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THE CHANGING VISION OF EVIL IN
HAWTHORNE'S FICTION.

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THE CHANGING VISION OF EVIL IN HAWTHORNE'S FICTION

by

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<u>AN</u>	<u>The American Notebooks</u>
<u>BR</u>	<u>The Blithedale Romance</u>
<u>DR</u>	<u>The Dolliver Romance</u>
<u>EN</u>	<u>The English Notebooks</u>
<u>F</u>	<u>Fanshawe</u>
<u>F&IN</u>	<u>The French and Italian Notebooks</u>
<u>HSG</u>	<u>The House of Seven Gables</u>
<u>MF</u>	<u>The Marble Faun</u>
<u>MFOM</u>	<u>Mosses from an Old Manse</u>
<u>OOH</u>	<u>Our Old Home</u>
<u>SF</u>	<u>Septimus Felton</u>
<u>SI</u>	<u>The Snow Image</u>
<u>SK</u>	<u>Tales, Sketches, and other Papers</u>
<u>SL</u>	<u>The Scarlet Letter</u>
<u>TTT</u>	<u>Twice-Told Tales</u>

INTRODUCTION

The subject of this dissertation is the nature of evil in Nathaniel Hawthorne's fiction. Much critical energy has already been devoted to the topic. The major thrust of this criticism, however, concerns evil as human sin. F. O. Matthiessen, for example, offers a penetrating study of Hawthorne's vision of evil in American Renaissance; but as its chapter title suggests--"Hawthorne's Psychology: the Acceptance of Good and Evil"--it is limited to a study of human sin and its effects on the sinner.¹ Roy R. Male's argument in Hawthorne's Tragic Vision focuses on the treatment of evil as it affects moral growth.² Harry Levin in The Power of Blackness also examines the darkness of Hawthorne's vision in terms of human sin and places his major emphasis on those aspects of sin that derive from Puritanism.³ Marius Bewley, comparing Hawthorne with Melville, sees Hawthorne as primarily interested in good and evil as they affect men living in relation with other human beings;

and he maintains that the problem of eternal sanctions never really bothers Hawthorne.⁴

Three commonplace notions have grown out of the body of criticism which concentrates on Hawthorne's vision of evil. The first is that the foundation of this vision rests on his ambivalent attitude toward Puritanism and that the dramatic tension in his work derives from this ambivalence.⁵ The second maintains that there was little if any change in his vision of evil during the course of his literary career.⁶ The third notion is that the works reflect an untroubled faith in God.⁷

It appears to me, however, that the tales and romances, supported by Hawthorne's letters and notebooks, offer evidence enough to warrant a reappraisal of these commonly accepted attitudes. Thus, the intent of my examination will be two-fold: to compare the treatment of evil in the early tales with the treatment in the later tales and the romances; and to examine the theological aspect of Hawthorne's vision of evil not only in the narrower sense of his relation to a particular creed, Puritanism, but in the larger sense of his relation to God. What I hope to demonstrate is that there is indeed a change in his vision and that the change is at least partially dependent upon a struggle with his own religious faith, a struggle which becomes increasingly apparent

beginning with the early 1840s.

A few words about my use of the term "vision of evil" seems in order here. By vision I merely refer to Hawthorne's distinctive way of viewing the human condition, the way in which he dramatizes the interactions between his characters and the world they inhabit. To define evil is, of course, a much more complex undertaking. Of all the abstract terms which characterize the subject matter of Hawthorne's work none, in fact, seems so impervious to definition as the word evil. Any attempt to define it must in a sense be reductive. There is, furthermore, the paradoxical situation into which any study of evil in literature must fall, and that is that while one of the ultimate targets of such a study is to designate a particular author's use of evil, the critic can hardly proceed without in some way demarcating his own uses of this amorphous term. With these problems in mind I have been led to choose for my working definition the very comprehensive delineation of evil offered by Richard B. Sewall in The Vision of Tragedy: "All the forces, within and without, that make for man's destruction, all that afflicts, mystifies and bears him down, are what man knows as evil."⁸ I would add to this that literature commonly deals with evil at three levels. The first is what we might call societal.

Here the literature concentrates on recognizable evils of society, those which are institutional and therefore remediable. A second level we might call cosmic. The concentration here is on external forces in the universe which to man seem inexplicable and inscrutable. Fate, destiny, God, are the concerns of this aspect of evil. The third level to which literature addresses itself is the evil that resides within the heart of man.

For the purposes of this study we may dispose of the first of these with a few words. An emphasis on the societal level of evil presupposes that man is naturally good and that reform of institutions will peel away the veneer of corruption which clouds this natural goodness. Although Hawthorne is concerned with the notion of reform, his interest is usually directed toward exposing how fatuous is the belief that the improvement of human nature will follow from an improvement of institutions. The Blithedale Romance is, on one level, a satirical commentary on the idea of mass reform. "Earth's Holocaust" deals with the possibility of purifying mankind of evil through institutional change.

It is thus with the other two levels of evil--the cosmic and the internal--and specifically with the charging emphasis which Hawthorne places upon them, that we are concerned. His treatment of evil in the human heart prompted

critical attention from the start. Speaking of Hawthorne's dark imagination almost a century ago, Henry James suggested that "nothing is more curious and interesting than this almost exclusively imported character of the sense of sin in Hawthorne's mind; it seems to exist there merely for an artistic or literary purpose. He had ample cognizance of Puritan conscience; it was his natural heritage; it was reproduced in him; looking into his soul, he found it there. But his relation to it was only, as one may say, intellectual; it was not moral and theological."⁹ James then goes on to cite a comment made by another critic, Emile Montegut:

"This marked love of cases of conscience, this taciturn, scornful cast of mind; this habit of seeing sin everywhere, and hell always gaping open; this dusky gaze bent always upon a damned world; and a nature draped in mourning; these lonely conversations of the imagination with the conscience; this pitiless analysis resulting from a perpetual examination of one's self, and from the tortures of a heart closed before men and open to God--all these elements of the Puritan character have filtered into him, through a long succession of generations."

All that Mr. Montegut says, observes James, is true "minus the conviction."¹⁰

James's remarks, both his negation of the theological and moral aspects of Hawthorne's relation to his Puritan heritage and his unequivocal statement of disbelief in Hawthorne's conviction, appear to us to be too facile, too easy a way of explaining this complex author--certainly the

notebooks and letters contradict the idea of a lack of moral and theological concern. But James's comments generate several interesting questions. What is it, for example, that makes a reader so perceptive as James sense a lack of conviction in a body of work which, for at least the first fifteen years, seems at times almost obsessively concerned with the dark, sinful side of man? If the firmness of Hawthorne's conviction is open to question, if his relation to this heritage is intellectual or artistic rather than emotional, can we accept the theory that it is his struggle with Puritanism which provides the dramatic tension in his fiction? Questions such as these have led to this examination and to the proposal that it is not a quarrel with Puritanism but--to borrow from Lawrance Thompson's very appropriate title for his book on Melville--a quarrel with God which provides the dramatic tension in Hawthorne's fiction. And what Hawthorne said of Melville as a result of their last talk seems, in fact, applicable to himself at this time: "He can neither believe nor be comfortable in his unbelief."¹¹

What strikes us most forcefully in the work that draws on Puritan concerns for its subject matter is the relative unimportance of the role assigned to God. For the voices of Puritanism, from John Winthrop to Jonathan Edwards, God is

the supreme subject. Yet references to God, Providence, fate are rare in the tales written prior to the early 1840s and when they do appear they usually sanction the ways of God in a rather desultory manner before the story moves back to its major interest: sinful man.

Nor, it follows, does this early writing display much interest in the problems of sustaining religious faith. Occasional manifestations of doubt do surface but they are notably infrequent, always more controlled and tentative than later expressions, and usually concluded on a note of affirmation.¹² The center of interest at this time focuses not on man's relation to any cosmic force but on his relation to himself and to other men. Sin and the responsibility for it are earthly affairs.

But then, beginning around 1842 and 1843 and moving with increasing intensity through the rest of Hawthorne's work, the interest shifts to man's relation with cosmic evil; and the burden of responsibility for evil shifts accordingly: away from man and toward Providence. There is the introduction of the Faust figure--the first of a series of characters who attempt to usurp God's role--in "The Birthmark." There is the detailed examination of the difficulty of religious faith in "The Celestial Railroad." Whereas allegorical representations of the devil were

abundantly dramatized in the early tales, there materializes here one of the first allegorical renderings of God, embodied in Rappaccini--and what a curious portrait it turns out to be! There is, furthermore, an altered relation between the author and his characters. Where Hawthorne's work depicted man as the source of evil, his attitude toward his protagonists was detached, often mocking. Hooper, Brown, Wakefield, Lady Eleanore: none were objects of sympathy. The cold heart was scorned and its landlord censured. But now, in "The Christmas Banquet," for example, what was formerly treated as sin becomes a sorrow. Hastings is not to blame for his inability to love. He is to be pitied as a victim of some force greater than his own dark heart. Finally, there emerges in the same story a prototype of those religious rebels whose minds stray into unorthodox areas of thought.

It is this move, this decided change in Hawthorne's vision of evil, that my essay proposes to examine. Ever since Julian wrote that the early tales "contain Hawthorne's philosophy of life, speculations and conclusions upon matters vital to all mankind. They contain, therefore, the corner-stone of his view of the problem of man, God, and the nature which is the medium between them,"¹³ the "static character of Hawthorne's theological thinking has," as Leonard

Fick notes, "been an established commonplace."¹⁴ But, if we are to rely on extrinsic evidence, we might as easily take Hawthorne's own comment as the definitive view. Referring to Mosses from an Old Manse, he writes: "Upon my honor, I am not quite sure that I entirely comprehend my own meaning in some of these blasted allegories....I am a good deal changed since those times; and to tell you the truth, my past self is not very much to my taste, as I see myself in this book."¹⁵

Fortunately we need rely on neither of these contradictory statements. What I am proposing is that the works themselves demonstrate change, that Hawthorne's vision of evil moves from an almost exclusive concern with evil as it inhabits the human heart, what might be called "the forces within," to an interest in the cosmic level of evil, those forces "without, that make for man's destruction," that afflict, mystify and bear him down.

The first chapter of this proposal concentrates on Hawthorne's relation to Puritanism, examining commonly shared concerns and elucidating similarities and differences in their respective dispositions toward these concerns. What I attempt to illuminate here is that despite the heavy infiltration of Puritan material, his interest is, as James suggested, intellectual and artistic, dispassionate rather

than involved. Criticism which sees Hawthorne's conflict with Puritanism as productive of dramatic tension frequently advances this confrontation as an explanation of his evasive technique. Indeed, the question that stands behind the interest of many of his readers is why does Hawthorne persist in screening his sentiments in a haze of obscurity. But Puritan influence does not seem quite satisfying enough a solution. If the blackness of vision that "fixed and fascinated" Melville is only an insight into the human heart, as evil would have been designated by his Puritan ancestors, why the evasiveness? Certainly this insight is a conventional enough subject for literature. Even if Hawthorne considered it a blasphemy against Puritan doctrine to suggest that seeking out iniquity is itself an evil, we must still ask why the evasiveness. Is there not enough overt censure of Puritan dogma in his work to dispel such a possibility? And surely the man who never went to church and who called for "a new revelation--a new system--for there seems to be no life in the old one"¹⁶ would not fear offending organized religion.

Thus, I submit, we must look elsewhere for an explanation of the purposive obscurity. My second chapter attempts to prove that in those works--written after the early 1840s --where dramatic tension actually obtains, the conflict

derives from a growing recognition on Hawthorne's part that human life is governed by antagonistic forces which thwart man's plans, theories, desires. We now begin to detect the emergence of a recurrent pattern wherein he offers God, fate or some other cosmic force as the responsible agent of evil and then backs away from that possibility by attributing the ultimate cause to some human sin. Occasionally his flirtation with the idea of a hostile universe or an unsympathetic God is characterized by a puzzling playfulness, ending in some variation of the conclusion to the organ grinder's scene in The House of Seven Gables where the narrator says: "But rather than swallow this last too acrid ingredient, we reject the whole moral of the show."¹⁷ At other times the evasiveness derives from the use of two characters who offer conflicting viewpoints concerning the degree of cosmic responsibility for man's suffering. Although Hawthorne refuses to offer direct authorial comment on these debates, he does, albeit subtly, offer a plentiful supply of hints which reveal his attitude toward the debaters.

As the conflict moves to the cosmic arena and the recognition of providential responsibility begins to occupy his artistic consciousness, his interest in Puritan concerns wanes. The later tales and the romances reveal an increasing concern with man's relation to God, Providence or fate.

The focus of this section lights on the blackness in Hawthorne's vision. My discussion aims at demonstrating both that this blackness becomes "ten times" more black and that its source changes. In addition to examining Hawthorne's altered use of light and dark imagery, I also attempt to probe what stands behind his changing conception of the brotherhood theme as well as his growing interest in man's insignificance and in the role of fate. The section closes by tracing his intensifying admiration for his Faust figures.

The third chapter centers on the more explicit expressions of religious doubt in Hawthorne's work. Since these are not integral to his early writing but rather become more pronounced, this section also demonstrates a change in his vision of evil. His evasive technique, likewise, receives extended treatment here. In addition to a discussion of manifest references to doubt in the fiction, notebooks, and correspondence, I explore the contributions to our sense of a growing struggle to believe in a benevolent and caring Providence that are made by such thematic interests as the Fall and immortality. Regarding the former, Hawthorne's early interest is man centered: he dramatizes the conventional initiation story in which an innocent encounters evil, is altered by his experience, and evokes a feeling of sorrow

in us for the loss of his happy state. Later treatments, however, differ in two respects. Although Hawthorne never loses sight of the price his characters must pay for their apprehension of evil, the balance shifts progressively toward a view of this archetypal experience as fortunate. Secondly, a new dimension enters the initiation stories. The question that occupies his imagination in the later romances concerns not only the consequences of the Fall but the reasons for it. And the latter concern once again takes us into the cosmic realm of evil. A shift of interest also obtains in the fictional treatments of immortality, moving from the question of heavenly immortality in the early works to the possibilities of earthly eternality in the later renderings.

