

Myth as Structure in *Raintree County*

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『愛情の花咲く樹』(*Raintree County*)は、ロス・ロックリッジ(Ross Lockridge, Jr.)によって書かれたアメリカの小説である。20世紀中頃に出版されたこの小説は、批評家たちの高い評価を受けて多くの賞を獲得した。この小説の構造は古代ギリシャ、ユダヤキリスト教、およびアメリカの多くの神話に基づいている。神話は集合的意識と儀式的再創造への参加を通してある社会にそれ自身の文化をあらわにする機能を持つので、作者はこれらの神話を小説の構造として用いることで読者に現代アメリカ文化の本質を説明することができる。

この稿では『愛情の花咲く樹』における神話の構造の使用について、さまざまな神話を通して基本構造がどのように進行するか、神話が構造においてどのように年代順の時間を回避し、読者を創造の起源に立ち返らせるために用いられるか、そしてこれらの神話が読者がより大きく小説に関与し、現代アメリカ文化の儀式的再創造についてより深く理解できるように作者によってどのように活用されているかに着目して概説し、論じ、解明する。

Myth functions as an explanation of the world in which we live. Myths “are stories that tell a society what is important for it to know, whether about its gods, its history, its laws, or its class

structure.”¹⁾ Myths are capable of revealing and teaching a society its cultural aspects because myth functions in the collective consciousness of a society in the same way that a dream functions in the consciousness of an individual ; they both represent the escape of the unconscious physical desires of procreation into the world of the conscious where they are controlled. So, by studying a myth, we can see what aspects of a culture are necessary to know for the maintenance and continuation of that culture, as culture is the consciousness of a society that creates structure and so represses the chaos and disorder that would result from the uninhibited release of the unconscious physical desires. Hence, the myth will show us, as in the dream, the proper means for continuing culture by controlling the unconscious with the conscious.

In his attempt to produce a the Great American Novel, Ross Lockridge, Jr. employs myth as a structure for is novel, Raintree County, in order to teach Americans the true nature of their consciousness as a culture. To achieve the same didactic feature of myth, Lockridge creates his own myth. He creates a myth by demonstrating how the hero of this story performs the same monomythic quest for the answer to the riddle of life as the heroes of traditional myths. The unique structure of this novel allows this writer to create his myth, and the use of myths as structure provides structural coherence among myths from various cultural perspectives, all allowing the author to send the hero on a quest for the answer to life in the present.

In order to reveal to a society its current cultural consciousness, it is necessary to show what was created at the origin of the culture's existence, as the origin and creation of an object will tell us its meaning. Mircea Eliade's view of the structure and function of myths is that myths function as reminders of our origins and that, by ritually experiencing the myths, we experience the time of the creation, which "implies that one is no longer living in chronological time, but in primordial time, the time when the event *first took place*."²⁾ "To re-experience that time, to re-enact it as often as possible, to witness again the spectacle of the divine works, to meet with the supernaturals and relearn their creative lesson is the desire that runs like a pattern through all the ritual reiterations of myths."³⁾ Therefore, for his work to function as a myth and relate to the American people their cultural consciousness, the author has structured his novel so that the hero escapes chronological time in the narrative structure of the novel in order that he can find the origin of the creation of himself and of his culture.

The novel is structured so that the hero, John Wickliff Shawnessy, departs on his mythic quest on America's ritual day of remembrance of its creation, the Fourth of July, through a series of flashbacks that take him back to the beginnings of himself. As he begins his search for the origins of his life and as his life parallels the history of nineteenth century America, we can see that John Shawnessy acts as the representative hero of America.

The first flashback occurs on the morning of the Fourth of July

and takes the hero back to the first event of his conscious existence. Then, as the day of the Fourth progresses from morning to evening, so do the hero's flashbacks progress from his childhood up to the day on which the hero is remembering his origin.

The novel is divided into twelve sections, each of which represents a mythic theme. The eighteenth century's return to the study of Graeco-Roman literature greatly influenced literature in the coming ages. The writers of the nineteenth century relied heavily on this traditional literature for its metaphors, as readers would better understand the hero of a modern work if they were offered a comparison with something they were already familiar with. This technique, known as *prefiguration*, can be extended from a limited comparison on the level of a simile, to an extended comparison using the whole plot of the myth. The use of this technique creates a closer relationship between the work of literature and the reader as the reader can better understand the events of the novel as they follow or deviate from the myth. This can be seen in such works as Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* and James Joyce's *Ulysses*.

The twelve major sections of *Raintree County* each employs a mythic plot prefiguration as a means of showing that Johnny Shawnessy is making the epic journey for the Republic of America in the same way that other mythic heroes have taken their journeys for their respective cultures.

By using the structure of flashbacks as representative of the

mythic hero's quest for the origin and answer to the riddle of life for himself and the people he represents, and by using the flashbacks as a technique for escaping chronological time in the novel and so juxtaposing the story segments that represent the mythic quality of American life with those segments that represent the mythic lives of the heroes of Western culture's traditional myths, Ross Lockridge, Jr. is able to create a hero who represents the American hero with the ability to discover the American dream.

