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Problems of historical inevitability in four American novels

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Problems of Historical Inevitability in Four American Novels

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of English

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

By

John Brinckwirth

July 2000

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ABSTRACT
PROBLEMS OF HISTORICAL INEVITABILITY
IN FOUR AMERICAN NOVELS

by John Brinckwirth

This thesis addresses the issue of historical inevitability in four acclaimed American historical novels: Catherine Maria Sedgwick's Hope Leslie, James Fenimore Cooper's The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish, Margaret Mitchell's Gone with the Wind, and William Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom! To differing extents, the form of these novels rely on historical inevitability to explain why history happened the way that it did. Sedgwick and Cooper treat the Puritan conquest of the Northeastern Amerindians, while Mitchell and Faulkner write about the defeat of the South in the Civil War and Reconstruction. My study focuses on how each pair of novels share the same constituent elements in furthering their historical plots and contriving an explanation of their respective historical episodes. The reliance on historical inevitability illustrates the author's different ideological concerns towards American history.

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Chapter One: Introduction

In the following discussion, I will characterize the problem of historical inevitability as it is depicted in and informs four historical novels concerned with two distinct periods of our national history. The historical event on which these novels center is broadly speaking that of *conquest*. In James Fenimore Cooper's The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish and Catherine Maria Sedgwick's Hope Leslie the Puritans usurp Indian lands in New England; in Margaret Mitchell's Gone With the Wind and William Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom!, the North defeats the South during the Civil War. In all four novels, the outcome of the historical event of conquest determines for each writer the meaning of that particular phase of history. The teleological framework of the historical event influences the shape of the narrative and, therefore, reflects the ideological implications of the narrative. My study will focus on how the following elements, though not mutually exclusive, indicate the restrictions of narrative teleology: the arrangement of events and the ideological underpinnings conveyed through the speech, thoughts, and actions of characters. I propose to demonstrate how teleological elements are used in each novel to posit the event of conquest as historically inevitable—unavoidable and irrevocable.

First, I will be working with Terry Eagleton's definition of ideology as the socio-political and/or cultural view that arranges, prioritizes, and evaluates into a quasi-systematized set of beliefs the phenomena of the external world (Ideology 18). Eagleton argues that ideology subsumes discourse and form in ways both conscious and unconscious for the creator, producer, or writer of a work of art; while shaping the forms literary works

take, writers always have ideological considerations even if they resist any pronouncement of ideology (Ideology 7). Ironically, Eagleton cites post-structuralist theorists who decry the concept of ideology as imprisoning since it relies on a teleological framework to determine meaning. Though Eagleton denies that ideology has to be restrictive in this way, these post-structuralist attacks expose the relationship between teleology and ideology in that the former becomes a pretext for the expression of the latter. Such a relationship, I argue, exists in fictional narratives grounded in historical settings, such as the two pairs of novels I will study.

Hope Leslie and The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish share a number of similarities: they portray a Puritan patriarch seeking spiritual renewal for his community through the isolation of the wilderness, Native American attacks of vengeance on Puritan settlements, marriage between a European captive and a young noble Indian, and incomparably noble acts of sacrifice by the Indian hero/heroine. In Absalom, Absalom! and Gone With the Wind, Faulkner and Mitchell convey the downfall of the South from the ante-bellum period through the civil war and its aftermath, employing the voice of the defeated. Here, the conquering force is the North, whose industrialism has usurped the agrarian and slave-holding culture of the South. At first glance, the nature of the Civil conflict between regions may not seem to collocate with the concept of an inevitable conquering force, but Southerners have traditionally defined their society and culture as distinct from the North. Furthermore, during the Southern Literary Renaissance movement of the nineteen twenties and thirties, Southern writers recognized and often romanticized the disappearance of the uniquely Southern way of life as the last generation

to have experienced the Civil War was dying out. Though their novels differ radically in form, both Faulkner and Mitchell center their historical narratives on the establishment and subsequent ruin of plantations, emblemizing the history of the South itself.

Although the defeat of the South does not precisely parallel the extirpation of the Indians in New England and though the earlier pair of novelists do not speak with the voice of the defeated, the two historical events depicted in these fictions share an emphasis on a conquering force and a defeated people. Moreover, differences between each historical period allow me to examine the historical inevitability of the South's defeat as represented from the perspective of the defeated.

I

Historical inevitability is writ large on our national history in many forms. Most high school students have sat through a lecture explaining American expansion during the nineteenth century by invoking the concept of *manifest destiny*—wherein the goal to reach the Pacific gave the United States the initiative and right, and for the apologists of imperialism, the duty, to conquer the frontier, decimate countless tribes of indigenous peoples, invade Mexico, and fight to maintain the union during the Civil War. Whether a justification of conquest is sought, *Manifest Destiny* is embedded in the structure of the nationalist progress narrative, rife with ideological contradictions regarding the capitalist-democratic ideals the Nation stands for, and the tragic circumstances of the Nation's past under which progress has been made. Hence, the teleology of progress—the goal of expansion—shapes the narrative forms in which the ideology of conquest, assimilation,

removal, and genocide are masked by the necessity of historical events in order to realize the Democratic ideals grounding our national destiny—and the nation’s expansion. This over-arching justification falls under the auspices of *History*, the grand narrative which seeks to encapsulate the totality of the past. In the Post-modern era, historians and writers of historiography question the possibility of understanding that totality and, furthermore, the value of understanding the past in such terms¹. In his critique, Illusions of Post-modernism, Eagleton summarizes the Post-modern reaction to *History*, a “teleological affair” whose proponents rely “on the belief that the world is moving purposefully towards some predetermined goal which is immanent within it even now, and which provides the dynamic of this inexorable unfurling” (45). Although he denies that anyone would have the credulity to assert this view of *History* as finite and absolute, Eagleton defends the ineluctable measure of invoking the grand narrative for us to understand, in practical terms, the *big picture*, and, more penetratingly, for the past to hold any coherent meaning for us.

Eagleton looks back to the advent of World War II as the pivotal event that fostered that skepticism as much as the “linguistic turn” of post-structuralism. Indeed, Isaiah Berlin delivered in 1951 a lecture on the abuse of Historical Inevitability as an attitude purveyed in the writing of history. Although Berlin’s empiricism is at odds with Eagleton’s Marxism, Berlin’s disdain for teleological consideration illustrates Eagleton’s claim that an event like the Holocaust should convince anyone that *History* does not inherently entail progress. In propounding the dangers of reading the past according to

teleological frameworks (such as those grounded in Christianity or Marxism), Berlin expounds,

Teleology is not a theory or hypothesis, but a category or a framework in terms of which everything is, or should be, conceived and described. The influence of this attitude on the writing of history [...] is too familiar to need emphasis. It enters, however unconsciously, into the thought and language of those who speak of the 'rise' and 'fall' of states or movements or classes or individuals as if they obeyed some irresistible rhythm [...] as if discoverable regularities had been imposed on individuals or 'super-individuals' by a Manifest Destiny as if the notion of life as a play were more than a vivid metaphor. (Berlin 15)

Berlin finds fault with the attitude that the past is best understood by the teleology of History, the attribution to "irresistible" forces instead of his empiricist model. Berlin specifically takes to task those writers who privilege style over substance by depicting the past as "a succession of pieces, comical or tragical, a libretto whose heroes and villains, winners and losers, speak their lines and suffer their fate in accordance with the text conceived in terms of them, but not by them" (16). Ultimately for Berlin, the effect of plot (and by extension, the writer's choice of the arrangement and representation of *History*) should be deferred for an otherwise empirical, pragmatic view of the past which emphasizes the individual and free will. While his complaint is with this lapse of style which imbues the arguments of historians, Berlin's concern centers on the ideological implications of those who view "the inevitability of historical processes" as both fact and justification (19). The explanation of how the events of the past unfolded engenders within its teleology "values which are either somehow 'embedded' in the facts themselves or 'determine' them from some 'transcendent' height" (19). For Berlin, historical inevitability errs because it negates the free will of the individual; it collapses

the need for explaining the past into the need to explain why the past happened the way it did.

As a problem of narrative teleology, historical inevitability implies that the outcome of a historical period is fleshed out by inescapable forces because they supersede the primacy of individual choice as a determinant. Since *History* is narrative based, Historical Inevitability occurs in the genre of historical fiction. Grounded in the events of a particular historical period, fictional narratives assume teleological frameworks because their narrative structures necessitate it.

II

In 1827, Catherine Maria Sedgwick published her third novel, Hope Leslie, shifting focus from earlier efforts at sentimental fiction to the challenge of writing historical fiction. Choosing the setting of seventeenth-century Massachusetts, Sedgwick depicts the conflict between the Puritan settlers of Massachusetts Bay and the Pequot Tribe. Two years later, having already published three of his enormously successful Leather-stocking novels, James Fenimore Cooper finished The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish, in which he chronicled conflicts surrounding King Phillip's Wars in the colony of Connecticut. Sensitive to their own family histories as well as to the history of the young nation, both Sedgwick and Cooper had as an impetus for their novels an earnest desire to explain, through fictional representation, the conquest and destruction of the North-Eastern Amerindian tribes. Each novel also accounts for the cultural influence Puritan New England had on the early Republic's history, and each expresses to a growing

national readership a genuine sorrow for the vanishing cultures of Indigenous Tribal Peoples.

After all, the 1820's was the decade when American expansion began to increase at an astonishing rate. The westward movement into regions inhabited by indigenous peoples became less a political issue than a working myth². The end of the decade saw the election of Andrew Jackson, whose policies would accelerate the removal of these tribal peoples from the land, despite their defending their constitutional right to retain it—a defense which the Supreme Court would eventually uphold. The national ideology of undeterred hostility toward various tribes reflected the culmination of expansionist attitudes.

As the Northeastern states cultivated a literary community, the quest to justify this expansionist ideology to both American and European audiences found expression in histories, poems, plays, and essays. For the writer of historical romance, what better way to arrive at the heart of the conflict between Europeans and Amerindians than to portray it in one of its earliest manifestations: the Puritan settlement in the New England wilderness? After all, within *History*, colonial expansion became inevitable once Anglophone people established a burgeoning community in New England. Though Cooper and Sedgwick might view tribal life as noble, the defiance of native peoples towards encroachment upon their lands would prove futile against the Puritans' superior technology and growing numbers.

No matter with which party the viewer sympathizes, expansionist ideology implies the historical inevitability of disappearing cultures through the extinction of tribes

and therefore justifies policies of aggression, or, at the least, assimilation. As with written histories, these fictional narratives contain an embedded explanation of their own meanings. The devices of emplotment create historical meaning by depicting the demand for policy to be implemented (such as the clearing of frontier land for colonial settlement), because they offer a framework for interpreting a particular set of constituent events and for representing those events as a way to purvey the historicity of the era. Neither Cooper nor Sedgwick explicitly adheres to a teleological framework, as the Puritan leaders did in their providential historical accounts³. In their historical fiction, the events of the past, understood as *History*, inevitably create the teleological framework of a specific era and region of the past as understood from a distanced present.

Both Sedgwick and Cooper follow in the tradition of Walter Scott, who, as Georg Lukács argues, established within the initial form of the historical novel the dialectical model of history. In his study The Historical Novel, Lukács asserts that historical change is worked out in fictional plots through “historical necessity,” which he defines in terms of “subtly portrayed dialectic between the effectiveness and impotence of a correct insight in concrete historical circumstances” (59). Furthermore, he defines this necessity in the novels of Scott and others, including Cooper, as “no otherworldly fate divorced from men; it is the complex interaction of concrete historical circumstances in their process of transformation, in their interaction with the concrete human being historical necessity is the tragic atmosphere of a period and not the object of the writer’s reflections” (58). Invoking the Marxian dialectic to promulgate the reflection of reality the historical novel necessitates as an art, Lukács suggests that historical inevitability is an inherent effect of

form because of the genre's antecedents in epic and tragedy. Both forms are capable of "portraying the totality of the life process" (90) and consequently can produce in "relative form" (90) reflection of historical reality: the art of literary fiction successfully portrays historical reality—the larger pattern of *History*—when it mirrors the historical forces in conflict in the lives of characters and events of the author's imagination.

In much American historical fiction, writers convey what Lukács calls "tragic atmosphere" to explain—and to some extent to justify—the conquering force underlying national history. Necessity becomes inevitability, and the historical development of the United States, no matter what judgment it incurs, remains grounded in the vision that the conquering force is inextricably bound to the character of our national destiny. The historical destiny of the United States has centered on expansion, whether it be in the form of manifest destiny, the containment of communism, or the globalization of free enterprise and democratic ideals. Although this literal *progress* of the United States may assimilate the people of other cultures, defiant cultures are usually usurped, annihilated, or removed from the domain of the conquering force.

The Civil War offers an example in which ideological differences resulted in the conquest and assimilation of the seditious region of the Union. Both Margaret Mitchell's Gone With the Wind and William Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom! rely on teleological frameworks and promulgate in different ways historical inevitability. Writing during the Great Depression, Mitchell and Faulkner chose the event of regional defeat and subsequent change of social order to depict the reasons why the South lost the War. Mitchell and Faulkner write from the perspective of the defeated; they romanticize as

well as demystify the ideologies of ante-bellum culture. These ideologies characterize the identity of the ante-bellum South as an agrarian, feudal region, as distinct from the North whose culture, economy, and social hierarchy rely on industrial capitalism. In these two novels, the inevitable defeat of the South as a result of this regional distinctness informs the narrative structure. Living during an era of increasing Unionist and Socialist activism and writing from a region economically underdeveloped compared to the North, Faulkner and Mitchell delve into the foundations of ante-bellum culture to make sense of the South's role in national destiny. Of course, the characteristic view of the Civil War emphasizes either the heroic position of the Northern Abolitionists and Lincoln or the importance of economic and political factors in fostering the war. In the South, the Civil War is viewed in the context of Northern aggression, as the Northern states imposing on the South their national ideology. Ultimately, the South seceded to defend their regional ideology—to preserve slavery and the caste system whose ideological underpinnings were grounded in racial and class hierarchy, as well as its division of gender roles. Thus, the downfall of that caste-system symbolizes the defeat of the South during the advent of the Civil War and Reconstruction. The plots of these two Southern novels emphasizes historical inevitability in order to come to terms with the South's defeat in the Civil War.

To understand how historical inevitability informs these four historical narratives treated in my study, their emplotment and their ideological implications, I will examine the way explanation is embedded in literary forms. In his essay "Interpretation in History," the historiographer Hayden White has theorized a schemata of the intersection of "explanatory strategies" and literary plot structures. White ascribes historical

narratives which move toward integrating the particular into a whole as utilizing synecdoche “to justify belief in the possibility of understanding the particular as a macrocosm of a macrocosmic totality” (73). This mode of explanation characterizes the ways in which the characters and events of the novels of this study represent *History*. The arrangement of events on the microcosm projects the *macrocosmic totality* in Hope Leslie, The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish, Gone with the Wind, and Absalom, Absalom!. Therefore, microcosmic events foreshadow the inevitable, or reify in a character or event the ideological nexus of the communities depicted, thus promulgating and/or resisting historical inevitability to characterize American history and our national destiny.

In his essay “Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel,” Mikhail Bakhtin offers the concept of chronotope (time-space) to describe the way “Time, as it were, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history” (84). Historical narratives were originally grounded in the theme of war.

This fundamentally historical theme—which has other motifs attached to it, such as conquest, political crimes and the deposing of dynastic revolutions, the fall of kingdoms, courts, executions [...] is interwoven with the personal-life narratives of historical figures (with the central motif of love), but the two themes do not fuse. The major task of the modern historical novel has been to overcome this duality: attempts have been made to find an historical aspect of private life, and also to represent history in its “domestic light.” (217)

Significantly, in historical fiction the theme of war defines the broad context while the theme of love exemplifies the localized narrative. Bakhtin goes on to describe how the “immanent unity of time” that had existed before in folk culture has “disintegrated.” The

dualities of exterior and interior space, public and private life, communal and individual experience have superseded the “collective struggle” against nature. Nature becomes the backdrop, the “landscape,” for private affairs and adventures, and time is individuated so that life experienced as a “social whole” can coexist with life experienced by the individual. Therefore, for the chronotope of historical fiction, we can use the dichotomy of the microcosmic and the macrocosmic to characterize the relationship between the broad context of history and the localized setting of the narrative. The relationship between the teleological framework of the past, as it is segmented in historical events of the *past as lived*, and that of fictional narratives grounded in historical reality can be best characterized as that of the macrocosm and microcosm. The macrocosm of the past, whether phenomenal or nominal, dictates the parameters of events in the microcosm. On the microcosmic level, time consists of events whose consequences are limited to a temporal and spatial arena that is essentially local. Once these consequences accumulate over time and space, they coalesce and form larger units of action that determine the destinies of human communities. On the macrocosmic level, the arena enlarges, gaining the dimension of historical insight. The spatio-temporal domain of the macrocosmic level features the conquests, political crimes, dynastic revolutions, and fall of kingdoms of which Bakhtin writes.

However, any portrayal or reference to the macrocosm cannot escape the historian’s ideologically tinted view of the events. To use an analogy, reading a dramatic representation of history is similar to experiencing dramatic irony in a play; just as the theater audience may wish to change the outcome of events, the reading audience

realizes that whatever resolution has been written in the novel remains inevitable because of the historical *reality* of the past. Therefore, the historical necessity that shrouds an historical period in which conflict eventuates change mutates into historical inevitability when presented as an explanation for why the past occurred as it did. The experience stems from the reader knowing the historical outcome of the conflict, a fact born from external knowledge of the historical context.

III

The first element that characterizes the microcosm of all four novels is the patriarch whose efforts to establish his lineage create a teleology. The patriarchal vision becomes synonymous with the author's view of the forces propelling historical change. Although the patriarch as character is different in degree and form in all four novels, this element foregrounds the macrocosmic totality. At the beginning of Hope Leslie, Sedgwick delineates the character of a Puritan patriarch as the source of the ideology of the early colony, and by implication, the Nation. William Fletcher, father of the hero Everell and adoptive father of the heroine, Hope, is a firm believer in the Puritan vision, so much so that he treks into the wilderness to escape the worldly influence of the Massachusetts colonies to seek a purer spirituality: "Hundreds in that day resisted all that solicits earthly passions, and sacrificed all that gratifies them, to the cause of God and man—the cause of liberty and religion" (12). Partly because he is denied the hand of his cousin by her father's single-minded and anti-Puritan vision and prejudice, William forms a deep understanding and sympathy toward the victims of prejudice and ill judgment; as a

result, his moral position becomes fixed and high, so that his only flaw, a deference to Puritan authority, leaves him vulnerable to external interference. Yet his position never changes in the novel, and the independent spirit which once characterized his youth is manifested in the second generation of cousins, Everell and Hope.

