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THE NEW  
ROMANTICISM  
A COLLECTION  
OF CRITICAL ESSAYS

EDITED BY  
EBERHARD ALSEN

GARLAND PUBLISHING, INC.  
A MEMBER OF THE TAYLOR & FRANCIS GROUP  
NEW YORK & LONDON  
2000

# THE NEW ROMANTICISM

WELLESLEY STUDIES IN CRITICAL THEORY, LITERARY HISTORY  
AND CULTURE  
VOLUME 26  
GARLAND REFERENCE LIBRARY OF THE HUMANITIES  
VOLUME 2188

## *Lancelot: Percy's Romance* (1983)

MARK JOHNSON

Walker Percy's *Lancelot* has been sharply criticized as an inept novel, but it should be seen as a contemporary romance.<sup>1</sup> As Flannery O'Connor says in "Some Aspects of the Grotesque in Southern Fiction," "Hawthorne knew his own problems and perhaps anticipated ours when he said he did not write novels, he wrote romances. Today many readers and critics have set up for the novel a kind of orthodoxy. They demand a realism of fact which may, in the end, limit rather than broaden the novel's scope." According to O'Connor, the writer's "true country" is "what is eternal and absolute," which she insists "covers considerable territory."<sup>2</sup> While *Lancelot* is not Percy's best book, only reading it properly—as a romance—grants us entry to its true country.

In contrast to the novel, Richard Chase observes, the romance "tends to prefer action to character," presenting two-dimensional characters who tend to be abstract and symbolic and who are frequently in a "deep and narrow, an obsessive, involvement."<sup>3</sup> The first words of *Lancelot* emphasize the narrowness of Lance's obsessions:

Come into my cell. Make yourself at home. Take the chair; I'll sit on the cot. No? You prefer to stand by the window? I understand. You like my little view. Have you noticed that the narrower the view the more you can see? For the first time I understand how old ladies can sit on their porches for years. (3)

Lance later speaks of his room as "nothing but a small empty space with time running through it and a single tiny opening on the world" (107).

Lance's obsession with his narrow view, while restricting his range of vision, has the virtue of concentrating his perceptions. On one level, the room is a metaphor for the operation of the romance.

While I cannot develop the idea in this essay, certainly the romance has undergone a radical metamorphosis since the nineteenth century. The distinction between novel and romance is still useful, however, and I would direct the reader to Robert Scholes' insightful discussion of Durrell and Fowles as modern romancers in *Fabulation and Metafiction*. Citing Borges' statement, "reality is not verbal," Scholes examines the epistemological problems of realism and the consequent return by such authors as Fowles and Barth to the "more fantastic and more philosophical romance." In *The Nature of Narrative*, he and Robert Kellogg are careful to note that "the novel is not the opposite of romance," and they cite Hawthorne as a pivotal figure in the development of the modern romance in his intentional blurring of the distinction between illustrative and representational art. Fifteen years ago, they observed that just as the novel evolved as a synthesis of empirical and fictional impulses, "the grand dialectic is about to begin again, and . . . the novel must yield its place to new forms."<sup>4</sup>

The romance opens up an important avenue for the contemporary writer, notes Chase: "The American imagination, like the New England Puritan mind itself, seems less interested in redemption than in the melodrama of the eternal struggle of good and evil, less interested in incarnation and reconciliation than in alienation and disorder."<sup>5</sup> The Manichaean sensibility which informs the tradition of the American romance is forcefully manifested in Percy's *Lancelot*. Like earlier American romancers, Percy is using the romance to question his contemporaries' materialistic faith in empirical science and capitalism, and to examine his age's abstraction, its separation of thought from feeling and of body from soul.

*Lancelot*, of course, does not speak for Walker Percy (a mistake made by a few early reviewers and continuing into some later essays),<sup>6</sup> any more than Chillingworth's is the voice of all wronged husbands. While never denying Hester's sin, Hawthorne's harshest judgment falls on Chillingworth. Percy presents us with a first-person account of a Roger Chillingworth, with some of Ethan Brand for good measure. Consequently, the epigraph from Dante could be spoken by Percival:

*He sank so low that all means  
for his salvation were gone,  
except for showing him the lost people.  
For this I visited the region of the dead. . . .*

While *Lancelot* does not speak for Percy, he is a useful device for illuminating, if only by moonlight, some of the concerns traditionally associated with the romancer: epistemology, alienation, and the nature of evil.

