WYSS, Hal Huntington, 1940-
IN VOLUNTARY EVIL IN THE FICTION OF BROWN, COOPER, POE, HAWTHORNE, AND MELVILLE.

The Ohio State University, Ph.D., 1971
Language and Literature, general

University Microfilms, A XEROX Company, Ann Arbor, Michigan

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1971
IN Voluntary Evil in the Fiction of

Brown, Cooper, Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville

Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

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The Ohio State University
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IN VOLUNTARY EVIL

A major force for continuity in early American fiction is a preoccupation with evil. This is one of two clear generalizations which emerge from a wide reading of such authors as Charles Brockden Brown, Cooper, Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville. A second is that America of the nineteenth century, as viewed by these writers, has much in common with America of the 1970's, as described by our most acute contemporary observers. And the parallels between the two eras are summarized by the single notion that the American dream is fatally flawed, that despite the great promise of our national experiment, seen by R. W. B. Lewis as expressed symbolically through the Adamic ideal, our culture consistently destroys what it creates. In direct opposition to the American Adam is the American Satan. Richard Chase has recognized what he calls "the Manichaean quality" of American fiction. A similar quality in the national character has been identified by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., among others.

We like to think of ourselves as a peaceful, tolerant, benign people who have always lived under a government of laws and not of men. And, indeed, respect for persons and for law has been one characteristic strain in the American tradition. Most Americans probably pay this respect most of their lives. Yet this is by no means the only strain in our tradition. For we also have been a violent people. When we refuse to acknowledge the existence of this other strain, we refuse to see our nation as

A modern historian, Schlesinger does not label our national character evil, but rather violent. The old good against evil dichotomy does not fit current terminology because it reflects an essentially individual and theological rather than social and political world view. The modern lexicon substitutes for evil such social abstractions as exploitation, corruption, violence, defacto enslavement, and sick society. But the place names, Los Alamos, Dallas, Watts, the Santa Barbara Channel, My Lai, and Kent State, give modern relevance to the concept of evil as part of the national heritage. This concept was first expressed as a psychological, as opposed to theological, reality by our early novelists.

Schlesinger's identification of the dualism in the American character illustrates the contemporary relevance of Hawthorne and Melville who emphasized a good versus evil dualism. In Moby-Dick, for example, Ishmael sees the contrast between the land and the sea as symbolically representative of the dual nature of man. "Consider them both, the sea and the land; and do you not find a strange analogy to something in yourself? For as this appalling ocean surrounds the verdant land, so in the soul of man there lies one insular Tahiti, full of peace and joy, but encompassed by all the horrors of the half known life." And in "Earth's Holocaust," Hawthorne suggests that even if we could purge ourselves of all the evil we have inherited from past generations, we would be left with the depravity of man's heart, that the tendency to do evil is part

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of our psychological makeup.

Since my main purpose in this study is to analyze the treatment of evil in our early fiction, I will not cite further examples at this time. Abundant illustrations are forthcoming in later sections. What I want to emphasize here is that while we have recognized the historical and artistic value of our literary heritage, we have perhaps not been fully enough aware of its value as one source of a psychological point of view which in large part still persists. And the tendency to belittle the ideas expressed in early American fiction may be seen as the natural result of our willingness to accept several conventional critical generalities which have long been in need of revision. For example, it has long been customary to see Hawthorne and Melville's treatment of evil as looking backward to the Mathers rather than forward to contemporary psychology. Of course Hawthorne and Melville were influenced by the Puritans. However, this does not automatically permit us to dismiss their psychology as reactionary. David Davis, a sociologist, insists that exactly the contrary is true.

A. . . recent [1952] list of the symptoms of the morally insane or psychopath has a striking resemblance to the fictional villain of 1840: superficial charm and good intelligence; no delusions; no nervousness or psychoneurotic symptoms; unreliability, untruthfulness, and insincerity; lack of remorse or shame; inadequate motives for antisocial behavior; pathologic selfishness and incapacity for love; general poverty of the major affective reactions, such as sympathy; . . . poor judgment; . . . inability to withstand tedium or pressure, and evidence of quick temper. [List taken from Manfred S. Guttmacher and Henry Weihoffen, Psychiatry and the Law (New York, 1952), p. 90. 4

Thus, what may appear to be easily understood, if we confine our investigations to past influences upon authors becomes complex when we begin to look at the degree to which authors participate in continuing psychological trends.

Countless words have been written about the subject of evil in early American fiction. But because the sources of that evil have been thought of as readily apparent, few scholars have deemed it worthy of their full attention. Instead, they have discussed it in connection with some other concern which they have judged to be more in need of explanation: symbolism (Charles Feidelson), artistic merit (F. O. Matthiessen), the Faust archetype (William Bysshe Stein), the Adam archetype (R. W. B. Lewis), and so forth. Why approaches of this kind do not yield a fully accurate description of fictional evil is explained in a later part of this chapter. My main contention here is that evil plays such a prominent part in the works of Brown, Cooper, Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville and that it is so useful in establishing not only the relevance of these authors to our own time but, also, the thematic continuity of their fiction that it ought to be analyzed, not as a corollary to some other theme, but as a major issue in its own right.

The five authors named above are bound together by a shared interest in a particular type of evil, the type I have chosen to designate by the adjective "involuntary."

Involuntary Evil

The meaning of the term, "involuntary evil," is, I suspect, fairly obvious, but a word or two of explanation may help to avert any possible misunderstanding. It is descriptive of actions which a character cannot
avoid performing by force of will alone but which are nonetheless judged to be evil by the character or by the author or by the reader (assuming the reader's values are in basic agreement with those of the culture at large) or by all three. Not all evil is involuntary. If, for example, I rationally decide to bribe the president of the AFL-CIO to support my candidacy for governor (an act I know to be evil), I am committing an act of voluntary evil which may get me elected, which will make me a good Machiavellian and which would make me feel at home in a novel by Dickens or Thackeray. If, on the other hand, I succumb to an irresistible urge to murder the mailman (an act from which I can expect no reasonable personal gain and an act which goes directly in the face of my better judgment), then I am committing an act of involuntary evil; I will be more at home in a novel by Charles Brockden Brown than in one by Dickens.

Involuntary evil is the more terrifying of the two types. An act of voluntary evil, regardless of how repulsive it may be on its surface, may be logically explained; it satisfies the mind's desire for orderly causal patterns and functions as an essentially conservative action in that it reinforces systems of thought. Involuntary evil, conversely, is essentially anarchical; it produces actions either totally lacking in cause or motivated by causes so indirect or subtle as to be beyond the control of the conscious mind of the performer of the actions. Referring specifically to such Melvillian characters as Jackson and Claggart, Merlin Bowen explains the potential literary terror which resides in involuntary evil.

In the actions of certain men we catch glimpses of a kind of malice so refined, so entirely gratuitous and unprovoked, as to defy explanation on the grounds either of animal savagery
or of the ordinary human love of self. The one phrase which seems adequate to it is the biblical one: "the mystery of iniquity."... Evil of a voluntary and occasional nature it is possible to bear with—perhaps even in some degree to understand. But evil that is radical and organic is worse because irremediable; integral to the agent's nature, it can end only with his final dissolution.  

What Bowen says of evil in the fiction of Melville accurately describes the form evil most often takes in our early fiction. Unfortunately, the fact that this has not been adequately understood has given rise to a number of critical problems. First, a confrontation by the reader with involuntary evil, like a confrontation with the elements of the Gothic novel, is productive of terror; if one becomes too preoccupied with the effect (in this case, terror) of a work of fiction and fails to recognize that that effect can be produced by different sources, he may understandably fail adequately to separate the sources. This is one reason for the consistent overuse of the term "Gothic" in criticism of American fiction. Tales of terror are not necessarily Gothic tales. Second, evil is described by the Puritans as not controllable by the will of man; it is, in effect, involuntary. For the Puritans, however, this is primarily a theological fact; involuntary evil is evidence of the absence of the grace of God. For authors of fiction, involuntary evil is primarily a psychological fact; it often finds its genesis in some basic imbalance of character, and its dynamic activity can produce dramatic power. Both of these problems are discussed more fully in the second half of this chapter.

One recurrent criticism of villainous characters in American fiction

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has been that they lack adequate motivation. Randall Stewart, for example, makes this point with respect to Hawthorne in the introduction to his edition of Hawthorne's notebooks.

The chief weakness of Hawthorne's villains is an inadequate motivation of their deeds. Perhaps only in three instances does the author provide adequate motivation for the acts of his evil characters: Rappaccini's zeal in scientific experiment, Chillingworth's desire for revenge, and Judge Pyncheon's attempt to escape the penalty of his crime by incriminating the innocent Clifford. The other characters seem to have been actuated merely by a motiveless malignity. Even among the examples Stewart cites of adequately motivated characters, questions may be raised about the motives of Chillingworth and Rappaccini. At the beginning of Chillingworth's quest for the father of Pearl, he is not consciously seeking revenge; he sees his quest as a scholarly problem which he expects to solve objectively. Thus, his initial motive is somewhat foggy. As for Rappaccini, the zeal Stewart mentions as producing acts of evil may itself lack adequate rational motivation. But the major reason for taking issue with Stewart is the unstated assumption upon which his overall judgment rests, namely that it is necessarily a flaw for characters to be "actuated merely by a motiveless malignity."

Modern experience has borne out the belief of our early novelists that much of what is amiss in the world resists rational analysis and that people do not always behave according to clear causal patterns. If, as Truman Capote says, "nobody is just naturally bad," some at least appear to behave as if they were, motivated by drives too obscure to be apparent to the observer. Moreover, the genre of the romance has traditionally

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been granted a kind of speculative license allowing it to go beyond what is scientifically provable according to the laws of causation. In fact, interest in involuntary evil, a kind of behavior I have described as not easily explained by the laws of causation, may have been one of the forces which directed our writing toward romance and away from realistic fiction. That villainous characters in American fiction often appear to be inadequately motivated has been too easily dismissed as a defect; it needs to be explored as a potentially positive characteristic of the fiction, as a viable part of the world view evolved by our early authors.

Involuntary evil enters American literature as a major fictional theme in the works of Charles Brockden Brown, a Philadelphia Quaker as free of New England Puritan influence as it would have been possible for any post-revolutionary American to have been. It is an important theme in five of his novels, Wieland, Ormond, Edgar Huntly, and Arthur Mervyn (parts one and two), and in the fragmentary Memoirs of Carwin, the Biloquist. Among these novels only Wieland currently receives much critical attention from anyone except the two or three extant Brown specialists. Fortunately, Wieland is a solid representative example of Brown's fiction, typical both thematically and stylistically of his work as a whole. Levin, although he is somewhat vague and although he makes a serious mistake by placing the whole blame for Wieland's crimes upon the shoulders of Carwin, accurately identifies the them of involuntary evil and logically connects it with Poe's theory of perverseness.

The voices that drive the fanatic to madness and murder in Wieland are produced by a ventriloquist, whose avowed intent has been to test his victim's credulity. This raises questions of motivation more terrifying in their purport than the superstitions they undermine; for Wieland's voices are
easily discredited; but Carwin, the malevolent rationalist, is prompted by that "mischievous demon" who will subsequently instigate Dostoevsky's Possessed. Brown's intellectual curiosity, restlessly probing into obscure relationships, clearly foreshadows Poe.\(^7\)

Levin might have found the "questions of motivation" raised by the book to be even more terrifying, had he recognized the full scope of the machinations of the demon he mentions, for it is not only Carwin who is possessed; Wieland himself is also a character moved by a compulsion to evil, as is explained by Carl Van Doren. Van Doren begins by describing Carwin as a character who "has to sin" because of "the driving spirit of evil which no man can resist." He then goes on to say that Wieland's crimes result from a combination of Carwin's prodding and Wieland's own inherent propensity for crimes of passion. "Though Carwin by his irresponsible acts of ventriloquism in and out of season actually sets going in Theodore Wieland's mind the train of thought which terminates in the crimes, he does no more than to arouse from unsuspected depths a frenzy already sleeping in Wieland's nature."\(^8\) Thus, two leading characters in the novel commit inadequately motivated acts of evil, acts which they are powerless to avoid committing. And this pattern repeats itself again and again in Brown's other novels. Of Edgar Huntly, for example, Cowie writes: "Clithero neglects to answer Huntly's charge regarding Waldegrave's death, but scoots off into a suburban wilderness, leaving Edgar to meditate on whether there can be guilt where there has been no evil design."\(^9\) It eventually develops that the main force motivating

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Clithero has been a kind of madness which culminates in his self-destruc-
tion; he is a precursor of similarly maddened characters created by
Hawthorne and Melville. As is explained more fully in the chapter on
Brown, his villainous characters seldom behave in accordance with their
own volition.

Involuntary evil cannot be called a dominant theme in the works of
Cooper and Poe, but neither does it go into complete eclipse. In the
Leatherstocking Tales, Cooper peoples the frontier with tribes of Indians
who behave in accordance with their "gifts," tribal traits for which indi-
vidual Indians can scarcely be held responsible. Some tribes, such as
the Delawares and Mohicans, are blessed with virtuous gifts; they can be
counted upon to behave nobly. Others, the Hurons and Sioux for example,
are dominated by gifts of treachery and deceit; they consistently behave
as "vagabonds" or "serpents." Admittedly, Cooper's creation of good and
bad Indian tribes provides only a tenuous thematic tie with the works of
the other authors, but the connection is made firmer by the existence of
a number of individual characters in his novels who look both backward
to Brown and forward to Hawthorne and Melville. Among these is the
Indian Magua, supposedly made bad by an extremely vague set of past
wrongs against him, but motivated primarily by a compulsion to evil. In
Cooper's works, also, may be found brooding characters like Captain
Heidegger in The Red Rover and John Paul Jones in The Pilot. Whether
these characters may accurately be called evil is doubtful, but both are
driven to go counter to their own desires in a way quite similar to the
way in which Ahab is driven in Moby Dick. Lionel Lincoln, disturbed by
dark dreams, is himself able to remain virtuous; his father, however, is
an incompletely drawn monomaniac, and his entire family is as corrupt as
the Pyncheons. Finally, The Prairie contains, in the person of Abiram
White, a character best described as naturally depraved (as Melville uses
the term in connection with Claggart), a label also applicable to Kit
Dillon in The Pilot. If, as Lewis and others have said, Cooper does not
provide a probing analysis of evil, evil at least is an issue in his
novels, and the form that evil takes is consistent with the form it takes
in the works of other early novelists.

The attempt to place Poe on a continuum with other American authors
presents special problems, partly because of his continuous use of Euro­
pean settings, partly because he wrote only one complete novel, and partly
because of his denial that his works have a didactic purpose. Nonetheless,
a pattern of evil emerges from Poe's tales which the author himself iden­
tifies as perverseness in "The Imp of the Perverse." This form of evil,
most clearly apparent in the narrators of "The Tell-tale Heart," "The
Black Cat," and "The Imp of the Perverse," is analyzed from a psychologi­
cal point of view by Davis.

We are presented with a character suffering from a
serious but obscure mental disorganization, his essen­
tial symptom being a rupture in the relation between
logical thought and emotional feeling. As the tension
increased [sic], escape seemed to lie only in an act
of violent aggression. A plan crystallized, and a
chain of ideas led irresistibly to an action which
was both illogical and beyond the understanding.10

Important for the purposes of this study is Davis's insistence that what­
ever force motivates characters of this kind is irresistible, that the
characters cannot by effort of will avoid succumbing to it even if they

10 Davis, p. 109.
understand that it is driving them to actions both irrational and evil. Maxwell finds the same force to be present in Poe's one novel, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*.

The human being becomes, so to speak, a medium which receives stimuli and transmits its awareness of them, more often than not aberrant. The novel, then, advances the characters—in particular, Pym—through a series of situations the point of which is to emphasize their discontinuity, or, more accurately, that the only consistency in human behavior is its compulsive liability to evil and to the irrational.**

In addition, the qualities of brooding morbidity and familial decay, both found in the works of Hawthorne, are clearly important to "The Fall of the House of Usher." Insofar as Poe develops any consistent psychological system in his fiction, his handling of evil is in basic agreement with that of the other authors under consideration.

As American fiction moves from the era of Cooper and Poe to that of Hawthorne and Melville, the theme of involuntary evil again becomes dominant. In Hawthorne it is present in all four novels and in many of the tales. In Melville it receives significant attention in *Redburn*, *Moby-Dick*, *Benito Cereno*, and *Billy Budd*, and lesser attention in other works such as *White-Jacket*, *The Encantadas*, and *The Confidence Man*. Quoting liberally from Melville's works, principally *The Confidence Man*, Bowen summarizes Melville's treatment of the theme.

Even the absence of self-interest—were it possible for us to be assured of that—would offer no guarantee of the purity of our motives. For evil is often disinterested and finds its sufficient satisfaction "in the very easy way of simply causing pain to others." There is a "rabies of the heart" as well as a mania of the brain, and what man will dare to.
think himself totally immune to it? The best of conscious intents offers but little protection against the possibility of an involuntary "chemical preparation in the soul for malice, as [a] chemical preparation in the body for malady." Granted that the great desideratum is the "free development of [our] immost nature," one must acknowledge that the enterprise is not wholly free of risk: "If some men knew what was their immost nature, instead of coming out with it, they would try their best to keep it in."

Significantly, while Bowen restricts his discussion to psychological ideas embodied in the characters of Melville, he at the same time provides a reasonably good description of such Hawthorne characters as Ethan Brand and Roger Chillingworth. Both of these characters begin by undertaking what they consider to be disinterested scholarly endeavors. For each the scholarly quest becomes an obsession, creating at once a mania of the brain and a malady of the heart. The course of Brand's developing monomania is described by Hawthorne as follows:

He remembered with what tenderness, with what love and sympathy for mankind, and what pity for human guilt and woe, he had first begun to contemplate those ideas which afterwards became the inspiration of his life. . . . Then ensued that vast intellectual development, which, in its progress, disturbed the counterpoise between his mind and heart. The idea that possessed his life had operated as a means of education; it had gone on cultivating his powers to the highest point of which they were susceptible. . . . But where was the heart? That, indeed, had withered—had contracted—had hardened—had perished! It had ceased to partake of the universal throb. He had lost his hold of the magnetic chain of humanity.

It is apparent from this that Brand neither wills nor even foresees his own transformation into a fiend. And by the time his course becomes

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12 Bowen, p. 36.
accessible to his understanding, he already is firmly under the control of an irresistible monomania. Thus, Brand’s evil, like that of Chillingworth and that found in the works of Melville, is involuntary.

Character Types

So far, I have been discussing the theme of involuntary evil in general terms, trying first to indicate that the theme indeed is present in the works of Brown, Cooper, Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville, and second to explain something of its scope in the works of these authors. For these purposes, it seemed unnecessary to establish more than the single criterion, evil without volition, for identifying the existence of the theme. However, it will be obvious to the reader that a variety of kinds of evil can meet this one criterion, that, for example, Hawthorne’s Brand and Melville’s Claggart, both identified as possessed of involuntary evil, exhibit significant differences. And it may be said that a character like Wieland is different in type from either of these. All three commit acts identified by the authors as evil, and none is provided a reasonable chance of resisting evil, but the causes and essential natures of the actions differ, as do the personalities of the characters. The theme of involuntary evil, then, is composed of a complex of related but recognizably distinct sub-themes, most clearly classified by the types of characters through which each sub-theme is expressed.

If one uses as a basis for classification the underlying explanations provided by the authors for involuntary evil, nearly all of the villainous characters in early American fiction may be placed in one of four groups. The first group contains those characters depraved by nature; their evil is pure and inexplicable in that there is no second cause; they are
simply evil by temperament. Second are characters destined to evil by their membership in a certain race or tribe; their racial traits supersede whatever individual wills they may have. In the third group are characters formed by the force of national or familial history, characters by whom the sins of the fathers are reenacted. The fourth and by far the most significant group is made up of characters gifted with superior intellects but unstable and only weakly aligned with the community of man; reformers, projectors, criminals, and born leaders, they suffer from the disease Melville identifies as productive of mortal greatness. Not all characters fit neatly within the boundaries of a single group (Cooper's Magua, for example, makes reasonable claims to membership in the first, second, and fourth class), but most do. Those who do not, at least fall within the broad boundaries of the entire system; they do not constitute a fifth class but rather transcend the internal borders of the four classes already set up.

One somewhat surprising result of this classification is that the group identified as naturally depraved is not very important. Most of the characters who fall within this group, for example, Brown's Welbeck (villain of Arthur Mervyn) and Arthur Wiatte (Clithero's victim in Edgar Huntly), Cooper's Abiram White, Kit Dillon, and others, and Melville's Bland, Jackson, and Claggart, are relatively minor. In fact, of the examples cited above, only Claggart, Welbeck, and perhaps Jackson can be called major characters. And if one accepts as naturally depraved only those characters who are evil by temperament and temperament alone, literally no naturally depraved characters exist in the fiction of Poe and Hawthorne, despite what Melville may have written in his essay on Hawthorne's Mosses. It is Melville himself, in Billy Budd, who provides
the clearest and most complete explanation of the meaning of natural depravity to be found in our fiction.

In the list of definitions in the authentic translation of Plato, a list attributed to him, occurs this: "Natural Depravity: a depravity according to nature," a definition which, though savoring of Calvinism, by no means involves Calvin's dogma as to total mankind. Evidently its intent makes it applicable but to individuals... The thing which in eminent instances signalizes so exceptional a nature is this: Though the man's even temper and discreet bearing would seem to intimate a mind peculiarly subject to the law of reason, not the less in heart he would seem to riot in complete exemption from that law having apparently little to do with reason further than to employ it as an ambidexter implement for effecting the irrational. That is to say: Toward the accomplishment of an aim which in wantonness of atrocity would seem to partake of the insane, he will direct a cool judgment sagacious and sound... Now something such an one was Claggart, in whom was the mania of an evil nature, not engendered by vicious training or corrupting books or licentious living, but born with him and innate, in short "a depravity according to nature."14

The latter part of this passage, emphasizing the apparent causelessness of natural depravity, strikes at the dominant characteristic of the psychological malady, as portrayed both by Melville and by other authors. The criterion established earlier in the passage, superior intellect, holds true for all of Melville's naturally depraved characters, but is less applicable to those created by Cooper and Brown. Abiram White and Arthur Wiatte, for example, are not noticeably more intelligent than the other characters in the novels in which they appear, but both are born villains. Still, naturally depraved characters typically are masters of deceit, able to hide their true purposes behind veneers of sham virtue.

14 Herman Melville, Billy Budd, Sailor, ed. Harrison Hayford and Merton M. Sealts, Jr. (Chicago, 1962), pp. 75-76.
If one were to attempt a composite portrait of these characters, he would find that their two shared physical characteristics are a general lack of robustness and a fascinating but discomfiting expression of the eyes. The glance with which Claggart transfixes Billy, compared to that of a serpent, culminates a long tradition of evil eyes. The fact that in most cases naturally depraved characters are relatively minor goes a long way toward explaining their lack of motivation. They function as melodramatic stage villains, not as fully drawn human beings, and the authors who have created them have not gone to great pains to justify their existence. Natural depravity is an important theme only in *Billy Budd*, *Arthur Mervyn*, and, perhaps, *Redburn*.

The second category of characters compelled to commit acts of evil has received the least attention, probably because modern readers do not enjoy contemplating the degree to which racial biases contributed to the shape of our early fiction. Nonetheless, with the exception of Hawthorne, all of the authors under consideration here have written at least one work in which a propensity for villainous behavior is explicitly equated with membership in a given race or tribe, and Hawthorne’s references to Indians in some of his tales (“Young Goodman Brown,” for example) make it clear that he would have been capable of making the same equation. Perhaps the most overt expression of this theme is Poe’s creation of the Island of Tsalal in *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*. Everything on the island including the natives (even their teeth) is black and sinister. Fiedler, with justification I think, makes a natural identification between the natives of Tsalal and the Blacks of the American South.

*He* /Pym/ is being, in fact, carried back to Ole Virginny—as the color of the natives he meets on
the Island of Tsalal, . . . clearly indicates. They are brawny, muscular, and jet black, with "thick and woolen hair," "thick and clumsy lips," these "wretches," whom Pym describes, after they have destroyed all the white men but him and Peters, as "the most wicked, hypocritical, vindictive, bloodthirsty, and altogether fiendish race of men upon the face of the globe." And he sets them in a world distinguished not only by blackness and warmth, but by a certain disturbing sexuality quite proper to Southern stereotypes of Negro life.  

Fiedler's explanation seems to agree not so much with the Calvinist view of the natural man, although that is possible, as with the more modern psychological concept of the scapegoat, here the projection by the white man of fear and guilt, generated by his own id, into the concrete embodiment of members of a race he considers to be savage. This concept is also applicable to the Indians who people the nightmare cave of Edgar Huntly, to the evil tribes in Cooper's Leatherstocking tales, and to the slaves in Benito Cereno. That a confrontation with the slaves destroys Cereno but leaves Delano virtually untouched can be seen as a result of Cereno's superior capacity for subtle introspection. As Winters suggests, the psychological import of the story easily outweighs any social burden it may carry.

The morality of slavery is not an issue in this story; the issue is this, that through a series of acts of performance and negligence, the fundamental evil of a group of men, evil which normally should have been kept in abeyance, was freed to act. The story is a portrait of that evil in action, as shown in the negroes, and of the effect of the actions, as shown in Cereno. It is appalling in its completeness, in its subtle horror, and in its silky quiet.  

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The hidden nature of the evil, the fact that it is normally held in check by superior power, both of these suggest parallels between the external events of the story and the psychological makeup of the individual man, in this case, Cereno. Like Conrad's Kurtz, Cereno eventually discovers the essential source of darkness in his own heart. But the fact remains that Melville, like Poe, chooses to personify this internal evil by ascribing it to members of the Black race, a technique at best somewhat insensitive. In general, one characteristic of early American fiction is a recurrent association of evil with members of non-caucasian races.

The third category of characters who commit involuntary evil contains those affected by what is customarily called "Faule's Curse;" that is, their history, usually familial but sometimes political, induces them to commit acts of evil. Davis has this type in mind when he writes: "Evil was... felt by some writers to be contagious in space and time so that one evil act might spread outward or be transmitted to future generations." It is important to recognize, however, that the kind of transmission to which Davis alludes is not the same genetic heredity which would become important for naturalist writers. What is inherited is a set of lore, a tradition, whose force is more nearly comparable to that of myth than to that of genetic heredity. Among the characters upon whom this kind of force operates are the Pyncheons in *The House of Seven Gables*, Theodore Wieland, Roderick Usher, Lionel Lincoln, and various members of the senate of Venice in *The Bravo*. In the cases of all of these characters except those in *The Bravo*, the tradition of evil

17 Davis, p. 41.
is a family matter. The young Theodore Wieland is shaped partly by an
intense interest in obscure theological subjects which he shares with his
progenitors and partly by a personal morbidity fostered by the weird
deaths of his father and his grandfather. Both of these forces are em-
phasized by Brown as major causes of the developing madness which even-
tually results in acts of violence against Wieland's closest relatives,
his wife and children. Similarly, both Judge Pynchcon and Roderick Usher
are the heads of declining, essentially morbid, families, and both commit
evil acts against near relatives, a brother and a sister. It remained
for Cooper, the most politically oriented of the writers included in this
study, to recognize the possibilities of this theme as a tool for politi-
cal commentary. In The Bravo he endows the city-state of Venice with
the same qualities of evil built up by tradition and a tendency toward
morbidity which other authors confine to a single family. Citizens who
come to power within this political system, comparable to heads of
families in other novels, invariably are forced to participate in the
evils of the system to which they belong, as is illustrated by the case
of the well-meaning but ultimately villainous Signor Soranzo. Again,
the evil overwhelms the volition of the characters who perpetrate it.
This form of involuntary evil does not appear as frequently in our lit-
erature as do some of the others, but it is important because of its
implications for the concept of the American Adam. The notion of in-
herited evil goes directly in the face of the Adamic ideal; that it may
be found in the works of all of the authors under consideration here,
save Melville, indicates that any identification of prelapsarian
optimism as a dominant ideal in American fiction needs careful qualifi-
cation.
The fourth group of characters, villainous intellectuals, is at once the most pervasive; only this type of evil character can be unequivocally identified in the works of all five authors. Also, it is the most important in that characters of this type typically are major figures in the novels and tales in which they appear. Orbitting about the prime example of Ahab are such other hero-villains as Brown's Carwin, Ormond, and Clithero, Cooper's John Paul Jones and Captain Heidegger, several of Poe's narrators, Hawthorne's Aylmer, Brand, Rappaccini, Chillingworth, Hollingsworth, and others. All of these characters are, to a greater or lesser degree, driven by the power of their dehumanizing intellects. They lose the capacity for ordinary human pleasure: Ahab discards his pipe and laments his inability to enjoy a sunset. They lose the saving warmth of companionship with other people, either wandering in solitude (as do Carwin and Brand) or coldly using other characters as extensions of their intellect or as objects of experimentation. They lose the ability to return love, as illustrated by the cases of Heidegger, Aylmer, and Hollingsworth. Finally, they are liberated by their intellects from the bonds of conscience imposed on other characters by traditional morality. In some characters, Ormond and Heidegger for example, the intellect remains relatively unfocussed, and the character's behavior may be described as random criminality; Ormond does attempt to seduce Constantia Dudley, but this is only one of many goals he sets for himself. In others, the intellect homes in on a single overwhelming obsession, the destruction of a cat, the removal of a birthmark, the discovery of the identity of an adulterer, the killing of a whale. The resultant madness, monomania, the most pervasive form of madness in early American fiction, is described by Davis thus:
In the deranged mind there was a curious perversion of the self-ideal, which, instead of compelling conformity to accepted standards of virtue, permitted the liberation of darker passions, a massing of latent hatreds which might surge upwards in a blinding monomania... In so far as the monomaniac had lucid intervals, he might technically be able to distinguish right from wrong, although he created his own morality with respect to the hated object... He was driven by an irresistible impulse. Thus, knowledge could coexist with deep emotional abnormality.

Particularly important in Davis's analysis is his identification of two outstanding characteristics of the monomaniac, his liberation from "accepted standards of virtue," and his compulsion to fulfill his task, a compulsion so powerful as to be called "irresistible" and thus not subject to personal volition.

The matter of motivation becomes extremely complicated in the case of monomania. Unlike the naturally depraved Claggart, such characters as Aylmer and Ahab are apparently prompted by understandable motives, the desire for perfection in the case of Aylmer and revenge in the case of Ahab. However, it is important to recognize that these motives are generated not just by the object of the monomania but by the involuntary action of the intellect of the character in conjunction with the object. Aylmer alone tries to remove Georgiana's birthmark; her other suitors, not dominated by their intellects, do not share Aylmer's obsession. Similarly, Captain Boomer of the Samuel Enderby, like Ahab, loses a limb to Moby-Dick, but unlike Ahab he has no desire to wreak vengeance upon the whale. In both cases, the object alone is not sufficient to produce a motive. Typically, in fact, the main function of the object

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18 Ibid., pp. 104-113.
is not to provide a motive but to operate as a point of focus necessary for transforming a sane but overly intellectualized character into a monomaniac. It becomes a kind of objective correlative for a mental condition, no longer capable of being described as normal, as a result of which the moral judgment of the character is no longer operative. With only small variations, compulsive evil of this kind appears throughout early American fiction.

Critics

If, as I have argued here and as I will continue to argue throughout this study, involuntary evil is a continuing major theme of early American fiction, it may seem surprising that most leading scholars have had relatively little to say about it. The reasons for this, however, are not difficult to discover. As was mentioned earlier, most scholars, assuming that the sources and nature of our fictional evil are fairly obvious, have tended to discuss that evil as a corollary to some other issue. The result has been that a number of conventional generalities, each partly valid and many having to do with a source of fictional evil, has emerged and has remained largely unchallenged. For example, there is Matthiessen's Hegelian paradigm of the philosophical relationship between Emerson and Thoreau, Hawthorne and Melville, and Whitman.

We may stay closest to the pressures of the age, as its creative imaginations responded to them, by going from the transcendental affirmation to its counterstatement by the tragic writers, and by then perceiving how Whitman rode through the years undisturbed by such deep and bitter truths as Melville had found. It would be neater to say that we have in Emerson and Thoreau a thesis, in Hawthorne and Melville its antithesis, and in Whitman a synthesis, but that description would distort
especially the breadth and complexity of Melville.\textsuperscript{19}

So long as one is interested, as Matthiessen here is, only in the writers of the American Renaissance, this scheme amounts to a useful clarification, especially given Matthiessen's careful qualification with respect to Melville. However, the assumption upon which the scheme rests is that the primary source of evil for Hawthorne and Melville is a reaction against the optimism of the transcendentalists, an assumption which tends to encapsulate the period in which Matthiessen is most interested. That is, it may discourage the reader from looking for any thematic continuity between Hawthorne and Melville and the pretranscendental novelists (Brown and Cooper) who are chronologically excluded by the scheme. And this view is reinforced by R. W. B. Lewis' denial (with which I am in obvious disagreement) that Cooper was at all interested in evil, at least in his novels of the wilderness.

Cooper differed radically from either Conrad or Melville in his refusal to perceive any evil, overt or hidden, in the magnificent world of space, or in any of its creatures. His most memorable creatures come into moral being in the environmental influence of that world; and they draw their breath in it; they reflect its firm and simple purity; they share its aloofness from time.\textsuperscript{20}

The net effect of the two passages cited above is to suggest that, with respect to the theme of evil, a neat dividing line may be drawn between Hawthorne and Melville and their predecessors.

However, when one looks at scholarly works of broader scope than American Renaissance and The American Adam, he finds that this dividing

\textsuperscript{19}F. O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman (New York, 1941), p. 179.

line becomes considerably fogged. Alexander Cowie and Leslie Fiedler, both of whom concur with Lewis' judgment of Cooper, also are in agreement with my own position that the novels of Charles Brockden Brown represent a clear anticipation of the later fictional treatment of evil. Cowie points specifically to the character of Carwin in Wieland. "As an embodiment of Brown's philosophical and scientific interests, Carwin is representative of a type of high-minded villains, experimenters on humanity, who manage to gain entry into almost all his novels. Retouched, Carwin would have made a good character for Hawthorne." Fiedler sees Brown as "the founder of the 'demonic, macabre, apocalyptic' school, which flourishes throughout the history of our literature." And, of course, not everyone agrees that Cooper is impervious to evil. Of the Leatherstocking Tales, D. E. S. Maxwell says that "the sense of evil, though muted, is there;" evil is quite obviously a central theme of such dark novels as Lionel Lincoln and The Bravo. Thus, Matthiessen may induce the reader to adopt a too narrow point of view by flatly stating: "How an age in which Emerson's was the most articulate voice could also have given birth to Moby-Dick can be accounted for only through reaction." The statement would have given a much truer indication of the complexity of the philosophical relationships among our early authors, had Matthiessen replaced his "only" with "partly."

21 Cowie, pp. 163-164. "[Cooper] combatted 'wrong,' but hardly came to grips with the essential nature of evil."
22 Fiedler, p. 185. "Evil is finally as unreal to Cooper as to that oddly Whiggish Tory Scott."
23 Cowie, pp. 75-76.
24 Maxwell, p. 146.
25 Matthiessen, p. 184.
The above discussion, although it is not intended to be exhaustive, illustrates the way in which excellent literary historians may inadvertently, through their creation of generalizations for limited purposes, place impediments in the paths of those seeking to understand a broader literary tradition. Admittedly, the reader's conception of the theme of evil in early fiction is only mildly distorted by Matthiessen's system of opposites. However, there are three conventional theories (two of which have already been mentioned) identifying sources of fictional evil which can cause much more serious misunderstanding. These trace the origins of evil in American fiction respectively to the influence of the English Gothic novel, to the allusive prevalence of the Faust myth, and to a residue of New England Puritanism. Each theory rests on unquestioned substantive evidence, but each distorts through overemphasis. The tendency has been to adopt what Alfred North Whitehead in another connection calls "misplaced concreteness," the assumption that the name and dimensions of an object are equal to its essential nature or "quidditas." Put another way, to label Charles Brockden Brown's fiction as Gothic may help to explain the superficial appearance of his fiction, but it may also substitute an easy simplification for a serious assessment of the real nature of the fiction. For this reason, the three theories cited above have become at least partly pernicious.

Gothicism

Critical custom traditionally sees the Gothic novel as a virtual fountainhead for at least three American writers, Brown, Poe, and Hawthorne; Leslie Fiedler goes so far as to say, "Of all the fiction
of the West, our own is most deeply influenced by the gothic, is almost 

essentially a gothic one."

While not everyone accepts Fiedler's overall assessment of the importance of Gothicism in American fiction, there is a consensus in support of his analysis of the pattern of Gothic influence in early fiction. Fiedler identifies Brown as the founder of the American Gothic novel, and thereby grants him an exceptionally high place in American literary history. "Charles Brockden Brown, single-handed and almost unsustained, solved the key problems of adaptation, and though by no means a popular success, determined, through his influence on Poe and Hawthorne, the future of the gothic novel in America." To me, Fiedler's choice of language in this passage is extremely interesting, for it introduces a type of ambiguity that is typical of those who label Brown as Gothic. Although Fiedler ends with the unqualified phrase, "gothic novel in America," he earlier has recourse to the term "adaptation," the implications of which are quite different from those of (say) "importation." And this, coupled with "problems," hints that the American intellectual climate may not have been predisposed to accept the Gothic romance in exactly the same form as it had evolved in England. That Brown "solved the key problems of adaptation" is another way of saying that Brown, because the true Gothic would have been out of place in this country, wrote something different from what is usually called Gothic fiction.

A few literary historians deny that the Gothic ever came to flower in this country, primarily because it conflicted with our cultural biases.

26 Fiedler, p. 142.
27 Ibid., p. 145.
Among these scholars, Lillie Loshe blames our emergent nationalism for our failure to cultivate Gothic romances.

When one considers the quantity of the Gothic output in England, one wonders that the type should not have been more cultivated here. The reason, perhaps, is to be found in the somewhat aggressive patriotism of the period, which, from the first, caused American fiction to concern itself almost exclusively with American subjects, to which the mediaeval machinery of Mrs. Radcliffe was not appropriate.  

In this Miss Loshe is supported by Brown's own protestations that he was attempting to write a fiction distinctly separate from that of Europe. Alexander Cowie does identify Brown as a practitioner of the Gothic, but he too denies the importance of the genre as an American form.

The Gothic romance, in point of fact, never really thrived upon American soil. . . . The Gothic novel had no ethical front. It might be provided with moral tags, but organically its function was not moral. . . . Reading it left the reader a mass of gooseflesh and fluttering nerves. How could such symptoms serve the cause of God and John Calvin? . . . It was sheer entertainment and as such to be condemned, whether written by Mrs. Radcliffe or by an American.  

Cowie also argues that our legends were too fresh and our buildings too new to foster a genre which thrived on the mouldering of the past. The important truth which emerges from the apparent disagreement between a modern critic like Fiedler and the two historians cited above is that their differences are largely semantic. When Loshe and Cowie refer to Gothic, they are thinking specifically of the kind of fiction written by Horace Walpole and Ann Radcliffe, sensational fiction

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29 Cowie, pp. 21-22.
containing intricate plots, supernatural beings (or at least the appearance of such in the novels of Mrs. Radcliffe), ramshackle castles with dungeons, Oriental luxury, dewy virgins in danger of losing both their chastity and their life, and almost no fully drawn or believable characters. Fiedler, on the other hand, uses "Gothic" as a much broader term, and classifies as Gothic American fiction which he acknowledges to be substantially different from that produced in England.

It should be noticed that the shift from the ruined castle of the European prototypes to the forest and cave of Brown involves a shift not just in the manner of saying what the author is after. The change of myth involves a profound change of meaning [emphasis mine]. In the American gothic, that is to say, the heathen, unredeemed wilderness and not the decaying monuments of a dying class, nature and not society becomes the symbol of evil. Similarly not the aristocrat but the Indian, not the dandified courtier but the savage colored man is postulated as the embodiment of villainy. Our novel of terror, that is to say (even before its founder [Brown] has consciously shifted his political allegiances), is well on the way to becoming a Calvinist expose of natural human corruption rather than an enlightened attack on a debased ruling class or entrenched superstition. The European gothic identified blackness with the superego and was therefore revolutionary in its implications; the American gothic (at least as it followed the example of Brown) identified evil with the id and was therefore conservative at its deepest level of implication, whatever the intent of its authors. 30

This goes a long way toward explaining how Fiedler is able to say that American fiction is essentially Gothic, but it also undercuts the value of the term. If the same term can be applied to two fictions described as diametrically opposed in meaning and opposed also in "manner," that term is too inclusive to be meaningful. It no longer is useful as a tool

30 Fiedler, pp. 160-161.
for classification. A simpler and more accurate approach would be to describe early American fiction as it exists, without reference to a form of English fiction with which it has some similarities but as many differences.

Frequently, scholars become so sidetracked in discussing the "shift" to the "American Gothic" that they seriously distort the content of the fiction itself. And this tends to compound the pernicious effort of the term. For example, in the passage from Fiedler quoted at length above, the wilderness is described as the source of Brown's "heathen" villains. Nothing could be further from the truth. Among Brown's novels, only *Edgar Huntly* contains evil Indians, and these, villainous as they may be, are tangential to the main issues of the novel. All of Brown's other major villains are thoroughly civilized and European, either by birth or by education. For Brown, evil resides primarily in the civilized man, not in the natural man, and this obviously is true also of Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville, with only a few exceptions. In fact, among our early major fiction, Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales* alone are fully exemplary of Fiedler's monsters from the id. Here the Sioux and the Mingos are both spawned by the wilderness and are evil by nature. It is also at least doubtful that Brown, a Philadelphian, a Quaker, and a follower of William Godwin, could have contributed to "a Calvinist expose of natural human corruption," despite his use of German Calvinism in *Wieland*, but this is discussed in a later chapter. Fiedler is right in suggesting that our own fiction is different from the English Gothic novel, but his evidence is distorted.

As was mentioned earlier, most scholars concur with Fiedler that Gothic influence on American fiction, whatever its extent, is primarily
a result of the novels of Brown. Hence, nearly everyone who writes about Brown makes frequent allusion to his "Gothicism," It is worth noting, however, that most of these allusions are broadly qualified and that it is most frequently those comments about Brown's Gothicism which tend to distort the content of his fiction. No obvious distortion mars Richard Chase's discussion of Edgar Huntly, but Chase clearly is uneasy about identifying the novel as Gothic.