Nonetheless, William's zeal is less affected than felt from within because of the disappointments he experienced in his youth. Because he clashed with rigid authority in the form of his uncle, Sir William, he understands the value of individual freedom—that undisputed foundation of republican ideology. Thus, Sedgwick portrays Fletcher as the true patriarch of republican ideals; he exemplifies the pursuit of freedom that would eventually lead to the Revolutionary War. For Sedgwick, his vision of religious autonomy creates the historical reality of political freedom engendered in revolutionary ideology. She describes Fletcher as being among the class of men who push forward despite the impediments of their society, "because they are visionaries—because they have a beau-ideal in their own minds, to which they can see but a faint resemblance in the actual state of things[...] they are too rapid in their anticipations" (16). Sedgwick plants the ideals of the republic anachronistically in the patriarchal vision of Fletcher, as she does with the subsequent marriage of Everell and Faith. Accordingly, idealists project their visions in the future, because they recognize the traces of their ideal vision in the present. In contrast to Fletcher is the rigid authority against which he rebels. An obstinate and unsympathetic bigot, Sir William warns his brother that Young William Fletcher will lose the hand of Hope Leslie if he continues his association with Puritans. Sedgwick introduces the novel with a letter from Sir William to foreground the

fanaticism of the Puritan colonists with the supplication to the Royal Court to which Sir William bows: “No man should be suffered to decline [...] the drawn line limited by authority, and by the sovereign’s laws and injunction” (8). Immediately, readers witness the persecution of Puritans.

During the early Republic, such rhetoric would have sounded brazen, if impious, in light of the independence won from the English Monarchy a mere forty years before. But to Sir William, Puritanism is the contaminant of England. Sir William’s caustic barb illustrates the antagonism against which Puritan dissenters pursued their spiritual and social reforms. He spoofs their project in the New World, where

their tender consciences would be no more offended because, forsooth a prelate saith his prayers in white vestments, and where they might enjoy with the savages that primitive equality, about which they make such a pother. (8)

Sir William rejects the ideals of progress, reducing the puritans’ criticism of clerical corruption in the metonymy of their attire and their struggle for social autonomy to the image of the “savage.” William Fletcher knows the outrage of Sir William at his involvement in Puritan leaders, but his idealism is strong enough to cause him to rebuke his uncle and to sail for the colonies.

This motif of the tyrannical patriarch in Hope Leslie has been noted by critics ever since 1827; what is not so often examined is the motif of germination: the recipe for engendering the Republic lies in the communion and consummation between the Fletcher and Leslie families. Young Fletcher loves his cousin Alice Fletcher, and she reciprocates out of a similar innate sense of necessity. Nonetheless, because of his fervid opposition

toward their marriage, Sir William forbids it, physically preventing Alice from fleeing with William to New England. This separation is embedded in the plot structure of the narrative and does not preclude the inevitable union of the families through matrimony. Indeed, here opposition seems to create a sense of the inevitable success of that matrimonial conjugation.

William Fletcher thus ironically germinates the perfection of the union between Everell and Hope. Even Sedgwick's Governor Winthrop—conceiver of the City on the Hill—recognizes the natural relationship between these young paragons of individual liberty when he informs Fletcher of his plans to marry them to different persons for political reasons. Pained by the magistrate's plans, Fletcher replies to Governor Winthrop in reference to the engagement of Hope and Everell: "Ay my friend—and was it not inevitable?" (152). Moreover, even the Indian characters recognize the inexorable union of Hope and Everell. Magawisca tells both of her white friends that Nelema knows their "souls were mated—she said your affections mingled streams from the same fountain" (330)—thus the inevitability of their union is tantamount to the inevitability of Colonial Independence.

Like Sedgwick, Cooper depicts an extended Puritan family moving further into the forest to isolate itself from what they perceive as the mundane corruption of the larger Puritan settlements in Massachusetts Bay. This corruption is represented less as a pervasive moral entropy endangering the souls of the community than as the psychological projection of the family patriarch's concern for the souls of his splintered community. The Heathcote family is therefore a microcosmic representation of Puritan

culture; noble as their aspirations are, the actions of these Puritan characters convey the cultural dangers of the fanatic ideology of their religious doctrines, a rigid fanaticism nearly opposite of the liberal meliorism of the Fletcher settlement.

In the novel's opening pages, Cooper contextualizes the Heathcote saga by delineating the character of the patriarch—a “stern, fanatical soldier” (3) who leaves England before the advent of the Civil War. Significantly, Mark Heathcote marries a woman of the rising middle-class, and by seeking the wilderness wishes to establish not only a community based on his religious principles but also on his lineage. Cooper suggests of Mark Heathcote and his new bride, “domestic harmony would not be less secure in the wilds of the new world, than among the companions with whom his earlier associations would naturally have brought him in communion” (3). Heathcote's involvement in the English Civil War has given him the strength and stoicism to survive in the New England forests. His wife's coat of arms, which he hangs above his mantle, connotes a social pretense seemingly at odds with the Puritan preference for humility. Inasmuch as he strives to live by doctrinal considerations, Mark Heathcote exemplifies the contradictions between his Puritan theology and his paternalist designs.

Like Fletcher, Mark Heathcote knows disappointment. But whereas Fletcher remains a political liberal after the death of his wife, the tragedy of Heathcote's wife's unexpected death rigidifies his pious resolution.

The calamity cast an additional shade of seriousness over a mind that was already more than chastened by the subtleties of sectarian doctrines, and from being grave and thoughtful, his character gradually assumed a cast that approached to austerity and melancholy. (4)

And while the loss Heathcote experiences strengthens his faith, it does not resign him to passivity. His resolve increases; his stoicism gains an air of haughty recalcitrance in the face of the mortal price exacted on his family. Indeed, the death of his wife is not the sign of prosperity one of the elect would hope to incur. Venturing further into the frontier, Heathcote imparts to the community he leaves behind, "I once more cheerfully devote to the howling wilderness, ease, offspring, and, should it be the will of Providence, life itself!" (6). Thus, Heathcote's Puritan mission and the establishment of his lineage become one and the same.

The journey to Connecticut proves to be one of "actual danger, no less than of terror" (8). Despite the precepts of pacifism professed in the Christian scripture, Heathcote—quite unlike Fletcher—is driven by a martial spirit that epitomizes his "worldly prudence" (17). Cooper notes, "there were moments too, when religious submission and, we had almost said, religious precepts, were partially forgotten, as he explained to his attentive son and listening grandchild, the nature of the onset"(10). Instruction of how to attack proves useful to the men of the Heathcote settlement during the "scourges" made upon the surrounding Indian villages. Later, Cooper reminds the reader,

But the simple history of the Wish-Ton-Wish had furnished another evidence of a political truth which cannot be too often presented to the attention of our countrymen; we mean that which is contained in the maxim that the best preservation of peace is preparation of war. (56)

Although Heathcote leaves the larger Puritan colony in part to preserve the autonomy of his vision, and to avoid involving his wards in the Indian wars, he still promulgates a

martial code of behavior, a way of communication that sees all strangers to the settlement as potential enemies. Not surprisingly, the “borderers” of his settlement are as organized in their roles and duties as a military regiment. Whereas the Fletcher’s homestead at Bethel appears entirely agrarian and pacific, the architecture of the Heathcote estate resembles that of a fort, even drawing the rather awed attention of the King’s men as they search out the regicide of Charles I. As spiritual and physical protector of the colony, Heathcote relies on his perseverance and military paternalism; his duty to protect the souls of his “parish” becomes the impetus for the elaborate aegis of the settlement. This protectionist attitude is an essential component of paternalist ideology.

In both Civil War novels, the patriarch differs from either Puritan patriarch in motives. Rather than create a settlement for spiritual salvation or liberty, Gerald O’Hara of Gone with the Wind and Thomas Sutpen of Absalom, Absalom! build plantations to empower themselves, better their social status, and elevate themselves from impoverished origins⁴. In Gone With the Wind, Gerald O’Hara emigrates from Ireland after killing an Orange rent-agent for singing “The Boyne Water”—a ballad which conjures especially bad memories among the O’Haras whose ancestors fought in the Battle of Boyne. Gerald arrives in Savannah where his older brothers (also renegades from the old country) have established themselves. After acclimating to the South and adapting its cultural values, Gerald builds himself an estate from meager pocket holdings, wishing to establish his lineage in the south of Georgia. He wins his plantation and valet in a whiskey-soaked poker game, and he marries a Southern Aristocratic Belle through timing and cunning.

With vision and hard work, he establishes Tara as one of the richest and most efficiently run plantations.

These two acquisitions hint at the elements of self-determination and chance that foreground the tribulations and successes of his daughter, the novel's heroine, Scarlett. Scarlett never finds the solution to her problems without creating new ones. But for Gerald, the past is the idyllic world of the ante-bellum South. The patriarchal landmark Tara represents all the labor and money that Gerald invests in it, but it is more than the result of his hard work. The land becomes the firmament giving weight to the proper name, so to speak, which the O'Haras never had in Ireland. The land in O'Hara's name, hand, and family becomes the life-blood for him and, later, his daughter. Few pages are devoted to the details of Gerald's early life, but the importance of his being the one to build the plantation cannot be overlooked; his success in establishing his lineage symbolizes his living out the immigrant's dream. Thus, acculturated in his region's uniqueness, Gerald's accomplishment is something that could have never occurred in the Old World.

With the advent of the Yankee invasion, Scarlett begins to sense the connection between her life's direction and the land. The patriarchy is inextricably tied with Tara—the land, the settlement, the plantation—which is why Gerald refuses to leave it for plunder, instead offering it to the Yankee soldiers for their use. He explains this to his daughter, when she stumbles back home bewildered as to why the house is still standing. Because his wife and children are sick, Gerald convinces the Yankees to refrain from burning Tara down (the fate of the other plantations), but his motives lie deeper:

Scarlett understood. There were too many Irish ancestors crowding behind Gerald's shoulders, men who had died on scant acres, fighting to the end rather than leave the home where they had lived, plowed, loved, begotten sons. (404)

For Scarlett, there is meaning to Gerald's gesture, futile as it may seem. By saving Tara, he leaves behind the possibility that his blood and lineage will thrive when he is gone. Of course, he may as well be dead at this point of the novel: catatonic and thrashed, the patriarch bows to fate, in the form of the Yankee, and bides his time waiting for his late wife.

Through Scarlett, however, the O'Hara lineage survives in blood if not name. Although the novel ends with Rhett leaving her, forcing the reader to decide whether returning to Tara means reclaiming the O'Hara name, Scarlett intuits the ghostly presence of past ancestors and draws strength and direction when resting in her boudoir, which recently housed Yankee soldiers:

All [family ancestors] had suffered crushing misfortunes and had not been crushed [...] Malign fate had broken their necks, perhaps, but never their hearts [...] All of those seemed to move quietly in the moonlit room. And Scarlett was not surprised to see them, these kinsmen who had taken the worst that fate could send and hammered it into the best. Tara was her fate, her fight, and she must conquer it. (414)

Hence, Scarlett inherits the patriarchal vision from Gerald. Thus, it is no surprise that she practices a survivalist politics among the Carpetbaggers and scalawags to gain economic footing while adhering to a typically paternalist ideology concerning class structure and Southern Blacks. Exploitative and less than ethical business practices become in the aftermath of the war a solution to the problems caused by the paternalist system. And yet for Scarlett, the former proves efficient to support the illusion of the latter. That is why

Ashley Wilke's dependence on her symbolizes the relationship so fittingly. She willingly supports his failure in business despite his owning up to being too inept to turn a profit. More damning, he willingly accepts wanting her while not being able to fulfill her desire for him.

But Ashley is not the only Southern male condemned to helplessness in the aftermath of the war. The moment when Scarlett recognizes her new role as head of Tara coincides with the image of her devastated father upon her return:

Gerald moved toward her, silent as a sleepwalker, his stiff leg dragging [...] His shoulders sagged. In the face which she could only see dimly, there was none of the virility, the restless vitality of Gerald, and the eyes that looked into her had almost the same fear-stunned look that lay in little Wade's eyes. (398)

It is not accidental that Gerald's movements are reminiscent of a ghost, the word used to refer to Southern women of the post-bellum era to in Absalom, Absalom!. Ironically, whereas the Southern woman's lot is inextricably bound to the decisions of men, the *has-been* patriarch looks to his daughter to preside over the manor. This transition does not reflect any burgeoning aspirations of women as a class—it does not even seek to be a corrective insofar as Scarlett takes after her father more than her mother. Rather, the transition reflects the triumph of one economic system—industrial capitalism—over another, agricultural feudalism. But, as we shall see, this supposed transformation conceals what was already a disguised mercantile capitalism based in the ideals of agrarianism and chivalry. The true emerging force to contend with lies in the illusion of the autonomous bourgeois subject—the individual who through stoicism, resourcefulness, and monetary sagacity uses present opportunities to make a killing on

tomorrow's instabilities. Rhett epitomizes this ideology; Scarlett embraces it while still clinging to some of the mores of ante-bellum culture. It is this conflict which gives force to the novel's more than epic-length narrative.

The same paternalist design grounds Sutpen's vision to stake his lineage to the land. Although the story of Sutpen foregrounds the entire novel, much of what is said about him in the first four chapters concerns the ruthless historical figure the town people thought him to be or the monster whom Rosa Coldfield depicts. In chapters six and seven, we read the first sympathetic portrayals of him. As Quentin recounts what his father told him, and what General Compson told Mr. Compson and Quentin, the narration presents a story of a poor white who, after being snubbed by a black house servant at a nearby plantation, decides to build an estate of his own where he can establish his patrimonial lineage. Unlike Gerald, Sutpen is not an immigrant but of red Scots stock living impoverished in the Appalachians. Whereas Gerald experiences iniquities because of historical conflicts between Protestants and Catholics, and a caste-system where the Irish Catholics have little, Sutpen believes as a child that iniquity is purely arbitrary; that is, until he is turned away at the door of a plantation mansion by a black house slave. Faulkner's narrators, Quentin Compson and Shreve McCannon, try to comprehend what motivated Sutpen.

His trouble was innocence. All of a sudden he discovered, not what he wanted to do but what he just had to do, had to do it whether he wanted to or not, because if he did not do it he knew that he could never live with himself for the rest of his life. (178)

His innocence is ignorance of the caste system: because he recognizes the difference between whites and blacks in ante-bellum culture, he assumes that the caste system is based on race alone. When he confronts the impenetrable “balloon-face” of the jeering servant, he intuits the contradiction behind the axiom so important to the poor-white of ante-bellum culture—at least *I’m not black*. Since the black slave knows what Sutpen is before the child learns it, Sutpen sees but one path before him—to relive that incident, but with one crucial difference: be the patriarch (on the other side of the black servant’s smile) who accepts the poor white boy at the front door instead of sending him to the back.

Sutpen’s plan is simple, but he cannot keep it from going awry. As he explains to General Compson during a furlough from the war,

You see, I had a design in mind. Whether it was a good or a bad design is beside the point; the question is, Where did I make the mistake in it? . To accomplish it [the design] I should require money, a house, a plantation, slave, a family. (212)

The ingredients he lists as essential parts incorporate the paternalistic ideology among the gentrified class in ante-bellum culture. Like Gerald O’Hara, Sutpen’s design has long been contrived before he even approaches carrying it out. Equally similar, part of Sutpen’s motivation stems from proving that a man of his class—and here arises the conflict between racial and class ideology—can accomplish his purpose. But for Sutpen, the design emerges as the central force of his motivation, rather than the purpose, so that the teleology of his vision becomes so exclusive of random variables that it implodes. Ironically, he never questions the system that excludes him; he merely extracts the

necessary elements (land, human property, respectable wife, and a male heir) from the social system to incorporate himself successfully into it.

Once he establishes Sutpen's Hundred, he disallows the squatter Wash Jones, whose background is the similar to Sutpen's, from entering his house; with further irony, Sutpen rejects the baby daughter whom he conceives with Wash's granddaughter Millicent. And, at the heart of the failure of Sutpen's design is his refusal to acknowledge his first son Charles Bon, a course of action that leaves it up to his second son Henry to prevent Bon from marrying Judith Sutpen. Again, Sutpen claims necessity to explain his decision, which he reveals to General Compson (appropriately in the most abstract of words) during a furlough from the war,

I was faced with condoning a fact [...] which meant the absolute and irrevocable negation of the design [...] Yet I am now faced with a second necessity to choose, either I destroy my design with my own hand [...] or do nothing [...] let matters take their course which I know they will and see my design complete itself quite normally and naturally and successfully to the public eye, yet to my own in such fashion as to be a mockery and a betrayal of that little boy who approached that door fifty years ago. (220)

Thus, to stave off the threat of bearing descendants of mixed blood a second time, the patriarch sacrifices his son. This passage epitomizes the ideological position of the plantation owner. While Sutpen is hardly representative of the typical Southern landed gentry, his dilemma can be substituted for the problematic social hierarchy at the foundation of ante-bellum culture. Whereas the ambiguous status of Sutpen's mixed daughter Clytemnestra does not preclude her from living in the house as one of the family, Wash's low status keeps him from inside the house.

Sutpen's single-mindedness eventually destroys him. His death at the hands of Wash presents another irony. Nonetheless, though Sutpen's disregard for the people about him eventually destroys him, he still dreams of a way to accomplish his design. Taking advantage of the dearth of men after the war, he decrees that Rosa will marry him so that he can have his son. Notwithstanding her low opinion of him, Rosa goes along with his plan because of her own vain hopes not to be inconsequential. But Sutpen transgresses the code of honor between men and women when, desperate to conceive a male heir, he suggests that Rosa and he have intercourse first to see if Rosa will bear him a son. Indeed, Sutpen's modified plan forever outrages Rosa and signifies to her the ultimate abomination of which any man is capable. But he nonetheless clings with no anxiety, despite her repudiation, to the design, "the old logic, the old morality which had never yet failed to fail him [...] was already falling into pattern, already showing him conclusively that he had been right, just as he knew he had been" (224). The motivation to establish his lineage suggests the necessity with which he acts. Outrage follows outrage, from Ellen to Rosa to Millicent; Sutpen does not care about the women involved: there is no illusion of protection and pretension toward the women in his life. Rather, they are meat to him, flesh for incubation, just as the land is merely there to receive seed and produce cotton. The mechanistic workings of Sutpen's reasoning and actions reflect the disparity between an ante-bellum culture which strives to create the illusion of chivalry and benevolent feudalism and the harsh reality of iniquities manifest in a socioeconomic system of exploitation.

Although the teleological frameworks of the first pair of novels center more on religious ideals than on the social and economic concerns of the latter pair of patriarchs, all four foreground the conclusions of their historical narratives and convey the ideological threads which weave through the their depiction of events. The patriarchal design appears in each novel as an integral element that underscores the movement and direction of the plot. While it is not the only teleological element, we will see how the patriarchal vision surfaces in the other constituent elements of these narratives.

IV

The following chapters will focus on how each novel promulgates and resists historical inevitability. In Hope Leslie and The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish, Sedgwick and Cooper respectively forward historical narratives that contextualize the colonial period of early New England and its relationship to the national Republic. Besides their depiction of a Puritan's inception of a settlement in the wilderness which eventually becomes part of the larger community of New England, both novels modulate the interplay between macrocosm and microcosm through three dialectical elements within which foreshadowing motifs and irreversible consequences intersect. These features revolve around pivotal events which determine the fates of the characters. My analysis will focus on these elements. The first element concerns the Indian redress (in the form of an impassioned speech) of wrongs incurred by their relations with the Puritans. In both novels, these redresses anticipate Indian attacks on the Puritan settlement. But because the these attacks counter previous Puritan aggressions (reported indirectly in the

narratives), the former appear to justify the latter—the preemptive strike rooted in the Puritan fear that war is imminent. Thus, for Puritan leaders, revenge is unwarranted and aggression becomes preventative. With the second element, the inherent moral nobility of the aboriginal cultures is illustrated through the heroic sacrifice of the Indian. This event occurs in different moments of the respective plots of Hope Leslie and The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish, but it serves to express the inevitable loss of those cultures, while hinting at the historical necessity for the Republic to be created. The third element concerns miscegenation. Both novels depict marriages between a white woman and Indian man to convey the inevitable difference between Puritan and Amerindian cultures. Part of the incompatibility stems from the fact that both white women are captives taken in the heat of battle, but the romance between the woman and Indian is genuine.