A few words concerning my method and scope, as well as the justification for another study of a writer who claims such an exhaustive body of criticism, will bring this introduction to a close. The statement of intention with which I began--that is, my desire to test the counterparts of the commonplace views of Hawthorne's writing career as static and as founded on an unquestioned belief in God--offers, I hope, at least partial justification for my essay. But I am aware that this desire may itself provoke rather than answer

an important question, namely how legitimate an undertaking is the study of a writer's religious faith. To this I can only answer that its validity rests on the relationship which the critic draws between the religious and creative experiences. I have thus sought to deal with Hawthorne's religious consciousness as it translates into aesthetic achievement. In treating the interdependence of the spiritual and the artistic, I was also faced with the problem of determining to what extent Hawthorne's characters represent his own beliefs. The general criteria I selected for this assessment included: 1) the frequency with which a particular attitude appears within the work in question; 2) whether or not it is supported in other fiction; 3) does it coincide with the author's non-fiction; 4) does the authorial voice recommend the same point of view.

Several factors dictated the method of this essay. The dangers of dealing with an author who, like Hawthorne, has prompted such excellent criticism are manifold. There is the temptation to be ingenious (which I hope I have avoided) as well as the danger of contentiousness which both the nature of a dissertation and the import of my argument make more difficult to evade. There is also the necessity of repeating much that has already been said. I have attempted to minimize this practice by omitting thoroughly worked

insights and referring the reader to other critical works. Where I have dealt with aspects of Hawthorne's fiction that already bear a considerable burden of analysis, I have done so in the hope that I offer a new perspective, a new way of seeing a particular facet of his artistic imagination. These are the conditions that have prompted me to eschew the more popular method of dividing my essay into chapters based on individual works or groups of works and to adopt a structure in which I might better offer a comprehensive picture of all Hawthorne's writing as it illuminates a particular aspect of his aesthetic. Thus I devote one chapter to Hawthorne and Puritanism, another to Hawthorne's blackness of vision, and the third to Hawthorne and God. My decision was reinforced by the demands of demonstrating change.

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

1. American Renaissance (New York, 1941).
2. Hawthorne's Tragic Vision (Austin, 1957).
3. The Power of Blackness (New York, 1958).
4. The Eccentric Design (New York, 1963).

5. In addition to Levin, this view is supported by Morris Lloyd in The Rebellious Puritan (New York, 1927); A. N. Kaul in The American Vision (New Haven, 1963); J. Golden Taylor in Hawthorne's Ambivalence Toward Puritanism (Loban, Utah, 1965).

6. The chief proponents of this view are Randall Stewart in Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Biography (New Haven, 1948) and Leonard Fick in The Light Beyond: A Study of Hawthorne's Theology (Westminster, 1955). The notion is more implicit than explicit in most other criticism. It stands behind a striking absence of any mention of change in the discussions of Hawthorne's vision. The works that do treat development in his art concentrate on technique and propose that his most characteristic uses of literary devices can be traced back to his earliest works. See: Marvin Laser, "Hawthorne and the Craft of Fiction: A Study in Artistic Development," Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1948; John D. Gordan, "Nathaniel Hawthorne, the Years of Fulfillment, 1804-53," BNYPL, 59, Parts I-IV (New York, March-June, 1955); Julian Hawthorne "A New Order of Things," The Idea of an American Novel, eds. L.D. Rubin, Jr. and John Ries Moore (New York, 1961); Robert Eugene Gross, "Hawthorne's First Novel: The Future of a Style," PMLA, LXXVIII (1963), 60-8; Seymour L. Gross, "Prologue to The Scarlet Letter: Hawthorne's Fiction to 1850," A Scarlet Letter Handbook, ed. Seymour L. Gross (Belmont, California, 1960).

7. Leonard Fick in The Light Beyond maintains that the keystone of Hawthorne's theology is an unshakable belief in Providence and that it is from the vantage point of this belief that Hawthorne reconciles the problem of evil; John T. Frederick in The Darkened Sky: Nineteenth Century Novelists and Religion (Notre Dame, 1969), p.29, asserts that primary in Hawthorne's "thinking was an unquestioned belief in God"; Frederick Crews in The Sins of Fathers:

Hawthorne's Psychological Themes (New York, 1966), p.7, opens this notion to question in suggesting that Hawthorne's "orthodoxy can be upheld only at the price of refusing to examine the psychological implications of his plots." But Crews's concern is psychological rather than theological and he does not pursue the subject. See additional references pp. 178-82.

8. The Vision of Tragedy (New Haven, 1959), p.47.

9. Hawthorne (New York, 1894), p.57.

10. Ibid., pp.59-60.

11. The English Notebooks, ed. Randall Stewart (New York, 1962), p.433.

12. "Young Goodman Brown" might be viewed as an exception since it can, of course, be read as a study of loss of religious faith as well as a study of the loss of faith in one's fellow man. And the former reading would testify to Hawthorne's early interest in the problems of sustaining religious faith. But even here the author's attitude toward Brown supports the notion of affirmation.

13. The Memoirs of Julian Hawthorne (New York, 1938), p.214.

14. The Light Beyond, p.174.

15. Letter of April 13, 1854, cited in James T. Fields, Yesterdays with Authors (Cambridge, Mass., 1900), p.75.

16. The American Notebooks, ed. Randall Stewart (New York, 1932), p.165.

17. The House of Seven Gables, Centenary Edition, II (Columbus, 1965), p.163.

CHAPTER ONE: HAWTHORNE AND PURITANISM

When we study Hawthorne's vision of evil in the light of his Puritan heritage, several questions immediately arise. There is the question of influence, a valid concern and one which provokes little controversy.¹ Hawthorne's conception of himself as a son of the Puritans cannot be disputed. Speaking of his "grave, bearded, sable cloaked, and steeple crowned" progenitors in the Custom-house section of The Scarlet Letter, he tells us that the "strong traits of their nature have intertwined themselves with mine."² Seven years later, at Easter services in England, he offers a similar comment: "the spirit of my Puritan ancestors was mighty in me" (EN, p.451).

That this identification was central to the subject matter of his early work is clear. Certainly the tales and the first of the romances reflect the concerns of the Puritan habit of mind. Perry Miller's summary of Puritan thought and behavior in The New England Mind: The Seventeenth

Century might, in fact, serve as a checklist for Hawthorne's most pervasive themes: original sin, human depravity, guilt, fate, redemption, the fall of man, the nature of good and evil, the limits of individualism, the relation of restraint to pleasure and duty, the role of the intellect. His symbolic technique, moreover, has its roots in the Puritan notion of the presence of the spiritual in all natural objects. And his psychological mode can be seen to stem from a Puritan preoccupation with the examination of oneself and others in order to detect the rationalizations and tricks of the conscience, and from a belief that guilt or innocence has to do not only with conduct but also consciousness.

Some other questions and the critical stances which purport to answer them appear to me less valid and, in fact, often reductive and distortive. A favorite concern is whether Hawthorne admired or scorned, agreed or disagreed with Puritan doctrine.³ Although his writing, itself often a form of bedevilment, can with "proper" selectivity be made to support either side, a question of this scope seems somewhat fruitless. The more illuminating criticism recognizes that Hawthorne was drawn to some facets of Puritanism and repelled by others. Some supporters of this ambivalence theory claim that the dual nature of his attitude provides the dramatic tension of his work. With this extension of

their analysis, I find it difficult to agree. For the dramatic tension, if it exists, would have to result from a conflict within Hawthorne over whether or not he supported such principles of Puritan doctrine as, for example, original sin or introspection or predestination. And there is little evidence to support the suggestion of such a conflict.

The apparent ambivalence which has led to this notion of conflict seems rather to stem from a combination of two pervasive qualities in Hawthorne's work. The first is merely his recognition--one shared by all writers of tragic vision--of the complexity of the human condition. The second, which may well be dependent upon, or at least conditioned by, this tragic recognition, is his playfully evasive technique. Whatever Hawthorne may have felt personally about the Puritans--and certainly he was caught in, even obsessed by their concerns--he refuses in his art to be attached to any unilateral position. What we find repeatedly in the early work is a structural pattern wherein the author appears to take a stand for or against some facet of Puritan creed. But lurking behind the approbation or censure are always the questions that suggest a dispassionate dramatization of varying perspectives. And by the time we reach the conclusion of a tale, we realize that Hawthorne is not so much quarreling or agreeing with Puritanism as using its doctrine as a fictional

stage on which to dramatize his vision of evil. He drew the artistic material for his stories out of the climate of mind, the inescapable cast of feeling, which he inherited from his ancestors. But his treatment of this material--sometimes sly, sometimes uncertain, sometimes confusing--offers no mere acceptance or rejection of Puritan dogma. Instead he explores, in contradistinction to the absolutist attitudes he often attributes to his ancestors, a variety of possibilities, exposing both the good and evil of their doctrine.

I

Hawthorne wrote of an ancestor that "he had all the Puritanic traits, both good and evil" (SL, p.9). The good traits as they appear in the writer's work are frequently dramatized in opposition to the currently popular Transcendentalism of Emerson and the Unitarianism of Channing. Hawthorne's own preference is revealed by his description of the library at the Old Manse: "Dr. Ripley's own additions to the library are not of a very interesting character. Volumes of the Christian Examiner and Liberal Preacher, modern sermons, the controversial works of Unitarian ministers, and all such trash; but which, I suppose express fairly enough, when compared with the elder portion of the library, the

difference between the cold, lifeless, vaguely liberal clergyman of our own day, and the narrow but earnest cushion-thumper of puritanical times. On the whole, I prefer the last-mentioned variety of the black-coated tribe" (AN, p.158).

What Hawthorne most admired in the Puritans was their "strength of mind and heart" (EN, p.451). Despite all the censure he heaps upon them in The Scarlet Letter, he is uninvolved enough even there to applaud the fact that they had "fortitude and self-reliance, and in time of difficulty or peril, stood up for the welfare of the state like a line of cliffs against a tempestuous tide" (p.238). To the Transcendentalists, however, his response was quite the reverse. He might, as he notes in "The Old Manse," admire "Emerson as a poet of deep beauty and austere tenderness" but he "sought nothing from him as a philosopher."⁴ Elsewhere he notes that "Mr. Emerson is a great searcher for facts; but they seem to melt away and become unsubstantial in his grasp" (AN, p.157). When Hawthorne comes to talk of the "Giant Transcendentalist" in "The Celestial Railroad," he remarks that "the chief peculiarity of this huge miscreant [is] that neither for himself, nor anybody for him, has ever been able to describe him" (MFOM, p.224). The optimism that accompanied this unacceptable philosophy and lack of direction

appeared to him to need tempering. And in several of the early works he launches corrective attacks against a rosy-eyed vision which failed to square with the reality of human experience.

One aspect of a seemingly closer affinity with the Puritans than with his contemporaries concerns what Hawthorne considered the latter's fatuous belief in the improvement of human nature through the improvement of institutions, a belief which discounted the Puritan recognition of the human heart as the source of evil. It is here that he deals with evil at the societal level, an interest which disappears from his later works (The Marble Faun and the unfinished romances) and which, when it appears in The House of Seven Gables, The Blithedale Romance and the prose pieces, functions as a vehicle for his exploration of man's insignificance and inefficaciousness in the cosmic scheme. In the earlier work the treatment of societal evil, albeit never a major concern, would seem to expose the delusory quality of the notions of reform and progress. But even here, where Hawthorne appears to be dramatizing a firm conviction, a note of uncertainty creeps into his narratives.

The work which ostensibly provides the most dramatic example of Hawthorne's attitude toward reform and which, consequently, is the one most often used by critics in

exemplifying it is "Earth's Holocaust." Hyatt Waggoner's comment is typical. He observes that "Hawthorne is saying in 'Earth's Holocaust,' that all reform is superficial so long as the heart remains untouched."⁵ If this observation is accurate the tale becomes little more than an unqualified dramatization of Puritan creed, of Jonathan Edwards' declaration in Religious Affections: "Without a change of nature, men's practice will not be thoroughly changed."⁶ But what Waggoner and his supporters neglect to mention is that the passage which contributes to this reading--"There's one thing that these wiseacres have forgotten to throw into the fire, and without which all the rest of the conflagration is just nothing at all....What but the human heart itself" (MFOM, pp.454-5)--is spoken by the devil and that the narrator's own peroration begins by questioning the truth of this assertion: "How sad a truth, if true it were, that man's age-long endeavor for perfection had served only to render him the mockery of the evil principle" (p.355, italics mine). Thus the tale provides a more appropriate example of Hawthorne's tendency to throw open to question what he saw as the absolutist creed of his Puritan forefathers than it does an illustration of his accord with certain of their beliefs.

The two middle romances would also seem to accord with

Puritan creed. In The House of Seven Gables Clifford and Holgrave are both mocked for their reformist views. Clifford's vision of progress as a "'beautiful figure, in an ascending spiral curve'" (p.259), of which the railroad is symbolic, is undercut by the abortiveness of his attempt to improve his own condition through taking a ride on this very sign of progress. His advocacy of the Emersonian belief that evil, if it exists, will disappear in this "'ascending spiral'" of progress is treated with scornful irony. There is, Hawthorne is saying, no celestial railroad. Of Holgrave's progressivism and reformist efforts Hawthorne advises his readers that the young reformer is destined at the close of his life to discern "that man's best directed effort accomplishes a kind of dream, while God is the sole worker of realities" (p.180), an attitude he was to repeat later that year in The Life of Franklin Pierce and ten years afterward in "Chiefly About War Matters."

