

The Confessional Hero in William Styron's *The Confessions of Nat Turner*

Sohan Singh

Department of English, Sikh National College, Banga (PB), India.

Confession is regarded as necessary for attaining divine/social forgiveness or appeasing the burdened conscience. In the Old Testament, the Lord, God said to Amram's son, Moses: "Say to the people of Israel, when a man or a woman commits any of the sins that men commit by breaking faith with the Lord, that person is guilty, he shall confess his sin which he has committed" (Num V.6). If in the ecclesiastical terms, it is "breaking faith with the Lord", then it is necessitated by "breaking faith" with the society.

Encyclopedia Britannica(Vol.6) cites another interpretation of confession- "an extra-judicial statement acknowledging guilt of an offence". The voluntary confession, in most jurisdictions, must be corroborated by other evidence before a defendant may be convicted, which can relate to the authenticity of the occurrence of the crime. It also means "self-humiliation and abasement by the acknowledgement of sin", and immediately the image presented to the mind is of a forlorn individual struggling to appease not only the deity and society but also his own conscience. Self-accusation appeases the personal and the collective conscience.

A slightly more comprehensive interpretation of confession can be had from the third volume of *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*: "A confession is a public avowal and formal statement, more or less detailed, of the doctrinal contents of religious belief, framed by an individual or by a group of individuals. It may be addressed orally or in writing, to a few persons in sympathy or out of sympathy with it, or to a congregation, or to a Church, or to the world". Since it is "addressed, orally or in writing to a few persons in sympathy or out of sympathy with it, or to a congregation, or to a Church, or to the world", it makes the gap between the ostracized individual and the social spectrum, conspicuous. We come to appreciate the cleavage and comprehend, but at the same time this "address" links the confessor to the society demanding it. Thus, confession carried out for the purpose of expiation, whether religious or social, acts as the vital link between the individual and the society that is pitted against him, it can take many forms. It can rob the individual of his will to act or to hibernate like Ellison's hero or express himself, attended by tremendous suffering.

The ecclesiastical confession is the basis from which various types of modern confession spring. These confessions may not be necessarily religious. They can be, to be more precise, amoral. The religious confession can be compared to Northrop Frye's (*Anatomy of Criticism*, 1957) archetype, which is the basis, and just as there are displaced myths originating from it, in the same way the confessions of the modern individual are the displaced confessions whose archetype is the religious confession. Perhaps this branching out, neglecting the roots, can be traced back to the advancement of science and technology at the end of the previous century that has robbed man of his basic religious and

existential assumptions and religion and its large manna-like promise have lost credence. Matthew Arnold's prediction that poetry will take the place of religion has not come true because what abounds in the modern fiction is not the love for poetry or literature but some sort of, stark and stripped of all grandeur, humanity.

This is the last yard-stick that man said to be in possession of. Even in the degenerated world of Samuel Beckett where everything has failed, the personal relationships still count. The companionship is still present. It is different from Forster's personal relationships. The element of humanity varies with every author, but they all throw it up for tentative acclaim now and then, in some form or the other. This stark stripped humanity is perhaps the only answer to the existential predicament and alienations of the modern individual. In this respect William Styron is neither alone nor unique. He is in the tradition of novelists like Dostoevsky and can be placed at par with the modern novelists like Saul Bellow who is his contemporary.

Novels with confessional heroes have been in vogue long before William Styron began writing. The origin of this kind of novel can be traced in the fictions of Fyodor Dostoevsky. This was used by other modern novelists, like Andre Gide, Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Koestler, Golding, Saul Bellow and William Styron. In the modern times, the confessional technique has not only been used but also intensified and interiorised. The central character's or protagonist's concern is with self-discovery trying to find out the meaning of the meaning. The confessional hero dwells on the metaphysical questions of 'how' and 'why', He questions the primary causes of which the hypothesis has to be built and is sceptical of the foundations. He feels that he can arrive at some sort of solution or conclusion through a "sincere and single minded self-analysis".

