Chapter - IX
Comparative Study
A comparative study of Hawthorne and Melville becomes relevant because during the great literary period to which both belonged, no two writers were as consistently preoccupied with Evil as they were. Writers were pressed to concentrate on 'the smiling aspects of life' to the total disregard of its 'diabolic aspects'. Thus the works of Hawthorne and Melville stand as an antithesis to the general clamour for optimistic platitudes. All levels of American life were affected by the era of good feeling following the War of 1812. American literature too began to bloom both in quality of style and philosophical insight. The chief factor responsible for the boosting of American Literature was Transcendentalism. Spiller points out that more than the general confidence of the period, it was the influence of New England Transcendentalism that proved decisive in conferring upon American Literature,

a perspective far wider and deeper than that proposed by its own formulated doctrines, the perspective of humanity itself.¹

It was this perspective which brought such divergent

writers as Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville and Whitman together. American literature acquired universal significance because of its interest in profound problems like the meaning of experience and the origin of Evil. The examination of man's importance as an individual and his importance as part of his cosmos became the common concern of these writers. Whereas Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman found genuine harmony between the individual and the cosmos, Hawthorne and Melville doubted whether such a harmony is possible at all. This was because both saw a tragic flaw in man's potentialities as well as his shortcomings. They saw the same tragic flaw in the inscrutability of his environment.

Though both Hawthorne and Melville discarded Calvinism as a dogma, they were sufficiently convinced of its empirical truth to be carried away by the insubstantial theories and optimistic sentiments of the Transcendentalists. Hawthorne mainly attacked the transcendental belief in the perfectibility of man and Melville, its belief in a wholly benevolent universe. Hawthorne was more intimately connected with the transcendentalists because of his wife's family, the Peabodys, being ardent supporters of the movement. He himself had a taste of it during his short stay at Brook Farm. Melville, though not as intimately connected with them, knew enough of the philosophical implica-
tions of the Transcendental doctrines to be able to project its obverse side in *Moby-Dick*. Both Hawthorne and Melville shared the transcendental belief in the pre-eminence of spirit over matter. Consequently Emerson's dictum that every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact was the basis upon which Melville could build his "cunningly linked analogies" in *Moby-Dick*. Emerson believed that every phenomenon of man's life whether bright or dark leads to Good. Hawthorne was convinced that under the purest character, one could discover secret sin or a propensity for evil. Both the writers rejected the transcendental denial of Evil for both knew that it was a fact of life which could not be wished away. Emerson and Hawthorne were neighbours and met quite often, yet there was a total lack of communication between them as far as Emerson's optimistic theories were concerned. Hawthorne confessed that he admired Emerson as a poet of deep beauty and tenderness but that he sought nothing from him as a philosopher. On the other hand, although Melville did not meet Emerson any time but only heard him lecture and read his works, yet he found him 'noble'. This difference in responses to one and the same person by two congenial writers speaks much about their attitude to the problems they were facing. A remark or two made by Hawthorne in connection with
Emerson will be relevant. Hawthorne viewed Emerson as

the mystic, stretching his hand out of cloudland, in vain search for something real...
Mr. Emerson is a great searcher for facts; but they seem to melt away and become insubstantial in his grasp;...

To Hawthorne, 'Mr. Emerson' was also

that everlasting rejector of all that is, and seeker for he knows not what.  

Emerson's insights came to him as he walked in a wood for there, as he said a man could find full freedom in space.

He wrote in his essay Nature:

In the woods, we return to reason and faith. There I feel that nothing can befall me in life - no disgrace, no calamity (leaving me my eyes), which nature cannot repair. Standing on the bare ground - my head bathed by the blithe air and uplifted into infinite space - all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball.....

Hawthorne naturally found this angle of vision one-sided and juvenile. For he realized fully that to attain maturity in life or to reach the centre of moral experience


one needs to undergo those very 'calamities' and 'disgraces' which according to Emerson nature succeeded in repairing. Thus as Mark Van Doren pointed out, the reason why Emerson and Hawthorne remained apart was the latter's genius for unhappiness.

The genius that is, of his imagination, which when it was most alive dealt only in sorrow and guilt. In tragedy, Emerson had no theory of tragedy.4

Emerson's son too speaks of his father's inability to read Hawthorne's works because of 'the gloom of his magic mirror'. And Emerson remarked that there was a tragic element in the solitude which characterized Hawthorne's life.

In contrast to Hawthorne, Melville appears more sympathetic to Emerson. In a letter to Evert Duyckinck following the one in which he had mentioned that he had heard Emerson, Melville remarks:

...I do not oscillate in Emerson's rainbow, but prefer rather to hang myself in mine own halter than swing in any other man's swing. Yet I think Emerson is more than a Brilliant fellow. ...he is an uncommon man. Swear he is a humbug - then he is no common humbug. ...I was very agreeably disappointed in Mr. Emerson. I had heard of him as full of transcendentalisms, myths & oracular gibberish;....

To my surprise, I found him quite intelligible.
...I love all men who dive.5

Thus Melville accepted the fact that Emerson was deep. The cause of Melville's exasperation with Emerson was the latter's facile evasion of the unpleasant facts of life. Melville's marginalia and notes in his copy of Emerson's Essays will further illuminate Melville's mixed response of admiration and irritation to Emerson's opinions. In the First Series of Emerson's Essays Melville marked the words:

The good, compared to the evil which he sees is as his own good to his own evil.

To this Melville's comment was:

A perfectly good being, therefore, would see no evil. - But what did Christ see? - He saw what made him weep.

The additional comment appended on the same page was perhaps by way of advice to Emerson and his followers.

To annihilate all this nonsense read the Sermon on the Mount, and consider what it implies.6

5 Eleanor Melville Wetcalf; Herman Melville: Cycle and Epicycle. ch.4, p.58.
Just how facile Emerson's observation in Prudence about the health-giving life of a sailor sounded to Melville can be judged by his comment:

To one who has weathered Cape Horn as a common sailor what stuff all this is.

