

WILLIAM STYRON; THREE STUDIES OF COMPOSITIONAL METHOD

by

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I. Introduction

William Styron is unusual among modern American novelists in that he has published comparatively little but is still among the three or four most respected and frequently studied authors of his generation. The scope and strength of Styron's achievement is indicated by the large body of published work about him. Both a full-scale descriptive primary bibliography and an extensive annotated secondary bibliography have been issued, and one scholar is presently assembling a compilation of Styron's interviews. There also exists a book-length collection of recent Styron criticism. Two published casebooks explore the historical and ideological ramifications of Styron's most recent novel, The Confessions of Nat Turner.

In 1951 Bobbs-Merrill published his first novel, Lie Down in Darkness. Although this work was filled with "Faulknerian ghosts," the critics generally agreed that it was a brilliant depiction of the violent disintegration of Southern family structure; and Styron was acclaimed, somewhat wrongheadedly, as the next great chronicler of the South. Styron's novella "Long March" appeared initially in discovery in February 1953 and was published as The Long March in a separate Modern Library paperback edition in 1956. Most critics viewed the novella as a technically sound and stylistically controlled statement of an individual's revolt against mindless bureaucracy. However, The Long March was generally considered too brief to fulfill the promise exhibited by Styron in his first novel. In

1960 when Random House published Styron's second full-length work, Set This House on Fire, most reviewers anticipated a monumental Southern novel. Instead, Styron had written a long, complex story set in southern Italy with an alcoholic, expatriate, blocked artist as its central character. One scholar has summarized the critical and popular reception of Set This House on Fire as "puzzled." Even before its publication in October of 1967, Styron's third novel, The Confessions of Nat Turner, had become an extraliterary event. Given wide publicity by Random House, the novel captured the attention of the reading public, particularly because of its controversial narrative technique. Styron, a white man, told the story of the most successful slave rebellion in the United States in the words of the black man who led the insurrection. With the memory of the "long hot summer" still fresh in their minds, reviewers unfairly seized upon the racial issue inherent in the novel. Black critics, indignant over Styron's attempt to "know" a Negro hero, filled pages with anti-Styron invective. From the beginning The Confessions of Nat Turner was swept up into a racial imbroglio that Styron never meant to address.

Criticism of Styron's writing to date has been largely thematic or interpretive. Accordingly, Styron's works suffer from an overabundance of psychological and "New" criticism. Few scholars have employed hard evidence--manuscripts, documents, letters, historical records and the like--in their consideration of Styron's fiction. This study, then, addresses this need in Styron scholarship.

By a careful examination of extant manuscripts and other documents housed at the Library of Congress and Duke University Library, we gain important insights about the author, his editors and publishers, and also his reading public.

In the first chapter the extant holograph manuscript, the "working" typescript, and the "editorial" typescript of Lie Down in Darkness are examined. These documents reveal an interesting relationship between Styron and his editor at Bobbs-Merrill, Hiram Haydn. Styron allowed Haydn to suggest changes throughout the "editorial" typescript, and many of Haydn's emendations appear in the published novel. Of particular interest is Haydn's censoring of many sexual passages in Peyton Loftis' interior monologue. All of Haydn's significant changes are listed here for the first time.

The second chapter of this study deals with the discarded opening for Set This House on Fire. This twelve-page holograph manuscript, never published, is written from the viewpoint of Peter Leverett, the "square" narrator of much of the novel. The document is important for what it reveals both of Styron, the conscious artist, and of Leverett, a troublesome character for most critics. A diplomatic transcription of this discarded opening is reproduced at the end of the chapter.

Although much of the furor over The Confessions of Nat Turner centers on Styron's so-called "distortion" of history, no serious scholarly effort has been made to discover the novelist's sources for his "facts." The final chapter of this study focuses on

Styron's copy of William S. Drewry's The Southampton Insurrection (1900), a well-known source for the novel. In this copy Styron has heavily annotated the endpapers. These notes not only inform us about Styron's use of specific passages in Drewry's book, but they also direct us to another major source for the novel, Frederick Law Olmsted's A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States (1856).

His Editor's Hand: Hiram Haydn's Changes in
Styron's Lie Down in Darkness

A study of the relationship between a writer and his editor can be revealing. Knowledge of the career of Maxwell Perkins, for instance, contributes significantly to our understanding of Thomas Wolfe, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Ernest Hemingway--all three of whom were Perkins' authors.¹ The same is true (though in a less positive sense) of Faulkner and his first editor at Random House, Saxe Commins.² Yet this bond between an author and his editor is, at best, fragile if only because of the author's sensitive ego. Often

¹For a general discussion of Perkins' editorial achievements see A. Scott Berg, Maxwell Perkins: Editor of Genius (New York: Dutton, 1978); and John Hall Wheelock, ed., Editor to Author: The Letters of Maxwell E. Perkins (New York: Scribner's, 1950). The relationship between Perkins and Fitzgerald has attracted extensive study. See, for example, Matthew J. Bruccoli, The Composition of Tender is the Night: A Study of the Manuscripts (Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1963); and John Kuehl and Jackson R. Bryer, eds., Dear Scott/Dear Max: The Fitzgerald-Perkins Correspondence (New York: Scribner's, 1971). Scholarship concerning the Hemingway/Perkins relationship, however, is far less abundant. See Carlos Baker, Ernest Hemingway: A Life Story (New York: Scribner's, 1964); and Michael S. Reynolds, Hemingway's First War: The Making of A Farewell to Arms (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1976). The Wolfe/Perkins relationship has spawned much mythology. For a good critical analysis see Francis E. Skipps, "Of Time and the River: The Final Editing," Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America, 64 (1970), 313-22.

²For a laudatory view of Commins' editorial accomplishments see Dorothy Commins, Who is an Editor? Saxe Commins at Work (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1978). For a somewhat less admiring view see Thomas L. McHaney, "William Faulkner's The Wild Palms: A Textural and Critical Study" (Diss., Univ. of South Carolina, 1968).

an author minimizes his editor's contributions to his work, rationalizing that it is his genius that supplies the necessary grist for the editor's mill. Gerald Brace Warner, a novelist himself, has written frankly about this delicate alliance:

Any writer is lucky to have a hard-headed editor whom he trusts, but even so, and even after repeated experience, most writers are reluctant to admit their faults. After the long hard work, after the intense devotion of mind and imagination, what is done must clearly be done well, and any suggestions for change simply represent the opinion of an outsider with different values and concepts. Writers take pride in being stubborn in their own defense. They assume that men of talent, like themselves, are misunderstood by all who are not writers, by editors and publishers and agents and those who have to do with the commerce of writing. Writers have delusions of their own importance.³

William Styron seems not to suffer from such delusions. He has always acknowledged the important role that his Bobbs-Merrill editor Hiram Haydn played in the writing of Lie Down in Darkness, the novel which rushed Styron suddenly to prominence on the American literary scene in 1951.

Haydn's influence on Lie Down in Darkness predates Styron's writing of the novel. In 1947, with only William Blackburn's creative writing classes at Duke University under his belt, Styron enrolled in Haydn's fiction-writing seminar at the New School for Social Research in New York City. Apparently impressed by his new pupil's short-story efforts, Haydn challenged Styron "to cut out the

³Gerald Brace Warner, The Stuff of Fiction (New York: Norton, 1969), pp. 141-42.

nonsense and start a novel."⁴ Styron immediately conceived a story about "a girl who gets in a lot of trouble."⁵ When Styron had written only twenty pages, Haydn took out an option on Lie Down in Darkness for Crown Publishers--then his employers.⁶ But after about thirty more pages, Styron's writing bogged down completely. The young Virginian returned to the South, spending an unproductive year among his familiar haunts at Duke University. Haydn sensed that Styron was foundering and urged him to return to New York. Styron did so, and after a short stay in New York City he took up residence in Nyack, New York with the family of another novelist, Sigrid de Lima. Later, Styron moved to West 88th Street in Manhattan. Approximately a year and eight months after his return, Styron finished Lie Down in Darkness.⁷ During this period Styron frequently visited the Haydn home, receiving the encouragement due a "de facto member of the family."⁸ And even more importantly, Haydn interceded successfully when the Marine Reserve board recalled Styron to active

⁴Jack Griffin, Jerry Homsy, and Gene Stelzig, "A Conversation with William Styron," The Handle (undergraduate magazine of the Univ. of Pennsylvania), 2 (Spring 1965), 17.

⁵John K. Hutchens, "William Styron," New York Herald Tribune Book Review, 9 Sept. 1951, p. 2.

⁶Hiram Haydn, Words & Faces (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974), p. 279.

⁷"A Conversation," p. 18.

⁸Haydn, p. 279.

service before he had finished the concluding section of Lie Down in Darkness. As a result of Haydn's efforts, Styron received a three-month deferment and, in nine days, finished the conclusion of the novel.⁹ Meanwhile Haydn changed publishing houses; Styron and Lie Down in Darkness followed him to his new position as editor-in-chief at Bobbs-Merrill.¹⁰

But Haydn contributed more to Lie Down in Darkness than advice, support, and intercession with the military. Many of his suggested emendations and deletions are presented throughout the published version of the novel. Again Styron has indicated candidly, if not quite accurately, the presence of Haydn's hand in Lie Down in Darkness:

And when finally [Lie Down in Darkness] was done, I remember how I found truly remarkable [Haydn's] ability then to exercise the editorial prerogative and point out where he thought things had gone a little haywire. There were never any major things at all in the book, as I recollect, that he changed; but certainly there were a myriad of little tiny points where he had this marvelous ability . . . to detect you at your weakest little moment where

⁹Haydn, p. 279-80.

¹⁰Interestingly, Styron again followed Haydn to his next publishing firm, Random House, which today remains Styron's publishers. But in 1960, Styron declined to accompany Haydn to Atheneum, the firm of which Haydn was a founder. Of Styron's defection Haydn writes, with what appears to be a bit of pique, that the novelist "was tired of having people think and say that he owed everything to me; he wanted to stand on his own feet." See Haydn, p. 281.

your phrase was not felicitous, or accurate, and you thought you could get by with what you put down He was not altering the nature of the book, or even much of the prose, but was catching me out in accuracies and grammatical errors, and an occasional badly chosen word. And I think this is beautiful when an editor can do this. It can only improve the book, without compromising the author's intent.¹¹

Certainly Styron is correct in stating that many of Haydn's changes involved "little tiny points." But a close scrutiny of the holograph manuscript, the "working" typescript, and the "editorial" typescript of Lie Down in Darkness--all now housed at the Manuscripts Division of the Library of Congress--reveals that many of Haydn's emendations constitute more than mere editorial tinkering. The two typescripts, "working" and "editorial," reveal a unique compositional process. Styron remembers sending the novel to Haydn in four or five installments.¹² Haydn, recognizing Styron's native ability and, moreover, not wishing to dampen the young author's enthusiasm, refrained from suggesting any changes during the initial composition of Lie Down in Darkness. A working typescript was prepared from the complete holograph manuscript, and Styron made changes and cuts throughout this typescript. A second typescript was then prepared from this emended one, and this "editorial" typescript was given to Haydn who then suggested his own deletions and emendations. Finally, Styron approved each of Haydn's suggestions individually by incorporating them back into the initial working typescript. The end product is two typescripts that have almost identical texts.

¹¹James L. W. West III, "A Bibliographer's Interview with William Styron," Costerus, N.S. 4 (1975), 23-24.

¹²"A Bibliographer's Interview," p. 23.

An example of this process occurs at the beginning of the third chapter of the published novel. In this passage, reminiscent of the "valley of ashes" in The Great Gatsby, Styron describes the garbage-filled marshland and a mysterious polluted creek that lie halfway between the railroad station and Port Warwick, Virginia. His narration focuses on the consciousness of Dolly Bonner, Milton's aging mistress, as she struggles amidst these repulsive surroundings with a nagging suspicion that Loftis no longer loves her. The working typescript reads:

All at once the limousine gave a startling heave, dipping downward, and her stomach leaped up inside her like a balloon: this sudden nausea, together with the sight of the weeds and the garbage, and the broiling heat, gave her a sense of almost unbearable anguish, and so with a despairing little cry she sank back into the seat, wet and wilted, and clutched at Loftis's hand. She felt Loftis quickly draw his hand away--that's another time he's done it--and it was then, looking up at him, that she had her horrible premonition.

He doesn't love me anymore. He's going to leave me.

The same premonition she had last night, and now she had it again. The moment pierced her with hopelessness and she shrank into one corner of the seat, looking at him. He was gazing out of the window with an air of misty preoccupation. (p. 90, working typescript)

In Styron's hand "nausea" is changed to "jolt" and "broiling" to "boiling." Styron also crosses out the phrase "an air of." The "editorial" typescript incorporating Styron's three changes was then prepared. In this second typescript Haydn emends the clause "--that's another time he's done it," by removing the italics, changing the dash to a colon, and capitalizing "that's." Styron, with both

typescripts before him, approves Haydn's changes by transferring them back into the working typescript. Styron's final reading therefore includes both his own and Haydn's emendations.¹³

Haydn's suggestions in this passage are typical of his minor changes throughout Lie Down in Darkness. By altering a dash to a colon and capitalizing the first word in the clause, Haydn is simply polishing. Most often, Haydn supplies the grammatical niceties for an already effective piece of writing. His deletion of italics here and throughout the editorial typescript is more significant. Styron himself has spoken often of having to rewrite the initial third of Lie Down in Darkness in order to rid the novel of Faulkner's influence.¹⁴ Obviously, the use of italics to highlight a character's thoughts and words is pure Faulkner; novelists, Southern and otherwise, have employed this device frequently since the publication of The Sound and the Fury. Therefore, Haydn's deletion of italics is an important example of his helping Styron to exorcise the "Faulknerian ghosts" from Lie Down in Darkness. Haydn suggests twenty-eight similar cuts in the first third of the "editorial" typescript; Styron uniformly incorporates each of these suggestions in the published novel.