In William Styron's *The Confessions of Nat Turner* there is suffering, death and finally an almost Christ-like victory; a peace that "endures". It depicts suffering, death and peace at the cost of immense pain. At the end of the novel, Nat Turner has been depicted as Christ thereby affirming the belief that man will ultimately defeat the forces of destruction. Styron, as a proof of his Faulknerian heritage re-affirms his faith in man's ability to "prevail". The confession of Negro slave who rises up in rebellion against his white masters, "is the only carefully planned and effective slave revolt in American history".¹ Styron uses the powerful Biblical rhetoric of the South to bring out this affirmation. The novel moves towards a kind of affirmation which the earlier novels failed to emphasize.

The critical opinions about the novel have been quite diverse. The book has been praised not only by the black, but also by the white people. Philip Rahv wrote in *The New York Review of Books*, *The Confessions of Nat Turner* is the best novel by an American writer to have appeared in some years, principally because in choosing a Negro slavery as the subject, Styron has found that "mighty theme" so necessary to the creation of truly great fiction. Alfred Kazin has called it "a wonderfully evocative portrait of a gifted, proud, long-suppressed human being".² C.Vann Woodward writing in *The New Republic*, called it "the most profound treatment of slavery in our literature".³ Raymond Sokolov claimed that "it is one of those novels that is an act of revelation to a whole society."⁴

The most vociferous comment has come from the Blacks themselves. Ten black writers have responded with the feeling "that the distortion of the true character of Nat Turner was deliberate. The motive of this distortion could be William Styron's reaction to the racial climate that has prevailed in

the United States in the last fifteen years. Nat Turner, a nineteenth century figure, seems to have been used to make a comment on a twentieth century situation.⁵

Styron himself intended to make the Black Brown John as the subject of his first novel. He is now convinced that would have been a mistake. If he had written it, he says, "it probably would have been gothic". It would have lacked the most interesting feature of the book as we have it- the first person point of view from which we see the novel's focal centre i.e the mind of Nat Turner himself. Styron felt that for a man of his generation a third person account would be both morally and artistically evasive. He had to understand the psychology of the black slave, in short, he had to see and feel what Nat saw and felt.

This would be a difficult job for any white man because enough time has passed since this revolt occurred. This task became menacingly difficult due to the paucity of historical sources. The only authentic document of Turner's revolt in 5000 word pamphlet, *The Confessions of Nat Turner* which was dictated by the condemned slave to his court-appointed lawyer, Thomas Gray. It was impossible for any writer to discover the historical Nat's motives and modes of expression from this only document. But this very fact allowed Styron the freedom to imagine what they were. It has been alleged that Styron distorted historical facts for his motives. Herbert Aptheker points out many historical discrepancies. He tells that the real Nat Turner was taught to read by his parents. In the novel, Styron showed that a benevolent master, Samuel Turner taught Nat to write to fulfill an "experiment". The historical Turner had a wife. Styron implies that Nat was a virgin.

The Confessions of Nat Turner is not only a drama of "saints" and "sinners" but also a "Civil Rights" novel thereby glorifying the black American and his passionate struggle for equality. Styron has dramatized the confrontation between White and Blacks in what is apparently the ante-bellum South, but he also comments on our own age in presenting sordid realities with an exhortation to usher in a new order - "Where the twain, black and white" could become one. The novel begins with "Judgement Day", the day that Nat is to receive a death sentence. From this situation in the present, Styron makes many invasions into the past. The recurring memories are used in an attempt to recapture lost times and it may be said that the novel is truly a "meditation". Then, the novel moves back into the past and Nat's mind slowly focusses itself on "Visions, Dreams, Recollections" and later to the "Old Times Past" of his childhood. It travels through time to "Study War", the preparations for the insurrection and finally, ends on a positive note, "It is Done". The novel ends in the present with Nat's death. Thus, it has a circular movement. The novel ended from where it began. The metaphorical description of early nineteenth century Virginia also recall a technique common to Styron's earlier novels. As Judge Cobb puts it, the state that was one the cradle of the nation is in his time rapidly becoming a wasteland, an empire converted into a breeding form for the cotton kings of the Deep South. This is the ruined land that produces Nat Turner, son of a rebellious runaway, slave whom he never knew and of a mother who cooks in the white man's kitchen.