But Melville could also feel elated on reading some of Emerson’s remarks like:

This reality (of simple virtues) is the foundation of friendship, religion, poetry and art.

Melville’s comment was:

True & admirable! Bravo!

But Emerson’s assumptions about Original Sin, the origin of Evil and predestination being 'the soul's mumps and measles' must have made both Hawthorne and Melville impatient. For, Emerson disposed of evil and ugliness with the facility of a Shaftesbury because of his belief that no such thing as pure malignity existed. Emerson also believed that the poet, by a deeper insight disposes easily of the most disagreeable facts of life. Although one knows about Melville’s angry retort against this easy

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid., p.715.
evasion of evil, one can presume that Hawthorne too would have agreed with Melville that it is this very 'deeper insight' of the poet that leads him to the core of the tragedy of human experience. As such it was the failure on Emerson's part to accept the disagreeable facts of life that prompted Melville to term Emerson's errors as proceeding from a 'self-conceit' intensely intellectual or as springing from 'a defect in the region of the heart'. The satirical tone of the sketch Cock-a-Doodle-Do and that of the episode dealing with the mystic, his disciple and the confidence-man in The Confidence-Man shows how vaporous the pronouncements of Emerson and his disciples must have appeared to Melville.

Similar as they were in their response to the transcendental evasion of Evil and in their insistence on Evil being an unavoidable part of reality, Hawthorne and Melville differed much in the scope and treatment of their problems. Basically both differed a lot in temperament and belief. Though a sceptic like Melville, Hawthorne remained a believer in Providence; whereas Melville could neither believe nor rest in disbelief. Both were victims of spiritual isolation. But whereas Hawthorne bore his isolation by remaining secluded and aloof, Melville was fated to bear it in the midst of crowded humanity. One of the most important
differences in the approach to their problems can be attributed to the circumstances of their early life. Melville immersed himself in a crowded and eventful life at sea; Hawthorne lived completely isolated and secluded at Salem for about a decade after his graduation. Thus Melville 'experienced' life; Hawthorne merely 'contemplated' it. Again Melville was a man of riotous emotions, with an urge to struggle against the injustices of the world around him. Except Moby-Dick he failed to organize his emotions in a balanced work of art. The self-possessed Hawthorne on the other hand, succeeded in channelizing his emotions into his artistic creations. Melville viewed Providence as a hostile adversary and was excited to challenge its inscrutability. Hawthorne accepted the inscrutability of Providence with detachment. Wherever he went or resided, he remained an objective observer instead of an active participator. The thinness and barrenness of Hawthorne's experience can well be seen from his works. Melville's works show a wider range of experience and a greater involvement in it.

Hawthorne's son has written about his father thus:

He had a deep and reverent religious faith, of what precise purport I am unable to say.

and also,

Hawthorne's religious faith was of an almost child-like simplicity, though it was as deeply
rooted as his life itself.9

As against these remarks Hawthorne's words in his
Journal written at Liverpool, about Melville's religious
belief are noteworthy:

He can neither believe, nor be comfortable in
his unbelief; and he is too honest and courageous
not to try to do one or the other. If he were
a religious man, he would be one of the most
truly religious and reverential;... 10

The works of both the writers, specially the problem of
evil which they both treated can be far better appreciated
if one keeps in mind these basic differences between them.
It is this difference that explains the attitude of cool
detachment on Hawthorne's part; and that of anguished questioning on Melville's. The oppressive sense of sin which colours
Hawthorne's works may lead one to presume that he suffered
from the orthodoxy of his belief but that was not so. For
he was brought up in an atmosphere of liberalism as championed by Channing. Surprisingly, this is in contrast to
Melville's devout upbringing which took its inspiration from
the traditions of the Dutch Reformed Church. We do not have
evidence of Hawthorne's having read the Bible as avidly as

9 Quoted by Austin Warren (ed.), Nathaniel Hawthorne

10 Eleanor Melville Metcalf, Herman Melville: Cycle and Epicycle, ch.11, p.161.
Melville had, nor do his works show that he had imbibed it as deeply as Melville had. Austin Warren states in his 'Introduction' to *Nathaniel Hawthorne*, that Hawthorne was not much given to reading theology and that he had little sympathy with theological books. The writer even adds that according to what Hawthorne himself stated in his *Mosses*, he considered

theological libraries to be accumulations of, for the most part, stupendous impertinence.\(^\text{11}\)

Still Hawthorne showed a greater preference for the books of the Calvinists than for those of the Unitarians. And in spite of his repugnance to the Puritan spirit of intolerance, Hawthorne's sympathies went out to the older and stern faith. He did not need to believe in Puritanism as long as he understood it much better than the many orthodox Puritans of his day. As Schneider says,

> He recovered what Puritans professed but seldom practised - the spirit of piety, humility and tragedy in the face of the inscrutable ways of God.\(^\text{12}\)

Like Melville, Hawthorne did not accept the doctrine of the Fall literally or on the authority of Creed. Neither

\(^{11}\) Austin Warren (ed.), *Nathaniel Hawthorne*, p. xxii.

did he reject it as pure myth but accepted it as empirically true. One of the 'five points' of the Calvinistic theology is that mankind are totally depraved in consequence of the fall of the first man. Modern Christians have rejected such a doctrine as inhuman, for belief in such a tenet makes God not adorable but diabolical. Yet some of the most modern minds have concluded that even if one rejects the original doctrine of the Fall, the fact remains that man cannot entirely rely on his own free will and that he is tied down by his heredity. An examination of the works of Hawthorne and Melville from this angle shows that Hawthorne views the evil propensity of man more in the traditional Puritan sense. Hence 'sin', whatever its form becomes a predominant motif in his works. On the other hand, although Melville shows a similar preoccupation with this doctrine, he gives it a thoroughly modern treatment. The characters of Jackson, Bland and Claggart prove this remark. But more than this Melville shows a preoccupation with evil in man's environment, be it human or cosmic. Consequently Melville's approach becomes modern and appeals to both Christian and non-Christian readers. Hawthorne can be appreciated more by those who are well-versed in Puritan theology. Fogle has remarked aptly that

the philosophy of Hawthorne is a broadly Christian scheme which contains heaven, earth and
hell. Whether heaven and hell are realities or only subjective states of mind is one of Hawthorne's crucial ambiguities. I do not call him a Christian humanist, as do some excellent critics, for it seems to me that heaven and hell are real to him and play too large a part in his fiction to be relegated to the background.13