It is possible to think of Edgar Huntly as a Gothic fiction in the sense that it retains the Gothic tone, the highly wrought effect of horror, surprise, victimization, and the striving for abnormal psychological states, even though the action has been "naturalized," so to speak, by being staged in the American countryside. Chase's description of Edgar Huntly is basically sound, although there is some question as to which character he thinks is victimized in the novel. A more important question is what the term "Gothic," qualified twice by Chase, contributes to what he has to say. His definition of "Gothic tone" is abstract enough to encompass nearly all bleak fiction, not just the tale of terror. R. W. B. Lewis, after classifying Arthur Mervyn as a combination of "the emergent Gothic novel and the sentimental romance," offers the following modification:

In the typical Gothic novel of Europe--such as The Mysteries of Udolpho by Mrs. Ann Radcliffe--the plight of the hero or heroine is a family affair; it is exactly the shock of evil emanating from one's close kin which energizes the tale. In Arthur Mervyn, as in most comparable fiction after it, it is the very unrelatedness of the hero to the centers of evil or to anything else which first stimulates the great unease.\footnote{Chase, The American Novel, p. 36.} \footnote{Lewis, p. 98.}
Again, a substantive distinction is drawn between the Gothic novel and the fiction of Brown, although in this case the accuracy of the distinction is doubtful. Of Brown's other major novels, both Wieland (technically excluded because it comes before Arthur Mervyn) and Edgar Huntly emphasize the potentially horrifying consequences of the breakdown of the brother-sister relationship. And that American fiction most frequently seen as influenced by Brown, the stories of Poe and Hawthorne's romances, often depicts evil as emanating from within the family unit: Roderick Usher buries his sister alive; the narrator of "The Black Cat" murders his wife; Judge Pyncheon wrongly sends his brother to prison; Chillingworth victimizes his wife's lover. In fact, even the example par excellence of the American Adam, Huckleberry Finn, sets off down river to escape from his father. Thus, it is in qualifying his identification of Arthur Mervyn as Gothic that Lewis commits himself to a dubious generalization.

The question of Gothic influence is particularly troublesome for Brown's two leading modern biographers, Harry R. Warfel and David Lee Clark. Warfel's working assumption is that Brown is a Gothic writer; in fact, he subtitles his biography American Gothic Novelist. However, very early in his study, he seems to undercut his own title by acknowledging that Gothicism is not the most important characteristic of Brown's fiction. "The outstanding contribution to fiction of this Quaker novelist is not his ideas nor his Gothicism, but his psychological probing into the minds of people under various kinds of tension." As he works into

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his analyses of specific novels, Warfel seems uncertain of exactly what he wants to do with his identification of Brown as Gothic. At times, he clearly overstates the parallels between Brown and Ann Radcliffe. Of *Ormond*, he writes, "The leading characters, the emphasis upon sex, and the melodramatic ending derive from Ann Radcliffe's Gothic novels, such as *The Mysteries of Udolpho* wherein Emily St. Aubert goes unharmed through three volumes of narrow escapes." Warfel's description is accurate only for the final scene of *Ormond*, which, with its confrontation between heroine and villain in an old, deserted mansion, does derive from the Gothic romance. However, this is the only scene in which Constantia Dudley is put into extreme peril by Ormond; it is the only scene in which sex predominates; and it is not representative of the novel as a whole. Moreover, except for their ultimate escapes, Constantia and Emily St. Aubert have little in common, nor does the high-minded Ormond resemble the greedy Signor Montoni. Except for its ending *Ormond* cannot be accurately described as a tale of terror. Warfel does not always emphasize the influence of the Gothic on Brown, but he frequently and needlessly makes references to the genre. "Brown organized his story *Wieland*, unlike most Gothic tales, around a theme of mental balance and the ease with which that balance is destroyed." Here, "Gothic" serves no purpose but to remind the reader that Warfel generally sees Brown as Gothic; it could well be left out.

David Lee Clark, writing in obvious reaction to Warfel, goes to an opposite extreme by denying any connection between Brown and Gothic

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34 Ibid., p. 138.
fiction. "With this school Brockden Brown had little or no kinship... Brown was a realist, and he sought his material in fact."\(^{36}\) Ironically, however, in denying the existence of parallels between Brown and what Clark calls the "school of terror," Clark introduces overstatements and distortions just as serious as those of Warfel. The term "realism," normally applied to Henry James and his contemporaries and requiring the fictional rendering not just of the possible but of the probable within a reasonable social framework, is in no way descriptive of the melodramatic romances of Brown. But Clark forges ahead with his insistence that Brown is primarily concerned with the "realities of life."

Brown was interested in the human side of life and the daily routine of the world, the natural and the marvelous rather than the supernatural. Disorders of mind and diseases of body were to him far more powerful agents of terror than haunted castles; Indian massacres were calculated to excite more fear than Alpine robbers; the fangs of a panther were more horrible than ghosts in armor. Brown's method of achieving terror, then, was an appeal to the realities of life: insanity, fanaticism, master passions, ventriloquism, somnambulism, yellow fever, savages. These were the forces behind his heroes and heroines. This difference between Brown's novels and Gothic romances is not accidental; it is significant and fundamental; in fact, it is this difference that separates him from the School of Terror and puts him in the ranks of the Revolutionaries, with Holcroft, Bage, and Godwin. It is more accurate to describe his novels as novels of purpose, their purpose being the dissemination of the radicalism then stirring the peoples of two continents. Whatever opinions one may entertain of the worthiness of the cause or the methods employed, novels of purpose were infinitely superior to Gothic romances.\(^{37}\)

One wonders where Clark sees the depiction of "daily routine" in the


\(^{37}\) Ibid., pp. 191-192.
novels of Brown, unless it be in the account of Constantia Dudley's struggles against poverty. There is absolutely no set pattern of life in either *Edgar Huntly* or *Arthur Mervyn*, and the nearest thing to a pattern in *Wieland* is a series of philosophical discussions which can hardly be called routine. Moreover, the whole concept of a routine seems to conflict with the second half of Clark's statement, that Brown is a "Revolutionary" whose purpose is the "dissemination of radicalism." Brown's relationship with political revolutionaries like Godwin will be more fully discussed in a later chapter. It is worth noting at this point, however, that Brown's most dedicated reformers (as Clark himself recognizes), Carwin, Ludloe, and Ormond, are all villains and that characters like Arthur Mervyn, Constantia Dudley, and Edgar Huntly, enjoy success in proportion to the degree to which they unite themselves with the existing social order.

I have surveyed accounts of Brown's Gothicism at some length, partly because Brown is often seen as the father of the American Gothic novel and partly because these accounts illustrate the way in which too great a preoccupation with a secondary issue can lead scholars away from a serious and accurate appraisal of the fiction at hand. What is true of accounts of Brown's fiction is also true, to a lesser extent, of the identification of Gothic elements in the works of Cooper, Poe, and Hawthorne. It may seem surprising that, although some scholars claim that Cooper totally lacked a sense of evil and although Cooper himself denied any affinity with the Gothic romance, some should still insist on

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38 For example, *The Pilot* (New York: Alden, 1893), pp. 78-79.
seeing the Leatherstocking Tales as Gothic novels. Nonetheless, this is exactly the position taken by Paul A. W. Wallace.

As a writer of strong Gothic affinities, Cooper is hardly to be surpassed. . . . As for the supernatural, what more is needed than he has provided: the demon-like forms of the "savages," whose steps are noiseless, whose purposes are "secret and bloody," whose yells (in their more demonstrative moods) mingle with "every fitful gust?" These are the Mingos, whose cruel, crafty, non-human devices take the place of Mrs. Radcliffe's fiendish barons or the spectral appearances of Horace Walpole, "Monk" Lewis, and Beckford of Fonthill.

Harry Levin sees Poe's tales as evolving from "a genuine sense of affinity between the American psyche and Gothic romance,"40 Fred Lewis Pattee describes Hawthorne's Twice-Told Tales as "Gothic romance tempered by New Englandism,"41 And William Bysshe Stein says that "Hawthorne persisted in retaining nearly all the Gothic machinery of Walpole, Radcliffe, Lewis, Maturin, and Godwin,"42 a great deal of machinery indeed to be manipulated by a single author.

It would be possible to raise the same kinds of objections to these generalizations that I raised in surveying comments about Brown's Gothicism. But the important question is not whether these scholars are right or wrong; the important question is whether the pointing out of parallels, real or supposed, between early American fiction and the Gothic romance contributes anything substantial to our understanding of the treatment of evil in the fiction in question. In all cases, those who identify as

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40 Levin, p. 20.
Gothic the fiction of Brown or Poe or Cooper or Hawthorne acknowledge the existence of significant differences and talk about the authors' "adaptation" or "naturalization" of Gothic devices. The result is that the term "Gothic," as applied to American fiction, becomes too broad, too diluted, and too ambiguous to serve as a meaningful tool for classification. On the other hand, if one insists, as do Cowie and Loshe, on defining the term within the narrow limits of literature like that of Walpole and Radcliffe, he finds that it can be accurately applied only to relatively superficial characteristics of a very few novels by major American authors. In either case, the value of the term is slight. To the extent that it may distort the content of early American fiction, "Gothic" has lost even the small value it might have once had and has become pernicious.

Faustianism

What is true of the overuse of "Gothic" in connection with early American fiction is also true, although to a much lesser extent, of scholars' tendency to overemphasize the importance of the Faust story as an influence particularly on Hawthorne and Melville. The pattern is quite similar to that described above. Scholars seem to begin with the assumption that the typical villain of Hawthorne or Melville is related to Faust, then spend most of their time explaining changes wrought upon the archetype by American authors. The justification for seeing American characters as Fausts is primarily empirical and stems from recognition of the fact that villains in American fiction are frequently intellectuals: artists, philosophers, physicians, scientists, scholars, and the like. There is, however, no conclusive evidence that Hawthorne, for example, ever read Goethe's Faust, although he certainly knew
Marlowe's version. A second justification is the existence of one overwhelming and undeniably Faustian character in the person of Captain Ahab, who attempts to "strike through the mask" in an effort to gain knowledge normally hidden from mortal man, who communes with a character explicitly identified with Satan (Fedallah), and who christens his harpoon in the name, not of Christ, but of the Devil. Even here, however, the Faustian contract is implied rather than stated, and it is doubtful that Ahab, given his developing madness, can be said to enter into any contract voluntarily and rationally.

The existence of other true Fausts in the fiction of Melville and Hawthorne is very doubtful. Attempts to label as Fausts such characters as Jackson or Claggart or Chillingworth or Ethan Brand meet with objections similar to those raised above in connection with the Gothic. Leslie Fiedler, for example, sees Jackson as Faustian, but acknowledges the absence of any Faustian bargain. 43 Harry Levin compares Ethan Brand with Faust, but decides finally that the two characters differ in motive. "Crime is incidental to sin, which is the singleminded motive of Ethan Brand—unlike Faust, who sins incidentally while pursuing illicit powers and pleasures." 44 Levin here ignores the fact that Brand begins by seeking to discover, not to commit, the unpardonable sin, and that during his quest he is transformed from scholar to sinner.

Those attempting to establish the ubiquity of the Faust myth in American fiction eventually encounter two insurmountable barriers. The first is the almost total absence of any explicit or clearly implicit

43 Fiedler, p. 453.
44 Levin, pp. 64-65.
Faustian bargain. Stein, who identifies literally all of Hawthorne's sinful characters as types of Fausts, attempts to account for the absence of a contract in "Ethan Brand" as a function of style. "With typical indirection, Hawthorne mentions no compact between Brand and Satan, but later circumstances indicate that Brand sold his soul to the devil for the privilege of discovering the Master Sin." Stein does not explain what "later circumstances" he has in mind. If, as appears to be the case, he is thinking of the arrival of the German Jew, he fails to accept the burden of demonstrating that that character is meant to stand as the Devil's emissary and that the German has come to Greylock to collect Brand's soul. Moreover, Stein sees "Ethan Brand" as Hawthorne's most direct portrayal of the Faustian contract. He admits that the contract is missing from the other stories but explains that it is implied through symbolism.

Symbolically the ritual act of commitment is implemented whenever a character in his Hawthorne's stories, either in thought or deed, endorses a mode of conduct that violates the conventional code or infringes upon natural human rights. To indicate that an illicit state of affairs prevails, Hawthorne ordinarily invokes the mythic image of the devil. However, on other occasions the devil is represented by proxy: the prevalence of witches or magicians, or the practice of witchcraft or of magic establishes the condition of diabolic government.

As "Gothic" is broadened by Chase and Fiedler to include nearly all bleak fiction, here Stein dilutes the Faustian contract until it encompasses all nonconformists. The result again is that a term becomes much too inclusive to serve as a useful tool for classification.

45 Stein, p. 98.
46 Ibid., p. 51.
Stein's use of "endorses" in the passage quoted above leads to the second major barrier encountered by Faust seekers. "Endorses" implies freedom of choice, that a character voluntarily commits his soul to the Devil, presumably, as is the case in Goethe's version, because he has been promised some reward. To be directly comparable to Faust, a character must act according to his will or volition, and Stein and Fiedler are convinced that this is exactly what happens in Hawthorne's fiction. The implication of free choice prevails, for example, in the following general description by Fiedler:

For Hawthorne, the Faustian man is one who, unable to deny the definitions of right and wrong by which his community lives, chooses nonetheless to defy them. He is the individual, who, in pursuit of "knowledge" or "experience" or just "happiness" places himself outside the sanctions and protection of society. His loneliness and alienation are at once his crime and his punishment; for he commits a kind of suicide when he steps outside of society by deciding to live in unrepented sin; and he can only return to haunt the world of ordinary men like a ghost (emphasis mine). 47

Fiedler, thus, rests his whole definition of "Hawthorne's Faust" on the assumption that Hawthorne's sinful characters voluntarily choose sin. However, as has already been stated, it is the main thesis of this study, particularly the parts dealing with Hawthorne and Melville, that the evil perpetrated by characters in early American fiction is, for the most part, involuntary. And if the evidence cited earlier coupled with that in the following chapters proves convincing, then one of the cornerstones of the Faustian position will have been removed.

47 Fiedler, p. 440.
The degree to which the shape of evil in early American fiction was influenced by New England Puritanism is an extremely complicated question. That some of the thinking of John Calvin flowed, via the Mathers, to at least Hawthorne and Melville is apparent from these authors' use of such Puritan terminology as "original sin," "natural depravity," and so forth. Melville's famous essay on Hawthorne's _Mosses_ reveals his own consciousness of the continuing relevance of Calvinism to the tragic artist.

Whether Hawthorne has simply availed himself of this mystical blackness as a means to the wondrous effects he makes it produce in his lights and shades; or whether there really lurks in him, perhaps unknown to himself, a touch of Puritanic gloom,—this, I cannot altogether tell. Certain it is, however, that this great power of blackness in him derives its force from its appeals to that Calvinistic sense of Innate Depravity and Original Sin, from whose visitations, in some shape or other, no deeply thinking mind is always and wholly free.  

In this passage Melville explains that for him the primary value of the Puritan tradition resides in its symbolism (blackness and gloom) and in the degree to which that symbolism accurately reflects the condition of the mind of man. Melville, that is, selects that part of Puritanism relevant to psychology ("Its appeals to that Calvinistic sense of Innate Depravity") and aesthetics but does not probe Puritan theology or metaphysics. And the pattern here established is generally valid for Melville and Hawthorne; they adopted that part of Calvinism they found useful for their own non-Puritan artistic purposes and tended to neglect

the rest.

Critical custom, however, grants a much larger role to Puritanism than is outlined above. Even such authors as Cooper and Brown, biographically far removed from Puritanism, are occasionally described as influenced by it. As was noted earlier, Fiedler says that Brown's novels are "well on the way to becoming a Calvinist expose of natural human corruption." And Yvor Winters thinks that Cooper has humanized the doctrine of election. "Like most novelists of class-struggle, he separated his characters pretty sharply into more or less Calvinistical categories of the socially saved and the socially damned."\(^{49}\)

But most commentary directed to the influence of Puritan thought upon American fiction focusses on the works of Hawthorne and Melville. The consensus seems to be that, at least in their conception of evil, both of these authors were dominated by their Calvinist heritage and that such domination weakened or tainted their fiction by tying it to an outworn system. Neither writer, the theory goes, was emotionally able to resist the aesthetic attraction of Calvinist gloom, although both were intelligent enough to deny the rational validity of Puritan theology. A typical statement of this view is that of Alexander Cowie. "It is clear that Calvinism constituted a real challenge to Hawthorne's mind and that emotionally, at least, he often surrendered to its spirit. Indeed he seems to have taken a melancholy comfort in exploring its gloomy negations."\(^{50}\) Cowie's use of "surrendered" clearly implies that he considers Hawthorne's indulgence in "gloomy negations" to be a fault, a view which

\(^{49}\)Winters, p. 180.

\(^{50}\)Cowie, p. 357.
is seconded by Marius Bewley.

Hawthorne's conception of human nature continued to be corrupted by Calvinism, even though, intellectually, it was unacceptable to him. The native defect of heart, or inherited malaise of will, which are so recurrent throughout Hawthorne... comes [sic] at last to impress one as some taint of the soul with which man is born, and for which, though hardly responsible, he must be endlessly punished.\footnote{Marius Bewley, The Eccentric Design: Form in the Classic American Novel (New York, 1959), p. 172.}

Again, the critic's choice of words, "corrupted" for example, reveals his feeling that Hawthorne's acceptance of Puritanism commits him to an untenable moral position.

It is perhaps a distortion to say that precisely the same view prevails for Melville. Chase, for example, says that Hawthorne was content to retain "his inherited Calvinism" intact but insists that Melville's imagination transmuted this same Calvinism into "a new view of life."\footnote{Chase, The American Novel, p. 81.} But others maintain that Melville, too, was "corrupted" by Puritan thought. The most extreme example of this position is Yvor Winters' reading of Moby-Dick as a Puritan allegory.

Melville's Ahab, who wilfully embarks upon the Sea of Unpredictability in order to overtake and slay the Spirit of Evil—an effort in which he is predestined and at the end of which he is predestined to destruction—appears to us merely the heroic projection of a common Puritan type. The Puritan may be said to have conceived of a Manicheistic struggle between Absolute Good and Absolute Evil, which he derived through the processes of simplification and misunderstanding, as a kind of preordained or mechanical, yet also holy combat.\footnote{Winters, pp. 161-162.}

This totally denies the complexity of Ahab's character and reduces him...
to little more than a stick figure, manipulated by warring cosmic powers. A more moderate assessment of the influence of Calvinism on Melville is that of William Ellery Sedgwick. "Melville was drawn to Calvinism because it recognized the cardinal fact of evil. He did not subscribe to the dogma which Calvinism fastened to the fact, but inasmuch as it recognized the fact it was truthful and commanded Melville's respect as Emerson did not." 54

Apparent in all these accounts of Puritan influence is the sense that it was the gloom, the darkness, the concept of evil in Puritanism which held the greatest attraction for Hawthorne and Melville. This general view is effectively summarized by Richard Chase.

The Manichaean quality of New England Puritanism, which, . . . had so strong an effect on writers like Hawthorne and Melville, . . . entered deeply into the national consciousness. From the historical point of view, this Puritanism was a backsliding in religion as momentous in shaping the imagination as the cultural reversion Cooper studied on the frontier. For, at least as apprehended by the literary imagination, New England Puritanism— with its grand metaphors of election and damnation, its opposition of the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness, its eternal and autonomous contraries of good and evil— seems to have recaptured the Manichaean sensibility. The American imagination, like the New England Puritan mind itself, seems less interested in redemption than in the melodrama of the eternal struggle of good and evil, less interested in incarnation and reconciliation than in alienation and disorder. 55

Chase's analysis, combined with the other comments cited so far, indicates that, with respect to their use of light and dark symbolism and their handling of the theme of evil, Hawthorne and Melville owe a very

large debt to the Puritans.

At this point, however, there is serious danger of oversimplification. It is obviously true that Hawthorne and Melville are preoccupied with sin and evil, although, as was noted earlier, Matthiessen attributes this preoccupation to a reaction against transcendentalism rather than an acceptance of Puritanism. It is also true that these two authors frequently make use of Puritan terminology and symbolism, but this does not necessarily mean that they are using it for the same purposes as did the Puritans. There is, in fact, an essential opposition between tragic novelists and the early New England Puritans, with Emerson and his followers representing a kind of bridge between the two. The Puritans concern themselves primarily with problems of metaphysics and theology to the almost total exclusion of psychology. The thrust of Puritan writing is almost entirely oriented toward explaining the workings of God, as they are evidenced in the physical universe and in the thoughts and actions of men. The transcendentalists seek to understand both the Spirit (God) and the mind of man, which they see as harmonious, and thus explore both theology and psychology. And our novelists are primarily interested in probing human psychology, to the exclusion of any very thoroughly developed system of theology or metaphysics.

To the extent that the conflict between good and evil dominated Puritan thinking, it did so on a cosmic rather than a human scale. In The New England Mind Perry Miller notes the failure of the Puritans to investigate the human mind.

Few Puritans in England and none in New England wrote books directly upon psychology, whereas they composed as many on witchcraft, providences, earthquakes, and storms as upon ecclesiastical polity; clearly in their consciousness the problem
of reconciling God's decrees and rational order
loomed large in the natural universe, but they
were hardly aware of even the existence of a
similar problem within the soul.\(^56\)

By extracting fragments from a number of varied Puritan documents,
Miller is able inductively to construct a Puritan psychological system,
but this he sees as almost totally derived from Medieval Scholasticism.
That the Puritans uncritically borrowed their psychological views from
a philosophy they otherwise rejected as outmoded Miller finds to be a
further indication of their prevailing lack of interest in psychology as
a subject worthy of their investigation.

What is true of Puritan thinking in general is also true of the
uses the Puritans made of symbolism. A preoccupation with symbolism
has been cited by Feidelson and Winters as a link between the Puritans
and American literature of the nineteenth century. Again, however,
Puritan symbolism differs significantly in direction from that of the
literature which follows. The basic thrust of Puritan symbolism, as
described by Winters, is toward a revelation of the workings of God and
the Devil. "God and devil were both active, scheming, hidden powers,
each pursuing his own ends by various ministrations, and natural events
were therefore to be understood only in so far as they showed evidence
of some divine or diabolical plot."\(^57\) Natural events, as Winters ex-
plains, were thought of as symbolic of divine actions. Essentially the
same view emerges from an analysis by Feidelson, who at once credits the
Puritans with initiating the symbolic bias of American literature and


\(^{57}\) Winters, p. 161.
criticizes them for failing to develop viable symbols.

The symbols themselves were meager, for the mental economy of the Puritans gave little scope for aesthetic realization of the natural world. These men narrowed "the meaning of God" to the meanings of a crabbed schoolmaster. Yet the symbolizing process was constantly at work in their minds. . . . The "reading" of events was the inadequate form taken by a basically symbolic vision; the Puritans saw the world as instinct with meaning by reason of God's concurrence and susceptible of interpretation by reason of God's salient acts.58

The whole thrust of Puritan symbolism is toward the answering of theological questions. Even the actions and words of men are interpreted as evidence of the degree to which these men are possessed of the grace of God or are languishing in natural depravity. For the Puritans everything that happens in the physical world is symbolic of God or the Devil, and the evil they see is cosmic rather than human.

It is precisely in the area of symbolism that a common ground may be discovered between the Puritans and the transcendentalists. Lewis says that "transcendentalism was Puritanism turned upside down."59 By this Lewis means that, although Emerson and his followers replaced the old Puritan bleakness with a glimmering optimism, they too interpreted natural objects as symbolic of the Spirit or God. This is perhaps most clearly stated by Emerson in the "Language" section of Nature: "Particular natural facts are symbols of particular spiritual facts," and "Nature is the symbol of spirit."60 Here at least is some substantive agreement between Emerson and the Puritans, although Emerson continually

58 Charles Feidelson, Jr., Symbolism and American Literature (Chicago, 1953), pp. 78-82.
59 Lewis, p. 23.
emphasizes the need for a fluid, dynamic symbolism, while Puritan symbols tend to be static. Also, Emerson, of course, does not find evidence of the workings of the Devil in nature; no diabolic serpents wriggle into his forest chapels. However, a major difference between Emerson and the Puritans exists as a result of Emerson's belief in a basic identification of man with God. Because the Spirit resides in the reason of man, the symbolism of nature reveals truths not just of divinity but also of mankind; the symbolism is at once theological and psychological.

We learn... that spirit creates; that behind nature, throughout nature, spirit is present; one and not compound it does not act upon us from without, that is, in space and time, but spiritually, or through ourselves: therefore, that spirit, that is, the Supreme Being, does not build up nature around us, but puts it forth through us, as the life of the tree puts forth new branches and leaves through the pores of the old. 61

For Emerson, the physical world, projected by the "Supreme Being" through the nature of man, is emblematic of man as he was intended by his Creator to be. If man has become a "stranger in nature," it is because he has become untrue to his own essential being. But he can study himself by studying the physical world.

Every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact. Every appearance in nature corresponds to some state of mind, and that state of mind can only be described by presenting that natural appearance as its picture. And enraged man is a lion, a cunning man is a fox, a firm man is a rock, a learned man is a torch. 62

In summation, for the Puritans symbolism works primarily in a single direction; it serves to reveal the workings of God and the Devil to man. For the transcendentalists symbolism is two-directional, revealing both

61 Ibid., p. 50.
62 Ibid., p. 32.
the Supreme Being and the mind of man.

Given this background, symbolism becomes a useful means for distin-
guishing the viewpoint of early American novelists from that of the
Puritans and that of the transcendentalists. In our fiction symbolism
is primarily psychological in function, not theological or metaphysical.
Melville and Hawthorne create characters who, because they cannot control
their own evil tendencies, allude to Puritanism. But both novelists use
symbols as devices for revealing the minds of sinful characters, not
primarily as devices for exploring cosmic origins of evil. This is not
to say that Moby-Dick has no metaphysical implications or that no theo-
logical attitude toward sin is reflected in The Scarlet Letter. It is
to say, rather, that the emphasis in books like these rests upon the
states of mind of characters confronted by theological and metaphysical
problems.

Psychology

The two novels cited above (both of which are more fully analyzed
in later chapters) can serve here as illustrations of the primarily
psychological function of symbolism in early American fiction. In The
Scarlet Letter the dominant symbols clearly are the two letters, the one
worn openly by Hester, the other hidden beneath the garments of Dimmes-
dale; these are customarily seen as representing open shame and hidden
guilt. Hester's badge, however, has been so wrought by her that it not
only stands for the acknowledged sin of adultery but also represents
those qualities of character which made the sin possible.

On the breast of her gown, in fine red cloth, sur-
rounded with an elaborate embroidery and fantastic
flourishes of gold thread, appeared the letter A. It was so artistically done, and with so much fertility and gorgeous luxuriance of fancy, that it had all the effect of a last and fitting decoration to the apparel which she wore.  

Hester's triumph in the novel is her eventual achievement of a stable balance between her "fertility and gorgeous luxuriance of fancy" on the one hand and her disciplining mind on the other, the essential balance between heart and head which is at issue throughout Hawthorne's fiction. For Hester this balance is not easily achieved; her course during most of the novel vacillates between the opposite extremes, and each wavering is connected with the letter. "All the light and graceful foliage of her character had been withered up by this red-hot brand. . . . Hester Prynne, whose heart had lost its regular and healthy throb, wandered without a clew in the dark labyrinth of mind."  

Here the golden luxuriant aspect of the letter has been denied in favor of scarlet shame. In the forest with Dimmesdale Hester wavers in the opposite direction by casting aside the scarlet and momentarily embracing the gold. She undid the clasp that fastened the scarlet letter, and, taking it from her bosom, threw it to a distance among the withered leaves. . . . Her sex, her youth, and the whole richness of her beauty, came back from what men call the irrevocable past. . . . All at once, as with a sudden smile of heaven, forth burst the sunshine, pouring a very flood into the obscure forest, gladdening each green leaf, transmuting the yellow fallen ones to gold.

It is perhaps an overstatement to say that the letter has no meaning apart from Hester or that Hester's character may be understood only through the

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64 Ibid., pp. 163-166.
65 Ibid., pp. 202-203.
agency of the letter. What is clear, however, is that the primary function of the letter is to provide symbolic penetration into Hester's psychological condition and that Hester's theological success (efficacious penance) and social success (winning the approval of the townspeople) are perquisites of her achievement of a psychological balance capable of transforming her badge of infamy into a coat of arms.

Dimmesdale's letter, though it too has theological and social implications, is again primarily emblematic of the character's psychological condition. Guilty of the same crime as Hester, Dimmesdale compounds his guilt through secrecy. The essential quality of his letter is that it is unseen; in fact, it may not exist in the physical world, although it is real enough in the minds of Dimmesdale and Chillingworth. Most discussion of the minister centers on Chillingworth's merciless probing of his heart, which is, of course, a major issue of the novel. But it is important to remember that all of Dimmesdale's major crises (his lapses into fantasy, his midnight vigil, his bout with perverseness as he returns from the forest) take place within his own mind; the other characters are neither participants nor apparently direct agents, and they are only occasionally observers. Each of these crises results from Dimmesdale's inability to face directly the cardinal fact of his existence, that he is the father of Pearl. And each finds its objective correlative in his inability to reveal his own letter. Thus, in the case of Dimmesdale, also, Hawthorne creates his major symbol primarily for the purpose of psychological insight.

Critics have not been able finally to agree on the exact symbolic meaning of the whale in Moby-Dick. Some agree with Ahab that it is the concrete embodiment of "intangible malignity;" some identify it as "the
mystery of creation," some as death, some as God, some as "the parental principle inclusive" (father and mother), and so forth. Melville himself equips sperm whales with four main qualities in the chapters on cetology: immensity, ubiquity, immortality (as a species if not as individuals), and mystery. These qualities all become focussed in the prime example of the sperm whale, Moby Dick. Beyond this, Moby Dick is white, a color explicitly associated with absence of meaning and with the presence of all meaning by Ishmael in "The Whiteness of the Whale." Without for the moment attempting to assign an exact symbolic meaning to Moby Dick, it seems fair to say that the whale stands for some power or concept too big, too omnipresent, too lasting, and too mysterious to be coped with or even fully comprehended by the finite mind of man. A major issue raised by the book is, given the existence of this power or concept, what should be the response of the sane, moral man?

That this issue is a dominant one is in part suggested by the fact that Moby Dick does not physically enter the book until the last three chapters. Until that point the whale, in effect, exists only as an idea in the minds of the characters. Moreover, Moby Dick's ultimate arrival is too tardy to overturn the conceptions of the characters; that is, he appears to the characters as their minds have predisposed them to see him, to one an overgrown mouse, to another the embodiment of intangible malignity. From this, it is not difficult to understand that the burden of the novel is heavily psychological, that as each character conjures up his own mental conception of Moby Dick the character creates a symbol for his own mental condition. Bland characters with no imaginative power like Captain Boomer of the Samuel Enderby see Moby Dick as no more than a particularly large sperm whale which happens to be white.
Humane characters like the captain of the Rachel react to Moby Dick as they would to any natural disaster; their concern is not with the agent but with the human victims. Beyond this are those characters identified as water-gazers in the early chapters of the novel, characters like Ishmael and Ahab whose minds turn again and again to questions of metaphysical meaning. Melville devotes a significant portion of his novel to explaining that for both Ishmael and Ahab the whale eventually becomes conceptualized as a limiting factor. For both, Moby Dick is a mask or wall defining the borders of human understanding as finite within a universe which is infinite. With respect to the process of conceptualization, then, Ahab and Ishmael resemble one another. However, much of the dramatic power of the book results from the diametrically opposed reactions of the two characters to the idea of limitation, as revealed in such chapters as "The Quarter-Deck," "The Try-Works," and "The Candles." For Ahab, the desire to "strike through the mask," to get at whatever it is that is behind the wall and is responsible for human misery, creates such singleness of purpose that it drives him mad: "There is a woe that is madness." And this madness symbolically revealed through Ahab's conception of the whale, is the source of Ahab's involuntary evil. For Ishmael the "Try-Works" chapter represents an acceptance of limits and an acknowledgement of misery as a portion of but not the whole of human existence; "There is a wisdom that is woe." In both cases it is the concept of the whale as opposed to the physical reality of the whale which produces the reaction (In "The Try-Works," Ishmael has not yet seen Moby Dick), and in both cases the reaction underscores the psychological condition of the character.

What is true of The Scarlet Letter and Moby Dick is in large part
true of our early fiction in general. The main issues raised by the novels and tales usually have to do with the condition of the human mind. Of the five authors discussed in this study, the bias in favor of psychology which sharply separates our fiction from Puritan theology is particularly prevalent in the works of Brown, Hawthorne, and Melville. In fact, as is explained in a later chapter, it would be more accurate to call Brown the father of the American psychological novel, a kind of fiction which continues to be especially viable in this country, than the father of the American Gothic. The other two authors, Cooper and Poe, also frequently develop psychological themes, but these tend to be somewhat diluted by other concerns which may be loosely summarized as social and political issues in Cooper and aesthetic designs in Poe. Both the advantages and the disadvantages of the general psychological bias are summed up by Chase, who couples psychology with ideology.

American novelists tend to ideology and psychology; they are adept at depicting the largest public abstractions and the smallest and most elusive turn of the inner mind. But they do not have a firm sense of a social arena where ideology and psychology find concrete representation and are seen in their fullest human significance. 66

Important for the purposes of this study is not so much Chase's critical judgment, which is a part of his separation of novel from romance, but his unqualified and accurate identification of psychology as one primary operating sphere of American novelists.

Where the Puritans tend to deal with evil as a theological fact and the transcendentalists tend scarcely to deal with it at all, our novelists

concentrate on the psychological implications of evil. Granted, this alone is not sufficient reason for saying that our early fiction has thematic continuity. What is needed is some kind of common ground of interest within the broad area encompassed by psychology and evil, but this common ground is provided, as the opening pages of this chapter suggest, by a shared preoccupation among the five authors under consideration with a particular type of evil, the type I have chosen to call involuntary.

Positive Alternatives

In the following chapters involuntary evil, in its four characteristic forms, is explored in the works of the five authors included in the study, Brown, Cooper, Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville. However, before turning specifically to the fiction of Brown, I want to suggest that the overall view of the human condition put forth by these authors is not quite so bleak as my identification of involuntary evil as a major source of thematic continuity might imply. By this I mean that the authors do not always treat a tendency toward involuntary evil as irreversible. True, characters formed with a psychological propensity for evil have no built-in psychological power for resisting that evil. On the other hand, the circumstances surrounding them may, on occasion, provide them with the counter-force they need. And this is particularly true of potential intellectual villains. As an alternative to the numerous characters who complete the destructive downward course from the simple possession of an overdeveloped intellect to full monomania, a few characters are rescued by the intervention of some outside agency, usually another character, before they become villainous.

In some instances this agency functions by revitalizing the emotional
capacity, by healing the heart of a potentially head-dominated character. Hester's forest conversation with Dimmesdale which reawakens her dormant love for him has this effect. Before this scene her intellect has grown, and her heart has undergone a proportionate decline. Although he may not be completely convincing, Holgrave, in The House of Seven Gables, is probably the clearest example of the potential monomaniac saved by love. Marius Bewley seems to me to be overly harsh in his critical judgment of Hawthorne, but his comparison of Holgrave and Ethan Brand is valid.

When we compare Holgrave and Ethan Brand—one a hero and the other a monster—and when we consider that, despite Hawthorne's conflicting attitudes towards them, their moral reality is almost identical, we see that Hawthorne is faced here with the seeds of an impossible dilemma.\(^6\)

What Bewley seems to deny here is that the two characters may be dynamic rather than static. Both begin as essentially upright characters, cursed or blessed with powerful minds. In the case of Brand, no outside agency intervenes and the intellect completes its irresistible progress toward monomania and the complete destruction of the heart. On the other hand, Holgrave moves only part way down this path before the admittedly feeble but nonetheless efficacious Pheobe Pyncheon intervenes to check his course and revitalize his heart. Until the heart has been finally turned to marble, an escape of this kind is possible for potential monomaniacs in American fiction.

A similar kind of escape is that made by Edgar Huntly. Here,

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\(^{67}\) Bewley, p. 117.
however, the outside agency functions both as an educational force on the intellect itself and as a revitalizing agent for the heart. Huntly's unnatural fascination with Clithero results from his unconscious identification with the unfortunate wanderer, an identification strengthened by his discovery that both of them are sleepwalkers. And this creates a bond of sympathy between the two. Huntly's tardy but ultimately complete acceptance of the inevitable conclusion that Clithero is mad serves to check his progress toward the same mental condition. The device which Brown in this novel uses imperfectly, that of paired characters, anticipates a much stronger execution of the same technique by Melville in *Moby Dick*, for Ishmael, like Huntly, is in danger of succumbing to a spiritual malady, namely "the woe that is madness." Slowly and tediously, Ishmael learns through the examples of Ahab and Queequeg to resist his own tendency toward morbidity. In "The Konkcy-Hope," a chapter in which he is linked by a rope to Queequeg while the latter works precariously on the slippery body of a captured whale, Ishmael first recognizes the danger of too closely aligning his own destiny with that of another. By analogy, his physical tie with Queequeg may be seen as similar to his spiritual link with Ahab. In "The Try-Works" Ishmael undergoes a complete anagnoresis through which he is able to reassert his own identity as separate from that of Ahab and to recognize Ahab's madness. Again, the example of one character dominated by a ponderous intellect serves to restore normalcy in another character.

All told, however, the view of the human condition in our early fiction remains less than optimistic. Only a few characters experience fortunate reversals like those of Holgrave and Ishmael; a far larger proportion completes the path to absolute domination of the heart by
the intellect. And it is not especially reassuring to note that those who do escape require the aid of outside conditions over which they can assert no personal control.
If, as is customary, one accepts the publication of William Hill Brown's *The Power of Sympathy* (1789) as the beginning of American fiction, the major phase of Charles Brockden Brown's writing career (1798-1801) belongs almost at the start of the history of the American novel. Brown most certainly is the earliest American novelist still considered to have literary merit and the first to exert any lasting influence on later fiction, both in this country and in Europe. Mary Shelley, for example, read *Vicland* prior to her creation of *Frankenstein*, and Godwin acknowledges his debt to Brown in the preface to his *Mandeville*.\(^1\) At once the most surprising and important accomplishment of Brown, however, is the accuracy with which he anticipates both the tone and the predominant themes of serious American fiction from its outset until the Civil War. Given his relative obscurity and the gap of time between his career and those of later authors, it would be an overstatement to say that Brown singlehandedly cast the mold which shaped the fiction of Poe and Hawthorne; but his thematic relationship to both of these authors is apparent.

The forces which influenced Brown's own fiction are much more complicated than they are often acknowledged to be. A typical practice of critics is to dismiss him as a neophyte artist who borrowed his ideas

from Godwin and his fictional techniques from Walpole and Mrs. Radcliffe, adding only local settings to achieve some semblance of originality. It is true, of course, that the only fictional tradition available for Brown to draw upon was the British and that Brown, who spent most of his time either reading books or talking about them with his friends, was thoroughly conversant with this tradition. It is also true, however, that Brown, a confirmed nationalist, dreamed not just of writing successful imitations of English novels but of helping to found a distinctly separate American fictional form. He states this intention in a letter to the Philadelphia Weekly Magazine, March 17, 1798.

Our ecclesiastical and political system, our domestic and social maxims are in many respects entirely our own. He, therefore, who paints not from books but from nature, who introduces those lines and hues in which we differ rather than those in which we resemble our kindred nations beyond the ocean, may lay some claim to the patronage of his countrymen.2

When he completed Wieland later in the same year, Brown considered his achievement to be of sufficient national significance to justify his sending a copy of the novel, together with a letter explaining its merits ("an artful display of incidents, the powerful delineation of characters and the train of eloquent and judicious reasoning") to Thomas Jefferson, then Vice-President of the United States.3 And in the preface to Edgar Huntly, Brown proudly points to his use of Indian characters as a naturalizing force distinguishing his fiction from that of his European predecessors.

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One merit the writer may at least claim— that of calling forth the passions and engaging the sympathy of the reader by means hitherto unemployed by preceding authors. Puerile superstitions and exploded manners, Gothic castles and chimeras, are the materials usually employed for this end. The incidents of Indian hostility, and the perils of the Western wilderness, are far more suitable; and for a native of America to overlook these would admit of no apology.

Brown, thoroughly aware of the conventions of the British novel, was also aware of the desirability of an American novelist's breaking away from these conventions by making use of subjects peculiar to his native land.

On the other hand, Brown was by temperament and circumstances something of an anglophile. As a boy he devoured English literature, particularly the works of Shakespeare and Milton. As a young man he was introduced by his friend, Dr. Elihu Hubbard Smith, to an informal society of young New York intellectuals known as the "Friendly Club," an organization dedicated to seeking a "plan to improve and secure human happiness." During his frequent and lengthy visits with Smith in New York, Brown regularly attended meetings of this society. The conversation at these meetings usually vacillated between politics and literature, coming to rest more often than not on William Godwin's two extremely popular works, his philosophical treatise An Enquiry into Political Justice and his novel Caleb Williams. For a time Brown became a virtual disciple of Godwin; he gave complete intellectual assent to Godwin's political theories and established Caleb Williams as a standard against which to judge his

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5 Warfel, p. 9.
own fiction. Referring to his first attempt at creative writing, an untitled, unpublished romance which was eventually destroyed, Brown writes:

When a mental comparison is made between this and the mass of novels, I am inclined to be pleased with my own production. But when the objects of comparison are changed, and I revolve the transcendent merits of Caleb Williams, my pleasure is diminished, and is preserved from total extinction only by the reflection that this performance is my first.

The extent to which Brown made a standard of Caleb Williams is illustrated by his remark that during a particularly productive period he was writing "a quantity equivalent to ten \( \frac{1}{2} \) of Godwin's\) pages daily.\(^8\)

It is obvious from the foregoing that Brown was profoundly influenced, both in thought and technique by Godwin. Ironically, however, by the time Brown wrote his first published novel, Wieland, roughly three years after he first became enchanted by Godwin, the influence took the form of reaction against rather than assent to Godwin's political ideas, although Brown continued to subscribe to some of Godwin's theories of fiction. In the preface to Caleb Williams Godwin explains that, to ensure the fulfillment of his moral purpose, the novelist should dominate, perhaps even terrify the reader and that he can accomplish this by mixing "human feelings and passions with incredible situations, and thus rendering\(^7\) them impressive and interesting."\(^9\) Godwin's influence is clearly apparent in Brown's statement of his own intentions as a novelist.

\(^7\)Ibid., p. 32.
\(^8\)Warfel, p. 54.
Like his mentor, Brown believes the novelist should forcefully lay hold of the reader's attention.