The Blithedale Romance also points an unmistakably accusatory finger at the reformist aspirations of Hawthorne's contemporaries. The Blithedalers' purpose is to reform by setting themselves up as exemplars of "a life governed by other than the false and cruel principles on which human society has all along been based."⁷ The criticism begins gently enough, referring to the enterprise as absurd but

generous and picturing it as "a counterfeit Arcadia in which ...grown-up men and women were making a playday of the years that were given [them] to live in (p.21). Coverdale then proceeds to relate the Blithedale enterprise to the writings of his contemporaries. While convalescing, he tells us, he "read interminably in Mr. Emerson's Essays, the Dial, Carlyle's works....Agreeing in little else, most of these utterances were like the cry of some solitary sentinel, whose station was on the outposts of the advance-guard of human progression; or, sometimes, the voice came sadly from among the shattered ruins of the past, but yet had a hopeful echo in the future. They were well adapted...to pilgrims like ourselves" (p.52).

Soon, however, with customary incisive irony, Hawthorne begins to deal in a more admonitory manner with the motivations of the do-gooders. Coverdale relates a conversation about Fourier that he has had with Hollingsworth. "'Never will I forgive this fellow!'" exclaims Hollingsworth. "'He has committed the Unpardonable Sin! For what more monstrous iniquity could the Devil himself contrive, than to choose the selfish principle--the principle of all human wrong, the very blackness of man's heart, the portion of ourselves which we shudder at, and which it is the whole aim of spiritual discipline to eradicate--to choose it as the master-

workman of his system?" (p.53). The marvelous irony here is, of course, that Fourier is accurately describing Hollingsworth himself who, as Coverdale points out, may "have originally been endowed with a great benevolence," but who now has as his closest friend "the cold spectral monster which he had himself conjured up," and to which "he had grown to be the bond-slave. It was his philanthropic theory!" (p.55). Hollingsworth's selfish egomania has become the "master-worker" of his own system.

The remainder of the book exposes the baser motives of other major characters. Zenobia, in part a precursor of James's Princess Cassimassima, is a woman in search of a cause; Coverdale turns out to be a more affable Unpardonable Sinner, prying as he does into the secrets of other human hearts. He concludes his narrative with the moral that philanthropy "is perilous to the individual, whose ruling passion, in one exclusive channel, it thus becomes. It ruins, or is fearfully apt to ruin, the heart....I see in Hollingsworth an exemplification of the most awful truth in Bunyan's book of such;--from the very gate of Heaven is a by-way to the pit!" (p.243).

The moral illuminates the ever present qualification of any total accord with Puritan dogma. Though Hawthorne nowhere supports progressive or reformist acts, here as

elsewhere in the story, we find a touch of sympathy for the reformers. In the second chapter, for example, after admitting that if a "vision have been worth the having it is certain never to be consummated otherwise than by a failure," the narrator goes on to exclaim: "And what of that! Its airiest fragments impalpable as they may be, will possess a value that lurks not in the most ponderous realities of any practicable scheme" (pp.10-11). In other writings, in fact, the sympathy borders on admiration. In "The Hall of Fantasy" the narrator says: "therefore may none who believe and rejoice in the progress of mankind be angry with me because I recognized their apostles and leaders amid the fantastic radiance of those pictured windows. I love and honor such men as well as they." He continues: "the heart of the staunchest conservative, unless he abjured his fellowship with man, could hardly have helped throbbing in sympathy with the spirit that pervaded those innumerable theories....Be the individual theory as wild as fancy could make it, still the wiser spirit would recognize the struggle of the race after a better and purer life than had yet been realized on earth. My faith revived even while I rejected all their schemes" (MFOM, p.205). Again, in The House of Seven Gables, we find an admiring authorial comment on Holgrave: "He had that sense, or inward prophecy--which a

young man had better never have been born, than not to have, and a mature man had better die at once, than utterly to relinquish--that we are not doomed to creep on forever in the old, bad way, but that, this very now, there are the harbingers abroad of a golden era, to be accomplished in his own lifetime" (p.180).

Hawthorne's conditional sympathy for the aims of his reformers is significant not only because of the light it sheds on his attitude toward Puritan doctrine, but also for its elucidatory effect in tracing his growing disillusionment in a beneficent Providence. For its growth is a correlative of a consistently increasing tendency to admire his Faust figures. Whereas the reformers are doomed to ineffectuality in the societal realm, the Faust figures, strivers after omniscience and omnipotence, are doomed in the cosmic realm. The former gain his sympathy and admiration in their attempts to eradicate worldly evil, the latter in their attempts to comprehend and combat the oppression they suffer at the hand of an inscrutable Providence.

II

Another aspect of opposition between the orthodoxies of

past and present stems from Hawthorne's recognition that Bunyan's puritanic view of the difficulty of faith and of the ease with which we fall into temptation was more compatible with human experience than was the Transcendentalist outlook. Mockery of the easy journey toward the good life becomes the subject of "The Celestial Railroad," a tale which not only exposes the foolishness of such a belief but suggests the more frightening proposition that these optimists are actually in league with the devil. The narrator tells us of "parties of the first gentry and most respectable people in the neighborhood setting forth towards the Celestial City as cheerfully as if the pilgrimage were merely a summer tour" (MFOM, p.214). Their "enormous burdens, instead of being carried on [their] shoulders as had been the custom of old, were all snugly deposited in the baggage car" (p.215). This illusion of ease is furthered by filling up the "Valley of Humiliation" with materials "from the heart of the Hill of Difficulty...thus obviating the necessity of descending into that disagreeable and unwholesome hollow" (p.219).

The Pilgrims believe they can by-pass the ugliness of life by constructing an elegant bridge, but "on both sides lay an extensive quagmire, which could not have been more disagreeable, either to sight or smell, had all the kennels

of the earth emptied their pollution there" (p.213). Mr. Smooth-it-away maintains that this Slough of Despond "'might so easily be converted into firm ground.'" But the narrator (a bit of a skeptic, whose conversion underscores the dangers of Transcendental optimism) calls to his attention Bunyan's observation that "20,000 cartloads of wholesome instruments had been thrown in here without effect" (p.213). Finally, the attempts to gloss over the Valley of the Shadow of Death by turning hell-fire into radiance has proved equally illusory. For the radiance is red and as disfiguring as the light of fire from below. And the reality of hell and human evil, also denied by the pilgrims, is strikingly manifest in the description of the grim faces that shine through the "dark of intense brightness" bearing "the aspect and expression of individual sins, or evil passions" (p.223).

That the tourists have been seduced by the devil is evident in their belief that Vanity Fair is "the true and only heaven" (p.225). That they have, in fact, entered into an alliance with Satan by refusing to face the reality of his existence is substantiated by the fact that Beelzebub's followers are engaged to run the train to the Celestial City, an act of which the seducible narrator says: "Bravo! This proves if anything can, that all musty prejudices are in a

fair way to be obliterated" (p.217), thus suggesting a warm welcome for the devil.

III

But if Hawthorne portrays his contemporaries as erring on the side of moral laxity, he depicts his forebears as erring unforgivably in excesses of moral sternness. If the former refused to see evil as anything more than a deprivation of good, the latter made no provision for the goodness of man. And, thus, where the Transcendentalists left themselves vulnerable to invasion by the devil, the Puritans invited the dark man into their ranks by elevating him to a position of prime importance. In Grandfather's Chair Hawthorne mocks his ancestors for doing just this. He ridicules Cotton Mather for believing "that there were evil spirits all about the world. Doubtless," he continues, Mather "imagined that they were hidden in all the corners and crevices of his library, and that they peeped out from among the leaves of many of his books, as he turned them over at midnight. He supposed that these unlovely demons were everywhere, in the sunshine as well as in the darkness, and that they were hidden in men's hearts, and stole into their most secret thoughts."⁸

Hawthorne not only recognized in the gloom and repressiveness of incipient Puritanism a life-denying force which he considered evil, but he also noted a continuing deterioration of their original strengths. In The Scarlet Letter the sense of deterioration emerges in a description of the women: "throughout that chain of ancestry, every successive mother has transmitted to her child a fainter bloom, a more delicate and briefer beauty, and a slighter physical frame, if not a character of less force and solidity, than her own" (p.50). Another allusion to deterioration, this time carrying a more decidedly moral tone, appears in "Main Street" where the show-man says of the Puritans: "all was well so long as their lamps were freshly kindled at the heavenly flame. After a while, however, whether in their time or their children's, these lamps began to burn more dimly, or with less genuine lustre; and then it might be seen how hard, cold, and confined was their system."⁹

"Hard, cold, and confined": these words provide the basis of Hawthorne's most stringent criticism of the Puritan's way of life. Their hardness is imaged again and again in descriptive passages. We read about "sages of rigid aspect," an "iron framework of reasoning," an "iron man," an "immitigable zealot" who "seemed wrought of iron," a heart turned to adamant. The intolerance nurtured by this hardness

became a constant object of attack. "The Gentle Boy" exposes Puritan bigotry and unfavorably compares the Puritans to other sects in their intolerance of Quakers: the place of greatest...peril for the Quakers "was the province of Massachusetts Bay."¹⁰ The children of this colony are, moreover, referred to as a "brood of baby fiends," a sentiment picked up again twenty years later in The Scarlet Letter when the little Puritans are called "the most intolerant brood that ever lived" (p.94).

With his usual psychological acumen Hawthorne was able to discern the gap between piety and morality in Puritan thinking. And, in addition to attacking them for bigotry and intolerance, he repeatedly castigates them for cruelty: for turning the Quaker Catherine out into the wilderness, for subjecting Hester to the worst of all fates, isolation from human sympathy. Theirs is a fierce piety in which the bible and the sword conjoin. The veterans of King Philip's War had burned villages and slaughtered young and old "while the godly souls throughout the land were helping them with prayer" (TTT, p.23), a scene which calls to mind Melville's "minister of the Prince of Peace serving in the host of the God of War" as well as Mark Twain's famous "War Prayer," both of which follow Hawthorne in exposing what Melville calls lending "the sanction of the religion of the meek to

that which practically is the abrogation of everything but brute Force."¹¹ The first of the Pyncheons, who in the name of piety had his competitor burned as a witch, provides another instance of the split between religiosity and morality. He stands in his portrait "holding a Bible with one hand, and in the other uplifting an iron sword-hilt. The latter object, being more successfully depicted by the artist, stood out in far greater prominence than the sacred volume" (HSG, p.33).

The excessive and morbid introspection which the Puritans considered a primary religious duty was meant to function as an antidote to false piety. But, like the scarlet letter, it had failed to do its office. Its effect, contrary to intent, consisted merely in strengthening the devil's grasp and thus it became another object of Hawthorne's censure. As Miller and Johnson have observed, the Puritans "employed self-analysis, meditation, incessant soul-searching to drive out sin from one strong hold after another." They "would make every man an expert psychologist, to detect all makeshift rationalizations, to shatter without pity the sweet dreams of self enhancement in which the ego takes refuge from reality. A large quantity of Puritan sermons were devoted to exposing not merely the conscious duplicity of evil men but the abysmal tricks which the

subconscious can play upon the best of men."¹² Hawthorne indeed took a dim view of this doctrine. "Diseased self contemplation" has "engendered and nourished" the devil not only in the bosom of Roderick Elliston (MFOM, p.319), but in Hooper and Brown as well. It is Dimmesdale, however, who demonstrates both the life-denying quality and the ineffectuality of this excessive introspection. The minister "kept vigils...night after night, sometimes in utter darkness; sometimes with a glimmering lamp and sometimes viewing his own face in a looking-glass, by the most powerful light which he could throw upon it. He thus typified the constant introspection wherewith he tortured, but could not purify, himself" (SL, pp.144-5). Ethan Brand's introspection produced no better results and, in fact, proved dangerous to his fellow men. For in his meditative nature lay the seeds of his plan to seek the Unpardonable Sin. And Coverdale appears to be speaking for his author when he says: "it is not, I apprehend, a healthy kind of mental occupation, to devote ourselves too exclusively to the study of individual men and women. If the person under examination be one's self, the result is pretty certain to be a diseased action of the heart, almost before we can snatch a second glance" (BR, p.69).

Two major ramifications of this excessive introspection

--gloom and moral blindness--emerge frequently as subjects for some of Hawthorne's most mordant irony. The "times of religious gloom" (SI, p.564), as he refers to the Puritan era in "The Man of Adamant," were not only deprivative but oppressive, and tended "to cause miserable distortions of the moral nature" (p.459). Public punishment furnishes the excuse for a half-holiday in The Scarlet Letter where the Puritans have forgotten how to enjoy themselves, where the blacksmith "'would gladly be merry, if any kind body would only teach him how!'" (p.228). Though never a convert to the easy optimism which characterized his age, though himself a man of dark vision in spite of his desire to write sunshiny books, Hawthorne never lost sight of the great place that joyousness must play in human life. It is probable, in fact, that his recognition of the darkness made him so conscious of the importance of merriment. While he could write in "The Lily's Quest" that there is no place on earth fit for the site of a pleasure house because there is no spot not saddened by grief, stained by crime or hallowed by death; he could also write in "The Hall of Fantasy" that "with all its dangerous influences, we have reason to thank God that there is such a place of refuge from the gloom and chilliness of actual life" (MFOM, p.203). And, despite the increasing blackness of his own vision, Hawthorne continued

to preach the need for gaiety, commenting in *The Marble Faun* that "there is a wisdom that looks grave, and sneers at merriment; and again a deeper wisdom that stoops to be gay as often as occasion serves."¹³

"The May-Pole of Merry Mount" offers one of the most extended treatments of Puritan gloom and the most explicit example of Hawthorne's awareness of the moderation called for by an unclouded view of the human condition. If the lust for pleasure turns the revelers into grotesqueries, the gloom of the Puritans earns them the designation of "dismal wretches." If at one point Hawthorne would seem to withdraw his sympathy from the revelers by proffering an outsider's view of their bestiality--"Had a wanderer, bewildered in the melancholy forest, heard their mirth, and stolen a half-affrighted glance, he might have fancied them the crew of Comus, some already transformed to brutes, some midway between man and beast, and the others rioting in the flow of tipsy jollity that foreran the change" (TTT, p.72, italics mine)--we are on careful reading forced to take note of the undercutting that is achieved by using such qualifying words to describe the wanderer's state of mind. If, furthermore, the revelers are guilty of trying to banish knowledge of evil and sustain their innocent state, if they suffer from moral naivete as their "playing at blindman's buff" suggests, the

Puritans are equally foolish in the belief that they can banish pleasure or suppress the desire for happiness. Even Endicott, the sternest of the Puritans, who "thought not to repent me of cutting down a Maypole," discovers that he "could find it in his heart to plant it again" (TTT, p.81).