The twelve divisions of this novel represent either a Graeco-Roman myth, a Christian myth, or a segment of American history. As the reader sees the events of the hero's life parallel the events of American history and at the same time parallel the actions of mythic heroes, they come to realize that Johnny Shawnessy is reliving the life of a mythic hero as an American mythic hero. Of the twelve segments of this novel, four represent the hero living the American myth, four represent the hero's reliving of an ancient myth, and the other four represent the feminine counterpart of the hero.

The first section of *Raintree County* is entitled "A Great Day." This section sets the scene of the novel in nineteenth century America during the ritual celebration of America's independence, the Fourth of July, and it is also the four-hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America in 1492. We can see that this sets up the myth of America as it introduces the ritual day in which the hero remembers both his and the country's origins, "YES, SIR,

here's the Glorious Fourth again."⁴) It reviews and recalls, as the hero will, the historical events of the past fifty years,

In those fifty years the Great West has been conquered, and the Frontier has been closed. The Union has been preserved in the bloodiest war of all time. The Black Man has been emancipated. Giant new industries have been created. The Golden Spike has been driven at Promontory Point, binding ocean to ocean in bands of steel. Free Education has been brought to the masses. Cities have blossomed from the desert.⁵)

and it introduces a mythic theme of America which functions as the American myth by which the reader can recognize the hero as the American hero.

The events of this day of ritual remembrance are structured with an American mythic theme so that, as the flashbacks carry mythic themes of our past heritage, the reader will be comparing the juxtaposition provided through the flashbacks of the hero's reliving of Graeco-Roman and Christian mythic themes with the hero's reliving of the American myth. This increases the reader's awareness of Johnny Shawnessy as the hero who will return with the answer to life in America.

The theme that is employed as a prefiguration for this section as the American mythic theme is Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story, *The Great Stone Face*. Although this story is not a myth in

the literal sense of a myth being traditionally the verbal heritage of a culture, Hawthorne's use of mythic archetypes in order to create a myth creates a better connection and comparison with the older, more traditional myths as it draws the reader into the mythic world of *Raintree County*, which is also creating a myth in its mythic attempt at explaining American life. In this sense, the author uses aspects of myth in a similar manner to that employed by Hawthorne. "A Great Day" introduces the return to the city of their origin of the archetypal characters represented in "The Great Stone Face."

Boyd Litzinger demonstrates in his brief article, "Myth-making in America; 'The Great Stone Face' and *Raintree County*," one of the few articles available concerning this novel, "that the central theme of *Raintree County* is an extension and elaboration of the mythical elements in Hawthorne's 'The Great Stone Face.'" ⁶⁾ Hawthorne's story is read by the budding scholar, Shawnessy, during his education at the academy he attends, and several pages are donated, in the novel, to a summary of the story. The story relates that in a valley existed a rock formation that resembled a human face, and a legend in the valley prophesized that,

A child should be born hereabouts, who was destined to become the greatest and noblest personage of his time, and whose countenance, in manhood, should bear an exact resemblance to the Great Stone Face.⁷⁾

The story continues as four likely candidates — a millionaire, a famous general, a politician, and a poet — return to their native valley. But none of these distinguished personages resembles the Great Stone Face. But then the poet realizes that one of the local villagers is the true hero as, “Ernest is himself the likeness of the Great Stone Face.”⁸⁾

On “The Great Day” four likely candidates for “the Greatest living American”⁹⁾ return to Raintree County, the place of their birth:

Nor is the Senator the only nationally known figure in Waycross today. His friend and ours, another Raintree County boy, Mr. Cassious P. Carney, the famous multimillionaire, is expected to be there. And our own great war hero, General Jacob J. Jackson, is going to lead a march of G..A.R. veterans to point up the pension issue. There are rumors of other celebrities coming on the Senator’s special train, and all in all it looks like the little town of Waycross will have dern near as many famous people in it today as Washington, D. C. If the celebrated Stanley set out to explore this dark continent tomorrow for the Greatest Living American, he could do worse than get off a train in Waycross to ask his famous question...

MR. JOHN WICKLIFF SHAWNESSY

I presume?¹⁰⁾

Here we have the archetypal characters of the politician, the millionaire, and the general. Also, the poet (whose name is not mentioned because of his shady past, as he attempted to run off with a minister's wife) is rumored to be on the train. As in Hawthorne's story, these famous people return to Raintree County during the day of the Fourth of July, but none of them represents "The Greatest Living American." However, at the end of "The Great Day," the poet realizes that it is John Wickliff Shawnessy who represents "The Greatest Living American." In "The Great Stone Face" the greatest personage resembles a significant part of the landscape. In Raintree County the poet shows that John Wickliff Shawnessy is the representative of Raintree County, and so of America, by carving his initials, JWS, in the air with his cane. Shawnessy realizes then that his initials resemble the path of the river on the map of Raintree County. "Using Freud's definition of a map or chart as drawings which seem, to the innocent eye, to be maps or charts but appear, on closer inspection, as representations of the human body, "¹¹) we can see that just as the hero of "The Great Stone Face" resembles a physical part of his landscape, so does the hero of Raintree County have the identity of his individuality printed on the map of his homeland.