Also, Gone with the Wind and Absalom, Absalom! feature three teleological elements that convey the historical inevitability of the defeat of the South. Surprisingly, these constitutive elements parallel those in the first pair of novels. First, the immanent doom of the South is repeatedly foretold or perceived as inescapable in hindsight. As in the first pair of novels, this element occurs in the characters' redresses and musings regarding how defeat is immanent and thus inexorable. Second, there is the transformation of women from Southern belles into "ghosts,"—shadows of their former illustrious selves—or, in the case of Scarlett O'Hara, into a fallen woman no better than a carpetbagger in the eyes of her social peers. This complex change of social roles serves to show the pretense of the Southern belle, of her believed social importance but ultimate inconsequentiality. The condition of women during war—a man's affair—is always a

social concern; women sacrifice their elevated position for the Cause and suffer the indignity of displacement. This transformation reflects the end of the Old South and the upheaval of the social order of the South. Third, the threat of miscegenation surfaces in both novels. Unlike in Sedgwick's and Cooper's novels, the miscegenation involves whites and blacks, and is never recounted but rather hinted at. More telling, this feature does not show difference as it conceals any hope of similar treatment between whites and blacks. That miscegenation constitutes a great social taboo in the South (even when the novels were written) explains the hysteria with which white the characters react to it.

Furthermore, the threat of miscegenation reifies for whites the profound ideological underpinnings of the complex caste system of the ante-bellum South. Their hysteria, (exemplified in Gone with the Wind by the Clan) illustrates the force used to prevent miscegenation between a white woman and a man even suspected of having partial African ancestry. This feature indirectly conveys the inevitability of defeat in the South through implosive hostility on a major portion of their population—African-American slaves.

With each novel, these three elements operate on the microcosm, informing the respective narratives with the teleological indicators of the macrocosm. Accordingly, these elements can define and purvey, within the explanation embedded in the narratives, historical inevitability, while resisting it.

Notes to Introduction

¹ Cf. Robert Berkhofer, whose work Beyond the Great Story: History as Text and Discourse summarizes contemporary historiography.

² Cf. Baym 154-6 for an account of how Amerindians continually surfaced as a popular theme in American Letters from the 1820's to the 1870's.

³ Cf. Gould 68-72 on the relationship between Puritan histories and histories written on the Puritans during the decade of the 1820's.

⁴ Cf. Ruben 174-5 for a comparison and contrast between the two patriarchs.

Chapter Two

In the preface to Hope Leslie, Sedgwick posits three points of importance about the nature of her historical romance. First, she distinguishes her work from a chronological history of early Puritan settlements. She asserts that Hope Leslie is “not offered to the public as being in any degree an historical narrative, or a relation of real events”(5); though “real characters and real events are [...] alluded to,” her purpose is “to illustrate not the history, but the character of the times” (5). For Sedgwick, “the character of the times” signifies the socio-cultural realm represented in the fictional narrative of the novel; she wishes to show how the ideals of the republic were first conceived, albeit in terms different from her time, by the Puritan settlers. This leads to her second point regarding the character of the Puritans themselves. They were, “not illiterate, but learned and industrious men” who “understood the importance of their station” (5). The Puritan characters that make up the community in Hope Leslie illustrate her judgment; and although faulted collectively, the community she represents forecasts the Christian progressivism which she espouses, especially in the individual cases of the titular heroine, Hope¹; her adoptive father, William Fletcher; and his son, Everell. Third, Sedgwick justifies her sympathetic portrayal of the “Indians of North America [...] the only race of men of whom it may be said, that though conquered, they were never enslaved” (6). The indigenous peoples, as Sedgwick points out, are depicted in Puritan histories as “surly dogs,” who seem to have adhered to their culture out of “stupid or malignant obstinacy” rather than the bravery by which they would have been remembered had they “their own historians or poets” (6). The tribes of which she writes had not developed a literate

culture contemporary to that of the Puritans; their history is mostly lost. To account for their destruction and dissipation into the frontier, Sedgwick offers not only a historical narrative in which the Puritans are justified in their ultimate objective—Christian progress—but also a narrative in which the destruction of the indigenous tribes is mourned as a tragic consequence of history.

For obvious reasons, a writer of the early republic could indulge in such a two-fold purpose only in an historical romance, by combining historical fact with poetic license. Although Sedgwick refers throughout Hope Leslie to the historical materials and precedents she used to shape her narrative, she addresses the reader indirectly with the following dictum: “The enlightened and accurate observer of human nature, will admit that the difference of character among the various races of the earth, arises mainly from the difference of condition” (6). Hence, despite the culturally prejudiced slant of perspective given in Puritan histories, Hope Leslie aspires to illustrate that the disparity between the development of Anglophone civilization and of the indigenous tribes of the New World rendered the defeat of the Pequods (and, by extension, all indigenous tribes) inescapable.

Before exploring the constituent elements of the teleological framework exemplified in Hope Leslie, I want to discuss here its form and style. The historical arena of Sedgwick’s novel differs radically from that of Cooper’s. In Hope Leslie, historical time essentially germinates and shoots out. What happens on the microcosmic level swells and expands; narrative strands convolute and burst forth as more figures crowd the plot. Sedgwick introduces new relationships, strange compromises, secret agendas and

secret meetings, mistaken identities, short visits and trips, convenient deaths and mishaps—all these enlarge the narrator's canvas and move the plot. Because of their interconnectedness, these events produce drastic results, which need great time and space to cohere and function normatively. For example, interpolated letters expose differing ideological attitudes toward the role of the individual, the purpose of religion, and interpretations of the past. At the end of the novel, movement into the frontier has increased. But, in Sedgwick's world-view, there must be worthiness to the Puritan experiment if the values of the Republic are to counterbalance Puritan atrocities against the Indians, not to mention those against Quakers and dissidents, as Sedgwick herself acknowledges. The misadventures that occur in the second volume of the novel focus on the activities of young adults on the verge of settling their fates as affluent and notable members of the community. Thus, the hijinks in Sir Phillip Gardiner's plot to marry Hope; the jealous emotions swirling among Esther and Hope, and, to a lesser extent, Magawisca and Hope; the obstructed romance of Everell and Hope, and their subsequent inner turmoil in being forced to obey political-minded elders, on the one hand, and their impulsive yet consistent acts of principle, on the other—these machinations and conflicts permeate the entangled strands of a narrative plotted toward a comic resolution.

In Hope Leslie, the transformation from the Puritan Era to the early Republic depends on historicizing a profound change in Puritan ideology. This change does not occur as a monumental event on the macrocosmic level, since there is no historical precedent; instead, resolutions to individual conflicts in the microcosm—the sphere of the Fletcher family—allow the matrimonial communion between Hope and Everell to

manifest such a transformation. Besides the domestic conflict of Winthrop's decision to marry the accepting and passive Esther to Everell and the disguised Catholic rake Sir Phillip to Hope, Magawisca's imprisonment poses the central ethical conflict for Hope and Everell. As in her preface Sedgwick ennobles the Amerindian for not submitting to slavery, so Magawisca's incarceration presents a similar dichotomy regarding freedom and slavery to Everell and Hope: the ideology of progress is contingent upon the individual liberty of all beings, even though they differ ideologically from the citizens of the Republic. That the hero and heroine free Magawisca symbolizes their commitment to such liberty; however, that they do so without suffering for their conduct illustrates the privilege of their class.

As representatives of a future community, Everell and Hope need not concern themselves with future Puritan transgressions of Indian territory. When Magawisca leaves Everell and Hope,

both afterwards confessed [...] the bitterness of their divided destiny, yet neither had they before known the worth of those principles of virtue, that can subdue the strongest passions to their obedience. An Experience worth a tenfold suffering. (334)

Everell and Hope value their encounter with the Amerindian because through it they learn the meaning of virtue triumphing over passion. Unfortunately, that lesson can be understood only after the tribal Native departs. Thus, the value of Amerindians can be experienced solely in their absence. And yet it is their presence in the historical imagination that Sedgwick projects in her wistful sense of loss.

This little remnant of the Pequod race [...] began their pilgrimage to the far western forests. That which remains untold of their story, is lost in the deep, voiceless obscurity of those unknown regions. (339)

Thus, this initial conflict of Amerindians and Puritans has already caused the inevitable: no union between European and Amerindian culture can be realized. By disappearing into the forest, the Pequots leave the land open for the Fletchers' descendants to settle. The culmination of the events on the microcosmic level therefore represents a global change within the Puritan community: they gain, through tribal disappearance, a new respect for the unbridled moral conscience and the value of individual freedom.

The first element of the teleological framework of Hope Leslie concerns the Pequots' sense of injustice and treachery. Since the history of North-eastern Amerindians is unrecorded by them, Sedgwick assiduously yet imaginatively incorporates their perspective into the narrative. Not surprisingly, the main instance of its telling occurs before the Pequot attack on William Fletcher's frontier home, Bethel. Although the inhabitants of Bethel are not responsible for an earlier attack on the Pequot village, the settlement becomes the target of Pequot vengeance. Sedgwick anticipates the attack after hearing Magawisca's version of the earlier conflict. We also hear, through Everell's ears, so to speak, Digby, a servant to the Fletchers and a soldier, tell his version. These scenes capture the tribal perspective on European encroachment and foreshadow the Pequot counter attack. A series of omens, which Magawisca explains to Everell, signifies revenge, providing justification for Pequot violence through Magawisca's account of the initial Puritan attack on the Pequot village. Her version represents the tribal history of the Indian and Puritan and resurfaces in the subsequent events of the novel.

The attack is first anticipated by Nelema, a lone local Pequot apothecary, in an omen which Magawisca translates for Martha, William Fletcher's wife, regarding the future of the Fletcher infant: "The baby is like a flower just opened to the sun, with no sun—that he better pass now to the Great Spirit. She [Nelema] says this world is all a rough place—all sharp stones, and deep waters, and black clouds" (37). Obtuse and occupied, Martha dismisses the portent as typically ominous talk of the elderly, cheerfully intoning that, for her newly born off-spring, "every path is smooth" (37). Nelema bitterly retorts, "I had sons too—and grandsons; but where are they now?" (37). Her rhetorical question implies Puritan guilt. Since Indian villages have been wiped out, the patriarchal lineage is dying out, leaving the land open for settlement. There are Indians waiting in the forest—Magawisca's father (Mononotto, a Pequot chief) and his Mohawk cohorts—but only the spirits of Nelema's kindred remain as a reminder of what was before the Puritan's landed their ships; those Indians "have fallen like our forest tress, before the stroke of the English axe" (37).

Nelema then leaves a portentous "a little roll [...] found to be an arrow, and the rattle of a rattle-snake enveloped in a skin of the same reptile" (38). Magawisca interprets Nelema's portent for Everell: the snake's skin signifies the "unseen and silent approach of the enemy"; the rattle, the "warning voice that speaketh of danger new"; the arrow, the "symbol of death" (39). Magawisca leads Everell through the intricacies of reading Pequot culture. She not only interprets its symbolism but thereby revises Puritan history. Magawisca's narrative speech similarly revises Digby's version while simultaneously anticipating the attack on Bethel. Everell optimistically reads tranquillity

in the sky. But Magawisca knows better. She agrees with her Puritan companion that the moon and stars “look peaceful”; but she protests, “ah! Everell, man is ever breaking the peace of nature. It was a night as this—so bright and still, when your English came upon our quiet homes” (46). Such rhetoric with which so many Indian characters imbue their speech is clearly intended to correct Digby’s version of the massacre².

For Digby, the Pequots’ need only be known as “famed above all the Indian tribes for their cunning” (43). His account is summarized with the admission that he “loved, as well as another man, and particularly those who have had brief military experience, to fight his battles o’er again” (43). His reduction of Indians to a “treacherous race” (43) when referring to Everell’s trust in Magawisca proves ironic in light of her actions to save Everell and bring Hope to her estranged sister, Faith, after she has been captured by the Pequots. But then Magawisca sums up Digby’s view, and the ideology of loyal yet xenophobic men like him: “Digby hath but one path, and that is plain before him” (45). The character of Digby embodies the role of servant, guard, soldier, and tutor of manhood in this particular episode. But this view of the events may reflect ignorance and cynical distrust toward Indians and therefore represent his class-status. This attitude, as Magawisca recognizes, is at the center of the Puritan policy of preemptive strike: better for the Puritans if they rid the land of tribal peoples by raiding unprotected villages under the pretext of self-defense. Ironically, Digby is a pivotal figure to the plot in that his absence leaves the Fletcher home unprotected, setting up the chain of events that culminate in Everell’s short captivity and Magawisca’s sacrifice to save his life, and retroactively justifies for Digby the earlier attack on the Pequot village.

In the second teleological element, the act of sacrifice not only demonstrates intrinsic goodness, but also embodies Christian virtue. Hence, to show that Indians were as capable as Europeans of a highly developed sense of sacrificial morality, Sedgwick paints Magawisca's character through perpetual self-effacing actions. Again, this allows events in the microcosm to reenact through a mytho-historical relationship between Amerindians and Puritans on the macrocosm. Embedded within the setting of domestic comfort in Bethel are the cross-cultural relationships between the families of Fletcher and Mononotto. Despite some objections to the attachment, friendship quickly and naturally grows among the Puritans and their Pequot guests: Everell forms a potentially romantic friendship with Magawisca while Faith, Hope's younger sister, becomes attached to Magawisca's brother, Oneco. Everell, a more insistently active version of his father, embodies all the qualities of young noble manhood which Sedgwick wishes readers to admire: independence, compassion, and the same sympathetic understanding that characterizes his father. Thus, his friendship with Magawisca, the noble Pequot heroine, falls in a pattern of sacrifice that resonates throughout the narrative, propelling time on the microcosmic level. This pattern partly informs the sense of inevitability behind the fate of the Pequots, and, in general, Amerindians.

Attacking Bethel to avenge his wife's death, Mononotto and his Mohawk cohorts kill Martha Fletcher and her infant, then take Everell captive to avenge the death of Mononotto's son. They respect Everell's courage, his refusal to complain of the Pequots' treatment of him, and to beg for mercy. Indeed, Mononotto assesses the young Puritan as a "worthy victim to offer" (91) for his own dead son who, like Everell, defends his

mother during an ambush. Even when Magawisca informs Everell that his fate is death, he awaits it “with a quiet dignity and calm resignation, that would become a hero, or a saint” (91). Everell’s being is so worthy that Magawisca intervenes on his behalf, sacrificing her arm to the falling ax of her father at the moment of Everell’s impending death. Though this scene demonstrates the way in which the novel ultimately privileges a Puritan’s life over that of an Indian, Sedgwick leads the reader to believe that Everell’s fate and Mononotto’s will are one.

Everell had expected death from his savage captors, but while it was comparatively distant, he thought he was indifferent to it, or rather, he believed he should welcome it as a release from the horrible recollection of the massacre at Bethel, which haunted him day and night. But now that his fate seemed inevitable, nature was appalled, and shrunk from it[. . .] The avenues of sense were closed, and past and future were present to the mind, as it were already invested with the attributes of eternity. (85)

The burden of the past, because it is so immediate, leads to *nature*’s revulsion in the face of such an injustice, though Everell moves from detachment to astonishment at his seemingly imminent death. Yet, what appears to be an enormous loss is only the loss of a limb. That Magawisca foils her father’s murder of her Puritan friend, the enemy, hints at the immanent unnaturalness of Everell’s death.

Magawisca’s monumental sacrifice foils her father, not through an act of betrayal, but of individual liberty: “Magawisca scaled the rock, and achieved her generous purpose” (94). The sense of urgency that Sedgwick ascribes to Everell’s psychological state fits with Magawisca’s conflicted emotions. She, too, “in the urgency of a necessity that could brook no delay [...] now saw the powerful agent was at work for her” (91). Likewise, Mononotto and his Mohawk companions gather around the “sacrifice-rock”

and “witness what they believed to be the execution of exact and necessary justice” (91). Fate seems decided; yet will seems opposed to it. Thus Sedgwick expertly builds suspense leading up to and surrounding that moment before death. Even Everell seems to will the final solution, so to speak, kneeling calmly “not to supplicate life, but to commend his soul to God” (92). He accepts death, affirming the conviction of his faith.

Everell bent forward, and pressed his forehead to the rock. The chief raised the deadly weapon, when Magawisca, springing from the precipitous side of the rock, screamed—“Forbear!” and interposed her arm. It was too late. The blow was levelled—force and direction given—the stroke aimed at Everell’s neck, severed his defender’s arm, and left him unharmed. The lopped quivering member dropped over the precipice. (93)

Simultaneously, Magawisca shows how noble she is and how much Everell’s life is to be valued. No one else in the novel sacrifices half as much to assert a moral position. Her sacrifice, buried deep in the Fletcher family memory, justifies Everell’s and Hope’s disobedience of Puritan authority when Magawisca is later wrongfully imprisoned³. The preternatural yet historicized tendency of Everell and Hope to show tolerance and compassion thus elevates them above their seventeenth-century Puritan milieu. When Everell defends Magawisca to the Puritan court, she recognizes his superior conscience, feeling that he

had gratified her strong national pride, by admitting the natural equality of all children of the Great Spirit; and by allowing that it was the knowledge of the Englishman—an accidental superiority that forced from the uninstructed Indian the exclamation, “Manittoo!--Manittoo!”—he is a God. (263)

Sedgwick illustrates this point excessively, granted, but the characters of Hope and Everell have to embody the Christian tenets she holds dearly, those that inform her

typology of historical interpretation and the explanation of historical meliorism embedded in the novel.

Therefore, it is no surprise that Magawiscas's heroism is revered not only by Everell but by Hope. This Puritan heroine, the object of Everell's love, later feels compelled to sacrifice herself in pale imitation of Magawisca's act by literally and publicly engaging Everell to Esther Downing. Like Everell, Hope is to be trusted because she has an innate superiority of conscience over most other Puritans. She proves it earlier by freeing Nelema, wrongfully imprisoned for witchcraft. For Hope's action, Nelema urges Magawisca to reunite Hope and Faith. Before her death, as Magawisca informs Hope, Nelema "had but scant time, and short breath; with that she cursed your race, and she blessed you, Hope Leslie" (187). Thus, Magawisca performs the favor for Hope because she trusts Hope, and moreover, trusts Faith will not relinquish her Pequot husband Oneco or tribal ways.