### 1.

How do we know what we know? *Lancelot*, like *The Scarlet Letter*, is a tale of infidelity, primarily Lance's discovery of his wife's infidelity but also of his mother's possible infidelity with Harry Wills, a relationship Lance's father understood and accepted. Lance, however, is still driven by questions years later: "Jesus, was I also [Wills'] son" (214). The ostensible subject is infidelity, but the real focus is epistemology, the need to know. The convergence of the two concepts in the one verb is telling. "One has to know. There are worse things than bad news" (131). Lance joins the ranks of such characters as Chillingworth, Robin Molineaux, Ethan Brand, and Goodman Brown in his quest for certainty: "Is all niceness then or is all buggery? . . . How does one know for sure?" (136-37). "Knowing" in both senses is made explicit in the scene in which Lance takes Raine: "What had God in store for us? So it was this. For what comes of being adult was this probing her for her secret, the secret which I wanted to find out and she wanted me to find out. The Jews called it knowing and now I knew why. Every time I went deeper I knew her better" (236). He reduces the act to a struggle of wills: "We were going to know each other but one of us would know first and therefore win. . . . It was a contest. She lost" (236).

But real knowing is harder to come by. Lance interrogates his own need to know on the same page, as he reflects on having spied on his wife and her lover: "I didn't see what I wanted to see after all. What did I want to see? . . . What new sweet-horrid revelation did I expect to gain from witnessing what I already knew? Was it a kind of voyeurism? Or was it a desire to feel the lance strike home to the heart of the abscess and let the pus out? I still don't know. I knew only that it was necessary to know, to know only as the eyes know." Even at the story's end, he says his first act upon his release will be to read the sign only partially visible from his window:

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B

"At last I shall know what it says" (250). *Lancelot*, craning his neck and peering around the corner, unable to read the sign, is a forceful type of Percy's idea of man's position in the world, a castaway in search of

signs.<sup>7</sup> "Free and maybe" what—an angel, a beast, or a pilgrim? Hawthorne's characters have similar problems interpreting signs, be they pink ribbons or A's in the sky. The narrator of *The Scarlet Letter* discredits the providence in the sky ("it could only be the symptom of a highly disordered mental state") even as he uses it (it "seemed to give another moral interpretation to the things of this world"<sup>8</sup>). Lance turns to videotape for confirmation of his suspicions. Chillingworth has less need of such mundane observations, but Hawthorne sent Ethan Brand around the world in search of his unholy Grail, and Rappaccini and Aylmer destroy that which they love in their failure to find "the perfect future in the present." Lancelot's voyeuristic empiricism is the antithesis of faith.

Percy has frequently distinguished between what science can tell us about—types—and what it cannot tell us about—individuals. His point is not a simple-minded anti-science but a positing of some sort of faith against an age's easy agnosticism. Percy embodies this need for knowledge of the intangible in a poignant aside by Lance as he remembers his plans to discover certainty: "(How happy scientists are! Why didn't we become scientists, Percival? They confront problems which can be solved. We don't know what we confront. Does it have a name?)" (100). But Lancelot's "new order" is certainly mad, naive, murderous itself.

How do we know what we know? In Percy's terms from "The Message in the Bottle," when the bottle washes ashore we must be ready to recognize news and knowledge, and to distinguish between "island news" and "news from across the sea." That Lance does not do so, in spite of his penetrating criticisms of the illusory and real worlds juxtaposed at Belle Isle, prompts us to caution.

In his quest for knowledge, Lance, unlike Hawthorne and Percy, rejects the past as "intolerable, not because it is violent or terrible or doom-struck or any such thing, but just because it is so goddamn banal and feckless and useless" (105). Rather, for Lance, "The mystery lies in the here and now. The mystery is: What is one to do with oneself?" But even this most desperate existentialist recognizes that "there is a clue in the past" (106). If Lancelot is walking away from the past as Margot conceives it, we have to agree with him. He tells us his wife is "a collector, preserver, restorer, transformer" (81). At the very moment he is examining blood types, as "the worm of interest turned" in his spine, he reflects on the pigeon roost she had restored as his workroom: "It took Fluker two weeks to shovel out 150 years of pigeon shit, scrape the walls, and reveal what Margot was after, the slave brick of the walls and the three-inch cypress floor, not only not rotted but preserved, waxed by guano"

(28). "Preserved, waxed by guano" is hardly the way Hawthorne would view the past, and he would have agreed only with the third word of Lance's description of his plan: "Here's my crazy plan for the future. When I leave here, having served my time or been 'cured,' I don't want to go back to Belle Isle. I don't want to go back to any place. The only thing I'm sure of is that the past is absolutely dead. The future must be absolutely new. This is true not only of me but of you and of everyone. A new beginning must be made" (62).

