

Hawkshaw in the *Dry September* and *Hair*—the Gazed in the Gaze of Folks

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Hawkshaw is the barber who makes defense for the black man Will Mayes in the *Dry September* and the one who married Susan in the *Hair*. He has been almost soundless when he was introduced in the *Hair*; his story was weaved by the narrator and the other folks. His life was always in the gaze of other folks; according to Foucault, the gaze is the sight carrying power or desire. Under the look of the gazers, he paid on the dead fiancée's family's mortgage; he gave up defending for Will; he married Susan and he left Jefferson. His behaviors can be explained by the gazer's submission and resistance. Therefore, this thesis aims to offer some visions on the image of Hawkshaw through the lens of Foucault's theory.

Keywords: *Dry September*, *Hair*, gaze theory, Hawkshaw

Introduction of Foucault's Gaze Theory

Gaze theory originates from Aristotle and Plato's insights on vision; then in 20th century, three world-renowned philosophers—Lacan, Sartre, and Foucault have significantly enriched the theory with respective profound ideas. Lacan's contribution to gaze lies in his famous conception—"mirror stage"; his gaze aims at the subjectivity. Sartre's gaze deals with the existence of others and the self-alienation caused by gaze, while Foucault pays attention to the penetration of power in gaze. He puts forward a phrase—medical gaze, implying the patient's body is separated from patient itself but becomes the object of the gazers. In the discipline and punishment, he uses the word "panopticon" to address the system of surveillance. Panopticon is a circular building where an observation tower is in the center. Foucault attests to the point that the panopticon is designed to "induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power...the technical idea of the exercise of an 'all-seeing' power" (2020, p. 207). In panopticon, the criminals would be monitored at any time by the wardens, so they are supposed to regulate their behavior all the time to free from punishment. Anyone who enters the tower could have a full view of the prisoners, so the one who occupies the panopticon is the gazer. In the two novels as *Dry September* and *Hair*, Hawkshaw was gazed by folks in Division such as Starnes family, Bidwell, and the narrator "I", and the townsmen in Jefferson such as McLendon, Matt, and Maxey. As the gazed, he was burdened and always soundless. To meet the expectation of the gazer, he internalized their gazes and submitted himself to them. Nonetheless, he has also counter-gazed by resistance.

Hawkshaw in the Gaze of Division Folk in *Hair*

Hawkshaw was not Hawkshaw at the beginning. This name was given by the loafers in the square when he was walking about the square aimlessly for two days. He was originally called Henry Stribling, a son of a tenant farmer of Mr. Starnes. Being engaged with the landowner's daughter—Sophie, he had to go out to make a fortune for their future. However, Sophie died of fever before their marriage and her last words were to ask Henry to take care of the mortgage. Therefore, under the gaze of Mrs. Starnes and Sophie, he internalized the mortgage as his responsibility, which essentially has little to do with him. But in the purpose of living up to Sophie's expectation, he went around to find chances to be barber and went back every April to clean up the house and pay on the mortgage. When Mrs. Starnes was alive, she took Henry's care for granted and even despised him, seeing him as one of those parveynoos. However, when she was dying, she said also about the mortgage "You know what Sophie said to do. That mortgage. Mr. Starnes will be worried when I see him" (Faulkner, 1977, p. 109). Therefore, again he took the mortgage as his duty consciously under the expectation of gazer—Mrs. Starnes. He was consciously and unconsciously internalized gazer's desire as his own desire. Even if Starnes family have all been dead, their real gaze disappeared, he still made the payment each year, lasting for 13 years. Why should he continue to pay the mortgage for so long? As Foucault's panopticism stated, he has already innated "a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power". Thus, though the Starnes were deceased and the house was not his property, he still regularly came back to clean it and pay the principal on the mortgage. Besides the pressure from the late ones, there were also live ones gazing upon him, such as the girl Susan, colleague Matt, and the owner Maxey of the barber shop. He met Susan when she was about five, and he was between 20 and 30 (deducing from the fact that he was about 45 when he paid in full in 1930 and he lived in Jefferson for 12 years). Susan had straight hair not blonde and not brunette, just like Sophie, "with a lot of straight hair not brown and not yellow" (Faulkner, 1977, p. 108). He has decided to stay after the first time Susan came for haircut. It was not his usual style as he always worked until April and quit for another place just for looking around. But the gaze of the "scared rabbit"—Susan, he felt being trusted and being needed. Susan would always wait for Hawkshaw to tend to her hair when she was young; she thought he was her exclusive barber and he considered her as his own client. In the gaze of Susan, Hawkshaw has gradually transformed her desire as his own desire, changing from being needed to needing. He would punctually drift up to the window every morning and afternoon to look Susan passing to and from school. But Susan grew too fast, and too differently: She would not always go to Hawkshaw's chair even when his chair was empty. At that time, he "wouldn't look at her then. Even when he wasn't busy, he had a way of looking the same: intent and down-looking like he was making out to be busy, hiding behind the making-out" (Faulkner, 1977, p. 105). It indicated that Hawkshaw was requiring gaze instead because he has already been accustomed to it. Susan herself was also under the gaze of other folks, but she did not follow the power the gaze carrying. She did not become the woman the system required her to be. As a result, as the folks declared, she got in trouble at last and was bad sick. The last time the barbers saw her, she was like painted ghost, gaunt, and hard. This was also the power of gaze: the negative one—punishment. But Susan was lucky to leave with Hawkshaw, to leave the backward and stagnant town, to leave the forceful gaze.