Magawisca's further sacrifice by taking the risk of being caught by Puritan soldiers demonstrates her noble character. But the scene in which the two sisters reunite constitutes one of many episodes where difference between the Puritans and Indians is emphasized. The interaction between Hope and Faith dramatizes the inescapable difference between Puritan and Indian cultures. When Hope meets Faith, who, after being held in captivity since youth, has adapted to Indian culture and married Oneco, she recoils at

an unthought of revolting of nature; and instead of obeying the first impulse, and springing forward to clasp her in her arms, she retreated

[...and] averted [Faith's] eyes and pressed her hand to her heart, as if [Hope] would have bound down her rebel feelings. (227)

The anticipation Hope feels is thwarted by her disgust at the culture her sister has assimilated to with such seeming ease. But to make contact, Hope resorts to three communicative strategies. First she speaks English to her sister, only to be told “No speak Yengees” (228). Hope now believes that the Indians have robbed Faith of her language, that Faith has therefore little resemblance to her childhood self; to Hope this “melancholy truth [...] open[s] a new and impassable gulf between them” (228). Hope makes her second appeal to bridge the gap by removing some of her sister's ornate Pequot head dress. But this action only exposes what “served to make more striking the aboriginal peculiarities’ and Hope, shudder[ed] and [was] heartsick” (228). Hope compensates by giving Faith her own cloak, an attempt to hide these “peculiarities” and mask her with Puritan attire. Hope makes her third appeal by asking Faith, through Magawisca, if she remembers their childhood, to which the interpreter replies “it is faint and distant” (229). Entreating Faith with promises of devotion, Hope resorts to giving her a “brilliant diamond ring” and “another and another,” crying, “she shall be decked with jewels” (229). This is too much for Faith, who has come to know the simple pleasures of being Oneco's “white bird”—a compensatory peace offering to substitute for the family he lost. His lot of passive resignation represents the Amerindian's retreat into the forest. These three appeals epitomize in the microcosm those made by the Puritan Settlers to communicate with the indigenous peoples of the land. But Hope does not

prevail, and Sedgwick is clearly aware of how desperate and unsuccessful Hope's efforts at cultural communication are. Magawisca is disappointed, and so too is Hope.

Moreover, Oneco is leery of leaving Faith, and suspects a plot to take her: "I will not permit my white bird to remain any longer with the reach of the net" (231). His motives are sincere; he has found solace, despite losing his brother and mother to the Puritans, because he has provided for one of theirs and won her over with his way of life. All the material blandishments and sentiment that Puritan civilization offers can not lure her away. Thus, Sedgwick allows Faith and Oneco to remain with one another⁴. There will be no blending of cultures. It cannot occur because distrust runs too deep for both Puritans and Pequots. Magawisca views all other Puritans with suspicion and disdain. Though Hope and Everell give the Indian heroine "emotions of joy, resembling those a saint may feel, when she sees in a vision the ministering angels sent to set her free from her earthly prison" (312), the reader and Sedgwick might imagine Puritan soldiers "freeing" the entire Pequot tribe from "its earthly prison" in a more brutal way.

The teleological framework of Hope Leslie engenders scenes in which the incompatibility of cultures is re-enacted through the drama of conquest. Since the ideals of the Republic preclude the anti-democratic motives that ground colonialist expansion, these ritualistic scenes of inevitable conquest must focus on the irreconcilable and therefore unconquerable difference between Europeans and Indians. Not surprisingly, Magawisca articulates this difference during her trial before the Puritan court, when she ironically substantiates the ideology of the preemptive strike: "Take my own word, I am your enemy; the sun-beam and the shadow cannot mingle. The white man cometh—the

Indian vanisheth. Can we grasp in Friendship the hand raised to strike us? Nay” (292). Sedgwick therefore has her Indian heroine convey the ideology of European conquest by expressing the inevitability of Indian removal from the land. Whereas the frontier settlers rationalize that the best defense against Indian attacks is their removal, Magawisca emphasizes the ironic role the tribal peoples play in the Puritan’s imagination. Why should the Pequot make peace and assimilate to a Puritan community which has inflicted cruelty on all neighboring tribes? Sedgwick thus shows the justification for the destruction of tribal peoples is the preemptive strike. But, the answer to Magawisca’s question goes beyond Puritan self-preservation. Simply put, the tribal peoples were not a part of the Puritan design. Thus, the clumsiness of the initial contact between the Puritans and Natives, like that between Faith and Hope, escalates quickly into war—symbolized on the microcosm by Mononotto’s kidnapping of Hope for revenge.

Furthermore, Sedgwick’s decision to have Magawisca create the syntactic parallel between the sunbeam and the white man, the shadow and the Indian indicates an ideology overtly inadmissible to the author’s Christian progressivism. Sedgwick further but inadvertently rejoices in this expansionist, melioristic, and culturally destructive ideology when, in a letter to Everell, Hope describes the view from the summit overlooking the new Puritan settlement Northampton:

Have these beautiful vallies of our Connecticut [...] looking like a smile on nature’s rugged face, and stretching as far as our vision extended, till the broad river diminished in the shadowy distance [...] been enjoyed only by those savages, who had their summer home in them? (100)

The answer is, of course, yes. Its ideological corollary is approbation of Puritan expansion. The Indians vanish before Europeans can commune with them; the land lays open, welcoming settlement for purposeful progress. Thus, Sedgwick depicts the Puritans, despite their faults, as having the courage and strength to realize their vision of religious ideals. Though they lack the progressivism which Sedgwick celebrates in the Nation, they nevertheless strive toward it. Because Puritans like Hope and Everell overcome prejudice, the Early Republic can incorporate the integrity of the Indian in national history, while at the same time proclaiming the inevitability of the “vanishing” culture.

Her narrative treatment explanation of Puritan New England, Sedgwick posits a progressivism of the present and contrasting it to a benighted past, while nonetheless allowing for the seeds of change. Sedgwick lived in a time of general optimism, so it is neither surprising that her work captured the popular imagination of her time, nor that Hope Leslie was later dismissed as inferior art because of its supposed sentimentality. The plot strategies that Sedgwick employs relegate Puritan history to an example of the melioristic, comic interpretation of National Development. She employs her optimistic judgment on the young nation’s history, because, ultimately, she believes progress has recurred in each successive stage, including the first.

Yet Hope Leslie contains a moral lesson concerning the consequences of the mistreatment of indigenous tribal peoples and the consequences of the misconception that ‘we’ (the voice of the dominant community) are always right. In Sedgwick’s view of

history, the initiative to reform and improve society and the individual through Christian virtue will create a just and free nation. Essentially, Sedgwick, speaking in the voice of a Puritan descendent, shows the limited foresight of her ancestors, but acknowledges her debt and the debt of her nation and ideology. Through Hope and Everell and the comic emplotment of Hope Leslie, Sedgwick posits the triumph of future progress. The tragedy of the vanishing Amerindian becomes a footnote, although a resounding one, to the historical process.

Chapter Two Notes

¹ Cf. Castiglia for a discussion of how Hope and Magawisca reflect Sedgwick's progressive ideologies.

² Cf. Gould 72-75. Gould analyzes the difference between the accounts of Magawisca and Digby. He recognizes Magawisca's story as Sedgwick's revisionist history.

³ Feminist critics have debated to what extent Sedgwick identified with the Puritans. Garvey reads this particular event as proof that not only was Sedgwick subverting the authority of the Puritan magistrates, but also urging women of her own time to participate in the public sphere.

⁴ Some critics have interpreted this as Sedgwick's implicit approval of miscegenation. Cf. Mitchell, who reads the miscegenated relationships in Hope Leslie, The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish, and Lydia Maria Child's Hobomok as tropes for prevailing attitudes toward the Indian question in the 1820's.

Chapter Three

The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish contains most of the themes presented in Hope Leslie. Indeed, one is tempted to speculate that Cooper intended to use these same themes in order to counter Sedgwick's appraisal of the Puritan experiment and her optimism for the future of the young Republic. The fate of the Amerindian was the subject of many historical novels and dramas during the decade of the 1820's. Traveling through Europe during 1829 apparently gave Cooper the impetus to explain, not only to a European audience, but also to himself, the role that conflicts between New England Puritans and Indians played in the national history. The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish suggests how the initial contact between Puritans and Indians set the tone for all subsequent relations between Anglophone and Indigenous cultures. The chief difference between the teleological frameworks of Hope Leslie and The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish is that the latter is tragic, not comic. Cooper was not a descendent of new England Puritans; unlike Sedgwick, he viewed their cultural values with suspicion. Both novels dramatize the defeat of the tribal peoples of New England, but Cooper's view of history is informed by his patrician conservatism—an ideology profoundly unlike either Sedgwick's melioristic progressivism or the populist land grab for which "progressive" Jacksonian Democracy stood.

Though Cooper judged the movement of settlers into the frontier auspiciously, his view is anti-expansionist to the degree that Cooper felt dissatisfaction with the changing Republic. Cooper views history not as regression, but as necessary regress in the face of

unbridled progress. However, as different as his ideological perspective on history is to that found in Hope Leslie, The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish projects the teleological problems of Puritan history by using the same three narrative elements as Sedgwick: speeches and dramatic reenactments of Amerindian redress; the sacrifice of the Indian Hero; the miscegenation between the Indian hero and the patriarch's granddaughter. The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish promulgates the historical inevitability of expansionism, if not that of Puritan conquest; but its tragic emplotment also conveys, along with critical detachment from the Puritan subject, a romanticization of individual heroism via Amerindian culture.

The style and structure of the novel differ from those of Hope Leslie. The narration is plodding at times, but the overall effect of the dense prose suggests Cooper's ambivalent attitudes toward the Puritans, and to whether history changes for the better. Cooper takes well over a hundred pages (nearly a third of the book) to narrate the events of one day. Also, Cooper's use of narrative elisions in time disrupts the temporal and spatial perspective to reflect the movement of the Puritan settlement when attacked by tribal peoples. The microcosm is dense with characters, who interpret signs and events as immanently concerning their security or benefit. When the narrative focuses on the Indian characters, the events concern Indian interpretation of the Puritan's presence as justification for revenge, the ostensible motive for the attacks on the Puritans in the novel. That King Phillip's war is the last pan-tribal holdout in the Northeast seems to justify the preemptive strike. But Cooper contrives a litany of ironic situations wherein the ideology of the preemptive strike exposes the contradictions in Puritan policy toward the Amerindian, and the view they held of their own place in history¹.

Like Sedgwick, Cooper prefaces The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish with an explanation of his attempts to convey historical truth. He asserts the historical veracity of his “aborigines” with the admission that,

although the situations are imagined, they so nearly resemble facts that are known to have occurred as to give a sufficiently correct idea of the opinions, habits, and feelings of a class of beings whom we are pleased to term savages. (v)

In legitimizing his fictional representation of the Northeastern Indigenous Peoples, Cooper thus intends to explain the irrevocable difference between the European settlers and Amerindian natives. The slight detachment in the passive construction “we are pleased” resurfaces later in the preface when Cooper points out that King Philip’s war, “threatened serious obstacles to [the Puritan] system of colonization” (vi). This was the last attempt at a united assault by the various indigenous peoples in New England--the type of pivotal event in *History* that inspires novels, in which the outcome is reversed. Cooper even speculates that had King Phillip

succeeded in uniting all the hostile tribes in a common effort [...] the realization of his vast and noble plans was an event far more likely to prove true, than we may be disposed to admit at this distant day. (vi)

That Cooper not only distances himself from the Puritans but also describes Phillip’s efforts with the words *vast* and *noble* reflect his sympathetic perspective to the Indians’ plight. Cooper had already assayed the Indian question in his *Leather-stocking Tales*, but he hardly identified with Puritans. Critics had for a period afterward regarded his portrayal of them in The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish to be unfair, whereas his

sentimentalization of the “vanishing Indian” proved a popular idiom for the public’s literary taste.

In The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish, Cooper departs from the adventure plot of his previous novels to “produce a familiar poem.” (vii). What Cooper meant by “familiar poem” remains elusive; ultimately the work, in its iterative summaries, minute descriptions, and tragic form, signifies a dramatic reenactment of the loss of those tribal cultures—a loss more powerfully evoked in the ending of his novel than in Hope Leslie. Cooper proffers the various methods of war—the martial, political, and psychological—as a deciding factor in the outcome, noting the military astuteness of both parties concerned. And Cooper, like Sedgwick’s *Magawisca*, portrays Puritan domesticity and informs his Indian hero, Conanchet, with the hue of the natural aristocracy.

The end of The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish reifies the tragedies born from the conflicts between Puritans and North-eastern tribes through the death of Conanchet, a Narragansett chief whose father was killed before him under similar circumstances. Significantly, the hero is struck down, with the death blow delivered by Uncas, an enemy chief of the Mohegen tribe, which, along with the Pequots, “were in deadly hostility” to the Narragansetts (368). The alliance of this tribe with the English weakens a pan-Indian resistance against the settlers. Before dying, with “fierce triumph upon his face [...] his lips moved,” and Conanchet utters the rebuke, “I die before my heart is soft”(389). Conanchet’s last words in the face of his enemies is essential to understanding Cooper’s assessment of the role of Indians in national history: Through asserting cultural values, Conanchet triumphs in death. Yet it is death that symbolizes the loss of tribal culture, a

culture whose foundations are upset by the Colonial presence². Conanchet's dignity elevates him above the Puritans, who, despite their "strict adherence" to Christian doctrine are, in Cooper's eyes, moral hypocrites because of their willingness to practice the politics of usurping lands in spite of their professed Christian ideals. The remaining tribes reflect either the corruption of the European influence (as in the case of the Pequots and Mohegans), or the inevitable aggression of the Narragansetts and Wompanoags to stop permanently the encroachment of the colonists. To preserve Narragansett culture, Conanchet ironically impels his own death before he is forced to give in to the wanton aggression and treachery at odds with his sense of personal honor.

Cooper further dramatizes the temporal preservation and loss of tribal values through death by depicting what he believes to be the inevitable separation of Indian from European. The spectacle of Narra-mattah, Conanchet's white wife, sitting catatonically before her dead Indian husband impresses even the Puritan soldier Eben Dudley, Cooper's equivalent of the world-view expressed by Sedgwick's Digby—who utters to his fellow witnesses, "This hath been a melancholy visitation of necessity, and a severe manifestation of the fore-ordering will" (390). His words crystallize the interpretation of history inherent in Puritan typology: the outcome of events represent the designs of the Puritan God. Thus, Dudley, "resolute, but justly disposed," experiences what appears to him and the most of his fellow Puritans as the inevitability of Conanchet's death; and indeed, having witnessed the death of Conanchet's father, the Puritan "borderer"—agent-provocateur behind the execution—exhibits "more steadiness in his contemplation of its

[the execution's] fulfillment" (390). While speaking for the plight of Conanchet and his people, Dudley affirms his culture's reading of history.

In contrast, Narra-mattah's demise at the novel's end moves from poignancy to hysteria. After lamenting for an hour, Narra-mattah disassembles before her parents. Taken captive by Conanchet as a child during the first tribal attack, the granddaughter Ruth Heathcote matures in the Indian hero's care and becomes his squaw. When he realizes that the Heathcote family did not perish in the attack, Conanchet takes Ruth, now integrated into Narragansett culture as Narra-mattah, to her blood family; moreover he sends their infant son, invoking the disgust of her parents. The Heathcotes get their daughter back, but, in the face of her husband's death, she reverts mentally to a childhood state. Her words betray the contradiction of Puritan ideology that Dudley embodies. Wondering why she sits in the forest, she warns, "It is not safe, thou knowest, mother, to wander far in the woods; the heathen may be out of their towns, and one cannot say what evil chance might have happen to the indiscreet" (397). Conanchet might have enjoyed the irony of such advice were he not dead. His self-sacrifice ultimately lands him in the hands of his Puritan and Tribal enemies. That the Puritans are out of their towns and spreading their cause among the tribal peoples proves them rather adept at protecting colonial interests by dividing the tribes against one another.

The forest proves an unsafe place for the Heathcote daughter, too, for she dies there. Urged to pray by Ruth Heathcote, the here-to-fore Narra-mattah prays herself to serenity, thus regaining child-like complacency.

Life played upon [her features], as the flickering light lingers on the dying torch [...] the full and sweet organs next rolled from face to face, recognition and pleasure accompanying each change[...] when they met the fixed, frowning, and still commanding eye of the dead chief, their wandering ceased forever[...] The hands of Narra-mattah trembled, and she convulsively to the robe of Ruth. "Mother, mother! [...] I will pray again—an evil spirit besets me!" (397)

The hysteria which befalls Narra-mattah illustrates the moral failure of Puritanism. The conquest occurs, but at what cost? Her death symbolizes the loss of innocence; she has slept with the enemy and become attached to his culture. The drama of the captive's return to Puritan culture results in her disintegration; and instead of the comfort of heaven with which she was promised, she dies under a siege by an evil spirit. Her identity usurped, Narra-mattah in turn represents the impossibility of coexistence between the two cultures. Moreover, as in Hope Leslie, The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish expresses the value of the tribal way of life only after it vanishes.

Thus, Cooper asks: Where does expansion stop? For Narra-mattah, the overpowering effect of superstition, fanaticism, and hysteria with which she was indoctrinated during her Puritan childhood leads to dissolution. Through her dissolution, Cooper indicts the failure of Puritan ideology: it is internally corrosiveness. Though the absence of the Indian suggests he lurks in the forest, the presence of Conanchet reminds Narra-mattah of whom she has become; his corpse at which she stares exposes for her the hypocrisy of Puritanism.

When the face of the insensible parent [Ruth] was withdrawn, the dead [Conanchet and Narra-mattah] appeared to gaze at each other with a mysterious and unearthly intelligence. The look of the Narragansett was still, as in his hour of pride, haughty, unyielding, and filled with defiance;

while that of the creature who had so long lived in his kindness, was perplexed, timid, but not without a character of hope. (397)

The union of Indian and European is not impossible, but the cultural differences are too enormous to surmount. Critics have viewed Conanchet's execution and Narra-mattah's subsequent death as signs of Cooper's disapproval of miscegenation, but their son lives on with the Heathcotes, suggesting Cooper was less appalled by miscegenation than skeptical of the possibility of incorporating tribal peoples into the Republic. Moreover, the burial of Conanchet with the other Heathcotes and the induction of his son into the family indicate an appreciation of the Narragansett in the patriarchal lineage of the family. Thus, while Cooper promulgates the inevitable defeat of the tribal peoples, he views expansionist ideology with skepticism.

Like Hope Leslie, The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish features the redresses of Puritan injustice toward Amerindian tribes; and, as does Sedgwick, Cooper represents the Indian's perspective on the history of contact in order to anticipate and in a sense justify Indian attacks. Though he remains silent of his knowledge of the coming onslaught, Conanchet throws down a bundle similar to the one Nelema drops at Bethel. In the scene when Ruth secures the children in the attic before the first raid, she explains Conanchet's behavior to her frightened daughter: "his fierce nature broodeth over some fancied wrong" (149). To the Heathcote men, who badger him to give them information of the attack, the young native chief replies, "The world is very wide. There is room in it, for the panther and the deer. Why have the Yengeese and the red men met?" (147). For the

adolescent Conanchet, Indian contact with Europeans has disrupted their way of life. His rejoinder anticipates the emotional complexity he exhibits in the second battle.

The second battle, because of its duration, is anticipated with another redresses, though this time the speaker is the half-wit Puritan Whittal Ring. His captivity among the Narragansetts engenders within him the voice of the Tribal native; he recounts the quasi-mythical Amerindian plaint as if “charged with the narration of a grave tradition, though he probably did no more than relate what many repetitions had rendered familiar to his unactive mind” (241). Why Cooper chose this speaker to render the perspective of the Indian’s demise is puzzling. On the one hand, Cooper may have simply been borrowing the device of the Shakespearean fool to elevate Whittal’s words above the condescension of his Puritan listeners; on the other hand, Cooper may have been satirizing the melodramas of his age that romanticized the plight of the Indian in overly sentimental terms. Regardless, Whittal’s speech contains the native justifications for King Philip’s war:

All this land and water the Great spirit gave to the men of red skins, for them he loved, since they spoke truth in their tribes, were true to their friends, hated their enemies [...] Then the Great Spirit grew angry; he hid his face from his children, because they quarreled among themselves. Big canoes came out of the rising sun, and brought a hungry and wicked people to the land [...] Oh they are wicked knaves! (241-2)

Whittal’s cultural theology justifies war with the English because of Indian right to the land. The failure to unite *en masse*, according to Whittal, has cost Providence’s favor, and has left the tribes vulnerable to the English, who, as Whittal concludes, are “wicked knaves.” This distorted view of the Indian perspective is inextricably bound within a

Puritan hysterically delivered discourse, which contrasts the speeches and dialogues concerning the other Indians characters. Through Whittal, Cooper projects the inevitable revenge feared, and thus prepared for, by the Puritans.

