Hawthorne and Faulkner---is "uncovered," it is uncovered in the form of fictional constructs---stories. In the stories appears the thing that is taboo, and by this

simultaneous uncovering and covering (due to its disguise in fiction), the thing points both to itself and beyond itself, to the domain of the symbolic. This masking of the thing repressed in a fictional construct mirrors the masking the writers engage in on several levels: the first and most obvious is the story itself; the second level is the way in which the writers mask themselves through the process of memories: both Hawthorne and Faulkner were aware that we (re)make our memories (which stand in for reality) in the process of remembering them. In the process of creating an identity (which is by necessity a construct and therefore fragile) for themselves (as writers), they were creating an identity for their regions (this identity with difference is not identical to the identity history would have assigned without their help). This reconstruction of memories, of the self, of one's region points to a history filled with processes of repetition and replication which negate the possibility of a static state of being: "the present is constantly 'rewriting' the past and future and, in its turn, being 'rewritten' by them" (Gray 206). What this means for the authors (their selves as writers and their selves as memories) and for the history of their respective regions is that an element of unknowability (which is irreducible) has crept in. (This both foils *their own* attempts and attempts by others to know them.) Simply the act of story-telling is itself a (re)creation in process, a reconstruction, a reinvention: this multi-layered making of reality through memories lends itself to the process of constructing written stories: the "memories" become writing becomes "history".

As Gray has noted, Quentin and Shreve in *Absalom, Absalom!* try to understand history by "resurrecting" and "becoming" the inhabitants of the past (Gray 208). Gray

declares that that process "is not so very different from the one the narrative of *Absalom, Absalom!* imposes on us" (Gray 208). The four narrators of the text tell different versions of the same tale, and we as readers are required to fill in the gaps and smooth out the inconsistencies to arrive at the "truth." We must undertake a similar process in "Alice Doane's Appeal," reading between the lines of what Leonard Doane says and looking behind the sinister laughter of the wizard to arrive, again, at the "truth." Our attempt at knowing truth arises through the reading process, which is significant because it differs from the process Hawthorne and Faulkner engaged in when learning about their forefathers; that is, both men *listened* to tales of their ancestors' exploits and in this manner "read" their ancestors. And this is the method they employ in "Alice Doane's Appeal" and *Absalom, Absalom!* to communicate truth. Both writers engage the process in an indirect method: the story within the story is narrated. Around both texts is a narrative frame, which is communicated in writing, and the kernel is communicated simultaneously in speaking and writing. This paradox, the duality of the kernel being spoken, as well as written, is advantageous due to the immediacy and personal encounter involved in speaking. The narrator of "Alice Doane's Appeal" is able to intuit immediately every tremor or sigh the girls might emit, is able to capture with his eye their every reaction almost as soon as it occurs. The spoken nature of the kernel assigns greater power to the narrator, and for us, the readers, it translates into a vicarious reaction on our part of seeing the girls react; our own reactions mimic theirs, and the simultaneity of our reactions with the girls (the repetition of reaction) means that the meaning of the story hits us harder, with more force<sup>5</sup>. In a way similar to that of "Alice Doane's

Appeal," the narrators of *Absalom, Absalom!* are able to see the direct effect their stories have on Quentin, and adjust their stories accordingly, to magnify and mythologize the Sutpen history in his (and our) mind. A third parallel is evident: it should be noted that in Nietzsche's text, the narrator Zarathustra also engages the reader in a spoken account: he *narrates* the myth of the eternal recurrence.

And so we return to the beginning, to the eternal recurrence, having completed our circular journey in which the nature of repetition is read as significant because of the infinite meaning it bestows upon the work of art, both written and non-written. Even the destruction of a precursor, literary or otherwise, is an act necessitated by the eternal recurrence. Such reconstitution of lives and texts mandates that all others continually be reinterpreted, and it is in this sense, in the sense of the interpenetration of repetition between the lives and texts of Hawthorne and Faulkner, that we can identify the eternal recurrence at work.

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Chapter One: "Heavy Burden of Fatality": Inescapable Heritage

<sup>1</sup> Turner says that Hawthorne probably read William Sewell's *History of the Quakers*, which reports, among other cruelties, that William Hathorne ordered "Anne Coleman and four of her friends" to be "whipped through Salem, Boston, and Dedham" (64).

<sup>2</sup> Turner notes that the "histories of New England that Hawthorne read during his twelve years in the chamber under the eaves were for the most part interpretative rather than documentary, each historian shading" the episodes he related according to his own view (64). Such a practice, designed to reinforce the view of Hawthorne's contemporaries that they lived in a more sophisticated society than had earlier Americans, necessarily cast Hawthorne's forefathers in a negative light.

<sup>3</sup> Although it is commonly thought that Hawthorne added the *w* to his name to separate himself from his paternal ancestors, not all critics agree. Turner notes that the form with *w* had occurred among his early ancestors in both America and England (396). Miller notes that Hawthorne wavered "indecisively" between the two spellings of his surname, spelling it both *Hathorne* and *Hawthorne* in his early years. If Hawthorne were aware of the *Hawthorne* spelling of the surname among his early ancestors, then it can be speculated that the decline of the Hathorne name and line shamed the novelist, who, in adding the *w* to his name, made the conscious choice to identify himself with the first two generations of his family in America. However, it cannot be proven that Hawthorne knew such information, and the evidence is that the Major and his son were among the early ancestors who spelled their name without a *w*.