The substantive differences between the two authors, however, become apparent when one turns from their artistic theories to their actual creations. For Godwin, evil resides primarily in the decay of outworn institutions. His villains (Falkland, for example) are representatives of a corrupt aristocracy, and his heroes (Caleb Williams) are young men of vision or reason who set out to penetrate the sham virtue of their elders; they are the type of the reformer. In only one novel, Arthur Mervyn, does Brown even approach a pattern of this kind, and he overtly acknowledges his debt to Godwin by naming two minor characters "Honest Caleb" and "Ephriam Williams, a plain, good man, of a temper confiding and affectionate." Even here, however, the resemblance is superficial. The villain Wolbeck is actuated not by his association with a corrupt aristocracy but by natural depravity. Arthur Mervyn is the most naive and least intelligent young man in all of Brown's major works. In Brown's other novels it is precisely the Godwinian hero, the youthful reformer, who becomes transformed into the intellectual villain, as exemplified by Carwin and Ormond. The recognition of this

10 Warfel, p. 89.
essential difference between Brown and Godwin is one of the important contributions of David Lee Clark's biography of Brown.

Brown's villains remind us strongly of Godwin's, but there is a difference—a significant difference. This difference lies in the motives behind the villainy. Brown's criminals are systematic and "large-minded" villains, clothed with mysterious powers, governed by an invisible Empire whose object is the salvation of the world. But Falkland, the typical Godwinian villain, on the other hand, becomes a criminal in a sudden burst of passion and then degenerates into a hardened sinner. Falkland has been schooled in the gentleman's code of honor, a blind irrational system which holds its devotees as in a vise and destroys their reason. Godwin was bent upon the destruction of an outmoded system; Brown, upon portraying the nefarious consequences of blindly following principles based upon cold logic. In reality this is a refutation of Godwinism. Ormond, Carwin, Ludloe, and Welbeck are villains by premeditation and for noble ends; not so Falkland. This difference is not merely accidental; it is fundamental.

During my discussion of Brown's novels which follows, I will take issue with Clark's conclusion that Brown's villains consistently act by premeditation and that they consistently work for "the salvation of the world;" Welbeck certainly has no such philanthropic motive, and Carwin has divorced himself from the society to which Clark alludes by the time he enters the pages of Wieland. Still, the general import of Clark's analysis is valid and significant because the analysis helps to elevate Brown from an apprentice to an English master to a creative thinker in his own right.

Perhaps Brown's turning away from the Godwinian ideas he had supported at meetings of the "Friendly Club" can be traced to two causes, one external and one personal. On the one hand, Brown became increasingly

11 Clark, p. 174.
fascinated with an obscure German cult known as the Illuminati; on the
other, he became progressively less able to throw off seizures of severe
psychological depression. Both of these forces tended to offset what­
ever philosophical influence Godwin had upon him.

The Illuminati, founded in 1776 by Adam Weishaupt, was a rationalist
society dedicated to the improvement of mankind through education. To
this extent, at least, it had much in common with Godwin. However, the
society's commitment to using whatever means necessary, legal or illegal,
to achieve its ends and its adoption of total secrecy after it was out­
lawed by the Bavarian government in 1785 made it appear to be partic­
ularly sinister. Its secrecy also permitted legends of its size and
power to grow while the society itself was rapidly declining. In fact,
the Illuminati may well have been extinct, except in legend, by the
time (about 1796) Brown first heard of its terrifying unscrupulousness
from Jedediah Morse, a Congregationalist clergyman who paid frequent
visits to Dr. Smith and who was carrying on a personal crusade against
the secret society. Brown enlisted in Morse's cause by writing a
series of articles for the Monthly Magazine and American Review in which
he expresses some admiration for the ideals of the society but generally
condemns it as dangerously unethical. He must, at some time, have be­
come aware that in attacking the Illuminati, he was in reality attacking
an extreme version of the Godwinian views he had earlier accepted. At
any rate, his three villainous reformers who most clearly resemble
Godwinian heroes, Carwin, Ludloe, and Ormond, all are or have been

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12Warfel, p. 98.
13Clark, p. 174.
members of a secret organization which, although it is never named in the novels, is transparently modeled after the example of the Illuminati.

Secondly, Brown conceived of his own sad condition as a powerful counter-argument to the notion that the improvement of the reason necessarily brings about the overall improvement of the individual. He became convinced by 1798 that his intellect had undergone vast improvement but that this improvement had not been accompanied by any corresponding uplift of his spirits or by a strengthened ability to accomplish the tasks he had set for himself. As early as 1793 his letters are filled with unparalleled passages of self-loathing.

We are strange, unreasonable creatures; at least such am I. I utterly despise myself. I am the object of my most unbounded pity, the slave of a gloomy and distressful musing. The fair forms of social dignity and happiness still continue to diminish to my sight. I lift up my languid eyes and gaze after them without effect; they still mingle and are lost in dim obscurity and grey confusion, and nothing but a wide vacuity presents itself.\(^{14}\)

The overall gloom of this passage and the compulsive desire to share that gloom are symptomatic of severe depression, but at this early date Brown is not yet thinking of his condition in connection with any philosophical system. A significant contrast is apparent in his letter to William Dunlap which describes a similar siege of depression but is dated January 1, 1798, three or four years after his initial burst of enthusiasm for Godwin.

I think upon the life of last winter with self-loathing almost insupportable. I sometimes wish it were buried in oblivion, but even a wish of this kind is a token of my intellectual infirmity. Alas!

\(^{14}\)Ibid., p. 34.
my friend, few consolations of a self-approving mind have fallen to my lot. I have been raised to a sublimer pitch of speculation only to draw melancholy from the survey of the contrast between what I am and what I ought to be. I am sometimes apt to think that few human beings have drunk so deeply of the cup of self-abhorrence as I have. There is no misery equal to that which flows from this source. I have been for some years in the full fruition of it. Whether it will end but with my life I know not. . . . How can I remove the burden of your Dunlap's scorn but by transforming myself into a new being. I look not forward to such a change. I shall die, as I have lived, a victim of perverse and incurable habits. My progress in knowledge has enlightened my judgment without adding to my power.15

This letter, similar in tone and content to the first, is distinguished from it by its obvious allusions to Godwinian philosophy. Early in the quoted section Brown says that his improved intellect has served to make him more aware of his own shortcomings, not to alleviate them, and thus has plunged him even deeper into depression. In his closing lines he laments his inability to act decisively, despite his increased knowledge. He expresses an almost fatalistic doubt that he will ever have the strength to overcome the inertia of his own habits and behave in accordance with the dictates of his reason. In effect, Brown is expressing a growing scepticism toward Godwin's ideas because his personal experience has run exactly counter to them. For him, the improvement of the intellect has resulted primarily in an ever more refined and paralyzing introspection.

Brown's turning against Godwin and the Illuminati was, in effect, a rebellion against rational systems, systems based on the belief that

15Warfel, pp. 87-88.
reason alone can control human behavior. Brown felt other, often sinister, forces at work in his own character, which both ran counter to his reason and were too powerful for his reason to overcome. No wonder, then, that he became fascinated with involuntary evil. He knew what he ought to be, and he knew what he was; he felt powerless to unite the two selves. It is only a small step from Brown's condition to that of Glaggart, "envious of the good, but powerless to be it."

It is probably to Brown's credit that immediately after writing his despair-filled letter to Dunlap, he entered upon a period of intense and disciplined creative effort which resulted in the publication of Wieland in September of the same year (1798). Ormond, Arthur Kervyn (part one), and Edgar Huntly all appeared within the surprising span of eleven months after Wieland. The questions of what generated this outburst of creative activity and, perhaps more important, what forces contributed most to the shaping of Wieland remain extremely difficult if not impossible for the modern scholar to answer with assurance. It is possible, as Warfel has shown, to trace the source of Theodore Wieland's crimes to a magazine account of a similar series of murders committed by James Yates, a New York farmer, and his name to the German poet, Christoph Martin Wieland. Similarly, Carwin's former membership in a secret society derives from Brown's interest in the Illuminati, and a few scenes (for example, Clara's overhearing sinister voices apparently plotting her murder) admittedly owe something to the Gothic novel. But none of this begins to get at the heart of the novel, which perhaps may best be explained as generated by the coming together of Brown's knowledge of past literature,

16 Ibid., p. 76 and p. 104.
his partial rebellion against Godwinian philosophy, his nationalism, and his internal turmoil. If his letters accurately reflect his mental condition, the latter force may well have been the most powerful.

In any case, the enduring interest of Wieland, both for the reader and for the historian of American literature, should not depend so much upon its origin as upon its essential nature as a novel, especially its pervasive gloom equal to that of The Scarlet Letter or "The Fall of the House of Usher," and its two dominant characters, Carwin and Theodore Wieland, both of whom commit acts of involuntary evil. Carwin, actuated by his own "imp of the perverse," which easily overcomes his most laudable intentions, is the prototype of the fourth character-type established in the preceding chapter, the intellectual villain. Wieland, also, in some ways foreshadows the monomaniac scholar, but his compulsive reading of obscure theology (perhaps the source of his given name) is a family characteristic, as is his morbid fear that some special destiny awaits him; he more clearly belongs to the class of characters who inherit a propensity for evil. Beyond this, Brown juxtaposes his characters in such a way that their evil, although different in source, becomes complementary. Carwin's sins are venial until they are compounded with those of Wieland, and it is partly through the agency of Carwin that Wieland is "transformed" from a melancholy scholar into a fanatic murderer.

Unfortunately, the portrait of Carwin is left incomplete by Brown as a result of his failure to finish his sequel to Wieland, the fragmentary Memoirs of Carwin, the Biloquist. However, the description of Carwin and his confession to Clara in Wieland, coupled with the account of his early years in the fragment, yield a clear enough impression of
his main attributes. In the opening chapter of the fragment, he describes himself as a compulsive scholar. "My thirst of knowledge was augmented in proportion as it was supplied with gratification. The more I heard or read, the more restless and unconquerable my curiosity became. My senses were perpetually alive to novelty, my fancy teemed with visions of the future, and my attention fastened upon every thing mysterious or unknown."\(^1\) That Carwin recognizes moral dangers in this compulsion is illustrated by his later reference to it as his "perverse and pernicious curiosity." In the fragment, also, he recalls his accidental discovery that he is a gifted ventriloquist but refuses, on moral grounds, to share his skill. "It is by far, too liable to perversion for a good man to desire to possess it, or to teach it to another." (p. 202). The cumulative effect of the fragment is to reveal Carwin as distinguished from ordinary men by two faculties, his scholarly curiosity and his ventriloquism, and to show that any increase in the development of these powers is accompanied by a corresponding decline in moral rectitude, a pattern familiar to readers of Hawthorne.

By the time Carwin enters the pages of *Wieland*, several years have passed during which he has been apprenticed to Ludloe, a member of a society like the Illuminati and during which he has suffered a series of moral setbacks caused by his inability to cope with his own talents. His appearance at this point, as described by Clara, is typical of characters of powerful intellect but weakened moral capacity.

His cheeks were pallid and lank, his eyes sunken,

his forehead overshadowed by coarse, straggling hairs. . . . His skin was of coarse grain, and sallow hue. . . . And yet, his forehead, so far as shaggy locks would allow it to be seen his eyes lustrously black, and possessing, in the midst of haggardness, a radiance inexpressibly serene and potent, and something in the rest of his features, which it would be in vain to describe, but which served to betoken a mind of the highest order, were essential ingredients in the portrait. (pp. 60-61).

The eyes become the focal point in physical descriptions of villainous characters in American fiction. They are seldom called "serene," but they are almost always dark and prepossessing, reflecting an intensity of intellect often capable of gaining control over more balanced characters. The eyes of Carwin resemble those of Magua and Claggart.

The story of Carwin's devious activities in Wieland becomes a chronicle of the struggle between his weak but well-meaning heart, and his powerful, amoral intellect, objectified in his ventriloquism. In a long confrontation with Clara, Carwin confesses his part in contributing to Wieland's developing madness. "I intended not ill; but my folly, indirectly and remotely, may have caused it." (pp. 220-221). He explains that, against his better judgment, he first resorted to ventriloquism to avoid discovery by Wieland.

A thousand times had I vowed never again to employ the dangerous talent which I possessed; but such was the force of habit and the influence of present convenience, that I used this method of arresting his progress and leading him back to the house, with his errand, whatever it was, unperformed. (p. 225).

He recounts other times when he found himself resorting to ventriloquism, although he understood that each lapse "made recovery more difficult." (p. 226). And he explains that he recognized the dangers involved in its use. "I saw in a stronger light than ever, the dangerousness of
that instrument which I employed, and renewed my resolutions to abstain
from the use of it in the future; but I was destined perpetually to
violate my resolutions." (p. 231). Moreover, he maintains he also
understood that his inability to withstand the temptation to use his
extraordinary powers worked directly counter to his own self-interest.

With regard to myself, I had acted with a phrenzy
that surpassed belief. I had warred against my
peace and my fame: I had banished myself from
the fellowship of vigorous and pure minds: I was
self-expelled from a scene [the home of the
Wielands] which the munificence of nature had
adorned with unrivalled beauties, and from
haunts in which all the muses and humanities
had taken refuge. (p. 237).

All of this occurred, he says, not because of his own volition, but be­
cause "some daemon of mischief seized [him]," (p. 227). Carwin, then,
because of his special intellectual powers, commits acts which he him­
self acknowledges to be potentially evil but which he is powerless to
avoid committing. By his own confession he is the first of a long line
of characters in American fiction dehumanized by intellectual gifts.
That his account of himself is to be taken by the reader as sincere, not
just an attempt at rationalization, is suggested both by its overall
agreement with the facts of the case supplied by other characters and
by Brown's total failure to provide any ironic undercutting of Carwin's
confession. The author gives the reader no substantial grounds for
doubting Carwin's word.

Those sins for which Carwin is solely responsible, his temporary
destruction of Clara's reputation, for example, are paled by comparison
with the crimes of Theodore Wieland, crimes for which Carwin appears to
be partly but only partly to blame. By the time Carwin enters the
story, Wieland's dehumanizing religious fanaticism and his tendency to
experience hallucinations are already operative. Carwin simply hastens Wieland's progress toward madness by reinforcing his delusions through the use of ventriloquism. The final hallucination, the spectre who orders Wieland to murder his wife and children, is not Carwin's doing; it is, rather, a creation of Wieland's own demented imagination.

The original sources of Wieland's homicidal mania are carefully developed by Brown during the early part of the novel. Wieland is the latest descendant of a family of German immigrants, long characterized by an almost compulsive interest in the study of theology. Unlike Carwin, whose family abhors reading, Wieland inherits a family tradition of scholarship which he in no way resists. "My brother," says Clara Wieland, "was an indefatigable student." (p. 27). As a result of his almost total commitment to religious scholarship, Wieland, even as a young man, is marked by an unusual somberness of character, a somberness which may remind the reader of Brown's own emotional condition described earlier.

His deportment was grave, considerate, and thoughtful. . . . The principal effect of this temper was visible in his features and tones. These, in general, bespoke a sort of thrilling melancholy. I scarcely ever knew him to laugh. He never accompanied the lawless mirth of his companions with more than a smile. . . . In his studies, he pursued an austere and more arduous path than his companions. He was much conversant with the history of religious opinions, and took pains to ascertain their validity. (pp. 25-26).

Like Ahab, Wieland reveals the early symptoms of his madness through his inability to respond fully to ordinary human pleasures, a weakness linked specifically by his sister to his too complete involvement in intellectual endeavors.

This man is of an ardent and melancholy character. . . .
All his actions and practical sentiments are linked with long and abstruse deductions from the system of divine government and the laws of our intellectual constitution. He is, in some respects, an enthusiast, but is fortified in his belief by innumerable arguments and subtleties. (pp. 39-40).

In effect, Wieland has subordinated all normal emotional responses and in their stead has erected a system of abstract ideas derived from his studies.

A second source of Wieland's madness is his inability to reconcile himself to the mysterious deaths of his father and his grandfather. Although in this case no family curse is provided as a cause, male members of the Wieland family have traditionally suffered deaths even stranger than those of the Pyncheons. Wieland's grandfather, claiming that he was answering a summons from his late brother, "rushed to the edge of a cliff, threw himself headlong, and was seen no more." (p. 202). Wieland's father "was likewise haunted by the belief that the kind of death that awaited him was strange and terrible. His anticipations were thus far vague and indefinite; but they sufficed to poison every moment of his being, and devote him to ceaseless anguish." (p. 15).

After complaining of a burning sensation in his head which has "scorched his brain to cinders," he repairs to a small family temple where he is consumed by spontaneous combustion. It seems significant that despite the extraordinarily bizarre nature of her father's death, Clara, Wieland's sister, recovers quickly from the trauma with no apparent lasting psychological scars. On the other hand, as Clara explains, the death makes a major contribution to Wieland's growing morbidity, again reminiscent of Brown's own morbidity. "His father's death was always regarded by him as flowing from a direct and supernatural
decree. It visited his meditations oftener than it did mine. The traces which it left were more gloomy and permanent." (p. 40).

The two forces discussed above, heightened by Carwin's untimely use of ventriloquism, mold Wieland into a religious fanatic capable of placing complete faith in the reality of his own hallucinations. His confession of murder is among the most ghastly passages in American literature.

I lifted the corpse in my arms and laid it on the bed. I gazed upon it with delight. Such was the elation of my thoughts, that I even broke into laughter. I clapped my hands and exclaimed "It is done! My sacred duty is fulfilled! To that I have sacrificed, O my God! thy last and best gift, my wife! (p. 194).

At this point, quite obviously, Wieland's madness is absolute; no humane faculty remains active within him to resist the compulsion to murder.

The catastrophe of Wieland may be viewed as resulting from the coming together of two characters, formed to evil by different forces, who while separated remain relatively harmless, but whose evil becomes complementary through juxtaposition and culminates in "inhuman" brutality, "worthy of savages trained to murder and exulting in agonies." (p. 195). This compounding effect may appear to be surprisingly sophisticated when one considers that Wieland is among the earliest American novels. On the other hand, that the effect partly weakened the dramatic power of involuntary evil is shown by its failure to be repeated in other novels, even in later novels by Brown. A hidden implication of Wieland is that one character, regardless of the degree to which he is compelled to commit acts of involuntary evil, may not by himself be capable of truly serious crimes, and that a second agent may be necessary. And this implication runs counter to the typical portrayal of
evil in American fiction, which normally focuses on a single villain who may use other characters as instruments for his crimes but whose capacity for evil is self-sufficient. Whereas in Wieland crimes may appear in part to result from peculiarly unfortunate and coincidental circumstances, the more usual fictional approach denies that unique circumstances are necessary for the perpetration of evil, and, in so doing, develops involuntary evil as at once more potent and more widespread than it seems to be in the world of Wieland, despite the particularly heinous nature of Wieland's crimes.

The more usual approach is adopted by Brown in his second novel, Ormond, which was published in February of 1799. Again, as in Wieland, two villainous characters are present, but here the one, Ormond, is so completely dominant and the other, Thomas Craig, so completely under his control that there is no impression of complementary effect. Craig becomes the instrument of Ormond whose depraved intellect can be seen as responsible for virtually all of the trouble which befalls the Dudley family, save for the financial disaster caused by Craig before Ormond enters the novel. In comparison to Ormond, Craig quite obviously is a minor character, but he is interesting because he represents Brown's first use of natural depravity, a theme which later becomes important in Arthur Mervyn.

Craig's most serious crime, his murder of Constantia's father, is implemented by Ormond. However, as Ormond himself explains, the means for his manipulation of Craig are provided by Craig's own natural depravity. "While revolving the means for killing Dudley, chance and his evil destiny threw Craig in my way. I soon convinced him that his
reputation and his life were in my hands." Ormond blackmails Craig by threatening to reveal his past crimes and thus gains control over him. The motivation for these earlier crimes, however, remains somewhat foggy. There is a suggestion that Craig's depravity grew slowly as a result of the ease with which he found he was able to deceive people.

His temptations to deceive were stronger than what are incident to most other men. Deception was so easy a task, that the difficulty lay, not in infusing false opinions respecting him, but in preventing them from being spontaneously imbibed. He contracted habits of imposture imperceptibly. In proportion as he deviated from the practice of truth, he discerned the necessity of extending and systemizing his efforts, and of augmenting the original benignity and attractiveness of his looks by studied additions. The further he proceeded, the more difficult it was to return. Experience and habit added daily to his speciousness, till at length the world perhaps might have been searched in vain for his competitor. (p. 97).

In a general way, Craig's gradual progress toward ever more serious deception is reminiscent of that of Carwin, but there is even less motivation for this deception than for Carwin's resorting to ventriloquism. Finally, Constantia reaches the conclusion that Craig must have been born to evil.

The meditations of Constantia, . . could not fail in some of their circuitries to encounter the image of Craig. His agency in the impoverishment of her father, . . was of an impervious and unprecedented kind. Motives were unveiled by time, in some degree accounting for his treacherous proceeding; but there was room to suppose an inborn propensity for mischief. (p. 211).

Somewhat conclusive in this passage are the general indication that

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whatever motives for Craig's behavior have emerged have been insufficient and the explicit use of "inborn," both suggestive of natural depravity.

Ormond, the dominant character in the novel, is Brown's most fully drawn intellectual villain. He is distinguished from most later characters of this type by his prominent heterosexuality; a number of his radical theories seem designed to justify his lust. In later characters of this type, Ahab, Chillingworth, and the like, the heterosexual drive is either overwhelmed by the stronger drive of monomania or redirected by the intellect toward a new object, often latently homosexual. In Ormond, however, a highly refined intellect, which totally subdues his capacity to experience such emotions as love ("He denied the reality of that passion" [p. 115]), at times becomes itself the tool of his desire for sexual gratification.

In his scale of enjoyments, the gratifications which belonged to these [physical propensities] were placed at the bottom. Yet he did not entirely disdain them, and, when they could be purchased without the sacrifice of superior advantages, they were sufficiently acceptable. (p. 115).

The sacrifices alluded to here are, of course, those which accrue to the institution of marriage, an outworn tradition which Ormond criticizes frequently. In the final pages of the novel, Ormond's physical desire for Constantia becomes so compulsive that he considers killing her and violating her corpse. He says to her, "Thy decision [whether to commit suicide to avoid being raped by Ormond] is of moment to thyself, but of none to me. Living or dead, the prize that I have in view shall be mine." (p. 276). It is at this point that Constantia has the presence to drive her knife, not into her own heart, but into that of Ormond, thus destroying both his passion and his intellect.
The sexual motif, undeniably present in this novel, lends credence to those interested in demonstrating Brown's Gothicism. The superficial action, in which a fiendish and perverted villain pursues a chaste maiden, corners her in a deserted mansion, threatens her chastity only to be foiled at the last possible moment (although no hero intervenes to help), may appear to be wholly derived from the Gothic novel. But this represents only a small part of what takes place in the novel (the remainder concentrates on the struggles of the Dudley's against poverty and yellow fever and the reformist ideals of Ormond). That it was borrowed from the Gothic is probable. On the other hand, no character from Gothic fiction emerges as a model for the fully drawn character of Ormond, whose sexuality becomes dominant only toward the end of the novel following a long period during which his dominant characteristic has been his intellect.

As often occurs in later American novels, Ormond's mind dehumanizes by overcoming or subverting those faculties capable of producing sympathy. Constantia comes to understand this as she faces Ormond and wonders how to escape from him.

She felt that entreaty and argument would be vain; that all appeals to his compassion and benevolence would counteract her purpose, since, in the unexampled conformation of this man's mind, these principles were made subservient to his most flagitious designs. Considerations of justice and pity were made, by a fatal perverseness of reasoning, champions and bulwarks of his most atrocious mistakes. (pp. 274-275).

The language of this passage, despite its pomposity, skilfully reveals Ormond to be a victim of his own intellect rather than a willing criminal, an impression reinforced by his ability to delude himself into believing that his darkest crimes are beneficial to other people. "I have set an
engine in act to obliterate an obstacle to your [Constantia's] felicity, and lay your father at rest." (p. 273). Here is "compassion" perverted by "reasoning." At other times, a remnant of something like true sympathy appears momentarily in his character but is quickly overwhelmed by his intellect. Having driven his mistress, Helena, to suicide, Ormond discovers her body.

This, without doubt, is a rueful spectacle. Can it be helped? Is there in man the power of recalling her? There is none such in me. She is gone. Well, then, she is gone. If she were fool enough to die, I am not fool enough to follow her. I am determined to live and be happy notwithstanding. Why not? (p. 166).

The initial response of shocked sadness immediately gives way to a chain of cold rationalization. A part of the strength of Ormond's character (as of Ahab's), however, resides in his inability to be completely comfortable with the dictates of his reason; something human within him, though not strong enough to overcome his delusions, will occasionally reveal a kind of tenacious, if almost subconscious, despair. At times, Ormond, the arch-calculator, feels as if he himself has become an agent of some power beyond his control. "By what inscrutable influences are our steps guided!" (p. 150). On other occasions he experiences brief but devastating glimpses of his own depravity. For example, in one scene he places his left hand on his forehead and says to Constantia, "Catch you not a view of monsters that are starting to birth here?" (p. 247). Thus, he is not totally impervious to the evil within him, although he is powerless to resist its influence.

The ideas conjured up by Ormond's mind are similar in effect to those of later intellectual villains in that they serve mainly to free him from allegiance to established systems of ethical behavior. Much
of his discourse consists of rational attacks upon existing institutions, particularly marriage and religion. Of the latter Brown writes:

His [religious] disbelief was at once unchangeable and strenuous. The universe was to him a series of events connected by an undesigning and inscrutable necessity, and an assemblage of forms to which no beginning or end can be conceived. Instead of transient views and vague ideas, his meditations, on religious points, had been intense. Enthusiasm was added to disbelief, and he not only dissented but abhorred. (p. 176).

He is an ardent member of a secret society, based on the Illuminati, which is working for a total reformation of society, "the subversion of all that has hitherto been conceived elementary and fundamental in the constitution of man and of government." (pp. 244-245). Significantly, however, Ormond says little of the new system to be established by this society. "What were the moral or political maxims which this adventurous and visionary sect had adopted, .. he carefully concealed." (p. 245). The effect of his membership is not to commit him to a new code of ethics but to reinforce his liberation from the old, so that, in reality, he appears to owe allegiance only to himself. This freedom from normal restraint typifies the intellectual criminal in our early fiction.

Ormond also resembles later characters in his conception of his relationship with other people. He judges others by assessing the degree to which they can serve as tools for his intellect. "He wanted instruments and not partakers of his authority,—one whose mind was equal and not superior to the cogent apprehension and punctual performance of his will; one whose character was squared, with mathematical exactness, to his situation." (p. 124). Moreover, like later characters of this type, he enjoys some success, because of his superior intellect, in his attempts to control those closest to him. "His words were always accompanied
with gestures and looks and tones that fastened the attention of the hearer." (p. 252). There is an intensity to his conversation, augmented by a sinister subtlety of motive. "Ormond aspired to nothing more ar­dently than... to exercise absolute power over the conduct of others, not by constraining their limbs or by exacting obedience to his authority, but in a way of which his subjects should scarcely be conscious." (p. 136). As noted already, he eventually resorts to the overt force of blackmail in his manipulation of Craig, but his domination of Helena comes much nearer to fulfilling his ideals. "He had fashioned his treat­ment of Helena on sullen and ferocious principles. Yet he was able, it seemed, to mould her, by means of them, nearly into the creature that he wished." (p. 136). An analogy with Aylmer, the scientist in Hawthorne's "The Birthmark" who attempts to mold his wife into the perfect human specimen, is apparent in these lines.

As indicated above, Ormond is drawn in exceptional detail. In him, the "high-minded" villain, already foreshadowed by Carwin, emerges as a nearly completed portrait. Like later villains, he loses the capacity for sympathy and love, and he is powerless to resist the "monsters" spawned by his intellect. Moreover, he resembles later characters in his freedom from traditional moral restraints (such as those imposed by religion and marriage) and in his conception of other people as tools for his intellect. Only his overt sexuality and his failure to develop an obsessive preoccupation with a single intellectual quest (monomania) separate him from the great scholar-villains of the American renaissance.

In comparison with Ormond, Brown's third novel, Arthur Mervyn (May, 1799) seems somewhat fragile and superficial, at least with respect to its treatment of psychological themes. For convenience, I will discuss
both the original novel and its sequel, *Arthur Mervyn* (Part Two), as one work, although the second book did not appear until 1801. The book's only important evil character, Welbeck, is not nearly so fully drawn as Ormond, and he makes only a brief appearance in the second volume. What following the novel still enjoys rests primarily on Brown's nauseatingly vivid account of an epidemic of yellow fever and on R. W. B. Lewis's justifiable identification of Mervyn himself as the earliest Adamic character in our fiction.

Nonetheless, had Ormond not intervened, Welbeck would probably have seemed a more worthy follower of Carwin and Wieland in Brown's catalogue of criminals. He is Brown's most important naturally depraved villain; aside from Claggart, he is one of the few naturally depraved characters to play a leading role in a major American novel. His primary function is that of a benchmark against which to judge Mervyn's virtue, the general impression being that if Mervyn can retain his honesty in the face of such evil as that of Welbeck, he must be an exceptionally honest young man. Each of Welbeck's crimes is justified by the superficial motive of expediency, but each violates his volition, and Brown makes it clear that Welbeck is intelligent enough to get along well in the world as an honest businessman, were it not for his inborn liability to evil. Like Carwin, Welbeck reveals his shortcomings, most of which Mervyn is too naive to perceive from direct observation of his behavior, during a long confession inspired by his (Welbeck's) contemplation of his latest crime (the murder of Watson). His comment on his treatment of Watson reveals the disparity between his will and the effect of his actions. "I never intended him [Watson] harm, though I have torn from him his sister [Welbeck seduced and abandoned Watson's sister] and
friend, and have brought his life to an untimely close." The remainder of the confession is marked by Welbeck's recurrent references to his own depravity as a "cureless disease." (p. 88). He says such things as:

"The perverseness of my nature led me on from one guilty thought to another;" (p. 89). "such is the malignant destiny by which my steps have ever been pursued;" (p. 107). and "such was my incurable depravity." (p. 88). In his fullest explanation of his own nature, he recalls his consistent and inexplicable inability to behave virtuously.

What it was that made me thus, I know not. I am not destitute of understanding. My thirst of knowledge, though irregular, is ardent. I can talk and can feel as virtue and justice prescribe; yet the tenor of my actions has been uniform. One tissue of iniquity and folly has been my life; while my thoughts have been familiar with enlightened and disinterested principles. Scorn and detestation I have heaped upon myself. Yesterday is remembered with remorse. To-morrow is contemplated with anguish and fear; yet every day is productive of the same crimes and of the same follies. (p. 86).

Again, as in Carwin's confession, Brown in no way implies insincerity on the part of the confessor. On the contrary, he grants it something like the authority of a deathbed deposition by having Welbeck attempt suicide (unsuccessfully) immediately after his declaration to Mervyn of his remorse for his crimes.

Like Carwin and Ormond, Welbeck has been educated in Europe; his heavy accent is the characteristic to which Mervyn most often alludes. However, unlike them, he in no way seeks to rebel against existing institutions, and, given a vague resemblance between Arthur Mervyn and

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Caleb Williams, his conception at first appears to owe a great deal to Godwin. However, Welbeck is neither landed nor titled; he is not a fit representative of the old order, as is (say) Godwin's Falkland. He may more accurately be described as selfishly apolitical, unconcerned about what transpires beyond his own sphere of personal activity. His natural depravity reveals itself, partly through his inability to fulfill his own intentions, and partly through his extreme skill at deceiving others, a quality also evident in Craig, the naturally depraved minor villain of Ormond. Even Mervyn, innocent as he is, is soon made uneasy by his recognition of Welbeck's duplicity. At a party he observes Welbeck's behavior.

His entrance into this company appeared to operate like magic. His eyes sparkled; his features expanded into a benign serenity; and his wonted reserve gave place to a torrentlike and everflowing elocution. I marked this change in deportment with the utmost astonishment. So great was it, that I could hardly persuade myself that it was the same person. . . . Nothing was further from my expectations than that this vivacity was mere dissimulation and would take its leave of him when he left the company; yet this I found to be the case. The door was no sooner closed after him than his accustomed solemnity returned. (p. 74).

On several occasions Welbeck attempts to enlist Mervyn's aid in furthering his deceptions by enjoining him to secrecy. Both his need to deceive and his ability to do so successfully give Welbeck something in common with nearly all evil characters in early American fiction, without regard to the categories of villains established earlier. And Mervyn's ultimate response to him, which evolves from long contact with Welbeck, is perhaps typical of the kind of response authors normally seek to elicit from their portrayal of characters compelled to commit acts of evil. "I suspected and pitied the man." (p. 193). Starbuck says something like
this of Ahab.

Brown's final major novel, *Edgar Huntly*, was published in August, 1799, at the end of his frenzied eleven months of writing. In addition to the second part of *Arthur Mervyn*, he wrote two other late novels, *Jane Talbot* and *Clara Howard* (both 1801), but these revert to the level of schoolgirl romance represented by *Charlotte Temple* and are usually ignored by Brown's critics. Neither do they contain any very fully drawn examples of evil characters. On the other hand, with respect to the treatment of evil, *Edgar Huntly* is one of Brown's most interesting novels. It contains no single villain as fully portrayed as Ormond, but where Ormond appears to represent the forces of evil in a relatively healthy world, the world of *Edgar Huntly* is as topsy-turvy and nightmarish as any conceived by Poe. Fiedler discusses the atmosphere of instability which permeates the novel.

In this world of transformation, not only do unlikes turn into likes, but things themselves become their own opposites. The best motives lead to the worst ends: attempting to protect Mrs. Lorimer, Clithero kills her brother, almost kills her. The dead prove alive; Sarsefield, protector of Huntly, and Viatto, brother of Mrs. Lorimer, "start to life at the same moment;" while Huntly, . . . is himself apparently dead twice, rises twice to life. Friends become enemies, the protector the destroyer; Sarsefield almost kills Edgar even as Edgar tries to kill him. Through such an unstable world one must flee continually from foes known and unknown: from the lunatic and the brother inexplicably dedicated to evil, from the panther and the Indian and the unwittingly hostile friend—finally, from the principle of destruction in the very self.\(^{20}\)

In *Edgar Huntly* Brown brings together several different kinds of evil (not complementary as in *Wieland*, for here each type is self-sufficient)

\(^{20}\)Fiedler, p. 158.
to achieve a particularly terrifying view of the human condition. And yet, the actual crimes in the story are, for the most part, less serious than those which occur in Brown’s other novels.

Perhaps the simplest and most elemental source of evil in Brown’s fiction (as illustrated by born villains like Craig and Welbeck) is natural depravity. In *Edgar Huntly*, for the first time in major American fiction, natural depravity is identified not just as an individual trait but as a group trait belonging to an entire tribe of Indians. However, except for the fact that Brown’s Indians set a precedent for Cooper’s Mingos and Sioux and confirm Brown’s interest in native subjects, they are not especially noteworthy. Brown does not allow any one Indian character to emerge as different from the others, nor does he say very much about the Indians in general except to show that they can be counted upon to murder and plunder wherever they find an opportunity. Ironically, the panther Huntly encounters in a cave appears to be more dangerous than the Indians, who obediently fall for his tricks and are adept at making good targets of themselves. Nonetheless, in the world of *Edgar Huntly*, it is literally true that the only good Indian is a dead Indian.

Individual natural depravity in the novel is personified in the character of Arthur Wiatte, a relatively minor character who is at once Brown’s darkest and most implausible villain. One possible justification for his implausibility is that he does not actually appear in the story but is described by Clithero who may exaggerate his villainy. Again, however, Brown tends to confirm most of what Clithero says. Superficially, Wiatte resembles some of Brown’s other villains through his total inability to experience sympathy. Clithero calls him "a hoary
ruffian, to whom the language of pity was as unintelligible as the
gabble of monkeys," and says, "His heart was fortified against compunc-
tion, by the atrocious habits of forty years." (pp. 70-71). However,
other parts of Clithero's description are so extreme as to make Wiatte
a mere caricature of other characters of this type.

This man [Wiatte] was an exception to all the rules
which govern our judgments of human nature. He
exceeded in depravity all that has been imputed to
the archfear of mankind. His wickedness was without
any of those remorseful intermissions from which it
has been supposed that the deepest guilt is not
entirely exempt. He seemed to relish no food but
pure unadulterated evil. He rejoiced in proportion
to the depth of that distress of which he was the
author. (pp. 43-44).

Still, even given the excesses of the above description, Wiatte's evil
appears finally to be involuntary. Clithero later refers to his
(Wiatte's) depravity as an "incurable" malady. (p. 46).

The two most fully developed characters in the novel, Clithero and
Edgar Huntly himself, are both relevant to a discussion of involuntary
evil, even though neither can accurately be called a villain. Clithero's
evil exists almost entirely within his own mind; his only act of vio-
ence, the killing of Wiatte, is quite obviously justified on the
grounds of self defense. Immediately following this killing, however,
Clithero begins to think about the effect it will have on Mrs. Lorimer,
Wiatte's sister, who has developed the irrational conviction that her
own fate is inexorably bound up with that of her brother. He becomes
obsessed by the fear that she will die when she learns of her bro-
ther's death.

I was haunted to despair by images of death,
imaginary clamours, and the train of funeral
pageantry. I seemed to have passed forward
to a distant era of my life. The effects which were to come were already realized. The foresight of misery created it, and set me in the midst of the hell which I feared. (pp. 73-74).

In a chain of rationalization somewhat reminiscent of Ormond's justification for killing Constantia's father, Clithero is deluded by his intellect into believing that he can perform an act of kindness by murdering Mrs. Lorimer in her sleep and sparing her the knowledge of Wiatte's death. Once this conviction has seized him, he has no power to resist it. He hurries to her room, mistakenly identifies the sleeping form of his beloved Clarice as that of Mrs. Lorimer, and is about to bring down the dagger when Mrs. Lorimer herself intervenes to prevent the murder. Brown's use of mistaken identity at this point may mislead the reader into believing that Clithero's intended mercy killing would have been morally defensible and that his only error was in misidentifying his victim. But such an interpretation is refuted by subsequent parts of the novel. Mrs. Lorimer does not die when she learns of Wiatte's death; after mourning for her brother, she marries Sarsefield and begins rebuilding her life. And Clithero, thinking about his own behavior, is more appalled by the fact that he tried to kill Mrs. Lorimer than by his almost having accidentally slain Clarice.

Clithero is driven mad by his recognition that within his own being exists the capacity for involuntary evil. Like Carwin, he describes himself as possessed by some demon which has taken over his mind. "I care not, indeed, for your Huntly's doubts... Would to Heaven that my belief were groundless, and that I had no reason to believe my intellect to have been perverted by diabolical instigations." (p. 65). Recalling specifically his plan to murder Mrs. Lorimer, he
again denies personal volition. "Was it I that hurried to the deed? No. It was the demon that possessed me. My limbs were guided to the bloody office by a power foreign and superior to mine. I had been defrauded, for a moment, of the empire of my muscles." (p. 79). He is convinced that even long after the events alluded to above, he still has no power to control the evil within him. "The demon that controlled me at first is still in the fruition of power." (p. 35). And he upbraids Huntly for informing him of Mrs. Lorimer's continued existence. "If she be alive, then am I reserved for the performance of a new crime. My evil destiny will have it so." (p. 276). Throughout his long confession to Huntly, Clithero refers again and again to his inability to withstand a tendency toward evil generated by his own perverted intellect. And, as in Brown's other novels, the confessor appears to be sincere. In reflecting on what he has heard from Clithero, Huntly, at least, indicates his own belief that Clithero did not act in accordance with his volition. "It must at least be said that his will was not concerned in this transaction. He acted in obedience to an impulse which he could not control or resist." (p. 87). In Clithero, Brown has developed a potential villain so inhibited by guilt and circumstances that he is unable successfully to conclude any of his own evil schemes. However, the introspective recognition of the inability of the will to resist an internal drive toward criminality is, in this case, sufficient to destroy both sanity and life. Clithero commits suicide while he is contemplating some new crime against Mrs. Lorimer.

Edgar Huntly is the last character to recognize Clithero's madness, primarily because a bond of identity is established between them.
Both are subject to sleepwalking, a malady Huntly says is generated by a disturbed mind.

The incapacity of sound sleep denotes a mind sorely wounded. It is thus that atrocious criminals denote the possession of some dreadful secret. The thoughts, which considerations of safety enable them to suppress or disguise during wakefulness, operate without impediment, and exhibit their genuine effects, when the notices of sense are partly excluded and they are shut out from a knowledge of their entire condition. (p. 13).

The reader of Moby-Dick will be reminded of Ishmael's description of Ahab, staggering from his cabin like a Zombie, the iron control of his monomania temporarily suspended by imperfect sleep. The passage quoted above is ironic in that Huntly is not yet aware of his own sleepwalking. The sense of identification with Clithero, inspired by Huntly's eventual recognition that he too is a somnambulist, is reinforced by both characters' hiding important documents while sleepwalking and later believing that the documents have been stolen. For Huntly, however, despite Clithero's madness, the identification proves to be a saving factor.

Edgar Huntly is a potential intellectual villain in his own right, perhaps even a monomaniac. Initially, the arrival of Clithero provides Huntly with a focal object for a monomaniacal quest. Huntly has been embittered by the murder of his friend Waldegrave. When he first sees Clithero, he immediately suspects him of the murder and is transported back to the frenzied emotional condition he experienced at the time of the murder. "The insanity of vengeance and grief into which I was hurried, my fruitless searches for the author of this guilt, my midnight wanderings and reveries beneath the shade of that
fatal elm, were revived and reenacted." (p. 7). Like Hawthorne's Chillingworth and Ethan Brand, Huntly is able to convince himself that his quest can be carried out objectively. "I was principally stimulated by an ungovernable curiosity; yet, if I intended not the conferring of a benefit, I did not, at least, purpose the infliction of evil. I persuaded myself that I was able to exclude from my bosom all sanguinary or vengeful impulses." (pp. 28-29). And like Chillingworth and Brand, Huntly begins mercilessly probing the affairs of another human being.

Henceforth this man [Clithero] was to become the subject of my scrutiny. I was to gain all the knowledge, respecting him, which those with whom he lived and were the perpetual witnesses of his actions, could impart. For this end I was to make minute inquiries, and to put seasonable interrogatories." (p. 15).