The next division of Raintree County adopts the myth of Adam as a prefiguration of this novel's hero. From this section on, Johnny has flashbacks to the days of his youthful innocence, from the period of his earliest memories to the point of the loss of his

innocence with the loss of his virginity. As Adam, Johnny attempts to return to the innocence of his youth and, as is revealed from the events of the flashbacks, his youth takes place in an Edenic garden. "As Adam his quest for the Raintree is a search for the lost Eden and the Trees of Knowledge of Good and Evil and Life. He wishes to return to that state of sublime innocence which has been lost to man forever." ¹²⁾ Johnny Shawnessy resembles Adam in this section's flashbacks in his idyllic life in a paradisaical garden and in his loss of this perfect life as a result of tasting the forbidden fruit.

The prefigurative mythic theme operating in this flashback is first introduced when, as a child, our hero is taught the stories of the Bible.

Some of the legends of the Bible became as much a part of him as his own life in the County. His mother had early read him the story of Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden, of God and the guileful Serpent, and of the tree that bore the Forbidden Fruit.

The greatest mystery of all was the Forbidden Tree. What kind of tree was it and why was it forbidden? And where was that other tree, the Tree of life, that Adam and Eve might also have eaten of to live forever? And why had God forbidden them to eat the fruit of the trees at all?¹³⁾

Also, as a child, Johnny had heard the legend of the origin of the name of Raintree County.

According to a popular legend, the earliest settlers found a ragged preacher wandering in the neighborhood of a lake in the middle of the County. He told them that in his youth he had had a vision of Heaven in which he beheld a green land full of fruitbearing trees and pleasant waters and had gone seeking for its earthly counterpart through the wilderness of America, carrying with him the seed of an oriental tree never before planted in America. Now he had found, as he believed, the land of his vision.

--Lo! I have sowed the seed, he cried. The Raintree will blossom in the western earth. The tree of life will drop its golden fruit in the new earthly Paradise.¹⁴⁾

This legend expresses a vision of an Edenic paradise ; where Johnny finds the legendary Raintree of Raintree County, there will he also find paradise on earth, and will moreover reenact the role of Adam.

As a young man, Johnny Shawnessy goes in search of the legendary Raintree in the woodlands of the county. The place where he looks for and eventually finds the tree is at Paradise Lake.

...he kept looking about him so see if he could see any

unusual tree that might be the celebrated Raintree...

He felt that he must be very close to Paradise Lake.¹⁵⁾

Like Adam, Johnny will find the legendary tree in Paradise.

Almost all of the women in *Raintree County* play the archetypal mythic role of Eve. Two women are portrayed as Eve in this section. The first is Nell Gaither, who epitomizes the innocent characteristics of Eve, and the other is Susanna Drake, who portrays the evil and seductive side of Eve.

Johnny first meets Nell when, as a child, he goes to play on the banks of the river. Then, as a young man, while drying off in the grass after swimming, he sees the nude form of Nell leave the river on the opposite bank and disappear into the foliage. Johnny and Nell are later brought together in a scene on the banks of Paradise Lake during an outing celebrating their graduation and attainment of knowledge, swimming together in the nude. But the two never consummate their love as they represent the innocence of life in the Garden of Eden.

The fall from grace component of the Adam and Eve myth occurs at the end of this section (according to the chronological order of the events of John Shawnessy's life, but not according to the chronological order of the flashbacks as they occur in the novel, as will be seen later) when John loses his innocence with Susanna beneath the Raintree at Paradise Lake.

Adam and Eve tasted of the tree of knowledge. Myth shows us

that the most important knowledge is that of origins, as knowing the origins takes one back to the time of creation and so gives one the power of creation. Adam and Eve learned the knowledge of the creation of man in their knowledge of sexual intercourse, which is the origin of all humankind. During a Fourth of July picnic, Johnny and Susanna find the tree of knowledge, which is represented by the Raintree, under which they make love, as they learn the knowledge of their origins in learning about the act of creation.

As Adam and Eve were evicted from Paradise, so do Johnny and his Eve leave their garden of innocence and happiness. After losing his innocence, Johnny no longer leads an idyllic life as he is forced through the guilt of his sin to marry Susanna ; their marriage is no paradise as it leads, in the later events of the novel, to war.

In the next section of *Raintree County*, the hero is portrayed as Eve. Four of the sections using mythic prefigurations rely on the myth of Eve. As the hero represents all humankind, to be truly representative of all humankind he must represent both the female and male sides. The four sections that employ Eve as a mythic prefiguration display the feminine side of the androgenous hero.

This section introduces the daughter of John Shawnessy, Eva. The name alone is enough to note a comparison with Eve. Moreover, as she is the child of our hero and so created from him as Eve was mythically created from Adam, an even closer

relationship to the mythic Eve is made manifest. As “The removal of the feminine into another form symbolizes the beginning of the fall from perfection into duality,”¹⁶⁾ and as the creation of Eve symbolized the beginning of the fall, so is Eva introduced in the novel (or created by the author) at this point in order to symbolize the figure of Eve and the fall from grace. At the end of the last section, our hero fell from grace through his sin, so in introducing a female figure as the hero, the author shows us that our hero has fallen from perfection into duality and hence will no longer live the ideal life once found in paradise.

As with her father, Eva’s flashbacks occur from that present Fourth of July on which the novel opens, and take her back to the paradisaical garden of her childhood. In this we can see that Eva is the feminine counterpart of her father as she also takes the hero’s part in her escape from chronological time through a return to her origins. Her memories take her back to her childhood in Greenville where she symbolizes the innocent Eve until she drowns a doll in a green pool. After this symbolically tragic event, her family moves to Moreland, where she becomes a student at her father’s school.