Ethan Brand, of course, did a lot of traveling before realizing the source of his problem. In the words of one of Hawthorne's contemporaries, Lance will be carrying ruins to ruins. Cutting himself off from his past and his place is folly, and at the book's end Percival is rightly aghast when told Lance is being released—"Why do you look at me like that? You don't think they should?" (249-50). Lance comments proudly, "A new life. I began a new life over a year ago when I walked out of that dark parlor after leaving the supper table" (63); but later he is left wondering, "But what went wrong with the other new life last year?" (108). He returns to the plan frequently, at times emphasizing his own sanity as opposed to the world's madness in a manner worthy of Poe:

It is simply this: a conviction and a freedom. The conviction: I will not tolerate this age. The freedom: the freedom to act on my conviction. And I will act. No one else has both the conviction and the freedom. Many agree with me, have the conviction, but will not act. Some act, assassinate, bomb, burn, etc., but they are the crazies. Crazy acts by crazy people. But what if one, sober, reasonable, and honorable man should act, and act with perfect sobriety, reason, and honor? Then you have the beginning of a new age. We shall start a new order of things. (156)

That Lance "burns" in the manner of the "crazies" he describes is one strong indication of Percy's irony. Lance gets his come-uppance from Anna, the gang rape victim who refuses to go with him. His view of the world as black-and-white, of women as ladies-and-whores, is too simplified, too abstract. Like Brand, Lance has "lost his hold of the magnetic chain of humanity."

## 2.

Lancelot's problem in his quest for knowledge has been his abstraction and consequent alienation, one of Percy's favorite themes. Separation

from others, of thought from feeling, of body from soul, is not an exclusively modern malady. Lance is a version of the Hawthorne character cut off from the "magic circle" of humanity, a circle joined by the mutual recognition not only of the sins of others (Chillingworth, Brown) but of oneself. So isolated, he has those same "stern and wild teachers" which taught Hester Prynne "much amiss." This line from Hawthorne's narrator is as direct a criticism of Hester as we get in *The Scarlet Letter*. Percy's distance from Lancelot's speculations should similarly be recognized. Even Lance's discovery of evil is abstract and empty.

There is a coldness. . . . You know the feeling of numbness and coldness, no, not a feeling, but a lack of feeling, that I spoke of during the events at Belle Isle? I told you it might have been the effect of the hurricane, the low pressure, methane, whatever. But I still feel it. That is, today, I don't feel it. I don't feel anything—except a slight curiosity about walking down that street out there. What do you think of it, that there is a certain coldness. . . . Do you feel it? (253)

Lancelot, after all he has been through and after two hundred and fifty pages of self-exploration, comes up with even less than Ethan Brand, for he declares that "there is no answer to the question": "The question? Very well. The question is: Why did I discover nothing at the heart of evil? There was no 'secret' after all, no discovery, no flickering of interest, nothing at all, not even any evil. There was no sense of coming close to the 'answer.' . . . There is no question. There is no unholy grail just as there is no Holy Grail" (253). Ethan Brand's discovery of the unpardonable sin within his own heart *is*, in its perverse way, a discovery of its opposite by implication, but Lancelot is denied even the questionable consolation of self-knowledge.

Percival, too, is described as abstracted, not listening to Lance's monologue, distractedly craning his neck to see further down the street. Percival, as well as Lance, comes to a sense of how to act, though only by an implied contrast with Lance. Through most of the book he is a voyeur, as Lance had been, and as had Roger Chillingworth, Miles Coverdale, or Nathaniel Hawthorne, and as in fact the reader is. The coldly dispassionate observer troubled Hawthorne, as it should trouble us. Lance, even in describing his murders, shows no feeling: "What I remember better than the cutting was the sense I had of casting about for an appropriate feeling to match the deed . . . and not finding one" (242). He is forever isolated—Anna is certainly right not to go with him—and his dying hour

will be gloom. Note the exchange between the mute Percival and Lance, which again implies an alternative Lance does not accept: "When the truth is, nobody understands anyone else, and nobody is reconciled because nobody knows what there is to be reconciled. . . . Don't you agree? No? Do you really believe people can be reconciled?" (200). Lance violates, and monstrously, the lives of others, however guilty, and he is no less deformed for not having Chillingworth's hump and red eyes. Percival *must* respond at the end, even if only to differ with Lance in monosyllables. To observe without responding to such a plight, to such an examination of evil, would be damning in itself.