The central tableau, which Styron time and again uses as a point of departure into the past, is, of course, the figure of Nat awaiting death. In the opening scene, Styron presents Nat as a revolutionary who now awaits execution. Nat not only faces the criticism of society, but is also tormented by doubt,

apprehending at last the chasm between himself and God which he vainly tries to close. His scheme of rebellion has been inspired by the Lord.

The inspiration of resurrection was inculcated very gradually in the mind of Nat from the incidents he was watching. He considers it to be a "divine inspiration". For at such times it seemed that the spirit of God hovered very close to me, advising me in this fashion, "Son of man, prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord; Say a sword, a sword is sharpened, and also furbished: it is sharpened to make a sore slaughter..."⁶ At the moment, God seemed to have deserted him. His feelings as he broods over the past, are of utter despair and loneliness at God's desertion:

Then what I done was wrong, Lord? I said. And if what I done
Was wrong, is there no redemption?
I raised my eyes upward but there was no answer, only the grey
Impermeable sky and night falling fast over Jerusalem.(p.115)

Thus, Styron presents a religious dilemma in which Nat finds himself in utter despair and his desertion by God. The first section of the novel depicts this crisis and the second section analyses the origin and development of Nat's religious fervor and his determination to exterminate the Whites. In this section, Styron evocatively presents Nat's childhood in Virginia – a "World of peace, joy and belonging". The next section shows the betrayal of Rev Eppes thereby sending Nat into the most severe kind of slavery. Nat gradually develops from an obedient slave into the leader of the most disastrous slave uprising in the history of American Negro. It is here that Nat sees himself as a prophet – as Elijah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel from the Old Testament. His imagination slightly turns apocalyptic as he moves towards the final execution of his plans. The last section depicts the cause of the rebellion and the consequent slaughtering of the Whites. The despair that follows the insurrection, ultimately leads Nat to a spiritual awakening that he experiences in the most bitter moment of his defeat. The spirit of Margaret Whitehead, the only woman he ever loved, and the only person Nat was able to kill in the insurrection, comes haunting alive. Nat realizes the promise of Revelation as the voice whispers; "Behold, let us love one another". (p.426) Nat "comes", finally symbolizing, like the Revelation, the coming of Jesus. The morning star is "fair and bright".

The Confessions of Nat Turner is an attempt to answer the questions that court appointed lawyer, Gray puts to Nat in the jail cell – "How could you start a calamity like you done...? How could the darks get organized... and carry out such a plan?" Styron effectively reveals the internal forces behind the Turner revolt through a perceptive study of Nat's character. In fact, it is Nat's peculiar position in society that finally drives him to rebellion. From early childhood, Nat is made to feel by everyone around him that he is different from other Negroes. His mother, Lau-Ann strengthens this feeling by making him believe that he is born to fulfill a great purpose. Besides, she instills in him a sense of pride by telling him time and again about his father – a proud and rebellious soul, who had successfully managed to run away from the bondage and about whom his mother never heard after that "Oh, yes, dat black man had pride awright, warn't many black mens around's like him".(p.135) Like his mother, Nat too begins to feel that "Us house folks is quality". (p.136) On account of this, Nat thinks of the Negroes as "the lower order of people – a ragtag mob, coarse, raucous, clownish,

incouth".(p.136) This contempt for his own people can be seen in the scene where Nat and Samuel Turner on their way home from Richmond, confronts the Ryder Negroes being transported to Georgia. Raymond looks spitefully at Nat thereby making him aware for the first time of his own blackness. This incident occurs directly after Samuel Turner has revealed his plans for liberating Nat. Styron very cleverly contrasts the promise made to Nat and his inevitable blackness, which belies the promise:

Now moving again down the long line of Negroes, I was aware that the jew's-harp had stopped playing; we came by the place where Raymond sat in his chains and I heard him call to me as we trotted past - the voice sweet and slow, high pitched, not unkind, as ever knowing and prophetic and profound. 'No' shit stink too, sugan : Yo' ass black jes' like mine, honey chile.(p.201)

Nat has been depicted as following the life style of the Whites:

So near to the White people, I absorb their language daily. I am a tireless eavesdropper, and their talk and command, even their style of laughter, vibrates endless in my imagination. Already my mother teases me for the way I parrot White folks talk - teases me with pride. Wash is moulded by different sounds - even now I am aware of this. Nigger voices striving clumsily to grapple with a language never taught, never really learned, still alien and unknown. (p.141-42)

Belief in his exalted nature takes firm hold when Master Samuel Turner makes him the subject of a singular experiment - he is taught to read. It is ironic that the first literature to which Nat is exposed is Bunyan's *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman* - a book which he steals from Turner's library. As the Turner family carry on with their little experiment in training the little nigger, Nat slowly takes on the lineaments of a White Christian. He is admonished "No more darky talk". (p.157) As he learns to quote from the Bible, it becomes clear to Nat that there is a contradiction between God's vision of man and the lot of the slaves:

What is man that thought are mindful of him? And the Son of man, that thou visiteth him? for thou hast made him a little lower than the angels and last crowned him with glory and honour.(p.26)

Nat's belief in the White man's moral superiority gradually dwindles away, till he comes to a gradual contempt of the white man's religion. Miss Emmelines' escape with her cousin Lewis at night shocks his sensibility as Nat was an unwilling witness to that sexual experience.

In a confessional novel, the central character finds himself completely alienated from the rest of the characters. This is true of Nat who realizes that he can never identify himself with the whites. This feeling gives rise to a deep sense of anguish in him. Nat's alienation may be viewed as an estrangement of his individual self from the oppressed social system. Styron, infact, has depicted the character of Nat as "invisibility of Nat" which is forsaken by both the blacks and the whites. Nat's contempt for the white is actually a matter of his "identity". Styron himself insists on the importance of human love as the basis of meaningful human relationships. Nat has been denied his love

throughout the novel. Thus, Nat feels the necessity of insurrection in order to overcome his unbearable sense of alienation and the lost identity.

Later on, Nat begins to identify himself with other Negroes as he comes closer to Hark. He feels that he is a messiah without a people to save until he undergoes a spiritual kinship with other slaves. This is fulfilled through a homosexual experience with Wills. Nat considers it to be a symbol of communion with all his black brothers. He follows it by performing his first baptism. The baptism confirms that he has been singled out by God for some holy purpose. The sexual ecstasy makes him realize that if he is to consecrate himself to God's service, in future he must avoid all such fleshly pleasures. He goes out into the wilderness and undergoes fasts in order to control his physical desires. He realises that the Negroes are God's superior outcasts unable to make an existential choice. This motivates him to strive for their upliftment:

In many ways, I thought, a fly must be one of the fortunate of God's creature. Brainless born, brainlessly seeking its sustenance from anything wet and warm, it found its brainless mate, reproduced and died brainless, unacquainted with misery of grief. But then I asked myself: How could I be sure? Who could say that flies were not instead God's supreme outcasts, buzzing eternally between heaven and oblivion in a pure agony of mindless twitching, forced by instinct to dine off sweet and slime and offal, their very brainless an everlasting torment? So that even if someone, well-meaning but mistakes, wished himself out of human misery and into a fly's estate, he would only find himself in a more monstrous hell than he had even imagined – an existence in which there was no act of will, no choice, but a blind and automatic obedience to instinct, which caused him to feast endlessly and gluttonously and revoltingly upon the guts of a rotting fox for a bucket of prisoner's slops. Surely that would be the ultimate damnation: to exist in the world of a fly, eating thus, without will or choice and against all desires.(Pg-150)

The fly here symbolizes the Negro-slave. The experience in which Nat witnesses his mother being raped by the White overseer, Mr. Bridge, completes the contempt both for the black and the White. What had really shocked Nat was the attitude of his mother after the rape. She was singing in a gentle voice.