...for Eva the life at Greenville was a changed life. The dominant image of this new life was the pond mucky and green, full of spooling and spawning forms of fish and frogs and snakes scarily beautiful. Deeply puzzled by the miracle of life and the mystery of the sexes, Eva was a

moody, jealous little girl during the years at Greenville. It was here that she committed the greatest crime of her life, the murder of the boy doll.¹⁷⁾

This passage provides the reader with images of Eden as the setting is that of a green fecundity of life, complete with snakes. As the knowledge of life and the sexes was gained by Eve, so does Eva seek and gain this knowledge. The greatest crime of Eva's life occurs just before she leaves Greenville when she drowns a boy doll. This can symbolically be seen as the same crime that Eve committed as Eve ended Adam's days in the garden because of her envy of God's knowledge of good and evil. So does Eva end the boy doll's life because of her envy of her brother's possession of it. After this crime, she moves to a new town where she gains knowledge of life from her father.

Eva sometimes wondered if she ever got very far beyond the great enlightenment of those first few years when her father was her teacher and she learned that all things were founded on fundamental principles and that the process of knowing was a matter of grasping those principles and keeping them steadfastly in mind.¹⁸⁾

In her move from the innocence of the garden, through a crime, to a new knowledge of life, Eva parallels the story of Eve.

Following the section concerning the myth of Eve, we return to

a section with a distinctly American theme. After casting Johnny Shawnessy as the mythic hero by juxtaposing his life against the background of the Adam and Eve myth (and several other minor mythic themes, metaphors, and similes), the novel's focus pans back to the hero's reliving of the American myth as his life parallels the legendary events of nineteenth century America. Two more sections covering the American themes will occur later; in these three sections the hero's life represents the events leading up to the Civil War and the war itself. This first section has the hero's life resembling the first altercations between the North and the slave-holding South as John Brown attempts to free the slaves and is hung for his heroic deed.

This section, "The Great Road of the Republic," represents Johnny Shawnessy as entering into the role of the American hero as he takes responsibility for his actions by marrying the supposedly pregnant Susanna, thus reaffirming the standards of American society.

Johnny's marriage to Susanna symbolized the events of the war as "Susanna Drake, the Southern Belle with Negro blood, is a physical embodiment of the war. She has a long scar between her breasts, which represents the scar the war is to leave on the South as well as the tragic division it will cause. Her heritage is one of mixed slave and free blood."¹⁹⁾

While getting his mail at the post office, Johnny stops to chat with a group of men who are discussing the recent raid at Harper's Ferry by "a man name John Brown that used to do all

that feudin' in Kansas." ²⁰⁾ After conversing about these momentous events, John opens his mail and discovers that Susanna is pregnant. This letter juxtaposes the beginning of trouble for America with the beginning of trouble for the American hero.

In the next flashback, Johnny is walking to Susanna's house to ask for her hand in marriage. As he was walking, "He was thinking then of John Brown, who had fought for the freedom of a few million nameless black men, shadowy projections of the Southern earth where they toiled."²¹⁾ Johnny compares himself to John Brown:

No one could keep the old man from the rope. John Brown must die, terribly alone as all men must.

But John Shawnessy was alive. He would go tomorrow to far, strange places. He would escape and pleasure himself with a barbaric love while the old man went down to a dirty grave.²²⁾

At the end of the flashback, after becoming engaged to Susanna, Johnny is further compared to John Brown and by the comparison, cast in the light of the American hero.

On the morrow he would rise and go forth and marry himself to a strange, wistful girl from the Deep South, and John Brown, too, would go forth to an equally ancient and

mysterious wedding. Who were these two men and who were these millions waiting for the dawn, these citizens of the Republic, wounding and loving, losing and finding each other in the human landscape of time and fate? So long as John Wickliff Shawnessy could spring up joyous in the springing day, John Brown would never die, not one would ever die, and one heroic soul was enough to sustain the whole mass and fabric of the world.²³⁾

Johnny and Susanna's marriage is celebrated on December 2, 1859, the day that John Brown is to be hung. The wedding scene is set against the scene of the execution through the use of newspaper clippings. When the people begin to gather for the wedding, so does the crowd begin to gather around the scaffold for the execution. As John enters the church, John Brown climbs the scaffold. And as John is married, John Brown swings.

In later sections, Johnny will continue to represent the American hero as his life parallels the historical events of the Civil War.

The next section returns us to the mythic theme of Eve, but this time with the wife that Johnny Shawnessy is married to during the Fourth of July flashbacks, Esther Root, representing Eve. The title of this section, "The Oldest Story in the World," reflects the Adam and Eve story in a reference from Johnny's childhood, "The story of Adam and Eve was the oldest story in the World."²⁴⁾ Even though Johnny's daughter, Eva, has already

prefigured Eve, as have other women in the minor mythic themes of the novel, his wife, Esther, will also represent Eve as “Eve was his mother, his daughter, and his wife.”²⁵⁾ This first section with Esther prefiguring Eve represents the innocent Eve of paradise, while the second section with Esther, the eleventh section, “Between Two Worlds,” prefigures Eve’s eviction from Eden.

