CHAPTER II

FROM GRACE EXILED: LIE DOWN IN DARKNESS

The age which witnessed the publication of such war novels as Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* (1948) and James Jones' *From Here to Eternity* (1951), was wholly unprepared for the emergence of the brilliantly evocative and lyrical *Lie Down in Darkness.* None of the literary formulas of the critics could explain the sudden eminence the novelist achieved—Styron had given no previous indication of his tragic genius, and the press hailed this wholly unknown new author.

Maxwell Geismar called *Lie Down in Darkness* "the best novel of the year . . . and maybe the best novel since World War II."¹ Ihab Hassan, another influential

¹William Styron, *Lie Down in Darkness* (Indianapolis, Ind.: Bobbs Merrill, 1951). All subsequent references in parentheses are to this edition.

writer, asserted that Styron's first novel "remains one of the outstanding works of post-war fiction." Elizabeth Janeway, writing in the New Leader, suggested that Styron, with this incredible first novel was trying something significantly new with fiction, "ridding it on the one hand of too much experimentation, and on the other of a too-rigid, traditional form." Helvin J. Friedman in a penetrating and stimulating "interim appraisal," hailed Styron as a messianic figure, the new hope for the novel form. Charles Fenton, commenting on the total impact of the novel, made a pointed observation: "Styron has undertaken the major effort which American critics have blandly urged on so many other skilful craftsmen in the past few years—O'Hara, Steinbeck, Marquand, Westcott—and which so seldom has been realized."

in Lie Down in Darkness, as elsewhere, Styron presents a terrifying and complex vision of man detached from his

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old structural values—the sense of the divine, the nucleus of the family, the larger contexts of group, clan, country, culture and heritage. The characters attempt desperately to infuse meaning into their lives, each pitted in a personal struggle against the meaninglessness of existence.

Shaun O’Connell has suggested that “time, ever fading beauty, death, the undeniable and impossible quest for resurrection, all the human despair which this implies—these are the elements of Styron’s sad vision.” In this gloomy, unrelieved tragedy, Styron tries to suggest (although none of the characters realize this truth), that life must be lived without assists of any kind—that “to be” is the supreme truth, the summa bonum of human existence.

It has been earlier observed that Styron is one of the few contemporary writers, who is most absorbed with the tragic mode of fiction-writing. In *Adele in Darkness* he has used with considerable skill the age-old matrix of classical tragedy. Charlotte Aretsoi has pointed out that "*Adele in Darkness*, in spite of the numerous reflections, interior monologues, the frequent changes in the different narrators’ aspects, and jugglery with dimensions of time within and between plots and subplots, invites us to treat

it as a classic tragedy."⁷ Styron has drawn inspiration
for this southern tragedy from the Greek myths, extracting
from them a hard core of meaning, that largely redefines
and underscores his themes. The events in *Lie Down in
Darkness* are surcharged entirely with a poignant sense of
suffering. The most distinctive and universal feature of
Greek tragedy was that of intense and unrelieved suffering.
In all the extant tragedies, suffering is presented in its
most lurid forms, often tinged with blood-guilt. We are
led to feel at such times that existence itself is nothing
but agony and terror.

In *Agamemnon* and *Prometheus in Jubilo*:
*Prometheus*, which begins with a description
of a plague-infested city and the Trojan
women, suffering is a universal night that
is not broken by a single ray of joy, wit
or delight in life.⁸

Tragedy is a conventional form that includes patterns
of action with conventional meanings. Stripped to its very
essence, however, a well-defined formula emerges: the tragic
action is a movement from guilt through suffering to purga­
tion and insight. In *William Styron*, the depiction of this
basic pattern evolves progressively, until it reaches a

⁷ Charlotte Kretzoi, "William Styron: Heritage and
Conscience," *Hungarian Studies in English*, 5 (Hungary:
Debrecen, 1971), 121-36.

⁸ Walter Kaufmann, *Tragedy and Philosophy* (Garden
climactic level in the last novel. The primary structure, everywhere, is always a progression from guilt to purgation. While speaking of *Die Down in Darkness*, Jonathan Saumabach has pointed out that "with the progressive deterioration of its romantic ideals, the aristocracy of Styron's South falls from innocence into decay, from decay into guilt, and finally from guilt into redemption through death." The basic pattern of this novel then, is that of classic tragedy.

Although Styron has modelled his novel on Greek tragedy his tragic vision is shaped considerably by the "modern temper." Modern sensibility, it has been pointed out, is notoriously sensitive to a world of flux, death, disintegration and disorder—a world which seems to fall apart. The image of life created in the mass of modern literature is that of a "fluid" society without a foundation of traditional values. Man is depicted as if in a vacuum, or else in a painful predicament, being smothered under violent pressure from the caged structure of values which he no longer believes in. This image has been reinforced on the metaphysical level by existential and Positivist thought which projects the "relativity" of all values, ethical or aesthetic. It has been suggested that it is impossible to

understand the universe on the metaphysical plane, in terms categorical and absolute. Reflecting this temper, Styron presents a chaotic vision of man separated from his ethic, and unable to return to a stable meaningful world.

Survival is a key-word in this novel. Survival in the present day, however, implies adjustment to a world devoid of any order; a world which is indifferent or even antagonistic to the plight of man. The characters are portrayed as individuals striving to maintain a semblance of order and balance in a frenzied, frenetic world, torn on all sides by disintegrating forces over which man seems to have no control.

In *Lite Down in Darkness*, the redemption of the major characters is not as effectively achieved as in the later novels. The novel does reflect the basic human desire to be free from the bondage of guilt, and to join a purified society. The cry of Milton Loftis is a plaintive one: "Ah, for a man to arise in me that the man I am may cease to be" (p. 209). O'Connell puts forth a similar view when he says that "the real theme of *Lite Down in Darkness* is the incorrigible human impulse to renew and redeem oneself, to father oneself out of defeat and decay, to resurrect the innocent child—when he and I used to walk along the beach,
In spite of all this, never do the characters, even when close to the grave, "see with blinding sight."

*Life Down in Darkness* can be analysed from two well-defined levels of meaning. The first, is the level of myth—an exploration of the various classical prefigurations which underscore much of the thematic content of the novel. The second and more complex level of analysis is that of corresponding idea and symbol. In the novel the two interact and illuminate each other, thereby enriching the formal structure and lending deeper philosophic overtones to the story. The ideas dominant in the novel, as perhaps in most tragedies, are guilt, suffering, and the search for salvation. Equally important are the ideas of hate-in-love, sex, the involvement with, and the attempt to internalize time—a complex of emotions, dreams, and memory. But anywhere, the narrative reveals a nexus of intercrossing ideas and motives.