The lesson taught by Endicott may be a needful one for Edith and her May-Lord, but the world is nonetheless a darker place for it. "As we glance at the Maypole," after the revelers have been dispersed, "a solitary sun-beam is fading from the summit, and leaves only a faint, golden tinge blended with the hues of the rainbow banner. Even the dim light is now withdrawn, relinquishing the whole domain of Merry Mount to the evening gloom" (p.81).

For a religion so proud of dragging "iniquity...out into the sunshine," and so ready to employ introspection toward this end, Puritanism, ironically, fostered moral blindness. Goodman Brown, who journeys into his own heart, seeking out its hidden evil, grows not only into a gloomy man but one with a distorted moral sense. Dimmesdale falls prey to a similar fate. "Sad indeed," says the narrator of The Scarlet Letter, "that an introspection so profound and acute as this poor man's should be so miserably deceived" (p.215). Father Wilson proves equally blind. While

Dimmesdale stands on the scaffold, inwardly screaming out his sin, "the venerable Father Wilson continued to step slowly onward, looking carefully at the muddy pathway before his feet, and never once turning his head towards the guilty platform" (p.151). Nor is Wilson an anomaly among the "wise" men of the community; for when in the final scaffold scene Dimmesdale makes manifest his guilt, drags "iniquity out into the sunshine," the "respectable witnesses" are convinced of his innocence, reading into his confession a desire to demonstrate to the world "how utterly nugatory is the choicest of man's own righteousness" (p.259). What Hawthorne seems to suggest here is that in so formal a religion as Puritanism, one which compels its members to act according to an all-embracing set of fixed moral laws, there is small opportunity for the individual to make the moral choices necessary for moral development. The citizens of Salem are almost invariably wrong in their moral judgments. They not only err in refusing to confront evil as it is symbolized in Dimmesdale; they are persistently mistaken in their perception of Hester's moral worth, punishing her severely for a venial sin of passion, a corporeal infidelity, and esteeming her once she has committed the cardinal sin of spiritual infidelity. And their punishment does not work: "the scarlet letter had not done its office" (p.166).

IV

A more pervasive manifestation of Hawthorne's artistic disposition toward the hardness and coldness of Puritan life surfaces persistently in the tales and first three romances as an attack on their tendency to elevate the head over the heart. The attack emerges thematically as a study of the evil wrought by the intellect working independent of the heart. F. O. Matthiessen rightly observes that "Hawthorne, and Melville after him, was primarily concerned with envisioning the kind of harmony that might be established between thought and emotion."¹⁴ Harmony for these writers, however, did not consist in equal proportion but rather was weighted, and even more so in Hawthorne's case, in favor of the heart.¹⁵ Having just read "Ethan Brand," Melville wrote to Hawthorne: "It is a frightful poetical creed that the cultivation of the brain eats out the heart. But it's my prose opinion that in most cases, in those men who have fine brains and work them well, the heart extends down to the hams....I stand for the heart. To the dogs with the head! I had rather be a fool with a heart, than Jupiter Olympus with his head."¹⁶

A plea for the subordination of heart seldom appears in either writer. Yet, with his characteristic refusal ever to project an absolutist vision, Hawthorne (and Melville, as

well) repeatedly examines two qualifications of his own position. One of these--which will be studied in depth as we trace the change in his vision--concerns his Faust figures, those characters who, like Aylmer, Ethan Brand, Septimus Felton, and Melville's Ahab, use their overly developed intellectual natures to probe the mysteries of human existence or to usurp the role of Providence in attempting to improve upon His creation. Although these questers meet a fate similar to that of the protagonists who use their intellects as weapons against their fellow men, and although they too are subject to Hawthorne's criticism and mockery, the criticism is almost always accompanied by an underlying admiration.

A second reservation characteristic of his predilection for the eminence of heart carries with it the awareness that an excess of emotion can lead to tragic consequences as it does, for instance, with Zenobia in The Blithedale Romance. Hawthorne's concern with both religious and emotional excess, although it does not directly support the forthcoming argument on his antagonistic treatment of Puritan elevation of heart over head, is worthy of a moment's digression. For it promises, in light of its persistent thematic reappearance--as fanaticism or obsession--to shed some light on our present subject.

The concern spans his career, beginning with "The Gentle Boy" in 1832 and continuing through Septimus Felton thirty years later. The earliest treatments, which concentrate on various aspects of religious fanaticism, in no way suggest an over-developed intellect as the cause of this diseased state of mind. In fact, quite the contrary situation obtains. As the narrator of "The Procession of Life" tells us, "Though the heart be large, yet the mind is often of such moderate dimensions as to be exclusively filled up with one idea. When a good man has long devoted himself to a particular kind of beneficence...he is apt to become narrowed into the limits of the path wherein he treads" (MFOM, p.246). Paradoxically, the consequences of fanaticism inevitably lead to either a deadened heart or a malfunction of that organ. The artist in "The Prophetic Pictures" (the solitary study in the 1830s of a highly developed intellect becoming obsessed) is compared to "all other men around whom an engrossing purpose wreathes itself," and is shown to be "insulated from the mass of human kind....His heart was cold" (TTT, p.206). Nor are the fanatics left with their powers of intellect intact. These too are destroyed. We learn from Coverdale, when he describes Hollingsworth's condition for us, that monomaniacs not only "have no heart" and "no sympathy" but also "no reason" (BR, p.70).

Hawthorne presents Catherine of "The Gentle Boy" as the first in a series of religious fanatics who demonstrate these consequences. Her obsession has led her to violate "the duties of the present life and the future, by fixing her attention wholly on the latter" (TTT, p.102). She fails to fulfil her responsibility to little Ilbrahim, and wanders "on a mistaken errand, neglectful of the holiest trust which can be committed to a woman" (p.115). The failure of heart that results from Catherine's fanaticism is repeated both in Goodman Brown, who in his gloom and desperation obviously fails his wife and friends, and in Hooper who, by setting up a barrier between himself and his congregation, fails first Elizabeth and ultimately all but the guiltiest sinners of his community. The Shakers in "The Shaker Bridal" offer Hawthorne's final word on the kind of obsession that exalts spiritual love at the expense of earthly affection. And indeed there is little more to say after the terrifying depiction of fanaticism embodied in Father Ephraim who blesses the labors of Adam and Martha "'so that the time may hasten on, when the mission of Mother Ann shall have wrought its full effect--when children shall no more be born and die, and the last survivor of the mortal race, some old and weary man like me, shall see the sun go down, nevermore to rise on a world of sin and sorrow'" (TTT, p.475). The good

Father, in his mistaken fervor, is calling for nothing less than the extinction of the human race.

The monomaniacs of the 1840s are, by contrast, all men of the mind--Aylmer, Rappaccini, and Ethan Brand whose quest becomes "the inspiration of his life" (SI, p.494).

Hawthorne's exploration of obsession now embraces two additional dimensions only hinted at in the earlier works: the fanatic is treated as a victim of "the tyrannizing influence acquired by one idea of his mind" (MFOM, p.52), and his obsession becomes the life force which sustains him. As the aged seeker of "The Great Carbuncle" admits, "'The pursuit alone is my strength,--the energy of my soul, the warmth of my blood,--and the pith and marrow of my bones'" (TTT, p.178).

The romances express these same convictions. Chillingworth has himself been seized "within the gripe" of a terrible fascination. And when Dimmesdale chooses confession and death, the life force that has sustained his fascinated tormentor collapses. "All his strength and energy--all his vital and intellectual force--seemed at once to desert him; insomuch that he positively withered up, shriveled away, and almost vanished from mortal sight....This unhappy man had made the very principle of his life to consist in the pursuit and systematic exercise of revenge"

(SL, p.260).

Hollingsworth experiences a similar pattern of deterioration. Coverdale suspects that the fanatical reformer had "been originally endowed with a great spirit of benevolence" but, having conjured up a spectral monster, he has become its "bond-slave" and is treated by his author as a victim in Hawthorne's most graphic description of the monomaniac. After telling us that Hollingsworth "was not altogether human," Coverdale goes on to say:

This is always true of those men who have surrendered themselves to an over-ruling purpose. It does not so much impel them from without, nor even operate as a motive power within, but grows incorporate with all they think and feel, and finally converts them into little else save that one principle....They will keep no friend, unless he make himself the mirror of their purpose; they will smite and slay you, and trample your dead corpse under foot, all the more readily, if you take the first step with them, and cannot take the second, and the third, and every other step of their terribly straight path. They have an idol, to which they consecrate themselves high-priest, and deem it holy work to offer sacrifices of whatever is most precious, and never once seem to suspect--so cunning has the Devil been with them--that this false deity, in whose iron features, immitigable to all the rest of mankind, they see only benignity and love, is but a spectrum of the very priest himself, projected upon the surrounding darkness (BR, pp.70-1).

Shaken by the destruction his fanaticism has wrought, Hollingsworth, after Zenobia's death, gives up his overruling purpose and we find him at the end of the book, like

Chillingworth, deprived of his sustaining energy and leaning for support on the arm of the fragile and purposeless Priscilla. And the penultimate of Hawthorne's unfinished romances, Septimus Felton, describes the hero, who, like his forebears, had been victimized by the pursuit of a single dream, as "crushed and annihilated."¹⁷

To return to the heart-head conflict, the earliest works demonstrate a belief in the elevation of head as detrimental exclusively to the practitioner or as an ineffectual avenue to knowledge. Fanshawe, for example, suspects that should he spend a "thousand such lives" in discovery, "he should still know comparatively nothing," and he simultaneously recognizes that the pursuit of knowledge is a "weary way, without resting place"¹⁸ as well as a false route to happiness. In "Sights from a Steeple," the narrator who muses on the desirability of becoming a "spiritualized Paul Pry, hovering invisible round man and woman, witnessing their deeds, searching their hearts" (TTT, p.220), concludes that it is as impossible to know the mystery of human bosoms as to fathom the interior of brick walls. The Virtuoso in "A Virtuoso's Collection," is, moreover, the solitary victim of his own intellectually inspired skepticism. The double irony of his situation is that he who has

seen and "known" everything remains blind to the calamity of an existence cut off from natural sympathies, and that he accepts his condition as "the greatest good that could have befallen him" (MFOM, p.558). Finally, the success of Adam's second chance in "The New Adam and Eve" is dependent upon his eschewing the "fatal apple of another Tree of Knowledge" (MFOM, p.300).

The notion of the heart as a more reliable guide to knowledge materializes frequently in the later works. In "Earth's Holocaust" the narrator indicates that "if we go no deeper than the intellect, and strive with merely that feeble instrument, to discern and rectify what is wrong, our whole accomplishment will be a dream" (MFOM, p.455). "The Snow Image" juxtaposes the portrait of a wife who "had kept her heart full of childlike simplicity" and thus "saw truths so profound that other people laughed at them as nonsense and absurdity" (SI, p.406), with her husband who is mockingly placed among the "wise men" of reason who "know everything, oh, to be sure!--everything that has been, and everything that is, and everything that, by any future possibility, can be" (p.412) and who, needless to say, turns out to be wrong.

By the time of The Scarlet Letter the notion has become a conviction. The narrator maintains that "when an instructed

multitude attempts to see with eyes, it is exceedingly apt to be deceived. When, however, it forms its judgment....on the intuitions of its great and warm heart, the conclusions thus attained are often so profound and unerring, as to possess the character of truths supernaturally revealed" (p. 127). Hawthorne again makes his preference audible in The House of Seven Gables and The Blithedale Romance. In the former, Holgrave, unable to pierce the complex riddle of human existence, admits that "'it requires intuitive sympathy, like a young girl's to solve it'" (p.179). In the latter, the Veiled Lady of Zenobia's legend demands that Theodore accept her on no other grounds than the heart's recognition and when his cold skepticism prevents him from doing so, she pronounces his doom: a life without "another breath of happiness'" (p.113).

As Hawthorne's works suggest, one of the most devastating effects of a failure of heart was the loss of a sense of reality. To the man of no heart both his own person and his world take on a shadow-like aspect and he in turn becomes a shadow to those who observe him. The guests in "The Christmas Banquet" shrink back from Gervayse Hastings --a man whose exemplary life has but one deficiency, the heart--because they experience the "feeling of a distrustful regret with which we should draw back the hand after

extending it, in an illusive twilight, to grasp the hand of a shadow upon the wall" (MFOM, p.340). Gervayse's own sorrow is described as "a chilliness--a want of earnestness--a feeling as if what should be my heart were a thing of vapor--a haunting perception of unreality!" (p.345). A kindred situation presents itself in The House of Seven Gables. Clifford's heart, never overly active, had dried up as a result of his long, isolated sojourn in prison, and his voice now "might be likened to an indistinct shadow of human utterance" (p.97). In addition, he, like Gervayse Hastings, suffers from an inability to sustain a grasp on reality. Seeking to make himself more sensible of the elusive world around him, Clifford presses the thorns of a rose in the hope of proving himself alive by "the sharp touch of pain" (p.150). And what appeals to him in Phoebe--a type or emblem of the heart--is that she is "real."

A natural outgrowth of the belief that the heart provides a surer guide than does the head issues forth in Hawthorne's conception of love as an effective antidote to evil. The idea becomes a controlling one in the early 1840s when the narrator of "The Procession of Life" expresses the judgment that will distinguish the good characters from the bad in many succeeding works: "Let the summons be to all those whose pervading principle is Love. This classification

will embrace all the truly good" (MFOM, p.244). At about the same time, in "Egotism; or, the Bosom Serpent," Hawthorne presents love as a redeeming force, calling Roderick Elliston back from the clutches of the devil by blessing him with the love of Rosina. In "The New Adam and Eve" he offers love as a curative, submitting that human ills have not abated because "man never had attempted to cure sin by LOVE!" (MFOM, pp.287-8). Almost a decade later, in The House of Seven Gables, love is again proffered as a purifier. Phoebe and Holgrave, having declared their love, "transfigured the earth and made it Eden again and themselves the first two dwellers in it" (p.307).