For Jesus came and lock de do,

An carry the Keys away...(Pg-150)

The song depicts the psychology of the Negro mind of the time and gives us an insight into the philosophy of the Negro mind. It depicts the Negro attitude towards God. It is an attitude which can never share.

The Southern Negro of that time strongly believed that God is omnipotent, that He is also revengeful and that He fights the Battle of His Chosen people; the Chosen people being the downtrodden Negroes. It is this firm faith like that of Browning, which enabled them to endure pain, hardships, cruelty and humiliation of any sort. It is this faith which consoles his mother even after the brutal rape by Mr. Bridge. But Nat's religion is quite opposed to his fellow-negroes. Nat through his education

comes to this conclusion that it is futile and unwise to look to Heaven for justice. He considers it a sort of escape rather than facing the reality. This realization ultimately persuades him to identify himself with the role of Messiah, a liberator – to free his people from the bonds of oppression.

The Christianity which was originally forced upon the slave to propagate their religion, later became an indispensable and integral part of the Negro's existence. In the novel, the Christianity as preached by the Whites is depicted through Whitehead:

If, therefore you would be God's free men in paradise, you must strive to be good, and serve him here on earth. Your bodies, you know, are not your own : they are at the disposal of those you belong to, but your precious souls are still your own, which nothing can take from you if it is not your own fault. Figure well then that if you lose your soul by leading idle, wicked lives here, you have gained nothing by it in this world and you lost your all in the next. For your idleness and wickedness are generally found out and your bodies suffer for it here, and what is far worse, if you do not repent and alter your ways your unhappy souls will suffer for it hereafter...(p.97)

What Nat wants to achieve through his insurrection is not only the creation of a separate state for Negroes, but also the rejection of a type of Christianity which is essentially White and hence detrimental to the welfare of the Blacks. The rejection of the Son of God represented as White man is quite apparent in the novel. Since Christianity - a religion imbibed through years of preaching, could never be given up, the black man could find ways to alter the image of Whiteness as synonymous with good, or as "denoting purity". This is the spirit behind a number of new black faiths that have been mushrooming all over the United States in the present century.

In *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, religion and tragedy are closely interwoven. Nat, nurtured in a God centred and religion - oriented universe, utters the tragic sign of who has been cosmically dispossessed:

Oh that I were as an months past, as in the days when God preserved me. When his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness....(Pg-79)

His cry echoes that of Oedipus, "God of Heaven, what wouldst thought do unto me?" Since the novel deals with the drama between man and God, it has a chance for a tragic stature. Styron perhaps wants the reader to view Nat Turner as an archetypal tragic hero. The novel glorifies the message of Revelation of Jesus Christ. Styron goes on to say in an interview that the book "is a "kind of symbolic representation of the conflict between the vengeance and blood shed of the Old Testament and the redemption, the sense of peace and renewal of the New Testament"⁷.

Nat experiences at the end of the novel that God has completely deserted him. That is why he finds his inability to pray to God. Even he feels irritated at the name of God in the morning. It is through his inability to communicate with God that Nat realises the failure of the version to which his whole life had been dedicated. At the end of the novel, he is heretic who is morally damned not only by society, but also by God. Like Job turns his imagination to the events of the past when God favoured

him. Nat searches desperately for the Bible which he has left behind in the swamp. When Nat feels the torture by the desertion of God, he sees in his dream two black boys sinking deeper and deeper into the mire :

Screaming their mortal fright, black arms and faces sinking beneath the slime, the boys began to vanish one by one before my eyes while the noise of a prodigious guilt overwhelmed me like a thunder clap...(Pg-76)