Hawkshaw in the Gaze of Jefferson Folks in *Dry September*

In *Dry September*, Hawkshaw was the only one who made defense for the black man Will, and he insisted that Will was a good nigger so he would not attack the white woman. But the others in the barber shop were all

shocked that he should take a nigger's words before a white man and thought he was a damn nigger-lover. They condemned him as nigger-loving when every time he tried to defend for Will. Consequently, he was gradually silent as he felt the pressure from their gazes. The gazers were deeply influenced by the idea of racism; they reckoned the white were much superior to the black and the black have always tried to attack and smear the white women. The gazers demanded Hawk to follow their path to repudiate the colored, and if he rejected, he would be equaled with the black and be isolated or even attacked. The folks led by McLendon thought that they had occupied the commanding point of justice and morals so they had gained the power of manipulating others just like the one who enters the panopticon. Being gazed by the powerful gazers, Hawk abandoned his rebellion and submissively regulated his behavior with the pattern of the whites. Chances were that Henry himself has not realized his mindset has already been in line with the racist. It can be seen from the fact that he joined the group who struck Will when Will objected to the blows and accidentally slashed the barber upon the mouth. Hawk was feeling sick just now when seeing the folks' cruel act on Will, but he was inadvertently being beaten by the black; his first action was to strike back because he could not tolerate being attacked by inferior creatures. This was exactly the penetration of gaze: When exposed to long-time surveillance, the state of conscious and permanent feeling of being stared will be generated, so the gazed will regulate his behavior even when there were no gazers. Therefore, hawk himself has identified with the idea of racism, and his behavior of vindicating Will was just stung by conscience and said some good words.

Nevertheless, the gazed can be not only submissive but also resistant. Henry is not just the gazed, but also the counter-gazer. He realized the gaze upon him was not standing for reason, and he has seen the dark side of the racist influence but he could not rebel against it, so he chose to leave, to be away from the gazers. He has also taken Susan, as she was not fit in the system and did not satisfy the expectation of the gazers.

Conclusion

Hawkshaw was almost voiceless in the story *Hair*; he was mainly living in the gaze of Starnes family and Susan: He kept paying the house mortgage for 13 years even he was not entitled to the property, but he has internalized the Sophie and Mrs. Starnes' expectation as his own goal; he took Susan's desire as his own desire and he hoped to last the feeling of being gazed by Susan but in vain. In the *Dry September*, he was incapable of sticking to his own opinion as he was unable to shake off the influence of the gazers. From the two novellas, we can see that Hawk tried to use reason to set things right but he cannot rebel against the gazers who stand for the power and he himself was also vulnerable as his mindset was also penetrated by the racism. Thus, as a way of revolting against the dominating power, he chose to leave, to leave the powerful gazers.

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