This is another important difference between the two writers. 'Heaven' and 'Hell' as Christian concepts are absent in Melville. About Melville's humanism there have been various opinions. Ray Browne in his study 'Melville's Drive to Humanism', mentions some of them. Richard Chase termed Melville's humanism as 'skeptical humanism'. Leslie Fiedler termed it 'tragic humanism' and Elizabeth Foster in her discussion of The Confidence-Man called it 'last-ditch humanism'. Melville may have created different impressions during different periods of his life but the overall impression that his works create is that even if he was not a 'Christian humanist' he was a humanist to the extent to which he was hopeful about the future of mankind. Melville did accept 'Sin' as an inescapable reality of this life but if Dimmesdale's words in The Scarlet Letter are any indication, Hawthorne believed that the consequences of sin extend beyond the grave and colour our relations in

the hereafter. In reply to Hester's anguished question whether they would meet in the next world, Dimmesdale says,

I fear! I fear! It may be that, when we forgot our God,—when we violated our reverence each for the other's soul,—it was thenceforth vain to hope that we could meet hereafter, in an everlasting and pure reunion.14

The traditional Christian belief that moral growth cannot occur without sin and suffering, with which Hawthorne's works are coloured, is absent in Melville. The doctrine of 'felix culpa' which forms the basis of The Marble Faun does not receive prominence in any of Melville's works. More than the theme of sin, it is the theme of guilt and secrecy that Hawthorne seems to be preoccupied with. No theme struck deeper to his imagination than the fact that there was a dark connection between guilt and secrecy. However monstrous a crime is, Hawthorne seems to imply, it is less hideous than the concealment of guilt and in his greatest work The Scarlet Letter, it is this facet of evil that finds a powerful expression through Dimmesdale's character. Among his shorter works, Roger Malvin's Burial is perhaps the most vivid treatment of this theme. It is a matter of conjecture whether this obsession with sin,

guilt and remorse was the consequence of Hawthorne's own sense of guilt for a hidden sin. Melville is said to have told Julian Hawthorne that he felt that his father carried a hidden guilt which he was unable to exorcise. Henry James, in his monograph on Hawthorne, suggests that the things that Hawthorne was guilty of viz. sin, guilt, remorse etc. were utilized by his fancy for poetic and artistic purposes only and that at bottom he did not take human nature as hard as he might seem to do. He uses M. Emile Montegut's argument to stress his own point. Montegut's remark is noteworthy in so far as it describes vividly the impression that Hawthorne's works creates on the reader's mind.

This marked love of cases of conscience, this scornful cast of mind, this habit of seeing sin everywhere and hell always gaping open, this dusky gaze always upon a damned world and a nature draped in mourning, these lonely conversations of the imagination with the conscience, this pitiless analysis resulting from a perpetual examination of one's self, and from the tortures of a heart closed before men and open to God - all these elements of the Puritan character have passed into Mr. Hawthorne, or to speak more justly, have filtered into him, through a long succession of generations.15

It is no wonder that the same writer was prompted to describe Hawthorne as "Un Romancier Pessimiste". To deny

that Hawthorne wrote all that he wrote about human nature out of conviction is to remove the very basis on which his greatness as an American writer rests.

A comparative study of Hawthorne and Melville will also have to take into account the head-heart controversy with which both were preoccupied. This controversy which was a product of the late eighteenth century continued to attract writers in the next century. The works of both these writers portray the evil effects of the dichotomy of the head and the heart. Both agreed that the exaltation of one over the other resulted in the dehumanization of an individual and fostered feelings of arrogance and self-centredness. Both of them saw the dangers of pursuing the dictates of the heart to the total disregard of the head. In either case it resulted in an extreme individualism that recognized no communal ties. A number of factors were responsible for this tendency of self-elevation that was gathering momentum in America during the mid-fifties. Unitarianism with its emphasis on man's divinity and perfectibility, the development of science and technology with its promise of greater independence and more material comforts, the spirit of exploitation and conquest both in the national and international fields, were prompting men to shift from the centre of human solidarity to dispersion, disunion and egotism. This in turn was leading men to pit
their intellects against God and to assert their supremacy over Nature. While the majority of the nineteenth-century Americans were carried away by this newly-won freedom of man, thinkers and writers like Melville and Hawthorne foresaw in this trend the culmination of a pride and isolation like Ahab's or Pierre's or Bannadonna's or like that of Ethan Brand's or Rappacini's or Aylmer's. Both Melville and Hawthorne realized that if the will of the individual was free to do good, it was equally free to do evil. Matthiessen and Newton Arvin have both recognized the contribution of these two writers in projecting this aspect of the American culture. Matthiessen says that Melville's portrayal of Ahab's career

is prophetic of many others in the history of later nineteenth-century America. Man's confidence in his own unaided resources has seldom been carried farther than during that era in this country.16

Newton Arvin speaks in much the same way about Hawthorne. Identifying Hawthorne's own isolated existence for more than a decade with that of his countrymen, he says,

In this light it should be obvious why Hawthorne's tales and novels can be called an elaborate study of the centrifugal. They are

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a dramatization of all those social and psychological forces that lead to disunion, fragmentation, dispersion, incoherence.\footnote{Newton Arvin, Nathaniel Hawthorne (New York: Russel & Russel, 1961), ch.6, p.185.}