¹³William Styron, Lie Down in Darkness (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1951), p. 69. All future references to the novel are cited parenthetically within the text.

¹⁴See, for example, E.P.H. [Eloise Perry Hazard], "The Author," Saturday Review of Literature, 34 (15 Sept. 1951), 12; and Hutchens, p. 2.

Sometimes Haydn's minor changes eliminate awkwardness and confusion. In the first chapter, for example, a middle-aged Helen Loftis dreams of her family's visit to her brother Eddie's farm in the Pennsylvania mountains. At the age of twenty-four she is already neurotically attached to her crippled first-born daughter Maudie. Both the editorial and working transcript versions of this section originally read: "The baby, waking from strange darkness into unfathomable light, began to cry but became quieter, after a while, in her mother's arms" (p. 32). In the editorial typescript Haydn reduces this simply and more directly to "Helen crushed the child into her arms." This change more powerfully suggests the cloying and destructive nature of Helen's love, and Styron wisely adopts Haydn's emendation in the published novel (p. 30).

At other times Haydn heightens the effect of Styron's prose by adding new phrases or sentences without deleting from the novelist's original wording. One such example occurs in the second chapter where Milton invites Pookie and Dolly Bonner to his home for late Sunday afternoon drinks. In this scene Milton wants to indulge his own lustful but as yet unrealized itch for Dolly. Loftis' initial overture to her is a cruel and ungentlemanly ridiculing of her husband. The editorial and working typescripts originally read this way:

"The hell with that," Loftis repeated to Dolly.

"Somehow, somewhere, you got stuck."

With what seemed infinite tenderness she gazed at him. She was discontented, she had had too much

whiskey, and she was vulnerable to about any emotion, especially that of lust. "You're beautiful," Dolly whispered. "You're wonderful." (pp. 78-79)

Immediately following Milton's remark, Haydn adds: "They sat there for a few minutes in silence. Then Dolly stirred." By slowing down the movement of this passage for several beats and by freezing these two would-be adulterers in silence, Haydn dramatically underscores the importance of Dolly's reaction. When Dolly responds favorably, Milton is sure of her receptiveness to an affair.

Still these emendations constitute only minor alterations in the text. At other times Haydn's emendations are more clearly significant. Generally these major changes can be divided into three categories. First and perhaps least importantly, Haydn offers more suitable word choices at places where, to paraphrase Styron, "I thought I could get by with what I put down." Second, Haydn supplies what Styron calls "accuracies" to an intricate plot structure. Here, Haydn points out certain narrative and rhetorical inconsistencies. Finally, Haydn suggests numerous deletions and emendations in Peyton's interior monologue in an effort to temper that section's sexual explicitness. And most important among these are the cuts and changes muting the incestuous relationship between Peyton and Milton Loftis.

Haydn's ability to suggest the "perfect" word distinguishes his editorial achievement. In Lie Down in Darkness these suggestions are subtle rather than overbearing, enriching rather than distracting. Haydn manages throughout the novel to suggest the appropriate word

or phrase that will enhance, not change, Styron's meaning. This procedure is clearly illustrated in the letter that Milton receives from Peyton shortly after her death. In this letter she tells "Bunny" about the terrifyingly abstracted thoughts that plague her. In both the working and the editorial typescripts, the passage in its unrevised state reads:

They've first started lately it seems, I've had these moments before, but never for so long--and they're absolutely terrible. The trouble is that they don't--these thoughts--seem to have any distinctness or real point of reference. It's more like some sort of black, terrible aura like the beginning of a disease, the way you feel when you're catching the flu." (p. 43)

In the editorial typescript Haydn simply emends "aura" to "mistiness"--but the emendation is significant. Haydn apparently remembered from his reading of the complete holograph manuscript that Peyton often complains of a sense of drowning in her interior monologue; "mistiness," with its dreary, oppressive connotations of wetness, is much more appropriate than "aura," a word which carries lighter, almost ethereal connotations. Styron defers to Haydn's judgment here and changes "aura" to "mistiness" in the published novel (p. 38). Similarly in the second chapter, Helen, furious with her husband for inviting the vulgar Bonners over for drinks, rebukes him over his desire for Dolly. The editorial typescript originally read:

"Your'r [sic] satisfied now"
"Why, Helen, what do you mean?"

"You didn't tell me that you called them, that you invited them."

"Honey, I forgot," he said. A shambling procession of lies and excuses strolled leisurely through his mind. "I wouldn't have thought it was important anyway. Honest to God," he said amiably, "if I had known you to be--to be apprised of the fact or that you wanted to be prepared . . ."

"Don't hand me that sort of thing," she retorted. "You know exactly what I mean." She ran her hand feverishly over her brow-- a theatrical gesture, he thought--raising her eyes skyward. She's neurotic, he thought with an oddly pleasant feeling of solicitude. There is really something wrong with her. (p. 76)

Here, besides deleting the italics, Haydn simply changed "neurotic" to "queer." By substituting the abstract, suggestive "queer" for the exact, almost clinical "neurotic," Haydn understates Helen's problems appropriately. At this point in Lie Down in Darkness we have had only glimpses of Helen's destructive personality; we have yet to witness her total depravity at Feyton's wedding. Therefore, Haydn's word choice keeps Styron from tipping his hand too early; the reader simply becomes curious about this "queerness" of Helen's. Furthermore, the use of the psychologist's term "neurotic" is inconsistent with the character of Milton Loftis. A Tidewater Virginia lawyer who thinks of himself as a Southern gentleman is more likely to ameliorate his wife's aberrant behavior by labeling it with a quaint word like "queer." Once again Styron heeds his editor's advice; "queer" appears in the published version of the novel (p. 59).

Successful novels almost always display narrative consistency. Moby-Dick, whatever else it may be, is always a whaling story narrated by a common seaman. And even such apparently chaotic works as Joyce's Finnegans Wake and Pynchon's Gravity's Rainbow achieve consistency in inconsistency and order in disorder. But often the novelist may lose sight of his grand plan: inextricably caught in the web of his own creation, he lacks the distance and objectivity necessary for close artistic control. Many times the chore of refining and ordering a work falls to the novelist's editor. The best-known example, of course, is Maxwell Perkins' reshaping of Wolfe's Of Time and the River. In Lie Down in Darkness Haydn occasionally performs a similar function. But the shaping hand in the novel is always Styron; Haydn merely points out small confusions in the narrative, assuring consistency in the plot, characters, and rhetoric of the novel.

A good example occurs in the chronology of Lie Down in Darkness. In both the holograph manuscript and the working typescript (p. 4), Styron begins the desolate journey of Llewellyn Carper's hearse and limousine on "a weekday morning in August in the nineteen forties." In the editorial typescript, however, Haydn specifies the date as "1945." Styron's editor again remembered from his reading of the manuscript that Peyton kills herself on the day of the bombing of Hiroshima--August 6, 1945. No matter how one views this bit of gratuitous symbolism, the ambiguous dating of the novel at the beginning is inconsistent with its exact dating at the conclusion.

Haydn recognized the disparity and Styron changed the date to "1945" (p. 11).

Haydn also supplies both narrative and rhetorical consistency in the letter from Peyton to Sunny. Although it appears early in the novel, this letter represents Peyton's pre-suicide mental state quite accurately. In the working-typescript version of the letter Peyton complains to Milton about the poignant disorientation which is characteristic of her breakdown:

Thinking of you helps some, thinking of home--but I don't know, nothing seems to really help for long. I feel adrift, as if I were floating out in dark space somewhere without anything to pull me back to earth again. You'd think that feeling would be nice-floating like that-but it isn't. It's terrible. (p. 43).

In the editorial typescript Haydn emends "floating" to "drowning"-- Peyton's most frequently repeated word later in her interior monologue. In the published novel Peyton therefore writes to her father of "drowning" and a connection is established between letter and monologue.

Haydn makes one other seemingly minor change that demonstrates his keen eye for consistency. Early in the same letter, Peyton tells her father about the noisy taproom that she lives above: "There's a bar downstairs (I remember you haven't seen this apartment since I moved up from the village) full of the loudest Irishmen imaginable." Haydn realizes that "Irishmen" is inconsistent. Peyton's lover, Anthony Cecchino, is Italian; her landlady, Mrs. Marsicano, is Italian; and she meets another Italian, Mickey Pavone,

in the same bar that she describes to her father. Peyton must be living in an Italian neighborhood, and so Haydn changes "Irishmen" to "Italians" in the editorial typescript.¹⁵

Haydn's most important emendations are his sexual cuts in Peyton's interior monologue. In 1951 when Lie Down in Darkness was published, America was still in many ways a repressive society, especially concerning the presentation of sexual matters. Haydn's changes reflect these inhibited attitudes: the editor repeatedly tones down the explicit nature of the sexual passages that fill Peyton's rambling monologue.

Haydn first cuts this interior monologue when he censors the passages in which Tony Cecchino, the milkman lover, forces Peyton to make love during her menstrual period. The editorial typescript of this passage reads:

He came near me, erect, stiff and with veins on it like blue ink leaked out from a pen. Then it dropped some, looking silly and pink; the pain went away, receding in short little gasps, I wondered if I was bleeding yet. (p. 506)

Haydn excises the accurate though explicit metaphor "with veins on it like blue ink leaked out from a pen" from his typescript. And Haydn

¹⁵ Haydn's one remaining emendation to Peyton's letter is also important. At the end of the paragraph describing her fear of "floating," Haydn adds the line "then when I see the birds it seems [something crossed out]." This addition enhances the passage in two ways: first, Haydn's phrase "[something crossed out]" enables Styron to reap the full benefit of his epistolary technique. These crossed-out words are tantalizing to both Milton and the reader. Second, Haydn introduces the crucial image of the "birds" into the novel for the first time. Peyton speaks often of these wingless and hairless creatures in her interior monologue.

(or perhaps Bobbs-Merrill) apparently reduced the entire passage in proof so that the published novel only reads "He came near me. I wondered if I was bleeding yet" (p. 337). Later in the editorial typescript, after Cecchino and Peyton finish their lovemaking, she says "When Tony came out, he had blood all over his belly and I was weeping" (p. 499). Haydn cuts "he had blood all over his belly and" from the line. And once again this sentence appears to have been edited even further in proof: "When Tony came out" is changed to "When it was over." The whole sentence, now entirely tamed, appears in the published novel as "When it was over, I was weeping" (p. 339). Finally Haydn emends the passage describing Peyton as she prepares to leave to visit her estranged husband, Harry Miller.

The editorial typescript reads:

I remember I was bleeding and I went into the bathroom and stuffed myself up. Quilted, absorbent, it was my last one; and I left hanging out the convenient thread. I scrubbed my face and brushed my lovely hair, for I must be pretty for Harry: like the tampax, "you are always out of things, darling" (p. 515)

Haydn simply changes "Quilted, absorbent, it was my last one; and I left hanging out the convenient thread" to "It was my last one."

The entire passage appears in the published version of Lie Down in Darkness as:

I remember I was bleeding and I went into the bathroom and fixed myself. It was my last one. I scrubbed my face and brushed my lovely hair, for I must be pretty for Harry: he would have scolded me for forgetting. "You are always out of things, darling" (p. 343)

Again Haydn or Bobbs-Merrill have substituted "fixed myself" for "stuffed myself up" and deleted "like the tampax."

Several of Haydn's emendations in Peyton's tragic soliloquy concern the Hungarian abortionist who comes to her aid. Peyton's promiscuity has already been established for us through her affairs with the mystery-writer Earl Sanders and with Cecchino. Haydn apparently felt that an additional sordid interlude with an oily and lascivious abortionist would be unnecessary and unattractive. He therefore deletes all mention of an affair between Peyton and her doctor from the text. The initial allusion to the Hungarian abortionist in the editorial typescript suggested Peyton's desire for the doctor:

He was a Hungarian, and when I squirmed because the tube made me feel hot he said, "Does it teekle? Dot's allride, only pwobing," and he probed some more and I got so hot I could hardly stand it, wanting him, powdered Hungarian face and flicking moustache and insolent, thoroughbred flesh. (p. 523)

Haydn substitutes "looking at the" for "wanting him," reducing Peyton's sexual arousal to a mere physiological reaction to the doctor's instrument. The second reference to the nameless abortionist alludes even more explicitly to some sort of sexual encounter:

Out loud I said, "Protect--" but didn't finish, remembering the guilt, for the second time, which I had not ever told Harry: the doctor, only probing, with his finger in me and not the instrument, at all, the chloroformed straining Hungarian flesh. (p. 575)

Haydn changes the passage drastically, deleting "with his finger in me and not" and substituting "merciless inside twitching" for "chloroformed straining Hungarian flesh." The passage in the

published novel speaks only of Peyton's guilt over the abortion and not of any sexual guilt:

Out loud I said, "Protect--" but didn't finish, remembering the guilt for the second time, which I had not told Harry: the doctor, probing, the instrument, the merciless inside twitching. (p. 376)

In her interior monologue Peyton's disorientation centers on the various men in her life--Milton Loftis, Dickie Cartwright, Harry Miller, Earl Sanders, and Anthony Cecchino. We observe her frenzied mind jumping from memory to memory of her lovers, distorting each affair into a jumble of sexual allusions. Haydn consistently edits these passages carefully. For example, in the editorial typescript, Haydn censors the passage in which Peyton compares the sexual organs of three of her lovers:

I peeked into my handbag: Harry's was just right, not big and gross like Tony's, and he said I could make it hard with the merest switch of my tail. Once he asked me who took my maidenhead and I said a bicycle seat named Dickie Boy. (p. 520)

By deleting "not big and gross like Tony's and he said I could make it hard with the merest switch of my tail," Haydn makes this passage far less explicit. Shortly thereafter, Haydn steps in again as Styron compares Peyton's sexual relations with Tony and Harry:

[Tony] had hair on his shoulders like wires; he was always taking it out to show me how big and he pressed my head down there once but I screamed. Harry and I did it because we loved each other (p. 531)

Here Haydn cuts the line "he was always taking it out to show me how big and he pressed my head down there once but I screamed." He also

edits the passage in which "Dickie Boy" Cartwright, Earl Sanders, and the strange, flightless birds appear together in Peyton's tortured mind:

I wanted so for Dickie Boy to get it up but only when we were drunk and we were always drunk; but he couldn't get it up and I'd play with him until it hurt him. Then the birds would come around, I'd want it so badly I could have died, anything--Dickie Boy, anybody or when I lay down in Darien with Earl Sanders once we were standing up, in the shower stall, and then the wings and the feathers all crowded through the translucent curtain: so I slumped down against him in the pelting spray and I bit him where he wanted me to, and I thought, oh Harry, I thought oh my flesh! (p. 541)

The editor's deletion of "and I bit him when he wanted me to" is simply the cutting of some 1950s sensationalism. But Haydn's excising of the first two sentences in this passage ("I wanted so for Dickie Boy anything--Dickie Boy, anybody") is more significant. In these lines Styron seems to indicate that Peyton's "bird" hallucinations are the result of sexual frustration, in this case caused by Dickie Cartwright's impotency. Actually, throughout the published novel, these "birds" are symbols of Peyton's futile search for familial love. Haydn's motives here would seem to be artistic as well as censorious.