Whittal's character functions to propel the inexorable march of events, and at the same time, burlesques Puritan hysteria. In a later scene, he dramatically re-enacts the scalping of whites through bizarre pantomime pointing out the gravity of Narra-mattah's position of being a Narragansett chief's wife and the mother of his son. He speaks the omen in the grotesque image of the chief collecting scalps: "his lodge will be lined with hair of the colour of deer!" (340). Narra-mattah laughs at the spastic pantomime of Whittal's "exertions" (340-1), distressing the Heathcotes. To the Heathcotes, Whittal and Narra-mattah embrace the enemy, the *other* in the strictest sense of the concept, which to the Puritans' eyes is the demonic. Content evaluates Whittal's mental capacity as "more blunted by exposure and the usages of a savage life, than by Nature" (236).

Whereas Whittal's assimilation to the Narragansetts has shaped his political leanings, Conanchet has lived enough with Christians to be touched by their religious conviction. He valorizes Submission's role as judge of Charles I and a declarer of his death sentence, calling him, "a brave warrior [...] his hand has took the scalp of the great Sagamore of his people" (303). Conanchet comprehends Submission's sincere motivation, but he misperceives the Puritan's bravery, which is ultimately subordinate to theocratic rule, not to a warrior code³. Accordingly, in the second constituent element of the teleological framework, Conanchet, like Magawisca, sacrifices himself to save a Puritan. The former, however, does so from domestic attachment; the latter does so from

the abstract principle of honor—a principle Conanchet perceives in Submission. The regicide is so impressed by Conanchet's sense of honor, he praises him: "Heathen [...] many a Christian man might take lessons from thy faith" (368). Conanchet's act of sacrifice is therefore the reductive consequence of the ideological conflict between the Puritans and Indians. Unlike Magawisca, who sacrifices an arm from perceived necessity, Conanchet's selfless act arises from the contradictory impulses of Conanchet's resignation on the one hand and the hypocrisy behind the Puritan politics of self-interest on the other. Indeed, the Reverend Meek Wolfe, the zealous yet politically acute minister of that settlement, justifies the treachery toward Conanchet with the admonition "Mercy is a quality of heavenly origin [...] and it should not be perverted to defeat the purposes of heavenly wisdom" (348). The Puritan's lack of effort to stop Conanchet's execution symbolizes their politics of opportunism. Conanchet's sacrifice, recurring in a different stage of the narrative and in a substantially different manner than the sacrifice of Magawisca does in Hope Leslie, taints all the Puritan heroism preceding it in the narrative, driving the plot to its inevitable conclusion—inevitable in that the historical Conanchet did die.

Thus, Conanchet's melancholy portends his death: "My eyes are too weak to look over so many mountains, and across so many rivers" (301). His death-melancholy is dramatized through his reluctance to claim the Heathcote's scalps, and, subsequently, to continue to participate in the pan-Indian assault on the English. The resignation he feels stems first from losing his father and his contact with the English, and second from seeing the people he thought dead for so long seemingly reborn. He thus relinquishes his will to

fight them further. Conanchet confides to Metacom, the leader of the pan-tribal assault, that as a boy he felt he “had felt the power of the God of the Yengeese. His mind began to grow weak; he thought less of revenge—the spirit of his father came no more at night” (303–4). Instead of seeking revenge against Uncas, the Mohegan chief who murdered his father at the request of the Puritans, Conanchet submits to his execution.

But does Conanchet submit as a result of having been influenced by Christian theology, or does he perform an act of self-assertion in dying a noble Narragansett’s death—a moral reason bound to be misunderstood in Anglophone history because of its inescapable difference from the sentiments of European peoples? Conanchet tells Narramattah, “a just and great chief cannot shut his ear to the Good Spirit of his people. Mine calls his son to hunt among the braves that have gone on the long path; thine points another way” (388). Thus, through Conanchet’s own words, the narrator suggests that the Narragansett chief would rather die and affirm his ties to his culture than betray the memory of his father for the temporary convenience of Puritan amity that Uncas enjoys. Like Magawisca, Conanchet proves to be superior in his assertion of a moral position to any other character. The crucial difference between Magawisca and Conanchet is that his sacrifice exposes hypocrisy inherent in Puritan politics. Furthermore, his sacrifice reaffirms his roots in a tribal culture already corrupted by Colonial presence. While in captivity, “the resolute but still quiet boy would not be lured into a forgetfulness of his origin” (91), an origin he remembers even in his choice of death.

The microcosmic tragedy of Conanchet’s death does not resist professing the Amerindian inevitably dying out as a race within the macrocosm of history. On the

microcosmic scale, Meek voices this interpretation in his judgment: "This is the law, the necessities of a suffering nature, and God's glory for our justification" (350). Rather than accept accountability, the pastor invokes the purpose of accomplishing "god's glory" without considering his own endorsement of a theology of peace through passivity. Meek does not interfere on Conanchet's behalf but passively watches him die at the hands of his enemies: "Providence of Heaven hath so interwoven the interest of man with its own good purposes, that to the carnal eye they may outwardly seem inseparable" (375). Paradoxically, Conanchet fulfills the role of hero in the otherwise conflicting theologies represented by Puritan and Amerindian. In the latter case, he refuses to cooperate with the English as the Mohegans have for survival, despite pleas from Dudley to forget the enmity between both tribes: "The fire that burnt the lodges of my people, turned the heart of Conanchet to stone" (386). By asserting his moral inclinations, Conanchet elevates his actions to a mythic-historical realm, iconicized in the image of the headstone marked "The Narragansett" that the author sees in the Puritan graveyard. Thus, in The Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish, King Phillip's War is subsumed into the narrative of proto-National History: the English settlements unite against Metacom's efforts to extinguish them from the land. The teleology of the war becomes one of disposal, either that of the Puritans or the Amerindian. In light of Puritan victory, conquest is inevitable in the face of resistance. As Cooper points out in the novel's preface, "Right or wrong, the colonists gravely decided that the war, on their part, was just" (248).

Cooper further illustrates the manner in which this justification occurs in an allusion to one of the most infamous moments in the annals of Puritan history: the Puritan

scourge of Pettyquamscott, the Narragansett village where “six hundred cabins were burnt” (250). Though the Indians defend themselves, “better arms and greater concert finally prevailed” (249). Twice, Puritan guilt is exposed for the slaughter of the Indians.

First, Cooper refers vaguely to the atrocities perpetrated on the village:

Nor was the victory achieved without accompaniments which, however unavoidable they might have been, had a tendency to raise doubts in the minds of such conscientious religionists concerning the lawfulness of their cause. (250)

A page later, Content echoes the same sentiment: “the bloody assault [...] even raised doubts of the lawfulness of some of our deeds” (251). Yet, like most conquerors, the messenger who reports the slaughter avoids accountability by invoking Providence, retorting, “thou wast in the Pettyquamscott scourging, and need not be reminded of the manner in which the Lord dealt with our enemies on that favour-dispensing day” (252). Thus, Content is exposed in the ideological trap resulting from the notion of destiny embedded in Puritan theology; Content was there, participating in acts for which he harbors reservations.

Similarly, Submission incites Meek’s congregation to fight off the Indians to avoid being slaughtered, but pleads to Conanchet that tolerance between Europeans and Indians is possible: “The earth is large, and there is place for men of all colours and of all nations on its surface” (332). Conanchet eerily refers to his father’s death to express his cynicism toward the idea that the Puritans might be inclusive and communal with the land: “My father hath found but little” (332). Indeed, the problem, Conanchet recognizes, is not one of space as it is the different values Puritans and tribal peoples

hold in relation to the land. Elsewhere, Submission echoes Metacom's belief that the Amerindian never will fit in with the Puritan's plans by evoking the will of *Providence*, the inevitability of conquest and usurpation: "Happy is he who can find justification in dwelling within its borders" (362). If we take *happy* as meaning of good fortune, then Providence is on the side of the English, because the Indians have "found but little." The Puritan justification extols the land as "a place" for all people, yet *Providence* shows whose theology is right, whose god is stronger.

Conanchet does not know happiness; his youthful brooding mirrors disappointment at the injustice of the world. Not surprisingly, by manhood, he is resigned in the face of a future which forecasts the inevitable loss of his culture through the loss of its land. He has seen the favor of Providence in the tragic circumstances of his life; he dies, hoping that his next life will offer him something else. At least Narramattah, unlike the other Puritans, has learned the advantage of living among Indians, practicing their way of life; nevertheless, beholding that experience in the Puritan world is too much for her.

The incompatible difference between Puritan and Indian is played out in the relationship of Conanchet and Narramattah. Even though their relationship is usually read as indicative of Cooper's supposedly negative views toward miscegenation, the marriage is only portrayed after Conanchet returns his wife to the Heathcotes. Even though Conanchet knows her as the child, Ruth Heathcote, the reader never perceives a glimpse of her transformation, only her temporary reversion to her former self before she dies. Conanchet's discourse with her focuses on his separation from her. He elaborates

on the difference between them—not in terms of culture, but in the teleology of *race*: the theology of each ultimately presupposes that each has been engendered by the primary race in the eyes of their deity⁴.

Narra-mattah recognizes this difference and proposes that “Conanchet quit the woods, and go into the clearings with the mother of his boy” (383). She reifies the difference between the two theologies into different views of land: “clearings” and “woods”; in turn these two metonymies represent the differing teleology of the two cultures. Because the two cannot coexist in the same realm, and because their teleology, literally, refers to the same land, the Indian vanishes in light of the ostensible progress of expansion into the frontier.

Cooper’s portrayal of Narra-mattah’s tragic demise differs from Sedgwick’s narrative explanation of the hopeful yet obscured departure of Faith and Oneco into the forest. Narra-mattah, like Faith, is rendered as a passive yet influential force on the outlook of her husband. But whereas Sedgwick’s *Indianized* white woman remains impenetrable to Hope’s attempts of re-assimilation, Narra-mattah subordinates the *racial* difference to her emotional ties to Conanchet: “If the great Spirit made her skin a different colour, he made her heart the same” (315). But this is her tragedy, and by implication, the sign of her story’s tragic emplotment. Unlike Faith, Narra-mattah experiences the pain of being unable to encompass either culture. She cannot accept the death of her husband, who represents her tie to the Narragansetts. And yet, the sounds she hears of her family praying in English induce recollections of a childhood now lost, which “conveyed their meaning to a mind that had gained its strength under a very

different system of theology” (336). Her dormant Puritanism provides no comfort when her Narragansett ties are severed.

Narra-mattah’s tragedy becomes that of the irrevocable past, a tragedy Conanchet experiences when he visits the remains of the Heathcote settlement under the assumption that the family died in the fire. He experiences loss over what he believes to be the destruction of an entire people: “His look was rivetted on the vacancy...where he had last seen the family, calling in their extremity on their Deity for aid” (187). The memory that human life had been there—that once there existed people with whom he lived in a state of captivity but through whose kindness he had learned their “theology,”—astonishes him, and, for a moment, he seems forever haunted by their absence.

Imagination still painted the victims in their burning pile [...] and taking a final gaze of the place, where fortune had made him a witness of so much domestic peace, and of so much sudden misery, his form was quickly swallowed in the gloom of his native woods. (187)

In a bizarre reversal, Cooper shows the Narragansett experiencing the emotions later overwhelming the historical-minded citizen of the Early Republic who would explain the conquest and destruction of Indian Tribes: he and they romanticize the past as tragic but justify events through their inescapable nature. Conanchet “trod[s] lightly along the path,” (187) as his character profoundly changes, affected by increasing melancholy. Conanchet’s certitude about destruction and inevitability is broken when he sees the Heathcote family alive and prosperous ten years later after a second Indian attack on a new Puritan settlement. But until then, his brief experience with the Puritans has taught

him the same lesson that Dudley refers to when he talks of the “melancholy visitation of necessity.”

Thus, the tragic emplotment of The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish does not offer meliorism or progress like Hope Leslie; instead, Cooper’s novel articulates the problem of expansionist ideology through the hypocrisy of Puritan’s politics. The microcosmic event of Conanchet’s death becomes Cooper’s enactment of the historical loss of northeastern tribal cultures. On the macrocosm, this event suggest that the first contact between Puritan and tribal peoples defined all subsequent relations between Amerindians and settlers. For Cooper, conquest is inevitable, but that does not qualify *History* as progress, as it does in Hope Leslie. Rather, historical inevitability is symptomatic of the loss of tribal cultures and the irreversible trends of national destiny. Where that destiny leads the Republic, Cooper does not say, nor does he contextualize, as does Sedgwick, the narrative with a vision of future promise. Just as Cooper’s manipulations of narrative time produce the effect of a microscope, wherein the microcosmic characters are fleshed out with detail, understanding Cooper’s historical time in The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish is tantamount to looking at the distant objects in the sky through a telescope. There is no direct relation between the viewer and the object; there is no sense of progress: only the light of objects from the past remains—the gravestones of the Heathcotes, Narra-mattah, and Conanchet. For Cooper, this temporal distance signifies the faint, static glimmer of the irretrievable past.

Chapter Three Notes

¹ Cf. Gould pp.156-9. According to Gould, these formal strategies reflect Cooper's derision over a New England based historiography of the young Republic.

² Karchner unfairly excoriates Cooper for implicitly promoting the extermination of Amerindians in her introduction to American Women Writers edition of Hobomok. Karchner uses Conanchet's death to read Cooper as approving war against tribal peoples and contrasts the fate of Conanchet and Ruth with that of Oneco and Faith (and that of Hobomok, Mary Conant and Hobomok) to show a melioristic vision toward the Indians. Karchner's distinction in the treatment of miscegenated relationship overlooks the fact that the child between Conanchet and Ruth lives.

³ Cf. Gould 69-71 for a discussion of their relationship and how it reflects Cooper's "moral dialectic."

⁴ Cf. Wallace who defends Cooper against charges of racism (like Lelie Fielder's), by demonstrating Cooper's non-essentialism in his views of race.

Chapter Four

Margaret Mitchell's Gone with the Wind remains the most popular novel in English¹, yet its lack of critical appreciation has been as much a result of its melodramatic presentation and length, as of its explicit racist ideologies, even though fans of the novel always speak of picking it up and not being able to put it down, caught up in the rush of the narrative. And, certainly, Mitchell deserves credit for taking by then conventional elements of the nineteenth-century historical novel and filtering them through a style which transforms potentially mundane scenes and dialogues into urgent moments of crisis.

Gone with the Wind is about the South coming to terms with its defeat in the Civil War. As a projection of regional history, it transcends its regional content to promulgate the bourgeois ideology of the autonomous individual, whose psyche survives and triumphs over the tribulations of life in a capitalist state. Mitchell does not resist invoking historical inevitability to inform the continuum of events, thus projecting a macrocosm of a doomed South, a doomed way of life, and an immanent surge of a bourgeoisie based on entrepreneurial mercantilism as opposed to a quasi-feudal, rigidly hierarchical caste system in which the white plantation class is the aristocracy and Afro-Americans the slaves. However, the cooperation of poor southern whites with the Northern conquerors upsets the old order and threatens the ideological underpinning of the hierarchical social system—excluding blacks from the privileges whites enjoy based on their color. Accordingly, blacks become an isolated caste, prevented from mixing

with whites, in order for the land-owning class to assuage their fears of poor whites and black slaves uniting to revolt against the caste system.

Because Gone with the Wind repeatedly asserts that Scarlett O'Hara's motives to profit from the South's defeat grow out of economic necessity, while simultaneously conveying her sexual desires and romantic fantasies derived from her acculturation in the ante-bellum south, the novel exposes the ideological contradictions resulting from the conflict between Scarlett's actions and the social constraints of ante-bellum culture². Thus, because Scarlett rejects the constraints on her freedom, yet is caught in the economic choice to thrive or to suffer, she seizes on the former, and acts outside the mores of her society. Because her character is less complex than dynamic, her actions, motives, and emotions reify the value of autonomy and will that constitute the bourgeois subject in a capitalist economy. Written during the 1930's, in a time of economic depression when the threat of spreading socialist ideologies unsettled those prone to romanticizing the past, Gone with the Wind supplies comfort for the bourgeois reader looking for affirmation in the American dream of the individual's success.

The narrative structure of Gone with the Wind follows convention. Alternating scene and summary with a few achronological sequences, the narration relies much on detail and repetition to plot the historical past. The novel's one thousand pages are testament to Mitchell's ambition to create a panorama of Georgia before, during, and after the Civil War. The canvas is crowded with characters, but only a few are fleshed out—the quarter of Scarlett O'Hara, Rhett Butler, Melanie Wilkes, and Ashley Wilkes. And it is they who embody the tensions between competing ideologies in the South. Most

chapters are focused on Scarlett's perspective, and we are given access to her thoughts, often via free indirect discourse, but usually in the conventional mode of *she thought* or *she felt*. But in Rhett, Ashley, and Melanie, actions and words represent their sentiments more accurately than with Scarlett who relies on deception to get what she wants, but is self-deceived about the aim of her desire, Ashley, whom she realizes in the end is an illusion. Ultimately, Rhett, Ashley, and Melanie are ideologically transparent because they do not appear self-deceived about their sentiments. The difference between Scarlett's actions and words, on the one hand, and her thoughts and feelings, on the other, reveals the conflict of her ideological stance, abandoning a much-romanticized past for a future where autonomy, comfort, and material prosperity lay. The microcosm of events (business dealings, spousal and family arguments, ballroom dances, and the occasional crisis) dominates the narrative perspective, but the macrocosmic totality contextualizes those events, antagonizing the life of comfort Scarlett believes she deserves.

This difference is best understood when examining the novel's ending. Though the narrative concludes seven years after the war, it is really the deaths of Bonnie and Melanie that symbolize the death of the *Old* South. For in Bonnie, Rhett attempts to mold the southern belle Scarlett once was, "the little girl again, before the war and poverty had done things to you [Scarlett]" (1018). Bonnie's death devastates Rhett because in life she awoke in him his life-long love for the ante-bellum South. In Bonnie, Rhett projects his notion of the ideal belle to counter the inescapable transformation women like Scarlett endured because of the war and reconstruction.

Similarly, Melanie's death, which occurs while she attempts to give birth to a second child, symbolizes further passing of the old order. Melanie shows some of the traits of an idealization of ante-bellum womanhood in that she is usually demure, nearly precious, and typically meek (except when morally inclined to object); she is defined in relation to men, the complete opposite of Scarlett. Not surprisingly, she resembles Ellen O'Hara most in demeanor, and like her mother, Melanie is perceived as the quintessence of delicacy and kindness. However, delicacy also characterizes her health and constitution, and early in the novel we learn that birthing babies will result in her death. The fulfillment of that portent symbolizes the living myth of the ante-bellum woman vanishing from the South when the Confederacy lost the war. Hence, Scarlett represents the new state of woman, perpetually struggling in a world of men yet capable of improving her condition without their guidance³.