Hawthorne's characters show that the cause of their estrangement from the central current of life was pride, irrespective of the form it took. It could be pride of family (Hepzibah - The House of the Seven Gables); or that of curiosity that intrudes upon the privacy of others (Chillingworth - The Scarlet Letter or Coverdale - The Blithedale Romance); or the pride that shrinks from revealing guilt (Dimmesdale - The Scarlet Letter); or the pride of a man dedicated to a limited ideal (Rappaccini - Rappaccini's Daughter; Aylmer - The Birthmark); pride could even take the form of spiritual compulsion as reflected by Hooper (The Minister's Black Veil). There are many more cases of estrangement in Hawthorne - all victims of self-inflicted isolation from the 'magnetic chain of humanity'. In The Gentle Boy it was Catharine, the Quaker woman whose fanaticism had become wilder by the sundering of all human ties. In Wakefield it was Wakefield who remained separated from his wife for twenty years, just for a whim. In The Bosom Serpent it was Roderick Elliston who carried the hidden serpent of jealousy in his bosom and therefore severed all his connections with humanity. In Lady Eleanore's Mantle it was Eleanore Rochcliffe whose spirit held itself too high to parti-
cipate in the enjoyment of other human souls. In The Christmas Banquet it was Gervayse Hastings, a victim of a cold heart, a chilliness or a want of earnestness and sense of belonging. In The Man of Adamant it was Richard Digby who isolated himself in a sepulchral cave to achieve salvation. And finally the most unpardonable of all these sinners was Ethan Brand who violated all canons of humanity in his search for the Unpardonable Sin which he finally discovered was lodged in his own bosom. His was

the sin of an intellect that triumphed over the sense of brotherhood with man and reverence for God, and sacrificed everything to its own mighty claims! The only sin that deserves a recompense of immortal agony! 18

The estrangement of Hawthorne's characters thus springs mainly from pride, guilt, sin and egotism. Melville presents a greater variety of victims of isolation. His first major study of isolation is Mardi. Taji gets estranged from his fellow-voyagers because of his inhuman search for an Absolute Ideal. In Redburn's estrangement one finds projected Melville's own sense of alienation that he experienced in his boyhood. Jackson in the same work is alienated from his

companions because of his repulsiveness. White Jacket finds himself in much the same predicament as Redburn. Ahab's isolation, which is perhaps the most impressive portrayal of its kind, springs from a desire to destroy the Evil in the universe. Ishmael though he begins as an 'isolato' finds himself transformed during the voyage. The description of the isolation Pip suffers when he is overturned in the sea (Moby-Dick, ch.93), evokes feelings of awe and terror. Melville speaks of it thus:

...in calm weather, to swim in the open ocean is as easy to the practised swimmer as to ride in a spring-carriage ashore. But the awful lonesomeness is intolerable. The intense concentration of self in the middle of such a heartless immensity, my God! who can tell it? 19

Hawthorne does not have anything of this kind in his works; neither can one expect him to visualize such a predicament, for he lacked Melville's first-hand experience of the sea. Pierre courts estrangement because of his over-ardent desire to champion the cause of his half-sister. Pierre is an illuminating study of an isolation which is the consequence of a heart gone perversely astray. The most fascinating 'isolato' in Melville is Bartleby whose motto 'I prefer not to' forces him to lead a life of negation and death. More than any other such character in Hawthorne or Melville, it is Bartleby who appeals most to the modern

19 Moby-Dick, ch.93, p.411.
sensibility. For modern man finds himself in the same predicament as Bartleby's. Just as Bartleby, who in spite of living in the midst of the busy Wall Street, finds himself incapable of becoming its part, modern man 'acknowledging the common continent of men' tends to live on a separate continent of his own. Bannadonna of The Bell-Tower, a victim of arrogant intelligence, is very much like one of Hawthorne's dehumanized scientists. The Encantadas examines the consequences of an isolation inflicted by a natural agency. Each of the ten sketches portrays the decay and desolation both man and nature suffer when they are totally cut off from human associations. The study of Oberlus in sketch ninth provides a vivid example of how depraved a man becomes by being totally cut off from humanity. Israel Potter is a study of the isolation of an exile. In The Confidence-Man, isolation is portrayed through the characters of Colonel Moredock, the Indian hater and the misanthropic bachelor Pitch. In Billy Budd, the study centres on Claggart the victim of 'innate depravity'. No other work of Melville has as many 'isolates' as Clarel has. Agath, Celio, Clarel, Mortmain, Nehemiah, Ungar and Vine are all victims of estrangement, dedicated to the search of a faith which they realize is impossible to be found. John Harr and Daniel Grmo are the last most fascinating portrayals of
the isolation of retired sailors, living ashore and finding themselves estranged from their land-oriented companions. Thus the theme of 'isolation' or 'estrangement' runs through all of Melville's works but in each work we find its cause to be different.

Melville far surpasses Hawthorne even in the treatment of this subject. A comparison of Melville's best study Ahab with that of Hawthorne's Ethan Brand or Chillingworth will show the difference. Simultaneously with the portrayal of Ahab's dehumanizing alienation, Melville projects the potency and the enduring influence of a man's heart, his sense of love, interindebtedness and comradeship through the characters of Ishmael, Queequeg and Pip. These stand as foils to the monomaniac Ahab. Moreover, Melville has even set off Ahab's perverse isolation by a contrasting portrayal of his own sentiments or his 'humanities'. Ahab's yearning for a hearth and home, peace and domesticity struggles to assert its supremacy over his overdeveloped intellect. This actual conflict in a single character between the demands of the head and the needs of the heart is absent in Hawthorne. Again the cause of the isolation of the majority of Melville's characters is credible; while it is not so with Hawthorne's characters. For example, the motives behind the isolation of Richard Digby in The Man of Adamant or that of the aged Seeker for the procurement...
of the Great Carbuncle in *The Great Carbuncle* are not very convincing. Moreover, in the absence of a direct conflict between the principles of the heart and the head of the kind one finds in Melville's characters, Hawthorne's advocating the importance of the principle of solidarity has to be only presumed. There is no agony on the part of Hawthorne's characters as a result of the heart trying to assert its claims. Another noteworthy fact about Hawthorne's treatment is that his characters fail to evoke feelings of admiration or pity. For there is nothing grand about Hawthorne's 'isolatoes'. One's feelings for Ethan Brand or Richard Digby or the Rev. Hooper or Rappaccini are marked by revulsion. These characters appear almost villainous. On the other hand, as has been shown in the discussion of his works, Melville succeeds in investing his characters with certain traits which tone down their repulsive side. Even characters like Jackson or Claggart whom one would normally term villains, inspire us with feelings of pity and understanding. Similarly we do not find in Hawthorne any powerful or sustained study of a heart going astray as we have in Melville's *Pierre*. The study of Hollingsworth in Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance* loses its impact because of the study of other important issues and characters. In his discussion of the difference in
the portrayal of this controversy by Hawthorne and Melville, Stanley Geist remarks,