The author continues to create comparisons through flashbacks and prefigurations. Esther’s flashbacks occur while she is listening to the Reverend Lloyd G. Jarvey give a sermon relating the story of Adam and Eve. In recounting the creation of Eve, the Reverend explains that,

--Body and soul, the Woman was made out of Man.
Body and soul the Woman belongs to Man. God made her
to be Man’s partner and helpmeet, and o, sisters of the
congregation, how woefully she betrayed His trust!²⁶⁾

Esther recalls how she was created from her current husband and Adam personification, Johnny, as she had been a student of his when she was a child. While waiting for her teacher-creator and future husband, the love-sick little girl appears to be living in a paradisaical garden.

It was warm in the sunlight. The green grass of
Raintree County was rushing up around her, a dense hair
growing. The precise faces of flowers were close to her face.

Shiny insect forms, looking impossibly clean and perfect, were in the thick growing of the green world around her.

The sunlight drenched her naked legs with warmth. She was all alone in the woods beside the little path. She was all alone and waiting in the green murmurous garden of Raintree County, a small girl, nine years old, weak with love and waiting.²⁷⁾

The Reverend continues his sermon with the tableau of the temptation of Eve by the serpent.

And now brothers and sisters of the congregation, we are approachin' that fateful moment which plunged the world into darkness. For the Woman and the Serpent find themselves one day beneath the Tree. And the fruit is hangin' low, temptin' the Woman. And the Serpent beguiles her and he seduces her with soft talk about the Tree. Look at it! he says. Hit's wonderful fruit. Why shouldn't you eat of it? But the Woman still has some slight stirrin' of conscience. She is not yet completely seduced and corrupted. The Lord has forbidden it, she says.²⁸⁾

When the Reverend reaches this scene of temptation, Esther recalls how she was tempted by a snake-like figure in paradise. Esther, like Eve, seeks knowledge in paradise as she and Johnny meet again after years of separation at the Raintree County

Teachers Institute held that summer at Paradise Lake. The summer tourist resort is billed as “a very Eden.”²⁹⁾

Johnny and Esther fall in love at Paradise Lake. They retain their innocence, as Adam and Eve did before the fall, even though they meet close to the mystical Raintree, which symbolizes the tree which holds the forbidden fruit. Before both of the occasions on which she meets Johnny near the tree, Esther encounters a snake, obviously symbolizing the serpent that tempted Eve.

Then it was that she stepped on the snake, a long lewd fellow, writhing under her very feet and slithering away in the water with a gay fury.³⁰⁾

A snake swam in a pool not far away.³¹⁾

The great sin is prevented when Esther’s father hears rumors of his daughter’s love affair and takes her away from the temptation of Paradise Lake. But this is only a postponement of the sin against her father, as will be seen in the eleventh section.

Returning once again to an American mythic theme, the sixth section, “House Divided,” continues with the theme of the American hero symbolically living in parallel the life of the Republic as the events in the course of Johnny’s marriage with Susanna correspond to the events of the Civil War.

The first flashback to greet the reader in this section provides an in depth view of the South with its institution of slavery just

prior to the war. For their honeymoon, Johnny and Susanna journey to the bride's old home of New Orleans. Here Johnny learns the secrets of Susanna's past, her possibly inherited insanity and her suspected negro blood, that will later create battles in the war that becomes their marriage. In addition to learning about Susanna's dark secrets, Johnny learns about the secrets of the South and its cruel and brutal institution of slavery, one cause of the battles of the war dividing America.

The flashback following on the journey south pictures the newlyweds back in Raintree County, Indiana, with Susanna's two negro slaves. As the North and the South argue over the divisive issue of slavery, Johnny and Susanna argue over the freedom of her two slaves. This altercation signifies the first ripples of trouble for this newlywed couple and reflects the torment of the issue of slavery as an incipient point of altercation for the nation. This flashback ends with a summary of the events leading up to the war. The two page summary is discharged with the simple line, "Susanna was coming to her time."³²⁾ Susanna nears her time to give birth to their child, and the Republic prepares to bear arms for war.

As the Civil War begins with the surrender of Fort Sumter, so does the brief life of Susanna's baby begin. During the thirty-four hours of shelling of Fort Sumter, April 12-13, 1861, Susanna goes through a false labor, and later suffers more labor pains. When the flag is struck from Sumter, the baby is born. The same newspaper edition that carries the news of the fall of Sumter also

carries the announcement of the boy's birth. A two page summary of the events of the Civil War leading up to the Battle of Gettysburg is followed by the short statement, "During this time, the child was growing." ³³⁾ And, as the events of the war inexorably march on, so does trouble with Susanna intensify. Her inherited madness begins to manifest itself in various ways as battles between the conscious and the unconscious rage in her mind.

The last flashback of the "House Divided" section finds Johnny's life more than ever allied to the mania of the war as Susanna in her madness disappears with their child. Johnny must then fight a battle to find his wife and child and restore the union of their marriage, while in the background of the day that Johnny conducts his wild search the Battle of Gettysburg rages. The climactic event of the war, the Battle of Gettysburg, occurs at the same point as the climactic events of John's marriage. When John returns home after his fruitless search, having heard that Susanna had journeyed back to the North, he discovers his house in flames, his child dead, and his wife gone forever. Their house divided could not stand.