During the course of this probing, however, Huntly begins to develop his sense of identity with Clithero and eventually becomes Clithero's advocate against others seeking vengeance against him. In Huntly's case the quest for an obscure piece of knowledge buried in the heart of another, normally a powerful dehumanizing force, serves to rehumanize him by revitalizing his capacity for sympathy. Upon confronting Clithero, Huntly remarks, "It is common for pity to succeed the bitterest suggestions of resentment." (p. 24). His development of fellow-feeling with the intended victim of his revenge establishes that balance between head and heart which Hawthorne considers essential for moral existence. Huntly's escape, through the agency of another character, from an intellectual compulsion to evil clearly foreshadows that of Holgrave in The House of the Seven Gables.
In conclusion, it may be said that Brown's fictional treatment of evil anticipates that of later authors with surprising accuracy. All four types of involuntary evil commonly found in later American fiction appear in his work: Natural depravity in the characters of Craig, Welbeck, and Wiatte; racial evil in the Indians of *Edgar Huntly*; inherited evil in Wieland; and intellectual evil in Carwin, Ormond, and Clithero. Brown's villains are typically compelled to acts of evil by forces often figuratively called "demons," but Brown makes it clear that his "demons" are not emissaries of Satan but are generated by the characters' own basic psychological makeup. Like later authors, Brown frequently points to the over-developed intellect, unchecked by human sympathy, as a major source of evil. While he does not portray true monomania, he approaches it in his portraits of Ormond and Edgar Huntly. Brown deserves a high place in the history of American literature, not for fathering "the American Gothic novel" or for importing Godwinian idealism, but for giving shape and substance to a theme which was to be important to most pre-Civil War American fiction, the theme of involuntary evil. Later authors would refine and intensify the theme, but they would make relatively few substantial changes on the model provided by Brown.
My decision to link in a single chapter the fiction of James Fenimore Cooper and that of Edgar Allan Poe requires perhaps some explanation. Certainly, it would be difficult to find in American literature two authors more different in temperament and in their general approach to the writing of fiction; Cooper plodding through novel after novel, Poe able to complete only one piece of sustained narrative. For the purposes of this study, however, the two authors are comparable in their handling of the theme of involuntary evil. The theme appears in the fiction of both, but in neither is it so prominent nor so clearly defined as it is in the works of the other three novelists under consideration. In both Cooper and Poe other issues (not, however, the same for both authors) tend to push involuntary evil to one side without entirely eclipsing it. What is a paramount theme for Brown, Hawthorne, and Melville, is in Cooper and Poe, simply present. On the other hand, to the extent that the theme does appear in their work, their treatment of it is consonant with that of the other three authors. The difference is more nearly a matter of emphasis than of substance.

The great misfortune of Cooper, like that of (say) Harold Stassen, has been his failure to be taken seriously by most modern readers, a result, partly of Mark Twain's devastating attack on Cooper's technique, and partly of the ease with which reader's on
their own can find obvious and often humorous weaknesses in style. 

Still, that Cooper develops characters of lasting literary worth, particularly Natty Bumppo who some see as a valid tragic character, has been argued by such scholars as R. W. B. Lewis and Robert E. Spiller, James Grossman, and others. To counter such humorously patronizing comments as Fiedler's ("Cooper had, alas, all the qualifications for a great American writer except the simple ability to write."\textsuperscript{1}) are several more serious appraisals, such as the following by Lewis: "For all the surface awkwardness and the nonsense, not less than half a dozen of Cooper's novels possess an amount of indestructible power: something we answer to even before we have spotted it; some image of experience we know to be fundamentally our own, or at least could wish that it were."\textsuperscript{2}

The most social-minded of our major early novelists, Cooper was less interested in psychology than in history, sociology, economics, and politics. Connected with these interests, of course, was Cooper's class-consciousness which has operated to the lasting detriment of his literary reputation. Henry Nash Smith believes that the greatest difficulty Cooper faced as a writer was the problem of reconciling his inherent faith in a class structure with the democratic ideals of freedom and equality. In The Pathfinder, according to Smith, Cooper ultimately failed to make a romantic hero out of Natty Bumppo because he could not grant Mabel Dunham enough refinement to function as a romantic heroine

\textsuperscript{1}Leslie A. Fiedler, Love and Death in the American Novel, Revised ed. (New York, 1966), p. 191.

and at the same time place her low enough on the social scale to be a fit match for the rough frontiersman. Smith concludes that Cooper was, at heart, a class-minded conservative.

Cooper, a consistent and explicit conservative in social theory despite his carefully limited endorsement of democracy, was quite willing to acknowledge that refinement and gentility were conceivable only in members of an upper class with enough wealth to guarantee its leisure, and a sufficiently secure social status to give it poise and assurance.

From this, one might justifiably expect to find no very sophisticated or comprehensive morality expressed in the works of Cooper.

However, class-consciousness is only a small part of Cooper's overall view of American culture. And some scholars insist that Cooper was concerned with "public morality." Maxwell suggests that the moral viewpoint of the Leatherstocking Tales was generated by Cooper's interest in politics, specifically the conflict between Hamilton and his opponents.

On the one hand we have the idea that human morality, naturally good, declines in proportion to the complexity and artificiality of society; and on the other that only restraint, the hope of reward or the fear of punishment, can neutralise the evil passions which predominate in human nature. . . . The disparity between promise and achievement has been commonly recognised as almost obsessively present in the American mind. . . . It is mainly around these basic antitheses that Cooper constructs the Leatherstocking novels.

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Bewley generally agrees with this suggestion and adds to politics the forces of economics and history as factors contributing to Cooper's moral view, at least as it is expressed in his European novels.

Cooper knew that if man had a fallen nature economics was the science in which one encountered it first. In the European novels he determined, therefore, to analyse the dangers he believed confronted America, but to do so in terms of a larger historical context than concentration on the national scene would permit, for he saw that these dangers had their roots and their counterparts in the cycle of European history. 7

Taken together, these two opinions indicate that questions of good and evil are not wholly absent from Cooper's fiction, although they may be connected with, and indeed inspired by, public issues more frequently than by the psychology of the individual. One need only read The Last of the Mohicans or The Bravo to discover a conflict between good and evil.

On the other hand, given Cooper's interest in public affairs and his conservatism, voluntary evil rather than involuntary evil would appear to be better suited to his purposes. Involuntary evil, as I have said earlier, tends to be anarchical in its implications, while voluntary evil poses no serious threat to social systems. Theoretically, a system can protect itself against voluntary evil by imposing punishments severe enough to offset any advantage an individual can reasonably expect to gain by committing a crime. So long as the potential criminal can be expected to behave rationally and so long as his chances of escaping punishment are slim, the system can, in

effect, persuade him that the commission of the crime is not in his own
best interest. However, since involuntary evil is compulsive, not
entered into by a process of rational deliberation, it is not subject
to such control. The involuntary criminal quite frequently is driven
to violate his own interest; he may, as in some of Poe's tales, even
seek punishment. From this, it is apparent that the causes of "public
morality" and "Hamiltonian conservatism," identified by critics as
Cooper's causes, may be served by the fictional portrayal of voluntary
evil but damaged by the portrayal of involuntary evil.

In actual practice, Cooper is able to make use of both types of
evil without doing violence to his own interests by adopting the simple
expedients either of showing social systems to be imperfect and thus
capable of fostering rather than combatting evil (of whatever type) or
of placing his villainous characters beyond the reach of any civilized
law. The Deerslayer, sometimes called Cooper's masterpiece despite
Mark Twain's ungentle treatment of it, can serve as a useful illustra-
tion of acts of evil generated by a corrupt system. Thomas Hutter and
Harry March twice make forays in quest of Indian scalps, preferably
those of women or children who put up less resistance than braves.
Since they rationally discuss their plans for these ventures and since
their motives are self-serving, their evil must be classified as volun-
tary. "Neither of these two rude beings, so ruthless in all things that
touched the rights and interests of the red-man... was much actuated

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by any other desire than a heartless longing for profit." (I, 265-266). The very fact that a profit is available from such an endeavor, however, is an indictment of the system. "The controlling principle is that one wrong will justify another. Their enemies paid for scalps, and this was sufficient to justify the colony for retaliating." (I, 78). Although Hutter and March act voluntarily, their volition is shaped, in part, by the system under which they exist, an outside force for which they are not personally responsible. Their evil, though voluntary, is partly beyond their own control.

In four of the Leatherstocking novels, excluding The Pioneers, true involuntary evil exists primarily in various tribes of bad Indians who function outside civilized systems: the Mingos, the Hurons, the Iroquois, and the Sioux. For Leatherstocking, and apparently for Cooper also, mere membership in one of these tribes is tantamount to being a villain. That Cooper's judgment of Indian tribes is erroneous and is based, for the most part, on the extremely biased accounts of a missionary named John Heckewelder, has been thoroughly documented. However, Cooper's uncritical acceptance of these materials, his use of them in several novels, coupled with similar treatments of Indians by Brown and of Blacks by Poe and Melville, reveals a particularly unpleasant racial characteristic of early American fiction. Of course, it can be argued that Edgar Huntly is not Brown, that Arthur Gordon Pym

9 All references to Cooper's novels in this chapter are to The Complete Works of James Fenimore Cooper, 32 vols. (New York, 1893).
is not Poe, that Amasa Dolano is not Melville, and that Leatherstocking is not Cooper. Indeed, most of the attacks on bad Indians in Cooper appear in dialogue, and the speaker is usually Natty Bumppo. In The Deerslayer, Natty's prejudice seems naive enough to be ironic. "I do not deny that there are tribes among the Indians that are naturally perverse and wicked, as there are nations among the whites. Now, I account the Mingos as belonging to the first, and the Frenchers, in the Canadas, to the last." (I, 37). Throughout the novel, Natty refers to members of the tribe as "riptyles" and "vagabonds," terms which, given Natty's dialect, seems almost humorous in connotation. The temptation is to credit Cooper with ironically poking fun at the prejudices of his young frontiersman. Finally, however, the opinions of the youthful Leatherstocking are born out by events; the Mingos in The Deerslayer really are "riptyles" and "vagabonds."

The same treatment of depraved tribes recurs in other novels in the Leatherstocking series. In The Last of the Mohicans Hawkeye says of the Hurons, "They are a thievish race, nor do I care by whom they are adopted; you can never make anything of them but skulks and vagabonds." (II, 35). In The Pathfinder his hatred of Mingos has become so exaggerated that he no longer bothers to recognize other classes of villains. Chingachgook corrects him when he wrongly identifies an Iroquois as a Mingo. Leatherstocking replies: "No matter, no matter; Iroquois, devil, Mingo, Mengwes, or furies—all are pretty much the same. I call all rascals Mingos." (III, 54). Still, Cooper in no way undercuts the biases of the scout. The Prairie, in which Leatherstocking reaches the end of his years, reveals him in the fruition of wisdom.
His eye has faded so much that he has had to resort to trapping as a means of support; he is no longer equal to being a hunter. But he can still see well enough to recognize "vagabonds" across a broad expanse of plain. "The creatur's are in open view; and a bloody band of accursed Siouxs they are, by their thieving look, and the random fashion in which they ride!" (V, 34). Again, there is no overt undercutting of Leatherstocking's racial views. In fact, in this novel Cooper seconds in his own words the judgment of his aged trapper. "From time immemorial the hands of the Sioux had been turned against their neighbors of the prairies; and even at this day, when the influence and authority of a civilized government are beginning to be felt around them, they are considered a treacherous and dangerous race." (V, 39). Cooper's Indians exist outside the range of civilized moral influences; their moral character derives its shape from tribal traits, either inborn or built up by traditions dating "from time immemorial." Whatever the source of these traits, however, they exist for Cooper as functions of race, and it may be said of Cooper, as it may be said of other early American novelists, that race alone can be a cause of involuntary evil.

Even given the racial bias of the Leatherstocking Tales, however, Cooper's Indians represent a significant advance over those of Brown, for Cooper, unlike Brown, permits some Indians to emerge as individuals with characteristics separating them from the rank and file of their tribes, albeit these characteristics are often simply exaggerations of tribal traits. Such characters as Chingachgook, Uncas, and Hard-Heart, produced by good tribes, become romanticized noble savages. To their
Inherited tribal gifts, they add an extra measure of intelligence and humanity. Conversely, Arrowhead, Mahtoree, and (especially) Magua, have their inherited tribal evil compounded by an extra dose of natural depravity (often reflected in their physical appearance) and by a fiendish intellect like that of Ormond or Chillingworth. Mahtoree has a "dark visage" and the "wanton and subtle manner with which the reptile is seen to play about its victim before it strikes." (V, 52). He is explicitly compared with Satan. "He stalked through the encampment, like the master of evil, seeking whom and what he should first devote to his fell purpose." (V, 55). All told, however, Mahtoree has redeeming characteristics of integrity and courage which tend to dilute his propensity for evil. The arch-villain of the Leatherstocking Tales is Magua. "So essentially the bad Indian," according to Fiedler, "that beside him Cooper's other villains seem scarcely to exist." 11

In conjuring up this demon of the forest Cooper makes use both of the tribal traits he borrowed from Heckewelder and of characteristics which other authors often ascribe to naturally depraved white villains and to intellectual villains. In appearance, Magua in some ways resembles Brown's Carwin, combining a general look of dishevelment with a peculiar intensity of the eyes, although he is certainly more frightening than Carwin.

There was an air of neglect about his person, like that which might have proceeded from great and recent exertion, which he had not yet found leisure to repair. The colors of the war-paint had blended in dark confusion about his fierce

11 Fiedler, p. 200.
countenance, and rendered his swarthy lineaments still more savage and repulsive than if art had attempted an effect which had been thus produced by chance. His eye, alone, which glistened like a fiery star amid lowering clouds, was to be seen in its state of native wildness. (II, 10).

Like Claggart, Magua possesses an expression powerful enough in itself to intimidate other characters, "a look so dark and savage, that it might in itself excite fear." (II, 37). Heyward cannot endure the look of Magua. "When the eyes of Heyward first met those of his recent guide, he turned them away in horror at the sinister though calm look he encountered." (II, 101). Magua's primary power for ill, however, resides in his cunning; like the monomaniacs of Hawthorne and Melville, he is endowed with a superior intellect unfettered by any allegiance to a traditional moral code. "He was far above the more vulgar superstitions of his tribe." (II, 315). He uses his intellect and his understanding of tribal customs to gain control of others and to dehumanize them. "Magua had so artfully blended the natural sympathies with the religious superstition of his auditors, that their minds, already prepared by custom to sacrifice a victim to the manes of their countrymen, lost every vestige of humanity in a wish for revenge." (II, 314). He loses the normal human desire for sleep. "While others slept, . . he neither knew nor sought repose." (II, 341). Instead, he is driven by his mind to pace about the campground. "At such moments it would not have been difficult to have fancied the dusky savage the Prince of Darkness, brooding on his own fancied wrongs and plotting evil." (II, 341-342). All of these characteristics, including the explicit association of Magua with Satan, are analogous to those of
intellectual and naturally depraved characters created by Brown, Hawthorne and Melville.

And like the characters of other authors, Magua lacks satisfactory motivation for his crimes, as is indicated by "fancied wrongs" in the passage quoted above. The only excuse he offers for his behavior is an extremely flimsy desire for revenge against Munro who has had him whipped for acts he committed under the influence of "fire-water."

"Was it the fault of Le Renard that his head was not made of rock? Who gave him the fire-water? Who made him a villain?" (II, 116). He implies that a single encounter with the effects of fire-water was sufficient to transform him from a virtuous brave into a villain and that he remains a villain because Munro punished him for acting like a villain in the first place. A second possible motivation, currently finding much favor among Cooper scholars, is the so-called "hidden theme" of The Last of the Mohicans, the theme of miscegenation. The theme is most clearly expressed through the sexual attraction which exists between Uncas and Cora. Lacking the approbation of Hawkeye, the moral spokesman of the novel, the relationship must end tragically, the implication being that interracial marriage is sinful. It seems doubtful, however, that this theme is of real importance to the character of Magua. Uncas, a completely human character, experiences ordinary human desires, but it is extremely unusual for characters of Magua's type to retain a normal sex drive; as has been mentioned earlier, such a drive usually is either subordinated to the intellect or redirected. Magua's failure to seek sleep indicates that his human desires have given way to the dictates of his mind. When Magua invites Cora to
share his wigwam, he is seeking, not to satisfy his sexual appetite, but to gain a means of revenge against Munro, as he explains to Cora. "The daughter of Munro would draw his water, hoe his corn, and cook his venison. The body of the gray-head would sleep among his cannon but his heart would lie within the reach of the knife of Le Subtil." (II, 119). Magua's suggestion of a sexual relationship between himself and Cora, then, is not a new motive for evil but simply an expression of his original motive, already shown to have a flimsy basis in "fancied wrongs." He is, finally, a character driven by an inherent malignancy compounded by a dehumanizing intellect, said by Natty to be "possessed of an evil spirit that no power short of Omnipotence can tame." (II, 267).

The great irony in the characterization of Magua and, for me, the most interesting aspect of his portrayal, is that he is a savage. In the hands of Brown, Hawthorne, and Melville, involuntary evil like that of Magua is most frequently generated by long years in European libraries, or by membership in secretive rationalist societies. Even Babo, the one Melville character who is both an intellectual villain and a member of a "savage" race, has had his European training to explain his superlative skill at deception. But Magua combines all the characteristics of a civilized villain with a uniquely uncivilized personal history. Given the normal viewpoint of American authors he is an anomaly. That he nonetheless exists is perhaps best explained by recalling Cooper's conservatism, which could not have been served by an intellectual villain spawned by the American social system. The spread of American civilization, however, is served so long as Magua
remains a kind of evil separate from it, if touched at all, touched by
the corrupt system of the French and by British fire-water, which are
themselves alien to Cooper's own system. Nagua at once represents
Cooper's closest approach to a treatment of involuntary evil like that
of the other authors included in this study and illustrates the degree
to which an essentially political point of view could modify that
treatment.

As Fiedler has said, Cooper's other villains seem pale in compar-
ison with Nagua. He sometimes includes white naturally depraved charac-
ters in his novels, but they are usually secondary, of so little im-
portance that they represent no serious threat to his social views. In
The Prairie, Ishmael Bush, an exploiter like Harry March and Thomas
Hutter, is quite obviously more virtuous and more adequately motivated
than his companion, Abiram White. White is quite comparable to Thomas
Craig in Ormond or Arthur Watte in Edgar Huntly, a melodramatic stage
villain whose lack of motivation is related to his relative lack of im-
portance. He is variously referred to as Ishmael's "ill-looking assis-
tant," his "gloomy associate," his "forbidding-looking" brother-in-law,
and his "savage-looking" helper. His life has been passed "in the
commission of a thousand mean and insignificant villainies." (V, 325).
At the time of the novel, however, his villainy has finally reached full
flower in his instigation of a sinister and impractical kidnapping and
his murder of one of Ishmael's sons. Like Claggart, he sees goodness
and is envious of it but has no power to change his own evil temperament.
Even the dull Ishmael seems to understand this when he says to Abiram,
"You want to pray! But of what use will it be... to serve God five
minutes and the devil an hour." (V, 97). Unable to repent, Abiram con­tinues his acts of villainy, although he seems aware that they will re­sult in eternal damnation. "[Abiram] stole a furtive and involuntary glance at the placid sky... as if he expected to see the Almighty eye itself beaming from the heavenly vault." (V, 97).

Almost a twin to White is Kit Dillon in The Pilot, a chameleon villain whose complexion by turns is black ("scornful eyes of black, and skin of the same color" VII, 63), "yellow," "sallow," and "livid." Like that of White, Dillon's villainy is weakly motivated and appears to result from his temperament, "in which malignant anger was... mingled with calculated humility." (VII, 113). When his plots are suc­cessful, Dillon engages in insufferable gloating. "The sullen, gloomy features of Dillon were seen as he advanced along the lower passage, with an expression of malicious exultation hovering above his dark brow, that denoted his secret satisfaction." (VII, 175). When they fail, he can almost be heard to mutter, "Curses, foiled again."

The captive now availed himself of the circum­stance [he has just been untied] to bury his features in the folds of his attire, where he brooded over the events of the last few hours with that mixture of malignant passion and pusillanimous dread of the future that formed the chief ingredients of his character. (VII, 278).

Like White, Dillon is powerless to overcome his propensity for evil. As he faces death he is admonished to trust in God. "'God!' echoed Dillon, in the madness of his frenzy; 'I know no God! there is no God that knows me!'" (VII, 294).

The Pilot contains a second kind of dark character, repeated in
The Red Rover, who is at once more complex and more significant than secondary naturally depraved characters like Kit Dillon. It requires no great imaginative effort to envision the brooding John Paul Jones as a forerunner of Melville's Ahab. Like Ahab, he is endowed with a "ponderous heart" and a "globular brain," and his immediate motivation is a desire for revenge, as he is told by Alice Dunscombe, a woman whose love he sacrifices to his intellectual purposes.

Though ye are at times, and I may say almost always, as mild and even as the smoothest sea over which ye have ever sailed, yet God has mingled in your nature a fearful mixture of fierce passions, which, roused, are more like the southern waters when troubled with the tornado. It is difficult for me to say how far this evil spirit may lead a man who has been goaded by fancied wrongs to forget his country and home, and who is suddenly clothed with power to show his resentments. (VII, 151).

In the novel Jones, despite his "evil spirit," does nothing that can be truly described as evil, unless it be his spurning of Alice. He is, at any rate, no villain. But he is composed of those characteristics which Brown, Hawthorne, and Melville usually assign to their intellectual villains. He is a sleepless, driven character, obsessed by "fancied wrongs." He attempts to transcend human limitations by performing seemingly impossible acts of daring. He possesses a visionary mind which overcomes his natural feelings; his head dominates his heart. "This singular man, in whose breast the natural feelings... had so long been smothered by the visionary expectations of a wild ambition, and perhaps of fierce resentments, pursued his course, in deep abstraction." (VII, 380-381). The portrait of Jones lacks only an act sufficiently destructive for damnation to be that of a typical intel-
lectual villain.

The hero-villain of The Red Rover, Captain Heidegger, is in large part, a more complete version of John Paul Jones. Neither Jones nor Heidegger has aroused a great deal of critical interest, primarily because critics have been content to go no farther than to point out the obvious similarities between them and the Byronic hero. The opinion expressed by George Dekker is typical: "Unfortunately, the character and traits of the Rover are too derivative [from Byron] for comfort."¹²

My quibble is not with the substance of Dekker's opinion but with his implication that the Rover, because he is Byronic, may be dismissed as unimportant. For there is every indication that Cooper's conception of the Rover was at least one of the forces which influenced Melville during the spring of 1850 when he was transforming Moby Dick from the travel-adventure he had promised Duyckinck into the symbolic novel it finally became. The reader who knows Moby Dick well will find numerous parallels in The Red Rover: a description of the power of a breaching whale and of "voracious" sharks; a captain who "stood alone, none presuming to approach the spot where he had chosen to plant his person;" (VIII, 272). a cosmopolitan crew selected from "among all the different people of the Christian world" (VIII, 372). (Melville, of course, includes the pagan world also); a young cabin boy who alone is able to awaken the dormant affection of his captain. And the Rover's ship, The Dolphin, is rumored to possess a supernatural immortality like that

which legend ascribes to the white whale in *Moby Dick*.

It is whispered, . . , that she lay under the guns of a fifty for an hour, and seemingly, to all eyes, she sunk like hammered lead to the bottom. But just as everybody was shaking hands, and wishing his neighbor joy at so happy a punishment coming over the knaves, a West-Indiaman came into port, that had been robbed by the Rover on the morning after the night in which it was thought they had all gone into eternity together. (VIII, 14).

That these resemblances are more than coincidental is suggested by Melville's publication in March of 1850 of a brief article on *The Red Rover*. According to Leon Howard, "Insignificant though the note itself is, it nevertheless indicates that Melville had been interested in Cooper's avowed effort to free the sea novel from the influence of Smollett by giving it a certain legendary flavor." 13

Captain Heidegger in no way approaches the magnitude or power of Ahab. His relationship to Ahab, however, is more like that of a rough pencil sketch to a finished oil portrait than like that of two finished portraits of different subjects. Like Ahab, he has lost the capacity for enjoyment; the spoils of his piracy hold no charm for him. Like Ahab, he is extremely moody, often going to his cabin in a fit of abstraction which makes him impervious to the existence of other people. His avowed motive is resentment of the British navy, but it becomes more and more apparent, as he continually takes unnecessary risks, that he is mainly interested in testing and extending his own powers, that in attacking ships far stronger and far better armed than his own, he is defying his limits, that he is, in effect, attempting to strike through

the mask. He does not, however, voluntarily choose this way of life. He says in justification of his behavior, "Think you we are to blame, if our temperaments incline more to evil than power is given to resist?" (VIII, 333). And, as happens frequently in American fiction, the source of the Rover's evil may be traced to the domination of his feelings by his intellect. In one scene, Wilder, the virtuous young hero of the novel who is continually overshadowed by the Rover, attempts to appeal to the Captain's sympathy.

He [Wilder] witnessed the short, severe struggle that softened the rigid muscles of the Rover's countenance; and then he saw the instant, cold, calm composure which settled on every one of its disciplined lineaments. He knew, at once that the feelings of the man were smothered in the duty of the chief, and more was unnecessary to teach him the hopelessness of his condition. (VIII, 446).

The hopelessness of Wilder's attempt to penetrate the iron will of his Captain in this scene will remind the reader of the similar plight of Starbuck in "The Symphony" chapter of Moby Dick. From all of this, one receives the impression that Cooper's inspiration for The Red Rover must have been very much like Melville's for Moby Dick but that he simply lacked the artistry and passion to realize the full potential from this inspiration.

Two other novels by Cooper, Lionel Lincoln and The Bravo, are relevant to the subject of involuntary evil. Lionel Lincoln, despite some fine historical description, is among Cooper's greatest artistic failures, as James Grossman explains.

At the denouement Cooper by a stroke of melodrama reverses the entire meaning of the story. Ralph is revealed as the father of Lionel and of the
illegitimate half-wit Job Pryce. Also, and more amazingly, Ralph, who at the beginning seemed to be the personification of mellow rational wisdom so tolerant that he can find kinship even with the poor half-wit, turns out to be a violent maniac.14 Despite its completely illogical ending, however, Lionel Lincoln is Cooper's fullest treatment of the power of family corruption, introduced by Brown in Wieland, and fully developed by Hawthorne in The House of Seven Cables. Owing partly to the machinations of the sinister Mrs. Lechmere, Lionel Lincoln's aunt, his mother has been driven to an early grave and his father to a madhouse. His father's insanity has also resulted in part, however, from intemperate study. "The grief of the husband took a direction towards religion; but unhappily, instead of deriving from his researches the healing consolation in which our faith abounds, his mind became soured by the prevalent but discordant views of the attributes of the deity." (XX, 53). The madness of the father develops into what David Davis calls a "monomania," the object being a desire for revenge against Mrs. Lechmere.15 Lionel's own liability to the intellectual morbidity which has destroyed his father is illustrated first by a dream "which partook of the ghastly horrors of the dead," (XX, 189). and later by his irrational sense of foreboding as he prepares for his wedding to Cecil Dynexor. "He was certainly not entirely free from a touch of that melancholy and morbid humor which has been mentioned as the

characteristic of his race, nor did he always feel the less happy be­
cause he was a little miserable," (XX, 264-265). Eventually, the
melancholy alluded to above takes such complete control of him that
he despairs of remaining virtuous or sane. "'I shall go mad! I shall
go mad!' cried Lionel, in ungovernable mental anguish, as he paced the
floor, in violent disorder. 'There are moments when I think that the
curse which destroyed the father, has already lighted on the son!'" (XX,
391). Such is not to be the case, however; like Hawthorne's Holgrave,
Lincoln escapes the snares of involuntary evil through the love of a
good woman.

**Lionel Lincoln** is not Cooper's final word on the theme of inherited
evil. The theme is again developed, although in an altered form in The
**Bravo**, a novel which scholars have for a long time been attempting to
rescue from oblivion without notable success. Artistically the novel
has been, with justification, defended as Cooper's greatest novel. Its
dominant theme, the dangers of a commercial oligarchy, is both powerful
and surprisingly modern, enough so to make it comparable to such novels
as 1984 and Catch-22, although it quite obviously is tougher going for
the reader than either of these. In The Bravo Cooper broadens the
theme of inherited evil from family to entire society. The citizens
of Venice are formed to evil by the weight of tradition, too heavy to
be resisted by the individual, but a tradition which transcends family
boundaries. No character in the novel is totally free from the in­
fluence of this tradition. Perhaps the most illustrative example of
its effects, however, is the case of Signor Soranzo, a basically
virtuous patrician, who, as soon as chance places him in a position
of power, begins to feel the insidious influence of the system.

The Signor Soranzo was far from understanding the full effects of the system he was born to uphold. Even Venice paid homage to public opinion, and held forth to the world a false picture of her true state maxims. Still many of those which were too apparent to be concealed were difficult of acceptance with one whose mind was yet untainted by practice; and the young senator rather shut his eyes on their tendency, or, as he felt their influence in every interest which environed him, but that of poor, neglected, abstract virtue whose rewards were so remote, he was fain to seek out some palliative or some specious and indirect good, as the excuse for his acquiescence. (XXIII, 262-263).

Unable to resist the system, Signor Soranzo seeks to assuage his own conscience through rationalization. His rationalizations are only partly successful. "Without being conscious of the reason, he felt sad, for he had taken the first step in that tortuous and corrupting path, which eventually leads to the destruction of all those generous and noble sentiments, which can only flourish apart from the sophistry and fictions of selfishness," (XXIII, 381). There is now indication, however, that he follows this path voluntarily, for there is no evidence that his free will remains operative after he becomes enmeshed in the bureaucracy of Venice; he "was now no more than the creature of the system." (XXIII, 358). And the system corrupts because there is no effective force to prevent it from corrupting. "There is no security against oppression and wrong in a state, but the fear of God, or the fear of man. Of the first, Venice hath none, for too many souls share the odium of her sins; and as for the last, her deeds are hid from their knowledge," (XXIII, 208). The theme of The Bravo, then, is the force of evil by tradition, here broadened from a family
matter to a national matter. Some feel that in revealing the corruption of Venice, Cooper was issuing a warning that a similar kind of corruption was possible for the similarly secretive and commercially-oriented system of the United States. If so, Cooper's preface indicates that he was looking far enough into the future to envision a government by committee, grown too large and too insulated from popular opinion to be called a democracy.

Its objects are to demonstrate the manner in which men get entangled in the meshes of mystifications, when even the best intentioned become the subjects of circumstances; and to expose the irresponsible nature of an aristocratical form of government, wherein the odium of the basest acts is made to rest on a soulless corporation, which, to repeat an idea of the work itself, has neither the advantage of being tempered by the personal qualities of the chief of state, as sometimes happens in a despotism, nor that of being subject to the human impulses of the majority, as is the case in a democracy.

Whether The Bravo should be taken as extremely prophetic or as simply the expression of the potential for involuntary evil accruing to members of any oligarchy which subverts or overwhms their wills is not of major importance to the purposes of this study. Rather, the interesting aspect of The Bravo is that it successfully broadens the theme of inherited evil from a familial issue into a political issue.

As was stated at the outset, involuntary evil is less central to the works of Cooper than to the works of some of the other authors, but is still of some importance. All four types of villains may be found in Cooper's novels; while his conception of natural depravity, as

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embodied in White and Dillon, may be thin, his anticipation of Hawt-
thorne's and Melville's intellectual villains and his extension of
inherited evil establish for his works a definite, if limited, place
in the development of involuntary evil as a continuing theme in Ameri-
can fiction.

Poe

A thematic analysis of the fiction of Poe is, for several reasons,
a more elusive task than is a similar investigation of any of the other
authors under consideration here. Poe has given rise to such a variety
of interpretations that some scholars now seem to find the history of
opinions about his work to be at least as interesting as the work it-
self. No other early American author has inspired so many ingenious
but still plausible interpretations as has Poe. There is, for exam-
ple, Richard Wilbur's convincingly developed argument that many of
Poe's tales, especially "Ms found in a Bottle" and "The Fall of the
House of Usher" are allegorical representations of the process of
going to sleep, a process which liberates the imagination from the body
and the senses, symbolized by Poe's architecture. 17 Maurice Beebe makes
no such division between imagination and body and explains that Roderick
Usher's gradual decline and eventual death are emblematic of the con-
tracting of the universe into "perfect oneness," as predicted by Poe in
Eureka. 18 And Edward Davidson interprets Usher's behavior as suicidal;

18 Maurice Beebe, "The Universe of Roderick Usher," The Personalist,
XXXVII (Spring 1956), 147-160.
he says that Usher seeks to escape, not from body and senses, but from a corrupted mind.\(^{19}\)

In addition to the widely divergent opinions of scholars, Poe's own comments on his art seem at first to discourage an attempt to discover thematic continuity in his work. In connection with poetry he says that one of the greatest fallacies of American poetic theory has been the insistence that truth is the main province of the poet. "It has been assumed, tacitly and avowedly, directly and indirectly, that the ultimate object of all Poetry is Truth," (VI, 9-10).\(^{20}\) This assumption Poe calls "the heresy of The Didactic" and answers it by arguing "that Beauty (not truth) is the sole legitimate province of the poem." (VI, 41). For the most part, Poe's poetic theories agree with his theories on prose fiction; he reserves the essay as the genre concerned with ideas. The author of a story, like the poet, is concerned primarily, not with meaning, but with "effect." "Having deliberately conceived a certain single effect to be wrought, he then invents such incidents, he then combines such events, and discusses them in such tone as may best serve him in establishing this preconceived effect." (VII, 38-39). A kind of aesthetic power, to which absolute unity is essential, appears to be Poe's main purpose. However, when he begins to explain what he means by "effect," it becomes apparent that one function of unity is to communicate a focussed thought. Poe says that

\(^{19}\) Edward Davidson, "Introduction," Selected Writings of Edgar Allan Poe (Boston, 1956), p. xvi.

\(^{20}\) All references to Poe's work in this chapter are to The Works of Edgar Allan Poe, ed. Edmund Clarince Stedman and George Edward Woodberry, 10 vols. (New York, 1894-1895).
when the advice quoted above is adhered to assiduously, "The idea of
the tale has been presented unblemished." (emphasis mine) (VII, 39).
Despite his overt attack on didacticism, Poe acknowledges meaning to
be inseparable from effect, at least in prose fiction. What he denies
is not that stories should contain themes but that an author should try
to instruct his readers.

Among Poe's earliest and most friendly critics was Charles Baudel­
aire. What is often forgotten is that Baudelaire, while he admired many
aspects of Poe's work, selected as Poe's greatest contribution to lit­
erature the American author's treatment of a single theme, involuntary
evil. Both because of what he says and the vitality with which he says
it, Baudelaire is worth quoting at some length.

More important than anything else: we shall see
that this author, product of a century infatuated
with itself, child of a nation more infatuated
with itself than any other, has clearly seen, has
imperturbably affirmed the natural wickedness of
man. There is in man, he says, a mysterious force
which modern philosophy does not wish to take in-
to consideration; nevertheless, without this name-
less force, without this primordial bent, a host
of human actions will remain unexplained, inexplic-
able. These actions are attractive only because
they are bad or dangerous; they possess the fas-
cination of the abyss. This primitive, irre-
sistible force is natural Perversity, which makes
man constantly and simultaneously a murderer and
a suicide, an assassin and a hangman;—for he adds,
with a remarkably satanic subtlety, the impossi-
bility of finding an adequate rational motive for
certain wicked and perilous actions could lead us
to consider them as the result of the suggestions
of the Devil, if experience and history did not
Teach us that God often draws from them the
establishment of order and the punishment of
scoundrels;—after having used the same scoundrels
as accomplices! such is the thought which, I
confess, slips into my mind, an implication as
inevitable as it is perfidious. But for the
present I wish to consider only the great forgotten truth—the primordial perversity of man—and it is not without a certain satisfaction that I see some vestiges of ancient wisdom return to us from a country from which we did not expect them. It is pleasant to know that some fragments of an old truth are exploded in the faces of all these obsequious flatterers of humanity, of all these humbugs and quacks who repeat in every possible tone of voice: "I am born good, and you too, and all of us are born good!" forgetting, no! pretending to forget, like misguided egalitarians, that we are all born marked for evil! 21

Baudelaire, admittedly, writes at some distance from the literature itself, and his enthusiasm suggests that he may be saying more about his own ideas than about those contained in the fiction of Poe. However, a sampling of selected conclusions from other critics and an examination of several of the tales tend to support his opinion that moral perversity is a major issue in Poe.

Among more modern critics, Allen Tate identifies one theme in Poe's tales as the same intellectual evil already explored in the novels of Brown and Cooper, "the intellect moving in isolation from both love and the moral will, whereby it declares itself independent of the human situation in the quest of essential knowledge." 22 And James Gargano offers an illustration of the type of evil Tate has in mind by examining the character of Montresor in "The Cask of Amontillado."

"His reasoned, 'cool' intelligence weaves an intricate plot which, while ostensibly satisfying his revenge, despoils him of humanity. His impec-

cably contrived murder, his weird mask of goodness in an enterprise of evil, and his abandonment of all his life energies in one pet project of hate convict him of a madness which he mistakes for the inspiration of genius." Gargano ascribes to Montresor all the classic symptoms of monomania.

In fact, Poe's theme of moral perversity is virtually the same as the intellectual evil portrayed by the other authors under consideration. The first half of "The Imp of the Perverse" contains Poe's longest expository statement on the meaning of "perverseness," an apparently reasonable analysis later undercut by the reader's recognition that the explanation is provided, not by Poe, but by a narrator who himself is about to be executed for a murder he has been driven to confess by the spirit of perverseness. Since all of the tales in which perverseness is clearly an issue are narrated by criminally insane persons, Poe's own views on the subject are somewhat elusive. The reader cannot finally be sure whether Poe's narrators are in fact driven to acts of evil, or whether, in retrospect, they attempt to rationalize their guilt by denying that their crimes have been voluntary. On the other hand, the narrators seem sincerely to believe their own explanations; if they are rationalizing, they succeed in misleading, not only their auditors, but also themselves. And something of the authority of death-bed confessions accrues to their accounts, usually issued on the eve of their executions. Further authority is provided by the

similarity of the explanations provided by various narrators of separate tales; they tend to reinforce each other to the extent that, even given their mental agitation, their ideas about perversity appear to coincide with those of Poe.

The narrator of "The Imp of the Perverse" introduces perverseness as "an innate and primitive principle of human action" and later calls it "a radical, a primitive impulse—elementary." (II, 39). It at first appears to be indistinguishable from what has elsewhere been called natural depravity. But the narrator ascribes several other attributes to perverseness which differentiate it from natural depravity and place it in the category of intellectual evil. Where natural depravity tends to be static (the character is born evil, lives evil, and dies evil), intellectual evil is dynamic or progressive. A character gradually inclines toward it until, through some decisive act, he crosses the line between cold intellectuality and villainy. Poe's theme of perverseness is dynamic rather than static. "The impulse increases to a wish, the wish to a desire, the desire to an uncontrollable longing, and the longing, . . .is indulged." (II, 41). In the intellectual villain, thought is subverted to the degree that the character cannot save himself from committing destructive acts, although he may be saved by some other character. The naturally depraved character, of course, is beyond redemption. Poe's narrator illustrates his theory of perverseness by citing the example of a man on the edge of a cliff, obviously analogous to a character tottering on the brink of a moral abyss.

Because our reason violently deters us from the brink, therefore do we most impetuously approach it. There is no passion in nature so demonically
impatient, as that of him who, shuddering upon the edge of a precipice, thus meditates a plunge. To indulge, for a moment, in any attempt at thought, is to be inevitably lost. . . . If there be no friendly arm to check us, . . . we plunge, and are destroyed." (II, 43).

As is typical of intellectual evil, because the reason is subverted the character cannot voluntarily resist a destructive impulse, but he still may be saved by someone else. In addition the narrator reveals his scholarly turn of mind when he describes the care with which he planned a murder.

It is impossible that any deed could have been wrought with a more thorough deliberation. For weeks, for months, I pondered upon the means of the murder. I rejected a thousand schemes, because their accomplishment involved a chance of detection. At length, in reading some French memoirs, I found an account of a nearly fatal illness that occurred to Madame Pilau, through the agency of a candle accidentally poisoned." (II, 43).

And finally, having committed a perfect crime, the narrator is overcome by an irresistible impulse to confess, which, because it gains total possession of his mind, may be likened to a monomania, a form of madness peculiar, in American fiction, to high-minded characters.

Two other tales, "The Tell-Tale Heart" and "The Black Cat," contain narrators driven to monomania by the spirit of perverseness. As is often the case with monomaniacs, the narrator of "The Tell-Tale Heart" believes that some of his faculties have actually been intensified by his madness. "The disease had sharpened my senses—not destroyed—not dulled them." (II, 65). His description of the way in which his monomania has developed, in gradual stages with no logical cause, points to perverseness as a source, and his calling his plan to
kill the old man an "idea" emphasizes the intellectual side of his evil.

It is impossible to say how first the idea entered my brain; but once conceived, it haunted me day and night. Object there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold I had no desire. I think it was his eye! yes, it was this! One of his eyes resembled that of a vulture—a pale blue eye, with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold; and so by degrees—very gradually—I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye for ever. (II, 65).

The "idea" of murder is promulgated by a perverted intellect which unnaturally abstracts the eye of the old man, called "his Evil Eye," from the rest of his being. The narrator claims, perhaps hollowly, to "love" the old man and later to "pity" him, but these feelings, if they exist, are easily overcome by a fascination with the obsessive object. The narrator is unable to carry out his projected crime when the old man is asleep because then the eye is closed, and the old man appears as a human being to the narrator. Once the eye has been opened, however, by the narrator's subconsciously intentional waking of his victim, it becomes the totality of the old man's being, his humanity completely fading from the narrator's vision.

It was open—wide, wide open—and I grew furious as I gazed upon it. I saw it with perfect distinctness—all a dull blue, with a hideous veil over it that chilled the very marrow in my bones; but I could see nothing else of the old man's face or person; for I had directed the ray as if by instinct, precisely upon the damned spot. (II, 69).

There is clearly a parallel between the killing of the old man and the death of Georgiana in Hawthorne's "The Birthmark." In both stories, a character marred by a single blemish becomes totally identified with
that blemish by another character, and the second character becomes so fascinated by the flaw that he is more than willing to sacrifice the life of the first to be rid of it. Relevant, also, is the reflected view of herself Hester sees in a suit of armor at Governor Bellingham's mansion in *The Scarlet Letter*, her humanity overwhelmed by the visually enlarged letter at a time when she, too, is in danger of becoming a head-dominated character with a monomaniacal focus on the symbolic "A."

"The Tell-Tale Heart" is a fragile, contrived story, but it provides an important link between Poe and Hawthorne.

In "The Black Cat" the narrator explicitly identifies perverseness as the source of his crimes, although the way has been prepared by intemperance. He describes himself as initially "noted for the docility and humanity of [his] disposition. [His] tenderness of heart was even so conspicuous as to make [him] the jest of [his] companions." (II, 48-49). From this, natural depravity may be ruled out as a source of his evil. His first act of violence, the removal of an eye from his pet cat (not, in this case, an "Evil Eye"), is apparently abetted but not caused by intoxication. "The fury of a demon instantly possessed me. I knew myself no longer. My original soul seemed, at once, to take its flight from my body; and a more than fiendish malevolence, gin-nurtured, thrilled every fibre of my frame." (II, 51). The sense of being possessed and of losing one's soul expressed here is reminiscent of the state Clithero describes in *Edgar Huntly*, and, of course, it foreshadows the condition of Ahab when he bursts from his cabin in a kind of semi-sleep, his soul separated from his will. It is immediately after this surgery that the narrator says, "And then came, as
if to my final and irrevocable overthrow, the spirit of PERVERSENESS," (II, 52). One apparently unintended implication of this is that one need not be perverted to take a pocket knife to his pet cat. A more reasonable conclusion, however, is that through his attack on the cat, the narrator begins to understand the degree to which his own actions are controlled by perverseness. The actual object of his monomania is a second cat, similar in all respects to the first which the narrator finally hangs except that its breast carries a white splotch shaped like a gallows. Again, the one characteristic is abstracted to become the only characteristic, the object of obsession, and the narrator's whole being strives to remove this object, as was true also of "The Tell-Tale Heart." The combination of perverseness and an overly intense focus, both connected with the abstracting faculty of his mind, culminate in his murder of his wife. That his monomania has thoroughly dehumanized him is shown by his failure to experience guilt after the murder. "My happiness was supreme! The guilt of my dark deed disturbed me but little." (II, 61).