With "Rappaccini's Daughter"¹⁹ Hawthorne begins to treat a disproportionate amount of intellectual curiosity more abrasively. No longer are the evil consequences of an imbalance of heart and mind confined to the seeker of knowledge. The moral hazards of a pursuit of knowledge now extend to subjects as well as seekers. Two years earlier Hawthorne had defined the Unpardonable Sin in his notebooks: "The Unpardonable Sin might consist in a want of love and reverence for the Human Soul; in consequence of which, the investigator pried into its dark depths, not with a hope or purpose of making it better, but from a cold philosophical curiosity,--content that it should be wicked in what ever

kind or degree, and only desiring to study it out. Would not this, in other words, be the separation of the intellect from the heart" (AN, p.106). Now one variation of this sin becomes embodied in Rappaccini. Baglioni tells us that Rappaccini "'cares infinitely more for science than for mankind. His patients are interesting to him only as subjects for some new experiment. He would sacrifice human life, his own among the rest, or whatever else was dearest to him for the sake of adding so much as a grain of mustard seed to the great heap of his accumulated knowledge'" (MFOM, p.116).

Ethan Brand, fashioned on the notebook entry, is the paradigm for the Unpardonable Sinner. The growth in Hawthorne's antipathy toward intellectual pride becomes evident when we compare the gentle criticism levied against Fanshawe with the reference to Brand's sin as the only one "that deserves a recompense of immortal agony" (SI, p.485). The price Brand pays for his "vast intellectual development" is indeed a big one. His heart "had withered--had contracted, --had hardened,--had perished! It had ceased to partake of the universal throb. He had lost his hold of the magnetic chain of humanity. He was no longer a brother-man, opening the chambers or the dungeons of our common nature by the key of holy sympathy, which gave him a right to share in all its secrets; he was now a cold observer" (p.495). Like

Chillingworth of The Scarlet Letter, he "became a fiend. He began to be so from the moment that his moral nature"--whose seat is the heart--"had ceased to keep the pace of improvement with his intellect" (p.495).

Nowhere does Hawthorne make the identification of the elevation of head over heart with Puritanism as explicit as in The Scarlet Letter. Miller and Johnson point out that in order to stem the rising tide of passions and emotions which threatened to subdue reason and intellect, the Puritan leaders shifted their attentions from exposition of creed to greater insistence upon committing power only to men of wisdom and knowledge.²⁰ The opening of the first romance attests to their accomplishment of this goal. The rulers of the community "were, doubtless, good men, just, and sage. But, out of the whole human family, it would not have been easy to select the same number of wise and virtuous persons, who should be less capable of sitting in judgment on an erring woman's heart, and disentangling its mesh of good and evil, than the sages of rigid aspect towards whom Hester Prynne now turned her face" (p.64). The extent of their coldness becomes horrifyingly clear when Hawthorne goes on to submit that Hester might expect more sympathy from the multitude whose heartless severity we have just witnessed.

Kindness and sympathy have become objects of opprobrium with this highly cerebral group of leaders. Wilson's kindness and geniality of spirit are "rather a matter of shame than self-congratulation with him" (p.65), a sentiment he shares with the Puritans of "The Gentle Boy" who, having felt sympathy for Catherine, mistake "their involuntary virtue for a sin" (TTT, p.103).

The dichotomy between head and heart is referred to repeatedly as the story progresses. Chillingworth materializes as an Unpardonable Sinner, delving and probing into his patient's bosom and thus violating "'in cold blood, the sanctity of a human heart'" (p.195). Hester's marble coldness is "attributed to the circumstances that her life had turned, in great measure, from passion and feeling to thought" (p.164). Throughout there is the very palpable suggestion, one that appears frequently in Hawthorne, that sins of the mind are more heinous than those of the flesh. When the narrator notes that Hester's and Dimmesdale's sin "had been a sin of passion, not of principle, nor even of purpose" (p.200), we are surely meant to contrast it with the principle and purposefulness of Chillingworth's Unpardonable Sin and to find the author's sympathy reserved for the former.

The House of Seven Gables would seem to offer another variation of the Unpardonable Sinner. Both the narrator and

Holgrave himself speak of the latter's extravagant intellectual curiosity. The narrator tells us that Holgrave "was ready to do [the Pyncheons] whatever good he might;--but, after all, he never exactly made common cause with them, nor gave any reliable evidence that he loved them better, in proportion as he knew them more. In his relations with them, he seemed to be in quest of mental food; not heart-sustenance" (p.178). The daguerrotypist, moreover, exclaims to Phoebe: "'Had I your opportunities, no scruples would prevent me from fathoming Clifford to the full depth of my plummet-line!'" (p.178). But despite the imbalance of heart and head which might prompt us to place Holgrave with earlier Unpardonable Sinners, several aspects of his characterization hint at the entrance of a new factor in Hawthorne's vision. Not only does Holgrave lack the singularity of purpose common to other miscreants but his actions repeatedly controvert his professions. And the author's attitude toward his protagonist is more sympathetic, in fact, admiring, than is consistent with earlier treatments of this character type. We might attribute these differences to the fact that Hawthorne was, as he wrote to James T. Fields, bent upon writing a sunny book,²¹ and demands of this goal probably could not well accommodate two dark villains. But another possibility --one supported by later works--points to a change of vision

that makes it increasingly more difficult for Hawthorne to portray villains in leading roles.

In The Blithedale Romance the Unpardonable Sin is embodied in two characters, one treated with scathing censure, the other with a mixture of censure and sympathy which distinguishes the more complex vision of evil dominant in the works of the 1850s and 1860s. Westervelt serves as both reflector and foil for Coverdale. Speaking of him as a cold skeptic, Coverdale adds, "I detested this kind of man, and all the more, because a part of my own nature showed itself responsive to him" (p.102). But Westervelt belongs to Hawthorne's file of manipulative sinners who use their fellow humans for their own selfish ends. Coverdale, on the contrary, while admittedly a "spiritual Paul Pry" whose "cold tendency between instinct and intellect" makes him "pry with a speculative interest into people's passions and impulses," is guilty mainly of a sin of omission, a failure to "avert misfortune from his friends" (p.154). We cannot help but make a distinction between the two cold skeptics and by doing so respond more sympathetically to Coverdale, especially since his "cold tendency" carries with it its own punishment: it has, he tells us, "gone far towards unhumanizing my heart" (p.154).

Hawthorne now adopts a technical device--a type of

dialectical dialogue--which is to become characteristic in The Marble Faun and Septimus Felton of his treatment of two subjects which have begun to play a prominent role in his artistic consciousness: Providence and immortality. In The Blithedale Romance the dialogue explores two conflicting explanations of Coverdale's "speculative interest." One is presented by himself as a defense, the other by Zenobia as an attack. Directly after admitting his failure to act, he goes on to tell us that "a man cannot always decide for himself whether his own heart is cold or warm. It now impresses me, that, if I erred at all, in regard to Hollingsworth, Zenobia, and Priscilla, it was through too much sympathy, rather than too little" (p.154). A short time later, in Zenobia's drawing room, Coverdale declares that Zenobia

should have been able to appreciate that quality of the intellect and the heart, which impelled me (often against my own will, and to the detriment of my own comfort) to live in other lives, and to endeavor--by general sympathies, by delicate intuitions, by taking note of things too slight for record, and by bringing my human spirit into manifold accordance with the companions whom God assigned to me--to learn the secret which was hidden even from themselves (p.160).

When Zenobia speaks, it is to tell him that "'It is dangerous, sir, believe me, to tamper thus with earnest human passions, out of your own mere idleness, and for your sport'" (p.170). Coverdale defends himself by asserting that it is

from some uncertain sense of duty that he does it, a reply which provokes Zenobia to cry out:

"I know precisely what it signifies. Bigotry; self-conceit; an insolent curiosity; a meddling temper; a cold-blooded criticism, founded on a shallow interpretation of half-perceptions; a monstrous scepticism in regard to any conscience or any wisdom, except one's own; a most irreverent propensity to thrust Providence aside, and substitute one's self in its awful place--out of these and other motives as miserable as these, comes your idea of duty! But beware, sir! With all your fancied acuteness, you step blindfold into these affairs. For any mischief that may follow your interference, I hold you responsible" (pp. 170-1).

What are we to make of these antagonistic views?

Hawthorne has heretofore repeatedly demonstrated an aversion toward the prying, probing intellect and our initial response is thus to side with Zenobia. But a new element, one which provokes sympathy for Coverdale, has been introduced. He is presented as a victim of his own proclivities; he is impelled against his own will to follow the path he takes. Zenobia, moreover, has been equally guilty of excess, tipping the other side of the scale with an extravagance of emotion unrestrained by a proper degree of reason, and her point of view must, therefore, be greeted with reservation. Furthermore, the primary accusation which she levies against Coverdale--meddlesomness--contradicts the charges which he has brought against himself: failure to meddle. For which of these

charges are we to fault him? Can he be guilty both of acting and of failing to act?

Or does the guilt lie with Hawthorne? Has he merely failed to note so obvious a contradiction? I think not. Rather, what we are encountering here is a dramatization of his growing recognition of the difficulty of assigning such words as sin, evil, guilt, to his fellow humans. This is not to say, of course, that Hawthorne was blind, before this romance, to the complexity of human life. As early as "The Minister's Black Veil," the thin line between sin and sorrow had been made almost invisible. In "The Procession of Life" it had virtually disappeared. What has changed is the frequency and conviction with which relative judgments replace absolute statements on the human condition, a change which, as I hope to demonstrate, coincides with an increase in the degree of responsibility for the human condition which he comes to place on Providence. The conclusion of this growing awareness is that except for the pasteboard figure of the Colonel in The Dolliver Romance, Hawthorne at the close of his life was faced with a failure of creative power when he tried to envision a villain, and the drafts for Dr. Grimshawe's Secret reveal the tortured nature of his attempts.

After The Blithedale Romance, Hawthorne drops the head-

heart conflict as a major theme. Whether he does so because he feels it has no further aesthetic possibilities or because he no longer feels so strongly about it we shall never know for certain. But the admittedly unconvincing evidence does at least intimate the latter possibility. In 1854, he wrote in his notebook about a Mr. Bradford who resembles Coverdale in his inability to "feel, or sympathize with, any passionate emotion." Yet Hawthorne finds Bradford "the best little man in the world" (EN, p.76). In The Marble Faun the theme which occupied Hawthorne for almost thirty years is absent. In Dr. Grimshawe's Secret there is a feeble and inconclusive attempt to revive it with the description of the Doctor who possesses "a good deal of intellectual ability" but is "so very dark on the moral side." The attempt, however, proves unsuccessful. Not only does Dr. Grimshawe's behavior belie this narrative assertion but the charge against him is undercut on the following page when, in what appears to be an embodiment of good Mr. Bradford, we are told that Colford shrank "from the rude manhood of the Doctor's character, with its human warmth"²² (italics mine). Finally, Septimus Felton, which would appear to evince renewed interest, offers such an unrelenting instance of divided sympathies and so much admiration, albeit qualified, for the hero as Faust figure, that it defies the easy categorization to

which the early works lend themselves. On the one hand, Septimus' studies lead him to the knowledge that the price of his goal is a deadened heart, and thus suggest a kinship between him and earlier men of the mind; on the other hand, his sacrifice of human sympathy to the pursuit of knowledge does not lessen his sense of reality but instead increases it: "His mind seemed to grow clearer; his perceptions most acute; his sense of the reality of things grew" (p.338).

V

Although Hawthorne seems to have viewed both the imbalance of heart and head and the inclusive doctrinal laws which governed the Puritans, as productive of moral blindness, some of these laws still appeared fundamentally attractive to him. Often, however, his reasons were quite apart from theirs. Their antipathy toward isolation provides a case in point. The Puritan community viewed isolation as both cause and consequence of sin. The strength of their conviction derived in part from the belief that since man is depraved, spiritual and communal life could not be separated; and they demanded that "in society...all men be marshalled into one united array. The lone horseman, the single

trapper, was not a figure of the Puritan frontier."²³ Man alone was too easy a prey for Satan. They believed, furthermore, that sin erected a barrier not only between man and God but between man and man as well, thus isolating him from both. Finally, they saw the roots of isolation as located in one or another form of pride.

That Hawthorne shared their antipathy toward isolation is indisputable. In a letter to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, he wrote: "I have been carried apart from the main current of life, and find it impossible to get back again....There is no fate in this world so horrible as to have no share in either its joys or sorrows."²⁴ But the place of isolation in his vision of evil was quite different from the significance which the Puritans attached to it. He may have agreed with the notion of a circular relationship between sin and isolation and with the idea that sin erects a double barrier. But his emphasis here differed from theirs. The Puritans were more interested in the obstructions placed between man and God. Hawthorne, his works reveal, was in closer accord with the modern theological view expressed by Paul Siwek: "According to the wisdom of the heart all that withdraws men from men and puts barriers between them and obstructs the flow of vital sympathies, all that is evil."²⁵ Thus, once again, we find Hawthorne simultaneously agreeing in basic

principle with some aspect of Puritan dogma and recognizing the shortcomings of their belief, a position which he turns to artistic advantage, using the deficiencies of the Puritan system as background for dramatizing his own more complex stance.