The opposition which he (Melville) set up between Heart and Head was not simply an opposition of emotion to intellect. He knew himself too well to be comfortable before any such cleavage of man into well defined categories of thought and feeling as Hawthorne proposed in Ethan Brand or in The House of the Seven Gables.20

For Melville the triumph of the heart is not a triumph over the head but over heartlessness. And man's heart triumphs only when he succeeds in combining his thought and feeling for an intuitive perception of the tragedy of existence or for a knowledge of the dark forces of life. No wonder Melville wrote to Hawthorne about Ethan Brand thus:

It is a frightful poetical creed that the cultivation of the brain eats out the heart. But it's my prose opinion that in most cases, in those men who have fine brains and work them well, the heart extends down to hams. And though you smoke them with the fire of tribulation, yet, like veritable hams, the head only gives the richer and the better flavor. I stand for the heart. To the dogs with the head!21


In Pierre Melville says,

the brains grow maggoty without a heart; but
the heart's the preserving salt itself, and
can keep sweet without the head.\textsuperscript{22}

And it was because of his conviction that in the heart all
the mysteries of life are solved that he ends his last
great work \textit{Clarel} by exalting the heart:

Then keep thy heart, though yet but ill-resigned-
\ldots thy heart, the issues there but mind. \ldots \textsuperscript{23}

We do not have any such eloquent pronouncement in favour of
man's intuitive faculty in Hawthorne's works, at least not
about the power of the heart in its capacity to face the
miseries and mysteries of the universe. A remark jotted in
his \textit{Notes} with a view to developing it into a sketch, though
fundamentally it stresses the eternal beauty lying deep in
the human heart, does not say anything about its redemptive
power.

The human Heart to be allegorized as a cavern;
at the entrance there is sunshine, and flowers
growing about it. You step within, but a short
distance, and begin to find yourself surrounded
with a terrible gloom, and monsters of divers
kinds; it seems like Hell itself. \ldots At last
a light strikes upon you. You peep towards it

\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Pierre}, \textit{Bk. XXVII}, ch.4, p.361.

\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Clarel}, Part IV, Canto xxxv, lines 27-28.
and find yourself in a region that seems, in some sort, to reproduce the flowers and sunny beauty of the entrance, but all perfect. These are the depths of the heart, or of human nature, bright and peaceful; the gloom and terror may lie deep; but deeper still is the eternal beauty.24

In Hawthorne's works the impression of the heart being a 'cavern' of evil is so overwhelming that one feels that he has very little faith in its redeeming power. He does not show what man can achieve with the help of his heart; he is more concerned with showing what man becomes by suppressing its urges. Like Hawthorne, Melville too knew the dangers of an absolute reliance on the dictates of one's heart. And again like him, Melville distrusted the intellect in so far as it encouraged the free expansion of one's personality at the cost of a full, normal and humane life. Both Melville and Hawthorne considered an ideal man to be one in whom the head and the heart were united. But here again Melville gains over Hawthorne for the latter could not conceive of such an ideal character. At the most he could show this union in the marriage between Holgrave and Phoebe in The House of the Seven Gables.

Richard Fogle points out rightly that

the ultimate union of Holgrave and Phoebe is symbolically the ideal union of head and heart, centripetal and centrifugal forces in perfect

balance. Typically with Hawthorne, ... the union is a balance rather than a synthesis.25

Elsewhere in the same work Fogle remarks,

In his (Hawthorne's) psychology the head and the heart can never be in harmony, and no character can be complete. Where the materials for synthesis exist as in The House of the Seven Cables and The Maypole of Merry Mount, we find only an unequal compromise.26

As against Hawthorne, Melville could conceive, in Jack Chase, the master-at-arms of the 'Neversink' (White-Jacket), a prototype of the synthesis of the head and the heart. Next to him perhaps it is Rolfe (Clarel) who represents the union of a 'genial heart' and a 'brain austere'. Viné too in the same work, who it is agreed stands for Hawthorne, creates the impression of a union of opposites and a delicate balance between heart and head. But his 'ruled reserve' towards his fellow-pilgrims, specially towards Clarel who yearns for his sympathy and understanding, makes him less impressive than Rolfe who shows a greater sense of participation in the problems of his companions. Knowing Melville to be what he was, one can conclude that much as he would admire a Vine, he would ultimately exalt a Rolfe. Finally

25 Richard H. Fogle, Hawthorne's Fiction: The Light and the Dark, ch. 11, p.158.

26 Ibid., ch.14, p.221.
the Island of Serenia' (Mardi) is Melville's earliest conception of an ideal society whose inhabitants combine 'right reason' with 'ethical laws'.