*Life Down in Darkness* is a domestic tragedy. It tells of a Southern family that finally crumbles into degeneration. Fate, ever-present and haunting, hounds this family down to its very doom. Told without the juggling of structure, it is a straightforward, simple narrative, and it is Styron's

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technical virtuosity which lends unexpected nuances to the story.

The novel begins in time "present" with Milton Loftis, the father, waiting for the corpse of his daughter Peyton, who has jumped to her death onto a Harlem street. He is accompanied by his mistress, the pallid, nervous Dolly Bonner, and his faithful black servant, Lilla Swan. The times are surcharged with tension. In the background, Styron skillfully evokes the horrors of war and the perils of our Atomic age. The day progresses slowly as the coffin is carried from Fort Warwick to the cemetery. The hearse breaks down periodically—a constant reminder of the breaking up of time itself. "Fractured time makes for a fractured consciousness."11

Using this pathetic tableau—the man, the mistress, and the dead body of a beloved daughter which the man is about to painfully inter—as a point of departure, Styron unfolds the whole tragic story in tantalizingly shattered parts. The story of the Loftis family's fall from grace is one of unrelieved gloom. The initial chapter serves as a glimpse into the nature of the Loftis family: "Milton's terrible fear and isolation, Helen's pride in refusing to join him

at the station, and Peyton's terror and desperation that are reflected in her last letter.\textsuperscript{12}

The central character in \textit{Lie Down in Darkness} is a young woman, Peyton Loftis, who belongs to an aristocratic Virginian family. Her father, Milton Loftis is a lawyer, a sot by any standards. He was once a handsome man, with a shock of white hair falling across his forehead, but the seed of degeneracy had been sown early enough in his life.

At nineteen he was a campus character known as 'Blow,' a sot even by fraternity standards who drank not only because whisky made him drunk but because, away from his father, he found the sudden freedom oppressive. (p. 16)

Bleakly waiting now for the body of his beautiful daughter whom he had loved with an almost oedipal compulsion, grief overtakes him:

Think of the water, think of now. Just the same, he knew he was too old, too weary for paradoxes, that he couldn't evade immediacy, and that the train would come after all, bringing with it final proof of fate and circumstance. (pp. 13-14)

Styron himself comments on this tableau:

So his father had somehow realized that his youth would rise up eventually to betray

him, even though he couldn't have foreseen
the final calamity—the son, middle-aged
now and a bit flabby, standing here awaiting
the symbol of his doom.

(p. 14)

In his youth Milton had nurtured political ambitions, but
the decay of the land had finally imbued itself into his
soul like a slow but deadly poison. The enormous inheritance
his wife eventually came into had inhibited any further
desire to "make good," and his life had converged more and
more towards a set groove—golf and social drinking. But
on this day, he remembers the warnings, almost prophetic,
of that old voice from the past, his father's:

... I can only admonish you with the words
of the Scotchman, wiselike, keep your ship
up and your kills down and let the wind blow.

(p. 15)

In desperation, in looking back over the vast wasteland of
years, he muses wistfully:

Not just that, papa. Other things.
Life tends toward a moment. Not just
the flesh. Not a poet or a thief, I
could never exercise free will.

(p. 15)

In his youth Milton Loftis had been lucky. During the
entire war he was at Governor's island, where by processes
more simple than he had ever imagined, he was made first
lieutenant and then captain, "emerging from the war with
that rank, and with the colonel's daughter" (p. 16).
Helen Loftis, the mother, is the child of "Blood and Jesus Peyton," a puritanical and sadistic army officer. The events in her life gradually make her so bitter that she is unable to love anyone else except Maudie, her retarded child. Milton's love for Peyton, their younger daughter, disturbs her so much that even after Peyton's suicide her feelings remain self-centred. Milton is overly indulgent towards his younger daughter, while Helen, who is forced into a close relationship with Maudie, magnifies her smallest ills with exaggerated maternal solicitude and devotes her entire life to protecting her imbecile child. Milton's affection for Peyton arouses intense feelings of sexual jealousy in Helen, and in her dreams she often destroys the fruit of her own womb. This involves the family in a variety of ambivalent love-hate attitudes, and is the cause of many dramatic events.

It is the parent's excessive, obsessive attachment to each daughter which brings them in opposition to each other and widens the chasm between them, driving Milton finally into the arms of the "other woman" Dolly Bonner. Helen retreats further into her obsession for order, and turns at last to religion, which gives only momentary relief.

The important scenes in the novel are the family birthdays, Christmas time and the times of reunion. The Loftises try their utmost to come together, to cohere; but these occasions,
begun with good intentions, only serve to drive them further apart. Peyton goes to a fashionable finishing school, Milton to his mistress and the pleasures of drinking, while Helen takes refuge in ministering meticulously to Maudie's smallest needs.

After Maudie's untimely death at Charlottesville, which is followed by a wild scene in which Helen charges her daughter with having caused Maudie's death, Peyton rushes in an agony of emotions into the arms of the juvenile Dick, who wants to marry her. She is persuaded at last to "lie down in the darkness"—and this is in a sense her first fall from grace. Increasingly unhappy, and lacking the parental love to sustain her, she leads a life of alcohol and sex before finally marrying Harry, a Jewish painter. This is her last attempt in the search for sanity and peace. Helen's hatred and her father's excessive love make her wedding day a miserable and bitter one. She resolves on self-exile not only from the family but also from the country of her birth. Later, frustrated and already on her way to psychosis, Peyton continuously "tests" Harry's love through acts which finally become so reprehensible that Harry has no recourse but to leave her. In doing so he seeks to save them both from mutually destroying each other; but Peyton is already beyond any hope of salvation. Haunted by her guilt, she makes one last futile attempt at reconciliation before jumping to her
death. Harry sends back the body, painfully reclaimed from Potter's Field where New York City's nameless dead are buried, to old Virginia, to a loving sorrowful father, who destroyed with his own hands the only thing "he really cared for." So much then, for the bare plot of the novel, told without the complex technique of time "present" and "past."

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Mie Donn in Darkness is prefigured by the Oedipal quest. The latent mythical motif can be explored so fruitfully that after a careful reading of the novel, there can be no doubt that myth forms an inherent part of the novel's content, and is not"just the fabrication of what James Joyce once called the 'ideal reader with ideal insomnia'."13 In using myth, Styron's intention is clear. His approach is not the retelling of a classical or medieval myth from a contemporary point of view. He uses it as a means of literary allusion to lend significance to the theme or situation by means of parallel.