Accordingly, Scarlett's acquisitiveness extends to her love life, and as noted earlier, her long desired object, reified in Ashley, represents the idealized ante-bellum gentleman whom she feels she has always been destined to marry. To an extent, this desire is what all along holds her back from the happiness she might experience with Rhett. But it is necessary for her to hold on to the past in order to adapt to the volatile changes of the Civil War and Reconstruction. And her epiphany that Ashley has become an empty symbol also represents an end to the Old South. Ashley becomes the last hold of that idealization on Scarlett. Even when found by her enemies in Ashley's embrace, and rebuked by Rhett, she rejoices in having physically experienced his desire for her. Before she can think of a way to staunch the flow of gossip, Scarlett escapes into her

well-worn maxim of tomorrow being another day, celebrating the possibility of melioration through embracing the next day—not a distant future but merely a new day.

Tomorrow—well, tomorrow was another day. Tomorrow she would think of some excuse, some counter accusations, some way of putting Rhett in the wrong. Tomorrow the memory of this hideous night would not be driving her so furiously that she shook. Tomorrow she would not be so haunted by the memory of Ashley's face. (921)

The promise of the future makes the vanishing past (reified by Ashley) easier for Scarlett to swallow. And with the next day comes a new space and time to correct her mistakes and seek improvement. Scarlett accepts the past fading into an irrevocable time; she does not view the future as time slipping seamlessly into an increasingly monumental (in its idealization by the old aristocracy) past, but merely as a blank slate on which she can ascribe new measures to overcome the burdens of social condemnation and spousal derision. The memory of the shame Scarlett feels as a result of social condemnation compromises her desire to attain the autonomy she ultimately values more than the past. Thus, genteel expectations of behavior are less important to Scarlett than the self-centered life the bourgeois culture of free enterprise offers.

Later, when Rhett puts her on a train back to Tara, she repeats her faith in *tomorrow* as a way to escape the scandal she has perpetrated; she says, “with the old defense against the world: ‘I won’t think of it now. I can’t stand it if I do. I’ll think of it tomorrow at Tara. Tomorrow’s another day’” (956). The sheer open-endedness of the future, albeit fraught with many of the same tribulations, which Scarlett has learned to appreciate through the war and reconstruction, gives meaning to her life. No matter what happens in the present, there is tomorrow, that field where hope gives meaning in an age

of conquest and instability, where the past has taken its prisoners—Melanie, Ashley, Gerald, Ellen. Scarlett refuses to live in that past, even though she may mythologize it as do its prisoners. She subsumes herself to the possibility of solution in an open future; and yet, throughout the narrative, the world doles out its misfortunes, of which Scarlett receives her fair share.

Although the hope of somehow uniting with Ashley maintains her spirits throughout the novel, Scarlett finally realizes that Ashley means nothing to her: “I loved something I made up, something’s that just as dead as Melanie is” (1004). This epiphany coincides with her recognition that Rhett suits her best as a husband. But he only rebukes her for having taken so long to realize that Ashley is dead weight to her purse, and, in light of that, Rhett suspects that it is his money (as always) that makes him worth marrying in her eyes. Of course, Scarlett’s astonishment says more about her self-centered view of other’s perspectives on her than about any fundamental change in Rhett’s character. Scarlett perceives Rhett’s cynicism as a result of his indifference. She thinks, “that nothing mattered very much to him, that he thought every thing in life, including her, an ironic joke” (923). In the advent of Bonnie’s and Melanie’s deaths, Rhett’s apathy reveals his essential sentimentality regarding the past, reified in his inability to live with Scarlett. In their last words, each subject confronts her and his respective limitations: Scarlett’s oft iterated plea of helplessness, “what shall I do?” (1022) provokes Rhett’s resignation and indifference: “my dear, I don’t give a damn” (1023). But he does give a damn; Scarlett’s inescapable desire for a better future induces him to retreat elsewhere, even into his own spotted past in North Carolina. Throughout

her adulthood, Scarlett has reenacted the moment of men abandoning her—including Gerald, her husbands Wade Hamilton and Frank Kennedy, Ashley, and Rhett—but even experiencing remorse on such occasions inevitably leads to her embrace of what tomorrow will bring her. Each crisis follows past triumphs and results in another personal victory before another crisis arises. Thus, events are arranged in Gone with the Wind, because the eventful day when personal victories arrives offers comfort to the individual who accepts success with strife.

It might seem Scarlett's return to Tara at the end of the narrative illustrates an acknowledgment to the old South, but Tara does not signify ante-bellum culture so much as the mythological origin of the right to autonomous subject-hood in the bourgeois state; it is the well-spring that gives Scarlett her identity, and by extension, her belief in her autonomy: the ancestry, the blood and soil, and, of course, the comfort supplied by the plantation offer more than the consolation of home; they establish her sense of subject-hood. Tara is Scarlett: the self-made, stubborn, unrelenting force behind the individual's rise through the capitalist state. And it serves as a reminder of the trials to be endured and the profits to be made. Therefore, another day poses the possibility of triumph in a world where solidarity, social stratification, and social convention no longer exist: the world of the bourgeois autonomous subject whose economic status is purely contingent on the performance of the subject, and not on the limitations produced by the social ideologies which inform the caste-system embedded in the culture.

To understand the presence and effect of historical inevitability on the plot of Gone with the Wind, one need look no further than the doom that is foretold by the

characters' themselves or in the narrator's comments. This first feature of the teleological framework recurs throughout the novel. Indeed, the narrator explains the downfall of the South in terms of it being historically inevitable before the Civil War takes place. Rhett voices this conclusion after pointing out the South's industrial inferiority, appropriately enough, at the announcement of Ashley's engagement to Melanie. The South's defeat is immanent: "Why all we have is cotton and slaves and arrogance. They'd lick us in a month" (113). Of course, the hyperbole of a month reflects Rhett's desire to perturb rather than to elucidate. But reducing the South to cotton, slavery and arrogance foreshadows what the region will relinquish after the Yankee's victory.

Inasmuch as Rhett predicts the South's doom, Ashley, of course, embodies it. His character represents the affirmation of the ideology of the male gentry class. His appearance, speech, and actions exude the aristocratic and chivalric ideals that underlie the cultural values of the Old South, and he seems to comprehend that and so further seek the purity of embodying that ideal. Of course, the one character trait that keeps him from slipping into two-dimensionality (like so many other characters in the novel) is the fatalism he expresses prior to the war. For Ashley admittedly romanticizes the antebellum South, within which he sees a "perfection and completeness to it like Grecian Art" (519). The idyllic past exists for Ashley in a static continuum wherein the free will and self-determination important to the bourgeois autonomous subject are absent. For Ashley, the immutable social code of chivalric values, which he reduces to honor, imbues with meaning rigidly defined roles and intricately refined manners.

Moreover, the cultural transformation the war causes within the region regardless of the outcome is already immanent. With the onslaught of the North and the realization that the South is fighting a losing war, Ashley's fatalism turns into defeatism. He spells out the inevitability of the South assimilating culturally to the North through socio-economics: "win or lose, we lose just the same [...] If we win this war and have the Cotton Kingdom of our dreams, we still have lost, for we will become a different people and the old quiet ways will go" (210). Ashley points out that the military defeat of the South is not what matters, but rather its cultural defeat. For, even if the South does prove victorious, the idyllic past, which Ashley projects, will inevitably undergo this economic transition. Yet this perspective is still tinged by the mystification of the ante-bellum era since the economy of the Old South, as chivalry-based as its proponents claim it to be, is still geared towards profit of the entrepreneur (the landowner). Only the commercialism that Ashley refers to is absent in the ante-bellum South: "Then, I fear, we will become like the Yankees, at whose money-making activities, acquisitiveness and commercialism we now sneer" (210). What Ashley truly fears is the end of the caste-system, which gives the South its culture, as opposed to the mutable cultures influenced by consumerism, the presence of immigrants, and the rise of the city—all of which inform the industrial North.

When the surrender is made, Ashley returns from six months imprisonment a broken man. His laconic demeanor indicates not only despondence over losing his land but also contentment of remaining a ghost. In one scene, Ashley admits as much and has

nothing in the way of comfort to offer Scarlett, who seeks inspiration from him during the initial stage of the reconstruction.

My home is gone and all the money that I so took for granted I never realized I had it. And I am fitted for nothing in this world, for the world I belonged in has gone [...] everyday I see more clearly how helpless I am to cope with what has come on us all. (518)

Thus, as the war emasculated Scarlett's father, it emasculates Ashley. His kind has no place in a defeated South, for the culture that gives meaning to him has irrevocably transformed. Notably, this realization recurs his every day: tribulations, from his inability to work the land, to his participation in the Clan, to his failure at the mill, all of which evince the inescapability of the transformation he fears. With each day passes a new regime, a new culture. Stuck in a static past where change never seems to occur, Ashley relinquishes any chance to adapt or defy: he merely wallows in his defeatist rhetoric and willingly offers himself and his wife to Scarlett's charity.

On the other hand, while Scarlett romanticizes ante-bellum culture through her desire for Ashley, she adapts out of necessity to the new transformation. For her, this transformation is immanent since even before the War she clearly differs from her peers in her audacity and moral ambivalence. But for those traits to develop, she must confront the disaster left in the wake of Sherman's invasion. On returning to Tara during the invasion of Atlanta, she passes through the burned fields and wrecked lands of the county and experiences the reality of defeat. Surveying the damage to Twelve Oaks, Scarlett's appearance changes in accordance with her attitude:

Her head was raised high and something that was youth and beauty and potential tenderness had gone out of her face forever. What was past was

past. Those who were dead were dead. The lazy luxury of the old days was gone and never to return [...] There was no going back and she was going forward. (421)

Scarlett's facial features symbolize the stoicism she embodies. Her direction is made clear. While the change occurs externally to the landscape and to her physical appearance, it does not change who she is internally; that is, ideologically, she has always been about acquisition. The lived relation to the exterior therefore does not change at all. Scarlett's bravery during the war (saving Melanie and her child, retreating successfully to Tara) demonstrates her facility for survival, but also for acquisition.

But during the reconstruction her talent for profiteering emerges only because of the downfall she experiences. A reversal occurs between the relations she has with money and men. What money men gained her before the war becomes what men money can gain her after. Accordingly, in this same scene, Scarlet utters those famous words, "as god as my witness [...] I'm never going to be hungry again" (421). Again, necessity, in the form of hunger, changes Scarlett's attitude from one wherein ante-bellum society cultivates female dependence on men to one wherein only self-determination will sustain her. This reversal of fortune, in which the plantation owner's daughter finds herself scratching in the dirt for food, Scarlett finds easy to dismiss as past—and looks forward to the transformation of her culture. Pondering Ashley's words on what Southerners were to anticipate from the North, Scarlett does not see the regional enmity affecting her well-being: "the South was being treated as a conquered province and that vindictiveness was the dominant policy of the conquerors. But that was the kind of statement which meant less than nothing at all to Scarlett" (511). What concerns Scarlett is self-preservation--

and that includes her household, the family (dependents and servants), and, of course, the O'Hara property, Tara. Therefore, social autonomy outweighs cultural solidarity. To retain a position of material prosperity is far more important to Scarlett than adhering to the tenants of ante-bellum culture. This is easy for Scarlett to recognize because she already has it in her to overlook the insults to Southern pride and cater to the new changes brought by the Northern soldiers and carpetbaggers. Despite her willingness to cash in on the changes, Scarlett identifies completely with the South as a regional unit, but her actions provoke the outrage of her peers in the old Aristocratic class. Eventually, Scarlett represents the new woman of the South.

Scarlett's facility for adaptation represents a fundamental difference between her and the other Southern belles. The second element that motivates plot movement concerns partly Scarlett's adaptability, but more significantly this difference underscores the inevitable material and cultural shift during the war and reconstruction for Southern women of the plantation class. Just as the madonna-figure formed the center of chivalry, the southern belle finds herself, ostensibly, at the center of ante-bellum culture: "all Southern girls were taught to make those about them feel at ease and pleased with themselves" (156). Placed at the hub of ante-bellum society, women provide comfort—whether in their demure behavior, their submissiveness, their affection, their attentiveness, or their mere appearance. Thus, according to the narrator, the ante-bellum Southern male is propped up by their women. In exchange for protection and exaltation, the women cater to the male ego.

It was this happy feminine conspiracy which made Southern society so pleasant. Women knew that a land where men were contented, uncontradicted and safe in possession of unpunctured vanity was likely to be a very pleasant place for women to live. So from cradle to grave, women strove to make men pleased with themselves, and the satisfied men willingly gave the ladies everything in the world except credit for having intelligence. (156)

This pseudo-chivalric relationship fits with the agrarian idealism that provides the foundation for ante-bellum culture. Since, in this system, women are supposed incapable of providing for themselves, as not having the intelligence to participate in the world of men (politics and business), they rely on men for their well-fare and protection. Furthermore, the protection of Southern maidenhood and against the danger imminent in Northern conquest, and by extension, industrialization which would cause a social upheaval, serves as a pretext for fighting the war.

But Mitchell reverses the master-servant relationship so that the system is a result of a “feminine conspiracy,” thus exposing her own romanticization of women’s roles in the ante-bellum south. With the advent of the war, women would no longer be able to sustain the conspiracy, the narrator implies, when foreshadowing the inevitable transformation. Thus, the path of resistance to change is highlighted in the following excerpt:

They [Southern women] loved their men, they believed in them, they treated them to the last breaths of their bodies [...] How could anything but overwhelming victory come to a Cause as just and right as theirs? (170)

Here, the Southern belle is the spirit permeating the South—almost the pretext for inhabiting the land and cultivating it; men reify in women the nobility of the Southern

Aristocracy, of its hierarchies and its rigidly defined roles—what Ashley refers to as its “symmetry.” Simply by losing the war, the men are incapacitated and the women unprotected.

Scarlett represents the new economy, the new culture, the new woman. She marries for money, uses convict labor, and openly employs her sexuality to get what she wants. Her business acumen, however, is not a result of necessity. Her flair for manipulation is immanent: as a teen-ager, Scarlett is an expert coquette whose ulterior motives distinguish her from the herd of southern belles, who apparently curtsy on cue out of sheer conditioning. Rather, Scarlett practices coquetry for her own self-fulfillment.

She only knew that such methods worked. It never interested her enough to try to think out the reason for it, for she knows nothing of the inner workings of any human being's mind, not even her own. She knew only that if she did or said thus-and-so, men would unerringly respond with the complementary thus-and-so. It was like a mathematical formula and no more difficult, for mathematics was the one subject that had come easy for Scarlett in her schooldays. (63)

Besides its analogous relationship to flirting, Scarlett's aptitude for math foreshadows her ability to run a household, balance accounts, and gauge which men are useful. For Scarlett only uses so much of her sexuality (she cannot be said to use sex itself except in withholding it from Rhett) to manipulate men into giving her money. For her, it is all a matter of exchange—and who gets the short end of it. Even in her marriage to Rhett, her entrepreneurial peer, Scarlett receives the better end: “He laughed at everything she did, encouraged her extravagances and insolences, jeered at her pretenses—and paid the bills” (870). In spite of her capricious demands Rhett outright tells her after she miscarries, “I've invested a good deal of money in you and I'd hate to lose it” (873). His remark says

more about his futility to get what he wants from her than about his preoccupation with her health. For she feels ambivalent toward carrying his child, and she does not want to own up to his social superiority as a man.

In addition, Scarlett is nearly made a pariah on many occasion by the other women because her attitudes and behavior do not sit well with them. That she openly resists their confidence reflects her pursuit of autonomy. Constantly the center of scandal, Scarlett refuses to cohabit the other women's domain of solidarity or to serve a predetermined social function. Only Melanie's loyalty alleviates some of the gossip circulating around Atlanta. Even early in the narrative during the engagement party for Ashley and Melanie, Scarlett's coquetry draws the ire of the competition, foreshadowing the inevitable self-exclusion from the women's domain after the war. In one scene, Honey Wilkes, who pines for Scarlett's future husband, Wade Hampton, tells her future-sister-in-law, "Scarlett acted as fast as a girl could act" (124). Honey's spite in turn draws Melanie's artless defense, which angers Scarlett all the more since she herself plays the angle of not saying anything bad about other girls to induce the admiration of men. She cannot even identify Melanie as a friend because she is marrying the man Scarlett has coveted since childhood.

Furthermore, the revulsion Scarlett feels toward ante-bellum conduct causes her to yearn for escape from the Wilkes' party, and by extension, the rigid mores of ante-bellum culture: "If she could only be with Ellen, just to see her [...] to cry and pour out the whole story in her lap [...] she'd already acted common enough today, enough like white trash—that was where all her trouble lay" (126). Even though she seeks solace in the

epitome of the ante-bellum woman, Scarlett understands that “the whole story” incriminates her more than the other girls. The significance in this passage lies in acting common, for Scarlett has been raised to be a debutante. Therefore, the notion of proper conduct for a woman is subverted by the heroine’s low behavior. It is that disregard for the social code among women that allows her to free herself of the ideological constraints that subjugate women below men. Moreover, the analogy drawn between Scarlett’s behavior and acting like “white-trash” also forecasts the upheaval of ante-bellum culture, and its inevitable disintegration in the context of a revamped socio-economic system.

Because ante-bellum culture was grounded in an intricate caste system based on class and race, Gone with the Wind promulgates the threat of miscegenation as the ultimate undermining of ante-bellum culture. Race lies at the foundation of class distinction. Unlike in Hope Leslie and The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish, miscegenation is a great taboo. Not surprisingly, there is no mention of the classic case of miscegenation most common in ante-bellum culture between the white male master and the black female slave. The absence of this all too common relationship suggests the threat and taboo miscegenation proved for Mitchell; besides, to acknowledge the relationships between white masters and black slaves would discomfit most Southern belles of the gentry class. Nevertheless, the matriarch Grandma Fontaine derides southern black women who run off with Yankee soldiers: “some of the troopers went off with the black fools behind them on their saddles. Well, all they’ll get will be yellow babies and I can’t say that Yankee blood will improve the stock” (442). The flagrant racism in her comment fails to consider that anything would be better than remaining a plantation slave—and this from a

woman who earlier in the dialogue chastises Scarlett for disparaging farm work, as if “honest work made white trash out of nice people” (442).

However, the most disconcerting threat to southern Whites is the threat of a black man raping a white woman. Rhett casually admits to Scarlet that he killed a black man for merely being “uppity to a lady” (614). Indeed, the act of miscegenation between a white woman and a black man is so abhorred, it calls for the death of the black male. Thus, this threat of miscegenation provides the social underpinning for the oppression of blacks, granting all whites supremacy over blacks, no matter what their class status. Of course, that house slaves live more comfortably and closer to their white masters—and hence enjoy more privilege and material prosperity than poor whites—exposes the ideological contradiction of ante-bellum culture. But as the Southern maidenhead must be protected from the Yank, so must it be protected from the freedman.