A second type of involuntary evil present in Poe's tales and most fully developed in "The Fall of the House of Usher" is that inherited from the family. For Poe, however, an inherited tendency toward evil usually manifests itself in a psychological condition quite similar to intellectual perverseness. In his tales only characters of unusual intellectual talent seem capable of being formed to acts of evil by their familial history; while they are not monomaniacal, they engage in the same dehumanizing processes of abstraction as do his pure intellectual villains. In "William Wilson" the narrator identifies his
family as the source of his own unmanageable mind. "I am the descendant of a race whose imaginative and easily excitable temperament has at all times rendered them remarkable; and, in my earliest infancy, I gave evidence of having fully inherited the family character." (II, 4). And this is compounded by his parents' inability to impose any counterdiscipline from without. "Beset with constitutional infirmities akin to my own, my parents could do but little to check the evil propensities which distinguished me." (II, 5). According to the narrator, then, both the source of his evil temperament and the reason for its unchecked development may be found in his family background. But having told us this, he quickly allows the family to disappear from the story and focusses instead on the growing imbalance of his own personality.

Like the other three tales discussed earlier, the remainder of "William Wilson" deals primarily with the gradual domination of the moral sense by the spirit of perverseness, the sympathetic heart by the cold, amoral mind. Here the division is objectified by the narrator's fantasy projection of a second William Wilson; the narrator retains in his conscious self only his intellect and relegates his moral sense to a subordinate, subconscious existence in his imaginary double. The double, says the narrator, seems to lack those qualities by which he himself is distinguished. "He appeared to be destitute alike of the ambition which urged, and of the passionate energy of mind which enabled me to excel." (II, 12). But the narrator acknowledges the moral superiority of the second Wilson. "His moral sense, at least, if not his general talents and worldly wisdom, was far keener than my own." (II, 17). Having separated itself from the moral sense,
the intellectual part of William Wilson (the narrator) pursues a course typical of intellectual villains. The narrator engages in "earnest inquiry" and "morbid speculation." He thinks of other people, Glendinning for example, as objects to be used rather than as sentient beings. "I soon found him [Glendinning] of weak intellect, and, of course, marked him as a fitting subject of my skill." (II, 25). However, so long as the moral sense, although weakened and encapsulated, continues to survive, William Wilson is saved from complete villainy. While the conscious Wilson dreams up countless schemes for subverting those around him, the subconscious alter-ego consistently intervenes to render these schemes harmless. "In no one of the multiplied instances in which he had of late crossed my path, had he so crossed it except to frustrate those schemes, or to disturb those actions, which, if fully carried out, might have resulted in bitter mischief." (II, 32).

As is true also in Hawthorne's tales, the moral sense of Poe's characters cannot long remain viable in competition with the burgeoning intellect. Near the end of the story the narrator senses a weakening on the part of his double. "With the increase of my own firmness, that of my tormentor underwent a proportional diminution." (II, 33). Finally, the two halves of the character lock in mortal combat (Wilson, drunk, duels with his own image reflected in a mirror), and the imaginary double is defeated. In effect, the moral sense ceases to be operative; lacking it, Wilson ceases to be human. As the vanquished double nears death, it speaks to the narrator: "Henceforward art thou also dead--dead to the World, to Heaven, and to Hope! In me didst thou exist--and, in my death, see by this image, which is thine own, how
utterly thou has murdered thyself." (II, 36). If the reader fails to think back over the story, he may too easily accept Wilson's self-destruction as a triumph for justice, forgetting that at no point in the story has Wilson been granted an opportunity to exercise free will; that he has, instead, been hurried to what he continually refers to as his "destiny." In explanation of why he has decided to tell his own story, the narrator says: "I long... for the sympathy--I had nearly said for the pity--of my fellow men. I would fain have them believe that I have been, in some measure, the slave of circumstances beyond human control." (II, 4). Not volition, but family background, a heightened intellect, and a proportionately weakened moral sense, combine to compel William Wilson to acts of evil.

"William Wilson" provides a useful bridge between the tales dealing with perverseness and "The Fall of the House of Usher." In tales like "The Imp of the Perverse," no family history is provided. In "William Wilson" family is seen as the source of a tendency toward evil, but it becomes secondary to the conflict between head and heart. Roderick Usher, who possesses the most refined intellect of all of Poe's characters, is, nonetheless, more clearly the victim of his family inheritance than of his own mind. At the outset the narrator reveals the two characteristics of the family essential to the reader's understanding of the story. First, the entire tradition of the family, though long, has been so narrowly focussed that it now resides entirely with Roderick Usher and his sister.

I had learned... the very remarkable fact, that the stem of the Usher race, all time-honored as
it was, had put forth, at no period, any endur­ing branch; in other words, that the entire family lay in the direct line of descent, and had always, with very trifling and very temporary variation, so lain." (I, 14).

Second, the family mansion has gradually become so closely associated with its inhabitants that both are encompassed by the phrase, "The House of Usher," "an appellation which seemed to include, in the minds of the peasantry who used it, both the family and the family mansion." (I, 14).

Given this explicit identification, the reader is encouraged to see the house as symbolic of the family and to translate physical descriptions of the house into comments on the spiritual condition of the Ushers. For example, when the narrator says of the house, "Its principal feature seemed to be that of an excessive antiquity," (I, 15) he is emphasizing the degree to which Roderick Usher is shaped by the influence of the past.

Like the Pyncheon home, the House of Usher is pervaded by a "deep and irredeemable gloom," which is transferred to its inhabitants as "a want of moral energy." (I, 17-18). However, while Judge Pyncheon proves himself capable of vigorous evil activity, Roderick Usher more nearly resembles an inhabitant of Eliot's "Wasteland," composed of contradictory attributes which preclude action. He may be called evil because he lacks the power to do anything of virtue, but he is less Manichaen than are most of the true villains of early American fiction. On the one hand, his intellect is so dominant and so refined that it far surpasses those of Poe's perverse narrators. There is nothing human about his paintings; they are totally abstract. "If ever mortal painted an idea, that mortal was Roderick Usher. For me at least, in
the circumstances then surrounding me, there arose out of the pure abstractions which the hypochondriac contrived to throw upon his canvas, an intensity of intolerable awe." (I, 24). And his poetry convinces the narrator that Usher is aware of the extent to which he has been a victim of his own intense rationality. "I fancied that I perceived... a full consciousness on the part of Usher of the tottering of his lofty reason upon her throne." (I, 25). Having developed over generations of scholarly and artistic endeavor, the Usher intellect has achieved a degree of refinement unknown to characters outside the family tradition. On the other hand, however, as the family intellect has developed, its physical and spiritual vitality has undergone a proportionate decay. Roderick Usher, pallid and weak is overcome by a debilitating ennui.

His moral condition is at once less extreme but more devastatingly hopeless than that of Poe's perverse narrators. In stories like "The Black Cat," the combination of intellect and energy produces a series of truly repulsive crimes. Lacking energy, Usher commits only the single, more comprehensible crime of consigning his sister prematurely to the grave, an act which appears to be more suicidal than homicidal in that he believes his own fate to be inexorably entwined with hers. In any event, his criminality is far less drastic than that of Poe's morally perverse characters. But Usher lacks the perverse character's chance for salvation, as is emphasized by the pervasiveness of symbolic falls in Poe's tales. In "The Imp of the Perverse," the reader will recall, Poe says that a character impelled by perverseness to hurl himself into an abyss may be saved by the intervention of a friend. Arthur Gordon Pym leaps into the arms of Dirk Peters instead of to his death.
In "The Fall of the House of Usher," the narrator is cast as the potential savior of the Ushers, but he is totally ineffectual; he can do no more than witness the final destruction of the house and the family. Whereas intellectual evil can be offset by renewed sympathy, a character borne down by inherited amorality, in Poe's tales, is fated to destruction regardless of other circumstances.

The final work of Poe's directly relevant to the study of involuntary evil is his only complete novel, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*. Pym, himself, although not a villain, is a first cousin of characters who commit evil acts because of an overdeveloped intellect. In thinking back over his advice to Captain Guy that they continue toward the South Pole, he says:

> While, I cannot but lament the most unfortunate and bloody events which immediately arose from my advice, I must still be allowed to feel some degree of gratification at having been instrumental, however remotely, in opening to the eye of science one of the most intensely exciting secrets which has ever engrossed its attention. (V, 227).

But the dominant form of evil in the latter portion of the novel is racial evil, the murder of Pym's companions by the black natives of Tsalal. As described by Pym the natives are "jet black, with thick and long woolly hair." (V, 230). "Their lips... are thick and clumsy, so that, even when laughing, the teeth never disclosed." (V, 243). Later (after the murders) they are called "the most barbarous, subtle, and blood-thirsty wretches that ever contaminated the face of the globe," (V, 254) and "the most wicked, hypocritical, vindictive, blood-thirsty, and altogether fiendish race of men upon the face of the
Throughout the Tsalal section of the novel, the evil of the natives is associated with their blackness, and this, in conjunction with their woolly hair and thick lips gives rise to Fiedler's theory (cited in Chapter One) that Pym is being "carried back to Ole Virginny." Sidney Kaplan, in his excellent introduction to the novel cites ample biographical evidence to show that Poe "held Blacks, at best, in good-natured contempt." However, Kaplan goes on to explain that Poe's blacks represent not only southern slaves but the mythic power for terror of all blackness in the traditions of western civilization. "In Pym, it is blackness that affrights." The great advantage of Kaplan's view is that it both encompasses Fiedler's interpretation (which it broadens) and accounts for the linguistic and biblical allusions which seem to have little connection with the American South. Most of the strange words Pym comes across, some uttered by the natives, some carved in stone, derive from ancient languages and refer either to darkness or light. The effect is to imply a mythic antipathy, dating at least from biblical times, and far more irrevocable than simple racial prejudice, although racial prejudice may derive from it. In any case, the natives are evil, not for any rational reason, but simply because they are black; in the yin and yang world of Pym, black and white are natural adversaries. The line between the two is blurred slightly by the uncertain blood of Dirk Peters and by the white

but apparently ferocious little animals found floating in the southern sea, but the essential light-dark antipathy dominates the latter part of the novel.

Three types of involuntary evil, intellectual, inherited, and racial, may be found in the fiction of Poe. He differs from the other authors in his tendency to combine the first two types; his characters formed to evil by family traditions are also head-dominated. Also, his narrators are distinguished by a kind of frenetic impulsiveness not so clearly apparent in the intellectual villains of (say) Hawthorne. Perhaps this is related to his concern with effect and his unwillingness to provide the detailed psychological portraits found in Hawthorne and Melville. Finally, however, his basic agreement with the other authors is revealed by his focusing on the heightened liberated intellect as a primary source of compulsive evil. Poe's "Imp" is the same demon which troubles Brown and Cooper and which is classified as the malady, monomania, in Hawthorne and Melville.
In moving to Nathaniel Hawthorne's treatment of involuntary evil I am inclined, perhaps somewhat arbitrarily, to eliminate from discussion those forces which influenced Hawthorne's conception of evil, save for one or two of the most important. Something has already been said of the general relationship between American fiction and European Gothic romance and of the role of the Faust story in American fiction. For reasons explained in Chapter One, I feel that both of these influences are secondary. Moreover, in the case of Hawthorne, Jane Lundblad has made a full length investigation of his use of Gothic devices, and William Bysshe Stein has thoroughly explored Faustian parallels in his fiction. My own temptation, of course, in attempting to establish thematic continuity in our early fiction, is to claim for the novels of Brown a large role in shaping the fiction of Hawthorne. Indeed, Hawthorne did know Brown's fiction well, and he apparently thought highly of it. In 1846 he said of Brown, "No American writer enjoys a more classic reputation." But there is woefully little evidence, either

3 Lundblad, p. 28.
biographical or in the form of direct allusions to Brown in Hawthorne's fiction, to indicate that Brown exerted a significant, direct influence on Hawthorne. What can be said, rather, is that their fictions are thematically parallel, that Brown and Hawthorne arrived, perhaps separately, at similar conceptions of the sources and nature of evil. And this in itself is significant since Brown lacked any biographical or intellectual connection with the New England Puritan tradition which has conventionally been seen as a major source of evil in Hawthorne's fiction.

In fact, Puritanism is extremely important to Hawthorne. Perhaps a better way of saying this, however, is that, as an artist he found Puritanism to be extremely useful. According to Hyatt Waggoner, "He was no Puritan. He would have been amazed as well as unhappy at being described as one by some modern scholars." In summarizing Hawthorne's opinions of his ancestors, Waggoner indicates that he shared the anti-

Puritan bias of his age.

Despite his long absorption in Puritan writings, it is pretty clear that Hawthorne had a typical nineteenth century view of his ancestors. He exaggerated their gloominess and their intolerance and probably attributed their persecution of sexual offenses to ideas other than those they actually held. He made them villains in The Scarlet Letter and created in Hester a somewhat Transcendental heroine, . . . What he thought of the exclusive emphasis they placed on man's depravity is clear in "Young Goodman Brown": they were just wrong. The revelations that came to Brown in the forest were more the Devil's doing than God's.  

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There may be reason to take issue with Waggoner's labelling of the Puritans in The Scarlet Letter as villains, but the overall purport of his summary is accurate. If we doubt that, we need only recall "The Maypole of Merrymount" (1836), in which Hawthorne describes a band of Puritans as "most dismal wretches," or his portrait of Cotton Kather in "Alice Doane's Appeal."

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 Kather, 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. (XII, 29%\textsuperscript{7}).

In this scene Hawthorne has Kather heartlessly presiding over the execution of innocent Salemites condemned as witches. The qualities most conspicuous in the description of Kather, mistaken sanctity, sternness, and intolerance, are those typically predominant in Hawthorne's Puritan characters.

Nonetheless, he was drawn to the Puritans for two reasons. First, as Waggoner explains, "he thought there were truths at the center of the Puritan faith that, when suitably translated, were still viable\textsuperscript{8}

\textsuperscript{7} All references to Hawthorne's tales and sketches are to The Complete Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne, with Introductory Notes, 12 vols, (Boston, 1883).\textsuperscript{8} Waggoner, p. 15.
frequently results from a particular kind of psychological imbalance or from the influence of a corrupt family; it is not caused by natural depravity or the influence of Satan, although Hawthorne's depraved characters may bear a symbolic resemblance to the Devil and although Hawthorne conceives of all mortals as sharing a natural potential for depravity. Said another way, the translation to which Waggoner refers is Hawthorne's translation of evil from a theological fact to a psychological fact.

Second, and perhaps more important, Hawthorne was drawn to the Puritans because they represented viable subjects for the kind of fiction he was motivated to write. Why he was so motivated will be discussed in a moment. However, in "The Custom-House" Hawthorne explains that he has lost the ability to create literature directly from what he observes in nature. "There would have been something sad, unutterably dreary, in all this, had I not been conscious that it lay at my own option to recall whatever was valuable in the past." (I, 26). 9

By breaking with Emerson and turning to the past, Hawthorne achieved what Lewis calls, "an original use of discredited traditional materials." 10 Quite simply, in the excesses of Puritan self-righteousness, Hawthorne found examples of the same lack of sympathy which he believed to be the most serious form evil could take, regardless of the historical epoch. His hard-hearted Puritans, Mather, Endicott, "the Man of

Adamant (Richard Digby)," are first cousins to Ethan Brand and Roger Chillingworth, himself born to Calvinism. All, in varying degrees, commit Brand's unpardonable sin of spiritually isolating themselves from the community of man. All subordinate emotion to intellect, sympathy to purpose, heart to head. All, finally, however much it is hidden from their consciousness, are guilty of the sin of hubris, a sin which for Hawthorne is particularly characteristic of historic Puritan leaders. It is paradoxical but true that Hawthorne used his Puritan predecessors as illustrations of a type of evil in some ways similar to that which they themselves most frequently preached against, human pride.

Why Hawthorne should have focussed so intently on isolation, usually resulting from the domination of the heart by the head, as a source of evil is an elusive question. As early as the turn of the nineteenth century, Benjamin Rush, a leading author of psychological theories who was also an acquaintance of Brown, had been saying that "hard study" could cause derangement or insanity. And monomania, the ultimate form of an intellectual imbalance, was accepted as a genuine disease of the mind.11 Hence, there was, and had been since the time of Brown, support from noted psychologists for the type of evil found in much of Hawthorne's fiction. Also, as was explained in Chapter I, many see Hawthorne's creation of diseased intellectuals as merely a continuation of the Gothic or Faustian traditions. Like Brown's,

however, Hawthorne's own mental condition is probably a stronger force in determining the thematic content of his fiction. That is, his ethical qualms as a creative writer direct his attention to the type of evil which he himself feared he was in danger of committing. Detachment and the practice of coldly analyzing others characterize most of Hawthorne's villains. "Wasn't it possible," asks Bewley, "that the nature of his art... set him apart from society as an observer and an analyst?" Levin seconds this suggestion: "To insulate, to isolate, to intellectualize, to be utterly incapable of emotion—Hawthorne protests against that attitude so obsessively that he seems to damn himself." In his tales Hawthorne makes it clear that some isolation and some refinement of the mind beyond the norm (inspiration) is essential to the creation of true art. Without these Drowne ("Drowne's Wooden Image") is simply a craftsman. Of Drowne's carvings Hawthorne says,

There was no inconsiderable skill of hand, nor a deficiency of any attribute to render them really works of art, except that deep quality, be it of soul or intellect, which bestows life upon the lifeless and warmth upon the cold, and which, had it been present, would have made Drowne's wooden image instinct with spirit. (II, 350).

Once inspired, Drowne devotes his entire being to the creation of a single carving, working at night in the solitude of his shop, and, for the only time in his life, succeeds in imparting spirit to his work. Similarly, Owen Warland, in "The Artist of the Beautiful," focusses his energies on a single task, works alone, and creates a work worthy

of standing as a symbol for his own conception of beauty. Ideally, for Hawthorne, it is possible for the artist to be truly creative and at the same time fully human, so long as his heart remains vital. Both Drowne and Warland are inspired by love, the one of a beautiful woman, the other of the beauty of nature. Both remain sensible to the opinions of others. Drowne finds real pleasure in the praise of Copley; Warland is severely troubled by the scoffing criticism of Danforth. Each, isolated physically while working, remains spiritually joined to the human community.

The obvious danger and one to which Hawthorne alludes again and again in his fiction is that the physically isolated artist may become coldly detached rather than passionately involved, that the inspiration of the heart may give way to the dictates of the intellect. The analysis of The Blithedale Romance later in this chapter deals in part with Miles Coverdale's tendency in this direction. And Hawthorne himself, as evidenced by his preoccupation with this source of evil, must have thought of it as a personal moral liability. His tremendous devotion to the affairs of home, family, and marriage may have been motivated in part by his desire to erect a bulwark against his potential artistic noninvolvement; the image of Paul Pry or Ethan Brand is inconsistent with that of a loving husband. At any rate, in his fiction Hawthorne occasionally casts himself in the role of detached manipulator, probing the sacred recesses of the human heart. For example, the story of murder in "Alice Doane's Appeal" is framed by the narrator's (not obviously distinct from Hawthorne himself) account of telling the tale to two proper young ladies. His reaction to their laughter reveals
something of his motive for telling the story in the first place.

I kept an awful solemnity of visage, being, indeed, a little piqued that a narrative which had good authority in our ancient superstitions... should now be considered too grotesque and extravagant for timid maids to tremble at. Though it was past supper time, I detained them a while longer on the hill, and made trial whether truth were more powerful than fiction." (XII, 292).

The narrator's avowed purpose of seeking an audience for his story has served as a disguise for his real intention of gaining some control over the emotions of his listeners. Having failed in his initial attempt, he casts aside the disguise and begins a particularly gruesome historical account of the execution of Salem witches. As he begins to describe the scaffold, he is interrupted. "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." (XII, 294). The experiment has been successful; any sympathy the narrator might feel for the distress of the girls is lost in the sweetness of his "victory." And it requires no imaginative leap to recognize parallels between the sense of triumph expressed here and that of Chillingworth as he discovers Dimmesdale's hidden letter or Aylmer as the tiny hand begins to disappear from Georgiana's cheek.

Involuntary evil, normally connected with isolation, is very widespread in Hawthorne's fiction. To give some indication of its scope and to explain the shapes it most frequently takes, I want to examine three of Hawthorne's lesser known tales, "Alice Doane's Appeal" (1835), "Egotism or The Bosom Serpent" (1843), and "The Man of Adamant" (1837);
four of his most famous tales, "Young Goodman Brown" (1835), "The Birthmark" (1843), "Rappaccini's Daughter" (1844), and "Ethan Brand" (1851); and the four later full-length novels. My purpose is not to provide comprehensive interpretations of this fiction but to identify and analyze Hawthorne's conception of evil.

The fragmentary extant version of "Alice Doane's Appeal," first published in The Token in 1835, is based on an original version Hawthorne had composed when he was sixteen. Presumably, the manuscript which the narrator reads to his companions is that of the earlier version, one of the two tales he has written which he has accidentally failed to consign to the flames with the others. Assuming that the published tale, fragile as it is, reflects with some accuracy the outlines of the original, it indicates that from the very beginning of his career Hawthorne thought of evil as involuntary and compulsive, as related to mental temperament ("diseased imagination and morbid feelings" (XII, 291), and as capable of being alleviated by sympathy ("mine had been softened and purified by the gentle and holy nature of Alice," (XII, 285)). Waggoner, rightly I think, says that the tale accurately foreshadows Hawthorne's later fiction.

Nearly all of Hawthorne's later themes are implicit in the work: the secret guilt, the haunted mind, fate, the universal sin, the curse from the past. Leonard Doane is said to be conscious of a guilt deeper and more terrible even than that for the murder he has committed. He is haunted by an obscure shame and an obscure dread, so that the world seems cold and unreal, frozen and lifeless. He has a feeling of being compelled by some

14Lundblad, p. 32.
nameless force, of being bewitched.\textsuperscript{15}

The suggestion of the influence of the past is quite clear. As Leonard Doane stands over the body of his victim, Walter Brome, his memory carries him back to the night, many years earlier, when his father was slain by Indians. Brome's features momentarily become those of Doane's father to indicate a connection between the two murders. The passage is too brief to reveal the exact nature of the connection, although a modern psychologist would be tempted to interpret Leonard's crime as the result of long festering Oedipal hostility rendered inappropriate by the early death of his father. What may be said without equivocation is that Leonard's subjective impression of the killing of his father contributes to the mental condition that renders him capable of committing murder. There is also a suggestion of incest, the sexual aberration that Leslie Fiedler and Roy Kale\textsuperscript{16} identify as a recurrent hidden theme in Hawthorne's later fiction. Leonard's immediate motive for murder is jealousy, "the insane hatred that had kindled his heart into a volume of hellish flame," (XII, 285-286) resulting from the fear that Brome is usurping his place in the affections of his sister Alice.

Both the influence of the past and jealousy, however, are secondary to Leonard's own temperament, and it is here that the story most directly foreshadows Hawthorne's major works. Like Brown's Carwin and Clithero, Leonard has a sense of being possessed by a demon; he feels as if he were "moved by dark impulses, as if a fiend were whispering

\textsuperscript{15}Waggoner, p. 50.
him to meditate violence." (XII, 287). This sense of possession is complicated somewhat by the shadowy presence of a wizard who probably played a much larger role in the original version. However, the story becomes empty fantasy, if the reader permits himself to blame the wizard for Leonard's crime. Symbolically, the wizard functions, like the witches in Macbeth, as an externalization of Leonard's capacity for evil. There is no indication that the wizard influences anyone other than Leonard; and there is every indication that Leonard's temperament renders him vulnerable to involuntary evil, with or without the influence of an outside agency. Given his morbidity and his diseased imagination, Leonard Doane is the first of Hawthorne's detached, analytical observers; his victim, Walter Brome, is the second. When Brome first appears as the suitor of Alice, Leonard mercilessly probes into his heart in quest of knowledge he can use to thwart Brome's suit.

'Searching,' continued Leonard, 'into the breast of Walter Brome, I at length found the cause why Alice must inevitably love him. For he was my very counterpart! I compared his mind by each individual portion, and, as a whole, with mine. There was a resemblance from which I shrunk with sickness, and loathing, and horror, as if my own features had come and stared upon me in a solitary place, or had met me in struggling through a crowd.' (XII, 285).

This is not the relationship portrayed by Poe in "William Wilson;" there a complete human being is divided, his amoral intellect housed in the ogo, his moral sense contained in an alterego. Here, two similarly inhuman intellects confront and understand one another. "At last, with the same devil in each bosom, they chanced to meet, they two on a lonely road." (XII, 286). The existence of the "devil in each bosom," detachment, isolation, heartlessness, evil, whatever name it goes by
In Hawthorne's tales, removes from both characters the option of voluntary restraint. Given their temperaments, it is inevitable that one will be destroyed by the other. The same kind of confrontation is refined and expanded in "Rappaccini's Daughter." Rappaccini unfeelingly uses his daughter Beatrice and Giovanni as objects for experimentation while the almost equally cold Baglioni scoffs at his failure when Beatrice dies after drinking an antidote provided by Baglioni himself. Finally, in "Alice Doane's Appeal" Hawthorne includes a beautiful impressionistic description of a village after an ice-storm, similar in visual quality to Emerson's "Snow Storm." However, where Emerson draws a positive aesthetic conclusion from his description, Hawthorne moralizes, and, in so doing, announces the theme which will be the hallmark of his career. "One looked to behold inhabitants suited to such a town, glittering in icy garments, with motionless features, cold, sparkling eyes, and just sensation enough in their frozen hearts to shiver at each other's presence." (XII, 288).

"Egotism; or, the Bosom Serpent," first published in The Democratic Review in 1843 and collected in Mosses from an Old Manse, (1846) appeared after several of Hawthorne's most famous tales but has remained relatively obscure, partly because it has been overshadowed by other more moving tales in Mosses and partly because its controlling symbol, identified in the title, is so artificial and obvious that it strikes the reader as hopelessly contrived, despite Hawthorne's unconvincing note to the effect that cases may be found in medical history of serpent's having taken up residence in the stomachs of human beings. Still, there is a kind of grotesque force to Roderick Elliston's refrain: "It
gnaws me! It gnaws me!" The tale is an allegorical extension of an idea Hawthorne introduced in "Alice Doane's Appeal," where Leonard Doane and Walter Brome are both said to have devils in their bosoms. Roderick Elliston also refers to "the devil within me" (II, 305), but his devil has adopted the Edenesque disguise of the serpent and has convinced him of its physical as well as its spiritual reality. The reader who resists the temptation to read this tale as an attempt by Hawthorne at self-parody, will find the story, though flawed in execution, to be thematically comprehensive. For example, Elliston, because of his own evil, attains the same insight into the sins of others as do Goodman Brown and Hester. "He showed so keen a perception of frailty, error, and vice, that many persons gave him credit for being possessed not merely with a serpent, but with an actual fiend, who imparted this evil faculty of recognizing whatever was ugliest in man's heart." (II, 310). The faculty, which seems to hold a certain fascination for Hawthorne, is simply a ramification of the basic tendency of Hawthorne's evil characters to probe the hearts of others.

Similarly, Elliston's egotism is a ramification of the same fundamental weakness, lack of sympathy, which dehumanizes most of Hawthorne's villainous characters. That he is not responsible for his malady is explicitly stated in the story. He is called a "being whom Providence seemed to have unhumanized." (II, 305). And this is reinforced, as it often is in Hawthorne, by frequent references to fate: "The doomed sufferer submitted to his fate." (II, 316). His inability to overcome his own evil results from his mistaken assumption that intellectual insight is the same as sympathy. He claims, for example that Herkimer,
because he has no serpent in his own bosom, cannot share the sympathy that he (Elliston) has for the sins of others. What he fails to understand is that his extra faculty provides him with knowledge, not sympathy, as is revealed by the heartless manner in which he uses the faculty.

Making his own actual serpent—if a serpent there actually was in his bosom—the type of each man's fatal error, or hoarded sin, or unquiet conscience, and striking his sting so unremorsefully into the sorest spot, we may well imagine that Roderick became the pest of the city. (II, 314).

Before becoming possessed by the serpent, Roderick had been characterized as "brilliant," a further indication that he is primarily intellectual in temperament. It is not surprising that he is unable to cure his spiritual disease. For he seeks his cure in the only place, given his temperament, where he could consistently look for it, in medical science; and science, in Hawthorne, has no affirmative moral power. Elliston even acquires a book on serpents in "an effort to become better acquainted with [his] bosom friend." (II, 318). Finally, through the repeated failure of scientific knowledge either to mitigate or to explain his malady, he intuitively recognizes its cause, although he remains powerless to effect a cure. "Could I for one moment forget myself, the serpent might not abide within me. It is my diseased self-contemplation that has engendered and nourished him." (II, 319). At this point, Elliston's estranged wife appears, rejuvenates his heart through love, and rids him of the serpent.

There are varying degrees of intellectual dehumanization in Hawthorne's fiction. Roderick Elliston is capable of being rescued from
involuntary evil, through the assistance of a second character, because his heart has only been subordinated and not thoroughly hardened. His introspective recognition of his evil, a recognition that causes him personal torment, indicates that he is not beyond redemption. In this respect he resembles such other conscience stricken characters as Reuben Bourne in "Roger Calvin's Burial" (1832) and Arthur Dimmesdale, both of whom achieve eventual atonement and reconciliation with humanity and with God. However, Hawthorne more frequently portrays characters so one-sidedly intellectual that they are beyond salvation, cold, detached characters who typically lack a capacity for accurate introspection. They see evil in others, but usually fail to recognize their own. Such is the condition of Richard Digby in "The Man of Adamant," first published in The Token in 1837 and collected in The Snow-Image (1851). He is so completely detached that even an angel, Mary Goffe, "who had been buried in an English church-yard months before," (III, 571) cannot win him back to humanity.

Like that of "The Bosom Serpent," the dominant symbol of "The Man of Adamant" is extremely artificial and is based on a somewhat spurious medical anomaly, the physical hardening of the vital organs of the body, especially the heart. I say "somewhat spurious" because a physician recently showed me an autopsy photograph of a heart so thoroughly calcified that all but a third of it was removed from the body and kept without preservative. This, of course, is the same medical phenomenon Hawthorne makes use of in "Ethan Brand." Whereas in "Ethan Brand" the symbol is relatively unobtrusive, appearing at the end of the story to confirm what the reader already knows about Brand's moral condition,
In "The Man of Adamant," Hawthorne insists on pushing the symbol into the foreground at the expense of the characterization of Richard Digby. He is a cartoon figure, briefly sketched and all of a piece. But he illustrates both the degree to which religious self-righteousness (pride) can contribute to an isolation productive of evil and Hawthorne's use of Puritan materials as illustrations of hard-heartedness. Digby is something of a super-Puritan, characterized by the exaggeration of typical Puritan qualities. "In the old times of religious gloom and intolerance, lived Richard Digby, the gloomiest and most intolerant of a stern brotherhood." (III, 564). He intellectually extends the Puritan concept of election to conceive of himself as saved and the whole remainder of humanity as damned. "His plan of salvation was so narrow, that, like a plank in a tempestuous sea, it could avail no sinner but himself, who bestrode it triumphantly, and hurled anathemas against the wretches whom he saw struggling with the billows of eternal death." (III, 564). Lest his sanctity be in some way polluted by the surrounding multitudes, he resolves to abandon the company of mankind and to embrace the solitude of the wilderness. He is mildly surprised, as he leaves his village, that the wrath of God does not immediately descend upon it. But he continues on into the forest, feeling more and more triumphant, the deeper he secludes himself in a gloom shown by Hawthorne to be both physical and moral. "The further he went... and the lonelier he felt himself, and the thicker the trees stood along his path, and the darker the shadow overhead, so much the more did Richard Digby exult." (III, 565). Finally, he shuts himself up in a "sepulchral cave," clearly emblematic of the state of living death
he has entered by cutting himself off from humanity. That his theology is erroneous, perverted by his pride, is indicated by his inability, in the darkness of the cave, to read the Bible accurately. "The shadow had now grown so deep, where he was sitting, that he made continual mistakes in what he read, converting all that was gracious and merciful to denunciations of vengeance and unutterable woe on every created being but himself." (III, 570). His sin is the arch-sin of Ethan Brand, spiritual isolation; he is impervious even to the ministrations of an angel. In his gloominess, his distrust of all other people, and his inability to recognize any evil in himself, he also has much in common with Goodman Brown. And like Brand and Brown, he is granted by the author neither the capacity to alter his nature, nor the capacity to respond to the sympathy of others. But Digby appears as a more completely doomed character than Brand or Brown, both of whom are fully human before becoming dominated by pride. Digby is thoroughly dehumanized from the outset of the story; his gradual physical hardening is both inevitable and somewhat anticlimactic, for there is no tension between the man of stone and some more fortunate earlier Richard Digby.

It is precisely the tension between what Goodman Brown becomes and what he has been, apparently fortunate and virtuous, which lends a dramatic power to "Young Goodman Brown" (New England Magazine, 1835, collected in Mosses from an Old Manse, 1846) which is missing from "The Man of Adamant." And because it is a much more powerful story, it has received far more attention from scholars. There seems to be general agreement that Brown's final submersion into gloom is caused by his inability to respond properly to his experiences in the forest.
Matthiessen says that the theme of the story is "that mere doubt of the existence of good, the thought that all other men are evil, can become a corrosive force to eat out the life of the heart." For Matthiessen then, what takes place in this story, like many of Hawthorne's other stories, is the gradual decay of a human heart. Male says that Brown dies in gloom "because he fails to attain a tragic vision, a perspective broad enough and deep enough to see the dark night as an essential part of human experience, but a part that may prelude a new and richer dawn." Male may be thinking here of Roderick Elliston or Donatello, both of whom are damaged by a confrontation with evil, but both of whom emerge as more fully human because of the confrontation. In any case, Male seems to agree with Matthiessen that Brown's heart is corroded, not enriched, by his midnight vigil. But the question that causes disagreement is that of the source of this corrosion, whether it is a vision generated from within the personality of Brown, or whether it is a physically real, external set of circumstances with which Brown is ill-equipped to cope.

Some seem to feel that it makes little difference; dream or real experience, the result is the same for Brown; he is convinced of its reality. "The experience in the forest (whether he 'dreamed' it or not)," writes Terence Martin, "has affected Goodman Brown as the most dismal, the most horrible, and, withal, the most real experience of

18 Male, pp. 79-80.
his life," It seems to me that this is valid, if one is interested only in the viability of Brown's final condition; that is, one need not decide whether the experience has had objective reality or only subjective reality to believe that it has rendered Brown gloomy and suspicious. On the other hand, the story raises the very important question of universal depravity, a question begged by the critic who dismisses the entire forest experience with the phrase, "whether he 'dreamed' it or not." Kale, for one, insists that much of the meaning of the story depends upon the reader's accepting the objective reality of the forest scenes. "Faith, like Beatrice Rappaccini, is both pure and poisonous, saint and sinner. She is in the forest that night, and the pink ribbons blend with the serpentine staff in what becomes a fiery orgy of lust." Faith is not in the forest, except in the sense that her sexuality, so incongruous with Brown's earlier conception of her, is one of the ideas Brown carries with him in his forest vision. And the pink ribbons, too, are carried into the forest by Brown's imagination.

In fact, much of the meaning of the story depends on the reader's recognition that most of the action is projected from within Brown's own psyche. He is scapegoating; unable to face the hints of evil he is beginning to discover within himself, he transfers them, and thereby transfers the blame, to those around him. Hawthorne initially asks, "Had Goodman Brown fallen asleep in the forest and only dreamed a wild dream of a witch-meeting?" (II, 105). He seems to be leaving the

20 Kale, p. 77.
question to the reader's determination. But he immediately follows this by making a flat statement, without recourse to the subjunctive: "It was a dream of evil omen for young Goodman Brown." (II, 106). By itself this one sentence is not conclusive, but it is supported by a tenacious piece of physical evidence, namely Faith's ribbons. Symbolically, they are something like Georgiana's birthmark or the gold in Hester's letter, evidence that the possessor is mortal and subject to sin, passion, and death. As Brown contemplates his wife, he focusses on the ribbons because he is, despite himself, attracted by her sexuality. He finds one of these same ribbons in the forest; it flutters down from a cloud and catches in the branches of a tree. The reader might well wonder, if Faith is really there, how she was able to cast that ribbon into the cloud to begin with. But she is not there. Brown's own lust, intolerable to his self-image, is transformed into a vision of Faith as temptress, her sexual aspect, the ribbon, standing for her entire being as he sees it fluttering from the branch. He is abstracting, as did the narrator of "The Tell-Tale Heart," a single characteristic and making it stand for the entire being, for, once he sees the ribbon, he has no doubt that Faith is lost. When he emerges from the forest, Faith is at home, still wearing her ribbons, which are part but only part of her being. Brown's vision of the ribbon in the forest has been only a projection of his abstracted image of Faith as a sexual object instead of a complete, relatively chaste, woman. The ribbon effectively serves to tip the scales. Had it been missing when Brown returned, the implication would have been that the experience was objectively real. As is, its presence confirms what
the reader has already suspected, that the apparitions Brown has seen are projections of his own liability to sin.

Brown has much in common with Richard Digby. Unable to tolerate the existence of evil in his own breast, he projects that evil into his conception of other people. Significantly, his first action in the story is to separate himself from his closest companion, despite her pleas that he should stay. To remain would be tantamount to admitting that he is subject to the same moral liabilities as the rest of mankind. Like Digby, he takes "a dreary road, darkened by all the gloomiest trees of the forest, which barely stand aside to let the narrow path creep through." (II, 90). The narrowness of the path is emblematic of Brown's own narrow moral views, again reminiscent of Digby's. He has made his appointment with the devil to satisfy his curiosity about evil; that is, he is seeking a kind of God-like knowledge which will set him above other mortals. He first learns that his father and his grandfather have both been friends of Satan, suggesting that his own evil is inherited. But such knowledge will not satisfy the demands of Brown's pride, for it merely explains why he is a sinner like other men; it does not set him above others. Soon, however, the devil, an objectification of Brown's own pride who reveals a certain family resemblance, begins to instruct Brown in the art of seeing evil in others instead of recognizing his own. Goody Cloyse becomes a witch, somewhat put out because she cannot find her broomstick, "'That old woman taught me my catechism,' said the young man; and there was a world of meaning in this simple comment." (II, 95). At first, the reader understands these lines to mean that Brown has been profoundly
disillusioned to discover that Goody Cloyse is a witch. But Hawthorne soon makes it clear that Brown is secretly pleased by the notion that he is morally superior to his own spiritual mentor. "The young man sat a few moments by the roadside, applauding himself greatly, and thinking with how clear a conscience he should meet the minister in his morning walk." (II, 96). I believe that the key to the story is Hawthorne's description of Brown as he runs through the forest, believing himself to be the one righteous creature in a world of universal depravity, when he is in reality even more hideous than the devil with whom he has been communing.

In truth, all through the haunted forest there could be nothing more frightful than the figure of Goodman Brown. On he flew among the black pines, brandishing his staff with frenzied gestures, now giving vent to an inspiration of horrid blasphemy, and now shouting forth such laughter as set all the echoes of the forest laughing like demons around him. The fiend in his own shape is less hideous than when he rages in the breast of man. Thus sped the demoniac on his course." (II, 99-100).

Like Digby, Brown is the unwilling victim of an error inspired by his own pride. His vision of universal depravity, really a projection of his own evil, like that of Digby, is so convincing that even when the spectral apparitions are routed by a single prayer, they remain in his imagination as the touchstone of his outward view.

A stern, a sad, a darkly meditative, a distrustful, if not a desperate man did he become from the night of that fearful dream. . . And when he had lived long, and was borne to his grave a hoary corpse, followed by Faith, an aged woman. . . they carved no hopeful verse upon his tombstone, for his dying hour was gloom. (II, 106).

The final irony is that Faith, supposedly revealed to be a sham by
Brown's visit to the forest, remains true to her own name, despite Brown's transformation. Her fidelity serves as a final confirmation of the idea that the evil Brown ascribes to others is a projection of his own.

Brown is a victim of the Puritan concept of natural depravity. Seeing himself as elect and finding no one around him to share salvation, he is doomed to a lonely, gloomy existence. His isolation, like that of Digby, exemplifies Hawthorne's use of Puritan theology, not as a viable philosophical view, but as the type of a kind of detachment productive of evil. Again, the volition of the character is not an issue. There is no indication that Brown could have reacted differently than he does. And it is apparent that once he is confirmed in his isolation, the love of his wife will not bring him back to the community of man. He would seem to be just as doomed as is Digby, were it not for the three months of domestic happiness he experiences before his fall. But his earlier alignment with mankind cannot save him. It simply adds a tragic dimension to his dehumanization.

Both Brown and Digby are called "narrow." Frequently in Hawthorne the narrowing process itself is productive of evil. The more intensely a character becomes focussed on a single artistic, scientific, or scholarly task, the less able he is to respond to other people, unless he is inspired by love as are Drowne and Warland. Absolute singleness of purpose was considered in Hawthorne's time to be a form of insanity (monomania), and Hawthorne's characters often progress from intellectuality to monomania. In "The Birthmark" (The Pioneer, 1843, collected in Mosses from an Old Manse) Aylmer undergoes such a transformation.
At the outset he is presented as too preoccupied with science to be capable of experiencing a complete, autonomous love for his new wife, Georgiana.

He had devoted himself, too unreservedly to scientific studies to be weaned from them by any second passion. His love for his young wife might prove the stronger of the two, but it could only be by intertwining itself with his love of science and uniting the strength of the latter to his own. (II, 47).

In this story, science has a lure not wholly different from the lure the unpardonable sin holds for Ethan Brand, the lure of competing with God, of usurping for man some small part of God's dominion. Hawthorne's frequent use of fire imagery, both in this story and in "Ethan Brand," provides a subtle and appropriate tie to the myth of Prometheus, a myth to which Melville specifically alludes in *Moby Dick*. Ethan Brand competes with God in a negative way by attempting to diminish God's power; if he can discover the unpardonable sin, he can, in effect, say to God, "This you cannot do. Here Your omnipotence is circumscribed." Aylmer and scientists like him compete in a positive way by attempting to participate in the miracle of creation.