In Mie Donn in Darkness, the setting, the land of despair in which the drama of the Loftis family is enacted, is not unlike the pestilence-riddled city of Oedipus. The

degeneracy of the South, the stamp of blood guilt, the
inherited sense of sin and decay are all part of the milieu.
Old Virginia is in her death throes, and Hilton ruminates:

Death was in the air; he thought briefly of
his father, of Maude; but wasn't autumn
the season of death, and all Virginia a land
of dying?

(p. 188)

As Peyton says remorsefully on her wedding day, it is the
heritage of the land and of its people:

I distinctly believe, Joe, that the race is
headed for destruction. . . . You know what
it is? it's time and remembrance.

(p. 303)

Cooper the mortician, so sensitive to the comforts of the
dead feels uneasily and ominously that "Something is rotten
in Denmark." In Helen's feverish, neurotic dreams, there
are again visions of a diseased city, infested with guilt
and shame:

In this landscape there were always the
vaguest outlines of a city, with many
ornate towers, from which pestilence rose
like smoke though the air. It was a city
of corpses and a faint moldering odor. . . .
The corpses which lay strewn about were
faceless, iridescent with decay, . . .

(p. 297)

The story abounds in Greek motifs. The ferryride to
Potter's Field, a burial ground for the forgotten, un-
identified, nameless dead, strikingly recalls to mind a
journey across the dreaded Styx:

Potters Field for New York City is on an island in the sound... The island itself is bleak and unprepossessing... no blade of grass grows here, only weeds... To transport bodies from the morgue they once had a tugboat painted black, a flag at half-mast on its stern, it smuggled up the East River on Thursdays.

(p. 325-37)

There is a singular fatalism in this novel of destiny. In a prophetic voice which tells of foreboding gloom, Milton's father—Jtyron's substitute for Keresias filters into the present through Milton's memory. It is a terrible voice admonishing against eventual tragedy:

I do not propose to convince, his father had said (in the feeble light of a March afternoon thirty years ago, before the house was finally condemned, but not long before; when even the lightest foot-step on the stairs sent a plaintive wooden squeal through the joists and beams, reminder not only of the swiftly aging house but of the passing of a finer, more tranquil age), I do not propose to convince you merely through paternal advice which no doubt you in your willful notion of filial duty would abuse anyway. I only trust you will heed the warning of one who has seen much water pass as it were beneath the bridge one to whom I must admit the temptations of the flesh have been and potent manifold, and that you will perhaps in some measure renounce a way of life which even in its most charitable concept can lead only to grief and possibly complete ruination. I am an old man now...

(p. 14)

And again in more hopeful tones:
My son, never let passion be a guide.
Nurture hope like a flower in the most
barren ground of trouble. If love has
fed the flame of your brightest imagin-
ings then passion will perish in that
flame and only love endure. . . .

(p. 45)

Milton's father, long dead, seems to echo from the past
three oft-repeated curses: sin, guilt and death. Styron,
in this novel, feelingly describes the final spiritual
extinction of the Loftis family. The failures of the father
are visited upon the children. The degradation of this
family is symbolized by Maudie whose imbecility approximates
to a representation of "dynastic" guilt—although the novel
is in every sense a domestic tragedy where the children pay
heavily for their parent's ambivalent love-hate attitudes.

I lie Upon in darkness is most reminiscent of the fall
of the House of Atreus, divorced of course from its element
of fated dynastic downfall. Maudie seems to be the symbol
of the guilt of generations, perhaps of the land itself.
There is no doubt that the novel is a "private" and in no
sense a community tragedy; but when Styron etches it against
the background of the "Age of the Bomb," it imbibes something
from the tragic times. The times are represented gloomily
by Harry's picture of a gloomy old man staring into vacuity—
a man who might very well be one, "who had stared so long
at the abyss that the abyss had begun to stare back at him."
The tragic story of the fall of the House of Atreus has been variously treated by the Greek tragic poets. Homer, Pindar, and the great Athenian tragedians of the fifth century, Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, have each in turn added a newer dimensions to this tale of woe.

_Agamemnon_, the first of the _Orestes_ trilogy by Aeschylus, is a domestic tragedy like _Ajax_, _in Darkness_. It speaks of the estrangement of husband and wife, caused by the sacrifice of Iphigenia, their first born. The younger daughter Electra, meets a fate similar to that of Peyton's. The story of the final extinction of the House of Atreus is so similar to the tragic story of the Lophitides that we may justly infer that a mythic parallel was intended. The pattern of Aeschylus' play most readily fits Hegel's claim that "the characteristic struggle in tragedy is between rival ethical claims: good is set up against good."14

Richmond Lattimore, in his introduction to the _Orestes_, has similarly pointed out that "on the personal level, _Agamemnon_ works through a complex of collisions, not so much right against wrong as right against right, each person insisting on his right with the force of passion."15 The novel

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similarly projects the characters in constant collisions—each character impelled by his or her sense of "right". Milton resembles Agamemnon in many respects. His neglect of Maudie is similar to Agamemnon's treatment of his elder daughter Iphigenia. In the Iliad, Achilles at one place calls Agamemnon a "drunken sot... with the eyes of a dog and the courage of a doe!" Milton too, in this novel, is described as a spineless drunken fool, "a sot even by fraternity standards." Peyton laments her father's weakness—"If just she'd had a soul and you'd had some guts" (p. 269).

Like Clytemnestra, who resents the sacrifice of a beloved daughter, Helen in this novel, dramatically charges Milton with neglect of their first-born, Maudie. Pindar, speculating on Clytemnestra's motives in killing her husband asks:

... whence came this?
Maybe was it Iphigenia,
done to death
Far from her home beside
Auripes' banks,
Sparked that harsh-handed
Rage within her soul?17


Helen is almost neurotically attached to Maudie, and feels that this love has been betrayed:

> Look at them, look at their sin, look how they have betrayed you both; you and that feeble beloved heart behind you that must vanish soon, she has betrayed you through infidelity and one through vice and meanness. 

(p. 118)

She thinks all this as she watches Milton and Peyton on the lawn, "There, there Maudie," she constantly whispers to her imbecile child, "My first, my dearest" (p. 30). Apart from Iphigenia's sacrifice, one other reason which prompted Clytemnestra to take revenge on her husband was that of jealous love aroused by Agamemnon's beautiful captive, Cassandra. Helen is similarly driven to jealousy by Milton's relationship with Sonny Bonner, prefigured as Cassandra. Battimore, while speaking of the play Agamemnon has observed that it's theme is "the philos-aphilos or hate-in-love; its drive is the dynamic force of contradiction." Similarly, in The Down in Darkness, the characters and their actions are motivated by an admixture of the feelings of hate and love.