The most important of Haydn's sexual emendations concern the incestuous relationship between Peyton and her father, an aspect of Lie Down in Darkness about which much has been written.¹⁶ Their

¹⁶See, for example, Jean Normand, "Un Lit De Tenebres de W. Styron: Variations sur de theme de Tristan," Etudes Anglaises 27, (1974), 64-71.

incestuous urges, though sublimated and never actualized, are implied throughout the novel--the playful fondling between father and daughter, Peyton's sugary term of endearment for Milton, her father's jealousy of Peyton's beaux, and his boyish excitement when Peyton returns home and his corresponding depression when she leaves. All these are tinged with feelings apart from mere paternal love. The incestuous action of the novel culminates with Milton's sexual anxiety at Peyton's disastrous wedding, climaxed by his openly-affectionate kiss that permanently shatters whatever familial ties still bind the Loftises together.

But several times in the editorial typescript of Peyton's interior monologue, Styron does more than imply subconscious feelings of incest: he actually indicates that Peyton and Milton may have made abortive attempts at indulging their desires. The first instance occurs when Peyton describes a summer night in Lynchburg, Virginia, with "Bunny":

But there were chimes in my soul, I was drowning in the summer night and I knew God was not a prayer automaton, but pitched half-way between Bunny and Albert Berger: love is a duality, one part dislike, one part soft-soap, so said Albert Berger, but oh how I have loved him: once in Lynchburg Bunny got me drunk off beer, and then we drove up into the hills and parked in the moonlight; he put his arm around me. I didn't care but the chill up my back--better than Dickie Boy--and then we both got embarrassed at the same time and didn't say anything for five minutes. (pp. 552-53)

This passage reveals urges that are certainly more than subconscious; Peyton and Milton are embarrassingly aware of their mutual desire, if only for an instant. Wishing to mute a subject that would

undoubtedly scandalize many 1950s' readers, Haydn strikes the entire passage from the editorial typescript, substituting in its place the innocent line "But I remembered grass, and gulls" (p. 363).

An even more explicit example occurs later in Peyton's interior monologue when she pleads with her husband Harry to return to her.

The editorial typescript reads:

Then I would say: oh my Harry, my lost sweet Harry, I have not fornicated in the darkness because I wanted to but because I was punishing myself for punishing you: yet something far past dreaming or memory, and darker than either, impels me, and you do not know, for once I awoke, half-sleeping, and you were still inside me and I ran my hand down your back and murmured, Bunny dear. (p. 577)

Again Haydn realizes that this is far too explicit for Styron's audience. He changes "for once I awoke, half-sleeping, and you were still inside me and I ran my hand down your back and murmured, Bunny dear" to a more moderate "for once I awoke, half-sleeping and pulled away. 'No Bunny,' I said" (p. 377). Haydn's emendation here may also have an artistic motive. Until this point the incest has been one-sided. Milton alone subconsciously desires his daughter: Peyton, though aware of her father's lust, never reciprocates. Haydn therefore makes this passage consistent with the rest of the novel by removing Peyton's physical longing for Bunny from the text.

Besides tempering the explicitness of the incest theme, Haydn's emendations affect the scope of the tragedy in Lie Down in Darkness. If Peyton is viewed as an unfortunate girl traumatized by actual sexual relations with her father and the resulting hatred of her

mother, her tragedy is merely a personal one--a tragedy that has special meaning for other unfortunates who have experienced a similar trauma. But if Peyton is actually a helpless victim of an uncontrollable desire rooted deeply in her subconscious, her tragedy is a universal one--a tragedy corresponding to modern man's struggle in a apparently loveless and meaningless world.

Haydn's sexual emendations, then, range in importance from his significant muting of the incestuous relationship between Peyton and Milton to his rather prudish substituting of "other things" for "brassiere and pants" at the conclusion of Peyton's soliloquy.¹⁷ Ironically, Haydn was accused by David Laurance Chambers, president of Bobbs-Merrill, of "sexual obsession" because he championed Lie Down in Darkness.¹⁸ One might logically assume then that Haydn's suggested changes are the result of censoring by Bobbs-Merrill or Chambers. Styron, however, feels otherwise:

I think Haydn was merely following the accepted pattern when he wanted me not to be too explicit. I don't think Bobbs-Merrill or Chambers exerted any direct pressure on Haydn, though he may have been vaguely intimidated by the firm, since it was the most wretchedly reactionary and stuffy publishing house in the business. It was only because of Haydn's great faith in the book that those Neanderthal mid-Westerners backed down and the book was published as successfully

¹⁷This variant appears on p. 393 of the editorial typescript and p. 385 of the published novel.

¹⁸Haydn, p. 49.

as it was. In short, I think Haydn's suggested cuts were due less to the shadow of Bobbs-Merrill and Chambers than to his own feelings which were honest though unadventurous.¹⁹

Whatever the case, Haydn's "unadventurous" changes did not alter the basic sexuality of the novel. Lie Down in Darkness remains a frank and sexually-candid work. But future editors of the novel would do well to consider restoring many of Haydn's sexual cuts. Few of today's readers would be shocked by the explicitness of the sexual language deleted from Lie Down in Darkness.

Much of Lie Down in Darkness, then, is the end product of a unique cooperation between novelist and editor. Styron himself was intimidated neither by Bobbs-Merrill or by Haydn. In fact, many of Haydn's suggestions were rejected by the novelist, and none of them, sexual or otherwise, were incorporated into the novel without Styron's full approval.²⁰ Instead of chastising Styron, as Bernard De Voto did Wolfe for his collaboration with Perkins in Of Time and the River, we should applaud the then young novelist's good sense and maturity in relying from time to time on his editor's experience and judgment. Lie Down in Darkness is a stronger, more consistent novel because of Styron's wise acceptance of Haydn's help.

¹⁹William Styron to Arthur D. Casicato, 8 July 1978. Quoted here with Mr. Styron's permission.

²⁰"A Bibliographer's Interview," p. 24.

Haydn's Changes in the "Editorial" Typescript
of Lie Down in Darkness

This table lists a representative selection of those changes suggested by Haydn and accepted by Styron. The organization of the table is as follows: each entry begins with a page-line reference to the Bobbs-Merrill first edition of the novel. The page-line reference is followed by Haydn's emended reading from the "editorial" typescript. (This same reading appears at the given line in the Bobbs-Merrill text.) Next there appears a left-pointing bracket which should be read as "emended from." Finally, Styron's original reading is given. For example:

18.9 whistle gave a loud blast] whistle made a
shattering blast

Line 9 of page 18 of the first edition of Lie Down in Darkness reads "whistle gave a loud blast." This line is Haydn's emendation of Styron's original reading "made a shattering blast."

- 11.14up in August of 1945, a] in August in the nineteen-
forties, a
- 18.9 whistle gave a loud blast] whistle made a shattering
blast
- 18.3up this was no day--] this was no day to mess up
- 19.1 hair. As he bent over a] hair. Peering, bending
over, a
- 30.21 that--How] that it was he she was yearning for.
How
- 30.12up Maudie sat alone, her braced leg outstretched on a
stool. Helen crushed the child into her arms. ¶
"There] Maudie slept amid dolls and woolen dogs
and familiar baby smelling bedclothes. The baby,
waking from strange darkness into unfathomable light,
began to cry but became quieter, after awhile, in her
mother's arms. "There
- 30.3up threatening rain] threatening death and rain
- 31.6 spreading wood?] spreading and trembling wood?
- 31.17-8 cried. (What's wrong with the kid? he'd say. She
shouldn't holler like that.) What's] cried. (What's
wrong with the kid? he'd say. She shouldn't holler
like that. What's
- 31.21 perspiring. Oh my sweet, he'd] perspiring. Oh my
sweet, he'd
- 31.7-8up trembled. He's going to cry, she said to herself:
He's going to cry. "Peyton."] trembled. He is
going to cry, she said to herself: He is going to
cry. ¶ "Peyton".
- 31.6up "Peyton." He's feeling it now. Ah, that sorrow
hurries like the wind. He] "Peyton." He is feeling
it now. Ah, that sorrow hurries like the wind. He
- 31.2-4 girl." Yes, perhaps now it will be upturned, the
chalice he has borne of whatever immeasurable self-love,
not mean, yet not quite so strong as sin . . . ¶ "My]
girl." Yes, perhaps now it will be upturned, the chalice
he has borne of whatever immeasurable self-love, not mean,
yet not quite so strong as sin . . . ¶ "My

- 32.1-3 girl." ¶ Upturned in this moment of his affliction and dishonor to find there not that pride he would clasp to his heart like a lover, but only grief. Only grief. ¶ He] girl." Upturned in this moment of his affliction and dishonor to find there not that pride he would clasp to his heart like a lover, but only grief. Only grief. ¶ He
- 32.12-13up window. Oh, take me now. She slept. ¶ A] window. And she slept, though uneasily. ¶ A
- 38.15 loudest Italians imaginable.] loudest Irishmen imaginable.
- 38.18up terrible mistiness like] terrible aura like
- 38.13up were drowning out] were floating out
- 38.11up nice-drowning like] nice-floating like
- 38.10up terrible. Then when I see the birds it seems [something crossed out] ¶ Oh] terrible. ¶ Oh
- 40.13 skirt. She heard the swollen notes of a mournful guitar; she] skirt. The notes of a mournful guitar, immensely magnified, fell on her ears; she
- 42.9-10up thinking: Jesus, she's getting on my nerves. Up] thinking: Jesus, she's getting on my nerves. Up
- 42.6up air. Jesus, he thought: This is more than I can stand. By] air. Jesus, he thought: this is more than I can stand. By
- 59.4up skyward. She's queer, he] Skyward. She's neurotic, he
- 59.2-3up solicitude: there is really something wrong with her. "Milton] solicitude: there is really something wrong with her. "Milton
- 61.13up stuck." ¶ They sat there for a few minutes in silence. Then Dolly stirred. With] struck." With
- 62.4 bird. "Aiee-eee," she] bird. "Aiee-eee," she
- 66.2up because there was something wrong with her - but] because she was sick, because they both were sick - but

- 67.4 reading Winnie-the-Pooh. He] reading The House at Pooh Corner. He
- 69.18up away: That's another time he's done it, she] away - that's another time he's done it, she
- 69.3-5up cheeks. It's true, she thought: the way he's been acting. He doesn't love me. He only came to get me this morning because Helen wouldn't come. Through] cheeks. It's true, she thought - the way he's been acting. He doesn't love me. He only came to get me this morning because Helen wouldn't come. Through
- 70.2-4 window: He's that way not just because he's grieving for Peyton, but because he's rejecting me. I can tell. Two] window - He's that way not just because he's grieving for Peyton, but because he's rejecting me. I can tell. Two
- 71.9-10up thought: Trouble trouble boil and bubble. ♣ "Trouble] thought--Trouble trouble boil and bubble. "Trouble
- 73.14-5up heart. His shirt unwashed. And] heart. October 21 come soon. And
- 73.3-4up red. When we're married, she thought, I'll have to make him stop drinking so much She] red. When we're married, she thought, I'll have to make him stop drinking so much She
- 74.1up still? He's married. Stern] still? He's married. Stern
- 75.2 sweat: Forswear adultery and other such iniquities. It] sweat: Thou shall not forswear adultery and such iniquities. It
- 76.6 over October twenty-first. ♣ Sometimes] over (date). ♣ Sometimes
- 76.1-2up thinking: Oh something's happening. ♣ A] thinking Oh something's happening ♣ A
- 85.13-5up her." She looked up at him, paused and shook her head. "Bunny," she said again, "I just don't think I love her." ♣ She] her." ♣ She
- 85.7up home." ♣ "No] home." Her voice was sad and muffled, tickling his chest, and seemed to rise from great distances through his own body. "No

- 87.20 made one over par] made two under par
- 98.20 room, and from his faltering, only half-willing hands. ¶ Charlie] room, and his soul, fainting with sudden despair, from all of the difficult, imponderable things which had gone before. ¶ Charlie
- 101.1 What had he done?] What have I done?
- 101.4 desolation. Then he knew. Standing at the door, he figured, she must have seen, or known, something frightening and terrible. ¶ Later, when] desolation. After that evening he saw Peyton only once or twice again for they both went off to school, but the particular tenderness of that evening lay for many years in his memory, sweet and disconcerting. He remembered how later, when
- 105.2-3 thinking: poor Helen, poor Helen. That] thinking: poor Helen, poor Helen. That
- 105.6-7 but poor Helen, poor Helen that] bat poor Helen, poor Helen that
- 138.16-7up that." She threw a dollar on the table. ¶ Then she wheeled] that.". Dolly wheeled
- 143.19up of psychology and] of Freud and
- 148.3-4up sence dat weddin' you wouldn't have no truck wid him. Like] sence you come back from when po' little Maudie passed away you wouldn't have no truck with him. Like
- 151.15-6up nobly. Mr. Casper thanked him kindly, gave Barclay a dirty look and hustled back to the limousine. ¶ Now] nobly. It was sheer expedience, but it worked, and Mr. Casper thanked him kindly, gave Barclay a dirty look and hustled back to the limousine, his heart aching at Ella Swan's soft high moan which still issued from within. ¶ Now
- 152.6up by the dull unalleviated pain of guilt. Had] by vastly unsatisfying pain. Had
- 152.3up not, he assured himself, alcoholic] not alcoholic
- 156.21 to Army Colonel] to Marine Colonel