The higher intellect, the imagination, the spirit, and even the heart might all find their congenial aliments in pursuits which, as some of their ardent votaries believed, would ascend from one step of powerful intelligence to another, until the philosopher would lay his hand on the secret of creative force and perhaps make new worlds for himself. (II, 47).

Both types of competition are forms of hubris. The structure of the passage quoted above reflects the structure of the entire tale. To begin with all the faculties of the complete human being, the intellect, the imagination, the spirit, and the heart, flourish in the embrace of
scientific experiment. Soon, however, all disappear, save for the intellect which strives for ever more powerful intelligence.

The Aylmer of the beginning of the story is portrayed as a brilliant, aspiring, not very successful scientist. His continual quest for an ideal that is always beyond his grasp serves both to make him admirable in Georgiana's eyes and to cast suspicion on his judgment. His failure to comprehend accurately the weaknesses of his intellect renders him subject to the same errors in introspection which lead Digby and Brown astray. But he remains fully human, if erring, until his intellect homes in on a single object, Georgiana's birthmark. The capacity for monomania, in other words, resulting from his intellectual temperament, remains dormant until the appearance of a suitable object for its expression. Then, a single obsession totally overwhelms Aylmer's humanity. He heartlessly says to Georgiana, "You came so nearly perfect from the hand of Nature that this slightest possible defect, which we hesitate whether to term a defect or a beauty, shocks me, as being the visible mark of earthly imperfection." (II, 48). Like some of Poe's narrators, Aylmer engages in the process of abstracting, making the birthmark symbolic of Georgiana's entire being. "Aylmer's somber imagination was not long in rendering the birthmark a frightful object, causing him more trouble and horror than ever Georgiana's beauty, whether of soul or sense, had given him delight." (II, 50). This is Hawthorne's version of the "woe that is madness." Aylmer's total identification of Georgiana with the birthmark is revealed by a dream in which he envisions himself attempting to remove the mark surgically but finds that it penetrates deeply into her being. Finally, he shouts
to his assistant, "'It is in her heart now; we must have it out." (II, 51). And Hawthorne's comment, "Truth often finds its way to the mind close muffled in robes of sleep," (II, 52). confirms that the dream accurately reflects Aylmer's mental condition. To satisfy his monomania, he is willing to commit Chillingworth's sin of probing the depths of the human heart. His belief that he possesses the skill to remove the blemish is, ironically, valid. Were it not, he would appear to the reader more as a bumbler than as a villain. However, it becomes apparent that the depth of knowledge required for the removal of the birthmark could not have been attained by Aylmer without the concomitant knowledge that the experiment would prove fatal for Georgiana. That he goes ahead is evidence that his monomanical intellect has thoroughly subordinated his capacity for sympathy; he is willing to sacrifice Georgiana to fulfill the purposes of his intellect.

Aylmer's killing of Georgiana, however, remains an act of compulsion, not an act of volition. His scientific temperament, reinforced by long years in the laboratory, leaves him no option but to act as he does. To demonstrate this, Hawthorne uses a technique which Melville may have borrowed for Moby Dick. Melville alludes to "the Birthmark" in Billy Budd, and he was reading Kosses from an Old Manse during the summer of 1850 while he was working on Moby Dick. Hawthorne contrasts Aylmer's obsessive reaction to the mark, with the much milder responses of Georgiana's other suitors. "Masculine observers, if the birthmark did not heighten their admiration, contented themselves with wishing it away." (II, 49). Many do not even "wish" the mark away, for they see it as a token of her charm.
Georgiana's lovers were wont to say that some fairy at her birth hour had laid her tiny hand upon the infant's cheek, and left this impress there in token of the magic endowments that were to give her such sway over all hearts. Many a desperate swain would have risked life for the privilege of pressing his lips to the mysterious hand. (II, 49).

As is explained in the next chapter, the gams in Moby Dick serve a similar function of chronicling responses to the white whale different from those of Ahab. Here, the clear implication is that Aylmer's response to the mark is unique; that the presence of the mark alone is not sufficient to create a fixation unless it is met by a character temperamentally impelled toward monomania. Aylmer reacts as his scientific intellectuality forces him to react. Georgiana's beauty and her very humanity are less to the amoral intellect than the challenge posed by her supposed imperfection. Her birthmark, an incidental part of her whole being to her other suitors, becomes for Aylmer the central problem of her existence and his own. It does so because Aylmer is much better equipped to pursue the duties of intellectual abstraction than those of husband and lover.

The thematic similarities between "The Birthmark" and "Rappaccini's Daughter" (The Democratic Review, 1844, collected in Mosses from an Old Manse) are obvious. In both stories scientific zeal is shown to be a dehumanizing force capable of producing evil by transforming other characters, in the mind of the scientist, from human beings into objects for experimentation. Rappaccini's "exclusive zeal for science" is described by his competitor, Baglioni.

He cares infinitely more for science than for mankind. His patients are interesting to him...
only as subjects for some new experiment. He would sacrifice human life, his own among the rest, or whatever else was dearest to him, for the sake of adding so much as a grain of mustard seed to the great heap of his accumulated knowledge. (II, 116).

By temperament, Rappaccini, like most of Hawthorne's other intellectuals, is one-sided. "He was beyond the middle term of life, with gray hair, a thin, gray beard, and a face singularly marked with intellect and cultivation, but which could never, even in his more youthful days, have expressed much warmth of heart." (II, 112). Again, then, there is no indication that Rappaccini could have become anything other than what he does become. In the development of science as expressive of a form of involuntary evil, "The Birthmark" and "Rappaccini's Daughter" have much in common.

But the stories clearly differ in thematic emphasis and structure. Aylmer occupies center stage during most of "The Birthmark;" the growth of his monomania is the major action of the story. Rappaccini consistently hovers around the edges of the few scenes in which he appears, and his character is not dynamic; he enters the story already in the grip of a mania for science. Waggoner suggests that this difference is important to the meaning of the story. "It is not the father, whose cold intellectuality has been established before the tale is one-fifth completed, but the evil which he has wrought which chiefly concerns us." Waggoner denies that Rappaccini is even the main character of the story. "Beatrice is the chief character, the center of interest,

21 Waggoner, p. 119.
and the primary symbol throughout, from the title to her death in the end." Waggoner's suggestions are extremely important to our understanding of evil in Hawthorne's fiction, for they imply that a major theme of "Rappaccini's Daughter" is a form of involuntary evil different from that traced so far through the other tales. As is most fully shown in The House of the Seven Gables, evil, for Hawthorne, may be contagious in time and space, may be transmitted from character to character, even from generation to generation. In the other tales discussed in this chapter the predominant source of evil has been the intellect of a single character. Vague hints of inherited evil may be found in "Egotism, or The Bosom Serpent" (Roderick Elliston's grandfather is said to have been possessed by a serpent) and in "Young Goodman Brown" (the devil claims to have been good friends with Brown's father and grandfather), but Hawthorne does not pursue the theme in these tales. In effect, in "Rappaccini's Daughter" Hawthorne first focusses on the idea which serves as a basis for Maule's curse.

Besides Rappaccini, three characters in the story, Beatrice, Giovanni, and Baglioni, are directly touched by evil. The worst side of each is brought out by the influence of Rappaccini. Beatrice is pure of heart, but because of her father's ministrations, she is both deadly and isolated. "There was an awful doom," she explains to Giovanni, "the effect of my father's fatal love of science, which estranged me from all society of my kind." (II, 143). Giovanni responds by releasing the selfish rage he has been harboring.

22 Ibid., p. 118.
"Accursed one!" cried he, with venomous scorn and anger. "And, finding thy solitude wearisome, thou hast severed me likewise from all the warmth of life and enticed me into the region of unspeakable horror!" (II, 143). Beatrice is "thunderstruck," and the reader tends to share her response, shocked by Giovanni's heartless accusation. As he reflects on Giovanni's words, however, the reader may experience a second shock, that of discovering that he, as Giovanni has done earlier, has become so enchanted by Beatrice's purity of motive that he has forgotten that she really is poisonous. Giovanni's accusation is factually true. Beatrice is capable of killing innocent creatures by simply breathing on them. She acknowledges as much when she responds to Giovanni's attack, "I, it is true, am the horrible thing thou namest me," (II, 144). Nor can she be rescued from the charge of being evil by the fact that she intends no malice. Virtually none of Hawthorne's villainous characters desires to commit acts of evil. Beatrice is unalterably tainted by "the evil" which her father "hast striven to mingle with" her being. (II, 147). Born into an inverted Garden of Eden in which to breathe is to be guilty, she can establish an Eve-like innocence only by leaving the garden through death.

Giovanni and Baglioni both lack Beatrice's depth of heart. However, both also enter the story free of the taint of inherited evil which dooms Beatrice. For them, Rappaccini's evil is contagious in space; it radiates outward and enfolds them both, because it finds parallels to Rappaccini's intellectuality in their temperaments. Hawthorne insists that Giovanni "had not a deep heart." (II, 122). And he wonders of Giovanni's attraction to Beatrice "whether it were not
merely the fantasy of a young man's brain, only slightly or not at all connected with his heart." (II, 127). That Giovanni is vain is suggested by his looking at himself in a mirror just before his final encounter with Beatrice. He is studying to enter Rappaccini's profession, medicine. Like Rappaccini, also, he has a thirst for knowledge that induces him to pass most of his time in solitary speculation. He coldly rebukes his benefactor, Baglioni, when the latter threatens to interrupt his intellectual meditations. But Giovanni performs no inhumane actions which are not inspired by Rappaccini. In effect, he enters into intellectual competition with Rappaccini when he heartlessly blames Beatrice for being what she cannot avoid being and when he induces her to drink an antidote to her poison. Like Rappaccini, he has begun conducting experiments on Beatrice. Dying from the effects of the antidote, Beatrice asks him, "Was there not, from the first, more poison in thy nature than in mine?" (II, 147). There was, in fact, a potential for evil in Giovanni's temperament, and the influence of Rappaccini has made that potential real.

The antidote is given to Giovanni by Pietro Baglioni, who is introduced by Hawthorne as a "professor of medicine in the university, a physician of eminent repute." (II, 115). Although he is characterized as "apparently of a genial nature" and as "jovial," he clearly is envious of Rappaccini. He warns Giovanni that Rappaccini appears to be eyeing him for some new experiment. "For some purpose or other, this man of science is making a study of you. I know that look of his! It is the same that coldly illuminates his face as he bends over a bird, a mouse, or a butterfly, which, in pursuance of some experiment,
he has killed by the perfume of a flower." (II, 124-125). There is a double truth to Baglioni's warning; Rappaccini is, in truth, experimenting upon Giovanni to create a mate for Beatrice, but so is Baglioni contemplating using the young man as an agent, if not an object, for an experiment of his own. He secretly hopes that Giovanni will provide him with an opportunity to demonstrate that his own skill is superior to that of Rappaccini. "We will thwart Rappaccini yet," thought he, chuckling to himself." (II, 138). He might have emerged as a virtuous character had he thought, with a look of concern instead of a chuckle, "We will save Beatrice yet." As is, however, he appears to be following Rappaccini's own procedure of considering Beatrice to be a part of his experimental apparatus. It is he who provides her with the fatal antidote. As Beatrice dies, he watches from a window. His reaction reveals that he retains something of human sympathy, but that this is secondary to his detached intellectual victory. "Pietro Baglioni looked forth from the window, and called loudly, in a tone of triumph mixed with horror. . . . 'Rappaccini! Rappaccini! and is this the upshot of your experiment!'" (II, 148).

Of the four leading characters in "Rappaccini's Daughter," none escapes committing acts of evil. Even Beatrice, completely pure in motive, has no power to overcome the evil bred into her by her father's science. The one, Rappaccini, adheres to the pattern familiar from Hawthorne's other tales; his evil is generated by the domination of his heart by his head. The others, by temperament capable of evil, but not truly villainous, are infected by Rappaccini. Beatrice, indeed, is sacrificed on the altar of science, but this distorts the moral
complexity of the story. She cannot be healed without being sacrificed. Finally, the story, if taken seriously, has something of the impact of the Book of Job. It implies that absolute justice is not comprehensible in specific examples of human behavior, that motives, influences, and actions can become so hopelessly tangled that the thread of justice is irrevocably lost. The major importance of the story for this study is its introduction of inherited evil as a second form of involuntary evil in Hawthorne's fiction. It serves to complement The House of the Seven Gables.

I have placed "Ethan Brand" (The Dollar Magazine, 1851, collected in The Snow-Image, 1851) last in my analysis of tales, although it is thematically aligned with "The Man of Adamant" and "Young Goodman Brown," partly because it is chronologically the latest of the tales central to the study of Hawthorne's treatment of evil and partly because the story provides a natural transition between the issues of the tales and those of The Scarlet Letter. Hawthorne's conception of Brand's character, as has often been noted, is very similar to his conception of Chillingworth. Both develop monomanias; both become isolated; and both "violate the sanctity of the human heart." "Ethan Brand" is subtitled "A Chapter from an Abortive Romance," suggesting that it is not to be taken as complete. The reader has no difficulty in spotting kinds of information, missing here, that could have been included in other chapters of the romance. Hawthorne, for example, fails to provide any details of the experiments Brand has carried out on other people in his quest for the master sin. And the German Jew remains something of an enigma; he is just fully enough drawn to suggest
several alternative interpretations. Is he destiny? or death? or Christ? or Satan? or the Wandering Jew? All of these have been suggested. Stein, as was noted in chapter one, bases his identification of Brand as a Faust figure on the assumption that the German Jew is Satan or Satan's emissary. I do not find Stein's thesis to be convincing because it is not adequately developed. Neither, however, can I convincingly document an alternative interpretation. The portrait of the German Jew is too thin to yield an unequivocal answer. However, his very title seems to sway the reader toward the Wandering Jew (Is the Devil Jewish? He doesn't look Jewish). Hawthorne's comments on the Wandering Jew in the sketch, "A Virtuoso's Collection," (1842) are relevant to "Ethan Brand."

I fancied... that there was a bitterness indefinitely mingled with his tone, as of one cut off from natural sympathies and blasted with a doom that had been inflicted on no other human being, and by the results of which he had ceased to be human. Yet, wondrous, it seemed one of the most terrible consequences of that doom that the victim no longer regarded it as a calamity, but had finally accepted it as the greatest good that could have befallen him. 'You are the Wandering Jew!' exclaimed I. The virtuoso bowed without emotion of any kind. (II, 558).

Like Ethan Brand, the narrator here is slow to identify the Wandering Jew. Other similarities are apparent. The Jew in "Ethan Brand" is a showman, as is the virtuoso. Both seem to take special delight in packing their shows with symbols of human misery or evil. And the virtuoso's spiritual condition is comparable to that of Brand; both have become completely cut off from the remainder of mankind. Also, there is a suggestion in "Ethan Brand" that the German Jew has suffered
the same isolation. "'Ah, Captain,' whispered the Jew of Nuremberg, with a dark smile, 'I find it to be a heavy matter in my show-box,—this Unpardonable Sin! By my faith Captain, it has wearied my shoulders this long day, to carry it over the mountain." (III, 491). It is possible, if one isolates this passage, to use the Jew's comments as evidence that he is either Christ (who lovingly accepts the burden of all men's sins) or an emissary of Satan, bringing the sin along as collateral for the soul of Ethan Brand. However, given Hawthorne's treatment of a similar theme through a similar representative in the sketch, it seems more reasonable to identify the German Jew as one who has long been fated to share Brand's sin, namely the Wandering Jew, who is there neither to exact payment from Brand for a bargain made somewhere outside the boundaries of the tale, nor to remove the burden of the sin from Brand's shoulders, but rather, by example, to confirm Brand's subjective impression that his quest has been completed, that he has discovered the unpardonable sin which both he and the German Jew have committed.

I am prompted to push this reading because it fits much more neatly with Brand's history than does a reading which makes either a Satan figure or a Christ figure out of the German Jew. The Wandering Jew, in Hawthorne's view, does not seek to become dehumanized; he seeks, rather, eternal life, not realizing that mortality is an essential ingredient of humanity. Similarly, Brand does not intentionally trade his soul for knowledge of the master sin. He does not even understand, to begin with, that any inherent conflict exists between his intellectual quest and the preservation of his humanity. "He
remembered with what tenderness, with what love and sympathy for mankind, and what pity for human guilt and woe, he had first begun to contemplate those ideas which afterwards became the inspiration of his life." (III, 494). The original source of his inspiration is the fire which he tends and gazes into as a youth; abstract and separated from humanity, it liberates his intellect to speculate into the realms of forbidden knowledge. It also appropriately invokes the myth of Prometheus, similar to Brand because his theft of fire, like Brand’s discovery of the unpardonable sin, limits the prerogatives of divinity. The result of Brand’s dominating idea is the same as that of Aylmer’s preoccupation with Georgiana’s birthmark. It cuts him off from sympathy with others. But Brand’s monomania contains an extra ironic twist. He discovers that the very process of isolation necessary to discover the sin is tantamount to committing the sin. The monomaniac object and the course of the monomania turn out to be identical.

As he does in "The Birthmark," Hawthorne in this story makes effective use of other characters to emphasize the hopelessness of Brand’s mental condition. He introduces "three worthies," former acquaintances of Brand who have since become victims of the bottle. The first, a former stage-agent, has taken up permanent residence in the corner of a barroom where he drunkenly dispenses witticisms. The second, once a lawyer, has lost various parts of himself ("a part of one foot" and "an entire hand") as a result of attempting to use tools while he was drunk. He is now "a soap-boiler, in a small way." The third is the "purple-visaged" village doctor, who, swaying from patient to patient, has "raised a dying man, as it were, by miracle, or quite as often, no
doubt, sent his patient to a grave that was dug many a year too soon." (III, 487). Doctor, lawyer, merchant, these three stand for the bottommost rung on the ladder of humanity. And yet, they remain human while Ethan Brand does not. He has probed their hearts, years before, but has found no sin that is not pardonable. For they, unlike himself, are not spiritually isolated from the rest of humanity. Brand, his heart hardened, is shown to be even lower than the "three worthies."

Old Roger Chillingworth in *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) undergoes a transformation very much like that of Brand. Both characters begin as cold-hearted, overly intellectual human beings, not as villains; both become obsessed by the desire to attain a single, elusive bit of knowledge; both, by the diligent application of scientific methods, are successful in their scholarly quests; but both, because of the extreme narrowness of their purposes, are transformed from scholars into demoniacs. Despite these overt similarities, however, Chillingworth is much the stronger of the two characters. Where the knowledge Brand seeks is an abstract concept, philosophically unattainable by experimentation and coming to him almost incidentally as an unforeseen by product of his experiments, Chillingworth is after a single, concrete fact, a fact which might logically become accessible to the careful observer. Put another way, Brand's quest is so far removed from probable human behavior as to have only symbolic validity; Chillingworth's behavior is not totally at odds with literal reality. Also, Hawthorne describes Brand after the fact of his transformation and doesn't trouble to provide any details of the dehumanizing process. In effect, he asks the reader to accept the transformation on faith.
Conversely, in the case of Chillingworth he follows the transformation step by step, portraying Chillingworth first as an objective scholar, then as a revenger, and finally as a fiend who engages in torture for its own sake. Chillingworth and Brand both violate the sanctity of the heart, but Chillingworth does so in a much more convincing fashion.

The exact nature of Chillingworth's metamorphosis is most clearly explained by Hawthorne late in the novel in the chapter entitled "Hester and the Physician." Important is the author's explicit statement that the change has been wrought within the seven years of the novel which confirms the reader's impression that Chillingworth was not a demoniac at the outset of the story.

Hester had been looking steadily at the old man, and was shocked, as well as wonder-smitten, to discern what a change had been wrought upon him within the past seven years. The former aspect of an intellectual and studious man, calm and quiet, which was what she best remembered in him, had altogether vanished, and been succeeded by an eager, searching, almost fierce, yet carefully guarded look. It seemed to be his wish and purpose to mask this expression with a smile; but the latter played him false, and flickered over his visage so derisively, that the spectator could see his blackness all the better for it. In a word, old Roger Chillingworth was a striking evidence of man's faculty of transforming himself into a devil, if he will only, for a reasonable space of time, undertake a devil's office. This unhappy person had effected such a transformation by devoting himself, for seven years, to a constant analysis of a heart full of torture, and deriving his enjoyment thence, and adding fuel to those fiery tortures which he analyzed and gloated over. (I, 169-170).

Again, the response elicited is like that of Edgar Huntly to Clithero or Starbuck to Ahab, "to hate with a touch of pity." Chillingworth has not voluntarily undertaken "a devil's office." Rather, like the
intellectual villains of the tales, a blind spot in his moral vision has allowed him to overlook the inevitable personal result of his commitment to a single overly focussed purpose. In fact, he is just as appalled as is Hester to discover what he has become.

He lifted his hands with a look of horror, as if he had beheld some frightful shape, which he could not recognize, usurping the place of his own image in a glass. It was one of those moments—which sometimes occur only at the interval of years—when a man's moral aspect is faithfully revealed to the mind's eye. Not improbably, he had never before viewed himself as he did now. (I, 172).

Chillingworth contrasts what he is with what he once was and acknowledges that he has become a fiend.

Many authors, quite probably, would have been content to end Chillingworth's story with this anagnoresis, to have had the villain, finally recognizing his own villainy, repent or at least absent himself from the neighborhood. To have done so, however, would have been tantamount to undermining fatally the theme of evil spawned by a detached intellect. Chillingworth's own new found self-recognition is intellectual, in part brought about by ideas put into his head by Hester. No new bond of sympathy has been established between the two characters, nor has their entire relationship ever been sanctified by love. If Chillingworth could be made moral by an idea, he would have no need for a functioning heart; the implication would be that the intellect is capable of curing whatever spiritual maladies it causes, if it is supplied with the proper information. But this does not happen. Instead, Hawthorne makes Chillingworth's moment of self-recognition the source of a new intellectual error which compounds Chillingworth's
evil. "Who made me so?" asks the physician. (I, 173). Seeing that his probing of Dimmesdale's heart has brought about his moral ruin, he transfers the blame to the minister, and thereby establishes a new justification for torturing Dimmesdale. The obviously spurious nature of Chillingworth's new reason for seeking revenge should cast doubt on the notion that his original reason for tormenting Dimmesdale was a desire for revenge at having been cuckolded, but this will be looked into in a moment. The point here is that Hawthorne, through a deft ironic inversion, transforms an instant of accurate introspection on the part of his villain into a further confirmation of the character's liability to moral error resulting from an intellect untempered by a healthy heart.

Hester says that she and Chillingworth are both "wandering together in a gloomy maze of evil," (I, 174) in which Dimmesdale is also located by the chapter, "The Minister in a Maze." She says that Chillingworth can extricate them all by simply pardoning Dimmesdale.

Chillingworth's answer is among the most famous passages in Hawthorne.

It is not granted me to pardon. I have no such power as thou tellest me of. My old faith, long forgotten, comes back to me, and explains all that we do, and all we suffer. By thy first step awry, thou didst plant the germ of evil; but, since that moment, it has all been a dark necessity. Ye that have wronged me are not sinful, save in a kind of typical illusion; neither am I fiend-like, who have snatched a fiend's office from his hands. It is our fate. Let the black flower blossom as it may. (I, 174).

It simply will not do to dismiss Chillingworth's words, as some critics have done, as simply a rationalization for his own behavior. Feidelson, for example, says that "he (Chillingworth) turns to Calvinism for
comfort, asserting that 'a dark necessity' beyond the human will has determined the whole action. . . However, his view is heretical, since it denies moral responsibility.23 Chillingworth does err in identifying Calvinist predestination as the source of his difficulties, but, as the rest of the novel confirms, his description of the effect is accurate. Hawthorne is not criticizing Chillingworth for being an heretical Puritan; he is, rather, revealing the undeniable appeal of Calvinism as an explanation for otherwise unexplainable evil and, at the same time, showing the Calvinist explanation to be hollow. "My old faith, long forgotten, comes back to me," says Chillingworth; the implication is that Calvinism is of little value until one is lost in a "maze of evil." Then, to the intellect demanding a causal pattern, it provides the essential cause: not rational, not verifiable, but better than no cause at all.

Since Chillingworth has just made the mistake of blaming the minister for his transformation, it seems reasonable to assume that his Calvinist explanation is erroneous also. However, he is right in saying that it has all been a "dark necessity," since Hester took the "first step awry." None of the leading characters in the drama has written his own role; all have worked out, with a beautifully symmetric preciseness, the natural pattern implied by that first step and

23 Charles Feidelson, Jr., Symbolism and American Literature (Chicago, 1953), pp. 11-12. In a later essay Feidelson moderates his judgment of Chillingworth's faith by calling it, not heretical, but "truncated" that is, Chillingworth accepts predestination but not the possibility of salvation. "The Scarlet Letter," in Hawthorne Centenary Essays, ed. Roy Harvey Pearce (Columbus, 1964), pp. 70-71.
the temperaments of husband, wife, and lover. At this point, however, it is absolutely essential that the reader of The Scarlet Letter keep in mind the chapter entitled "The Interview," which appears very early in the novel. If he forgets this as he contemplates Chillingworth's "dark necessity," he will overlook the marvelous ambiguity of "first step awry." He will assume that the phrase refers, as indeed it may, to Hester's adultery. But this becomes more and more dubious as one recalls that causes for the adultery have been established by the marriage of Hester and Chillingworth. Given the full history of the characters, the act of adultery seems more reasonably to be an effect which in time becomes a cause of later effects in a long and pernicious causal chain. It most certainly is not the first cause. "By thy first step awry," Chillingworth says to Hester, "didst thou plant the germ of evil." That "first step" may well refer to her consenting to marry Chillingworth. In "The Interview" Chillingworth says, "I ask not wherefore, nor how, thou hast fallen into the pit, or say rather, thou hast ascended to the pedestal of infamy, on which I found thee. The reason is not far to seek. It was my folly, and thy weakness." (I, 73-74). Obviously, he is alluding to conditions existing before the act of adultery. Referring specifically to the marriage, he at first blames himself.

I,—a man of thought,—a book-worm of great libraries,—a man already in decay, having given my best years to feed the hungry dream of knowledge,—what had I to do with youth and beauty like thine own! Misshapen from my birth-hour, how could I delude myself with the idea that intellectual gifts might veil physical deformity in a young girl's fantasy! Men call me wise. If sages were ever wise in their own behoof, I might have
The irony of Chillingworth's final sentence is telling, for he is about to enter into an even greater folly, the results of which he again fails to foresee, in his persecution of Dimmesdale. But he retrospectively accepts partial responsibility for Hester's downfall and his own cuckolding by calling the marriage a folly. And Hester, defending herself, inadvertently reinforces the implication that the marriage was "the first step awry." "Thou knowest I was frank with thee. I felt no love, nor feigned any." (I, 74). The entire tragedy of The Scarlet Letter finds its source in Hester's acceptance of Chillingworth, the single act in the novel totally lacking in apparent motivation.

Chillingworth's desire to marry Hester is motivated, and admirably so. It is an instinctive desire on his part to avoid the fate which eventually overtakes him. He has some insight into the moral liability of his preoccupation with books. He partly understands his coldness.

The world had been so cheerless! My heart was a habitation large enough for many guests, but lonely and chill, and without a household fire. I longed to kindle one! It seemed not so wild a dream, —old as I was, and somber as I was, and misshapen as I was, —that the simple bliss, which is scattered far and wide, for all mankind to gather up might yet be mine. And so, Hester, I drew thee into my heart, into its inmost chamber, and sought to warm thee by the warmth which thy presence made there! (I, 74).

By her 'first step awry' Hester fraudulently offered Chillingworth an escape from intellectual isolation, for she felt nothing of the love that Rosina exhibits for Roderick Elliston or Phoebe for Holgrave. Lacking this essential emotion, Hester unwittingly contributed to Chillingworth's transformation from the cold, scholarly being he had
been into the demoniac he becomes. Chillingworth is not a victim of "his old faith," Calvinist predestination; that answer simply provides a balm for his logical mind; but he is unwillingly fated to a lonely, ultimately evil existence by the juxtaposition of his scholarly temperament with the unthinking behavior of a passionate young girl.

By gradual degrees not perceptible to himself, he embarks on the course leading to monomania. At first, he simply reacts to the possibility that Hester's partner will escape detection. "It irks me, nevertheless, that the partner of her iniquity should not, at least, stand on the scaffold by her side. But he will be known!—he will be known!—he will be known!" (I, 63). Gradually, the notion that he may turn his skills as a scholar to the discovery of Pearl's father takes possession of him. "I shall seek this man, as I have sought truth in books; as I have sought gold in alchemy. There is a sympathy that will make me conscious of him. I shall see him tremble. I shall feel myself shudder, suddenly and unawares. Sooner or later, he must be mine." (I, 75). Chillingworth's use of "sympathy" is, of course, ironic, as was Roderick Elliston's. For Chillingworth, sympathy is not a sense of fellow-feeling. From this point on, the deformed scholar, totally and unmercifully cut off from his single, hoped-for connection with the rest of humanity, moves inexorably away, gradually approaching a monomania.

He had begun an investigation, as he imagined, with the severe and equal integrity of a judge, desirous only of truth, even as if the question involved no more than the air-drawn lines and figures of a geometrical problem, instead of human passions, and wrongs inflicted on himself. But, as he proceeded, a terrible fascination, a kind of fierce, though still calm, necessity
seized the old man within its grip, and never set him free again, until he had done all its bidding. He now dug into the poor clergyman's heart, like a miner searching for gold; or, rather, like a sexton delving into a grave, possibly in quest of a jewel that had been buried on the dead man's bosom, but likely to find nothing save mortality and corruption. Alas for his own soul, if these were what he sought! (I, 129).

Hawthorne's use of the specific term, "necessity," to which Chillingworth later has recourse substantiates Chillingworth's claim to being little more than an actor, playing out the role allotted to him. Certainly, he violates Dimmesdale's heart, for "the sake of truth or "for art's sake;" (I, 138), the latter has relevance to the comments made about Hawthorne's own artistic problem at the beginning of this chapter. Certainly, Chillingworth tortures Dimmesdale, once he has become convinced of the existence of Dimmesdale's private letter. "He became, thenceforth, not a spectator only, but a chief actor, in the poor minister's interior world." (I, 139). Finally, however, he emerges as the novel's chief victim, as well as its leading villain. The only action he might voluntarily avoid performing is his proposal of marriage to Hester. But he makes this proposal for the most laudable of Hawthornian motives, the desire to rekindle a domestic hearth-fire of warmth in his own cold heart. That he instead kindles a hell-fire is the result of Hester's "first step awry," the acceptance of his proposal, and of his own scholarly temperament, not of his volition. Chillingworth strives only to be himself and to make that self somewhat better than it has been. The rest is "a dark necessity."

Hawthorne's other full-length romances are less focused than The Scarlet Letter, and do not represent as full a penetration into human
psychology, beyond the tales, as does his first. But *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851) remains interesting because the type of evil most central to it, called "Kaule's curse," is distinct from that of Ethan Brand or Roger Chillingworth. Among the tales, it is most clearly foreshadowed by "Rappaccini's Daughter." *The House of the Seven Gables* is Hawthorne's only work of fiction in which inherited evil takes complete precedence over intellectual evil. The leading intellectual character, Holgrave, emerges as morally sound, never becoming the villain he at first appears destined to become. And the role of true villain is reserved for Judge Jaffrey Pyncheon who has the moral misfortune of being male heir to a line that has traditionally produced more than its share of villains. Twice Hawthorne tells the reader that his moral purpose is to expose the way in which the evil done by one generation may darkly influence the affairs of succeeding ones. In his preface he announces: "The author has provided himself with a moral,—the truth, namely, that the wrongdoing of one generation lives into the successive ones, and, divesting itself of every temporary advantage, becomes a pure and uncontrollable mischief." (II, 2). And he reemphasizes this theme in an early chapter of the novel.

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

In effect, Hawthorne is saying that in this novel intellectual evil, if it appears at all, will be subordinate to inherited evil.

The weight of tradition on the Pyncheon family, symbolically
connected with their home and having been accumulated over hundreds of years, has much in common with that born by Poe's Ushers. Both family lines, though long, have been remarkably narrow, failing to produce viable collateral branches. As Roderick and his sister inherit all that is left of Usher history, so Jaffrey, Clifford, and Hepzibah represent the last remnants of their family, except, of course, for Phoebe who can thank the infusion of a strong, non-Pyncheon inheritance from her mother, for her unPyncheonlike temperament. Hawthorne echoes Poe in his symbolic description of the house. "The aspect of the venerable mansion has always affected me like a human countenance, bearing the traces not merely of outward storm and sunshine, but expressive, also, of the long lapse of mortal life, and accompanying vicissitudes that have passed within." (II, 5). The aspect of the house, gloomy and decayed, reflects the spiritual morbidity of the family. There is, however, a major difference between Poe's tale and Hawthorne's novel. For Poe, the accumulated morbidity of centuries of decay and refinement is sufficient to dehumanize his leading character. For Hawthorne, the addition of an original sin, Colonel Pyncheon's usurpation of Matthew Kaule's land, never atoned for by succeeding generations, gives a substance to the inheritance of the Pyncheons lacking from the comparatively abstract inheritance of the Ushers.

Matthew Kaule, it is to be feared, trode downward from his own age to a far later one, planting a heavy footstep [because of his curse], all the way, on the conscience of a Pyncheon. If so, we are left to dispose of the awful query, whether each inheritor of the property--conscious of wrong and failing to rectify it--did not commit anew the great guilt of his ancestor, and incur all its original responsibilities. (II, 20).
Hawthorne's addition is an important one, for it introduces a problem, missing from Poe, which has come down relatively unchanged into modern American fiction. Hawthorne's "awful query" is precisely the problem which Isaac McCaslin faces and is broken by in Faulkner's Go Down, Moses.

As has been mentioned, the Pyncheon tradition finally comes to rest on three characters. Two of these, Clifford and Hepzibah, are made miserable by it but are not forced into villainy. Hepzibah continually wears a forebidding scowl, but she has a vital heart, totally devoted to the needs of her brother Clifford. Clifford has experienced what may have been a fortunate fall; imprisoned, through the deceit of Jaffrey for most of his adult life, he has been denied an opportunity to participate in the family guilt. Clifford has an artistic temperament, a powerful imagination and a love of the beautiful, which, given his inherited morbidity and isolation, might have produced a monomaniac. Martin compares Clifford with Owen Warland, but concludes: "There is the dark possibility that he may have developed into more of an Aylmer than an Owen Warland." But, because he has spent most of his life in prison, he has no chance to realize whatever potential may be contained in his inheritance and his temperament. This leaves Jaffrey Pyncheon fundamentally alone as the inheritor of Maule's curse.

He is an exceptionally fit recipient of the inheritance, resembling the patriarchal Colonel Pyncheon more closely than has any other

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24 Martin, p. 134.
member of the family during the intervening two centuries. Hawthorne's
first description of him ironically reveals that his supposed virtue
is a sham built up by wealth and artifice.

Judge Pyncheon was unquestionably an honor to his
race. He had built himself a country-seat within
a few miles of his native town, and there spent
such portions of his time as could be spared from
public service in the display of every grace and
virtue—as a newspaper phrased it, on the eve of
an election—befitting the Christian, the good
citizen, the horticulturist, and the gentleman.
(II, 24).

Hawthorne's use of "display," his allusion to campaign rhetoric, and
his intrusion of "horticulturist" into an otherwise laudatory series
undercut the portrait sufficiently to allow the reader to understand
the existence of a disparity between the Judge's real nature and his
public image. Holgrave's picture of Judge Pyncheon, taken in the truth­
ful light of the sun, serves as a norm for the earlier ironic descrip­
tion. "Here we have the man, sly, subtle, hard, imperious, and withal,
cold as ice. Look at that eye! Would you like to be at its mercy?
At the mouth! could it ever smile?" (II, 92). In fact, Judge Pyncheon
does smile much of the time, but Hawthorne tells the reader that an
acute observer "would probably suspect that the smile on the gentle­
man's face was a good deal akin to the shine on his boots, and that
each must have cost him and his boot-black, respectively, a good deal
of hard labor to bring out and preserve them." (II, 117). Phoebe is
surprised when she first meets the Judge to find that he really
resembles Holgrave's picture. She intuitively moves toward an accurate
recognition of Judge Pyncheon's moral condition.

Was it, therefore [Because his real temper agrees
with the picture, no momentary mood, but, however skilfully concealed, the settled temper of his life? And not merely so, but was it hereditary in him, and transmitted down, as a precious heirloom, from that bearded ancestor, in whose picture both the expression, and to a singular degree, the features of the modern judge were shown as a kind of prophecy? (II, 119).

Judge Pyncheon, like his ancestor does not live in the House of the Seven Gables, but enters it to die, in the very same chair in which the ancestor died.

At this point, however, the interpreter must be careful to avoid a modern pitfall naturally fallen into by one working from a modern point of view. Roy Male, whose comments on the novel are generally quite strong, slips, I think, when he says, "The fact that The House of the Seven Gables would now hardly bear scrutiny as a scientific treatise in genetics should not blind us to its essentially genetic point of view." Male acknowledges that Hawthorne, writing before the work of Mendel, conceived of physical traits as transmitted by the blood rather than by the genes, but he insists that the Pyncheon inheritance is physical. A modern geneticist, I suppose, might suggest that the Pyncheons are ruined by an extra "y" chromosome. It is essential that the reader recall Hawthorne's own statement of his moral purpose, that the sins of one generation, if not atoned for, recur in later generations. It is the history of the family, not genetic heredity that establishes in Judge Pyncheon a capacity for evil. His physical resemblance to his ancestor, his liability to a similar fatal ailment,

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25Male, p. 123.
and his sitting in the same chair to die, function symbolically to reinforce the fundamental moral premise of the novel, that if the father does not expiate his own sin, that sin will devolve upon the son and so forth until some heir has the moral strength to break the chain. Each generation, in the novel, inherits a tradition or set of lore, objectified in but not caused by inherited physical characteristics. The curse is finally lifted by love, not by sexual union: the love of Phoebe and Holgrave feebly mirrored by that of Hepzibah for Clifford which carries no sexual taint.

Except for his emphasis on the influence of the past, Hawthorne's conception of Judge Pyncheon's evil is not substantially different from his general treatment of the subject. As Bowley remarks, "If The House of the Seven Gables at one level treats of the American tension between past and present, it also makes another statement on Hawthorne's old theme of human isolation." The Judge possesses the same "iron will" as Richard Digby and Roger Chillingworth, a typically erring intellect, a loss of the affective capacity for sympathy, pride, and, like Brown and Digby, an inability to "arrive at true self-knowledge." He is distinguished from Hawthorne's other villains by the source of his evil, not its shape. When his path is blocked by Hepzibah as he is on his way to "wrench a secret" from Clifford, his appearance and behavior are identical to those of Hawthorne's dehumanized intellectuals. Confronting Hepzibah and hearing Clifford's entreaties to her not to

26 Bowley, p. 179.
let him enter, the Judge momentarily lets slip his mask of sham benevolence.

For an instant, it appeared doubtful whether it were not the Judge's resolute purpose to set Hepzibah aside, and step across the threshold into the parlor, whence issued that broken and miserable murmur of entreaty. It was not pity that restrained him, for, at the first sound of the enfeebled voice, a red fire kindled in his eyes, and he made a quick pace forward, with something inexpressibly fierce and grim darkening forth, as it were, out of the whole man. To know Judge Pyncheon, was to see him at that moment... And it rendered his aspect not the less, but more frightful, that it seemed not to express wrath or hatred, but a certain hot fellness of purpose, which annihilated everything but itself. (II, 129).

Centrality of purpose, to the exclusion of all other human characteristics, typifies both Judge Pyncheon and most of Hawthorne's other fully drawn villains. Even in death the Judge has nothing human about him. "We can liken him to nothing better than a defunct nightmare, which had perished in the midst of its wickedness." (II, 252).

The overall impression of the novel, however, is somewhat brighter than that of The Scarlet Letter, primarily because of the presence of Phoebe and Holgrave. To begin with, Holgrave appears to be morally doomed, for he shares many characteristics with most of Hawthorne's darkest characters. As the latest descendant of the Maudles, he, like the Pyncheons, is subject to the pernicious influence of the curse, the revengers having traditionally derived evil from the curse only slightly less severe than that of the Pyncheons. He, of course, does not immediately admit to being a Maudle but hides, instead, behind the veil of an assumed name. A similar disguise was adopted by Chillingworth as a device to allow him to gain Dimmesdale's confidence, and the figure
of the veil becomes an important symbol of moral weakness in *The Blithedale Romance*, where several characters hide their true motives for joining the experimental community. Perhaps because of the history of his own family, Holgrave despises all symbols of the past. "The house, in my view, is expressive of that odious and abominable past, with all its bad influences... I dwell in it for awhile, that I may know better how to hate it." (II, 184). But by concentrating on the material inheritance of the present, Holgrave appears to be aligning himself with false reformers like those portrayed by Hawthorne in "Earth's Holocaust" and *The Blithedale Romance*. Finally, Holgrave has much in common with Hawthorne's other detached, cold observers.

It is not my impulse, as regards these two individuals /Hepzibah and Clifford/, either to help or hinder; but to look on, to analyze, to explain matters to myself, and to comprehend the drama which, for almost two hundred years, has been dragging its slow length over the ground where you and I now tread. (II, 216).

Phoebe responds by saying, "The play costs the performers too much, and the audience is too cold-hearted." (II, 217).

Holgrave finally is saved in the only way he can be, as a head-dominated Hawthorne character, by the rejuvenation of his heart. He looks upon the corpse of Judge Pyncheon, but is simply plunged deeper into moral gloom; he cannot intellectually correct his moral weaknesses by applying the example of the Judge's fate to his own condition. Only the arrival of Phoebe can effect a cure.

The presence of yonder dead man throw a great black shadow over everything; he made the universe, so far as my perception could reach, a scene of guilt and of retribution more dreadful than the guilt. The sense of it took away my
youth. I never hoped to feel young again! The world looked strange, wild, evil, hostile; my past life, so lonesome and dreary; my future, a shapeless gloom, which I must mould into gloomy shapes! But, Phoebe, you crossed the threshold; and hope, warmth, and joy came in with you! The black moment became at once the blissful one. It must not pass without the spoken word. I love you! (II, 306).

It is perhaps true that Holgrave's sense of intellectual disillusionment makes him particularly receptive to Phoebe's warmth, that he begins to recognize the futility of his life at the very moment he is offered an alternative. But it is also apparent that his transformation, for once in Hawthorne a positive one, could not have occurred without the intervention of a sympathetic outside character. That intervention is efficacious because it takes place before Holgrave's analytical faculties have completely atrophied his heart. Like Roderick Elliston, he still possesses something of his essential humanity, whereas Richard Digby, Chillingworth, and Judge Pyncheon are irrevocably lost.