Helen, estranged from Milton, whom she has at last relinquished to the triumphant Jolly Bonner is just as

empty as Clytemnестra when she speaks of the torments of a house which has lost its man.

It is evil, and a thing of terror when a wife sits in the house forlorn with no man by . . . 19

Helen, like Clytemnестra has her enemies, and in the land of her dreams the true identity of this complex character is revealed:

Three enemies had always dwelt there, in her dream country; three enemies and a friend . . . . Then there had been the big enemy; . . . Many times Dolly had died in her dreams, often by the knife that Helen wielded, grinning . . .

. . . Sometimes Dolly died with stiletto in her back . . . . but always the corpse returned to its destined place in the plague-ridden city—disgraced, ugly, with sprawling, indecent legs.

( pp. 297–298 )

These dreams parallel the fate that Cassandra met at Clytemnестra’s hands. Unlike Clytemnестra, Helen does not murder Loctis, but seeks to emasculate him, and revels in his grief, in the death of his soul. The horror we feel at Clytemnестra brutally wielding the axe is no less real when

we watch Helen revelling in Milton's grief. In the Iliad, the dead Agamemnon loudly proclaims:

... but I lifted my hands and with them beat on the ground as I died upon the sword, but the sluttish woman turned away from me and was so hard that her hands would not press shut my eyes and mouth though I was going to Hades.20

In Styron's novel, Helen refuses to comfort Milton on his symbolic journey to the land of the dead, although he pleads persistently:

"... and she wouldn't come, she wouldn't come at all, Loftis was saying."
I begged, I pleaded with her, 'Helen,' I said, 'simple decency demands that you come. This day at least,' ...  

(p. 19)

Helen watches with growing comfort the depth of her husband's grief:

Yes, perhaps now it will be upturned, the chalice he has borne of whatever immeasurable self-love, not mean, yet not quite as strong as sin ... 

(p. 31)

And again, almost jubilantly:

"The grief is coming now, she said to herself: he's beginning to know what suffering is. Perhaps that's good in a way. Even he, perhaps that's good for a man—finally to know what suffering is, . . . ."

(p. 26)

She would have Milton constantly on his knees before her, paying unending homage to her warped Puritan self. After Naudie's death when Milton returns to her and stops drinking too for a while, he satisfies Helen's secret desire to emasculate him. Helen herself realizes this in the darkness of her dreams:

Sometimes the dreams became all mixed-up, . . . Then it seemed that she was the enemy, she was the one who threatened people, frightened them . . . then her second enemy the Man appeared — . . .

(p. 298)

If Helen and Milton Lofts prefigure as Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, and Jolly Donner as Cassandra, then surely Reyon herself prefigures as Electra. As a rebel, a mother-hater, and as one who laments the death of a father, she resembles Electra in many respects. Her hatred for her mother is overt, possibly originating in her own repressed sexual desires towards her father. She dismisses Helen as a warped, inhuman creature, although her father she is
always ready to forgive:

"Don't you see—he's never been beyond redemption like Helen." (p. 207)

There is thus the fusion of the motives of mother-resentment and jealousy, coupled with a hatred of a mother for a daughter, who is excessively attached to her father. In *The Libation Bearers* Electra attributes her sorrow to her parents:

> Of what thing can we speak, and strike more close, than of the sorrows they who bore us have given?  

Styron similarly ascribes the doom Peyton faces to the Loftises. Between the two of them they give her no chance. Milton realizes with a sudden shock of insight: "If he himself could love so much, only Helen could love so little" (p. 291). Milton through excessive love and Helen through her jealous hatred destroy Peyton. Peyton herself realizes this when she reproaches Milton drunkenly, sadly, on her wedding day: "If just she'd had a soul and you'd had some guts" (p. 269). She longs for a life of peace, a home, a father: "I've wanted to be normal. I've wanted to be

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like everyone else." Peyton laments the loss of a father, even as Electra does. Her life has never known a father; in Harry, and in the succession of lovers that follow, each time she sins, she is impelled by her quest for father-love.

. . . I wept like a baby thinking: if Harry saw me, thinking of St. Catherine, of Orestes and Iphigenia and her knife: my life hath known no father, she screamed, any road to any end may run, . . .

(p. 342)

This is accompanied by, as with Electra in _The Libation Bearers_, an indifference to, or even virulent hatred towards the mother:

To call you father, is constraint of fact and all the love I could have borne my mother turns Your way, while she is loathed as she deserves.22

In _Electra_ by Euripides, Clytemnestra casts away her daughter to prevent the possible conception of an heir who would avenge the series of heinous, murderous acts. Electra proudly, scornfully recites:

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22 Aeschylus _The Libation Bearers_, p. 102, lines 239-241.
Peyton, too, exiled from the land of her ancestors, mournfully expresses the desire to come home. "I wish I could come home. I wish it were possible. Oh, Daddy, I wish I could come home! The birds are haunting me beyond all belief" (p. 39).

Although the hate that Clytemnestra bears Electra is not overtly brought out by Aeschylus, we have references to it in Sophocles. Styron goes one step further: Helen actually wishes for her daughter's death, transferring all that she feels towards Jolly onto a rebellious, promiscuous daughter:

A wave of agony swept over her. . . . Something caved in on her mind: she saw Peyton, her gestures, her sinful hips, as round as moons. She saw Milton and Peyton together, and the tender, corrupt solemnity of their caresses: a multitude of red, soft lips, Milton's hair, Peyton's breasts, the torture of twenty years. . . . and as she spoke she knew that it was not Jolly's legs, but Peyton's, which had shown with the rainbow of decay, sprawled out go indecently in the dreaming, pestilential dust.

(pp. 300-301)

It is significant that Peyton's desire to stay away from home is largely induced by Helen. Away from her mother she walks the strange streets of New York City, cut off from the heritage of the guilt-infested South whose warmth she misses, although she can never hope to escape either the curse, or the remorseless pursuit of fate.

According to Maxwell Geismar, "On a deeper level there is no doubt that **Life Down in Darkness** is the story of an illicit Oedipal relationship of father and daughter." In the novel, the presence of an Oedipal element is quite evident. On Peyton's wedding day Milton poignantly realizes his Oedipal attachment to his daughter with a growing sense of horror.