Both Melville and Hawthorne have been criticized for having weakened the drama of the action in their major works by allowing destiny to play a major role. This criticism is valid from the literary point of view. However, a study of the responses of these writers to the working of fate speaks much about their philosophy. Having been brought up in the Calvinistic tradition of Christianity, both were obsessed with the significance of the term 'predestination'. Yet both show a remarkable difference in their approach to destiny. Melville was one of the first of the nineteenth-century American writers to stress the importance of determinism in the modern sense at least. The romanticists of his own day however resented the idea of man's affairs being guided by a fixed fate. To them man's freedom was an unchallenged reality. It was only in the latter half of the century that determinism began to preoccupy thinkers and writers. The determinism that runs through Melville's works foreshadows the scientific determinism of the twentieth century. This marks the main difference between Melville and Hawthorne. The latter does not differentiate between 'fatalism' and
'determinism' as the former does. In Mardi, the philosopher Babbalanja states the difference thus:

Fatalism presumes express and irrevocable edicts of heaven concerning particular events. Whereas necessity holds that all events are naturally linked and inevitably follow each other without providential interposition, though by the eternal letting of Providence. 27

In Pierre Melville refers to the subtle control Fate exercises on a person. "Strike at one end", he says,

the longest conceivable row of billiard balls in close contact, and the furthermost ball will start forth, while all the rest stand still; and yet that last ball was not struck at all. So, through long previous generations, whether of births or thoughts, Fate strikes the present man. Idly he disowns the blow's effect, because he felt no blow, and indeed, received no blow. 28

Yet Melville's approach to the inevitableness of fate or necessity is not as detached as one finds in the above remarks. There is a kind of tension running all through his works between man's free will and a thwarting Fate. Sometimes the consciousness of man's free will predominates, at other times it is Fate that holds the upper hand. Even in a single work, like The Confidence-Man it is not unusual to find Melville's inconsistency in expressing this.

27 Mardi, ch. 135, p. 353.
conflict. This is natural in a writer who oscillated between belief and non-belief. In a work like *White-Jacket* one naturally finds Melville optimistic about the possibility of man's shaping his own destiny. But in *Mardi*, *Moby-Dick* and *Pierre*, Melville represents his heroes as helpless but protesting victims of Fate's powers. This is remarkable in view of the detached approach, he evinces, in the quotations above. These heroes insist upon the utter independence of their action and yet realize that they cannot escape fate. All three impute malignity to fate and a heartless trading with man's life. They feel that this malignity could be destroyed if it were opposed. This is in keeping with the mood of Melville's early works, a mood characterized by anger and defiance. The mood of the works of the fifties was different. It was a mood of resignation. Hence in the works after *Pierre* Melville shows a greater awareness of the potency of Fate. Perhaps it was the Civil War that made Melville more conscious of the weight of necessity and so *Battle-Pieces* is full of references to the working of destiny, fate or necessity.

On the other hand Hawthorne whose mental make-up was moulded both by his Puritan background and his innate constitution, saw in the shadow of all action a dusky...
fatalism. This prompted him to believe that all action was vain and that the individual will was the victim of a thwarting external force. Thus few of his characters seem to be the agents of their own destiny. They appear to yield to the supernatural powers without the least struggle. A typical remark in this connection is made by the narrator in *Wakefield*:

> I had a folio to write, instead of an article of a dozen pages: Then might I exemplify how an influence beyond our control lays its strong hand on every deed which we do, and weaves its consequences into an iron tissue of necessity.\(^29\)

This maxim guides the lives of *Wakefield* (*Wakefield*), Roger Malvin (*Roger Malvin's Burial*), Eleanore Rochcliffe (*Lady Eleanore's Mantle*), Dr. Heidegger's guests (*Dr. Heidegger's Experiment*), Colburn and Martha Pierson (*The Shaker Bridal*), Walter and Elinor (*The Prophetic Pictures*). Even in his greater works one finds expressed this sense of man's helplessness against a warping external force. In *The Scarlet Letter* Roger Chillingworth sounds impotent when rejecting Hester's plea to purge his evil nature by forgiving the sinners, he says:

> It is not granted me to pardon. I have no such power as thou tell'st me of. My old

\(^{29}\) *Wakefield*, p.78.
faith, long forgotten, comes back to me, and explains all that we do, and all we suffer. By thy first step awry thou didst plant the germ of evil; but since that moment, it has all been a dark necessity.30

Such an insistence on necessity 'devitalizes' character and fails to create dramatic action. This is where Melville differs from Hawthorne and surpasses him. His Ahab and Pierre show their mettle before they are crushed by the iron wheel of necessity. Hawthorne presents man as a helpless creature incapable of standing up against the hostile forces in his life.

Closely connected with fatalism is the subject of the oppressiveness of the past. More than Melville, Hawthorne shows a sense of being plagued by the shadow of the past. As in other respects, Melville's early works are characterized by a mood of defiance with regard to the traditions of the past. In White-Jacket specially, Melville becomes eloquent about the necessity of paying homage to the Future instead of the Past, for the Past he says is the 'text-book of tyrants' and the Future, the 'Bible of the free'. But this optimistic mood gives place to caution and restraint in the tales of the fifties and in Battle-Pieces. These words express the chastened mood of Melville:

The tempest bursting from the waste of Time
On the world's fairest hope linked with man's
toulest crime.
Nature's dark side is heeded now-
(Ah! optimist-cheer disheartened flown)- ...31

It is in Clarel that we find Melville preoccupied with an
oppressive sense of history. The Past he says is the
proven half of time. No age can escape it. At one place
he gives a very apt picture of the durability of the effects
of the Past:

...Thou shadow vast
Of Cheops' indissoluble pile,
Typ'st thou the imperishable Past
In empire posthumous and reaching sway
Projected far across to time's remotest day?32

Accordingly all hope and optimism about the progress of
mankind are in vain. Obviously Melville's concern with the
Past appears metaphysical in nature. Hawthorne was more con­
cerned with it from its psychological and moral aspects. He
shows a more obsessive awareness of the weight of the Past
on the lives of human beings. It is this factor among many
others that adds to the gloom of his works. The Puritan
bent of his mind instilled a feeling of terror in him with
regard to the darkness overhanging his country's Past. He

31 (Battle-Pieces), Misgivings, p. 37, lines 6-9.
32 Clarel, Part II, Canto xi, lines 60-64.
believed that the consequences of deeds and even impulses last forever. In the 'Preface' to The House of the Seven Gables, Hawthorne emphasizes this belief by saying:

...the wrong-doing of one generation lives into the successive ones, and, divesting itself of every temporary advantage, becomes a pure and uncontrollable mischief;... 33

The old New England background against which his tales and stories are placed gives one the feeling that something persistently haunted him when he wrote them. Perhaps he could not free himself from the consequences of the guilt of his forefathers in executing the witches and persecuting the Quakers. In the chapter entitled "The Custom House", introductory to The Scarlet Letter, Hawthorne confesses his sentimental attachment to old Salem, which he says is assignable to the deep and aged roots which his family had struck into the soil. This sentiment acquires a moral quality when he thinks of his illustrious progenitors whom he had failed. In addition to this, the atmosphere of the Gothic and the macabre also accounts for the oppressive quality of his works.