Lance's abstraction evidences itself in his tendency to oversimplify matters into polarities of past and present, lady and whore, Louisiana and Los Angeles. Like the world of Hawthorne's romances, that of Lancelot is presented as a series of dualisms, most obviously in the device of the film's artificiality: "Things were split," Lance tells us. "I was physically in Louisiana but spiritually in Los Angeles. The day was split too. One window let onto this kind of October day, blue sky, sun shining. . . . The other window let onto a thunderstorm. My wife's friend's film company had set up a thunderstorm machine in the tourist parking lot" (25). Percy's humor allows Lance to set up some distinctions any reader would accept: "Which is worse, to die with T. J. Jackson at Chancellorsville or live with Johnny Carson in Burbank?" (158). But the dualisms turn sharply serious. Lance predicts that the country "is going to turn into a desert and it won't be a bad thing. Thirst and hunger are better than jungle rot. We will begin in the Wilderness where Lee lost. Deserts are clean places. Corpses turn quickly into simple pure chemicals" (158). Hester Prynne also knew "desert places": "She had wandered, without rule or guidance, in a moral wilderness; as vast; as intricate and shadowy, as the untamed forest. . . . Her intellect and heart had their home, as it were, in desert places, where she roamed as freely as the wild Indian in his woods." Lance's condemnation of his society, like Hester's, has much to recommend it; but what desperate alternatives! This paragraph from Hawthorne's romance ends, "Shame, Despair, Solitude! These had been her teachers,—stern and wild ones,—and they had made her strong, but taught her much amiss." Percy also seems to sympathize with his protagonist's complaints, but both Percy and Hawthorne saw, with Robert Frost, that nature's desolation is not ultimate. "I have it in me so much nearer home /To scare myself with my own desert places."

Consequently, we should be distanced, if sympathetic, when Lance discovers his wife's infidelity. His cuckold's sensitivity is so sharp that

he believes a character humming "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" refers to him, with Rudolph's antlers. Jealousy worms its way into his heart: "How strange it is that a discovery like this, of evil, of a kinsman's dishonesty, a wife's infidelity, can shake you up, knock you out of your rut, be the occasion of a new way of looking at things!" (51). With the subtle double nod to Hawthorne, we should not be surprised nor misled when Lance continues in the "logic" of Ethan Brand:

Can good come from evil? Have you ever considered the possibility that one might undertake a search not for God but for evil? . . .

But what if you could show me a *sin*? a purely evil deed, an intolerable deed for which there is no explanation? Now there's a mystery. People would sit up and take notice. I would be impressed. You could almost make a believer out of me.

In times when nobody is interested in God, what would happen if you could prove the existence of sin, pure and simple? Wouldn't that be a windfall for you? A new proof of God's existence! If there is such a thing as sin, evil, a living malignant force, there must be a God! (51-52)

Once again, our literature presents us with a perfectly logical lunatic, one whose perverse insights give us real perspective on our own condition whether he gains the same into himself or not. The insights remain, nonetheless, perverse.

### 3.

Lance's Manichaeian view of the world is no novelty for Percy's audience. In *The Last Gentleman* both a stranger and Barrett's girlfriend Kitty make the distinction between ladies and whores; Barrett wants certainty but, to his credit, will not accept such a simple-minded distinction: "But what am I, he wondered: neither Christian nor pagan nor proper lusty gentleman, for I've never really got the straight of this lady-and-whore business. And that is all I want and it does not seem too much to ask: for once and all to get the straight of it." In *Love in the Ruins*, Tom More invented MOQUOL to diagnose and treat an angelism/bestialism syndrome, only to conclude, "Dear God, I can see it now, why can't I see it other times, . . . it is pilgrims we are, wayfarers on a journey, and not pigs, nor angels."<sup>9</sup>

Lancelot continues with such relentless dualisms and such an uncompromising need for certainty that, like Goodman Brown, he is shattered when certainty is not forthcoming:

The innocence of children. Didn't your God say that unless you become as innocent as one of those, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven?

Yes, but what does that mean?