... he saw Peyton, those solid curved hips trembling ever so faintly; he thought desperately, hopelessly, of something he could not admit to himself, but did: of now being above—most animal and horrid, ... ever since he was child enough to love the face of woman and the flesh, too. Yes, dear God, he thought (and he thought dear God, what am I thinking?) the flesh, too, the wet hot flesh, straining like a beautiful, bloody savage.

(p. 271)

Drunk, officious, and heartbroken, "he remembered then that she was irretrievable, lost forever, that he had no claims on her any more" (p. 307. However, Hilton had never

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Anyway, he would always remember that moment on the lawn: picking Peyton up with a sudden, almost savage upwelling of love, pressing her against him as he murmured in a voice slightly choked... paying homage to this beautiful part of him, in which life would continue limitlessly.

(p. 46)

Confronted with the loss of his daughter he realizes the truth with greater poignancy. Latent desire rises strong and hot within him as he goes to her side:

... but she seemed to be fading from him, vanishing in a powder of crushed-up dreams, and he found himself beside her, kissing her in front of everyone, much more than a father.

(p. 286)

Peyton’s guilt in loving a father is revealed to her in parts, in everwidening circles of guilt. The birds haunt her, poor wingless things, symbols of her helplessness against the sexual fires that burn deep within her. She is crippled by the knowledge that she cannot soar. Like Oedipus, she is oppressed with incestuous guilt, and this apprehension of guilt drives her to death, in a search for a father her life has never known. Her final monologue bears ample witness to this. Impelled by guilt to her final act of suicide, and purged by death, she returns to her father’s arms: clean and in a virgin state like a babe born anew.
I pray but my prayer climbs up like a broken wisp of smoke; oh my Lord, I am dying, is all I know, and oh my father, oh my darling, longingly, lonesomely, I fly into your arms! Peyton you must be proper nice girls don't. Peyton. He? Myself all shattered, this lovely shell? Perhaps I shall rise at another time, though I lie down in darkness and have my light in ashes. I turn in the room, see them come across the tiles, dialy prancing, fluffing up their wings, I think: my poor flightless birds, have you suffered without scaring on this earth? Come then and fly, and they move on past me through the darkening sands, awkward and gentle, rustling their feathers; come then and fly, and so it happens: treading past to touch my boiling skin—one whisper of feathers is all—and so I see them go—oh my Christ!—one by one ascending my flightless birds through the suffocating night, toward paradise. I am dying, sunny, dying. But you must be proper. I say, oh pooh.

(p. 386)

In jumping to death, Peyton can "fly" at last—after the ritual of undress—into the arms of her father. The sin of loving a father is exorcised by ritual death. Laumbach asserts that "Ironically, it is through 'falling' that Peyton achieves her redemption. Styron's point is that only through hell—the ultimate fall—can one finally come to heaven." Like Oedipus, Peyton's penance is complete and the furies are quiescent.

The mythic story of the House of Atreus then, forms the

latent sub-structure of this novel. The final achievement of the use of mythical parallel is to deepen the experience of the Loftis family. Styron has succeeded in skilfully presenting two levels of experience—myth and reality. We experience both simultaneously and with an equal sense of involvement. Styron's rich inner world of the emotions is brought out subtly and is further enriched by the evocation of myth.

IV

Much of Southern literature functions within the confines of a particular cultural setting which defines its personality. In adhering to the Southern mode of writing, Styron makes use of well-known leit-motifs very much in the tradition of Faulkner. A few motifs recur—a disintegrated family, a deep sense of the past, the rich sensuous rhetoric style, and the treatment of the Negro. The appearance of such leit-motifs as that of the faithful Negro (comparable with Wilsey in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, for example), the motif of the idiot symbolizing inherited guilt, and the references to the South as the land of lost causes, definitely suggest adherence to what is called the Southern mode.

But apart from the obvious use of these leit-motifs, the novel abounds in a symbolic use which is highly personalized. When Styron dramatizes the central illicit Oedipal
relationship, for example, he does not use Freudian cliches. He relies on his imaginative faculty to supply symbol and idea for the successful evocation of complex psychological stances.

The most engaging problem that Styron presents in the novel is the problem of guilt, both inherited and individual, and there is an implied quest for a guilt-free existence. The predestined fall of his characters is caused by a deep sense of guilt and the innate desire to escape from the consciousness of guilt. "Styron's characters who are destroyed or who destroy have, like the children of the Garden fallen from the golden age."26 In *A.Jorn in Darkness* we are led to believe that the struggle to find meaning and the search for grace is a search that leads inevitably to destruction. The characters fail to arrive at an integration of their personalities; they fail to escape 'schism and heresy'. Styron grapples with the concepts of need and love, and probes into the need to love, into man's propensity to discover his being through love "my poor Harry, couldn't he understand?" "Need, Need", he said I refuse to be needed unless I am loved too and so to hell with you,"(p. 42).

Charlotte Kretzoi asserts that there "is love in the novel,  

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side by side with hate, but it is not the right kind of love, not a saving but a destroying love. The surviving loyalties go round and round not finding the way out of their cul-de-sac while the bauxite dust floating above Port Warwick settles and buries them.27 The characters in this novel, especially Peyton, recognize their inadequacy, their partial, incomplete, 'shriven' selves; theirs is a personal quest for the transcendent self.

Styron skilfully uses corresponding symbol and idea. The furies, the relentless pursuit of fate that is the lot of this doomed family, is symbolized by the image of the bees which recurs throughout the novel. Hilton's daughter, inexorably pursued by fate, comes running into her father's arms, crying hysterically, "the bees, daddy, the bees." The father remembers the incident:

"'Member, Helen? . . . 'Member the time when Peyton almost got stung by the bees? 'Member the way she hollered, 'The bees, daddy, the bees, the bees! ' . . . 'The bees! she hollered. I can see her now . . . running . . . 'The bees, daddy, the bees!''

(p. 28)

The symbol of the bees is repeated again and again, till it indicates fate's relentless pursuit. The boys swarm around Peyton like bees, and later, the gossip about Hilton's

liaison with Jolly whirls around town like a "swarm of bees" (p. 74). Peyton and Milton, bask in illicit sexual pulls towards each other, buzz like bees:

... but Milton was running from his chair, intercepting her, tossing Peyton high in the air as the small prim skirt blossomed like a gaudy flower against the sky. And so, muzzling his face against her neck, he bore her toward the porch, both of them giggling, both of them buzzing like bees.