An examination of the letters written by each of these two to the other and to friends, of entries in their

33 The House of the Seven Gables, Preface, p. 243.
journals and of Melville's *Review* of Hawthorne's *Mosses*,
will prove illuminating for this study. Barring his praise
for Melville's *Mardi* as

a rich book with depths here and there that
compel a man to swim for his life.\(^{34}\)

Hawthorne has made no direct references to Melville's works
or his thought. The 'joy-giving' and 'exultation-breeding'
letter that Hawthorne wrote to Melville after the publication
of *Moby-Dick* is lost. Hawthorne's only remark about
*Moby-Dick* was:

*What a book Melville has written!*\(^{35}\)

In Hawthorne's journal and his correspondences one only
finds references to visits exchanged between them. There
is also a hint or two about the topics they discussed:

time and eternity, things of this world and the
next,\(^{36}\)

or

of Providence and futurity, and of everything
that lies beyond human ken,...\(^{37}\)

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\(^{35}\) Ibid., p.438.

\(^{36}\) Eleanor Melville Metcalf, "Herman Melville:
    *Cycle & Epicycle*, ch.8, p.113.

\(^{37}\) Ibid., ch.11, p.161.
Much has been said about the friendship between Melville and Hawthorne during the period 1850-51 in Pittsfield. Much has also been made of the suspicion that Hawthorne responded to Melville's overtures with coldness and a sense of embarrassment. Again, the issue of Hawthorne's influence on Melville, especially when he was writing *Moby-Dick*, has also been debated, discussed and challenged sufficiently to need further discussion. Two recent contributions that need mention in this connection are Charles Watson's *The Estrangement of Hawthorne and Melville* and Jerome Loving's *Melville's Pardonable Sin*.38

However, to accept the theory that *Moby-Dick* was transformed from 'a romantic fanciful and literal whaling voyage' to what it actually became, merely because of Hawthorne's influence, is to disregard Melville's works prior to *Moby-Dick*, especially such rich works as *Redburn* and *Mardi*. It is clear however that though both of them were consistently preoccupied with Evil, the question of one influencing the other in a major way does not arise. For both were temperamentally and philosophically different writers, preoccupied

with different aspects of Evil. If Hawthorne exerted any influence on Melville, it was perhaps in igniting the latter's hidden thoughts into a furious explosion. The blackness in Hawthorne which Melville felt originated from Hawthorne's sense of 'Innate Depravity' fixed and fascinated him. Hawthorne's study of Evil gave Melville the moral support he needed in articulating thoughts which he knew his countrymen, with all their religious inhibitions and facile optimism would not be ready to swallow. In this connection, Sophia Hawthorne's remarks about Melville in a letter to her sister are relevant.

I enclose a very remarkable quotation from a private letter to Mr. Hawthorne about the House of the S.G. (Seven Gables) but as it is wholly confidential do not show it. The fresh, sincere, glowing mind that utters it is in a state of "fluid consciousness", & to Mr. Hawthorne speaks his innermost about GOD, the Devil, & Life if so be he can get at the Truth for he is a boy in opinion - having settled nothing yet - informing - & it would betray him to make public his confessions & efforts to grasp, - because they would be considered perhaps impious, if one did not take in the whole scope of the case. 39

Just how uneasy even Melville's close friends felt about his pronouncements can be imagined from the remark quoted.

Melville himself testifies to the moral support he

39 Eleanor Melville Metcalf, Herman Melville: Cycle and Epicycle, ch.7, p.106.
received from Hawthorne when he writes, in his Review of Hawthorne's Mosses about the 'shock of recognition' that one genius feels for another. An examination of a few remarks Melville made about Hawthorne in his letters to friends and in the Review itself will show that they are more a reflection of what Melville as a thinker and writer yearned to do but could not do, than what Hawthorne had actually succeeded in doing. Writing about Hawthorne's Twice Told Tales to Evert Duyckinck he remarked,

Some of those sketches are wonderfully subtle. Their deeper meanings are worthy of a Brahmin.  

Just in what sense Melville equated Hawthorne with a Brahmin is a matter of conjecture. More convincing is what follows:

... I regard Hawthorne (in his books) as evincing a quality of genius, immensely loftier, & more profound, too than any other American has shown hitherto in the printed form.

For Hawthorne can claim greatness on the basis of his being the first writer to have grappled with the profounder experiences of life. In another letter written in 1851 Melville says:

There is the grand truth about Nathaniel Hawthorne. He says No! in thunder; but

40 Ibid., p. 99.
41 Ibid.
the Devil himself cannot make him say yes,... .42

This again is more a reflection of Melville's own response to the problems that plagued him, especially as reflected in Moby-Dick and Pierre. Hawthorne does not appear to thunder in any of his works, not even in The Scarlet Letter for he did not undergo Melville's intellectual torments. And although he talked about metaphysics with Melville, his works do not show any deep reflection on that subject.