In the next section the reader is returned to the day of the Fourth of July on which the flashbacks occur, but this section adopts an ancient mythic theme instead of the American theme that the Fourth of July represents. By utilizing mixed mythic and American themes, set against the American theme of Independence Day, the author maneuvers the reader into a

position from which they can realize that the day of the Fourth that Johnny is remembering from is also a myth. He accomplishes this move by bringing forth a mythic theme, that has so far only been prefigured in the flashbacks, up to the present ritual day of the Fourth of July.

Entitled, "A White Bull," the seventh section of the novel prefigures the hero's life with the mythic theme of Theseus and the Minotaur. The main characters of this section, Johnny, Evelina Brown, and Reverend Lloyd G. Jarvey, respectively represent Theseus, Ariadne, and the Minotaur.

As this section opens, a description of the Reverend Jarvey is juxtaposed to that of a white bull that is to be used for breeding that afternoon. As the bull walked about in his pen, "The Reverend Lloyd G. Harvey, shaggily virile, strode back and forth in the little tent beside the Revival Tent... Dripping with sweat, back and forth he strode, his eyes glaring savagely with a penned-in, fretful look."³⁴⁾ The Reverend is a very powerfully built man, and is also as blind as a bull, "He had congenital myopia that amounted almost to blindness."³⁵⁾ Zeus, in the form of a white bull, raped Europa and conceived Minos, the king of Crete who created the Labyrinth where the Minotaur was caged. In other versions of the myth, Zeus himself fathered the Minotaur. In the myth that is in this novel, at the same time that the white bull, whose name is Jupiter (the Roman name for Zeus), is being hoisted onto a heifer, the Reverend Jarvey is engaging in the same type of activity with the Widow Passifee. This event, with

the bull at least, is clearly stated as being related to the myth of the rape of Europa:

--A great white beast is pastured around here somewhere, the Perfessor said, passing Mr. Jacobs' barn. I'm supposed to drop back in time to see him perform in that wellknown museum piece 'The Rape of Europa.'³⁶⁾

As a consequence of this mythic event, the Minotaur was created. Consequently, by reliving the myth of the creation of the Minotaur, the Reverend Jarvey takes on characteristics of this mythic creature. As the Minotaur was a corrupt form and man and beast, so has Jarvey become a corrupt being as he has sinned against his religion. Jarvey, in his likeness to the Minotaur, threatens the Theseus and Ariadne characters of Johnny and Eveline, respectively. Jarvey attempts to destroy Johnny's world when he accuses Johnny of adultery with Evelina. Like Ariadne, Evelina has led Johnny through the maze of the day of the Fourth in that she has been in charge of planning the events of the day's celebration. Moreover, like Ariadne, she is not able to totally possess her lover as Johnny abandons her after receiving her assistance in navigating the labyrinth. Johnny, as Theseus, destroys the Minotaur, Jarvey, when Jarvey publicly accuses Johnny of iniquitous relations with Evelina Brown. While Jarvey and the Widow were entwined, one of Johnny's children was watching through a side window. This information is conveyed to

Johnny by his son when the Reverend makes his accusations. With the public revelation of the Reverend's wicked act, Johnny vindicates himself and defeats the Minotaur by refuting the bull.

Shifting once again to the flashback scenes, the next section, "Fighting for Freedom," returns to an American mythic theme as Johnny's life becomes even more deeply intertwined with that of the Republic's. After his life is crushed by the death of his son and Susanna's disappearance, Johnny joins the Union forces and marches off to war. As the North battles the South, Johnny participates in almost every major engagement.

The Civil War destroyed the old traditions of the nation, and a new nation, without the evils of slavery, is reborn from the ashes of this symbolic death. "John's change and rebirth parallels that of America, also transformed by the Civil War."³⁷⁾ While serving with Sherman's army on its descent into the burning hell of Atlanta, Johnny is inadvertently reported as killed. His obituary appears in the newspapers and the townspeople start plans to erect a monument to their fallen hero. As Johnny travels home, his symbolic descent into hell and subsequent rebirth are compared with those of other heroes who have made the same journey:

Still no one recognized the young Lazarus.³⁸⁾

It was a selection of lines from the greatest of all the epic poems, and this poem was himself...in the years 1859, 1863,

1865—only in these did he hint the vast comedy, more true than Dante's.³⁹⁾

Johnny feels that through his symbolic death he can now be reborn as the Hero of Raintree County.

...he began to take pleasure in the thought that he would come back from death and surprise everyone. Now, at last he had become, it seemed, the Hero of Raintree County...⁴⁰⁾

The nation's struggle for life in the war, and its emergence as a new nation, are paralleled by Johnny's struggle for life on the battle fields and emergence as a new, changed man.

The report of his death, however, is no mere accident on the mythic level of the novel. When he finally returns to the County he is no longer the same youth who left it. He is a man with all the responsibilities of his new role. The questioning curiosity of youth has mellowed into a philosophical musing.⁴¹⁾

The following section returns to the Eve myth, represented again by Eva, the hero's daughter. In the third section, Eva represented the innocent Eve of the garden. At the close of that section, Eva was just beginning to gain knowledge of her own self and her sexuality. This section shows Eva as she is emerging

from the innocence of the garden to knowledge of the difference between the sexes, symbolized by the forbidden fruit. It represents her final emergence from Eden.