Nat had first noticed God's departure immediately after the start of the uprising. He had reflected then that perhaps was God's way or forcing him to consider things he had not thought of before. One of the things he had not thought of is the possibility that the massacre is a Black Mass rather than a divinely guided Act of Atonement. Another is that the spiritual liberation and fulfillment lies elsewhere. In the infinite sense, Christ is the incarnation of love and mercy. It is Margaret Whitehead the only one whom he wishes he had saved and who now saves him. She had shown him "one whose presence I had not fathomed or may be ever known". Because he had simultaneously loved her for her beauty and hated her for being beyond his reach, her murder had been both a sexual act, "Ah, how I want her, I thought and unsheathed my sword" and an inverted religious sacrifice of the one being standing between him and an unqualified hatred of white humanity. Now, he realizes that through repentance, he can attain God's grace. Finally, Nat attains an ecstatic vision in which he and Margaret, the "twain-black and white-are one". At the same time, he remembers the words of Christ she had once recited to him, "Beloved let us love one another for love is of God, and everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God". With this revelation of love and union, the God's name, which he has forgotten, returns. He dies the death thinking of the "bright and morning star". The story ends as it began - with Nat's paradigmatic image of a "white inscrutable...mystery" - except that at last the image is accompanied by Christ words, "Then behold I come quickly".

Unlike Oedipus, the typical Greek hero, Nat is capable of freedom and consequently, he is capable of guilt and sin. Finally, Nat is forgiven because he arrives at some kind of transcendent knowledge through suffering and God provides him with the basis for a new life. It is finally God's mercy which redeems Nat despite his guilt and sin.

Nat is a typical rebellious figure, takes on the lineaments of one of the prophets of the Old Testament in order to liberate his people from the bondage. Ezekiel whom Styron quotes extensively in the novel, is the prophet with whom Nat may be identified very closely. Nat's vision of the New Jerusalem is not like the vision of Prophet Ezekiel. He assumes that he is divinely ordained to exterminate the Whites:

This is the fast that I have chosen, to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that he break every yoke...(Pg-292)

Nat thinks that the Jerusalem is a city of Sinners who have refused the judgement of the Lord God. Nat considers it to be his pious duty to demolish this city of Sinners and found a New Jerusalem. He considers it to be his moral duty to exterminate all the Whites. Nat wishes to spare one man with mark upon his head - Jeremiah Cobb. Cobb is convinced that the brutal system of slavery is "like

living in a dream" : then, Nat finds himself thinking that "when I succeed in my great mission, and Jerusalem is destroyed. This man Cobb will be among those few spared the sword...(Pg-75)

Nat gradually moves from the rebellious vision to the peace of Revelation. Although this message comes at the very end of the novel, Styron uses image which recur throughout the novel and which shows Nat's final acceptance of the "bright and morning star". The story is framed on one side by the visionary scene of promontory, a boat and a white building recalling to mind Ezekiel's vision after the fall of Jerusalem. This vision invokes a deep sense of mystery and awe, but promise final freedom from bondage and from the burden of guilt:

Now as I driftt near the cape I raise my eyes to the promontory facing out upon the sea. There again I see what I know I will see, always. In the sunlight the building stands white-stark white and serene against a blue and cloudless sky. It is square and formed of marble like a temple, and is simply designed, possessing no columns or windows but rather, a place of them, recesses whose purpose I cannot imagine flowering in a series of arches around its two visible sides...(Pg-4)

In this vision, Nat is invariably moving along a river which merges with the sea. In the childhood this is the very dream which Nat wants to fulfill in life. As he was denied the chance of ever visiting the sea side, he had to content himself with the vision which existed in his imagination. The White temple of Nat's dreams is the New Jerusalem where all conflicts are finally resolved. The voyage symbolizes the journey towards peace where all distinctions are finished. Here Nat's diverse feelings are integrated, as he eventually pours out his love for Margaret, "She reaches against me, cries out and the twain-black and white-are one." (Pg-426) Margaret's voice whispers, "It is not true, Nat? Did He not say, I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and the morning star?" (Pg-426) It is here that Nat comes closer to spiritual awareness. Nat affirms that he would have spared her that "showed me Him Whose presence I had not fathomed or may be ever known. Great God how early it is until now I had almost forgotten His name..." (Pg-428) To emphasize Nat's spiritual awakening, Styron contrasts the earlier visions of the devouring beast with the images of peace and fulfillment projected at the end of the novel:

The edge of dawn pales, brightens; stars wink away like dying sparks as the night fades and dusty sunrise begins to streak the far sky. Yet steadfast the morning star rides in the heavens radiant and pure, set like crystal amid the still, waters of eternity. Morning blooms softly upon the rutted streets of Jerusalem...(Pg-27,28)

Thus, Styron suggests, through appropriate myth and evocation, that man will ultimately prevail against the forces of evil if only he keeps in mind the Styronian idea that love is the chief element in all relationships. This is what Margaret Whitehead had explained to Nat Turner while quoting Christ which he comes to understand only subsequently.

Once again Nat Turner of *The Confessions of Nat Turner* is in the tradition of Dostoevsky. Peter Axthelem in his lucid expositions of the confessional individual tells of the significant action. According to him, at the moment of that action the protagonist is unclear about his motivations. Nat Turner while going through the massacre thinks it to be ordained by God although God has been

absent from the moment of his plan of violent death of the Whites. He possesses other traits of the confessional individual also. After the significant action is over, he falls into disillusionment and despair which illustrate his alienation from his self and the society and the consequent disintegration that becomes obvious to him during his meditations later on. To overcome this alienation, the confessional individual indulges in his confession. This confession is an attempt by the character to bridge the increasing gap between his self and the society. This is the link of the separate individual with the external world. He indulges in self-examination in an attempt to comprehend his self, the motivations for his action and the relation of his self with the other. This is characteristic of the confessional individuals. Their failure and suffering drives them to self-examination and the burden of their guilt necessitates intense soul-searching. Their affirmation is their comprehension of their self and the relation of their self with the outside world. Nat Turner also indulges in deep introspection and retrospection. Introspection explains to him the falsity of his hallucinatory ideas regarding the extermination of the Whites. It is the introspection that takes him from vendetta to revelation. He comes to value crucifixion. It is his retrospection that makes him realise that by exterminating white he became as brutish as were the whites he was fighting against. That explains to him the absence of God and the need for crucifixion. Not only that heaven killed that innocent virgin who showed him the light of love and knowledge. She made him realise the dimensions of God, Almighty which he may never have realised by himself alone. She gave him the idea that God is love. Seeing her exposed white flesh, he was physically excited and could not differentiate between his then motivations and the love of God that she explained to him through her quoting of Jesus Christ. This makes him realise also what the relations of his self should be and with the others. Appropriately, as the saying of that girl that the body may be had by any one on earth but the precious soul has to be retrieved, he turns at the last towards her saying. He feels that it is her precious soul beckoning his precious soul to discard the body indifferently and be united through that great element of love. Once again, Styron, like *Lie Down in Darkness* confirms life through death. The confessional individual in this novel also comes to value posthumous existence. Once again, like *Lie Down in Darkness*, the death becomes a convenient vehicle for solving the problems. Passing through death, Nat Turner can be cleansed and united with the innocent, Margaret Whitehead. The philosophy that God helps those who help themselves is at last understood in the true perspective by Nat Turner that the semanting force can be love and not hatred, otherwise there will be no difference between the cleansed Nat Turner and the dirty aristocratic whites. So in *The Confessions of Nat Turner* like *Lie Down in Darkness*, the protagonist has to realise the right type of human relationship. In this novel also, the Christian mythology abounds and Stella Maris is looked up to as the guiding star by Nat Turner. The bright and fair morning star, Stall Maris and Margaret Whitehead herself get inter-twined with the right perspective and Virgin Marry. This novel shows that Styron's development of his powers of his craftsmanship is continuous and consistent. *The Confessions of Nat Turner* once again, has dis-jointed chronology like *Lie Down in Darkness*. It also begins where it ends. The whole novel comes to us in the form of the protagonist's confession and self-analysis, in the first person narrative which gives it urgency and immediacy. The difficulties were immense, but Styron has come through appreciably. As is supreme when giving motivations to the protagonists actions, that is providing the cerebral basis to actions and incidents as no concocted historical evidence was available to form a basis to Nat's doings.

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