Basically, as already mentioned, Hawthorne was a believer in a Higher Power and was less sceptical of its workings than of the workings of the human heart. Where Melville, like his own Ahab was prompted to strike through the mask of inscrutability, Hawthorne could rest satisfied with accepting it. For Hawthorne, man's accidents were God's purposes. Again Melville over-estimates Hawthorne's power when he compares him with Shakespeare. Melville resented the then prevalent idea that Shakespeare could not be approached and was convinced that there had been minds that had gone as far as Shakespeare had into the universe. And though he does not mention that Hawthorne was one of those minds, he means almost that when he says,

42 Ibid., ch.7, p.105.
...the difference between the two men is by no means immeasurable. Not a very great deal more, and Nathaniel were verily William.43

If any American writer went as far as Shakespeare did, into the universe, it was Melville himself and not Hawthorne as he never made it his concern to fathom the unfathomable Universe. While comparing Hawthorne with Shakespeare in the 'art of telling the truth', Melville once again reflects his own tragic plight as a writer. Referring to Shakespeare he says,

... it is those deep far-away things in him; those short, quick probings at the very axis of reality; these are the things that make Shakespeare, Shakespeare.44

Hence, Melville felt, if few men had time, or patience or palate for the spiritual truth that Shakespeare possessed, little wonder that in a contemporaneous age, Nathaniel Hawthorne was almost utterly mistaken among men. Actually the Truth which Hawthorne wanted to express was accepted with encomium by his countrymen for he had the art of telling it in the form of puritan-based allegories. It was Melville who failed to get recognition for telling

43 Willard Thorp (ed.), Herman Melville, p.336.
44 Ibid., p.334.
the Truth, for he wanted to express it in a way that was unpalatable to his countrymen. If Melville had to plumb the axis of reality he would have had to become blasphemous. Lloyd Morris in *The Rebellious Puritan*\textsuperscript{45} refers to the remarks made about Hawthorne during his burial-service to the effect that Hawthorne would always be remembered as a writer who like the Saviour showed great compassion for the guilty and the sinners. Melville also points out the same virtue when, in his *Review*, he refers to the 'depth of tenderness' and 'boundless sympathy' and 'omnipresent love' which he feels Hawthorne evinces in *The Old Apple-Dealer*. Here again Hawthorne appears over-rated for one sees very little of the lower strata of society in his works to warrant this praise. Words like 'depth of tenderness' and 'boundless sympathy' used by Melville in connection with Hawthorne's feelings are more a reflection of his own virtues than Hawthorne's; for the latter shows a greater preoccupation with characters belonging to the upper and middle classes than with those of the lower class or dregs of society. The compassion and understanding that Melville brings even to the most depraved characters, are wanting in Hawthorne whose attitude is more that of a cool and detached analyst, than that of a man.

whose intellect sends 'few thoughts into circulation, except they be arterialized at his large warm lungs and expanded in his honest heart'. Of the ten sketches Melville specially mentions in his Review, only *Young Goodman Brown* and *Earth's Holocaust* show the profundity and depth that Melville so reverently attributes to Hawthorne. Very few writers have portrayed as vividly as Hawthorne has done in these two sketches, man's iniquity and the Universality of Sin.

A brief recapitulation of the most noteworthy points discussed will show how and where Hawthorne and Melville differed and why Melville emerges as the greater of the two. Most of Hawthorne's tales and novels are woven around the themes of Sin, Guilt, Retribution, Pride and Isolation. He is more concerned with the psychology of a sinner in a moral situation. His works are the product of a man with a limited or narrow experience of life. Because of the provincial New England background of his works, they appear dated. Again most of his characters, at least the most important ones belong to the upper levels of society and are confined to artists, scientists or scholars. A few examples will elucidate the point. *Owen Warland* (The *Artist of the Beautiful*) is an artist. *Dimmesdale* (The *Scarlet Letter*) is a scholarly priest. *Coverdale* (The
Blithedale Romance) is a poet. Kenyon (The Marble Faun) is a sculptor. Holgrave (The House of the Seven Gables) is a daguerreotypist. Chillingworth (The Scarlet Letter), Rappaccini (Rappaccini's Daughter) and Aylmer (The Birthmark) are scientists. Only Goodman Brown and Ethan Brand, among the very important characters, belong to the remoter parts of society or its lower rungs. Thus Hawthorne confines himself to the class to which he himself belonged. With regard to the source of Evil, Hawthorne's verdict seems to be that all evil springs from the human heart only. The Unpardonable Sin as Ethan Brand learned was not to be found in any of the many hearts he had peered into but it grew within my own breast. 46

And unless, one hits upon "some method of purifying that foul cavern of a human heart", says the stranger in Earth's Holocaust,

forth from it will reissue all the shapes of wrong and misery. . . . 47

Hawthorne's works achieve depth because his researches were always directed into the depths of 'our common nature'. And in this respect Hawthorne definitely scores over Mel-

46 Ethan Brand, p. 477.
47 Earth's Holocaust, p. 412.
Wille for the latter does not have a single depth-study like Hawthorne's, among his works. But at the same time his conception of the human heart being what it was, Hawthorne's characters do not rise to heroic heights as some of Melville's characters do. Melville had greater faith in the strength of fallen, finite man. Hence he could project puny man pitting his strength against a hostile and indifferent Universe. Melville surpasses Hawthorne in other respects too. Unlike Hawthorne, he does not confine himself to the four or five major causes of Evil. His examination of evil embraces practically all the aspects of man's life, social, religious, political and economic. His examination also embraces evil among the Primitive and the Savage. His experiences on the sea brought him in touch with men in all walks of life. Hence his characters, specially the evil ones belong to all the levels of society. The 'Neversink' of White-Jacket, which is a microcosm of man's society, alone illustrates how keenly Melville's eye probed its innermost corners. Moreover, Melville could also project the positive qualities of his evil characters. Hawthorne's villains are all black. Melville was less concerned with examining evil in the human heart than with the titanic, ruthless forces of Nature which totally stunt men. Melville's greatest
work *Moby-Dick* dwarfs Hawthorne's greatest work *The Scarlet Letter* precisely because of this aspect of his work. We do not have a single example in Hawthorne of the Manichaean struggle between Good and Evil that characterizes *Moby-Dick*. Melville's examination of Evil in *Moby-Dick* achieves universality because he has transmuted the philosophies of Evil of both the East and the West to project Ahab's struggle against the whale as the struggle of Everyman against his Universe.