- 156.20up stationed at Camp Pickett. Loftis] stationed in
Norfolk. Loftis
- 161.18 him (Why won't she stay home? he] him (why won't
she stay home? he
- 161.19-20up I'll get my degree and then go into the Navy. I'm in
the Reserve." They] I'll finish out this year at
the university and go into the Navy." They
- 163.19 but it was Peyton who would suffer the most if there
were a fight, and] but a fight would have bounced
over more violently back upon Peyton, and
- 166.8up echoed plunk-plink-plunk around] echoed plunk-
plink-plunk around
- 167.16 way down from Blackstone on] way over from Norfolk
- 168.10up filled, in the careful fold] filled, the carefree
fold
- 170.5-6 wings: Yes, Milton, feel that; haven't I got love down
there, too? For] wings: yes, Milton, feel that;
haven't I got love down there, too? For
- 173.6-8up her. From his law practice he received a marginal
income, and the practice itself, involving as it did
contracts and drafts and mortgages, was an increasing
bore. Gradually] her. Gradually
- 207.9up him! Or - do you? It depends." "Like] him!"
"Like
- 207.6-7up baby! Gimme a drink. Mmm. No, I don't really think
you do." ♪ Loftis] baby!" ♪ Loftis
- 207.45up Loftis took back his bottle from her, dipping the
flagstaff, which he gripped in the other hand, in]
Loftis held out his bottle to her, dipping the
flagstaff, which he gripped in the same hand
- 208.1 smiled; there was a smear of lipstick on one of her
large front teeth. ♪ They] smiled and shot out her
fangs, smeared with lipstick. ♪ They
- 210.17-8 as a long forward pass, which seemed to spin endlessly
] as the football, spinning endlessly

- 210.16up and he had lost his] and someone had stolen his
- 210.15up around someone else's neck. Loftis turned] around Hubert McPhail's neck. Loftis heard her call him "Admiral Sheridan." He turned
- 231.14-5up clear some of the qualities about him that she loved. It was partially that] clear, that
- 241.10-1up hats, they chatted for a moment, understanding each other. ¶ But] hats, a gentle, sure understanding sprang up between them, for although they had known each other professionally for many years, neither had, until this moment, suspected the other of such wellsprings of compassion, of patience and humility in the face of God's most awful judgement. Their gentle hearts were, after a fashion, formed in the same mold, and each suddenly admired and respected in the other the wisdom which waits in reverent service upon those who suffer, only by accident of time, the same fate which would befall each of them, too, someday. But
- 260.18up Warwick. All] Warwick; she had invited them by mail. All
- 262.6up silly. After Maudie died I wanted--" ¶ He] silly. The thing I mean is that--well, when I quit school and went to New York I was all set to go wild, you know, after what happened in Charlottesville--" ¶ He
- 262.1up eyes. There] eyes, with the faint breath of sorrow on her lips, and behind his own eyes. There
- 263.2 years; with] years; grave innocent promises made to a youngish father now grown older, a little wiser; with
- 269.7 necessity. ¶ "O.K., baby," he said. ¶ The] necessity, and he felt his heart scattering slowly away, like all the leaves of a book. ¶ The
- 269.15 it get] it--these people frequently become Unitarians or Christian Scientists--get
- 269.20 service. The] service. Whatever its shortcomings, if any, the

- 272.1-3up mannerisms. Throughout the ceremony, she had forced herself to conceal her joy, revealing it, she knew, only in the light of triumph which flashed briefly across her eyes. It] mannerisms. The look Loftis had seen on her face had not been one of studiousness, but had reflected just an effort to conceal her joy. Only in the light of triumph which flashed briefly across her eyes had he made the right guess. It
- 273.1 triumph. Life] triumph. There are some people who can't stand joy unless it is a joy in which they themselves may participate, and Helen was participating to the hilt. Life
- 280.19 which (so Loftis' New York classmates told him) many] which many
- 291.18 little. ☞ Carey felt benevolent after three glasses of sherry, and] little ☞ Three drinks--straight bourbon--which, because he was a sherry man, he was unaccustomed to--had made Carey tighter than he would have wished, and
- 306.13up for eight months he] for a year, nearly he
- 326.10up monoliths; near] monoliths certainly something fantastic; nears
- 333.5up said. "If I'd just known what was going on inside her. Why? Why?" "Sh-h-h] said. "If she just hadn't done it that way. The final sordid horror! The waste. Just a note! She could have told me!" "Sh-h-h
- 333.3up easy." "I could have stopped her." "Cut] easy." "This was their fault, too. Perhaps mine. Yes, perhaps." "Cut
- 334.13 me." ☞ "I could have stopped her." ☞ There] me." ☞ "God." ☞ There
- *337.15up me. I] me, erect, stiff and with veins on it like blue ink leaked out from a pen. Then it dropped some, looking silly and pink; the pain went away, receding in short little gasps, I

*See pp. 18-19 of the proceeding for a discussion of this variant.

- 337.3up too; he] too; I looked at it; it was limp and small
now. He
- 339.13 down at me, his] down on my face like Pride or
Doctor Faustus, his
- *339.13up over, I] over, he had blood all over his belly and I
- 340.11up with dead spirits." I] with the dead spirits of
Suckling, Herrick and Donne." I
- 342.9 his shoulders there] his back there
- 342.10 and I] and I beat them until the blood came out: I
- 342.14up big birds with] big animals with
- 343.2 myself. It was my last one. I] myself. Quilted,
absorbent, it was my last one, and I left hanging out
the convenient thread. I
- 345.1up play someone said] play the muse said
- 346.2 right. Once] right, not big and gross like Tony's,
and he said I could make it hard with the merest switch
of my tail. Once:
- 347.3up it, looking at the powdered] it, wanting him,
powdered
- 348.13 hard. There] hard--and avoided the bowel movements
everywhere along the curb, of dogs. There
- 352.9up wires. Harry] wires, he was always taking it out
to show me how big and he pressed my head down there
once but I screamed. Harry
- 357.6up them. Harry] them: I wanted so for Dickie Boy to
get it up but only when we were drunk and we were always
drunk; but he couldn't get it up and I'd play with him
until it hurt him. Then the birds would come around--I'd
want it so badly I could have died, anything--Dickie Boy,
anybody. Harry
- 358.3 spray and] spray and I bit him where he wanted me
to and

*See pp. 19 of the proceeding for a discussion of this variant.

- 358.19up face, and] face like Magdalene's tears, and
- 363.15up home. Albert] home. We moved off past the stop-light: nostalgia not longing was not like that, God the suffering: could he never know? How one part of me said, not he, but I, shall never come again, for he has had no guts at all. And Albert
- 363.7up ethos--Call] ethos in the name of a funzoid, call
- 363.4up replied. But I remembered grass, and gulls. "All] replied. But there were chimes in my soul, I was drowning in the summer night and I knew God was not a prayer automaton, but pitched half-way between Bunny and Albert Berger: love is a duality, one part dislike, one part soft-soap, so said Albert Berger, but oh how I have loved him: once in Lynchburg Bunny got me drunk off beer, and then we drove up into the hills and parked in the moonlight; he put his arms around me. I didn't care but the chill up my back--better than Dickie Boy--and then we both got embarrassed at the same time and didn't say anything for five minutes." All
- 364.8up gone? "Why] gone? And where had he gone, and will he never come again? I couldn't help thinking now: blessed Beatrice, and we lay down in the darkness--featherless, wingless, guiltless, so many years ago: blessed Beatrice, upon a day came sorrow into me, saying I have come to stay with thee awhile. "Why
- 365.19up a metal bird. "Come] a pterodactyl. "Come
- 367.20up a young man leaned] a colored fairy boy leaned
- 371.16up vengeance . . . That] vengeance for his defection so small? That
- 371.15up down with] down in the darkness with
- 371.4up address. "There] address. Soft and tender is my Harry, but will he never come again? "There
- 372.10 washing in] washing, her stickⁿ rank like scallions and honest in
- 372.19 down with] down in darkness with

- 376.18up the doctor, probing, the instrument, the merciless, inside twitching. "Oh] the doctor, only probing, with his fingers in me and not the instrument, at all; the chloroformed straining Hungarian flesh. "Oh
- 377.14 and pulled away. "No, Bunny," I said. That] and you were still inside me and I ran my hand down your back and murmured, Bunny dear. That
- 378.15 time. Then I] time. It perished in my soul then, I knew he would never come again. Yet I
- 384.1 with pain: that] with a pain that passes all understanding: that
- 385.1up my other things and] my brassiere and pants and

Styron's False Start:

The Discarded Opening for Set This House on Fire

Preserved among the William Styron papers at the Library of Congress is a discarded opening for Set This House on Fire. Written in No. 2 black pencil on long yellow legal sheets, this twelve-page holograph manuscript is important for several reasons. First, this false start is a significant step in Styron's creative process; it allows us to examine the imaginative seeds from which Set This House on Fire eventually flowered. Second, by comparing the discarded opening to its published equivalent, we are able to look over Styron's shoulder as he edits, deletes, and re-creates in order to achieve his fictional ends. Most importantly, a close scrutiny of this document supplies clues to Styron's original conception of the "square" narrator of the novel, Peter Leverett, whose character has always been a bone of contention among critics of the book.

Styron discarded most of the writing in this false start: only Peter's initial brief description of Sambuco, the tiny southern Italian town where the tumultuous central action of the novel occurs, survives in the published book:

Aloof upon the hills, remote and beautifully difficult of access, it is a model of invulnerability and is certainly one of the few towns in Italy which have remained untouched by bombs and invasion. Had Sambuco ever lain upon a strategic route to anywhere it might not have been so lucky and at one time or another might have found itself, like Monte Cassino, crushed in ugly devastation. But the

affairs of war have left the place intact, almost unnoticed¹

The rest of the prose was abandoned, but the subject matter and the method of development for the opening of the published novel also originate in the false start. In the fragment Peter Leverett describes two ocean cruises. He remembers the first, which he took to Europe a few years after World War II, as "adventurous and grand." His expectations for this voyage are clouded by a romantic fog; he anticipates ending up "in the cabin of some compliant and breathtaking girl," and he pictures himself as continually "flushed and palpitant and on the threshold of conquest." His imagination stoked by such romantic reminiscences, Leverett speculates that the "indescribable charm" of the first voyage was supplied by a mysterious and beautiful but typically unapproachable woman passenger:

She was French--that much I knew--a lonely-looking creature who, besides having the blackest eyes I have ever seen, was also somehow delectably sick, as if she had just recovered from or was about to succumb to some decently romantic illness, like tuberculosis. I never spoke to her but I followed her every move and gesture with hungry yearning.

Leverett's second voyage, however, is quite different. Peter remembers this cruise, on which he sailed from Naples to New York

¹All quotations are taken from the unpublished false start preserved at the Library of Congress. At the end of this commentary, the entire text of the discarded opening will be reproduced. Within the text of this commentary, I will quote only Styron's finished reading of this document, but I preserve all of Styron's revisions, interlinings, and excisions, as well as his occasional misspellings, in the reproduction of the discarded opening.

shortly after the violent events at Sambuco, as "a trip shorn of romance and of any illusions at all." Leverett scandalizes his cabin-mate, "an Evangelical Lutheran from out west," with his drinking, rudeness, and solitary debauchery. He also cuts both his table companions and his waiter whenever one of them offers overtures of goodwill or fellowship. Peter returns home to America decidedly neurotic:

I was panicked, shattered, and left gazing inward upon a conscience which for the first time in my life had begun to gaze back at me I had begun to know what it is to live constantly with fear. I was sick to death of voyages, of adventure. I felt like the limpest of passengers--my bright pennants furled, shaky and seasick like all the rest, and given to fits of wild alarm.

Through the obvious contrast of these two cruises, Styron apparently meant to pique the reader's curiosity. What could have happened in Sambuco to transform an immature but harmless romantic into a jittery, almost hysterical candidate for analysis?

Although Styron abandons all talk of ocean voyages in the published opening of Set This House on Fire, the travel motif suggested by the discarded fragment is still present. Styron begins his first chapter with an excerpt from a travel guide, Nigel's Italy: "The road is hewn nearly the whole way in the cliffs of the coast. An evervaried panorama unfolds before our eyes, with continual views of an azure sea, imposing cliffs, and deep gorges."² The contrast between the

²William Styron, Set This House on Fire (New York: Random House, 1960), p. 3. All future references to this book are cited parenthetically within the text.

two ocean voyages, which seems forced and contrived in the false start, is skillfully implied in the opening of the novel. Styron sets the dead facts of Nigel's Italy ("We return to the sea and then make a retour round the grim ravine of Erchie, approaching the sea again at Cape Tomolo.") against the vivid, living, cataclysmic murders and rapes that occur in Sambuco. Like Sterne in Book VII of Tristram Shandy, Styron is parodying, though much more darkly, tour books that reduce human experience to neat, sanitized paragraphs of geographical and topographical highlights.

In Styron's false start, one finds a problem which eventually turns up in the published book. This fragment, like the novel, is told from the first-person point of view. But often we suspect that it is actually Styron speaking rather than his "I" narrator, Peter Leverett. Our belief in Leverett as a fictional consciousness completely separate from the author is sometimes strained; Peter's words occasionally appear to be Styron's own explanations of his narrative. He is his most painfully didactic and obtrusive self in the false-start passage that introduces Peter's second cruise. Here, Styron seems to drop the mask of the Leverett persona and barge into the story with a rhetorical question-and-answer: "Why do I mention all this? Only by way of contrast, I suppose, to my last--my final--voyage home." Styron need not underscore the obvious contrast between the two ocean cruises; his device is already clear to the intelligent reader.