Hawthorne was aware that the most seminal of Puritan principles fostered the very isolation it condemned. The strong element of individualism that arose from the requirement that each man work out his own salvation, along with the concomitant emphasis placed on self examination and lonely meditation, was the fountainhead of the self-isolating tendency. And the Puritan penal code which practiced banishment or ostracism was equally instrumental in fostering the very consequence which the settlers were trying to fight against by marshalling all men "into one united array": rebellious thought. Hawthorne's consciousness of the irony inherent in this situation is evident in his treatment of Hester Prynne who

for so long a period not merely estranged, but outlawed, from society, had habituated herself to such latitude of speculation as was altogether foreign to the clergyman. She had wandered, without rule or guidance in a moral wilderness....For years past she had looked from this estranged point of view at human institutions, and whatever priests or legislators had established, criticizing all with hardly more reverence than the Indian would feel for the clerical band, the judicial robe, the pillory, the gallows, the fireside, or the church (SL, p.199).

Equally ironic was the fact that the encouragement of spiritual excellence was in fact the encouragement of spiritual pride which gained the devil a stronghold among the pious. Again and again in Hawthorne the impeccably devout are exposed as the worst of sinners, isolating themselves through spiritual pride. Hooper, "a man apart from men," has been led by his introspection to see the sin in his own and all other human hearts--"if I cover [my face] for secret sin, what mortal might not do the same" (TTT, p.62)--but has in the process become guilty of spiritual pride that isolates him from these other hearts. Digby, in "The Man of Adamant," represents perhaps the most searing condemnation of Puritan blindness to the spiritual pride their doctrine fostered. So proud is he of his piety that he refuses to contaminate his soul by allowing it contact with other mortals. And so he removes himself from the community to a lonely cave. "He talked to himself...he read his Bible to himself....So congenial was this mode of life to his disposition, that he often laughed to himself, but was displeased when an echo tossed him back the long loud roar" (SI, p.565). The consequence of this self-imposed isolation is "a deposition of calcilous particles within his heart" (p.567). Discovered by some boys after the calcium has enveloped his heart and led to his death, this man of adamant is found "in

the attitude of repelling the whole race of mortals,--not from heaven,--but from the horrible loneliness of his dark, cold sepulchre!' (p.573).

Cause and consequence of isolation is one of the most consistently treated themes in Hawthorne. As such it has received a great deal of excellent critical examination²⁶ and I will thus not venture another detailed study. I do, however, wish to mention briefly two consequences of isolation which, to my knowledge, have not fallen under critical scrutiny. The first concerns an equation which Hawthorne sets up between isolation and death. In addition to Digby's fate in "Man of Adamant," the equation is dramatized in "Fragments from the Journal of a Solitary Man," where the journal keeper, who has isolated himself in order to keep "aloof from mortal disquietudes,"²⁷ sees in the looking glass that he is dressed in a shroud.²⁸ "Lady Eleanore's Mantle" demonstrates a similar situation. Eleanore, "Queen of Death," has brought the plague to American shores in her mantle which is, as she tells us, an emblem of her isolating pride "I wrapped myself in PRIDE as in a MANTLE and scorned the sympathy of nature'" (TTT, p.325). The suggestion is that pride and isolation have become companions of death.

The second consequence is the loss of a sense of reality, which also typifies those characters who look to

the mind instead of the heart for guidance. The most poignant example of this condition occurs in The House of Seven Gables where Clifford hears the "mighty river of life" in the street below "calling to the kindred depth within him" (p. 165). Having in his long isolation "lost his hold on the magnetic chain of humanity" (SI, p.495), Clifford "needed a shock; or perhaps he required to take a deep, deep plunge into the ocean of human life, and to sink down and be covered by its profoundness, and then to emerge, sobered, invigorated, restored to the world and himself" (p.166).

VI

As Hawthorne saw it, the linear stand usually taken by the Puritans on such issues as isolation, intellectualism, indeed sin itself, was a result of the polarization of good and evil which characterized their thinking. This habit of mind attracted, even as it repelled, his imagination and generated the dramatic situations for a host of stories in which he exposed its defectiveness. Nor was his interest an isolated phenomenon in the Romantic literary picture. Criticism has frequently discussed the fictional material, both stylistic and contentual, supplied to mid-nineteenth-century

novelists by the Puritan tendency to polarize good and evil.

Richard Chase, for example, writes:

The Manichean quality of New England Puritanism ...had so strong an effect on writers like Hawthorne and Melville and entered deeply into the national consciousness....New England Puritanism--with its grand metaphors of election and damnation, its opposition of the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness, its eternal and autonomous contraries of good and evil--seems to have recaptured the Manichean sensibility. 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.²⁹

The Manichean quality of mind which Hawthorne chose to examine, although it was by no means characteristic of all Puritan thought, often manifested itself in a vision of life distinguished by a constant battle between the forces of good, emanations from God, and the forces of evil, stemming exclusively from the devil. Since good and evil derived from antagonistic forces, there could be no intermingling, none of the good and evil mixture we see as typical of the human condition. There could, furthermore, be no gradation of sin, no distinction between cardinal and venial offences. The Puritans who have gathered before the jail to witness Hester's public shame might have been there to behold the punishment of a sluggish bond-servant or a notorious culprit. Sin, whatever the degree, was for many Puritans evidence of the devil's success. Narrow of vision, they failed to perceive

that in acknowledging the Powers of Light and the Powers of Darkness with equal fervor, they were actually paying homage to and encouraging the latter.

Hawthorne recognized--The Scarlet Letter with its study of different degrees of evil attests to it--the irony that inhered in the thought of those Puritans who embraced a Manichean vision of evil. And despite the parade of unredeemed sinners who march through his early work, he consistently supported the notion of the inseparability of good and evil. From the start, his writing reveals that he saw human existence with what Richard Sewall (in a description of Faulkner's art) calls the "'double vision' of tragedy,"³⁰ in which the good and bad, the noble and ignoble, the sublime and absurd are intertwined.

Although the earliest tales do not focus on the ambiguity of the human condition except to demonstrate, as in the cases of Brown and Hooper, the necessity of accepting a mixture of good and evil as the condition of existence, the notebook entries feature a series of plot suggestions for examining the duality in man. An entry for October 25, 1836 furnishes a representative example: "The good deeds in an evil life,--the generous, noble, and excellent actions done by people habitually wicked,--to ask what is to become of them" (AN, p.43).

The interplay of good and evil begins to advance thematic material in the late 1830s. One of the first questions to which this theme addresses itself is: What is human sin? Does guilt consist, as the Puritans believed, not in what is done but in what is intended? Neal F. Doubleday has pointed out that the opening of "Fancy's Show Box" represents an expanded paraphrase of Jeremy Taylor's statement on the subject: "the act of the will alone, although no external action or event do follow, is imputed to good or evil by God and men."³¹ The tale presents us with the situation of Mr. Smith whose evil intentions have been thwarted by circumstance before they can be translated into action. Is Smith, who never harms a fellow man, then, to be considered guilty? In answer to this question, John T. Frederick proposes that Hawthorne is devoted to "the view that sin contemplated, enacted in imagination, incurs guilt equally with sin actually committed."³² This seems to me an inaccurate reading. I would suggest, on the contrary, that Hawthorne refuses to embrace the pat solution of Taylor's Puritan dogma. The passages that discuss the question of intent actually offer a series of contradictory statements which imply an interrogative rather than a declarative mood. While the narrator submits that guilty deeds are no more than shadows of guilty thoughts and that "in the solitude of a midnight chamber or in a desert, afar from men,

or in a church, while the body is kneeling, the soul may pollute itself even with those crimes which we are accustomed to deem altogether carnal," he immediately undercuts this assertion with: "If this be true, it is a fearful truth" (italics mine). He then proposes that "it is not until the crime is accomplished that guilt clinches its gripe upon the guilty heart, and claims it for its own. Then, and not before, sin is actually felt and acknowledged, and, if unaccompanied by repentance, grows a thousand fold more virulent by its self consciousness. Be it considered, also that men often over-estimate their capacity for evil." Finally, before tendering what he perceives to be "some sad and awful truths"--a phrase nowhere applied to the relation between deeds and thoughts--he refers to the above as "slight fancy work" (TTT, pp.256-7).

"The Intelligence Office" also portrays the disparity between man's inner and outer selves. Here Hawthorne suggests that a book of human wishes "is probably truer, as a representation of the human heart, than is the living drama of action as it evolves around us. There is more of good and more of evil in it; more redeeming points of the bad and more errors of the virtuous; higher upsoarings, and baser degradation of the soul; in short, a more perplexing amalgamation of vice and virtue than we witness in the outward world" (MFOM,

p.337). But no question as to guilt is raised. And, although on the one hand, the passage proposes that "decency and external conscience often produce a far fairer outside than is warranted by the stains within," on the other hand, it indicates that our wishes, stemming from our inmost souls, reveal more virtue and more good than is outwardly evident.

"Rappaccini's Daughter," which has been extensively discussed in this context by Roy H. Male,³³ offers the first detailed dramatization of the "amalgamation of vice and virtue." "The Birthmark," published a year earlier, had played with the notion that the noblest aims of man might indeed lead to the most evil acts. In the later story, emphasis falls once again on the discrepancy between intention and effect as well as between the hidden and public selves of man. But a reverse set of conditions prevails. Unlike Mr. Smith of "Fancy's Show Box" or the characters whose wishes are entered in the Intelligence Officer's volume, Beatrice has a pure heart, yet emanates poison; she lacks evil intent but her very being is destructive. To compound the complexity of human nature embodied in Beatrice, Hawthorne endows her with angelic beauty which is indeed a reflection of her soul. But Beatrice offers only one experience of the contradictory quality of existence. The plants which appear to mirror her offer another. The purple shrub is described as an "evil

mockery of beauty," and other flowers as creeping serpent-like along the ground, thus implying that despite the harmony in Beatrice, beauty is not necessarily a reflection of good. The moral appears to be that life, human and natural, is an inexplicable and irreducible mixture of good and evil rather than the polarization of these two forces that the Puritan conception would suggest.

In the 1850s Hawthorne's preoccupation with this theme takes on a new dimension which will lead to the ultimate conclusion that good and evil are not only inextricably rooted in the condition of human life but are often indistinguishable and deceptive. The relativity which dominates his later vision stands behind the moral of "The Snow Image": "What has been established as an element of good to one being may prove absolute mischief to another" (SI, p.411). The opening of The Scarlet Letter greets us with another instance of the commonly shared ground of these two opposing forces. In comparing Hester to the image of Divine Maternity, the narrator sees "the taint of the deepest sin in the most sacred quality of human life" (p.56). There is, in addition, an expansion of the relativistic view introduced in "The Snow Image." The scarlet letter stands for both adulterous and able and, like the whiteness of Melville's whale, for both evil and good. Even more significant, the good is a product of a

sinful act. Conversely, in the case of Dimmesdale, goodness becomes an agent of torture. "'Were I an atheist,'" the good minister tells Hester, "'a man devoid of conscience,-- a wretch with coarse and brutal instinct,--I might have found peace, long ere now. Nay, I never should have lost it! But, as matters stand with my soul, what ever of good capacity there originally was in me, all of God's gifts that were the choicest have become the ministers of spiritual torment'" (p.191).

Variations on the theme continue, moving from the "curious subject of observation and inquiry" which in The Scarlet Letter raises the question "whether hatred and love be not the same thing at bottom" (p.260), to the surmisal in The House of Seven Gables that "life is made up of marble and mud" (pp.40-1). This "curious subject" apparently held Hawthorne's interest over the next decade for it becomes a controlling idea in The Marble Faun where the line which separates good from evil grows slighter and less visible until it all but disappears. Using a stylistic device which will be exploited by Henry James, Hawthorne embodies his theme in setting and art objects. Rome is pictured as "the City of all time, and of all the world!--the spot for which Man's great life and deeds have done so much, and for which Decay has done whatever glory and dominion could not do!"

(p.111). The romance opens with the description of a piece of sculpture representing the relation between good and evil: "Here...is seen a symbol (as apt, at this moment, as it was two thousand years ago) of the Human Soul, with its choice of Innocence or Evil close at hand, in the pretty figure of a child, clasping a dove to her bosom, but assaulted by a snake" (p.5). Although the commentary on the statue seems to insinuate, by its use of the word "choice," that a distinction exists and that free will is a positive factor, the statue itself demonstrates an impossible choice, for the decision made, the snake continues to assault.³⁴

Miriam's paintings, likewise, provide a striking illustration of the thin line separating good from evil. The duality which inhabits human nature is reflected in the two types of paintings to which her talent is persistently drawn. There are those which treat the innocence of "domestic and common scenes" (p.45) and those which feature a vengeful woman whose hands are stained by blood. The portrait of Jael is especially interesting, foreshadowing, as it does, Miriam's own part in the murder of the model. Here a "wayward quirk of her pencil" converts the stern Jewess from "perfect womanhood, a lovely form, and a high, heroic face of lofty beauty" to "a vulgar murderess" (p.45). In Miriam's own experience, it is a look emanating from her eyes, one of which she is

unaware, that provokes Donatello to commit his fateful act, to cross the line between innocence and guilt.

Kenyon's sculpture repeats this mirror technique. He captures in clay all the contradictory impulses of human behavior, making Cleopatra at once "fierce, voluptuous, passionate, tender, wicked, terrible, and full of poisonous and rapturous enchantment" (p.127). And he similarly expresses in his bust of Donatello--finally consummated by a movement much like Miriam's quirk of the pencil--the co-presence of joy and sorrow, innocence and guilt, good and evil, characteristic of life.

Again and again as the story progresses good and evil are shown to grow out of each other, fuse into each other, even change places, as they are to do in Melville's Billy Budd some thirty years later. Speaking of the frescoes, the narrator of The Marble Faun comments: "For it is thus, that, with only an inconsiderable change, the gladdest objects and existences become the saddest; Hope fading into Disappointment; Joy darkening into Grief, and festal splendour into funereal duskiness; and all evolving, as their moral, a grim identity between gay things and sorrowful ones. Only give them a little time, and they turn out to be just alike" (p. 226). The same can be said for guilt and innocence. And the portrait of Beatrice Cenci says it effectively, casting its

ambiguous reflection alternately on the virginal Hilda and the worldly Miriam. What Miriam says of Beatrice's sin, moreover, can as well be said of her own and Donatello's. "'Perhaps,'" she tells Hilda, it "'was no sin at all but the best virtue possible in the circumstances. If she viewed it as a sin, it may have been her nature was too feeble for the fate imposed upon her'" (p.66). Kenyon will later express a similar appreciation of the relative quality of sin in explaining the position of the two murderers.