The casualness with which Rhett makes his admission is echoed by the narrator’s tone when recounting of a freedman who “boasts of raping a white woman” and is thus imprisoned. Before a trial can begin, the Clansmen storm into the jail and hang the black man:

The Klan had acted to save the as yet unnamed victim from having to testify in open court. Rather than have her appear and advertise, her shame, her father and brother would have shot her, lynching the negro seemed a sensible solution to the towns people, in fact, the only decent solution possible. (738)

Besides illustrating the novel's explicit racist attitudes, this passage inadvertently exposes the hysteria provoked by miscegenation between a white woman and black man. For those faithful to ante-bellum sentiments, the crime produces no other course of action but lynching—especially since the social implications of the crime—racial integration—renders due process irrelevant. Indeed, the narrator importunes that the damage towards the victim's male relatives makes them experience greater shame in her shame—thus what the narrator has called the Southern woman's conspiracy.

And yet the narrator's casual attitude toward the necessity of lynching the man before a trial indicates how significant it is to the white gentry that blacks stay at the lowest tier of the caste system. Here, vigilantism invokes the inexorable defiance of the displaced southern gentry. One clan member in particular, Tony Fontaine, expresses this fear:

And if they give the negroes the vote, it's the end of us. Damn it, it's our state! [...] Soon, we'll be having nigger judges, nigger legislators—black apes out of the jungle [...] He [Jonas Wilkerson] had the gall [...] to say niggers had a right to—to—white women. (637)

Not surprisingly, this connection between miscegenation and freedmen's rights is highlighted in other episodes regarding reconstruction policy. The right for a black man to have intercourse with a white woman means the toppling of all entitlements white males (almost exclusively of the ruling class) enjoy. The previous slave-driver on Tara, Jonas Wilkerson, along with abolitionist Hilton Calvert, conspires with poor white families like the Slatterys to help the North dismantle class stratification by working in the Freedman's Bureau. Their manipulation is exposed when they spread the rumor

among blacks (almost for the benefit of white resentment) that if the old guard were to regain power, the black would be enslaved again. Thus, the Freedmen's Bureau feeds "idle and excited ex-slaves," whose minds are "poisoned against their former owners" (512). The two "told the negroes they were as good as the white in every way and soon white and negro marriages would be permitted" (512). Mitchell's unintentional irony of Wilkerson, the slave driver on Tara before the war, being the freedman's advocate during the Reconstruction again shows how overwhelmingly myopic racial antipathy towards blacks could be in 1936.

In contrast, the field hands, we are told, are the "ones least willing or able to learn, the least energetic, the least honest and trustworthy, the most vicious and brutish" (645). Their purpose as freedman, the narrator would have us believe, is to loaf and loiter—or worse, rape white women. The hysteria invoked by the threat is dramatized in Scarlett's attack in Shantytown while driving home from a mill. The black man in this scene is a caricature, brutish yet bumbling. Ironically, it is a poor white who directs him to check Scarlett's breasts for the purse:

As the negro came running to the buggy, his black face twisted in a leering grin [...] the negro was beside her, so close she could smell the rank odor of him [...] then she felt his big hand at her throat and, with a ripping noise, her basque was torn open from neck to waist. Then the black hand fumbled between her breasts, and terror and revulsion such as she had never known came over her and she screamed like an insane woman (780).

The attacker is reduced to a lascivious grin and a hand. As in Absalom, Absalom!, the smile epitomizes the mask of impenetrability that southern whites despise most about blacks; and the hand, repeated with modifiers *big* and *black*, symbolizes that terrifying,

phallic weapon of aggression suggesting all at once theft, insurrection, rape, and murder. That hand probably picked cotton for some plantation owner too, but Mitchell is too confined by her own racism to intend ironies or show sympathies.

Nonetheless, Scarlett literally vocalizes her hysteria toward miscegenation. Her screams signal the one taboo she could break that would finish her in southern society. Yet her revulsion is ironic when compared her awakened passion when Rhett takes her by force. In fact, the emotion she experiences is articulated in nearly the same way: “she had a wild thrill she had never known” (929). The unintentional ironies do not cease there. Rhett’s character bears traits suggestive of someone who could be of mixed race. The narrator paints his trademark features thus: “He was dark of face, swarthy as a pirate, and his eyes were as bold and black as any pirate’s appraising a galleon to be scuttled or a maiden to be ravished (98). His complexion is dark, and his image is foreboding. Furthermore, he is a social outcast: he mocks ante-bellum convention and ideals. Southern critics have speculated the possibilities of the author’s projection of repressed desire for black men onto Rhett, or of him being part *negro*⁴. Since Rhett can act the part of a white gentleman, he can get away with murder and rape. But this quality suggests the ambivalence of the privilege white men were entitled to, and, on the other end of the spectrum, the criminal guilt black males were laden with before receiving a fair trial. For Rhett acts upon his desires as Scarlett can, but her attachment to him revolves around his desire for her: a modified belle. So, as rebellious and self-serving as his business practices and love affairs may be, he still remains loyal to that central underpinning of the South: the taboo of miscegenation.

Again, this feature is suppressed compared to what lies in the stories told in Absalom, Absalom!. Mitchell does not differ so radically in her race views from her ante-bellum ancestors. So it is not surprising she would exclude lynching except as a peripheral event, a historical detail. But that exclusion evinces the racist attitudes common to the time and region. The fear of miscegenation, and the hysterical reactions to it, exist throughout the novel, but the act thus abhorred is not presented. Mitchell ultimately reaffirms the threat of miscegenation, because in the world of Gone with the Wind, the Old ways are still embodied by the aristocratic class. So, in the advent of an economic shift from the plantation to the middle household, the central underpinning of ante-bellum culture is easily transferred to the center of post-bellum culture.

But in avoiding the happy ending of a comic emplotment, Gone with the Wind expresses the contradictory impulse of explaining the defeat of the South. The events leading up to the end are all tragic, but the resolution of Tara affirms the temporal continuum of hope within the *mundane*. The sequence of tomorrows suggests better days while simultaneously asserting its opposite. Can things get much worse? For a struggling middle class in an economically underdeveloped area during a severe national economic depression, hope is in the novel. The inevitable triumph of Southern whites after the Civil War and the Reconstruction offers comfort in the open ending. That it leaves the possibility of sequel hinted at has been assumed by later female authors. But if the microcosmic events limit the macrocosm vision of history, Gone with the Wind exemplifies that limitation appropriately in Mitchell's romanticization of a past that she attempts to show has vanished.

Chapter Four Notes

¹ Cf. Dwyer for a discussion of the novel's commercial success and critical reception.

² Cf. King 169-70 for a brief comparison of how this theme plays out in Gone with the Wind and Absalom, Absalom!.

³ Cf. Egenrichter's essay which posits that Scarlett inexplicably clings to ante-bellum assumptions of women's roles despite her manipulations of men.

⁴ Cf. Pyron 215-6. Mitchell supposedly was fascinated with miscegenation and wrote a novella concerning a relationship between white woman and man of mixed blood.

Chapter Five

In Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom!, readers are presented with the problem of how to interpret history. They are forced to see the complex, multi-voiced narration as an attempt to make sense out of a past that still enthralls the present-time of the narration (1909), yet readers will often forego grappling with these divergent, often contradictory narrative strands to head towards the story of the Sutpen family. Indeed, the story of the Suptens remains elusive to the narrators who attempt to make sense of that abomination of the past. These narrative complexities, often wrought in contradiction, mire the coherence of Southern history.

Because so many of the events in Absalom, Absalom! are missing, because what information the narrators do have is fragmented and already biased with other perspectives, the principal narrators rely on the inexorable and irrevocable nature of events to explain how the past shapes the present. No historical alternatives exist in any of the narrators' conceptions of the historical past¹. All the narrators—Rosa, who lives through the Civil War, Mr. Compson, his son Quentin, and Shreve McCannon, Quentin's roommate at Harvard—sift through the mysteries of the past. Consequently, historical inevitability grounds the historical explanation of each narrator in various ways. To make their stories cohesive, Mr. Compson, Rosa, Quentin, and Shreve fill in the gaps of missing knowledge by telling what probably happened—*what must have happened*. Thus, it would appear that to explain a past event is to rely on the inevitability of that event occurring out of circumstances that would have allowed no other outcome. For

example, Bon's death was bound to happen, according to Mr. Compson, because of bigamy; but later in the novel, we discover that Mr. Compson did not know all the facts when he told that to his son. Quentin and Shreve narrate a different story in which Henry kills Bon to prevent miscegenation. Similarly, Sutpen's design is doomed to fail (and by extension, his life is destroyed) because of its naïve conception and ruthless execution.

Of all four novels, Absalom, Absalom! is the most heterodox stylistically; the narration is extremely dense and intricate. Instead of a linear narrative structure, Absalom, Absalom! relies on a circular, repetitive emplotment of macrocosmic events, with the microcosm shifting among four various perspectives of 1909. The basic story is reiterated through different perspectives in the nine chapters with more information given in each subsequent chapter. Absalom, Absalom! is rife with ideological prejudices that shape the very narratives. If one could argue that the narratives not only reflect these ideological prejudices, but are the constituents of such prejudice, then history itself becomes the ideological prejudice of recollection of the past. For Faulkner does not show readers the ideological forces that shape history, though we can sense them; rather he constructs each fractured, skewed narrative on the ideological prejudices of the narrators themselves. Sorting out a cohesive story of the past is problematized by the complex structure of Absalom, Absalom!: from its temporal labyrinths on the microcosmic level of the long winding sentences to the different layers of facts, memories, conjecture, lore, meditation, recollections, and deliberate reconstructions that make up the narrators' stories—and ultimately the oblique macrocosm. The narrators' prejudices shape the stories that they tell.

The concept of historical inevitability proves useful in showing the relationship between narrator-narrating-narration. Historical inevitability permeates the reflections and explanations of Absalom, Absalom!. When Quentin and Shreve are telling the story back and forth to each other, Quentin accuses Shreve of sounding like Mr. Compson. Although the accusation is never narrated, only thought of by Quentin, Shreve tells him later that he is not the only one who sounds like Mr. Compson. This fear of taking on the voice of the fatalist, of explaining the past through a process of excluding what-may-have-been for what-must-have-been leads Quentin to reflect,

Yes. Maybe we are both father. Maybe nothing ever happens once and is finished. Maybe happen is never once but like ripples maybe on the water after the pebble sinks, the ripples moving on, spreading [...] or maybe Father and I are both Shreve, maybe it took Father and me both to make Shreve or Shreve and me both to make Father or maybe Thomas Sutpen to make all of us. (210)

Among the issues in this passage is the question: does the present make the past or the past make the present? In formulating composites of narrators, of interpreting beings, Quentin speculates whether the narrators are in fact the story which they tell. For in that moment of lucidity, when the past reiterates itself in the narratives of present-time, the present becomes the past, and in infinite, circular repetitions, time repeats itself ².

Absalom, Absalom! ends with a return to the scene in September of 1909 when Quentin arrives with Rosa at Sutpen's dilapidated mansion. They discover Henry inside, but there is no revelation of truth--only more context. The narration shifts back to the dormitory room at Harvard where we learn that three months afterward, Rosa goes back to find answers and Clytie, once more anticipating Rosa's gesture, sets fire to the house to

conceal those secrets. Quentin imagines Rosa in an apoplectic rage “struggling and fighting like a doll in a nightmare, making no sound, foaming a little at the mouth” (301). Thus, the self-proclaimed victim of *Historical* circumstance is devoured from within by her own frustration with a past whose meaning eludes her. Mr. Compson, in typically sardonic fashion, speculates on Rosa’s fate:

Surely it can harm no one to believe that perhaps she has escaped not at all the privilege of being outraged and amazed and of not forgiving but on the contrary has herself gained that place or bourne where the objects of the outrage and of the commiseration also are no longer ghosts but are actual people to be actual recipients of the hatred and the pity. It will do no harm to hope. (302)

Thus, the past is inescapable, suggesting that in the same way, so is the march of history. Yet, if the past and present are merely the strides in an endless cycle, the future could converge on the past.

In many instances in Absalom, Absalom!, the narrators explain the past in terms of the present or even the future. The most spectacular example of the latter occurs at the end of the novel, when Shreve, in a gesture of half-comic condemnation of the South, prophesies that the future of the South lies in the black blood of the last Sutpen descendent, Jim Bond.

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

Shreve reverses the temporal direction of this process by saying that the end result will engulf the past so that all the whites who might have thought themselves racially pure

(Shreve the Canadian being the most far-flung example) will discover they were tainted to begin with. The inevitability of such a conquest plays not only on the fears that white southerners have of being part black, but also on the nightmare they have of being represented by such a half-wit figure. Shreve mocks the foundations of hierarchy in the South, the foundations of identity, by using historical inevitability to explain the racially-motivated fears southern whites have.

As in Gone with the Wind, characters in Absalom, Absalom! use inevitability to explain the defeat of the South, along with the microcosmic events of the past. But unlike in Gone with the Wind, this teleological element is most often presented when the narrators speculate on events in the context of *History*, so that the evocation of the past results in a more powerful reliance on historical inevitability. In the novel's first pages, Rosa exposes the imminent downfall of the South when judging Sutpen:

But that our cause, our very life and future hopes and past pride, should have been thrown into the balance with men like that to buttress it—men with valor and strength but without pity or honor. Is it any wonder that Heaven saw us fit to lose? (13)

Rosa claims that ruin was brought upon the South, not by its institutions, but by men like Sutpen. Yet, in her monologue, she mystifies the figure of Sutpen into a force; she assigns blame to him, judging him not as a man with freewill but as a metaphysical entity of evil. Having accepted her doom forty-three years before the telling of her story, Rosa attributes the gaps of her knowledge to historical inevitability.

Mr. Compson is especially bent on explaining the Civil War as the South's defeat rather than the North's invasion and victory in his version of Charles Bon's courtship of

Judith Sutpen. Before giving Quentin the historical document of Bon's letter to Judith, Mr. Compson paints a story of fatalist lovers in a doomed romance. Invoking the story passed down from his mother, Mr. Compson recounts Judith's explanation for giving the letter to Question's grandmother before Bon returns to the war. Since Mr. Compson sees Judith as "the bucolic maiden [of] inexplicable tranquil patient clairvoyance" (102), her words spoken to his mother suggest a weariness about the inevitability of the catastrophe that ensues. This act ultimately signifies the threat of miscegenation in the microcosm of the narrative—and in the macrocosm it constitutes and projects the ideological underpinning of the South's effort. The words Mr. Compson attributes to Judith and those of Bon's letter differ in that she instinctively grasps the futility of the situation.

You get born and you try this and you don't know why you keep on trying [...] with a lot of other people, all mixed up with them, like trying to, having to, move your arms and legs with strings only the same strings are hitched to all the other arms and legs [...] like five or six people all trying to make a rug on the same loom only each know that, or the Ones that set up the loom would have arranged things a little better, and yet it must matter because you keep on trying or having to keep on trying and then all of a sudden it's all over and all you have left is a block of stone with scratches on it. (101)

Judith speaks of people's actions being inextricably bound to one another, a situation that could have been much simpler had those who set the loom up only made it so. But since people have different visions for the future—in the metaphor of the rug—there can be no unified vision—no pattern to the rug. While Judith struggles along side Clytemestra, and later Rosa, to survive the war, Mr. Compson recounts the words she speaks when giving the letter to his mother to read or destroy as if she were a fatalist like Bon. Thus, in relating the microcosmic event of the past through the document of Bon's letter, itself an

exercise in fatalism, Judith is cognizant of the irrevocability of past events. Yet she insists that people must keep trying to make sense of their era. When all action becomes past, only the “block of stone” remains to tell those of a different present how the past was.

Accordingly, the letter remains a cipher of permanence from a time of uncertainty—near the end of the war. Relying on inevitability to historicize the microcosmic past, Mr. Compson attributes to Judith evidence in her words (which of course he does not know) that one set of tangled lives (the Sutpens) burdens another set of lives (the Compsons). As he hands the letter “block of stone with scratches on it,” to his son as proof that Charles Bon lived, Mr. Compson lays the burden of history on Quentin. Described by Mr. Compson as “gentle sardonic whimsical and incurably pessimistic” (102) the letter accurately reflects the same platitudes that Mr. Compson attributes to Bon in his story prefacing the letter. Bon’s words verify the portrait Mr. Compson assays.

The letter reflects the absurdity of the war in a bemused tone. Bon shows a bent for black humor when he describes his regiment’s attempt to find sustenance and instead stumbling upon a wealth of stove polish, “still trying to overtake General Sherman with some belated amended field order requiring him to polish the stove before firing the house” (103). Nonetheless, Bon’s words echo those which Mr. Compson imagines Judith telling his mother:

you now hold the best [water-marked paper] of the old South which is dead, and the words you read were written upon it with the best (each box [of stove polish] said, the very best) of the new North which has

conquered and which therefore, whether it likes it or not, will have to survive, I now believe that you and I are, strangely enough, included among those who are doomed to live. (105)

Through its combination of sarcasm and divination, Bon's stoicism is still articulated in terms of inevitability. The South has inevitably lost at the hands of Northern conquest, but Bon reads the discovery of stove polish as a sign of the South's imminent and immanent defeat, immanent in that Bon resorts to using a product of Northern industrialism, stove polish, to write his message to Judith. The relationship between the seventy year old water-marked paper and the stove polish recently manufactured in a New England Factory reflects the inevitable economic transformation facing the South. But despite the hope that the survivors of the ante-bellum era are capable of eking out a new present, there remains the fact that readers already know that Bon is killed by Henry. Thus, even this gesture of hope proves a futile one in light of what the reader knows about Bon's death.

Likewise, Sutpen's design exposes its inevitable failure, though mostly because of the ideological contradictions underpinning ante-bellum culture. Furthermore, Quentin is doomed to listen to Rosa's story because of the relationship between his grandfather and Sutpen. Mr. Compson points this out to him early in the novel, when his son asks his father, "why tell it to me?" (7). Mr. Compson spins off a few answers in the vein of his flippantly misogynistic humor before settling on the inevitability of the story being told to Quentin:

She may believe that if it hadn't been for your grandfather's friendship, Sutpen could never have got a foothold here, and that if he had not got that foothold, he could not have married Ellen. So maybe she considers you

partly responsible through heredity for what happened to her and her family through him. (8)

Mr. Compson reverses the temporal direction of causation to explain why Quentin must endure listening to a story he has already heard countless times as county lore—a story Quentin will have to listen to it as he retells it to Shreve. At first, Mr. Compson's assigning blame to his son—as if the father were absolved—seems innocent teasing, but considering the burden that Rosa makes of it, such blame reifies in the post-bellum generation the inevitable loss of an idyllic past. The story told of the past in Absalom, Absalom! drives Quentin to exclaim twice in response to Shreve's question about why he hates the South, "I don't hate it" (303) and think it twice as the narrative ends on the utterance "*I don't! I don't! I don't hate it! I don't hate it!*"(303). The intensity of the narrative's conclusion signifies the enormity of that burden on Quentin, whose utterance is tantamount to *I don't hate myself*. One wonders whether it was perhaps inevitable that Quentin would kill himself after having such a burden dropped on his conscience.

The second element of the teleological framework—the transformation of women during the war and reconstruction—is conveyed through the character of Rosa and the story she tells. Unlike Scarlett, Rosa is doomed by her upbringing and romanticized self-perception to remain a ghost after the war. Her destiny is suffused with the illusions and expectations of women's roles in ante-bellum culture. Significantly, the burden of the past prevents Rosa from ever living in the present. As the only female narrator of Absalom, Absalom!, Rosa differs from the other narrators in that she lives during the central events. Although she survives the horrors of the war, the starvation and

desolation as well as the breakdown of the social mores—epitomized by Sutpen’s proposal and proposition to her—Rosa lives in suspension, wearing “eternal black [...] long embattled in virginity” (3-4). Because of her rejection of Sutpen, she suffers forty-three years in the spinsterly paralysis of her renown for being the town’s jilted bride. Not surprisingly, Rosa therefore blames Sutpen, “the long dead object of her impotent yet indomitable frustration” (3). The image verges on parody when the implied narrator likens Rosa to a child, so short in a tall chair that her feet hang “clear of the floor” (3).