If Styron's habit of commenting on narrative action were merely confined to his foul papers, it would be of little consequence. But unfortunately these authorial intrusions are present in the published version of Set This House on Fire. Styron's own voice can be heard above Leverett's with annoying frequency in the transitions and introductory passages of the novel. Still not trusting his readers or, perhaps, his own writing, Styron "labels" the story, prescribing for his readers the emotion that a passage should elicit. Styron does far "too much 'telling' and not enough 'showing'."³ Weak transitions such as "It was not long after Cripps left that a really - rather distressing thing occurred. What happened was this . . . (p. 122)" stop the flow of the narrative. All this pump-priming is unnecessary, and as Michael Mewshaw points out, the reader "would prefer to decide for himself what is truly 'distressing,' or 'interesting,' 'amazing,' or 'fantastic.'"⁴

A stylistic device which Styron employs much more successfully is his use of the melodies and lyrics of popular music to counterpoint the action of his story. This technique (which Styron might have seen first in F. Scott Fitzgerald's writings) is noticeable throughout

³Michael Mewshaw, "Thematic and Stylistic Problems in the Work of William Styron," Diss., University of Virginia, 1970, p. 129.

⁴Ibid., p. 130.

Styron's works.⁵ In the discarded opening, for instance, Leverett's initial romantic cruise has its own music. Peter remembers a three-piece band that seemed constantly to be playing "C'est si bon," that "imbecile, off-key tune uncoiling night and day from the ballroom." This carefree, lilting melody with its trivial love lyric is the perfect accompaniment for Peter's romantic illusions. But "C'est si bon" is merely part of the "enforced fun" of Peter's first ocean voyage. The true mundane nature of the cruise is brought into sharp focus by his table mates: Mrs. Fessenden, "a huge divorcée from Chicago who was transporting with her to Europe some secret and impressive grief; a British tractor salesman whose pretentiously hyphenated name Leverett cannot recall; and two distinctively middle-class starchy female alumnae of the University of Florida who were like "two fresh daffodils . . . ripe, erect, with flossy blond hair." "C'est si bon" even permeates Leverett's only remaining pleasant memory of the first cruise, his vision of the mysterious French girl: "Through a blizzard of confetti and with C'est si bon still fluting madly from the ballroom, she glanced at me and gave me a sly and secret smile."

⁵For early examples of Styron's use of contrapuntal music, see "Where the Spirit Is," his first contribution to The Archive, a student publication of Duke University. In this story he uses the dark, sad, sensual beat of Africa rhythms and the plaintive words of a Negro folk song to counterpoint the central character's fall from innocence. See also Styron's sketch, "A Moment in Trieste," which appeared in American Vanguard, 1948. Here he contrasts the "mincing ragtime" of "Honeysuckle Rose" and the exotic "Begin the Beguine" with the grim tensions of military occupation in cold war Trieste.

Likewise, the published version of Set this House on Fire has its own significant song. In *Sambuco*, as Peter and the director, Alonzo Cripps, watch a drunken Cass Kinsolving reel wildly through Mason Flagg's party for the "flicker creeps," a recording of Don Giovanni issues full blast from Cass's rooms below. Here, Styron relies on the reader's knowledge of the story and the mood of the opera for his contrapuntal effect. But suddenly the sublimity of Don Giovanni is replaced by the nasal twang of American country-and-western music as "a hillbilly song [erupts] on the night, athrob with shrill messianic voices, male and female, and the strumming of steel guitars" (p. 121). The song, "What's the Matter with this World," like "C'est si bon" in the discarded opening, functions on at least two levels. First, the melody with its whining dulcimers and crying twelve-strings summons up for Peter and probably for Cass "summer weather, southern voices, southern scenes":

Country beer joints, pinewoods, dusty back roads and
red earth and swamp water and sweet-fragrant summer
dusks. (p. 121)

Peter describes the song oxymoronically as "so lovely and so horrible" because he, like Cass, associates it both with the innocent days of youth in Port Warwick, Virginia, and with the American decadence--already far too pervasive in *Sambuco*--of the sterile, vicious diletante Mason Flagg. Second, the song's lyrics reflect Cass Kinsolving's self-destructive fascination for peering into the existential abyss:

This question we daily hear, no one seems to know . . .
 Wha-a-at's the matter with the world . . .
 Now this rumor we hear: Another war we fear,
 Revelations is being fulfilled . . .
 Your soul's on sinking sand, the end is drawing near
 That's what's the matter with this world . . . (p. 121)

This apocalyptic vision will be shared, to a much lesser extent, by Leverett after he has witnessed the human depravity that occurs in Sambuco.

Most critics, though disagreeing radically about Styron's style and achievement in Set This House on Fire,⁶ are generally of the opinion that the novel's major flaw lies in Styron's conception of his self-proclaimed "square" narrator, Peter Leverett. Typically, Donald Malcolm classifies Leverett as "a hopeless fathead" because of Peter's susceptibility to Mason Flagg's superficial and repulsive charm.⁷ David L. Stevenson complains about the "un-novelized materials" in the narrative: Leverett's self-effacing thoughts about himself, his stunted affairs with women, and especially his

⁶The critical reception of Set This House on Fire deserves extensive study. Many commentators (Styron among them) have characterized this reception as uncommonly harsh. Louis D. Rubin, Jr., in his book The Faraway Country, calls the reviews of Set This House on Fire "a torrent of critical abuse the like of which has seldom been seen in our time." In reality, however, the criticism of the novel can be assessed much more accurately as "uneven." For example, the reviewer for Time dismisses the novel as "a 507-pp. crying jag," while Abraham Rothberg, writing in the New Leader, calls Set This House on Fire "a great artistic task."

⁷Donald Malcolm, "False Start," The New Yorker, 4 June 1960, p. 154.

didactic conversation with his father.⁸ With characteristic truculence Robert Foster views Leverett as a gross, soulless caricature of Nick Carraway--a parasitic voyeur who "wants hotly to see everything, and what he can't see he craves to have described to him."⁹ Abraham Rothberg sees Leverett as an uninteresting and unnecessary character whose deletion would quicken the pace and magnify the tension of a novel that is too long by two hundred pages. Even Louis D. Rubin, Jr., an admitted and unabashed Styron admirer, finds the major defect of the novel to be the Leverett character.¹⁰

That Styron was aware of problems with his "square" narrator is apparent from the significant revisions that the author and his editor at Random House, Robert Loomis, made in the typescript and galley proofs of Set This House on Fire. Speaking in a recent interview, Styron remembers being aware "that Peter Leverett . . . was often gratuitously, in I thought an annoying way, commenting on his own actions over and over again, when silence would have been more golden."¹¹ In an earlier interview with Robert K. Morris,

⁸David L. Stevenson, "Styron and the Fiction of the Fifties," Critique, 3 (Summer 1960), 52.

⁹Robert Foster, "An Orgy of Commerce: William Styron's Set This House on Fire," Critique, 3 (Summer 1960), 64.

¹⁰Louis D. Rubin, Jr., "An Artist in Bonds," Sewanee Review, 69 (Winter 1961), 178.

¹¹James L. W. West III, "A Bibliographer's Interview with William Styron," Costerus, N.S. 4 (1975), 22.

Styron said that "in Peter Leverett's description of himself there are a lot of things he overly described--self-conscious reflections about himself--and I remember distinctly (though not exactly where) Bob Loomis and I got them out of there."¹²

The discarded opening for Set This House on Fire is even earlier evidence of Styron's concern with the Leverett character. The false start, like the finished novel, is narrated by Leverett; but the narrator of the discarded opening is a different man from the narrator of the published novel. In the false start we can already see what Styron would later call his narrator's propensity for "self-conscious reflections." Leverett is not content with divulging to the reader his intimate (but rather average) romantic fantasies about ocean cruises; he must also analyze them for us:

Even so, the idea of a voyage had always had for me this high dazzle and enchantment, and it is no doubt an attribute of the young (or the stupid or the incurably optimistic) that they can face such an outing again and again with fine expectancy.

This passage adds nothing to the characterization of the narrator. At the beginning of the fragment Leverett labeled himself as an "incurable optimist," and his preoccupation with the clichéd aspects of romance has already earmarked him as "average." Leverett is merely commenting gratuitously about himself, and his remarks constitute an excellent

¹²Robert K. Morris, "An Interview with William Styron," in The Achievement of William Styron (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1975), p. 29.

example of Stevenson's "un-novelized materials." In the eventual opening of the published novel Styron sidesteps judiciously the pitfall of Leverett's long-winded self-characterization; the narrator establishes himself as Everyman by simply admitting to the reader that he is "something of a square" (p. 5).

In the false start Leverett is equally loquacious as he talks about his post-Sambuco mental condition:

And so during those first few months in New York I can recall only having been prey to sickening and degrading terrors; fearful of assaults from things and robbers; of fire and sudden falls and disease; of suicides plummeting down to crush me, like a bug upon the sidewalk; of taxi drivers and subway platforms and of all heights above six feet.

This list goes on, but the message is clear: Leverett is neurotic. He even spells out his problem again: "As a neurotic first-class I must have been characteristic: paralyzed, evil-tempered, humorless, and abominably self-centered." In the novel Styron carefully avoids this extraneous summary and analysis, reducing all this nervous chatter to a simple admission by a more laconic Leverett that "the blood and the tumult and the shambles" of Sambuco had left him in "a really rather bad state" (p. 5). Just how bad is left, more satisfyingly, to the reader's imagination.

The published novel, however, is not free from Leverett's "self-conscious reflections." Styron is in firm artistic control of those materials which he distilled from the false start; but there are several instances of bloated self-evaluation by Leverett still present later in the novel. As soon as he finishes his

opening evocation of Sambuco, Leverett launches into a capsule biography after the fashion of Melville's Ishmael:

My name is Peter Leverett. I am white, Protestant, Anglo-Saxon, Virginia-bred, just past thirty, in good health, tolerable enough looking though possessing no romantic glint or cast, given to orderly habits, more than commonly inquisitive, and strongly sexed (pp. 4-5)

His revelations continue, but, as Stevenson has indicated, Leverett is embarrassingly intimate for a person we are meeting for the first time. Shortly thereafter, his extraordinary frankness becomes wearing, and when he allows us to peek at the "total and sweeping catastrophe" of his vacation with his fiancée, Annette, we begin first not to care about, and then to doubt, Peter's testimony that "there were no sexual difficulties" (pp. 9-10). In his need to "see" the events of Sambuco through the eyes of Cass Kinsolving, Leverett is in some ways a voyeur. But, in his painful self-revelations, he is something of an exhibitionist, an emotional "flasher" who enjoys baring his soul to the readers.

Styron chooses, in the novel, to temper his false start characterization of Leverett. Instead of severely neurotic, Peter is merely "desparately stunned" by the carnage of Sambuco (p. 5). This alteration is more consistent with Styron's conception of his narrator. It is illogical to make Peter a neurotic: he lacks the artistic sensitivity of men prone to neuroses and psychoses. In fact, Styron deliberately makes Leverett an imperceptive and often insensitive observer in order to add to the story's mystery. The

perceptive reader realizes that it is the village idiot Saverio who actually kills Francesca long before that information is revealed to a mystified Leverett.

But Styron does not merely abandon his neurotic characterization of Leverett; he wisely saves Peter's agitated sensibilities for a more suitable character--the blocked painter Cass Kinsolving. Moreover, the Leverett character in the false start exhibits many aspects of the Kinsolving character in the published novel. For instance, in the discarded opening Peter tells the reader that he returned to America "removed the width of a hair from lunacy." In the novel it is Cass's hairbreadth escape from insanity that we witness. Styron also borrows from his false start in Peter's description of the ocean liner that brings him home from Europe:

It was an American ship--a cocky overstatement of indigenous chrome, egalitarian, cheerful and grim.

His words are similar to Cass's answer when his wife Poppy asks him why he is so "anti-U.S.A.":

Because it's the land where the soul gets poisoned out of pure ugliness. It's because in the U.S.A. everything looks like a side street near the bus station in Poughkeepsie, New York . . . and whenever I think of it I get consumed with such despair over its sheer ugliness that I feel waves of anguish rolling over me, and I want to cry (p. 283).

Just as the effect of the trauma of Sambuco is much more intense on Cass than on Peter, Kinsolving's anti-American invective is much more severe than Leverett's own condemnation of his homeland.

Styron's purpose in drawing much of Cass's personality from the false-start characterization of Leverett is clear: by giving Peter and Cass similar though not identical characteristics, he hopes to create characters who are shadows of each other, thereby merging together the first and third person points of view.¹⁴ In a letter to Publisher's Weekly Styron writes about his narrative experiment:

I had never seen the welding of two points of view attempted in a work of fiction before: I had never seen a narrator who, beginning in the first person, could, convincingly, end up in the third person, the story so merging and mingling that one might accept without hesitation the fact that the narrator himself knew the uttermost nuances of another man's thought; and it was the fight to achieve this new dimension--involving over three and a half years of more tearing apart and putting back together than I care to think about--which gives to the book whatever power and tension it has.¹⁵

This discarded opening for Set This House on Fire is probably the initial step in Styron's long "tearing apart and putting back together" process. In this false start we see Styron flexing his creative muscles, deciding which characteristics to give Leverett

¹⁴Rubin has written suggestively along these lines: "But what is Cass Kinsolvings' relationship to Peter Leverett. In the novel ostensibly both are friends of Mason Flagg, and that is all. Dramatically, psychologically, however, they are more than that. They are one and the same person. We meet Cass Kinsolving in mid-passage, a painter who cannot paint, a created, believable character. It is Peter Leverett's past history, not Cass's, that explains why Cass cannot paint. Peter Leverett, in other words, becomes Cass Kinsolving. See Rubin, p. 178.