There is, of course, the question of Beatrice Cenci's guilt. Not only is the question never resolved, but it repeats itself in Miriam's past (where it also remains a mystery) and in the joint crime she commits with Donatello. It is as impossible to decide on Donatello's responsibility for the murder as it is to point an accusatory finger at Miriam. The sense of collaboration which surrounds the act is too strong. We are made to feel that the victim invited and deserved his fate; and we are apprehended repeatedly by a mysterious aura which suggests that all Rome contributed to the crime. What Hawthorne appears to be propounding by the repetition of this query is the difficulty, alluded to sixteen years before in "Fancy's Show Box," of distinguishing between guilt and innocence. Kenyon's explanation to Hilda corroborates this reading and at the same time restates the

now familiar theme concerning "'what a mixture of good there may be in things evil'" (p.383). The sculptor attempts to convince his friend that

"the greatest criminal, if you look at his conduct from his own point of view, or from any side-point, may seem not so unquestionably guilty, after all. So with Miriam; so with Donatello. They are perhaps partners in what we must call awful guilt; and yet, I will own to you--when I think of the original cause, the motives, the feelings, the sudden concurrence of circumstances thrusting them onward, the urgency of the moment, and the sublime unselfishness on either part--I know not well how to distinguish it from much that the world calls heroism" (pp.383-4).

Hilda refuses to acknowledge "'any such dreadful mixture of good and evil'" (p.384). The exchange between these lovers is one of the most significant in the book for it provides a positive statement on Hawthorne's part of a great leap in sympathy toward his sinners and it places Hilda among the earlier protagonists who received his condemnation for a failure of vision in their refusal to accept the amalgamation of good and evil as part of the human condition. The question we are left with--one that will provide the basis of discussion for the second part of this study--is where Hawthorne places the responsibility for human evil once he begins to remove it from the moral shoulders of his fellow men.

VII

But the problem of assigning responsibility does not plague the first part of Hawthorne's career. His preoccupation with evil at this time is influenced by still another concern of Puritanism: secret sin. At first he appears to agree with the Puritan doctrinal expedient that sin be dragged out into the sunshine. But it soon becomes apparent that his and the Puritans' reasons are quite disparate. For the Puritans, sin was an affront against God and the community. Secret sin isolated man from God and posed a threat to the settlement. Believing that man's soul was in constant jeopardy, vulnerable to the temptation offered by the devil, they felt it necessary to root out and exorcise secret sin as though they feared its contagious quality. Exposure thus served both as example and punishment. For Hawthorne, by contrast, secret sin was dangerous to the sinner, wasting away his soul and isolating him from his fellow man.

"Roger Malvin's Burial" provides a typical instance. Hawthorne agrees with the Puritans that men attempt to hide their sins and rationalize them away; but his major interest rests on the consequences experienced by the sinner.³⁵ Reuben Bourne suffers punishment incommensurate with his act because of "the moral cowardice that had restrained his words when he was about to disclose the truth to Dorcas" (MFOM,

p.394). The implied moral here serves as a precursor to the one stated in The Scarlet Letter: "Be true! Be true! Be true! Show freely to the world, if not your worst, yet some trait whereby the worst may be inferred!" (p.260). Although there is little, if any, sympathy for the protagonist, Hawthorne makes it clear that the sin is not one of commission but of omission. All references to Reuben's wrongdoing in relation to Roger Malvin are undercut. Reuben clearly faces an impossible choice. If he demonstrates a bit of selfishness, he himself agonizes over it and "the consciousness [makes] him more earnestly resist his companion's entreaties (MFOM, p. 384) that he leave him there. Furthermore, Hawthorne explains that Reuben would surely perish if he stayed. And the desertion is several times referred to as justifiable. Reuben's invitation to the devil is rooted in his secrecy: "His one secret thought became a chain binding down his spirit and like a serpent growing into his heart" (MFOM, p.395).

Secret sin remains a major preoccupation of the next few years. But Hawthorne's stance becomes more complex as he begins to explore not the consequences to the sinner but rather the fate of those who attempt to probe the secret places of human hearts. One possible explanation for this shift of attention may be a desire to illuminate the fatuity and danger of the Puritan habit of public exposure. Though

he may agree that the sinner, for his own well-being, must confess, must "Be true," he apparently disagrees with the Puritan doctrine that demands public confession. Another possibility concerns Hawthorne's recognition that revelation is sometimes too dark, too great a burden for man to bear. The latter of these is suggested not only in "Roger Malvin's Burial" but also in "The Haunted Mind" where the narrator says:

In the depths of every heart there is a tomb and a dungeon, though the lights, the music, and revelry above may cause us to forget their existence, and the buried ones, or prisoners, whom they hide. But sometimes, and oftenest at midnight, these dark receptacles are flung wide open. In an hour like this, when the mind has a passive sensibility, but no active strength, when the imagination is a mirror, imparting vividness to all ideas, without the power of selecting or controlling them; then pray that your griefs may slumber, and the brotherhood of remorse not break their chain (TTT, pp.345-6).

The realization--one that looks forward to the later James, especially in The Ambassadors--that the veil may be a necessary adjunct to human existence and intercourse, becomes obvious during this period. In a notebook entry for 1836, Hawthorne makes the distinction between veils and masks and concludes that the former "may be needful" (AN, p.35).

Goodman Brown, Hooper and Roderick Elliston refuse to let the griefs slumber. They see in the heart only "a tomb and a dungeon" and their fates are indeed sad ones. In what appears to be a paradox but is more likely a change in

Hawthorne's angle of vision, these protagonists who wish to uncover the evil in human hearts are "transformed into...sad and downcast" men, the description applied to Reuben Bourne who refuses to uncover his own ostensible sin. In "Young Goodman Brown" it is, significantly, the devil who urges Brown on, who prods him to seek out iniquity and who tells the good man that he "'shall exult to behold the whole earth one stain of guilt'" (MFOM, p.103), a sentiment uncannily similar to that expressed by the Puritans in designating as a half-holiday the day on which iniquity is brought out into the sunlight.

Hooper, although there is no indication that he is prompted by the devil, develops a bond of rapport only with the guiltiest and blackest sinners of the community. He sees the secret sin in every human heart. His sermon on the day he dons the veil has "reference to secret sin, and those sad mysteries which we hide from our nearest and dearest, and would fain conceal from our own consciousness, even forgetting that the Omniscient can detect them" (TTT, p.55). His dying words, moreover, repeat the notion of secret sin in every heart: "'When the friend shows his inmost heart to his friends; the lover to his best beloved; when man does not vainly shrink from the eye of his Creator, loathsomely treasuring up the secret of his sin; then deem me a monster, for

the symbol beneath which I have lived, and die! I look around me, and, lo! on every visage a Black Veil!" (p.69). Are we to sympathize with Hooper or are we to deem him a monster, as do his townsfolk, for seeking out the hidden evil in human hearts and attempting to encourage his fellow men to acknowledge it? Hawthorne, with the detachment characteristic of this period in his career, does not say. But the consequences of Hooper's behavior hint at the latter. First of all, isolation, always an emblem of sin in Hawthorne, is the minister's doom. Secondly, as we recall from our earlier discussion, the wages of sin are often portrayed as the loss of a sense of reality. The sinner not only loses touch with the world but becomes a shadow to those who behold him. That Hooper suffers this loss becomes evident when one of the townsmen says: "'The black veil, though it covers only our pastor's face, throws its influence over his whole person, and makes him ghostlike from head to foot" (p.57). What underscores Hawthorne's altered stance is that while he was playing with the idea of secrecy as reprehensible he assigned both of these conditions to Reuben Bourne. We learn that Reuben's "secret thoughts and insulated emotions had gradually made him a selfish man" who "could no longer love" (MFOM, p. 396) and that he had lost the ability to determine reality: "unable to penetrate to the secret place of his soul where

his motives lay hidden, he believed that a supernatural voice had called him onward and that a supernatural power had obstructed his retreat. He trusted that it was Heaven's intent to afford him an opportunity of expiating his sin" (pp.401-2). He is, of course, mistaken and pays for his severance from reality with the sacrifice of his son.

Roderick Elliston too would have his fellow men grapple with the ugliest truth. He, like Hooper and Brown, sees all hearts tainted by evil. Once again it would seem that Hawthorne agrees with the need for exposure, since his narrator talks of "the instinctive effort of one and all to hide those sad realities" (MFOM, p.314). As we read on, however, we not only recall that Elliston is possessed by the devil and in his power, but that the proposal which places a "brood of small serpents or one overgrown monster" (p.314) in every heart is not the narrator's theory but Elliston's and so the suggestion, voiced as it is by the devil's landlord, is undercut.

George Parsons Lathrop's capsulization of the Puritan outlook furnishes us with an excellent background for Hawthorne's treatment of secret sin in The Scarlet Letter. "The Puritans," Lathrop writes, "carried out in the severest style a practical illustration of the consequences of moral

offence. Since men and women would not voluntarily continue in active remorse and public admission of wrong-doing, these governors and priests determined to try the effect of visible symbols in keeping the conscience alive. People were set before the public gaze."³⁶ Against this backdrop the romance brings together both of the sentiments Hawthorne has been evincing. On the one hand, we find an extensive treatment of the consequences of secrecy. In the first scaffold scene, Dimmesdale outlines for Hester what the Puritans considered the advantages of public exposure. Speaking of the secret sinner, he says: "'Though he were to step down from high place, and stand there beside thee, on thy pedestal of shame, yet better were it so, than to hide a guilty heart through life. What can thy silence do for him, except it tempt him --yea, compel him, as it were--to add hypocrisy to sin? He even hath granted thee an open ignominy, that thereby thou mayest work out an open triumph over the evil within thee, and the sorrow without'" (p.67).

The rest of the story depicts the destructive consequences of secrecy. Dimmesdale becomes morbid and isolated from his fellows, "trusting no man as his friend," and, even worse, unable "to recognize his enemy" (p.130). He loses his sense of reality, subsisting as an entity only on the energy drawn from his suffering. As the narrator reveals, "To the

untrue man, the whole universe is false,--it is impalpable, --it shrinks to nothing within his grasp. And he himself, in so far as he shows himself in a false light, becomes a shadow, or, indeed ceases to exist. The only truth, that continued to give Mr. Dimmesdale a real existence on this earth, was the anguish in his inmost soul" (pp.145-6).

Dimmesdale himself, moreover, is plagued by the question of his existence: "What was he--a substance?--or the dimmest of all shadows?" (p.143).

The debate between Dimmesdale and Chillingworth provides a link between the two opposing attitudes towards secret sin and presents as well the conclusions Hawthorne has reached during his long consideration of the question. Dimmesdale begins by telling the physician:

"There can be, if I forbode aright, no power short of the Divine Mercy, to disclose, whether by uttered words, or by type or emblem, the secrets that may be buried within a human heart. The heart, making itself guilty of such secrets, must perforce hold them, until the day when all hidden things shall be revealed. Nor have I so read or interpreted Holy Writ, as to understand that the disclosure of human thoughts and deeds, then be made, is intended as a part of the retribution. That, surely, were a shallow view of it. No; these revelations, unless I greatly err, are meant merely to promote the intellectual satisfaction of all intelligent beings, who will stand waiting, on that day to see the dark problem of this life made plain. A knowledge of men's hearts will be needful to the completest solution of that problem. And I conceive, moreover, that the hearts holding such miserable secrets as you

speak of will yield them up, at that last day, not with reluctance, but with a joy unutterable" (pp.131-2).

What Dimmesdale recommends here is first that contrary to Puritan dedication to dragging "iniquity...out into the sunshine," probing the secrets in men's hearts is actually not possible. His observation is confirmed by the irony applied to the Puritan attempt. While the Beadle exults in praising the colony for exposure of the heart's secrets, the community remains blind to the secret sin of their beloved minister. Dimmesdale's next point controverts the Puritan practice of exposure as punishment. He then proposes that revelations of secret sin are not for public observance but for the next world where all secrets of human existence will be unfolded. Finally, in this first exchange, he admits what the tales have expressed and what will continue to appeal to Hawthorne's sensibility through The Marble Faun--namely, that albeit confession results in relief, it demands a moral courage which has proven impossible to man despite the price he pays for this weakness, a price underscored by the description of Dimmesdale directly preceding this speech: "It was the clergyman's peculiarity that he seldom, now-adays, looked straightforth at any object, whether human or inanimate" (p.131).

 Dimmesdale then proffers reasons why men keep their

sins secret:

"It may be that they are kept silent by the very constitution of their nature. Or,--can we not suppose it?--guilty as they may be, retaining, nevertheless, a zeal for God's glory and man's welfare, they shrink from displaying themselves black and filthy in view of men; because thenceforward, no good can be achieved by them; no evil of the past be redeemed by better service" (p.132).

Chillingworth replies:

"The men deceive themselves....Their love for man, their zeal for God's service,--these holy impulses may or may not coexist in their hearts with the evil inmates to which their guilt has unbarred the door, and which must needs propagate a hellish breed within them. But, if they seek to glorify God, let them not lift heavenward their unclean hands! If they would serve their fellow-men, let them do it by making manifest the power and reality of conscience, in constraining them to penitential self-abasement! Wouldst thou have me to believe, O wise and pious friend, that a false show can be better--can be more for God's glory, or man's welfare--than God's own truth? Trust me, such men deceive themselves!" (p.133).