It is obvious he made a mistake or else played a very bad trick on us. . . . Yet God himself so arranged it that you wake up one fine morning with a great thundering hard-on and wanting nothing more in life than a sweet hot cunt to put it in, drive some girl, any girl, into the ground, and where is the innocence of that? Is that part of the innocence? If so, he should have said so. From child to assailant through no doing of one's own—is that God's plan for us? Damn you and your God. (176)

Unable to reconcile the ideal with the real, Lancelot finds refuge in evil itself, in violence, in a view of the world which belies its own stated aims. Refusal to accept Sodom does not necessitate going Sodom one better. "God himself so arranged it" echoes Chillingworth's self-defense of a "dark necessity." But we should remember Barrett's characterization of Sutter Vaught: "Where he probably goes wrong . . . is in the extremity of his alternatives: God and not-God, getting under women's dresses and blowing your brains out. Whereas and in fact [the] problem is how to live from one ordinary minute to the next on a Wednesday afternoon" (*LG* 354-55).

Thus, while the characters pursue a cosmic evil, Percy's readers examine it in primarily human terms. Melville said Hawthorne's "power of blackness . . . derives its force from its appeals to that Calvinistic sense of Innate Depravity and Original Sin, from whose visitations, in some shape or other, no deeply thinking mind is always wholly free." For Percy as for Hawthorne, the primary sin is against another human being. In *Love in the Ruins*, Tom More recounts a memorable conversation with his daughter about salvation and a "sin without forgiveness," against which his wife is protected by her "Invincible Ignorance": "Which one is that?" Tom asks. "The sin against grace. If God gives you the grace to believe in him and love him and you refuse, the sin will not be forgiven you" (*LR* 353).

Like Ethan Brand, Lancelot had set out for the embodiment of evil, perversely seeking in unpardonable, uncontaminated evil an implicit proof of good. But Lance is too much of an absolutist: "‘Evil’ is surely the clue to this age, the only quest appropriate to the age. For everything and everyone’s either wonderful or sick and nothing is evil" (138). He comes actually to relish evil, "the sense at last of coming close to it, the sweet secret of evil, the dread exhilaration, the sure slight heart-quicken- ing sense of coming onto something, the dear darling heart of darkness— ah, this was where it was all right" (216). But finally Lance proclaims his search for cosmic evil a failure: "There is no unholy grail just as there was no Holy Grail" (253), concluding in his logic that since he cannot find evil, there is no good. Because he cannot plumb his heart as Brand had, because he cannot recognize his own evil, Lancelot wears the armor of Invincible Ignorance. Percival, with the reader, knows better.

## 4.

That Percy can speak so unself-consciously of sin, evil, and faith, is testimony to the continuing power of romance. But the indigenous strain of the American romance is viable today because of our writers’ willingness to continue asking fundamental questions about the nature of reality, of man and his behavior. "Tell me something," says Lance. "Why did I have to know the truth about Margot and know it with absolute certainty? Or rather why, knowing the truth, did I have to know more, prove more, *see*? Does one need to know more, ever more and more, in order that one put off acting on it or maybe even not act at all?" (89). The piercing nature of Lance’s questions belies the unfortunate action he does take. *Lancelot*’s plot is as grotesque as something out of Flannery O’Connor, for Percy too is writing in large and startling figures for the almost blind.

For such metaphysical concerns, nonetheless, our writers have been criticized as "bad novelists," so that Hawthorne and Melville protested that they were writing romances. The problem continues, as in John Gardner’s review of *Lancelot*:

Fiction, at its best, is a means of discovery, a philosophical method. By that standard, Walker Percy is not a very good novelist; in fact *Lancelot*, for all its dramatic and philosophical intensity, is bad art, and what’s worse, typical bad art. Like Tom Stoppard’s plays, it fools around with philosophy, only in this case not for laughs but for fashionable groans. Art, it seems to me, should be a little less pompous, a

lot more serious. It should stop sniveling and go for answers or else shut up.<sup>10</sup>

At least the intensity of Gardner’s response indicates the book’s power. Unfortunately Gardner resembles Lancelot in demanding answers, which Percy like Hawthorne is not in the business of providing. O’Connor, speaking of the writer in "the modern romance tradition," notes that "Such a writer will be interested in what we don’t understand rather than in what we do."<sup>11</sup>