¹⁵"William Styron Writes PW About His New Novel," Publishers Weekly, 197 (30 May 1960), 55.

and which to give Kinsolving. At first their personalities were too similar--perfect reflections where Styron was only aiming for an echo. Styron saw his error and began again, solving this problem by heightening certain characteristics in Kinsolving while tempering the same characteristics in Leverett.

Transcription of the False Start

Following is the text of Styron's rejected opening for Set This House on Fire. The text is rendered here in a diplomatic transcription, with all deletions, revisions, and irregularities preserved. Material interlined by Styron is also interlined here; deleted words are enclosed within elbow brackets. Styron is in general a correct speller and punctuator, but there are still several demonstrable errors in the draft of the false start. These too have been preserved in the transcript which follows.

- DREAMS: 1. Earth-burning-super Nova Homosexual phase: gets Tic
2. One with far horizon, river, cannibals
3. Ben dreams Mason still alive,
sitting in nearby room. candle-lit
4. Waterspout destroying Hays's house;
I beg people take refuge ravine, Emily, sex.

About some things I had been an incurable optimist. A voyage on an ocean liner, for instance, possessed for me an irresistible glamor. Perhaps this was because, a bachelor still, I had never been able to shed the illusion that all that enforced fun -- the music, the games, the various hectic, pleasant tricks which are employed to fight boredom, much in the same way that fever is often artificially induced to cure certain diseases -- that those imposed, light-hearted intimacies could only lead to my ending up, at one time or another, in the cabin of some compliant and breathtaking girl. It is a dream shared by bachelors and other lonely and frustrated persons but like all dreams it is as airy and as insubstantial as smoke. The girls are either not beautiful or, if so, are not willing or are accompanied by watchful husbands or are the ones who are shy and young and virginal and disposed to sea-sickness. Or, presuming some flirtation, once begun, contains the seeds of promise -- plop! there you are in Plymouth or Havre, flushed and palpitant and on the threshold of conquest, but disembarking, bound for some other destination.

Even so, the idea of a voyage had always had for me this high

dazzle and enchantment, and it is no doubt an attribute of the young (or the stupid or the incurably optimistic) that they can face such an outing <experience> again and again with fine expectancy, like sailors on liberty in Norfolk, avid for pleasure but haunted by the faint, nagging knowledge that this time, as usual, they will ^{have to do} <go> without girls. Nor ^{had I been} <was> so old or jaded that the first voyage I <had> made did not still possess its own distinct identity -- its own mood and meaning -- and corresponded with a phase in my life which, as I looked back on it, <now> seemed singularly adventurous and grand. It was as if that putting out to sea had been a sort of baptism washing me clean of the mistakes of the past, making an auspicious beginning, with the voyage itself an exciting preview in miniature of the world which would be opened up to me on the other shore.

And so whenever I remembered my first trip abroad -- a few years after the war -- I tried not to recall those items which reason told me made up, after all, the real essence of the voyage -- my table-mates on that big French boat, for example, or Mrs. Fessenden. For even from the start, innocent as I was of world travel, I was aware that somehow Romance had not shipped aboard this trip -- at least not in the person of my dinner companions, a glum British tractor salesman with a ^{still} hyphenated name which I cannot remember, and two young alumnae of the University of Florida whose names I've also forgotten, except that one of them seems to have been called Melba. They were like two fresh daffodils, those girls -- ripe, erect, with flossy blonde hair -- and they had the touching artlessness of grown Southern girls who have

not been forced to study much, and they informed me early in casual tinkling tones that they were going abroad to visit their soldier husbands and certainly were not going to tolerate any <attempted> impropriety, especially from all those Frenchmen. Inseparable, they clung to one another for the entire voyage, their soft brown eyes rolling wide with surmise and delighted alarm, like maidens during the sack of Atlanta. So, still drugged by their perfume, I would lurch my way alone to my cabin or, more often, to the bar, where a three-piece band constantly played C'est si bon. There now and then I talked to Mrs. Fessenden, a <immense> divorcee from Chicago who was transporting with her ^{huge} _{to Europe} some secret and impressive grief, which she kept stoked with vast quantities of cognac. She wept often and showed me her jewels, calling me "Hon"; and one night late, while the clarinet piped high and shrill over the rushings of the wintry sea, she told me that I was the only one on earth who understood her, and she sort of whinnied, and drew me down close to her steaming and resplendent bosom.

No, it was certainly not these faces which <in retrospect> lent to that voyage such an air of indescribable charm. It was something else -- the music, perhaps, that imbecile, off-key tune uncoiling night and day from the ballroom; or the persistent clamor of the sea, which gave to my conscious hours such a feeling of quest and peril and adventure; or perhaps one other girl, whose name I never found out. She was French -- that much I knew -- a lovely-looking creature who, besides

having the blackest eyes I had ever seen, was also somehow <vaguely and> delectably sick, as if she had just recovered from or was about to succumb to some decently romantic illness, like tuberculosis. I never spoke to her but I followed her every move and gesture with hungry yearning. Her flushed, tormented beauty fascinated me, and when she brushed by me in a passageway I'd begin to sweat and feel my heart pounding stupidly. No doubt it was shyness (another name for vanity, after all) which prevented me from making some advance; in any case, our eyes met only once -- at the harbor in Cherbourg -- when from a distance, through a blizzard of confetti and with C'est si bon still fluting madly from the ballroom, she glanced at me and gave me a sly and secret smile. It was a smile of invitation but also of farewell, for in a second she was gone and I never saw her again. Perhaps she had known my passion for her all along, and her smile had been a final token of sympathy; perhaps, more truthfully, it was just my imagination and she had not been smiling at me at all but only at the gray coast of France. Whatever, it took some of the curse off the Florida girls and the Tractor salesman and Mrs. Fessenden, so that I was able to recall that moment as the glory of the voyage: standing alone on the windy deck with a new continent spread out base and vulnerable before me, and thinking of all the girls in Paris willing to smile upon me their sly and wistful smiles.

And it is in that way, I have no doubt, that most men regard themselves when they were younger: remote, mysterious, and fascinating -- jaunty voyagers not yet debarked from the sea of illusions.

Why do I mention all this? Only by way of contrast, I suppose, to my last -- my final -- voyage home from Europe a year or so ago -- a trip shorn of romance and of any illusions at all. Returning home from the wreck and ^{the confusion} <the loss> -- from Sambuco, and all the ^{ugly} <evil, deathly> events that happened there that summer -- I was panicked, shattered, and left gazing inward upon a conscience which for the first time in my life ^{had begun to gaze back to me.} <was as base and as vulnerable as a pink, new-born baby> And for the first time in my life -- with the chilling surprise which must accompany the onslaught of some fatally incurable disease -- I had begun to know what it is to live constantly with fear. I was sick to death of voyages, of adventure. I felt like the limpest of passengers -- my bright pennants furled, shaky and seasick like all the rest, and given to fits of wild alarm.

On that voyage -- it was from Naples -- I shared my quarters with a man of God -- an Evangelical Lutheran from out west who exposed his plump body daily to the late summer sun and rubbed himself with some oil that filled the cabin with a fragrance of cinammon. He was a nice man but I was heartlessly rude, and made only muttered replies to his decent gestures of fellowship. I don't suppose I spoke to him more than three or four times during the entire trip. I felt utterly cowed by my sorrow and bewilderment, and exhausted, and I lay on my bunk day after day gazing upward toward nothing, while the ship plowed westward through calm seas and burning sunlight past Africa, and into the wild ocean. It was an American ship -- a cocky overstatement of indigenous chrome, egalitarian, cheerful, and grim -- with the gift, such as the

ships of no other nation possess, of making one feel already on native soil. There were lots of Army people aboard -- the proconsuls of Munich and Frankfurt on leave with their families: fat captains and skinny majors and women who herded their offspring down corridors and passageways with incomprehensible Texas cries. My waiter whistled as he brought me my hamburgers and chicken pie, eager to establish some facetious rapport. He, too, I cut dead without embarrassment, as with my table companions -- three frail and translucent old ladies -- to whose quiet remarks about the wonders of Venice and Rome I replied with mumbles of murderous scorn. I felt like ^{a bastard about it} <the most arrant of bastards> but I didn't care. I suppose I was a bit insane. I steered clear of the bar, too, but bought whiskey by the bottle which I drank in my cabin -- to the concern of the Lutheran minister who would burst in on my solitary debauch with paunch glistening, smelling of cinammon, and with a clamp-jawed air of censure. I slept until far past noon, numbing myself with great long draughts of unconsciousness, and often I would arouse myself only after the last glimmerings of sunset had begun to color the remotest limits of the sea.

And so finally I came home again to America, removed the width of a hair from lunacy, and not nearly so much alive as one quivering, bottled-up scream. Nor do I mean to exaggerate. As I look back on it now, it is a mystery how I got past the Immigration people -- even equipped as I was with a passport, but with hair unbarbered and flying, whiskers bristling wildly, and with a watery glint of mania in my eyes. I can't remember having taken a bath. I must have stunk like an old

shoe. Anyway, there is little I can recall about that debarkation day, save that <the Statue of Liberty was wrapped in a brown and sleazy fog, and that> somehow and in wicked delirium I got myself to a hotel near Times Square, where I slept for three days. It was not only a joyless homecoming, it was ^{lacking in dignity,} <in some ways ignoble> but I didn't care. Awaking finally one midnight to the raucous new clatter of America on the streets below, I felt like a man who on his knees has done night-long vigil, only to look up and see at the heart of the altar a pitiless and uncompromising sneer.

Fear. I had -- almost overnight, it seemed -- become the victim of the most ignoble, the meanest of emotions. <believe that the natural courage of youth would sustain me without end, not reckoning upon those subtle processes of the mind which, as we grow older, can begin to clutter up the reason and make ^{<a shambles of our bravery>} a fearful shambles of all our valor.> And so during those first few months in New York I can recall only having been prey to <the most> sickening and degrading terrors; fearful of assaults from thugs and robbers; of fire and sudden falls and disease; of suicides plummeting down to crush me, like a bug upon the sidewalk; of taxi drivers and subway platforms and of all heights above six feet; of germs in restaurants, of madmen gone beserk upon the avenues, and of electrocution in the bath. Thoughts of blights like leukemia and sarcoma and Brights' disease drummed a steady litany in my mind, and I went to a physician named Rubinstein who tested me with syringes and blood pumps, and prescribed vitamins.

More than anything I longed for the faintest shadow of health,

for a moment in which I could draw one tranquil breath hungered greedily <for serenity, too selfish to admit of the selfishness that denied the same jitters, the same frights, to people all around me.> As a neurotic first-class I must have been characteristic: paralyzed, evil-tempered, humorless, and abominably self-centered. I tried to console myself with the easy thought that in my state I was a victim -- and a part -- of the temper of the times. Yet in my new job in an office above Fifth Avenue I still made no friends, sullenly each Friday collected my pay, and took my lunch alone in Schrafft's, surrounded by malodorous fumes of skin lotion and ladies from the suburbs deep in fretful colloquies. Horribly, I realized I had in my panic come to identify myself with these matrons; failing, a-flutter, and now womanish like them, I yearned moreover, in the sickly stew that my mind had become, to be crushed in tender solace against those stern and be-corseted forms. It was despicable.

Now in retrospect certain things have become clear to me about that period in my life -- the most important among them being the fact that not once since leaving Europe had I given the slightest thought to the event (or rather series of events) which must have been the cause, or at least the trigger, for my unhappy condition. There had not been a time when my mind, even for an instant, had turned back to Sambuco, or had ever lingered upon that fantastic green-and-calcimine coast or upon the extraordinary events which took place there and which had caused in the end my headlong stampede for America. About the things which had happened to me in the recent past I had drawn a total blank,

as if there were walled up in my brain vast zones of consciousness too bleak for recall.

Only recently -- now that the letters I've received from Ben Kinsolving have managed to clear up much of the whole story -- have I been able to face the memory of that summer with passable calm. And only very recently have I been able to picture in my mind Sambuco again -- a quiet, lovely place ^{which became placid} after nine centuries the victim of all our meanness and discord.

<Sambuco stands over a thousand feet above the sea, with the descent in some places almost straight down. Aloof upon the hills, remote and beautifully difficult of access, it is a model of the few towns in Italy which have remained untouched by bombs and invasion. Had Sambuco ever lain upon a strategic route to anywhere it might not have been so lucky and at one time or another might have found itself, like Monte Cassino, crushed in ugly devastation. But the affairs of war have left the place intact, almost unnoticed, so that its homes and> of pleasure. My arrival that time had not been auspicious. I had come late at night by car, in a howling rainstorm which had transformed my journey up the serpentine valley, with its hairpin turns and appalling dips, into one of solitary terror. It was November and piercingly cold. I was hungry and evil-tempered when I drew up to the hotel, where a soggy porter thrust a lantern resentfully into my face and told me that it was late, the kitchen was closed, and that furthermore the storm had put out all the lights. The town was rainswept, black, and unutterably gloomy -- it may as well have been Nebraska -- and

I went to bed in the dark, famished and fumbling with candles, and with the resolve to call it quits with Sambuco as soon as possible.

<The next morning, however, dawned bright and clear. I was awakened by the hotel-keeper, an obsequious Swiss who came to babble smooth amends for the night before, to bring me personally a tray of eggs and bacon, and with a heavy-handed flourish to throw open the blinds. "Eccovi!" he cried, and, turning, I saw instantly, and with a touching sense of awe such as I have>

Styron's Annotated Copy of
Drewry's The Southampton Insurrection

In October 1967 Random House published The Confessions of Nat Turner, unquestionably William Styron's most controversial and popular work. The novel, cast as "a meditation on history,"¹ was narrated by the nineteenth-century black man who led the only sustained insurrection in the history of United States slavery. The novel, however, was immediately and vociferously attacked by the black intelligentsia whose burgeoning black pride and emotional militancy blinded them to the work's literary merit. Their spleen produced a collection of essays of dubious worth in which ten black writers severely chastised Styron and his novel on both historical and ideological grounds.² In the ensuing controversy few critics, black or white, were able to refrain from adding fuel to the racial fires surrounding Styron's work.³ Instead of reflecting professional objectivity and scholarly acumen, most essays were filled with the

¹William Styron, The Confessions of Nat Turner (New York: Random House, 1967), ix. All future references are cited parenthetically within the text.