Ironically, Rosa reveals that living during the historical event that impels the story does not give her more insight than the other narrators when explaining the relationship between Henry, Bon, and Judith. Uncannily, not only is Rosa absent when Henry kills Bon, she does not even see the corpse. In chapter five, she uses the phrase “so they will have told you doubtless” to repeat what Quentin may have heard from town legend, from or his father or grandfather, but then changes her phrase to “but they cannot tell you,” revealing that her presence during the events of 1869 may, after all, be crucial to understanding the relationship between Bon and Judith, which sheds light on Rosa’s character and role in the novel. Rosa’s monologue is grounded in two diametrically opposed emotional states: vituperation for Sutpen’s disregard of honor and decency on the one hand, and on the other nostalgic romanticization of Bon, who emblemizes for her the ideal fiancée-husband.

Indignant and obsessed, Rosa calls her sister Ellen a “blind romantic fool” for marrying a man about whom the town knew little about, yet Rosa cannot explain why nearly marries Sutpen later. She does not admit to the situational irony of her position;

she merely concedes that her life revolves around Sutpen; when he ceases to exist, she broods:

But I had all my life to watch him in, since apparently and for what reason Heaven has not seen fit to divulge, my life was destined to end on an afternoon in April forty-three years ago [...] I saw that man return—the evil’s source and head which had outlasted all it’s victims—who had created two children not only to destroy on another and his own line, but my line as well, yet I agreed to marry him. (12)

After listening to this oration, readers have little doubt why Quentin is perplexed. Rosa invokes the notion of divine plan to avoid explaining her own actions. Rosa does not know why she has to endure living those events. The figure of Sutpen represents the conflict between her Calvinist bent toward predestination and her unfulfilled romantic fantasies.

Bon, however, represents the mystery of male sexuality which Rosa never experiences, as well as the cultural ideal of the Aristocratic Southern gentleman³. Although she denies loving Bon, he embodies her belief in the ante-bellum values of Southern gentility, while his mysterious past remains enticingly exotic. Rosa recollects the “miscast summer” of “barren youth” (116)—her childhood, “some projection of the lightless womb,” a permanent state of limbo where she waits for “that doom which we call female victory which is endure and then endure, without rhyme or reason or hope of reward—then endure” (116). Not only does Rosa repeat the same words she uses to describe why Judith’s marriage to Bon was forbidden, but she forecasts her own future from the past, refracting what becomes of her into the ontological condition she embodies

at the age of fourteen. The inevitability of her spinsterhood is clear to her in this recollection.

Rosa becomes “all polymath love’s androgynous advocate” (117), doomed to be a virgin yet sensitive to love’s promise in the form of betrothal. She even imagines that her presence somehow has an impact on Bon and Judith, sentimentalizing her adolescent emotion and directing it at Judith: “yet there may come some moment in your married lives when he will find this atom’s particle as you might find cramped small pallid hidden shoot in a familiar flower bed” (120). Thus, Rosa projects herself into a space and time where she is conspicuously absent as if to give more meaning and relevance to her part in the story. But, she was, too late by being too young, and thus, too far removed to comprehend what took place and why in the past of her story.

The sentimentality ascribed to Judith and Bon’s courtship belies the outrage Sutpen’s proposition provokes when he suggests they have sex before marriage to she if she can produce breed a male heir. For Rosa believes in the regenerative power of her love. In her brief courtship with Sutpen, she imagines,

I was that sun, who believed that he[...] was not oblivious of me but only unconscious and receptive like the swamp-freed pilgrim feeling earth and tasting sun and light again and aware of neither but only of darkness’ and morass’ lack—who did believe there was that magic in unkin blood which we call by the pallid name of love that could be, might be sun for him.
(135)

Rosa romanticizes herself as a figure of hope in the future; she fantasizes Sutpen as man shell-shocked by the war and therefore vulnerable. Contrary to Rosa’s fantasy, Sutpen is hardly catatonic or in need of emotional consolation; he is more obdurate in

accomplishing his design than ever, suggesting his nefarious proposition to her, “as if he were consulting with Jones or with some other man about a bitch dog or a cow or mare” (136). Appalled, Rosa still lingers for two months on the devastated plantation waiting for Sutpen to change his stance. In the face of Sutpen’s gross insensitivity, Rosa retrospectively explains her outrage by showing she was capable of expressing love. But because of Sutpen’s desire for expediency during the post-war aftermath, Rosa’s opportunity to love is squelched. Thus, having to endure the summation of her life in the town’s eyes in the oft repeated jingle “*Rosie Coldfield, lose him, weep him, caught a man but couldn’t keep him*” (136), Rosa vilifies Sutpen for determining the irrevocable destruction of her emotional and sexual being.

As much as Rosa clings to and even espouses the paternalistic values that have shaped the events of her life, she points to Sutpen as the cause of her furor and failure. Readers know she has the capacity to be something else: she is intelligent, insightful, and a great manipulator of language, yet she has apparently been robbed of the ability to act in any way to determine the course of her life⁴. Like so many other women in the novel—including Judith, Ellen, Bon’s octoroon mistress, and Charles St. Etienne Bon’s wife, Rosa’s life is shaped by men. Yet, Rosa confuses her destiny with the man whose actions affected, but whose death freed her from the onus of being anything more than herself. Still, the ostensible jilt has left her stigmatized in the town’s eyes. Could this too be another manifestation of Rosa’s projecting nature? Considering that her monologue seeks to disclaim her ineffectuality, readers may see her character as the aspiration of southern femininity, idyllic and incorruptible. That she lives her life in limbo

demonstrates how much she clings to the empty, long-past conceptions of Southern womanhood.

Ultimately, the threat to that ideal is manifested in the taboo of miscegenation. Unlike in Gone with the Wind, miscegenation is a major theme in the microcosm of Absalom, Absalom!: The miscegenated relationship conveys the inevitability of racial mixing, as Shreve predicts at the end of the novel; miscegenation poses the largest threat to the old order because it threatens social upheaval. There are many examples of miscegenation: Sutpen and his first wife, Eulalia Bon; Sutpen and the slave who mothers Clytie; Bon and the octoroon mistress; Bon and Judith; Charles St. Etienne Saint-Valery Bon and his black wife. It is no accident that the black women remain nameless. The narrators' categorical designations (slave, mistress, or harsher, nigger, ape) reflect the racist ideologies inherent in their story-telling. Faulkner was conscious of these ideologies as such, and in Absalom, Absalom!, he focuses more on exposing the inherent racism of the social structure of the South than on representing the experience of southern blacks. Therefore, leaving the black women unnamed illustrates their being exploited and excluded from antebellum culture. That Rosa, Mr. Compson, Quentin, Shreve, and county lore cannot name any of those women of color points to the concealment of their relationships with white men.

The exception is Bon's relationship to Judith, which is an inversion of the typical case of miscegenation. Having a black grandmother on Eulalia's side, Bon and his mother bear the taint of race that excludes them from being white; nonetheless, they pass as white and are culturally so as well. Quentin and Shreve arrive at this conclusion

through conjecture, but ultimately it serves as the most powerful and most realized explanation for Henry's fratricide. Ironically, Mr. Compson's ornately drawn but speculative explanation of Henry's murder of Bon evinces miscegenation as the ultimate cause; however, the relationship he reveals is that between Bon and his octoroon mistress. This part of the narrative renders the relationship between Bon and Henry as that of mentor to protégé. Bon introduces Henry to the world of New Orleans. But again, Mr. Compson is aware of the limitations of his knowledge of the historical past, and to fill in the gaps, he conjectures from his knowledge of macrocosmic history (ante-bellum New Orleans), his ideological prejudices, his misogyny, and his cynicism, to create an intricately, codified world of sophisticated mores and fraternal codes. Thus, for Mr. Compson the conflict centers on the question concerning whom Henry confides in and trusts more, his mentor/future brother-in-law or his sister. Because Bon is so inaccessible as a character, Mr. Compson characterizes him as a "mere spectator, passive, a little sardonic, and completely enigmatic" (74). But this is just one way Mr. Compson deals with Bon's inaccessibility. At one point, Mr. Compson comes to see Bon as an embodiment for New Orleans, "acting as an elegant and indolent esoteric hothouse bloom possessing merely the name of a city for origin and past" (77). Here, Bon represents for Mr. Compson (similarly as he does for Rosa) the ideal ante-bellum gentleman, cultivated and confidant, yet laconic and aloof.

On the other hand, Henry is "the provincial, the clown almost, given to instinctive and violent action rather than to thinking" (75). Mr. Compson calls Henry's reaction to Bon's mistress "a fetish-ridden moral blundering which did not deserve to be called

thinking” (74) and claims that “he [Henry] was doomed and destined to kill” (72). While not a fatalist himself, Henry is doomed to an irrevocable course because of his single-mindedness in protecting his sister from sleeping with a man who has a black concubine slave. Thus, Mr. Compson gives evidence for the inevitability of Henry’s crime by characterizing his artless simplicity as the result of his Calvinist upbringing. For Mr. Compson, Henry is one of the clearly drawn integers of the past, whose contact with a world (New Orleans) he cannot understand dictates his fated resolve.

The argument between Bon and Henry that Mr. Compson imagines extrapolates on Henry’s horror with miscegenation. In it, Bon justifies miscegenation. Uneasy in the octoroon ballroom, “a place created for and by voluptuousness” (91), Henry protests first to Bon’s clandestine faux-matrimonial arrangement with a “whore,” a charge Bon counters with a barrage of rebuttals: “not whores” but concubines of privilege bred for the position, bred by white men of the south to fulfill a role in the French-Catholic culture of New Orleans. Moreover, Mr. Compson’s Bon expounds upon the mistresses’ loyalty and servitude-till-death, their willingness to serve beyond the duties of prostitute and wife. Henry’s simplicity leads to a second objection—the need to recognize the relationship through a faux-matrimonial ceremony, which Bon dismisses as “a formula, a shibboleth meaningless as a child’s game, performed by someone created by the situation whose need it answered” (93).

Caught in the ideological contradiction of his own circular reasoning, Henry asserts the contract obligation that the ceremony represents, despite the meaninglessness of its language. It is at this point that Mr. Compson’s Bon invokes the institutional

racism of ante-bellum culture: “Have you forgot that this woman, this child, are niggers? You, Henry Sutpen of Sutpen’s Hundred in Mississippi? You, talking of marriage, a wedding, here?” (94). Bon’s sardonic questions trump Henry by perversely goading him to legitimize the union between a white man and black slave. Therefore, Henry faces the situation of his sister marrying a bigamist because race plays a deeper role in ante-bellum values and its social hierarchy. While Bon’s reasoning reflects Mr. Compson’s misogynistic, even puerile, attitudes, it exposes Henry’s uneasiness regarding any form of miscegenation, despite his own father having similarly had a slave concubine who gave birth to his sister, Clytemnestra.

Ironically, it is the potential miscegenation between Bon and Judith that causes Henry to commit fratricide. Embittered from Sutpen’s refusal to acknowledge him, Bon challenges Henry in Quentin and Shreve’s version of the events leading up to the fratricide, “So it’s the miscegenation, not the incest which you can’t bear” (285). When Sutpen tells Henry the truth about Bon’s African blood, Henry knows, despite his earlier concession to incest, he must prevent intercourse between Bon and Judith. Thus, just as he had problems with Bon’s marriage to the octoroon mistress, Henry he cannot stomach knowing that the man who has sex with his sister is part black. The anxiety he suffers is dramatized through his panting and trembling during Bon’s confrontation. This reaction exposes the hysterical irrationality of his revulsion to miscegenation, even though Bon has is his half-brother, a fact Henry can swallow, as well as his closest companion for four years.

As for Bon, his purpose is resolute: “*No I’m not [your brother] . I’m the nigger that’s going to sleep with your sister. Unless you stop me, Henry*” (286). While his motivation never remains clear, his fatalism suggests that he sees the fratricide as inevitable because Henry does not have the power to escape his father’s command; and yet Bon recognizes the fratricide as the ironic fulfillment of the situation Sutpen has tried to avoid. The possible motives—love for Judith, recalcitrance toward the system that makes him categorically black, or revenge on Sutpen—all return to the inevitability with which he challenges Henry to murder him. Thus, Bon’s gesture reveals this hysteria as the ideological underpinning of Southern paternalist ideology.

The story of Charles Etienne de St. Valery Bon, the child resulting from the relationship between Bon and his octoroon mistress, further exposes that hysteria miscegenation provokes. Though capable of passing as white, Charles bears the social stigma of mixed-blood and defies social convention by marrying a dark-skinned black woman, antagonizing both white and black community. His son, Jim Bond, is the last male descendent of Sutpen. Accordingly, Sutpen’s attempt to keep his lineage racially pure is foiled. That its failure is immanent exposes the ideological underpinning of black and white, their inextricable difference and the necessity of their separation in order for the South to maintain its identity. Thus, in Absalom, Absalom!, the Civil War exposes the ideological contradictions of the South, and by extension, the United States, by exposing the racism rooted in the foundations of the caste system.

As in Hope Leslie and The Wept of Wish-ton-wish, the difference between two races cannot be overcome because only one can master the land. Thus, in the languid

atmosphere of the early twentieth-century South, the stories of those who survived the Civil War, and the subsequent generation, cannot escape the consequences of *History*. Because it represents a historical past from another perspective also set in the past, Absalom, Absalom! illustrates the trap of historical inevitability more explicitly than the other novels with which I have dealt. Even though they speculate regarding event, cause, and consequence, the narrators who tell the various stories of Sutpen cannot free themselves from its implications; they are shaped by the past, determined by their stories. Certainly, Rosa, Mr. Compson, and Quentin suffer the repercussions of the Civil War, both from the internal disintegration of the post-bellum South and from the external effects of the War and Reconstruction. Thus, Faulkner evokes inevitability to reveal the foundations of Southern identity and the danger which miscegenation represents. The South cannot escape the ideological contradictions upon which its caste-system and culture are founded. The cycle of history ultimately makes consequence fulfill its own cause, in the same way that the end result of Sutpen's design was "the sound of the idiot negro [Jim Bond] left" (301).

Chapter Five Notes

¹ Cf. Rollyson outlines how the story-tellers's conceptions of history in the context of historiography.

² Cf. Slaughter's discussion of the circularity of time in Absalom, Absalom!.

³ Cf. Raily's argument that Bon represents the paternalism of the old order (especially as cultivated in New Orleans), an ideology competing ante-bellum culture with the liberalism Sutpen represents.

⁴ Cf. Wilson who examines Rosa's role as story-teller and participant of history.

Conclusion

I want to resist making a causal relationship between the Early Republic and the Great Depression, if only to resist using a teleological explanation of History. The relationship is complex, more so than that of the historical events depicted in the two pairs of novels. The correlation between the Puritan-Amerindian Wars and the Civil War centers on the crisis of national identity in light of greater expansion. Granted, the North-eastern Amerindians differ categorically from Southern Confederates, but their representation as a defeated people shows a desire to convey a past long gone because of the event of conquest. With Puritan invasion comes the loss of North-eastern Tribal peoples and their cultures; with Northern victory for the Union comes the loss of Antebellum culture, and perhaps the last threat keeping the young nation from expanding. Had the Civil War not been fought when it had, the North may have never consolidated enough power to reconquer the South and integrate the Western territories into the Union. My point is that National History portrayed in these historical novels reflect the concern with the relationship between land, property, and cultural identity. While the repercussions in the advent of Puritan-Amerindian wars are much more sinister than those of the Civil War, both reflect moments of historical tragedy that may have been otherwise but could not be.

To a varying degree the respective authors are aware of that influence of historical inevitability. Exploring the ideological concerns in each novel, I have suggested that the constituent elements of patriarchal design and miscegenation are woven into the teleological framework of each historical narrative. The patriarchal design is the

microcosmic reality—Lukac’s “relative form”—that projects the macrocosmic totality of the history. Likewise, exploring instances of foreshadowing in the narrative structure reveals stratagems for anticipating conquest and defeat, whether retroactively positing the outcome of the Puritan-Indian Wars on the one hand, or depicting the defeat of the South as immanent because of the South’s early economic dependence of Slaves. The use of foreshadowing in all novels reveals ideological contradictions in the historical explanations embedded in the narrative—whether the religious and martial ideologies represented in Hope Leslie and The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish, or the cultural, racial, and class ideologies rendered in Gone with the Wind and Absalom, Absalom!.

Interestingly, in both Gone with the Wind and Absalom, Absalom!, men like Sutpen and Gerald O’Hara set out to accomplish their patriarchal design roughly during the era of the Early Republic: both novels extend back to the early nineteenth century. Gerald comes to the US in 1822, Sutpen in 1833; both purchase land from the local tribe’s cheaply on account of Jackson’s aggressive assaults against the Creeks, Choctaws, Cherokees, and Seminoles. How ironic that their version of the individual’s pursuit of happiness through property coincides with the removal of the Indians from the land. Of course, that arrangement conveys the historical inevitability of Amerindian defeat because frontier expansion implies that tribal peoples can always move out further west. During that period of our national history, it was possible for poor whites and immigrants to develop large tracts of land and produce enough crops to thrive economically within the quasi-feudal ante-bellum South.

In the earlier novels, the Puritans resist incorporating the tribal peoples of the Northeast and instead dispose of them through war or removal. The racial ideology inherent in the authors' historicizing of those early conflicts in New England reflect their teleological concerns. While Hope Leslie promises progress by deriding the Puritans for their intolerance and bigotry, and promoting the melioristic, liberal attitudes of the Puritan hero and heroine, The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish ossifies the past to lament the personal heroism displayed by the Amerindians in their struggle with the Puritans. Both foreshadow the problem posed in light of the ostensibly progressive force of the nation excludes a dispossessed peoples, i.e. Africa-American slaves. In these novels, conquest calls for either melioration or oppression, or in the case of countless native tribes, genocide; thus, I suggest, in light of tribal genocide and slavery, Cooper and Sedgwick, and Mitchell and Faulkner illustrate the powerful influence of historical inevitability in their respective novels to justify those elements of the national history at odds with the national ideology of progress.

The Civil War makes a fitting catastrophe to compare to economic and social despair of the Great Depression; for in the former, the moneyed class is vaunted during the fight over slavery—the institution that props them. Yet, despite the defeat of the South, remnants of the ante-bellum caste-system, like the taboo of miscegenation, remain because it is embedded in the patriarchal designs of an unscrupulously willful man like Sutpen, on the one hand, and the raucous yet benevolent drunk like O'Hara on the other.

Certainly, progress narratives still ground our National Culture despite the skepticism that characterizes the post-Modernists and Pragmatists of today: one need look

no further than the cultural forms of commercials promoting technology to see how the inevitability of the future explains why we should consume the latest cell-phone or palm-pilot. Similarly, the success of Private Sector in the running a bureaucracy explains the inevitable Corporaticization in the narrative of Global Capitalism. These examples are loaded in order to point out the obvious problems posed in invoking Inevitability to justify an ideology through the auspices of progress.

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