At the last, however, I must confess to some disappointment with *Lancelot* myself. In *Historicism Once More*, Roy Harvey Pearce identified Hawthorne’s major theme as "the discovery and acceptance of guilt (and righteousness too) in the present." Such, it seems to me, is the subject of *Lancelot*, despite the title character’s final failure of insight. But Pearce further observed that while "Hawthorne’s earlier fictions may serve to indicate the limits to which the romance could be taken and still not lose contact with actuality, so *The Marble Faun* . . . may serve to indicate just where the romance lost such contact, where the form began to lose its cultural strength and significance, where the romantic twilight set in."<sup>12</sup> The intense focus of *Lancelot* similarly removes Percy from the strengths of his earlier novels, notably character and place. It has its advantages as we have seen, but the price is high indeed. We lose the real interaction between the characters so crucial to the earlier books and only implied here. The contact can be tenuous, as in Barrett’s joyous bounding toward the waiting Edsel at the end of *The Last Gentleman*. But Percival is at best only a shadow, and his important perspective remains wholly implicit and is consequently unable to maintain the necessary tension to support a credible conflict. As for place, it seems odd to speak of the locale of *Love in the Ruins*—Paradise Estates at "the end of the world," with the ruins of a Howard Johnson motel, a sulphurous golf course, a dilapidated church, Fedville—as an example of a writer’s fine sense of place, but I would still argue that place is very well realized in that book and is almost totally absent from *Lancelot*.<sup>13</sup> We have not yet removed to Italy, but the new book is more cerebral than its predecessor and, ironically, seems to be a misguided attempt at universality.

Hawthorne’s "The Custom House" locates the romance in "a neutral territory, somewhere between the real world and fairy-land, where the Actual and the Imaginary may meet, and each imbue itself with the nature of the other." So far as Percy loses touch with the actual in his fiction, just so far is his power lessened. Nevertheless, the romance



continues to enable our serious writers to ask metaphysical questions without pretending to have pat answers. In a fine touch of dramatic irony, Lance says of Elgin, "Happy the man who can live with problems!" (141). Whether or not Percy, with more questions than answers, should "stop sniveling and shut up," each reader will have to determine for himself by such light as his narrative affords.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>*Lancelot* (New York: Farrar, Straus, 1977); references to this edition are hereafter made parenthetically.

<sup>2</sup>*Mystery and Manners*, ed. Sally and Robert Fitzgerald (New York: Farrar, Straus, 1969), 38-39, 27.

<sup>3</sup>Richard Chase, *The American Novel and Its Tradition* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1957), 13.

<sup>4</sup>*Fabulation and Metafiction* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979), 9, 45; *The Nature of Narrative* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 15, 69, 89-90, 99.

<sup>5</sup>Chase, 11.

<sup>6</sup>For instance, Joyce Carol Oates observes that Lance's ideas are "uncomfortably close to ideas Percy has expressed elsewhere" and proceeds to identify the two in her review, *The New Republic*, 5 February 1977, 32-34. John Gardner, to whom I return later, seems to confuse Lance's ideas with Percy's, *New York Times Book Review*, 20 February 1977, 16-20. Certainly, Lance expresses many of Percy's harsh judgments of contemporary America, and Lewis Lawson relates both Lance and Percival to Percy in "The Fall of the House of Lamar," in *The Art of Walker Percy*, ed. Panthea Reid Broughton (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 243. But as Cleanth Brooks observes, "For many readers, the millennium of Lancelot Lamar will be obscured by the fact that his condemnation of the modern world may easily appear to be Walker Percy's own. This may well be. . . . But one can agree with Lance that the world is corrupt without agreeing at all with his single-minded resolution," in "Walker Percy and Modern Gnosticism," *Southern Review*, 13 (1977), 677-87.

<sup>7</sup>See particularly Percy's "The Message in the Bottle" (1959) and "The Man on the Train" (1956), rpt. in his *The Message in the Bottle* (New York: Farrar, Straus, 1975), which inform much of this discussion.

<sup>8</sup>See Robert Shulman, "Hawthorne's Quiet Conflict," *Philological Quarterly*, 47 (April 1968), 216-36.

<sup>9</sup>*The Last Gentleman* (New York: Farrar, Straus, 1966), 100 and 178-80; *Love in the Ruins* (New York: Dell, 1972), 104.

<sup>10</sup>Gardner, 20.

<sup>11</sup>O'Connor, 42.

<sup>12</sup>*Historicism Once More* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 153, 176.

<sup>13</sup>See my essay, "The Search for Place in Walker Percy's Novels," *The Southern Literary Journal*, 8 (1975), 55-81. For a very different view of Percival's character, see William J. Dowie's argument that "Percival usurps the novel," in "Lancelot and the Search for Sin," *The Art of Walker Percy*, 258.