²John Henrik Clarke, ed., William Styron's "Nat Turner": Ten Black Writers Respond (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968).

³See, for example, Albert Murray, "A Troublesome Property," The New Leader, 10 (4 Dec. 1967), 18-21; and C. Vann Woodward, "Confession of a Rebel: 1831," The New Republic, 157 (7 Oct. 1967), 25-28.

tired debate between "fact" and "fiction." Criticism degenerated into a nasty "guessing-game" about Styron's personal motives in distorting the so-called "facts." Little was ever said about Styron's writing or the novel's value as art.⁴ The single critic who brought any scholarly investigation to bear in his discussion of Styron's novel was in serious error when he judged Styron as a historian rather than a novelist.⁵ The Confessions of Nat Turner became an extraliterary event--a moral and political issue over which critics and reviewers could take sides. As Richard Gilman points out, "the book was immediately swept up into areas of power and influence wholly outside its existence as literature, and, even more crucially, before such existence could even be brought into question."⁶

Useful scholarship about The Confessions of Nat Turner is therefore lacking. Styron's use of source material, for example, has never been adequately investigated. In "Styron and His Sources" Henry Irving Tragle examines the sources Styron chose to abandon.

⁴The notable exception is Richard Gilman, "Nat Turner Revisited," The New Republic, 158 (27 April 1968), 23-26, 28, 32. Gilman calls the book "a mediocre novel, not a beautiful or even well-written work of fiction."

⁵Henry Irving Tragle, "Styron and His Sources," Massachusetts Review, 11 (Winter 1970), 134-53. Tragle writes that "[Styron] revealed procedures, and an attitude toward research, that no historian should rest easy with" (p. 136).

⁶Gilman, p. 23.

Here Tragle unsuccessfully attempts to demonstrate that Styron was historically irresponsible in dismissing the minutes of the Court of Southampton County and the contemporary accounts in the Richmond and Norfolk newspapers as "halfway informed and hysterical and probably not very reliable."⁷ Styron has often noted that his only contemporary source was a 5000-word document called "The Confessions of Nat Turner." This pamphlet, which Turner supposedly dictated to a Southampton County lawyer named T. R. Gray, was his main source for information about the 1831 rebellion and its leader. Another important source that Styron himself has frequently mentioned is William S. Drewry's The Southampton Insurrection. This book, published in 1900, was originally Drewry's doctoral dissertation at Johns Hopkins. About his use of Drewry's book, Styron has said:

"The Southampton Insurrection," while obviously biased, served me quite well. It helped give me a sense of the feeling and smell of the revolt, after, of course, I sieved out what I instinctively sensed was irrelevant, fake or biased.⁸

One would expect that the book which supplied Styron with his "sense of the feeling and smell of the revolt" would attract extensive commentary. But The Southampton Insurrection has remained, until now, largely unexplored as a source for The Confessions of Nat Turner.

⁷Robert Canzoneri and Page Stegner, "An Interview with William Styron," Per/Se, 1 (Summer 1966), 38.

⁸Frederic Kelly, "William Styron tells the story of the Nat Turner Rebellion," The New Haven Register, Sunday Pictorial Section, 14 Aug. 1966, p. 7.

Fortunately Styron's personal copy of Drewry's volume has survived. Presently housed in the William R. Perkins Library at Duke University, the book was annotated by Styron on 66 different pages. The most interesting and important of these annotations, though, are found on the front endpapers.⁹ These notes are significant for two reasons: first, Styron indicates certain passages in Drewry's book that are important to his fictional purposes; and second, these notes direct us to previously undiscovered source material which Styron took from Frederick Law Olmsted's book A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States.¹⁰

The history of Styron's copy of Drewry's book is in itself interesting. A Tidewater Virginia native, Styron had always wanted to write about the 1831 Nat Turner Rebellion which occurred near his birthplace in Newport News. He first encountered the Turner story as a youngster studying a benighted grammar school text of Virginia history. Here Nat is briefly mentioned as a fanatical Negro preacher who led a bloodthirsty reign of terror against the whites of Cross

⁹For the purposes of this brief study, I will confine my observations to these endpapers. The remaining 64 pages of annotations point to ample material for further discussion of Styron's methods.

¹⁰Styron's annotations here also mention Gray's "The Confessions of Nat Turner" and an article in Atlantic entitled "Jones & Johnson." The five annotations to Gray's pamphlet are only unimportant general remarks. I could not locate the Atlantic essay and Mr. Styron cannot remember the article or anything significant about it.

Keys, Virginia. In 1947, when he was enrolled in creative writing classes at the New School for Social Research in New York City, Styron spoke to his teacher Hiram Haydn about the Turner project. Haydn, later Styron's editor at Bobbs-Merrill and Random House, advised the novice author to write about a subject that he understood better.¹¹ Following Haydn's advice, Styron went to work on Lie Down in Darkness, a novel set in contemporary Tidewater Virginia. Styron's first novel won the 1952 Prix de Rome for Literature, which paid his passage to Europe in the early spring of 1952. By the time he reached Paris, Styron was thinking about his next project. In a letter dated 1 May 1952, Styron told his father, who was back in Newport News, that Nat Turner would be the subject of this novel. Shortly thereafter, in another letter, Styron asked his father to gather information about Nat's Rebellion. The elder Styron contacted a black professor at nearby Norfolk State University who directed him to some pertinent materials. Styron's father sent his son a copy of Drewry's book and a photo-reproduction of Gray's "Confessions" (also at the Duke University Library). But Styron decided to postpone his Turner novel once again. By late June of 1952 he had turned to a subject that was fresher in his mind--his Marine Reserve experiences on Parris Island, especially the brutal forced march that became the central event in his 1953

¹¹George Plimpton, "William Styron: A Shared Ordeal," The New York Times, 8 Oct. 1967, p. 2.

novella, The Long March. In 1962, two years after the publication of his second novel Set This House on Fire, Styron resumed research on the Turner insurrection. Presumably he made his annotations on the endpapers of Drewry's book at the beginning of the five-year period that culminated with the publication of The Confession of Nat Turner in 1967.

Styron's assessment of Drewry's study as "a book of considerable information and detail, and valuable to that degree"¹² is reflected by the novelist's annotations. Styron gives five paginated references to Drewry's book. The first of these annotations deals with the prevalence of apple brandy in Southampton County and the resulting problem of Negro drunkenness throughout the insurrection. Drewry's version reads:

Apple brandy was the principal source of revenue. Cotton, corn, and tobacco grew in the orchard, and while they were nurturing the apples were gathered and manufactured into brandy and cider. Thus the apple crop was clear profit. The following are the words of a native of Southampton at the time of our narrative: "Apple brandy was a factor, and an important one, in these bloody scenes. But for that many more would have been murdered. Nearly everybody at that time had an orchard, and it was probably the largest source of revenue in a county whose revenues were small. I know my father's income was derived chiefly from the brandy he made and sold. Whenever they (the negroes) stopped in their raids they drank abundantly of it."¹³

¹²"An Interview," p. 39.

¹³William S. Drewry, The Southampton Insurrection (Washington: the Neale Co., 1900), p. 104. All future references to Drewry's text are cited parenthetically within the text.

Accordingly, Styron emphasizes the importance of liquor in the final defeat of the rebellion, mentioning apple brandy and cider several times in The Confessions of Nat Turner. The first reference is significant: Nelson, a powerful member of Nat's inner circle of revolutionaries, agonizes over the problem of drunkenness in the ranks: "Us jes' gots to keep de niggers out'n dem cider presses. Let dem black bastids get at dat cider an' brandy and we done lost de war" (p. 100). Later Nat himself speaks of the wealth of apples in the countryside:

This was the estimable brandy distilled from apples growing so plentifully throughout the county. For if the soil of Southampton was utterly wrecked for tobacco and could produce cotton in qualities only adequate for subsistence, a cornucopia of apples ripened on every hand--wild and in cultivated orchards, in bramble-choked groves on dead plantations, by the wayside of each land and road. They grew in all sizes and colors and varieties, and what had once lain in wormy, decaying heaps on the ground were now dumped by the wagonload into the stills which had become each farmer's most valued asset. (p. 320)

Styron's second paginated annotation refers to Drewry's observation that "all along the route lay the murdered victims, so mangled by the murderers and disfigured by hogs as to be unrecognizable even to their friends" (Drewry, p. 118). This sentence seems merely to represent a gruesome but insignificant detail. Yet Styron transforms it into a brief but powerful set-piece that captures the dehumanizing effect of the rebellion on Nat:

As I crept past the chicken shed and into the barnyard I heard a grunting and a snuffling noise, and saw two razorback wild hogs devouring the body of a man. It

must have been the overseer. The corpse was parted from its head and I knew that the last face the man had ever seen had been that of Will. I watched the hogs rooting at the man's intestines for a moment and I was without feeling; the iniquitous mud-smear'd beasts may as well have been feeding upon slops, or offal. (p. 401)

Turner, a black preacher, has been so traumatized by the bloodshed that he has lost all human compassion. Self-preservation is his sole concern as he flees from the unburied corpse into the woods surrounding Cross Keys.

The next paginated annotation refers to Drewry's testimony that "Nat, upon his arraignment, pleaded not guilty, declaring to his counsel that he did not feel so" (Drewry, p. 98). Styron employs this "fact" twice in the published novel: first, when Nat replies to Gray's question about the rebellion leader not feeling "a pang of remorse":

"That's right, Mr. Gray. I fear I would have to plead not guilty to everything, because I don't feel guilty. And try as I might I simply can't feel--as you put it, sir--a pang of remorse. (p. 392)

and later, shortly before Turner's execution, when Gray presses Nat again about his guilt:

"Well I got to go, Reverend. I'll see you tomorrow. Meanwhile, I'll put down in my deposition to the court which precedes your confession that the defendant shows no remorse for his acts, and since he feels no guilt his plea will be that of 'not guilty.' Now, one last time, are you sure you feel no remorse at all? I mean, would you do it again if you had the chance? There's still time to change your mind. It ain't goin' to save your neck but it'll surer'n hell look better for you in court. Speak up, Reverend."

When I made no reply to him he left without further word. (pp. 398-99)

But Styron's speculation in the endpapers concerning Nat's plea is more interesting than his use of Drewry's information. Following his note to Drewry's book, Styron wrote "Perhaps an offer to be transported was made, provided he pleaded guilty but Nat's dignity and honesty did not allow." Ironically, if Styron had included his theory in the published novel, his black critics would certainly have applauded this alteration of the historical record. Any man who rejects expediency and life in favor of principles and death is made of the stern stuff of tragic heroes. But Styron realized that his speculation suggested a Christ-figure motif, a symbolic trap he strenuously labored to avoid.¹⁴ Styron views Nat not as a New Testament figure but rather as an Old Testament prophet like Ezekial or Jeremiah. True to this artistic vision, the novelist adhered to Drewry's testimony, rejecting his own theory even to the point of crossing it out in the endpapers.

Styron's final paginated annotation¹⁵ to Drewry's book concerns the author's search for a narrative voice:

Possible narrative approach: Mr. Gray and his "confession," for instance p. 101 here, powerful!

¹⁴"The Confessions of William Styron," Yale Reports (mimeographed transcript of a radio program broadcast on WTIC Radio, Hartford, Conn., 5 Nov. 1967), p. 5.

¹⁵Styron's only remaining paginated annotation to Drewry's book (p. 98) deals with the two female slaves, Charlotte and Lucy, who were reportedly the only women executed. From this passage Styron takes only the name of the slave Charlotte mentioned briefly on p. 299 of the published text.

This note is important in two ways: first, it forms the basis for dating Styron's annotations in these endpapers. We know that Styron decided on his first-person narration after reading Camus' The Stranger in the summer of 1962.¹⁶ However, this annotation shows Styron still struggling to find his narrative stance. Therefore we can assume with some justification that Styron's notes were also made in 1962, shortly before his reading of Camus' novel. Second, the possibility of Gray as narrator is significant. The lawyer's stilted rhetoric ("The expression of his fiendlike face when excited by enthusiasm, still bearing the stains of helpless innocence about him . . .") dramatically captures the puzzlement and terror characteristic of the white men in Southampton County after the rebellion. The use of Gray as teller of the tale is also an attractive device: Styron could have counterpointed the historical document written by Gray, a biased white Southern slave-owner, with the emotional "true confessions" written by a different Gray, a troubled, introspective commentator searching for an understanding of the rebellion. Furthermore, the use of Gray as narrator would have allayed the criticism of those blacks who chastised Styron for his attempt to assume the consciousness of a nineteenth-century Negro slave.

¹⁶"William Styron," p. 2.