(p. 29)

In this novel of destiny, the Loftises constantly hear the ominous pursuit of fate. The nature of fate is indicated by the epigraph taken from Thomas Brown's Urn Burial:

... since our longest sun sets at right descensions, and makes but winter arches, and therefore it cannot be long before we lie down in darkness and have our light in ashes... Brutuntnity is a dream and folly of expectation.

The flight of the years, the course of events, is predestined. It is futile either to dream or to hope.

Styron is both the product and the interpreter of what is called the Bomb age. In a world devoid of human dignity and given up to destruction, the people in his novels are the bringers of their own annihilation, beating their way about in the darkness of moral chaos. The Loftises are the victims of an age in which God is dead and where ethical
values are atrophied. Carey Carr, the episcopal minister presiding at Peyton's wedding, fondly thinks:

... it occurred to him, not very originally, that no ceremony in the Christian culture is more exciting, or grand, or awe-inspiring, than a wedding.

"It is the symbolic affirmation of a moral order in the world."

(p. 248)

But this affirmation of a secure moral order is frustrated by the accompanying events. The alienation of mother and daughter, the sham of organized religion and its inability to purify Helen's sick mind—"I have always been so sick. All my life I have yearned for sleep" (p. 27)—Hilton's illicit incestuous love for his daughter—which is brought forcefully to our attention—symbolize the crashing down of a well-ordered world. Peyton's wedding ceremony then, becomes the symbol of the impossibility of redemption. Harry, the suffering Jew from New York, intensifies this total hopelessness through his painting of an old man, looking up to the sky from a surrounding heap of atomic rubble:

He was painting an old man. In grays, and deep blues, an ancient monk or a rabbi lined and weathered, lifting proud, tragic eyes towards heaven; behind him were the ruins of a city, shattered, devastated, crumbled piles of concrete and stones...

(p. 374)
Harry symbolizes the fruitlessness of hope in our times. He asks brokenly: "Do you realize what the world's come to? Do you realize that the great American Commonwealth, just snuffed out one hundred thousand innocent lives this week?" (p. 377) One can notice that at this stage of his evolution as a novelist, Styron denies the possibility of hope, in spite of exhortations to "Nurture hope like a flower in the barren ground of trouble."

Guilt forms the core of the thematic content of the novel. It depicts a paradise fallen into chaos, as each character feverishly attempts to escape the agonizing consciousness of guilt: Helen escapes into religion, and when that fails, into insanity; Milton escapes through drink and adultery; Peyton alone can shake off the knowledge of guilt—not through any conscious process of self-purification, but through death.

Throughout the novel, the birds symbolize guilt. In her wild, insane monologue just preceding death, Peyton murmurs "Guilt is the thing with feathers, they came back with a secret rustle, preening their flightless wings, and I didn't want to think" (p. 382). The dominant image is that of wingless, landbound birds which indicate Peyton's inability to shake off the burden of guilt. The recurring image of the birds is given different and ever-widening
dimensions of guilt. Peyton first refers to them in her dream. It is the wish to go home, the yearning for security that dominates this dream, in which a grandmother wearing a mother-hubbard consoles Peyton, "Don't you fret, Peyton honey". The dream is shattered when a cop chases them, and they run like birds. Grandmother herself is a "kyrd", and the entire action takes place in "kyrdland." Lying down in darkness with the Italian Tony Cacchino who smells perversely of milk, and who avidly assaults her aching, sick body, Peyton thinks again and again of the birds, "Feathers, birds," she says, "Fie, what a scent is here!" (p. 339).

Styron next depicts the image of the birds to correspond with the male sexual organ—again implying Peyton's sexual guilt. Peyton remembers her first sexual experience with Dick Cartwright: "Dickie Boy couldn't ever get big after the first time... his bird was so small and futile, but he had warm hands and when we lay down in the darkness, I felt his ribs" (p. 340). Peyton's mind is obsessed with guilt, and birds of all sizes, shapes and colours, haunt her incessantly.

I tried to think, there were birds in my mind, landbound birds whirling about, dodos and penguins and cassowaries, ostriches befouling their lovely black plumes and these seemed mixed up with Bunny. (p. 341)
The reference to "-sunny", her father, indicates the oedipal nature of Peyton's guilt. "...my life hath known no father, she screamed, any road to any end may run" (p. 342).

Each time she indulges in the sexual act, as in Darien with Earl Sanders, it is to consummate the desire to sleep with her father, and on these occasions, the birds return to haunt her with a deepening consciousness of guilt. The birds stand, flightless, wingless, welded unyieldingly to her consciousness:

... the birds came back and things shadowed over some—it seemed that a lot of light went away from the day and the birds came in a scamper across the darkening sand, surrounded me once more, ... (p. 343)

Again, at the psychiatrist, she remembers the time guilt overwhelmed her:

... then the birds all rustled in the sand, their legs unhinged, necks craning, round, unblinking, incurious eyes and I lay down somewhere in the desert topography of my mind, only it was his couch, and he was holding my hand while I trembled in dread and guilt, ... (pp. 347–48).

To escape guilt, Peyton realizes that she must die; but the human need for purification asserts itself strongly:
... oh God, I must die today, but will I not rise again at another time and stand on the earth clean and incorruptible? (p. 358)

She feels the pull of the flesh, primal and instinctive—"strong is your hold 0 mortal flesh, strong is your hold 0 love" (p. 338). In the final moments of her monologue, she strips naked, the act symbolizing the ritual of self-purification. "I was naked, clean if sweating, just as I had come." Peyton must return, symbolically to the realm of the child's mind (just as she had come) where good and evil are indistinguishable, before she can even attempt the flight into a guilt-free existence. Her prayers are futile, climbing up like a "broken wisp of smoke," and she knows she is dying, impelled by a "guilt past memory" (p. 386).

What Peyton desires is to establish a fresh new relationship with her father, which is impossible because her life has never known a father. And now, on the brink of salvation, she longs for the comfort of her father's arms "Oh my father, oh my darling, longingly, lonesomely I fly into your arms." There is hope now, arising from this knowledge, and deliverance is not far away: "Perhaps I shall rise at another time, though I lie down in darkness and have my light in ashes" (p. 386). The birds, symbols of deep-seated guilt—fly at last, even as Peyton herself flies into the arms of a sorrowing, loving father.
... my poor flightless birds, have you suffered without soaring on this earth? Come then and fly... and so it happens; treading past to touch my boiling skin— one whisper of feathers is all—and so I see them go—oh my Christ—one by one ascending my flightless birds through the suffocating night, toward paradise.