The optimistic ending of *The House of the Seven Gables* contrasts sharply with the pervading thematic pessimism of Hawthorne's next work, *The Blithedale Romance* (1852). The tone of *The Blithedale Romance*, partly determined by the character of the narrator, is less gloomy than that of *The Scarlet Letter*, but the thematic bleakness of the novel is not broken by any final moral triumph. As Waggoner notes, "Hawthorne wrote only one novel and very few stories with happy endings that are even partially convincing, but surely this is more negative and hopeless than most of the works."\(^{27}\) The entire Blithedale community is

\(^{27}\)Waggoner, p. 206.
guilty of substituting an intellectual commitment to the idea of brotherhood for a full human commitment to its practice.

'One remarkable thing about this community,' says Waggoner, 'founded on the theory of the brotherhood of man is the almost complete absence in it of any actual brotherhood. The leading characters, Zenobia, Hollingsworth, and Coverdale, are scarcely concerned at all about the fate of the community; each uses it for his own purposes. And they care less and less for each other as time goes on.'

The community is, in part, characterized by a tendency toward abstraction which Hawthorne elsewhere assigns to separate individuals. Beyond this, however, three characters in the novel, Hollingsworth, Westervelt, and Coverdale, contribute to Hawthorne's overall portrayal of intellectual evil. Each is sufficiently one-sided to be plausibly categorized by an abstract label: Hollingsworth, a reformer; Westervelt, a skeptic; and Coverdale, a detached observer.

Although the story is told from the point of view of Coverdale, Hollingsworth is the most fully drawn of the three characters. His grand idea is a plan for the reformation of criminals which he has fixed upon with monomaniacal intensity. At first, the other members of the experimental community, themselves committed to reform, are more amused than dismayed by Hollingsworth's singleness of purpose. Zenobia playful asks Coverdale, "Do you suppose he [Hollingsworth] will be content to spend his life, or even a few months of it, among tolerably virtuous and comfortable individuals like ourselves?" "Upon my word, I doubt

it," responds Coverdale. "If we wish to keep him with us, we must systematically commit, at least, one crime apiece! Mere peccadilloes will not satisfy him." (III, 22). But such sporting with Hollingsworth's one-sidedness is possible only during the early days of the colony, before his brooding presence has begun to spread gloom over the other characters, and before they have begun to recoil from his morally fatal attraction. On the eve of her suicide Zenobia challenges him, "Are you a man? No; but a monster! A cold, heartless, self-beginning and self-ending piece of mechanism!" (III, 218). She has come to understand that she exists in his eyes only as a device to be used to further his purpose. Coverdale, too, feels the attraction of Hollingsworth, as if he "had caught hold of my heart, and were pulling it towards him with an almost irresistible force," (III, 134) but, being a man, Coverdale is better able to withstand Hollingsworth's "magnetism" than is Zenobia ("Hollingsworth... was likely to make at least two proselytes among the women to one among the men." (III, 687). Recalling his rejection of Hollingsworth's attempt to recruit him for his crusade, Coverdale says that he was repulsed by the prospect of using the hearts of others as objects of experimentation.

I saw in his scheme of philanthropy nothing but what was odious. A loathsome that was to be forever in my daily work! A great black ugliness of sin, which he proposed to collect out of a thousand human hearts, and that we should spend our lives in an experiment of transmuting it into virtue! (III, 134).

As Hollingsworth's assistant, Coverdale would be abetting the commission of the unpardonable sin of Brand and Chillingworth. This he cannot do because he retains something of a functioning heart, despite
his detachment, as is confirmed by his profession of love for Priscilla.

Neither can he be fully comfortable about providing a complete analysis of Hollingsworth's character. He feels humanly fallible, and he has some scruples against laying bare the soul of another. Nevertheless, even though he calls his own judgment into question, he provides one very penetrating paragraph on Hollingsworth's moral failings which he defends by calling it "exaggerated," but "strongly expressive of the tendencies which were really operative in Hollingsworth." The paragraph is among Hawthorne's most complete explanations of evil resulting from intellectual error.

He [Hollingsworth] was not altogether human. There was something else in Hollingsworth besides flesh and blood, and sympathies and affections and celestial spirit. This is always true of those men who have surrendered themselves to an overruling purpose. It does not so much impel them from without, nor even operate as a motive power within, but grows incorporate with all that they think and feel, and finally converts them into little else save that one principle. When such begins to be the predicament, it is not cowardice, but wisdom to avoid these victims. They have no heart, no sympathy, no reason, no conscience. They will keep no friend, unless he make himself the mirror of their purpose; they will smite and slay you, and trample your dead corpse under foot, all the more readily, if you take the first step with them, and cannot take the second, and the third, and every other step of their terribly strait path. They have an idol to which they consecrate themselves high-priest, and deem it holy work to offer sacrifices of whatever is most precious; and never once seem to suspect—so cunning has the Devil been with them—that this false deity, in whose iron features, immitigable to all the rest of mankind, they see only benignity and love, is but a spectrum of the very priest himself, projected upon the surrounding darkness. And
the higher and purer the original object, and the more unselfishly it may have been taken up, the slighter is the probability that they can be led to recognize the process by which godlike benevolence has been debased into all-devouring egotism. (III, 70-71).

Generalizing from the case of Hollingsworth, Hawthorne, through his narrator, identifies monomania as blind egotism, with the emphasis on blind. He calls monomaniacs "victims," saying that their purpose becomes more than simply a source of motivation; it becomes incorporated with their entire being, becomes, in fact, the defining factor of their character. They lose heart, conscience, sympathy, whatever faculties might have blended to create a moral sense. Nothing human remains in them to resist a propensity for evil. Clearly, then, they cannot voluntarily avoid becoming fiends, once they have become possessed by a single idea, and there is no indication that they could have avoided the initial fixation. If they are to be saved at all, and it is improbable that many can be, they must "be led" back to humanity; they cannot escape from the maze by relying on their own faculties, for these led them into it to begin with. It seems to me that, through the example of Hollingsworth, Hawthorne effectively summarizes the theme of intellectual evil, as it appears in most of the works discussed in this chapter.

In comparison with Hollingsworth, Westervelt is little more than an attendant demon. He will remind the reader of the Devil in "Young Goodman Brown," for he too carries a serpentine staff that seems alive, and on several occasions he is explicitly compared with the Devil. His characterization is the closest Hawthorne comes to portraying natural
depravity like that of Brown's Wiatte or Melville's Claggart. Unlike Hawthorne's other villains, there is no indication that Westervelt has undergone any dehumanizing process, for there is no indication that he has ever been fully human. Still, Hawthorne makes a head-dominated character of him, coldly rational and incapable of sympathy. His rationality, in contrast to Hollingsworth's idealism, is skeptically materialistic. Coverdale summarizes his character by saying, "He was altogether earthy, worldly, made for time and its gross objects, and incapable—except by a sort of dim reflection caught from other minds—of so much as one spiritual idea." (III, 241). Time-bound, he contrasts with the Blithedale reformers who strive, unsuccessfully to move beyond the sound of striking clocks. But, like the Blithedalers, Westervelt is looking forward to the dawning of a new and better age; his scheme of reform, based on mesmerism, is a successful parody of the Blithedale experiment.

He spoke of a new era, . . . that would link soul to soul, and present life to what we call futurity, with a closeness that should finally convert both worlds into one great, mutually conscious brotherhood. He described (in a strange, philosophical guise, with terms of art, as if it were a matter of chemical discovery) the agency by which this mighty result was to be effected; nor would it have surprised me, had he pretended to hold up a portion of his universally pervasive fluid, as he affirmed it to be, in a glass phial. (III, 200).

The Blithedale reformers are also seeking to establish a new kind of brotherhood. But their reform, casting aside old institutions and ideas, is no more efficacious that Westervelt's application of a "universally pervasive fluid." Both engage in what Waggoner calls
"the folly of expecting utopias if the heart of man remains unchanged, the same theme, essentially, as that developed in "Earth's Holocaust."\textsuperscript{29}

All of the masquerade imagery in the novel, the frequent references to veils, the hidden identities, underlines the falseness of intellectual reform. Zenobia's plight stems from the same source. Caught between an intellectual idealist (Hollingsworth) and a skeptical materialist (Westervelt), she seeks what Frost calls "counter-love," where no love is possible. Her death confirms the essential inhumanity of reform schemes based solely on logic or science, and this quite obviously is relevant to our own age. As for Westervelt, his coldness is an absurd but effective exaggeration of a basic fallacy of the Blithedale experiment. If one conceives of human existence as taking place totally in the realm of ideas, he may as well reduce these ideas to Hartleian chemical impulses.

The third character, the narrator Miles Coverdale, is not a villain, but neither is he on safe moral ground. He is an Edgar Huntly, or a Holgrave, or an Ishmael, a character who totters for a season on the brink of moral destruction but survives to tell the tale. In fact, his survival appears as the single positive thematic aspect of an otherwise totally bleak novel. Most of his experience seems to be vicarious. Male accuses him of living "by proxy," and suggests that his given name, Miles, in juxtaposition with that of Priscilla, may be a conscious allusion to New England folk history.\textsuperscript{30} At times, he classifies himself as an overly cold-hearted observer.

\textsuperscript{29}Waggoner, p. 206.
\textsuperscript{30}Male, p. 152.
With the power, perhaps, to act in the place of destiny and avert misfortune from my friends, I had resigned them to their fate. That cold tendency, between instinct and intellect, which made me pry with a speculative interest into people's passions and impulses, appeared to have gone far towards unhumanizing my heart. (III, 154).

The use of "made" in this confessional passage again confirms the compulsive nature of intellectual probing in Hawthorne's fiction. But the passage is immediately offset by a second introspective thought on the part of Coverdale. "It now impresses me that, if I erred at all in regard to Hollingsworth, Zenobia, and Priscilla, it was through too much sympathy, rather than too little." (III, 154). This second part of Coverdale's confession at first seems to contradict much of what Hawthorne has stood for in the other fiction discussed in this chapter. A character with too much sympathy would appear to be unique and out of place in Hawthorne's fiction. The apparent paradox is resolved, however, if one recalls that evil may be contagious, as it is in "Rappaccini's Daughter" and The House of the Seven Gables. Coverdale is, by temperament, a mildly one-sided character, leaning toward, but not in serious danger of becoming, a dehumanized intellectual. For, in addition to his intellect, he possesses a conscience strong enough to inhibit both his potential for villainy and his artistic focus; he is a second-rate poet. At Elthedale, however, he is exposed to true evil through the powerful personage of Hollingsworth and his instruments, Zenobia and Priscilla. His nearest approach to perdition in the entire novel is not the scene in which he peers through his hotel window at Zenobia and Westervelt but the scene in which he almost agrees to become Hollingsworth's assistant. His isolation, however,
remains mildly discomfitting until the ending when he confesses his love for Priscilla. It makes little difference that Priscilla has been lost to Hollingsworth. A union between Priscilla and Coverdale would have been even less believable than the marriage of Holgrave to Phoebe. Rather, Coverdale's confirmed capacity for love, by which he apparently has been tormented throughout the sordid falling apart of the Blithedale community, confirms both that his rejection of Hollingsworth has been complete and that his voyeurism is reflective only of an eccentric tendency, not of his whole being.

Hawthorne's final full-length work, *The Marble Faun* (1860), adds relatively little to our understanding of Hawthorne's conception of involuntary evil. In contrast to *The Blithedale Romance* it is clearly the most morally optimistic of Hawthorne's long romances. Only the mysterious Capuchin Monk, who dies relatively early, can be called unredeemed. Miriam, who appears to have murdered her father and who induces Donatello to murder the Capuchin, is morally stronger at the end of the novel than at the beginning. And Donatello's initial participation in acts of evil is at least ambiguous. To begin with he is something of a cross between Young Goodman Brown (before his forest vigil) and Pearl, innocent, but not quite human. After the fall, the physical fall of the Capuchin which mirrors the moral fall of Donatello, he is both humanized and guilty, but his transformation is not obviously for the worse. Hawthorne suggests, but does not finally affirm, the paradox of the fortunate fall. However, it is clear that neither the Eve-like Miriam nor the Adamic faun Donatello is made less human by a confrontation with evil, and neither has very much in common with
Hawthorne's head-dominated villains.

This leaves only the Capuchin as a final example of inhuman villainy. He remains a shadowy figure, built up more out of innuendo and legend than out of facts. It is strongly hinted by Hawthorne that he is a cousin of Miriam's, to whom she was formerly affianced against her will and by whom she was driven to whatever dark crime (patricide, probably, because of her resemblance to Beatrice Cenci) haunts her past. As Chillingworth functions, in part, as an externalization of Dimmesdale's guilt, so the Capuchin has cast himself as an emblem of Miriam's past. Again, the concept of a dark necessity is invoked, although Miriam says to the Capuchin, "You mistake your own will for an iron necessity." (IV, 96). But she cannot escape from his influence. "Alas, such was her evil fortune, that, whether mad or no, his power over her remained the same, and was likely to be used only the more tyrannously, if exercised by a lunatic!" (IV, 96). The Capuchin is frequently associated with the Devil (he bears an uncanny resemblance to a diabolic sculpture Kenyon is working on), and he also is reminiscent of Hawthorne's treatment of the Wandering Jew in "A Virtuoso's Collection" and "Ethan Brand." When he first appears in the Catacomb, Kenyon asks, "And how long have you been wandering here?" Before the Capuchin can answer, a guide mutters, "A thousand and five hundred years... It is the old pagan phantom that I told you of, who sought to betray the blessed saints!" (IV, 30-31). Implied is that the Capuchin impresses the guide as one who has lived far beyond the normal span of a mortal life, and this is of a piece with Hawthorne's portrayal of characters who have lost their humanity. Holgrave, upon seeing the
corpse of Judge Pyncheon, fears that his own youth is irrevocably lost. The Wandering Jew, in "The Virtuoso's Collection" has outlived his own emotional capacity. Finally, the Capuchin is connected to Hawthorne's earlier characters by Miriam's response to him. She obviously hates him, but when she witnesses his inability to pray, Hawthorne says, "He looked so fearfully at her, and with such intense pain struggling in his eyes, that Miriam felt pity." (IV, 96). From Brown, through Hawthorne, to Melville, this is the reaction most frequently directed toward dehumanized characters by the authors who conjure them up. The Capuchin seems, finally, to be a typical Hawthorne villain viewed in soft focus. He seems less substantial and more impressionistic than Hollingsworth or Chillingworth, although his shape is familiar. The stark bleakness of The Blithedale Romance has given way to a milder conception in which the personification of involuntary evil has begun to fade, although he remains potent as a force determining the affairs of other characters.

In most of his fiction Hawthorne concentrates on the intellect, untempered by a vital, throbbing heart, as the fundamental source of evil. Inherited evil, also, appears frequently in his works, but even here, the infection is often introduced into a family or group of characters by an intellectual villain. Chillingworth is the most complete of Hawthorne's villains, the closest he ever came to creating a counterpart for Ahab. He is revealed to be both diabolically dark and a victim of forces over which he can reasonably be expected to exert no control, as, to a lesser extent, is true of most of Hawthorne's other villainous characters. The cause is a dominant scholarly
intellect which, a source of error because it is only one part of a complete human being, cannot be counted upon to correct moral mistakes. A heart is necessary for that, but a heart is exactly what Hawthorne's intellectual characters have lost. They are beyond rescue by their own conscience and only occasionally subject to rescue by other characters. *The Blithedale Romance*, in which Hawthorne unflinchingly pursues this theme to its most reasonable outcome, is thus Hawthorne's most consistent work, if not his most powerful. Throughout his fiction, however, the bleak thematic tone of *The Blithedale Romance* is strong, and it is most responsible for his failure to contrive viable happy endings.
MELVILLE

In analyzing the treatment of involuntary evil in the fiction of Herman Melville, I want to turn almost immediately to the fiction itself. The forces which helped to shape that fiction, particularly Moby-Dick, have already been so thoroughly explored by Melville scholars that there seems to be little reason to go back over such well-trodden ground. Melville's debt to Shakespeare has been fully established,¹ as have his debts to various other European authors. It is doubtful, at this late date, that any important biographical stones have not been turned over several times by critics seeking objective confirmation for parallels they see between Melville's work and that of various other authors. Indeed, his letters have been so thoroughly ransacked that some phrases from them ("dollars damn me," "wicked book," "No, in thunder") are almost as familiar as the best known passages from Moby-Dick. Hence, it seems sufficient here to reemphasize the fact that Melville's conception of evil owes something to at least three of the other four authors included in this study. No concrete evidence that I know of points to a direct link between Melville and Brown. But Poe's The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym has long been recognized as influencing both Redburn and Moby-Dick.²

¹See, for example, Charles Olson, Call Me Ishmael (New York, 1947) and Julian Markels, "King Lear and Moby-Dick: The Cultural Connection," The Massachusetts Review, IX (Winter 1958), 169-176.
Melville's own acknowledgement, in a letter to Rufus Wilmot Griswold, of an early interest in Cooper reinforces Howard's suggestion (noted in Chapter Three) that Ahab owes something to The Red Rover and The Pilot.

I never had the honor of knowing, or even seeing, Mr. Cooper personally; so that, through my past ignorance of his person, the man, though dead, is still as living to me as ever. And this is very much; for his works are among the earliest I remember, as in my boyhood producing a vivid, and awakening power upon my mind.3

Of course, the American author who exerted the most direct and powerful influence on Melville was Hawthorne. Humphreys, after mentioning Shakespeare and Dante, goes so far as to claim

... the main literary precipitant of Moby-Dick was Hawthorne. The crucial passages of Melville's article on 'Hawthorne and His Mosses' are wholly relevant to Melville himself, and his sense of a kindred spirit accompanied him from the early stages of Moby-Dick and through the wonderful letters he wrote Hawthorne, during composition and after publication.4

Rather than call Hawthorne "the main literary precipitant," it is perhaps more reasonable to say that Melville's close friendship with Hawthorne contributes to his conception of evil in Moby-Dick; that along with his impassioned reading of Shakespeare's darker tragedies, it forms an important part of an extremely fortuitous matrix of circumstances which helped Melville create a single masterpiece far

surpassing his other works. The real danger for the scholar seeking thematic continuity in early American fiction is the temptation to grant Hawthorne too large a role as a psychological trail-blazer for Melville. Although he was fifteen years Melville's senior, the apex of Hawthorne's literary career is roughly contemporary with Melville's. And Melville neither knew Hawthorne personally nor had read his works until the summer of 1850, when Moby-Dick was already well begun. From that time until shortly after the publication of Moby-Dick (1851), Melville wrote longer, more candid letters to Hawthorne than to any other of his correspondents. And he frequently alluded to his sense, derived both from his reading of Hawthorne's fiction and his night-long, Champagne-nurtured conversations with Hawthorne about "the Universe," that he and Hawthorne shared a kindred tragic view of the human condition. Melville's fullest expression of his fellow-feeling for Hawthorne is a letter written shortly after the publication of Moby-Dick. "Whence come you, Hawthorne? By what right do you drink from my flagon of life? And when I put it to my lips--lo, they are yours and not mine. I feel that the Godhead is broken up like the bread at the Supper, and that we are the pieces. Hence this infinite fraternity of feeling." Melville almost seems here to be thinking of a Platonic psyche-epipsyche relationship between himself and Hawthorne. But the friendship declined very quickly. Howard only slightly overstates its brevity when he says, "The excitement and enthusiasm aroused

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5The Letters of Herman Melville, p. 142.
in *[Melville]* by Hawthorne belonged entirely to the period in which he was reworking *Moby-Dick.* Such influence as Hawthorne has on Melville gradually disappears after *Moby-Dick.*

The phrase, Hawthorne 'in Melville, rolls too easily off the tongue. Although both authors frequently portray involuntary evil, their dark characters belong predominantly to different classes. Hawthorne's, erroneously called naturally depraved by Melville, are most often intellectual villains, characters not born evil but born with a powerful intellect, which, allowed to develop unchecked, has subjugated their moral sense or heart. Melville's characters frequently are naturally depraved; they share a cunning with Hawthorne's scholars, but they lack a dynamic transformation. They are inhuman rather than dehumanized. The significance of this difference is that intellectual dehumanizing is traditionally portrayed as a gradual, continuing process, taking place often over a number of years, and that the potential head-dominated villain, Holgrave for example, may not be finally lost. With the introduction of a new element, a sympathetic companion, he may be won back to the ranks of humanity. But the naturally depraved character is beyond redemption. By nature he is, as a donnee, in a condition similar to the final stages of intellectual dehumanization. He may understand goodness, but he cannot participate in it, even if some luckless maiden has the misfortune of falling in love with him.

Jackson, Bland, and Claggart, all endowed with superior

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intelligence, seem more logically to belong in the ranks of the naturally depraved than anywhere else, partly because there is no indication that they have been transformed into villains and partly, of course, because Melville explicitly identifies Claggart, who clearly resembles Jackson and Bland, as naturally depraved. Babo, the deceitful leader of the mutiny in "Benito Cereno," is similar to these three except that his depravity is a function of race. His Negroness is essential to his characterization. Finally, Ahab, Melville's most powerful character, is not naturally depraved. He is, rather, an extension of the typical Hawthornian monomaniac. Peleg might be a spokesman for Ethan Brand or Roger Chillingworth when he describes Ahab as "something like me—only there's a good deal more of him," (p. 119).\footnote{All references to Moby-Dick are to Herman Melville, Moby-Dick or The Whale, ed. Charles Feidelson, Jr. (New York, 1964), p. 119.} Ahab is the culmination of the entire tradition of involuntary evil in American fiction. Melville builds on the groundwork laid by the other four authors to create a character who is similar in outline to most of the characters discussed so far but outdoes them all by retaining "his humanities" as he pursues his obsessive quest.

Only five of Melville's works, Redburn (1849), White Jacket (1850), Billy Budd (1924), "Benito Cereno" (1856), and Moby-Dick (1851), are discussed in detail in this chapter. These five most clearly reveal Melville's conception of involuntary evil, although the theme might also be followed through Mardi, Pierre, "The Encantadas," and The Confidence Man. My purpose, as it has been throughout, is to provide
illustrations sufficient to demonstrate both the form the theme takes in the works of a given author and the degree to which it is central to his fiction. For Melville, the five works cited above fulfill this purpose. To trace the theme into the nooks and crannies of the other novels, where it is less central, might well be rewarding, but it would also consume space that might better be devoted to Moby-Dick, where any thematic analysis of Melville must finally conclude. Thus, a less comprehensive approach seems valid, if within its boundaries, the ponderous heart and globular brain of Ahab are at least partly contained.

The first three novels, Redburn, White Jacket, and Billy Budd are similar in their treatment of involuntary evil in that the dominant dark character in each is naturally depraved. At least, lacking a second cause for his evil, he appears to be naturally depraved. Alluding to characters of this type, Matthiessen suggests envy as a cause. "Melville's most recurrent type of evil character—from Jackson, the sailor whose sinister will so terrified young Redburn, to Claggart, the master-at-arms in Billy Budd—is one whose malignity seems to be stirred most by the envious sight of virtue in others."8 But it is apparent that Matthiessen is thinking of envy as an immediate motive for specific acts of evil, not as the source of the malignity. Arvin calls Jackson "the first of Melville's full-length studies of depravity according to nature."9

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9Arvin, p. 104.
The characterization of Jackson in Redburn largely anticipates Melville's portrayal of later characters of this type. But there is one significant difference, pointed out by Bowen.

It is worth noting that among Melville's radically evil characters—Jackson, Bland, Babo, the confidence man, and Claggart—only the first (and earliest drawn) seems unequivocably to be what he is. Evil elsewhere wears the mask of good, ... and so imposes on that simple innocence which sees only 'the clean swept deck.'

I am not convinced that the confidence man belongs in this group, and I feel that Bowen's sharp division between Jackson and the others is mildly oversimplified. It might be more accurate to say that the characters are in a kind of continuum; Jackson's depravity is more visible than Bland's; Bland's is more visible than Babo's or Claggart's. Still, Bowen is right in saying that Jackson is Melville's only villain who in no way disguises his depravity. And given the degree to which the ability to deceive is usually a major characteristic not only of Melville's other villains but those also of the four authors already discussed (some obvious examples are Welbeck, Ormond, Magua, Montresor, and Chillingworth), Jackson's apparent guilelessness seems to reflect a more rudimentary, less sophisticated conception of involuntary evil than is reflected by Melville's later characters. When he first meets young Redburn, who is almost as naive as Billy Budd and who would be an easy dupe for (say) Claggart, Jackson threatens to pitch him overboard, "and that he swore too, with an oath." (p. 52).

11 All references to Redburn are to Herman Melville, Redburn: His First Voyage, ed. Harrison Hayford, Hershel Parker, and C. Thomas Tanselle (Evanston and Chicago, 1969).
In other respects, however, Jackson is a fairly typical victim of natural depravity. The first long description of him comes to rest, inevitably, upon his eyes after touching briefly on his superior intellect.

He had... such an unflinching face, and withal was such a hideous looking mortal, that Satan himself would have run from him. And besides all this, it was quite plain, that he was by nature a marvelously clever, cunning man, though without education; and understood human nature to a kink, and well knew whom he had to deal with; and then, one glance of his squinting eye, was as good as a knock-down, for it was the most deep, subtle, infernal looking eye, that I ever saw lodged in a human head. I believe, that by good rights it must have belonged to a wolf, or starved tiger; at any rate, I would defy any oculist, to turn out a glass eye, half so cold, and snaky, and deadly. It was a horrible thing; and I would give much to forget that I have ever seen it; for it haunts me to this day. (p. 57).

The eye is later referred to as "Jackson's evil eye" and has the same legendary serpentine mesmerising power as do the eyes of Kagua and Claggart. (p. 60). The quality of his hatred seems to resemble that of the revenger, but it is not generated by any specific desire for revenge. "He seemed to be full of hatred and gall against every thing and every body in the world; as if the world was one person, and had done him some dreadful harm, that was rankling and festering in his heart." (p. 61). Like Cooper's naturally depraved characters, Abiram White and Kit Dillon, Jackson is totally cut off from God, "'Don't talk of heaven to me--it's a lie--I know it--and they are fools that believe in it.'" (p. 104). And like most compulsive villains in American fiction, he has lost the capacity for normal emotional responses to acts of kindness. Redburn marvels at his lack of gratitude.
"I noticed, that those who did the most for him... were the very ones he most abused," (p. 59).

Lawrance Thompson argues that Jackson could be "considered as an artistic preliminary study, on Melville's part, of that character who was later to emerge in full-length portraiture as Captain Ahab." And there is some justification for this. For one thing, Jackson continually holds a mysterious sway over the rest of the crew, controlling them by a superior intensity of purpose. Also, Jackson has been wasted by disease so that, like Ahab, he appears to be physically diminished from his original bulk. But it should be pointed out that where Ahab has been metaphorically purged by fire of all that is not essential to his will, has been compacted and toughened, Jackson has been eaten away from within. Ahab could never be described as "the foul lees and dregs of a man... thin as a shadow... skin and bones," (p. 53). The most important similarity between the two characters is the response they elicit from sympathetic companions, Ahab from Starbuck, Jackson from Redburn. In describing his feelings for Jackson, Redburn seems to anticipate the very language of Moby-Dick.

There seemed to be even more woe than wickedness about the man; and his wickedness seemed to spring from his woe; and for all his hideousness, there was that in his eye at times, that was ineffably pitiable and touching; and though there were moments when I almost hated this Jackson, yet I have pitied no man as I have pitied him. (p. 105).

Two juxtapositions in this passage, wickedness with woe and hatred with

pity, are repeated by Melville in particularly meaningful lines in *Moby-Dick*.

This, however, is as far as a comparison between Jackson and Ahab can be pushed without doing violence to their characters. As is true of all the characters included in this study, Jackson and Ahab share the common fate of committing acts of evil which they have no capacity to resist. But the two characters are obviously different in type; one is not simply a rudimentary version of the other. Jackson lacks Ahab's grand obsession, his perverted idealism, his ponderous heart. While Ahab has been philosophically seasoned and eventually maddened by forty years of solitary night watches at sea, Jackson has been primarily a creature of the waterfront, defining his own history by telling tales to illustrate his total liberation from pangs of conscience related to vice. Ahab does not trifle with vices. He, too, is liberated from outside restrictions upon his behavior, but his liberation is much more metaphysical and cosmic than that of Jackson. Where Jackson is an inhuman monster, depraved by nature, and is more pathetic than tragic, Ahab, with no trace of natural depravity, is a complete man, gradually dehumanized (but never totally so) by intellectual narrowness. Ahab is tragic.

Melville's second naturally depraved villain is Bland, the master-at-arms in *White Jacket*. The discursive nature of this book ("narrative" might be a better generic term for it than "novel") precludes the full development of any of its characters, even the marvelous Jack Chase. Bland turns up from time to time throughout the course of the narrative, but he is the center of interest only in one or two chapters.
He is a much more sketchy character than either Jackson or Claggart. He carries, however, the eternal badge of the naturally depraved villain, a "snaky black eye, that at times shone like a dark lantern in a Jeweller-shop at midnight, and betokened the accomplished scoundrel within." (p. 184). As mentioned earlier, Bland partially conceals his evil nature behind a mask of gentlemanliness.

Bland, . . was no vulgar, dirty knave. In him . . vice seemed, but only seemed, to lose half its seeming evil by losing all its apparent grossness. He was a neat and gentlemanly villain, and broke his biscuit with a dainty hand. There was a fine polish about his whole person, and a pliant, insinuating style in his conversation that was, socially, quite irresistible. (p. 183).

He stands as a reasonable intermediary character between Jackson and Claggart, although he follows Jackson by a year and precedes Claggart by forty. Where Jackson is a common sailor, Bland is an officer, of the same rank as Claggart, and thereby in a position to do more mischief than Jackson because of his greater authority. Where Jackson openly reveals his own depravity, and Claggart successfully conceals his, Bland is able, through his polished manner, to cover up "half" of his own evil. Redburn calls Jackson's evil "inscrutable;" Claggart is explicitly identified as naturally depraved, and a pseudo-scientific explanation of this malady is provided. Again, the portrayal of Bland falls near the midpoint between the other two. White Jacket analyzes Bland from a point of view strikingly reminiscent of

\[13\] All references to White Jacket are to Herman Melville, *White Jacket* (New York, 1956).
Hawthorne's detached observers, but there is only the mildest suggestion that White Jacket himself may be courting moral disaster by putting a fellow sailor under a microscope. At the time he was writing White Jacket, Melville, who vaguely alludes to Hawthorne once near the end of the book, (p. 271), was just becoming acquainted with Hawthorne's fiction and had not, as yet, fully imbibed the concept of intellectual evil. In any case, White Jacket, in his final appraisal of his master-at-arms, categorizes Bland's evil as natural depravity, but of a much hazier sort than that of Claggart.

A studied observation of Bland convinced me that he was an organic and irreclaimable scoundrel, who did wicked deeds as the cattle browse the herbage, because wicked deeds seemed the legitimate operation of his whole infernal organisation. Phenomenologically, he was without a soul. Is it to be wondered at that devils are irreligious? (p. 185).

White Jacket's dual conclusions are that Bland is constitutionally evil and that he cannot, through effort of will, be otherwise.

Although White Jacket's summary completes the characterization of Bland, I cannot leave this work without calling the reader's attention to two other passages, neither of which sheds light on an important character, but both of which say something about Melville's conception of involuntary evil at a time immediately preceding his composition of Moby-Dick. The first is a description of a plaster cast, owned by the ship's surgeon Cadwallader Cuticle, of the head of a woman, horribly disfigured by "a hideous, crumpled horn" growing from the forehead.

Your whole heart burst with sorrow, as you contemplated those aged features, ashy pale and wan, The horn seemed the mark of a curse for some mysterious sin, conceived and committed before the spirit entered the flesh. Yet that sin
seemed something imposed, and not voluntarily sought; some sin growing out of the heartless necessities of the predestination of things; some sin under which the sinner sank in sinless woe. (p. 239).

Melville is grappling with the tenets of Calvinism, accepting part and rejecting part. He will acknowledge that sin may be inherited, as does Hawthorne in *The House of the Seven Gables*, but he cannot believe that the "sinless" sinner deserves punishment for evils not related to her personal volition. He in no way blames her for the objective mark of her sin, the horn; rather, it, in juxtaposition with her pious features, arouses in him feelings only of sadness. Her evil is portrayed as purely involuntary. That Melville rejects the Calvinist belief that it is still deserving of punishment suggests that he would also hesitate to condemn Jackson, Bland, and Claggart, because their evil is beyond their control. And this is supported, as will be seen shortly, by what Melville says of Claggart in *Billy Budd*. If Ahab's acts result from madness, then he too belongs in the group of characters victimized by a force beyond their own control.

The second passage is an explanation of the heartlessness of surgeon Cuticle. It is part of a grotesque satirical portrait, most of which must be taken ironically, but this part strikes me as being literal in tone. I bring it in because it suggests that Melville may have come, independently, to a view of the potential for dehumanization in scientific experimentation similar to that of Hawthorne. If so, then Melville's enthusiasm for Hawthorne's fiction may indeed have resulted from his sense that Hawthorne was saying what he had already figured out for himself more than from a feeling that Hawthorne...
already had explained what he was groping to understand. It is apparent, however, that Hawthorne's portrayal of intellectual evil is far more refined than anything Melville approaches in *White Jacket*. Of Dr. Cuticle, Melville writes:  

Long habituation to the dissecting-room and the amputation-table had made him seemingly impervious to the ordinary emotions of humanity. Yet you could not say that Cuticle was essentially a cruel-hearted man. His apparent heartlessness must have been of a purely scientific origin. It is not to be imagined that Cuticle would have harmed a fly, unless he could procure a microscope powerful enough to assist him in experimenting on the minute vitals of the creature (p. 241).  

Here, in a brief sketch, is the rudimentary outline of a typical Hawthornian scientist, a Rappaccini or an Aylmer. While the major form of evil in *White Jacket* is Bland's natural depravity, Melville provides a brief hint of his recognition of intellectual evil, as a potential fictional subject, and an indication of the direction in which his mind was turning immediately before his creation of Ahab.  

Melville's final treatment of true natural depravity is his portrayal of Claggart, villainous master-at-arms in *Billy Budd* (written 1888-1891, but not published until 1924). For more than a generation, the focal point of critical debate about *Billy Budd* has been the question of whether the book represents Melville's "testament of acceptance," his final reconciliation with things as they are. Spokesmen for the affirmative include Lewis Mumford. "At last he was reconciled. He accepted the situation of moral ambiguity as a tragic necessity; and to meet that tragedy bravely was to find peace, the
ultimate peace of resignation, even in an incongruous world."\(^{14}\) And
Mumford is accompanied by a truly remarkable assemblage of Helvillian
scholars: Newton Arvin, William Ellery Sedgwick ("It is right and true
to call Billy Budd Melville's 'testament of acceptance'"\(^{15}\), Leslie
Fiedler, R. W. B. Lewis ("The entire story moves firmly in the direction
of a transcendent cheerfulness"\(^{16}\), and F. O. Matthiessen ("After all
he had suffered Melville could endure to the end in the belief that
though good goes to defeat and death, its radiance can redeem life."\(^{17}\).
In the face of all of this, Lawrence Thompson intimates that most of
Melville's critics have been duped into taking as literal what is
intended as satire.

In conclusion, we may ask... how it is possible that
anyone who has read Billy Budd carefully could ever
describe it as Melville's 'Testament of Acceptance,'
But we know the answer to that: Melville cunningly
arranged to have certain kinds of readers arrive at
exactly that mistaken interpretation.\(^{18}\)

The obviously condescending tone of these comments and the thinly veiled
snort of "certain kinds of readers" induce one to believe that Thompson
has an ax to grind which stubbornly refuses to take a very keen edge.
Perhaps the greatest failing of Thompson's interpretation of Melville's
fiction as satire is, ironically, summarized by a sentence Thompson
himself includes, although he directs it to his opponents. "The major

\(^{14}\) Lewis Mumford, Herman Melville: A Study of His Life and Times, 2nd
\(^{15}\) William Ellery Sedgwick, Herman Melville: The Tragedy of Mind
\(^{17}\) Matthiessen, p. 514.
\(^{18}\) Thompson, p. 413.
factor of our misunderstanding of Melville is usually our tendency to read into a statement exactly the value or meaning we prefer to find. Once again, a rendezvous is consummated between a pot and a kettle. Of course, Thompson is not alone in disagreeing with those who see Billy Budd as an affirmation. Richard Chase argues that "the moral situation" of the book "is deeply equivocal," and that "we do our author no service," if we insist on a single, positive interpretation. Milton Stern begins somewhat ambivalently by saying, "This last book is not an 'acceptance' either of God or of expediency for its own sake," but he clarifies this: "Billy Budd accepts only what all the books before it accepted... Melville was not able to deduce a changed history from the facts of his times." In effect, Stern maintains that Melville's view of the human condition is not substantially more optimistic in Billy Budd than in Moby-Dick or The Confidence Man. Finally, Merlin Bowen interprets Billy Budd as an attack on Bentham's utilitarian philosophy. The Benthamite Vere, a callous utilitarian, "proceeds to hang, for the greatest good of the greatest number, a man innocent in all but the most technical sense of the word." It may be superfluous to add that Bowen does not believe the book to be a "testament of acceptance."

19 Ibid., p. 30.
22 Bowen, pp. 216-217.
I, for one, do not presume to question the ability of such scholars as Matthiessen, or Arvin, or Thompson to read and understand *Billy Budd*. They have provided interesting and informative analyses of the novel. However, their entire argument over whether the book is a "testament of acceptance" rests on an assumption to which no one except Milton Stern seems to pay any attention, namely, that Melville is so much at odds with things as they are in *Moby-Dick* that he needs to become reconciled. No doubt, there is something strongly positive about Billy's "ascension," not seriously undercut by the erroneous accounts of newspaper reporters who, unlike the reader, are seriously misinformed. But Billy's rosy-hued death is not clearly more affirmativ e than the continued life of Ishmael, a mature human being who is neither an "upright barbarian" nor the counterpart of a "Newfoundland dog." By discussion of *Moby-Dick*, which follows shortly, contends, in part, that that book culminates in an affirmation strong enough to preclude a need for a later "reconciliation" on the part of Melville.

John Claggart, as was mentioned earlier, is made evil by the same force which motivates Bland, namely, natural depravity. In fact, *Billy Budd* is, in subject, very much like *White Jacket*, even though forty years elapsed between the composition of the two books. Both deal with life aboard a military vessel, the inhumanity of which is objectified through descriptions of floggings. Both contain, as leading figures, a "handsome sailor," an evil master-at-arms, and a captain obedient to military codes. Even the names, Claret and Starry Vere, are similarly celestial in connotation. The world in which the characters in both novels function is so highly regimented that it
cannot easily be changed, even by its titular lord, the captain. The two books are not the same, but they resemble each other in subject and in a thematic conception of evil as an inevitable ingredient of the human condition for which no particular character is directly responsible. They differ, primarily, in accordance with the extent to which Melville’s imagination contributes to their composition. 

White Jacket is an informational work, filled with concrete details, cluttered with a baffling array of sketchy characters, and at least partly didactic in purpose. Billy Budd is more imaginative than informational; fewer documentary details are included; only three characters, supported by two or three attendants, are developed. Metaphorically, Billy Budd, except for its suggestion of mutiny, might be described as an impressionist painting inspired by an eight by ten glossy photograph called White Jacket. Or, in accordance with Wordsworth’s system, the first book is the moment which, recollected many years later, yields the vision for the second. The tones are softened, irrelevant details discarded, and emphasis is transferred from occasional social issues to lasting problems of morality.

Claggart is an imaginative extension of the more realistic but relatively insipid (and appropriately named) Bland. Where Bland is convicted for instigating a small-time bootlegging operation, Claggart is almost Puritan in his avoidance of petty vices. This, coupled with his diplomatic handling of superiors, has been responsible for his quickly becoming an officer.

The superior capacity he immediately evinced, his constitutional sobriety, an ingratiating deference to superiors, together with a peculiar ferreting
genius manifested on a singular occasion; all this capped by a certain austere patriotism abruptly advanced him to the position of master-at-arms. (p. 67).23

Glaggart, then, is no mean villain. Unlike most characters of his type, he has a conscience, and he sometimes has difficulty reconciling his conscience with actions dictated by his inherent malignity. Melville suggests that Claggart's overemphasis on the relatively minor incident of Billy's spilling a bowl of soup is an attempt to come to terms with his conscience.

Probably, the master-at-arms' clandestine persecution of Billy was started to try the temper of the man; but had not developed any quality in him that enmity could make official use of or even pervert into plausible self-justification; so that the occurrence at the mess, petty if it were, was a welcome one to that peculiar conscience assigned to be the private mentor of Claggart. (p. 80).

The implication is that Claggart, adept at concealing his evil from others, labors under the necessity of disguising it even in his own mind. He must concoct some kind of an excuse before he can comfortably proceed with his dark designs.

The immediate motivation for Claggart's persecution of Billy is a particular kind of envy caused by Claggart's inability fully to rationalize away his own essential nature. Billy is a living example to tear down the facade of virtue Claggart attempts to construct to appease his own conscience; he is a threat to Claggart's self-approbation. Even Claggart's superior mind is unable to develop a chain of reasoning.

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23 All references to Billy Budd are to Herman Melville, Billy Budd, Sailor, ed. Harrison Hayford and Kerton K. Seals, Jr. (Chicago, 1962).
acceptable to him that will make Billy into anything other than the
personification of innocent virtue.

If askance he eyed the good looks, cheery health and frank enjoyment of young life in Billy Budd, it was because those went along with a nature that, as Claggart magnetically felt, had in its simplicity never willed malice or experienced the reactionary bite of that serpent. . . One person excepted [Captain Vere], the master-at-arms was perhaps the only man in the ship intellectually capable of adequately appreciating the moral phenomenon presented in Billy Budd. And the insight but intensified his passion [envy], which assuming various secret forms within him, at times assumed that of cynical disdain—disdain of innocence—to be nothing more than innocent! Yet in an aesthetic way he saw the charm of it, the courageous free-and-easy temper of it, and fain would have shared it, but he despaired of it. (p. 78).

Whatever virtue Claggart is rationally able to assign to himself becomes hollow as he observes Billy. Condescending disdain is transformed into envy, in this case, the other face of introspective despair. It is significant, I think, that immediately after the account of Claggart's envy quoted above, Melville reveals the absolute hopelessness of Claggart's condition.

With no power to annul the elemental evil in him, though readily enough he could hide it; apprehending the good, but powerless to be it; a nature like Claggart's, surcharged with energy as such natures almost invariably are, what recourse is left to it but to recoil upon itself and like the scorpion for which the Creator alone is responsible, act out to the end the part allotted it. (p. 78).

This is as clear an affirmation of the existence of involuntary evil as will be found in American fiction.