Clearly this sampling of annotations does not exhaust the influence of Drewry's book on Styron's published novel. In fact, The Southampton Insurrection is a store-house of minute details which Styron appropriated in order to give his Confessions a realistic flavor. For example, in his study Drewry describes Nat's escape and subsequent capture at some length. Here he relates that Nat kept accurate time during this period "by means of a notched stick, which was found in the cave at the time of his capture" (Drewry, p. 90). In The Confessions of Nat Turner Styron uses the device of the notched stick in his description of Hark's ill-fated attempt at escape:

[Hark's] difficulties about finding the way began that night and plagued him all the long hours of his flight into freedom. By notches cut with his knife on a small stick each morning, he calculated (or it was calculated for him by someone who could count) the trip as having lasted six weeks. (p. 279)

Drewry's book is also the source for a horrifying detail concerning Nat's treatment by his captors. In The Southampton Insurrection, as he is transported back to Jerusalem, Nat is described as being "persecuted with pin-pricks and soundly whipped" (Drewry, p. 92). Styron amplifies Nat's torment in the published novel:

The day before, when they brought me up by foot from Cross Keys, there had been two women--banshees in sunbonnets, egged on by the men--who had pricked my back deep with hatpins a dozen times, perhaps more; the tiny wounds along my shoulders had begun fiercely to itch and I yearned to scratch them, with a hopeless craving which brought tears to my eyes, but I was prevented from doing so by the manacles. (p. 13)

Styron garners an even more gruesome "fact" from Drewry's study for his description of the murder of the Travis' infant. Drewry's version reads:

Then, remembering his resolve to spare neither age nor sex, and reflecting, as he said, that "nits make lice," Nat sent Henry and Will back to take it by the heels and dash its brains out against the bricks of the fireplace." (Drewry, p. 36)

In The Confessions of Nat Turner Gray attributes an almost identical statement to Turner:

So you say out loud, 'Nits breed lice!'-there's a delicate sentiment, I'll vow, Reverend, for a man of the cloth--and you send Henry and Will back to the house an' they take the pore pitiful little babe and dash its brains out agin the wall. (p. 392)

Frederick Law Olmsted's A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States rivals Drewry's work as a rich source of factual and realistic details for Styron's novel. Perhaps best known for his collaboration with Calvert Vaux in designing New York's Central Park, Olmsted published his influential study of the South in 1856. The book is based on a series of letters written by Olmsted to The New York Times during a journey from December 1852 to April 1853 which extended as far west as New Orleans. Olmsted, a Northerner born in Hartford, Connecticut, painted a dismal picture of Southern manners and mores, especially in his depiction of slavery. But critics applauded Olmsted for the objectivity of his reporting--a quality that was lacking in the anti-slavery tracts of the era. In his introduction to a later edition of Olmsted's book, W. P. Trent claims that:

A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States must probably rank along with Uncle Tom's Cabin and The Impending Crisis as one of the three books that did most to open the eyes of the North to the true nature of the plague of slavery and to the inflamed condition of public opinion at the South during the decade preceding the Civil War [Olmsted's book] is by far the most valuable to the historian and to the reader interested in reconstructing the past.¹⁷

Since Styron's major burden in The Confessions of Nat Turner was achieving a "reconstruction of the past," it is not surprising that he relied heavily on Olmsted's book. But Styron has only mentioned this study once in his published interviews and then only in an oblique reference in defense of the Negro dialect in the novel.¹⁸ However, the endpapers of the Drewry book reveal that Styron gleaned many important details from Olmsted's Journey. Styron refers to Olmsted in eighteen different annotations--half of which are paginated.¹⁹ Of these eighteen annotations only nine point to material that eventually appears in the published novel. But even the references that do not directly contribute to the

¹⁷Frederick Law Olmsted, A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States: In the Years 1853-1854 With Remarks on Their Economy (New York: G. P. Putnam's, 1904), xxxi-xxxii. All future references to Olmsted's text are cited parenthetically within the text.

¹⁸"William Styron," p. 2.

¹⁹Styron refers to Olmsted's book by writing "Olmstead" [sic] or "Olm." and then the page number. The unpaginated annotations are easily located in Olmsted's text because Styron made his notes in the order of the pages; that is, if an unpaginated reference is preceded by a paginated one (p. 121) and followed by another paginated one (p. 124), the unpaginated material will be found between pp. 121-24.

finished work are significant because they show Styron "doing his homework," bolstering his own knowledge of life in Southampton County with the observations of a reliable contemporary of the Turner Rebellion. For example, Styron notes a description of a horse in Olmsted that may prove valuable:

The filly was just so pleasantly playful, and full of well-bred life, as to create a joyful, healthy, sympathetic, frolicsome heedlessness in his rider--walking rapidly, and with a sometimes irresistible inclination to dance and bounce. (Olmsted, p. 68)

In the endpapers Styron speculates that Nat might have had such a horse during his raid. Styron may have been attracted to Olmsted's filly because of the dramatic possibilities involved in having Nat, the grim avenging angel, seated on so lively and friendly a mount. Apparently Styron abandoned this idea, though, since this horse does not appear in The Confessions of Nat Turner. Another annotation shows Styron striving for historical accuracy. In this case Styron turns to Olmsted for a reliable description of the buildings in the small village of Jerusalem, Nat's main objective during the insurrection:

I rode to the Court House, which was a plain brick building in the centre of a small square, around which there were twenty or thirty houses, two of them being occupied as stores, one as a saddler's shop, one had the sign of "Law Office" upon it, two were occupied by physicians, one other looked as if it might be a meeting-house or school house, or the shop of any mechanic needing much light for his work, and two were "Hotels." (Olmsted, p. 82)

But Styron finally abandons this passage, deciding not to describe Jerusalem in the novel. These annotations also reveal Styron's healthy skepticism concerning the surviving historical record. He questions, for example, the feasibility of the rebel's survival in the Great Dismal Swamp, Nat's ultimate goal according to Gray and Drewry. Styron finds his answer in Olmsted's book:

"But, meanwhile, how does the negro support life in the swamp?" I asked.

"Oh, he gets sheep and pigs and calves, and fowls and turkeys; sometimes they will kill a small cow If it is cold, he will crawl under a fodder-stack, or go into the cabin with some of the other negroes, and in the same way, you see, he can get all the corn, or almost anything else he wants." (Olmsted, p. 112)

Satisfied that Turner and his band could survive, Styron retains the Great Dismal Swamp in the published novel.

Those annotations, which refer to material that Styron wove into his narrative, range in importance from minor but realistic specifics such as the food and clothing of Negro slaves to a lengthy sermon that Styron adopts almost verbatim from Olmsted's text. The first of these smaller details concerns the treatment of mules and horses by Negroes. In his study of the South Drewry writes:

So, too, when I ask why mules are so universally substituted for horses on the farm, the first reason given, and confessedly the most conclusive one, is, that horses cannot bear the treatment that they always must get from negroes; horses are always soon foundered or crippled by them, while mules will bear cudgelling, and lose a meal or two now and then, and not be materially injured, and they do not take cold or get sick if neglected or overworked. (Drewry, p. 51)

Styron changes this passage slightly, including oxen along with horses as animals mistreated by black slaves:

I could hear Hark in the barn with the mules. The oxen that Moore once owned he had replaced with mules, partially because mules--unlike oxen and certainly horses--would sustain almost any punishment handed out by Negroes, a people not notably sweet-natured around domestic animals. (p. 293)

Two of Styron's annotations deal with the terrain of Southampton County, in particular the condition of the farm and timber land.

In his Journey Olmsted wrote powerfully about the over-cultivation of the soil:

"Old fields"--a coarse, yellow, sandy soil, bearing scarce anything but pine trees and broom-sledge. In some places, for acres, the pines would not be above five feet high--that was land that had been in cultivation, used up and "turned out," not more than six or eight years before (Olmsted, p. 72)

In the novel Olmsted's words are echoed by Samuel Turner, Nat's most humane master, as he explains why he must sell his slaves:

"Well, soon all of them will be gone--everything--not just the land now utterly consumed by the terrible weed, not just the wagons and the pigs and the oxen and the mules but the men too . . . all gone south, leaving Virginia to the thorn bushes and the dandelions. (p. 220)

Olmsted also mentions the variety of trees in Southampton County:

Out of the cool, dark-green alley, at last, and soon with a more cautious step, down a steep, stony declivity, set with deciduous trees--beech, ash, oak, gum (Olmsted, p. 76)

These same trees are scattered across the landscape of Styron's novel. Nat, for example, names two of them when he describes his

tedious work on Moore's farm:

Nor was there any such thing as "nothing to do," for looming like a black wall above and beyond all this work, no matter what the season, was the stand of pine and gum and poplar and oak which I had to help Moore cut down (p. 271)

Styron demonstrates his propensity for realistic detail in two annotations concerning the difference between Negro and white food.

Of Negro food Olmsted writes:

I was assured however . . . that, generally, the slaves were well provided for--always allowed a sufficient quantity of meal, and, generally, of pork (Olmsted, p. 120)

According to Olmsted, white Southerners ate substantially better:

There was fried fowl, and fried bacon and eggs, and cold ham; there were preserved peaches, and preserved quinces and grapes; there was hot wheaten biscuits, and hot short-cake, and hot corn-cake, and hot griddle cakes, soaked in butter (Olmsted, p. 88)

In the novel Styron juxtaposes these diets in order to underscore the humane treatment that Nat receives from Joseph Travis:

Instead of nigger food I was accustomed to at Moore's, fat pork and corn pone, I got house food like the white people--a lot of lean bacon and red meat, occasionally even the leavings from a roast of beef, and often white bread made of wheat (p. 48)

Styron's desire for accuracy even extends to the clothing of Negroes. Olmsted describes the dress of male slaves in his book:

As to the clothing of the slaves on the plantations they are said to be usually furnished by their owners or masters, every year, each with a coat and trousers, of a coarse woollen or woollen and cotton stuff . . . for Winter, trousers of cotton osnaburghs for Summer, sometimes with a jacket also of the same; two pairs

of strong shoes, one pair of strong boots and one of lighter shoes for harvest; three shirts; one blanket, and one felt hat. (Olmsted, p. 124)

Nat has a similar wardrobe when he is sold to Reverend Eppes:

My Bible was the only possession I had to take away from Turner's Mill save for these things: a single change of denim pants, two cotton shirts, an extra pair of what are elegantly known as nigger brogans (p. 229)

Styron also relies on Olmsted in his portrayal of two other interesting sub-classes of the antebellum South--the free Negroes and the poor whites. Of the former Olmsted writes: "Our free negroes . . . are a miserable set of vagabonds, drunken, vicious, worse off, it is my honest opinion, than those who are retained in slavery" (p. 48). This statement is Styron's inspiration for his sketch of Arnold, the drunken free Negro in the novel:

Now having been set free through the grace and piety of his late mistress (who had left him a hundred dollars--which he had squandered in brandy during his first free year--but who had not thought to teach him a trade), the oafish old fellow dwelt upon life's farthest rim, more insignificant and wretched than he had ever been in slavery (p. 261)

Drewry's portrait of the poor white Southerner is equally distressing:

I have been told once or twice that the poor white people . . . are worse off in almost all respects than the slaves. They are said to be extremely ignorant and immoral, as well as indolent and unambitious. (Olmsted, p. 93-94)

This passage is a compendium of the vices that Styron attributes to the poor white trash of Jerusalem:

These white idlers were the rogues and dregs of the community: penniless drunks and cripples, scroungers,

handymen, ex-overseers, vagabonds from North Carolina, harelipped roustabouts, squatters on pineland barrens, incorrigible loafers, cretins, rascallions, and dimwits of every description . . . allowing the slaves from their market promontory a bracing glimpse of white men worse off--in certain important respects at least--than themselves. (p. 305)

The most interesting item of source material is the sermon that Styron takes directly from Olmsted's text (pp. 131-32). This sermon, which is "a specimen of the most careful kind of preaching, ordinarily addressed by the white clergy to the black sheep of their flocks" (p. 131), was originally delivered by Bishop Meade of the Church of England in Virginia. After changing several words and deleting about a third of Meade's sermon, Styron put the Bishop's words into the mouth of Richard Whitehead, a young Methodist minister and brother of Catherine Whitehead, the only victim Nat personally dispatches during the rebellion. This alteration tightens the structure of the novel: by making Whitehead the preacher, Styron avoids having to introduce another character. Richard's sermon also places him in direct opposition to both Catherine and Nat. The minister's obvious pro-slavery sentiments are the antithesis of his sister's humanistic attitudes; his harangue urging subservience of Negroes to their masters is diametrically opposed to Nat's religion of revolt. More importantly, Styron uses the sermon contrapuntally: he ironically counterpoints Nat's description of his fanatical conspirators with Whitehead's message of forbearance of temporal pain as a necessary prelude to happiness in the afterlife. For example, Nat's description of half-mad Will is preceded by Whitehead's plea for earthly obedience in light of God's terrible vengeance:

And though you could manage so cleverly as to escape the eyes and hands of man, yet think what a dreadful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God, who is able to cast both soul and body into hell . . .

And now through the soft moaning of the black crowd . . . I hear another voice behind me and very near, almost at my shoulder, a harsh rapid low muttering, almost incoherent, like the sound of a man in the clutch of fever . . . me some of dat white stuff, yas, get me some of dat white stuff, yas . . . (pp. 101-02).

Any discussion of Styron's annotations in Drewry's book merely touches on "the tip of the iceberg." A careful examination of the entire text of both Drewry's The Southampton Insurrection and Olmsted's A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States will doubtless unearth additional valuable insights into Styron's making of The Confessions of Nat Turner. Moreover, these two books are merely a small corner of Styron's research for the novel. Future scholars should explore Styron's extensive reading on slavery for additional important source material. For the present it may be stated with certainty that Styron's annotations show him to be a wide-ranging and attentive researcher in recreating a historical event--and not as his early black critics contended, a careless distorter of historical facts.

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WILLIAM STYRON: THREE STUDIES IN COMPOSITIONAL METHOD

by

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(ABSTRACT)

William Styron is one of the most respected and frequently studied authors of his generation. Critical recognition of his role as a shaping force in post-modernist fiction has resulted in the production of a large body of published work: a full-scale descriptive primary bibliography and an extensive annotated secondary one; a collection of recent Styron criticism; and two published casebooks that explore Styron's most recent novel, The Confessions of Nat Turner.

Traditional scholarly study of Styron's work is, however, sorely lacking. This study addresses this need by examining several extant Styron manuscripts: Chapter I deals with the holograph manuscript, the "working" typescript, and the "editorial" typescript of Styron's first novel, Lie Down in Darkness (1951). Chapter II treats the unpublished discarded opening to the author's second novel, Set This House on Fire (1960). The final chapter focuses on Styron's annotations on the endpapers of his copy of William S. Drewry's The Southampton Insurrection, an important source for The Confessions of Nat Turner (1967). These documents supply clues to Styron's compositional method and therefore add to our understanding of the author, his fictions, and his reading public.