<sup>4</sup> For example, when Hawthorne tells the story of Ann Coleman, a Quaker woman who was bound to a cart and led through three towns naked from the waist up, receiving thirty lashes in all, her punisher's last name is *Hawthorne*, not *Hathorne*, as would have been historically accurate.

<sup>5</sup> Bell quotes contemporaries of Hawthorne who possess a similar ambivalence towards the founding fathers.

<sup>6</sup> According to anecdote, Falkner convinced a Negro to lie down on the ground and pretend to be dead while Falkner placed a bloodlike substance in strategic places. When a crowd of Negroes came within hearing distance, Falkner placed his foot on the "dead" Negro's body, declaring that he had killed the Negro for trying to vote, and he would kill any of the others if they also tried.

<sup>7</sup> For a more extensive listing of the parallels between the lives of Faulkner's forefathers and those of his characters, see Richard Gray's *The Life of William Faulkner: A Critical Biography*.

<sup>8</sup> Gray notes that "Faulkner was to confirm his own patriarchal status even while he seemed to be putting patriarchy in doubt by his act of re-naming himself: two of his younger brothers eventually added the *u* to the family name in deference of his fame, and gradually acquired status as head of the family" (65). It should be noted that critics do

not agree in respect to when a member of the Falkner clan first began using the form *Faulkner*. One of the mysteries surrounding the Old Colonel's abrupt act of leaving home at a young age concerns his surname. Gray notes that a few critics believe that the Old Colonel's surname had been *Faulkner* when he left home, and when he left to start a new life, he dropped the *u* to escape any ignominy that might have followed him. If this is true, then this is yet another interesting parallel between Hawthorne and Faulkner, and if Faulkner knew of it, then perhaps through the act of readding the *u* he was attempting to *identify* with his ancestors.

## Chapter Two: Inscribing Masculinity and Identity

<sup>1</sup> Milton Kornfield, in a study of Hawthorne, James, and Faulkner, says that "belief in a deep underlying 'goodness of man' has haunted American fiction in tortuous ways, for it has always been accompanied by a suspicion of the sinister, a suspicion of destructive impulses and urges which lurk beneath the benign assumptions of democracy and which have led us to distrust the very values we proclaim to be the basis of our uniqueness as a nation" (Kerr 10). Such an interpretation of our views toward democracy indicates that even the American dream itself is ambivalent for us.

<sup>2</sup> In Stanley Brodwin's essay "Hawthorne and the Function of History: A Reading of 'Alice Doane's Appeal'," he notes Seymour L. Gross's assertion that "Alice Doane's Appeal" is the "only story" of Hawthorne's "which is *told about* rather than *told*," which, in Gross's opinion, makes the story clumsy and confused. Brodwin also notes that Frederick C. Crews says the tale is full of "contradictions" and "false starts" and that Hyatt H. Waggoner calls it "fragmentary and chaotic," inviting "psychological rather than structural criticism," all of which invites, even demands, psychoanalytic interpretation.

<sup>3</sup> Brodwin says that "Alice Doane's Appeal" may possibly be a "rebuke to those spokesmen like Rufus Choate, who, in 1833 at Salem (where Hawthorne was then living), called for American writers to use Puritan history in their romances, but to record 'the useful truth . . . only,' i.e., to ignore unpleasant episodes like the witch trials." It is not known, however, that Hawthorne actually heard Choate's speech.

<sup>4</sup> Allene Cooper delves with great insight into the psychological aspects of this uneasiness of the reader in not having firm ground on which to stand, pointedly suggesting ways readers often avoid uneasiness in the reading process through acts of self-deception.

<sup>5</sup> Irwin notes that a dreamlike feeling often accompanies tales in which there is doubling and repetition.

## Chapter 3: The Recurrence of Authorial Violence

<sup>1</sup> For greater detail of the repetitions from one author's art to the other's, see Wagner's *William Faulkner: Four Decades of Criticism*.

<sup>2</sup> During his period of insanity (1890-1900), Nietzsche was in the care of his sister, according to Joseph Stewart. During this period, his sister tampered with his texts, destroying some of his writing and adding her own thoughts in places, so that critics who later looked at Nietzsche's texts, according to Stewart, could not clearly determine which writings belonged to Nietzsche, and which to his sister. It is certain that at least part of Nietzsche's writings has been lost. One of the themes discussed in this thesis is the relationship between brothers and sisters. Nietzsche's sister's act of interpolation is ironic: it is the ultimate revenge against the brother, almost a form of inverse incest, betraying what was closest and dearest to Nietzsche. Her act seems fratricidal, especially in light of Faulkner's comment that "a book is the writer's secret life, the dark twin of a man." Nietzsche's dark "twin" was partially destroyed by his sister.

<sup>3</sup> It has been well documented (by Randall Stewart and a host of others) that Hawthorne consciously chose to include elements of Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* in his own stories. Among these stories influenced by Spenser's work is "Alice Doane's Appeal": John Shroeder calls it "the first of Hawthorne's many Spenserian paraphrases," the plot of which is "an elaboration of the Archimago episode in *The Faerie Queene*" (Clark 129). Hawthorne also, Clark hints, attempted to conceal his source.

<sup>4</sup> Hawthorne called upon this power in naming by invoking the muse who had helped him write "Alice Doane's Appeal" when his first child was born: he named her Una, after the character in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*.

<sup>5</sup> It is also interesting to note the ways in which the texts are effectively silenced: in both stories, the sister whose honor is in question is allowed no voice. In a similar way, the reader, who is forced into a confrontation in which he must face his own guilt is allowed no voice and cannot defend himself.

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