Claggart appears to be doomed to self-destruction and made aware of that doom by his observation of Billy. If the reader recognizes
this, he is also in a position to recognize that Claggart's accusation of Billy is not as unmotivated as it may at first appear to be. So long as Billy remains on board the Bellipotent with his innocence intact, he is an object of self-torment for Claggart. Melville speaks of times when Claggart glances toward Billy.

Then would Claggart look like the man of sorrows. Yes, and sometimes the melancholy expression would have in it a touch of soft yearning, as if Claggart could even have loved Billy but for fate and ban. But this was an evanescence, and quickly repented of, as it were, by an immitigable look, pinching and shrivelling the visage into the momentary semblance of a wrinkled walnut. (p. 83).

Billy, by continually reminding Claggart of his own hopeless depravity, acts as a force hastening Claggart toward self-destruction. Claggart's accusation is an act of desperation, foreshadowed by Melville's comment that "something decisive must come" (p. 90), of his attempts to come to terms with his own depravity. The accusation is generated by two opposite impulses, the one suicidal, the other a final grasp at self-preservation. Claggart cannot, of course, anticipate that he will be struck dead by Billy, but he is warned by Captain Vere that "there is a yardarm-end for the false-witness." (p. 95). He will die, if he fails to convince the Captain that Billy is guilty of plotting mutiny.

At least, there will be an end to self-torment. However, if he is able to make the accusation stand, he will be, in effect, bringing Billy down to his own level, and even though he knows that his charges are false, with the authority of Captain Vere confirming their validity, he will have more than enough to assuage a conscience already shown (in the affair of Billy's spilling soup) to be capable of being
satisfied by trumped up evidence. His accusation is a desperate attempt to retain a rationally contrived self-identity which is mortally threatened by Billy's virtue. That he fails is, of course, inevitable, for his charges are just as flimsy as is his own self-image, and Melville has already made it abundantly clear that Claggart, because he is hopelessly depraved, is doomed.

The evil in "Benito Cereno" is, in many respects, quite similar to that in the three works already discussed. Like Claggart, Babo is irrevocably depraved, intelligent, and skilled at concealing his own malignity from others, particularly the gullible Captain Delano. But Babo is black, and there is a clear connection between his depravity and his blackness. None of the blacks on board the San Dominick is guiltless; the women, whom Delano initially views as examples of natural animal innocence, turn out to be even more sadistic than the men. Not satisfied with simply murdering the whites, they attempt to arouse the men to commit acts of torture. When Don Benito is asked by Delano, "What has cast such a shadow upon you?" he responds inclusively "The negro." (p. 104).24 It is possible that he is referring to the single Negro, Babo, but his deposition indicates that he considers Babo to be a representative of his race, differing more in degree of depravity and in intelligence than in essential moral condition from the other Blacks. And Melville, although he explodes the shallowness of some of Delano's stereotyped ideas about Blacks, offers almost

24 All references to "Benito Cereno" are to Shorter Novels of Herman Melville, ed. Raymond M. Weaver (New York, 1928).
nothing that can be construed as undercutting the views of Don Benito. Only once or twice is slavery alluded to as an evil, and the effect, in one instance, is to broaden the onus of guilt so that whites need not alone feel responsible. "Poor Babo here, in his own land, was only a poor slave; a black man's slave was Babo, who now is the white's," (pp. 26-27). According to Matthiessen, Melville's failure to come to grips with the ethical implications of slavery is the major weakness of the story.

The embodiment of good in the pale Spanish captain and of evil in the mutinied African crew, though pictorially and theatrically effective, was unfortunate in raising unanswered questions. Although the Negroes were savagely vindictive and drove a terror of blackness into Cereno's heart, the fact remains that they were slaves and that evil had thus originally been done to them. Melville's failure to reckon with this fact within the limits of his narrative makes its tragedy, for all its prolonged suspense, comparatively superficial.25

In general, critics are about equally divided on the question of the story's artistic merit. Newton Arvin, probably "Benito Cereno's" most outspoken detractor, calls it "an artistic miscarriage" which has been "unduly celebrated."26 He focusses his attack on Melville's failure to "work up" his source material, which may, in part, explain his (Melville's) failure to deal adequately with the slavery issue. Those who defend the story, Richard Harter Fogle for example, are pretty much forced into arguing that the artistic power of the book's color

26Arvin, p. 238.
pattern transcends its social implications. Fogle introduces the issue by saying, "'Benito Cereno' has a decorative color scheme of white, black, and gray." His use of "decorative" seems to be an intentional attempt to play down the racial suggestions of the colors. Next he explains, rightly, that white has the same ambivalence in this story as in _Moby-Dick_, being associated both with moral goodness and decay. And finally, he says that, "if we omit the elements of absolute evil in Babo, ... the rebellious slaves are good and also evil, like other men, but they lack a principle of control, ... The Negroes are not well governed." I have a great deal of sympathy for this line of reasoning, because it translates the racial theme of the tale into a political theme; ironically, however, if we pursue Fogle's argument to its next logical step, it results in a compounding of the racial bias of the story. Considering that the Blacks have recently completed a successful revolution, the system of government they have established, if imperfect, is remarkably well-ordered under the existing circumstances. In fact, it resembles in structure a modern corporation, complete with a president, Babo; an executive vice-president, Atufal; a board of directors, the otkum pickers; and a security force, the hatchet polishers. The Blacks murder, not because their primitive impulses are unrestrained (if that were the case, the torture sought by the women would have been carried out), but as a part of corporate...
policy. Sometimes this policy is carried out inefficiently and sloppily, but it nonetheless remains policy, not random savagery. And this, given Fogle's position, leads to a very difficult dilemma. We are faced with the alternatives of rejecting Fogle's views and concluding that the Blacks in "Benito Cereno," relatively well-governed, are portrayed as racially depraved, or of accepting Fogle's interpretation and concluding that the Blacks, led by the imposing and all but noble Atufal and the surpassingly intelligent Babo, are incapable of governing themselves. To accept the latter alternative is the moral equivalent of calling Atufal and Babo "boys." It reflects exactly the attitude of racial condescension to which Ralph Ellison and others object in *Huckleberry Finn*. In either case, "Benito Cereno" belongs with those works already discussed in which involuntary evil is primarily a function of race.

*Moby-Dick* (1851) is the logical work with which to conclude a study of involuntary evil in early American fiction, for here evil generated by an intellectual idea, the most pervasive of the four types, comes to full flower. The book, as I suggested in Chapter One, is primarily psychological in theme, but the psychological meaning is expressed through the way in which various characters, especially Ishmael and Ahab, react to a matrix of metaphysical possibilities, symbolically opened to them by their willingness to put to sea and symbolically objectified in the white whale. For this reason, the psychological realities of Ahab's character become accessible, in large part, through the medium of *Moby Dick*. To examine Ahab but to ignore the whale is to do violence to Melville's final metaphorical
I am in basic agreement with those who say that the whale stands for the mystery of creation, or the unknowable, or the infinite, as confronted by the finite mind of man. "Is not," asks Fiedler, "... Moby Dick identified with Leviathan himself; and is not Leviathan the immortal symbol of the inscrutability of the created world?" Sedgwick says essentially the same thing: "Moby Dick stands for the mystery of creation which confronts and challenges the mind of man... He is significant of the massive inertia in things, and of the blind beauty and violence of nature—all that ignores or twists or betrays or otherwise does outrage to man's purposes." Important in both of these comments are breadth and a liberal allowance for ambivalence of meaning. We do not need to go as far as Levin and call Moby Dick "an irreducible symbol" which "must have a different meaning for every man." Enough positive characteristics are ascribed to the whale by Melville to suggest a line of interpretation which may be followed by more than one reader. But there is a danger of overreducing the symbol. To suggest that Moby Dick stands for death or is the embodiment of "intangible malignity," is to repeat Ahab's error of intellectual narrowness. Death and evil are parts of "the mystery of creation," the very parts, in fact, which tend most to tantalize man's searching mind. He wonders why he must die more often than why he was born.

30 Sedgwick, p. 98.
although the origin of self is just as mysterious as the end of self. God's plan poses no particular riddle for Job so long as he is healthy and prosperous; it becomes subjectively puzzling to him when he is covered with sores. It is, in other words, and this is one of the valid implications of Melville's novel, quite normal for man to be more aware of the negative aspects of the mystery than of its positive sides. But Moby Dick, given his tremendous capacity for destruction, is also majestically beautiful as he breaches at mid-day off the bow of the Pequod; there is enough of him, and he is ambivalent enough, to encompass yin and yang, as Ishmael alone comes to understand.

The reader who begins with the assumption that the novel is an artistic unit and rejects the temptation to skim over the chapters on the technical details of whales and whaling will find that these chapters help him to understand the nature of the white whale. The characteristics of all whales become centralized in a single outstanding species, the sperm whale; and all that is said of this species is true, finally, of its greatest representative individual, Moby Dick. Hence, the chapters on cetology make an invaluable contribution to the symbolic portrait of the white whale. In these chapters Melville emphasizes four dominant attributes of the whale genus: immense size, ubiquity, immortality, and inscrutability. He calls the whale "the mightiest animated mass that has survived the flood; most monstrous and most mountainous." (p. 97). He alludes to the Book of Job in describing the "ponderous task" of attempting to classify whales. "What am I that I should essay to hook the nose of this leviathan!" (pp. 181-182). The sheer bulk of the whale makes its classification
too difficult for the ordinary man. And, of course, countless passages on various parts of the whale contribute to the impression of vastness, the most obvious of the four characteristics cited above. The quality of ubiquity is more subtly implied, but it too runs through much of the book. The prefatory "Extracts" section indicates that whales swim through the minds of most thinking men. Products made from whales are found almost everywhere, from the person of Ahab, to the docks of the Pequod, to whaling ports, to the courts of kings. But perhaps the clearest impression of ubiquity, amounting almost to a kind of panetism, is yielded by the title of chapter fifty-seven, which names a series ascending both in size and in degree of permanence: "Of Whales in Paint; in Teeth; in Wood; in Sheet-Iron; in Stone; in Mountains; in Stars."

The presence of whales in such lasting objects as mountains and stars suggests, of course, not only ubiquity but also immortality, a characteristic to which Melville explicitly alludes on several occasions. Viewing a fossil whale, Ishmael is overcome by a sense of incomprehensible duration.

Here Saturn's grey chaos rolls over me, and I obtain dim, shuddering glimpses into those Polar eternities; when wedged bastions of ice pressed hard upon what are now the Tropics; and in all the 25,000 miles of this world's circumference, not an inhabitable hand's breadth of land was visible. Then the whole world was the whale's; and, king of creation, he left his wake along the present lines of the Andes and the Himmalehs. Who can show a pedigree like Leviathan? Ahab's harpoon had shed older blood than Pharaoh's, Methuselah seems a schoolboy. I look round to shake hands with Shem, I am horror-struck at the antemosiac, unsourced existence of the unspeakable terrors of the whale, which, having been before all time, must needs exist after all.
humane ages are over. (p. 582).

Finally, whales defy comprehension by the human mind; they are inscrutable. Ishmael laments the inaccuracy of most paintings of whales, but concludes that the blame lies not so much with the artists as with the subject.

Any way you may look at it, you must needs conclude that the great Leviathan is that one creature in the world which must remain unpainted to the last. True, one portrait may hit the mark much nearer than another, but none can hit it with any very considerable degree of exactness. So there is no earthly way of finding out precisely what the whale really looks like. (p. 352).

Similarly, it is impossible for man to read the meaning of the whale's enormous brow. "If... Sir William Jones, who read thirty languages, could not read the simplest peasant's face in its profounder and more subtle meanings, how may unlettered Ishmael hope to read the awful Chaldee of the Sperm Whale's brow? I but put that brow before you. Read it if you can." (p. 449).

Whales as a group function in the novel as an objectification of all that is too large, too pervasive, too lasting, and too mysterious to be comprehended by the limited mind of man. And Moby Dick, according to the legends which have grown up around him, stands for all of this and adds the element of whiteness. He is "a Sperm Whale of uncommon magnitude." (p. 240). According to Ishmael, superstition has given rise to "the unearthly conceit that Moby Dick was ubiquitous; that he had actually been encountered in opposite latitudes at one and the same instant of time." (p. 243). And to this has been added the belief that he is immortal;
that though groves of spears should be planted in his flanks, he would still swim away unharmed; or if indeed he should ever be made to spout thick blood, such a sight would be but a ghastly deception; for again in unsanguined billows hundreds of leagues away, his unsullied jet would once more be seen. (pp. 244-245).

But the dominant characteristic of the white whale is inscrutability, made up of "all manner of morbid hints and half-formed foetal suggestions of supernatural agencies." (p. 241). At times, the whale seems to be endowed with "intelligent malignity," in addition to all of his other seemingly supernatural attributes. If so, then there is some justification for Ahab's obsession. But the suggestion of intelligent malignity is undercut twice, and must, I think, finally be rejected. To begin with, it is first mentioned as the last item in a catalogue of characteristics superstitiously assigned to Moby Dick. In this context it is neither more nor less believable than the suggestions that Moby Dick is ubiquitous and immortal. Second, as the whale prepares to ram the Pequod, Ishmael says: "Retribution, swift vengeance, eternal malice were in his whole aspect." (p. 720). But the chase continues for three days after the white whale is found, even though it is obvious that Moby Dick could have destroyed Ahab the first day. True, there seems to be purpose to his sinking of the Pequod, but there is the same semblance of purpose in his swimming round and round the floundering Ahab instead of moving in for the kill. The appearance of intelligent malignity is balanced by the appearance of intelligent restraint; the destruction of the Pequod is offset by the whale's steadfast refusal to kill Ahab (he is swimming away when Ahab hurls his final dart and dies entangled in his own line). In fact, the
reader receives the distinct impression from the final chapters that the whale is issuing an ascending series of warnings to Ahab to give up his fatal obsession, first wrecking his boat, then drowning Fedallah, and finally sinking the Pequod.

That all of this remains uncertain is of a piece with the whiteness of the whale. Says Ishmael, "It was the whiteness of the whale that above all things appalled me." (p. 253). A major theme of Robert Frost's poetry is that the ability to endure tentativeness is the test of true mental strength. "There may be little or much beyond the grave, /But the strong are saying nothing until they see." For Ishmael, it is the paradoxical ambiguity of whiteness, at once ultimately meaningful and absolutely meaningless, that is intellectually appalling. The white whale appears to encompass all knowledge behind an impenetrable mask of blankness. Attempting to grope for an explanation of his emotional response to whiteness, Ishmael finally offers this suggestion.

Is it that by its indefinite indefiniteness it shadows forth the heartless voids and immensities of the universe, and thus stabs us from behind with the thought of annihilation, when beholding the white depths of the milky way? Or is it, that as in essence whiteness is not so much a color as the visible absence of color, and at the same time the concrete of all colors; is it for these reasons that there is such a dumb blankness, full of meaning, in a wide landscape of snows—a colorless, all-color of atheism from which we shrink. (pp. 263-264).

The threat of annihilation, the hint of atheism, reflects a tentatively

tragic view of the human condition. But ambivalence predominates, to the extent that the irrevocable promise of eternal annihilation would almost seem preferable to the prevailing uncertainty of blank whiteness. Ishmael, like Ahab, is appalled by the aspect of irreducible mystery, not even the existence of which is recognized by the other characters in the novel. He, like Ahab, is faced with the possible alternatives of learning to accept tentativeness (the introspective recognition that his finite mind cannot encompass the infinite), or of making a desperate attempt to penetrate the blankness. And he, like Ahab, in the world of Moby-Dick, is not granted even the prerogative of deciding for himself which alternative he will choose but by temperament and circumstances, is irresistibly impelled toward one possibility and away from the other. Ironically, however, where Ahab cannot avoid moving toward self-destruction and the destruction of all who remain in league with him, Ishmael seems fated to move toward the re-establishment of his free will and salvation.

A part of Ahab, that part in which his madness is sourced, is similar to the whole of Hawthorne’s monomaniacal characters. Bending over his charts at night, seeking intellectually to deduce the probable location of Moby Dick, Ahab seems the type of the dehumanized scholar.

While thus employed, . . . it almost seemed that while he himself was marking out lines and courses on the wrinkled charts, some invisible pencil was also tracing lines and courses upon the deeply marked chart of his forehead. . . . Almost every night the charts were brought out; almost every night some pencil marks were effaced, and others were established. For with the charts of all four oceans before him, Ahab was threading a maze of currents
and eddies, with a view to the more certain accomplishment of that monomaniac thought of his soul. (p. 267).

And like Hawthorne's Ethan Brand or Richard Digby, Ahab's preoccupation with a single intellectual purpose has robbed him of the capacity to enjoy physical pleasures, or beauty, or companionship. He throws his pipe into the sea with the lament, "this smoking no longer soothes." (p. 175). He senses that his intellectual elevation has resulted in a concomitant human diminishing. The sunset no longer holds any joy for him. "Dry heat upon my brow? Oh! time was, when as the sunrise nobly spurred me, so the sunset soothed. No more. This lovely light, it lights not me; all loveliness is anguish to me, since I can ne'er enjoy. Gifted with the high perception, I lack the low, enjoying power." (p. 226). And he is unable to engage in menial conversation with the other officers who dine with him. "In the cabin was no companionship; socially, Ahab was inaccessible." (p. 206). It is apparent that Ahab has undergone a Hawthomian transformation by which his mind has increased and his affective capacity has suffered a proportionate decline. That he regrets his loss of ability to enjoy his pipe or the sunset suggests that the transformation has not been voluntary.

Ahab, in effect, encompasses the aspects of the typical Hawthomian intellectual monomaniac, and then is only about a third complete. The remainder of his character moves beyond Hawthorne's conception in two important ways. First, Hawthorne's monomaniacs usually home in on limited objects, often literal in its implications. There is no symbolic overtone to Brand's unpardonable sin or Chillingworth's
cuckolder. Only Aylmer, among Hawthorne's intellectual villains, is preoccupied with a symbolic object, the tiny fairy mark on Georgiana's cheek scarcely carries symbolic meaning comparable in scope or power to the symbolic implications of Moby Dick. Ahab's monomaniacal object is at once more central to human experience and broader than anything Hawthorne ascribes to his own characters. The white whale, as seen by the sane Ishmael, stands for universal mystery. Ahab, because of his madness, narrows the whale's meaning, in a way already shown to be of a piece with usual human behavior and a symptom of madness only in its extreme forms, by screening out its positive aspects and focussing on "the mystery of iniquity." But even after Ahab's imposing of intellectually narrow limits, the whale remains the symbol of a more essential part of human experience than the question of whether it is possible to commit a sin so dark that God cannot pardon it. The desire for revenge in Ahab is a superficial manifestation of Ahab's basic moral condition, as Claggart's envy is a symptom of his natural depravity. Losing a leg to the whale has been both a physical diminution for Ahab and an intellectual enlightenment. It has given him a taste from Pope's Empyrean Spring, initiating him into the outer circle of mysteries normally withheld from mortals. In seeking revenge against the whale, Ahab is really attempting to enlarge the scope of the insight he has derived from his first encounter with the whale, made an object of revenge by Ahab's association with it of all iniquity, but finally more valuable to him as a source of knowledge.

It is apparent that Ahab's quest for revenge derives from a
scapegoating transfer of his own limitations to the external world. It is an expression of his sense of limitation. In his initial confrontation with Moby Dick, Ahab, not yet maddened, struck at the whale because, "knife in hand, he had given loose to a sudden, passionate, corporal animosity." (p. 247). Having lost a leg to the whale during this encounter, Ahab lay suffering in his bunk on the long homeward voyage. "Then it was, that his torn body and gashed soul bled into one another; and so infusing, made him mad." (p. 248). And then it was that Ahab became obsessed by a desire for revenge. "The White Whale swam before him as the monomaniac incarnation of all those malicious agencies which some deep men feel eating in them, till they are left living on with half a heart and half a lung. That intangible malignity which has been from the beginning," (pp. 246-247). To this extent, the whale serves him as a projection of his innate sense of imperfection. What is wrong within himself he objectifies in the whale. At this point, however, the desire for revenge ends, replaced by the quest for knowledge. In one of the most powerful passages in the entire novel, Ahab attempts to explain to Starbuck (the establishment) the fascination of Moby Dick.

All visible objects, man, are but as pasteboard masks. But in each event—in the living act, the undoubted deed—there, some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the moldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask. If man will strike, strike through the mask! How can the prisoner reach outside except by thrusting through the wall? To me, the white whale is that wall, shoved near to me. Sometimes I think there's naught beyond, but 'tis enough. He tasks me; he heaps me; I see in him outrageous strength, with an inscrutable malice sinewing it. That inscrutable thing is chiefly
what I hate; and be the white whale agent, or be the white whale principal, I will wreak that hate upon him. (pp. 220-221).

Again, the inscrutability of the whale has become its defining characteristic. Perhaps there is no hidden meaning behind the wall imposed by the whale, but the wall itself is infuriating. And it appears to conceal the answer to those questions which most torment mankind, the questions of why evil is inevitably present wherever people gather and why birth must be followed by death. Ahab seeks solutions to these problems with a will "grooved to run on iron rails."

But, and this is his second advantage over Hawthorne's characters, Ahab remains a divided character. The usual Hawthornian intellectual villain may accurately be called one-sided. Not so, Ahab. Both Chase and Matthiessen seem to overlook this essential aspect of Ahab's nature when they compare him to Ethan Brand, although the comparison is made natural by the association of both characters with fire and by their shared pride. Writes Chase, "Like Hawthorne's Ethan Brand. . . Ahab is the victim of a disintegrating personality, a personality in which the mind driven by the will has cut itself off from the heart."33 And Matthiessen says "Ahab's tragedy. . . runs the course of the tragedy of Ethan Brand, whom Melville regarded as typifying the man whose inordinate development of will and brain 'eats out the heart.'"34 I have already suggested that one part of Ahab resembles Hawthorne's dehumanized intellectuals. However, where the heart of

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33 Chase, Melville, p. 48.
34 Matthiessen, p. 449.
Ethan Brand is turned to marble and rendered inoperative, Ahab's is not. Before the onset of his monomania, Ahab has the morbid madness of tragic greatness, composed of "a globular brain and a ponderous heart," liberated from traditional ideas by long solitary watches in the remotest latitudes. (pp. 111-112). Neither the heart nor the brain is destroyed by the monomania, a new form of madness compounding the first and called by Ahab "madness maddened." (p. 226). In fact, his intellect seems even keener than before.

Human madness is oftentimes a cunning thing. When you think it fled, it may have but become transfigured into some still subtler form. Ahab's full lunacy subsided not, but deepeningly contracted... As in his narrow-flowing monomania, not one jot of Ahab's broad madness had been left behind; so in that broad madness, not one jot of his great intellect had perished. That before living agent, now became the living instrument. If such a furious trope may stand, his special lunacy stormed his general sanity, and carried it, and turned all its concentrated cannon upon its own mad mark. (pp. 248-249).

In practice, Ahab's still functioning intellect serves his madness by permitting him to impart some appearance of normalcy to his search for the white whale. "The subtle insanity of Ahab respecting Moby Dick was noways more significantly manifested than in his superlative sense and shrewdness in foreseeing that... the hunt should in some way be stripped of that strange imaginative impiousness which naturally invested it." (p. 285). The monomania stimulates the intellect in order to make a more effective tool of it and in order to allow Ahab to conceal his compounded madness from Peleg, Bildad, and the rest. But even though Peleg is deceived, he is right in saying that "Ahab has
his humanities." (p. 120).

Ahab's heart has neither decayed nor been turned to marble. Rather, it has been stripped of its sovereignty and yoked to his intellect to serve as a source of motive power for his madness. The heart is like the liver of Prometheus, doomed to be eternally fed upon but not to diminish in size. The unnatural alloy of heart and head forged by Ahab's monomania is nearly perfect, so long as he is awake, but the two elements tend to separate as he sleeps. "A chasm seemed opening in him, from which forked flames and lightnings shot up." (p. 272). At such times the heart or living principle in Ahab seeks to escape from the mind with which it has been combined by his monomaniac purpose.

Crazy Ahab, the scheming, unappeasedly steadfast hunter of the white whale; this Ahab that had gone to his hammock, was not the agent that so caused him to burst from it in horror again. The latter was the eternal, living principle or soul in him; and in sleep, being for the time disassociated from the characterizing mind, which at other times employed it for its outer vehicle or agent, it spontaneously sought escape from the scorching contiguity of the frantic thing, of which, for the time, it was no longer an integral. But as the mind does not exist unless leagued with the soul, therefore it must have been that, in Ahab's case, yielding up all his thoughts and fancies to his one supreme purpose; that purpose, by its own sheer inveteracy of will, forced itself against gods and devils into a kind of self-assumed, independent being of its own. . . Therefore, the tormented spirit that glared out of bodily eyes, when what seemed Ahab rushed from his room, was for the time but a vacated thing, a formless somnambulistic being, a ray of living light, to be sure, but without object to color, and therefore a blankness in itself. God help thee, old man, thy thoughts have created a creature in thee; and he whose intense thinking thus makes him a Prometheus; a vulture feeds upon that heart for ever; that vulture the very creature he creates. (p. 272).
All of the essential faculties of Ahab's being, although refined and compacted by the scorching heat of his purpose, remain intact, but they have been reordered to form a new Ahab symbolically represented by the new harpoon he forges and baptises in the name of the devil. The new being, as keen and focussed as it is possible for a man to become, still will not penetrate the mystery represented by Moby Dick. Shortly after Ahab has christened his ultimate harpoon, he is told by the captain of the Delight, "The harpoon is not yet forged that will ever do that [kill the white whale]." (p. 680).

The fact that Ahab's heart is incorporated into his new being, not turned to marble, sets him apart from Ethan Brand or Roger Chillingworth. While he, like them, is totally incapable of voluntarily resisting the dictates of his dehumanizing monomania, he at least retains the capacity for regret. Chillingworth and Brand are finally transformed into monsters; in Ahab, the human being is imperfectly concealed behind the monster. One cannot conceive of Chillingworth's adopting Pip or of Brand's yielding even a single tear to the Pacific. Chillingworth and Brand steadily pursue a journey from membership in the human race to membership in a race of fiends. Ahab, already both human and diabolic when he first stands on the deck of the Pequod (his division symbolized by the white slash which bisects him from head to toe), has already undergone his own transformation. From this point on, he vacillates between humanity and diabolism, appearing most fiendish in "The Candles" and most human in "The Symphony."

If he has a tragic power surpassing that of Hawthorne's villains,
it is partly because of his magnitude and partly because the living principle within him heroically opposes the inevitable flow of his character, like the wave in Frost's "West-Running Brook." When the Pequod finally approaches "the line," Ahab's monomaniac purpose visibly increases. "Launched at length upon these almost final waters . . . the old man's purpose intensified itself. His firm lips met like the lips of a vice; the Delta of his forehead's veins swelled like overladen brooks." (p. 615). But Ahab still walks on "life and death." (p. 310). It seems valid to suggest, since Ahab is frequently compared to the whales he hunts, that as he nears the inevitable conclusion of his voyage to self-destruction, the life-principle within him becomes agitated for one final "flurry," comparable to the flurry of a dying whale. The flurry begins with Ahab's sympathetic adoption of Pip. "Hero, boy; Ahab's cabin shall be Pip's home henceforth, while Ahab lives. Thou touchest my inmost centre, boy; thou art tied to me by cords woven of my heart-strings." (p. 659). The heart momentarily asserts itself in defiance of the monomania, but only briefly. Sympathy, at least in the fiction of Brown and Hawthorne, is the one power capable of curing intellectual villainy. Ahab's intellectual dementia, more firmly entrenched than that of Huntly or Holgrave, recognizes the danger to itself generated by Ahab's relationship with Pip and moves to destroy that danger. "Ahab. . . would not have thee by him. There is that in thee, poor lad, which I feel too curing to my malady. . . and for this hunt, my malady becomes my most desired health." (p. 672). Any hope that Ahab may regain his sanity is dashed by this rejection of Pip. But the life principle is still capable of
arousing regrets in Ahab, and of making him feel that he is hurrying
to an end which he would not have sought, had his free will remained
viable.

What is it, what nameless, inscrutable, unearthly
thing is it; what cozening, hidden lord and mas­
ter, and cruel, remorseless emperor commands me;
that against all natural lovings and longings, I
so keep pushing, and crowding, and jamming myself
on all the time; recklessly making me ready to do
what in my own proper natural heart, I durst not
so much as dare? Is Ahab, Ahab? Is it I, God, or
who, that lifts this arm? (p. 685).

The answer to Ahab's question is that Ahab is Ahab, himself lifting the
diabolic harpoon in defiance of his own limits, but that this Ahab is
a new creature, doomed by the juxtaposition of a detached intellect
and intense physical suffering, to see only the dark side of the
mystery of creation and to be maddened by it. On the other hand, the
question is posed by the remnant of an earlier, more humane and more
free Ahab, subordinated but not destroyed by the advent of his mono­
mania. To the end, Ahab retains a capacity to be tortured by his own
involuntary evil that is unique in American fiction. Possessed by a
dehumanizing madness, he ironically proves, by calling himself
"unmanned," that a part of him never is unmanned.

Ahab's definace of Moby Dick is, of course, not the only possible
response to the whale. There are just about as many possible reactions
to Moby Dick as there are characters in the novel. But all of these
may be reduced to two essential kinds determined by whether a charac­
ter recognizes the whale's metaphysical implications. According to
this criterion, the group which fails to see the symbolic importance
of Moby Dick encompasses all of the characters except Ahab and
Ishmael, even Starbuck, who comprehends much of Ahab’s character, insists that the whale is nothing more than a brute beast. Ahab alludes to this when he says Starbuck and Stubb “are the opposite poles of one thinking... ye two are all mankind; and Ahab stands alone among the millions of the peopled earth,” (p. 697). The totally practical, totally non-symbolic attitude toward the whale is epitomized by Captain Boomer of the Samuel Enderby whose physical experience, the loss of a limb to the jaw of Moby Dick, parallels that of Ahab. Boomer interprets the whale’s malice as being “only his awkwardness.” The practical Boomer will not again lower for the white whale, “He’s welcome to the arm he has, since I can’t help it, and didn’t know him then; but not to another one. No more White Whales for me; I’ve lowered for him once, and that has satisfied me.” (p. 564). As far as Boomer is concerned, there is no more to Moby Dick than his physical reality, no wall or tantalizing mask to be penetrated at the risk of life and soul.

Only Ishmael shares Ahab’s visionary sense that the whale has greater importance as a symbol, a vision reinforced by Melville’s failure to grant physical reality to Moby Dick until the end of the novel. For this reason, the importance of Ishmael as a character is very great. He alone emerges from the social fabric of the novel to stand beside Ahab. It is precisely at this point, I think, that many who attempt to come to terms with the novel make a serious mistake. Feidelson, for example, suggests that Ishmael almost disappears as the novel progresses. “As Ishmael the narrator enters more deeply into his symbolic world, he increasingly becomes a presence, a visionary
activity, rather than a man; we lose interest in him as an individual, and even Ishmael the sailor almost drops from the story.\textsuperscript{35} I, for one, do not lose interest in Ishmael. At times Melville drops the mask of first person narration and provides insights into Ahab's character which could not be available to Ishmael; thus, Ishmael's character is sometimes eclipsed by direct authorial narration. But these eclipses are temporary, and one test of the power of the novel is the fact that many readers, myself included, are not bothered by these apparent lapses in fictional technique.

Ishmael asserts his autonomy as a significant character by managing to survive when all other characters, even those not on board the 
Poquod, are relegated to oblivion. He survives by going far enough with Ahab to recognize the symbolic implications of the whale, something no other character does, and then making "a separate peace." To begin with, the youthful Ishmael appears to be a potential Ahab. He is given to morbid speculation, to "Novembers" of the "soul" suggestive of morbidity and to seeking second meanings behind physical objects (witness his impression that the sign at the "Try-Pots" Inn is suggestive of a gallows and his foreboding meditation about the name of Peter Coffin). Also, Ishmael feels from the beginning a sense of identity with Ahab. When he is first told about his captain by Peleg, he says,

\textsuperscript{35}Feidelson, p. 31. It should be noted that Feidelson acknowledges the reemergence of "Ishmael the Sailor" in Chapter xlii and that he nowhere suggests we should lose interest in Ishmael.
At the time, I felt a sympathy and a sorrow for him, but for I don't know what, unless it was the cruel loss of his leg. And yet I also felt a strange awe of him; but that sort of awe, which I cannot at all describe, was not exactly awe; I do not know what it was. But I felt it; and it did not disincline me towards him. (p. 120).

Given Ishmael's temperament, his natural tendency toward morbidity and his compulsion to look behind the mask (reflected by his need to go to sea and his narration of "The Whiteness of the Whale"), his aligning himself with Ahab exposes him to two potentially fatal dangers. On the one hand, he may, like Starbuck and the other members of the crew, become one of Ahab's instruments and be swept to destruction along with Ahab. On the other, he may repeat Ahab's error of focussing too exclusively on the dark side of the mystery of the universe and, like Ahab, become maddened.

Both threats exert a serious influence on Ishmael. As has already been shown, in "The Whiteness of the Whale," he reveals a personal sense of frustration, aroused by Moby Dick, only slightly less intense than that of Ahab, although, significantly, his sense of the symbolic importance of the whale is much broader than Ahab's. Of course, his identification with Ahab serves, in part, to compound his animosity towards Moby Dick.

I, Ishmael, was one of that crew; my shouts had gone up with the rest; my oath had been welded with theirs; and stronger I shouted, and more did I hammer and clinch my oath, because of the dread in my soul. A wild, mystical, sympathetical feeling was in me; Ahab's quenchless feud seemed mine. (p. 239).

But Ishmael finds salvation in a manner which, as Ahab's damnation is large enough to encompass both head and heart, requires both
a rejuvenation of his fellow-feeling with other men and the develop-
ment of an intellectual recognition of the danger of going too far
with Ahab. Early in the novel Ishmael emerges from his initial
morbidity by establishing sympathy with Queequeg. "I felt a melting
in me. No more my splintered heart and maddened hand were turned
against the wolfish world. This soothing savage had redeemed it." (p.
83). But Ishmael is speaking prematurely, and his redemption is not
permanent. When he takes the oath to destroy Moby Dick, he is again
raising his "maddened hand." His fellow-feeling, however, is only
subordinated, not lost. It comes to the fore again in "A Squeeze of
the Hand," a chapter strategically located near "The Try-Works" in
which Ishmael's reassertion of a positive free will is completed.
Dipping his hand into a vat of spermacetti, along with several other
sailors, Ishmael says, "I forgot all about our horrible oath \["Death
to Moby Dick\]/; in that inexpressible sperm, I washed my hands and my
heart of it." (p. 532). The oath is replaced, in Ishmael's conscious-
ness, by a sense of oneness with the other sailors. "I found myself
unwittingly squeezing my co-laborers' hands in it, mistaking their
hands for the gentle globules. Such an abounding, affectionate,
friendly, loving feeling did this avocation beget; that at last I was
continually squeezing their hands, and looking up into their eyes
sentimentally." (p. 532). At this point, any alienation or isolation
on the part of Ishmael from the rest of humanity, caused by his native
morbidity and his intellectual focus on Moby Dick, has been overcome.
He is again in a state of atonement with the rest of mankind. More-
over, that he has now established a lasting oneness with others is
later confirmed by his sorrowful lamentations over the apparently
dying Queequeg: "My poor pagan companion, and fast bosom-friend,
Queequeg, was seized with a fever, which brought him nigh to his end-
less end." (p. 606).

But this alone will not ensure Ishmael's salvation. There is no
indication that Stubb or Flask or Starbuck lack sympathy for the other
members of the crew. What they do lack that subjects them to the same
fate as Ahab is a personal conception of the mystery of creation strong
enough in its own right to offset the influence of Ahab's conception.
They lack the intellectual power to define and cope with the potentially
pernicious effects of their relationship with Ahab. Ishmael escapes,
unlike Hawthorne's endangered characters, because both his heart and
his intellect are strong. The implication is that if either were less
than they prove to be, he, like the other crewmembers, would have been
lost. He begins to recognize the danger of his dependence on Ahab's
judgment, his willingness to take the oath to hunt Moby Dick to the
death, in "The Monkey-Rope." He is attached by a rope to Queequeg who,
if he falls while working precariously on the carcass of a whale, will
pull Ishmael to his death. "I seemed distinctly to perceive that my
own individuality was now merged in a joint stock company of two; that
my free will had received a mortal wound; and that another's mistake
or misfortune might plunge innocent me into unmerited disaster and
death." (p. 416). Although he is referring specifically to his
connection with Queequeg in this passage, his physical condition here
is clearly analogous to his spiritual connection with Ahab brought
about by his inability to resist signing aboard the Pequod and his
enthusiastic acceptance of Ahab's obsessive need to destroy Moby Dick. His recognition of an intellectual rift between himself and Ahab is further developed in "The Grand Armada." Having been inadvertently carried to the center of a series of concentric circles made up by a huge school of sperm whales, Ishmael is moved by the tranquility he observes, as contrasted by the panic inspired by the whalers' attacks upon the outer circles.

And thus, though surrounded by circle upon circle of consternations and affrights, did these inscrutable creatures at the centre freely and fearlessly indulge in all peaceful concerns; yea, serenely revelled in dalliance and delight, but even so, amid the tornadised Atlantic of my being, do I myself still for ever centrally disport mute calm; and while ponderous planets of unwaning woe revolve round me, deep down and deep inland there I still bathe me in eternal mildness of joy. (pp. 498-499).

Ishmael is again, as he has been in his contemplation of the whiteness of Moby Dick, confronted by inscrutability. But here the confrontation inspires a sense of acceptance, not an appalling uncertainty. For here, tranquility prevails where one might expect to see turmoil. "The Grand Armada" stands as a positive alternative to "The Whiteness of the Whale." Both concentrate on incomprehensible aspects of the universe as objectified through concrete aspects of nature, but where the first suggests an emphasis on the negative, the second provides a portrait of an equally incomprehensible positive. In both chapters "inscrutability" is a dominant characteristic of whales.

Finally, given his revitalized sympathy shown in "A Squeeze of the Hand" and his emerging intellectual recognition of the folly of going too far with Ahab, as illustrated by "The Monkey-Rope" and "The
Grand Armada," Ishmael learns, as Ahab cannot hope to learn, the spiritual danger inherent in challenging the evil of the universe. Ishmael appears to be extremely fortunate. He can no more escape voluntarily from "the woe that is madness" than can Ahab. He is compelled toward escape as Ahab is compelled toward destruction. Still, however, there is something strongly positive in the picture of Ishmael's remaining afloat as Ahab is dragged to his doom, especially considering the fact that Ishmael is allowed to bring all his faculties into play to effect his escape, unlike the characters created by other authors who must suspend their intellects and allow themselves to be led from perdition by meek young ladies. Ishmael makes his "separate peace" with the mystery symbolized by Moby Dick in "The Try-Works," placed by Melville shortly after "The Grand Armada" and "A Squeeze of the Hand." The immediate impetus is a psychological trauma familiar to ordinary human experience; Ishmael dozes and becomes momentarily disoriented.

Starting from a brief standing sleep, I was horribly conscious of something fatally wrong. The jaw-bone tiller smote my side, which leaned against it; in my ears was the low hum of the sails, just beginning to shake in the wind; I thought my eyes were open; I was half conscious of putting my fingers to the lids and mechanically stretching them still further apart. But, in spite of all this, I could see no compass before me to steer by; though it seemed but a minute since I had been watching the card, by the steady binnacle lamp illuminating it. Nothing seemed before me but a jet gloom, now and then made ghastly by flashes of redness. Uppermost was the impression, that whatever swift, rushing thing I stood on was not so much bound to any haven ahead as rushing from all havens astern. A stark, bewildered feeling, as of death, came over me. Convulsively my hands grasped the tiller, but with the crazy conceit that
the tiller was, somehow, in some enchanted way, inverted. My God! What is the matter with me? thought I. Lo! In my brief sleep I had turned myself about, and was fronting the ship's stern, with my back to her prow and the compass. In an instant I faced back, just in time to prevent the vessel from flying up into the wind, and very probably capsizing her. How glad and how grateful the relief from this unnatural hallucination of the night, and the fatal contingency of being brought by the lee! Look not too long in the face of the fire, O man! Never dream with thy hand on the helm! Turn not thy back to the compass; accept the first hint of the hitching tiller; believe not the artificial fire, when its redness makes all things look ghastly. Tomorrow, in the natural sun, the skies will be bright; those who glared like devils in the forking flames, the morn will show in far other, at least gentler, relief; the glorious, golden, glad sun, the only true lamp—all others but liars! (pp. 541-542).

By turning from destruction to a course toward a haven, from the deceptive light of a fire toward the truthful illumination of the sun, Ishmael is declaring his personal independence from Ahab, whose element is fire. And he is doing so because he has been given the opportunity intellectually to understand the folly of Ahab's quest. However, as Ahab has no chance to avoid the fate to which he eventually succumbs, so there is no indication that Ishmael can keep from learning how to avoid a similar fate. Volition is not operative until after Ishmael has been led to reassert the sovereignty of his volition by his unsought renewed sympathy with the other crew members and his unsought intellectual recognition that the oath to pursue the white whale amounts to a suicide pact. Ishmael summarizes the meaning of his escape in a passage which seems to me to be among the most meaningful in the novel. "Give not thyself up, then, to fire, lest it invert
thee, deaden thee; as for the time it did no. There is a wisdom that is woe; but there is a woe that is madness." (p. 543).

Here, Ishmael explains his advantage over Ahab. It has, as is typically the case in early American fiction, nothing to do with his volition. Rather, Ishmael has been able to develop "the wisdom that is woe" without moving on to madness because, although he shares Ahab's tendency toward morbid speculation, he is young, not formed by forty years of lonesome night-watches in polar regions, and because he, unlike Ahab, is in a position to learn from the negative example Ahab provides. This amounts to a kind of hesitant affirmation, not of human sovereignty, but of the human condition in general, which, if it is not finally satisfying, is at least more positive than whatever optimism is provided by Brown and Hawthorne. Here, at least, one may be saved without dependence on a kind fellow-human, if he feels he belongs to the community of mankind and if he is intelligent enough to learn from the errors of others. Ishmael is lucky enough to be impelled by his own temperament and circumstances to see that the mystery of Moby Dick is two-sided, that the appalling destructiveness of the whale is balanced by his majesty, that the inscrutability of a school of whales may suggest unexplainable tranquility as well as awful power. His limited affirmation of a positive universe is, to me at least, more optimistic than the rosy ascension of the dead Billy Budd, or, for that matter, than the comparatively hollow salvation of those characters who have to fall in love with shallow ingenues to escape perdition. In early American fiction, the involuntary optimism of Ishmael is perhaps the single most viable alternative to the
recurrently powerful force of involuntary evil.
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Criticism