(p. 386)

Parallel to the image of the birds that recurs in Peyton's monologue is the use of the clock image. Melvin W. Friedman relates this piece of writing to other stream-of-consciousness works, to writers like Joyce and Virginia Woolf, especially in novels like Mrs. Halloway and Ulysses. In these novels, the clock is related directly to Bergson's theory of psychological time. In Styron, however, the clock image is a symbol that admits a variety of connotations. It is not, for example, merely a device intended to indicate changes in situation or mood.

Like Down in Darkness like many other Southern tragedies, speaks of time and its erosions. Styron's concern with time in this novel is related to his vision of life. That Styron's problem with time, and the effective changes in time focus, is technical, cannot be denied. He has expressed the difficulty of fusing various levels of expression into a time structure:

well, the book started with the man, Lofts, standing at the station with the hearse waiting for the body of his daughter to arrive
from up North. I wanted to give him density, but all the tragedy in his life and happened in the past. So the problem was to get into the past, and this man's tragedy, without breaking up the story. It stumped me for a whole year. Then it finally occurred to me to use separate moments in time, four or five long dramatic scenes revolving around the daughter, Peyton, at difficult stages in her life. The business of the progression of time seems to me one of the most difficult problems a novelist has to cope with.28

However, Styron's problem with time seems to be not only technical, but "metaphysical" as well. In his examination of Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, Sartre has suggested that the novel projects "the metaphysic of time."29 The same idea may profitably be applied to an analysis of Styron's novel. For Styron, as for Faulkner, there is only, time past, which invades violently time present. *The Sound and the Fury* and to some extent, *Lie Down in Darkness*, deny the possibility of a future. The vision of the Loftis family is paralysed because the future does not exist for them; and their entire life converges on time and remembrance. Throughout her monologue, Peyton functions like an automaton

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in the present, but is really living in the world of what has been. Feyton's actions on the day of her suicide, are performed in a mechanical, puppet-like manner, for they are of no great import. What is significant are her thoughts which revolve around her father and the sense of guilt associated with him.

To symbolize time which has ceased to function, Styron uses the clock image. Critics have analysed the metaphysical nuances that emerge from this symbol of time. Marc Hatner, for example, has felt that "Styron presents the clock as an image of the child's security of the womb in Peyton's inner consciousness in direct contrast to the physical pain she feels in her flesh."

The clock in this novel is used as a symbol of an impossible world, a world which is well-ordered and which "coheres." It symbolizes Feyton's unending search for a refuge from the burden of guilt. The clock is a far-off, never-never land, "where all the love is true love and true love goes on forever." Feyton cannot accept the challenges existence thrusts upon her. She is, therefore, always obsessed with time: "I don't have enough time, Tony" (p. 335). She refers half-heartedly to a Shakespearean play—"Somewhere

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Hatner, William Styron, p. 49.
in the play, someone said the bawdy hand of the hour is on the prick of noon." She reiterates frequently, even to Albert larger the New York homosexual "remember . . . how short my time is" (p. 350). The time for Reyton, is indeed "out of joint."; hounded by immeasurable guilt, unable to face the despairing flux that life is, she seems to be diametrically at cross-purposes with the very rhythm of time. Her involvement with the clock is, therefore, an attempt to internalize time, thereby making an attempt to approximate to eternity itself. The clock is Reyton's insane invention aimed at levelling the erosions of time:

I sank back again, watching the clock: 2.30, it said, . . . inside, it would be filled with clean chrome, springs and cogs all working quietly; in there I could creep and sprawl along the mainspring borne round and round through the darkness, . . .

. . . and I thought, lifting the hand-bag to my ear, the clock ticking inside precise and steady as before: here all our guilt will disappear, among the ordered levers and wheels, in the aqueous rub, clinging sun. . . .

(pp. 337-54)

Reyton is obsessed with clock time and in the short time left to her, she is haunted by a basic need—the need to be loved, the need to find a new father, a new home.

". . . I haven't got much time. I mean, not that someone should ever want to come home to stay, but that just to be understood for what you are, neither to be
This constant involvement with time—Peyton’s obsessive attachment to the clock as a substitute for a secure, well-ordered existence—indicates the schism in her personality, the Jungian disintegration of self symbolized by her acute sensations of drowning. Peyton fails to perceive time, because the perception of time is predicated by the struggle of the self to differentiate itself as a separate identity. She is unaware of her entity and failing to integrate, she regresses into the obscurity of an unrecognized, undifferentiated self. Styron symbolizes this regression through the frequent imagery of drowning. The image of drowning is further, very skilfully, connected with the image of the chimes that Peyton hears, and which signify time and remembrance. When confronted with the agony of time and remembrance, Peyton withdraws into the obscurity of the unconscious. For instance, she cannot tolerate the memory of Harry’s “one defection so small.” This forces onto her the feeling that she is drowning, and its remembrance thrusts her deep into the darkness of the womb, onto the primal level of the undifferentiated self. When Harry, patient and suffering and very much in love with Peyton, asks for forgiveness, she is still troubled by memory and remembrance, and is unable to forgive:
Forgive me, he said. On his knees he said it, but the chimes were still in my brain and I was drowning and I knew something was wrong on earth.

(p. 350)

Later, when Harry kisses Marta Epstein (his one defection so small), she is overcome with jealousy:

if I just hadn't been drowning I wouldn't have hated, I would have forgiven. . . .
that was what had me in the bar—not Marta Epstein but the drowning.

(p. 351)

Harry's defection then, is not a serious one by any stretch of the imagination. It is Feyton's regressed self that colours it with the juvenile feelings of hatred and jealousy. When Feyton avenges herself for Harry's "defection," stretched naked under a Connecticut sun, the regression manifests itself again. "I drowned on the terrace, and when I slept afterwards, I dreamt of drowning too" (p. 351).

Feyton, in some hazy, instinctive, animal vein, half realizes the threat that her own mind poses to her existence. It is not guilt alone, or the desire for order, but the inability of her mind to cohere:

I was beginning to drown some: the water not so much within me as if swallowed, but around me, not touching me, with the shimmering quality of vagrant but surrounding thick light. It seemed to lay at the windows, the mirror, making the air opalescent and somehow milky; yet it was
not this water which threatened me so,
but my own mind...  

(p. 352)

Leyton places her last hopes in Harry—her hope to be rescued from the obscurity of her own regression:

then I thought: Even if I begin to drown completely and the day comes down on me like all the oceans as it did last time, then still Harry will keep my head up above: that was my pride and joy...  

(p. 353)

but even as she says this she is dying, and she knows the fruitlessness of this hope:

He's soft and tender, I thought, is my Harry, and how does it go: bind him with cowslips and bring him home, but it's decreed that i shall never find him.  