As this section opens, we learn that the door to the garden is open and that Eva will soon leave her state of childhood innocence; “we bring Eva near the end of her happy child life and leave her on the threshold of woman’s estate,”⁴²⁾ as she is about to inherit a woman’s troubles handed down from the first woman who possessed them, Eve.

Eva symbolizes Eve in this section for it is through envy of those more powerful than herself that she gains knowledge of the difference between the sexes, as it was Eve’s envy of God’s power which led her to knowledge of the forbidden fruit.

Even though Eva had blossomed into a young woman, she still had not become fully conscious of herself as a woman, “Eva became in form a woman, though in spirit still a child. The child, the sexless, anachronistic child, still lingered on, ill at ease, unhappy, reluctant to give up. ”⁴³⁾ Portrayed here is an innocent Eve before the fall. But Eva arrives soon enough at the exit to the garden with the knowledge of life as represented by the knowledge of her own sexuality.

Yet there was a moment of self-discovery during these early years in Waycross when Eva herself became clearly aware for the first time that she had crossed a dark valley and was emerging on the farther side. The discovery came

in early June of the year 1892 along with one of the great emotional crises of her life. It came suddenly and unexpectedly as a result of a simple thing.⁴⁴⁾

As her envy of her brother's superior power grows, Eva is forced to realize her sexuality by its limitations as seen when compared with her brother's,

Little by little she had been forced to give up her claims to physical equality with her brother Wesley. Only in wrestling had she still been able to maintain her old proud feeling of equality.⁴⁵⁾

It is during a wrestling match that Eva finally loses her physical equality with her brother. In Eva's fall in the wrestling match we can also see Eve's fall as Eva, like Eve, becomes aware after the fall of her existence as a woman.

The tenth section, "Sphinx Recumbant," adopts the myth of Oedipus's encounter with the Sphinx as a prefiguration of Johnny's life. Upon his return home from the war, Johnny no longer feels that his home is in Raintree County because he has been changed so much by the war that he is no longer the same person that he was. Like Oedipus, Johnny lives in what he has believed to be his home town, but which he can no longer call home. He leaves home because of what appears to be an oracle telling him that he must go to the city to find his real life.

He came to the City because he was always meant to come. It was as if a voice had spoken from the sky above his home in Raintree County, saying:

My child, you shall go to the City, because without the City you are incomplete. You shall go to the City and be sad, because you haven't yet been sad enough. You shall go to the City and know a love unlike any other, because you haven't yet loved enough. You shall go to the City, and the City will drench you in its liquorcolored lights, ravish you with its enormous beauty, wound you with its hard surfaces and pointed towers, and reject you from its million doors. Then perhaps some day if you are lucky, having tasted its red forbidden fruit, you will come back from the City to your home again.⁴⁶⁾

Oedipus also left home because of an oracle, which as we know cause him to go to the city, "Know a love unlike any other,"⁴⁷⁾ and wound him with the "hard surfaces and pointed towers,"⁴⁸⁾ of Jocasta's brooches.

When Johnny travels to the city, he meets Laura Golden, an actress. Laura presents Johnny with a riddle as he is unable to understand the complex characters of Laura's personality. Laura represents the Sphinx as she presents a riddle to the many men who court her. Her suitors are unable to solve the puzzle and are devoured by their unrequited desires. But Johnny is finally able

to solve the riddle.

Central to the symbolism of the riddle is an infamous room in Laura's house which is rumored to be "decorated with a Pompeian lavishness for the entertainment of her lovers."⁴⁹ Only those who solve the riddle are admitted to this room; only those who can understand her will become her lovers. In the last scene of this section, Johnny is admitted to this room, and solves the riddle of "What is Man?" He enters a room full of mirrors where Laura has a small stage for private rehearsals. This mirrored room explicates a Rousseauesque explanation of what Man is in that Man obtains consciousness as Man by comparison with an object other than oneself. By comparing oneself to another object, one can achieve self realization. Through the reflection of Laura's mirrors, John visualizes the answer to the riddle posed by Laura, and by life, as he comes to the realization that he is created for himself only in the objectification of the mirrors, as Laura can only be somebody by objectifying herself onto the characters she plays and lives. When Johnny has solved this riddle of "What is Man?", Laura disappears, and like the Sphinx, will devour no more young men.

The next section once again makes use of the Eve myth as a prefiguration of Esther Root, Johnny's second wife. "Between Two Worlds" tells of Esther's final transition from the innocent world of life with her father to the world of knowledge of life as Johnny's wife.

After her father removed her from Johnny's side at Paradise

Lake, Esther is secluded at the family farm. Her father is like a god to her, and she feels that she could live forever as an innocent child under the protection of her father.

Perhaps her destiny was simply to live forever in this relation to Pa. Sometimes, even, there was a stern joy in the thought of such a dedication. Always she felt as though it would take impossible courage and sinful audacity to sever the ancient tie. Pa's will was right simply because it was his will, and she never questioned his right to keep her entirely to himself.⁵⁰⁾

As Eve severed her tie to God through a sin, it is Esther's "sinful audacity" that severs her ancient tie to her almighty guardian. Esther's love and desire for Johnny cause her to disobey her almighty father's will and to leave his world forever, for she never returns to her father's domination. When Esther leaves her father's farm and runs away to marry Johnny, she crosses through a small wooded area. These woods are for Esther the threshold of a new world outside of the Edenic world controlled by her father, for on the other side of the threshold, she runs into the arms of Johnny Shawnessy.