(p. 355)

Then she trembles, oscillates sorrowfully between hope and fear: "Whines in my drowning soul: oh, no, Jed, I thought, he'll come back with me" (p. 354).

Oppressed by the temporal, Peyton wishes for a time, for a refuge, where whole and integrated, she would be reborn:

... then we would look the door and pull down the blinds and lie there through the heat and the afternoon darkness, watch dusk come late, lie down and sprawl on the springs and drowse a while, touch hands across the incessant, ticking wheels; this darkness is
as perfect as the center of the earth,
only with the glow of rubies and diamonds,
shining with a self-luminous light,
flawless and divine.

(p. 355-356)

Feyton's longing, however, ends in futility as she
jumps, naked and child-like to her tragic death. Styron
seems to imply that his characters who "fall" are impossible
to redeem, and the vision that emerges is one of intense
despair. Styron evokes Feyton's first fall from grace in
lyrical tones:

When evening came. Arms and legs aspawl,
they stirred and turned. Twilight fell over
their bodies. They were painted with fire,
like those fallen children who live and
breathe and soundlessly scream, and whose
souls blaze for ever.

(p. 236)

Styron completely negates the efficacy of conventional
modes of salvation. Carey Gurr is the symbol of the failure
of traditional religion as a decisive factor in man's search
for salvation. Carey Gurr himself realizes the fruitless-
ness of his vocation when he speaks of Helen:

She had gradually become a sort of symbol
to him, of every lost person who seeks
Christ, no matter how fitfully, and is
salvageable. But he had not saved her,
he had not taught her faith enough to
endure disaster.

(p. 239)
Carey appears in Helen's fevered dreams, brandishing a stick, saying, "You must believe! I am the way, the truth, the life" (p. 299). Helen's reaction is characteristically violent "Your God. Your god God is a silly old ass, and my God, . . . my God is the devil" (p. 299).

Helen's religion is contrasted with Fundamentalism, the primitive faith of the negroes. Throughout the novel, the faith of the negro is contrasted with the lack of faith and the spiritual vacuity of their masters. Ella Swan sings a tune about Jesus amidst the rattle of pots and pans. The negroes roar fervently: "Heal dem Jesus." After Peyton's body has been finally laid to rest, Styron describes the baptismal meeting, projecting it as a symbol of purification. There is a crackle of thunder. "It was as if all the air had become an ocean!" (p. 387). Later, when the negroes gather for the revival meeting of Daddy Faith, the sky is clear. It is touching to see their belief and subsequently, their increased ability to suffer and to accept:

Daddy Faith, he say grief is a wellsprings and a fount, dat when it run dry den it's time to lift up yo heart and praise Him fo' his blessin's, dat it's time fo' thanksgivin' -- (p. 390)

"happy am I in my Redeemer" (p. 392) the chorus joins in "I am so happy."
However, it must be pointed out, that in emphasizing the primitive aspects of Daddy Faith's religion Styron implies that this form of religious fundamentalism is acceptable only to the innocent mind of the Negro. The juxtaposition of the diluted Episcopal faith of Carey Carr, and the fundamentalism of Daddy Faith, serves to underline their inadequacy as redemptive modes, thus leading us to an even bleaker conclusion—the failure of religion to provide man with the means of salvation.

The view of life that emerges then, is a pessimistic one, implying the impossibility of redemption, the futility of the search for coherence and meaning. In Styron's world, religion can no longer function effectively; the universe is an ethically neutral canvass, darkening forces signal man's annihilation, and lonely souls seek a light in the wilderness, a light that seems ever beyond their reach. Death, guilt, and decay are the hallmarks of this modern wasteland.

The escape from loneliness and the vacuum created by the loss of love, cannot be assuaged by a spiritual quest—sex, alcohol, and finally death alone can free the individual from his immense burden of guilt.

Junnar Urang has asserted that "insofar as the novel exemplifies the tragic vision, it is in the tradition that
W.H. Auden has called 'Christian Tragedy'. He observes that while at the end of a Greek tragedy we may feel "what a pity it had to be this way", Christian tragedy on the other hand, makes us say "what a pity it was this way when it might have been otherwise." Styron feels that the pattern of *Lie Down in Darkness* "is one which somehow combines the modern equivalent of Greek objective necessity with Christian subjective necessity." One feels however that at this point in his evolution as a novelist Styron denies the possibility of religion "to be a means of genuine social or spiritual salvation." Inhab Hassan feels that "the tragic tensions of civilized life, as Styron knows, are not so easily resolved."--thus Helen's religiosity which seems to be only an extension of her egotism, the hollowness of Carey Carr's episcopal church, and the fundamentalist frenzy of the Negroes fail to redeem. If there is hope of redemption in this novel, it is denied flowering in this world. Peyton's leap is into the world hereafter. Styron seems to suggest

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32 Ibid., pp. 183-209.

33 Hassan, *Radical Innocence*, p. 128.

34 Ibid., p. 129.
in this, the bleakest of all his novels, that life in time, life in this world, is tragedy without redemption. Peyton's tragic self-knowledge, gleaned before her act of suicide, her tragic catharsis, can never bring her back to life; it leads her inexorably to the grave. There is at the end, however, an awareness of what her life has been, a recognition of her yearning for a father, which constitutes tragic insight. Peyton is destroyed, but this destruction gives hope only in the life to come—"Shall I not rise again?" although man must invariably "Lie down in darkness," Styron does not entirely rule out the possibility of a kind of affirmation of the positive values of human existence. In Lie down in Darkness, self-awareness has roots only in death. Only in his next novel, The Long March does Styron proceed further towards possibility of redemption. As O'Connell has pointed out, "If Lie down in darkness dramatizes the fall from innocence and the impossibility of going home again, then The Long March could be seen as a picture of the world after the fall."35 Lie down in Darkness both Helen and Hilton are failures, their life may be summed up by a piteous "Nothing, nothing! Nothing!" It is Peyton alone, who in death achieves a kind of transcendence. From death,

and hope in the life hereafter, Styron moves logically in his next novel, to hope in life, projecting the tragic value achieved by a man painfully aware of himself. The tragic fate of the Laftises is very trenchantly suggestive of an affirmation that is realized progressively in each subsequent novel, reaching redemptive and religious heights in *The Confessions of Nat Turner.*
I know my life's a pain and but a span,
I know my sense is mocked with everything;
And to conclude, I know myself a man,
which is a proud and yet a wretched thing.

Sir John Davies