The final section of *Raintree County* is entitled "The Golden Bough." Our hero's life is prefigured in this section by the myth of Aeneas's descent into the underworld. Aeneas was one of the few mythic heroes to descend into the underworld and return.

Aeneas accomplished his task, of discovering all that he needed to know by returning to his father, representative of his origin, through the magical aid of the golden bough.

In his use of the flashbacks in returning the hero to his origin and the time of the creation before chronological time, the author is also able to escape from the restrictions of chronological time in his novel. The flashbacks that present the reader with the climactic scenes of the past sections of the life that Johnny has remembered all occur within this last section. As the flashbacks of this section represent the Aeneas myth, and as they cover the most important events of Johnny's life, then his whole life can also be seen as a reliving of the myth of Aeneas and the journey he takes to find a new meaning in life.

The first significant flashback of this section occurs when Johnny initially discovers the golden bough as he is making love with Susanna beneath the golden Raintree. Upon discovering the golden bough, Johnny descends into hell, beginning with the death of his son in the family's burning home. This tragic event moved him to enter the war, described throughout the battle scenes as a veritable hell. The next couple of flashbacks place Johnny in the company of the dead as they tell of the events following the assassination of President Lincoln and the passing of Johnny's mother. The last flashback of this section is the climax to Johnny's symbolic death and rebirth in the Civil War. Like Aeneas, Johnny has grasped the golden bough, descended into the underworld of his memories, and returned with a vision

for the future.

The author places this myth last so as to emphasize Johnny's likeness to Aeneas in that they both return from the underworld with a vision of a future republic founded on the answer to the hero's quest for the meaning of life.

The juxtaposition of the hero's life against the lives of mythic heroes, and against the life of historical America, enlightens the reader as to the role Johnny plays as the American hero in the American epic⁵¹⁾, rediscovering the meaning of life in America by finding the essence of that life in the timeless events of its creation.

Through his use of a mythic structure in employing mythic themes as prefigurations of his hero and in using the etiological flashbacks to reach the non-linear time of creation, Ross Lockridge, Jr. has created a hero who can demonstrate the myth of America through its collective consciousness and give Americans an answer to the question of life in America and the quest for the American dream. As the author's son, in a biography of his father, so rightly stated, "In the end it's a collective self-not the self-intoxicated John Shawnessy-who keeps alive the great mythic enterprise of the American Republic."⁵²⁾

Notes

- 1) Northrup Frye. *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981), p. 33.

- 2) Mircea Eliade. *Myth and Reality* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 19.
- 3) Eliade, p. 19.
- 4) Ross Lockridge, Jr. *Raintree County* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1948), p. 1.
- 5) Lockridge, p. 1.
- 6) Boyd Litzinger. "Myth Making in America: 'The Great Stone Face' and *Raintree County*," *Tennessee Studies in Literature* 8 (1963), p. 81.
- 7) Litzinger, p. 81.
- 8) Litzinger, p. 82.
- 9) Lockridge, p. 2.
- 10) Lockridge, pp. 2-3.
- 11) Delia Clarke. "*Raintree County*: Psychological Symbolism, Archetype, and Myth," *Thoth*, 11 (Fall, 1970), p. 32.
- 12) Clarke, p. 35.
- 13) Lockridge, p. 55.
- 14) Lockridge, pp. 43-44.
- 15) Lockridge, p. 103.
- 16) Joseph Campbell. __ *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 152.
- 17) Lockridge, p. 244.
- 18) Lockridge, p. 250.
- 19) Clarke, p. 36.
- 20) Lockridge, p. 283.
- 21) Lockridge, p. 318.
- 22) Lockridge, p. 319.
- 23) Lockridge, p. 331.
- 24) Lockridge, p. 55.
- 25) Lockridge, p. 18.
- 26) Lockridge, p. 371.
- 27) Lockridge, p. 374.
- 28) Lockridge, p. 387.
- 29) Lockridge, p. 394.

- 30) Lockridge, p. 403.
- 31) Lockridge, p. 413.
- 32) Lockridge, p. 473.
- 33) Lockridge, p. 498.
- 34) Lockridge, p. 553.
- 35) Lockridge, p. 570.
- 36) Lockridge, p. 569.
- 37) Clarke, p. 36.
- 38) Lockridge, p. 750.
- 39) Lockridge, p. 751.
- 40) Lockridge, p. 749.
- 41) Clarke, p. 36.
- 42) Lockridge, p. 754.
- 43) Lockridge, p. 755.
- 44) Lockridge, p. 761.
- 45) Lockridge, p. 761.
- 46) Lockridge, p. 817.
- 47) Lockridge, p. 817.
- 48) Lockridge, p. 817.
- 49) Lockridge, p. 799.
- 50) Lockridge, p. 871
- 51) Leonard Lutwack. "Raintree County and the Epicising Poet in American Fiction," *Ball State University Forum*, 131 (1972), p. 14.
- 52) Larry Lockridge. *Shade of the Raintree : The Life and Death of Ross Lockridge, Jr., Author of "Raintree County."* (New York : Viking), p. 430.

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