Although the sequence of passages here quoted does not reveal Hawthorne's position, passages later in this book and in The House of Seven Gables suggest that Chillingworth's thoughts are closer to the author's than are Dimmesdale's. In addition to the expressed moral--"Be true! Be true! Be true!"--Chillingworth, once he "has become a fiend," attempts in the third scaffold scene to keep Dimmesdale from confessing in order to retain a fiend's place in the minister's heart. In

The House of Seven Gables, moreover, in one of the marvelous passages which illumine his comic genius, Hawthorne paints a portrait of Judge Pyncheon which embodies the argument put forth by Dimmesdale. For the Judge too has hidden his sin under "a sculptured and ornamented pile of ostentatious deeds." The narrator's question at the close of this portrait clearly illustrates the author's point of view. Should Pyncheon commit "one questionable deed, among a thousand praiseworthy, or, at least, blameless ones--would you characterize the Judge by that one necessary deed, and that half-forgotten act, and let it overshadow the fair aspect of a lifetime! What is there so ponderous in evil, that a thumb's bigness of it should outweigh the mass of things not evil, which were heaped into the other scale! This scale and balance system is a favorite one with people of Judge Pyncheon's brotherhood" (pp.231-2). The contempt is clear and cannot help but reflect on Dimmesdale's rationalizations.

Although Chillingworth may here be used as a disputant to demonstrate Dimmesdale's self-deception, he is more importantly cast both as an outgrowth of Hawthorne's earlier dramatizations of men who seek out the evil in other human hearts and as a precursor of Ethan Brand. Brand, we recall, set out to seek for the Unpardonable Sin and in the course of probing human hearts himself became the Unpardonable

Sinner, his evil consisting in what Dimmesdale refers to as violating "'in cold blood, the sanctity of a human heart'" (p.195). Thus, whereas Hawthorne could recognize that outward virtuous acts did not atone for a corrupt heart, he maintained even more firmly that exposure was not to be effected either by the community or by another human being.

Hawthorne seems to lose interest in the question of secret sin after The Scarlet Letter, and except for the comic description of Judge Pyncheon it reappears only briefly in The Marble Faun where, on two occasions, confession is proposed in relation to the relief it affords. Kenyon suggests that if Donatello would only tell him his trouble he would rid himself of "'the additional zest of a torture just invented to plague him individually'" (p.263). The narrator, likewise, after Hilda has confessed to the Priest the crime she had witnessed, exclaims: "Ah, what a relief! When the hysteric gasp, the strife between words and sobs had subsided, what a torture had passed away from her soul! It was all gone; her bosom was as pure now as in her childhood" (pp.357-8).

VIII

Probably the most frequently discussed aspect of Hawthorne's relation with Puritanism involves his attitude

toward the belief in original sin. This Puritan concept included not only the doctrine of innate depravity but an organically related belief in both the universality of human evil and the idea of the sins of fathers visited upon sons; or, as Austin Warren defines it, "primal and general corruption of the human heart."³⁷ Basic to this doctrine was the assumption that man is imperfect, fallible, and prone to evil. Hawthorne's interest in this concept remained constant throughout the first half of his career. But his attitude did not. Whereas there is much evidence to support Levin's assertion of Hawthorne's "profound belief in original sin"³⁸ or Matthiessen's suggestion that innate depravity was "the conviction from which Hawthorne never swerved,"³⁹ there is also abundant evidence to recommend, on the contrary, that Hawthorne believed man is born good and made corrupt by his encounter with life. Once again he appears to be trying out varying perspectives on the material provided by his Puritan heritage. Often he sets up two types of dramatic situations: one leads us to conclude that man is indeed innately depraved; the other controverts this vision and demonstrates man's acquisition of his evil tendencies.

As early as Fanshawe (which despite Hawthorne's desire to disclaim authorship does introduce many themes that continue to occupy his imagination) we find examples of both situations. When the narrator notes that "it is our nature to shun the sick

and afflicted; and unless restrained by principles other than we bring into the world with us, men might follow the example of many animals in destroying the infirm of their own species" (p.445), it is tantamount to saying that man is born with a tendency toward evil which needs curbing by society. But when he describes Ellen as having "the gaiety and simple happiness, because the innocence of a child" (p.341), we are led in the opposite direction toward a vision of man born in purity and corrupted by experience.

"The Gentle Boy," on the other hand, would appear to confirm the readings of Levin and Matthiessen. Tobias, a sympathetic character, articulates the Puritan view: "'do we not all spring from an evil root? Are we not all darkness till the light doth shine upon us?'" (TTT, p.90). And the behavior of the young Puritans seems to mock optimistic confidence in the innocence of children and to support Tobias' belief in innate depravity. When Ilbrahim approaches the group of children, "the devil of their fathers entered into the unbreeched fanatics....In an instant, he was the centre of a brood of baby-fiends, who lifted sticks against him, pelted him with stones, and displayed an instinct of destruction far more loathsome than the bloodthirstiness of manhood" (TTT, p.112).

But if Ilbrahim's persecutors are "a brood of baby-fiends" meant to demonstrate a heritage of the sins of their fathers

and to suggest innate depravity, Ilbrahim and the children in subsequent stories are portrayed as fountains of innocence. The narrator of "Little Annie's Ramble" talks of the innocence of the "sinless child." The young boy of "The Great Stone Face" (whom adulthood does not corrupt) retains his "tender and confiding simplicity" (SI, p.416). Even Pearl, though she may be an "imp of evil," is referred to in terms of her "innocent life" and she as yet wears "nothing on her bosom" (SL, p.183).

A notebook entry of 1836 is frequently used as evidence for Hawthorne's belief in general depravity. On October 25, he wrote: "There is evil in every human heart, which may remain latent, perhaps, through the whole of life; but circumstances may rouse it to activity" (AN, p.43). This view of the human heart is repeated several times in the tales. In "Young Goodman Brown" we read that "'Evil is the nature of Mankind'" (MFOM, p.104); In "The Minister's Black Veil" Hooper says: "'If I hide my face for sorrow, there is cause enough, and if I cover it for secret sin, what mortal might not do the same'" (TTT, p.62). "A Virtuoso's Collection," moreover, dramatizes the narrator's horror when gazing into the fire "which symbol, was the origin of all that was bright and glorious in the soul of man," he beholds "a little reptile" (MFOM, p.550). "Earth's Holocaust," likewise, finds general corruption to prevail: "The heart, the heart,--there

was the little boundless sphere wherein existed the original wrong of which the crime and misery of this outward world were merely types" (MFOM, p.455).

In a manner similar to that which characterizes his exploration of primal sin, however, Hawthorne often appears to be undercutting his position. Goodman Brown, like Hooper after him, becomes an isolated, gloomy man for adopting an exclusively black vision of human nature. In "The Minister's Black Veil," Elizabeth's behavior confutes Hooper's assertion. The undermining continues in "Earth's Holocaust" where a good man forestalls the suicide of a girl who claims she is worthless. He tells her to "'Be patient, and abide Heaven's will. So long as you possess a living soul, all may be restored to its first freshness'" (MFOM, p.439) --a sentiment scarcely designed to support a belief in general depravity.

Interspersed with these tales are others which examine still additional possibilities relating to man's potential for evil. "Fancy's Show Box" proffers the idea that "there is no such thing in man's nature as a settled and full resolve, either for good or evil" (TTT, p.257). "The Birthmark," on the other hand, suggests that all men bear marks of earthly imperfection and "that their perfection must be wrought by toil and pain" (MFOM, p.50).

The romances add further proof that any attempt to place Hawthorne exclusively in the Puritan tradition must be reductive. The Scarlet Letter begins by telling us that "the founders of a new Colony...have invariably recognized it among their earliest practical necessities to allot a portion of the virgin soil as a cemetery, and another portion as the site of a prison" (p.47). The implication is that sin is inevitable and universal and that the wages of sin being death, the cemetery is a necessary corollary. But we must recognize that this dark view reflects Puritan doctrine not necessarily shared by the author. Should we initially miss the distinction, moreover, we cannot help but sense that a gentle mockery of this dark view of human nature is being projected in the image of the beautiful rose bush, which, it may be conjectured, had "sprung up under the footsteps of the sainted Ann Hutchinson, as she entered the prison door" (p.48). For "the sainted Ann Hutchinson" sinned not in the eyes of Hawthorne (or, it would seem, Nature who provided the token) but in those of the Puritans.

The "Preface" and opening pages of The House of Seven Gables offer the moral that the sins of fathers become a curse to their sons. But here again Hawthorne undercuts his own position. Not only does he mock the didactic efficacy of stated morals but before the end of the first chapter the

responsibility for the curse has been shifted to the sons themselves: "The writer cherishes the belief that many, if not most, of the successive proprietors of this estate, were troubled with doubts as to their moral right to hold it....We are felt to dispose of the awful query, whether each inheritor of the property--conscious of wrong, and failing to rectify it--did not commit anew the great guilt of his ancestor, and incur all its original responsibilities" (p.20).

The pattern which shows Hawthorne moving away from the Puritan preoccupation with human evil and toward an engrossing concern with the cosmic level of evil is upheld in his attitude toward original sin. His interest in this theme has been steadily waning and with The Marble Faun as well as the unfinished romances it is all but extinguished. The Marble Faun does hint at the sins of fathers theme in dealing with Miriam's past, but the intimation remains vague and undeveloped. The notion of original sin, indeed of human sin, as a viable explanation for "all the forces, within and without, that make for man's destruction, all that afflicts and mystifies and bears him down"--in other words, for the evil that permeates the universe--has lost its hold on Hawthorne's imagination. A change in vision that began trickling into his work over a decade before this last finished romance is solidified here. His dark view of human existence has

continued throughout, but as the next chapter will attempt to demonstrate, the villains and victims of his dramas of the human tragedy have changed places.

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1. To mention just a few of the critical comments on influence: V. L. Parrington, Main Currents in American Thought (New York, 1930), II, 436: "Although [Hawthorne] was a child of the liberation and had broken the web, he did not choose to quit the world from whose bondage he had freed himself....It appealed to his imagination after his reason had rejected its dogmas, it determined his art after it had ceased to command his loyalty." Harry Levin, The Power of Blackness, p.55: "Taking a limited view of the potentialities of human nature, Hawthorne remained a Calvinist in psychology if not in theology." Lloyd Morris, The Rebellious Puritan, p.4: "Hawthorne had been unsparing in his criticism of Puritan America, but he had been its child. His incessant preoccupation, as a writer, with sin and with evil; his perception of life as a moral experience with tragic meaning; his emphasis upon the invincible loneliness of the human soul; these were Puritan traits." Austin Warren, Rage for Order (Chicago, 1948), p.90: "In Hawthorne as in no other American writer, Puritanism, freed from its doctrinal precision, took central position." Henry James, Hawthorne, p.10: "passages in [Hawthorne's] diaries show that the Puritan strain in his blood ran clear. To him as to them, the consciousness of sin was the most importunate fact of life." Edward H. Davidson, Hawthorne's Last Phase (New Haven, 1949), p.142: "Whatever its origins, we know that Hawthorne had this Puritan bias." The scantiness of this list becomes evident when we note that the most recent Hawthorne bibliography, Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Reference Bibliography, 1900-1971, compiled by Beatrice Ricks, Joseph D. Adams, Jack O. Hazlerig (Boston, 1972), lists 67 entries under the topic Puritanism.

2. The Scarlet Letter, Centenary Edition, I (Columbus, 1962), p.9.

3. See, for example, Newton Arvin, Hawthorne (New York, 1961), p.65; Hubert H. Hoeltje, Inward Sky: The Mind and Heart of Nathaniel Hawthorne (Durham, 1962), p.236; A. N. Kaul, The American Vision, pp.69-70.

4. The Complete Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne: Mosses from an Old Manse, Riverside Edition, intro. George Parsons Lathrop (Boston, 1883), II, 42. Hereafter this edition will be cited as Works in the notes, but references in the text will name individual works. See Abbreviations, p.v.

5. Hawthorne: A Critical Study (Cambridge, 1963), p.203.
6. A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections, reprinted in Jonathan Edwards: Basic Writings (New York, 1966), p.194.
7. The Blithedale Romance and Fanshawe, Centenary Edition, III (Columbus, 1964), 1964.
8. True Stories, Centenary Edition, VI (Columbus, 1972), 94.
9. Works: The House of Seven Gables and The Snow Image and Other Twice-Told Tales, III, 449.
10. Works: Twice-Told Tales, I, 85.
11. Billy Budd, Sailor, ed. Harrison Hayford and Merton M. Sealts, Jr. (Chicago, 1962), p.122.
12. Perry Miller and Thomas H. Johnson, The Puritans (New York, 1938), pp.283-4.
13. The Marble Faun: or, The Romance of Monte Beni, Centenary Edition, IV (Columbus, 1968), 437.
14. American Renaissance, p.345.
15. Hawthorne's and Melville's preoccupations with this conflict places them clearly in the mainstream of an American tradition that continues through Mark Twain to William Faulkner and Saul Bellow. When Faulkner was asked what he thought was "man's most important tool--the mind or the heart," he replied: "I don't have much confidence in the mind....The mind lets you down, sooner or later, but the heart doesn't." (Faulkner in the University, ed. Frederick L. Gwynn and Joseph L. Blotner [Charlottesville, 1959], p.6). Even Henry James who, after Washington Square where the heart-head conflict dominates, treats failure of perception as a sin, projects as his definition of intelligence something very close to Melville's assertion that "fine brains" have as their corollary a heart "that extends down to the hams." (See note following)
16. The Letters of Herman Melville, ed. Merrell R. Davis and William H. Gilman (New Haven, 1960), p.129.

17. Works: The Dolliver Romance, Fanshawe, and Septimus Felton, XI, 430.

18. The Blithedale Romance and Fanshawe, Centenary Edition, III (Columbus, 1964), 350.

19. "The Birthmark" had appeared a year earlier and although Aylmer can be charged with want of reverence for the human heart, the loftiness of his aspirations exempts him from the unmitigated severity of censure Hawthorne bestows on Rappaccini. The disparity between the two scientists is underscored by the subject of their experiments: the one attempting to achieve human perfection, the other cultivating poison and ultimately destruction.

20. The Puritans, pp.17-8.

21. Cited in "Introduction" to The House of Seven Gables, p.xxii.

22. Works: Dr. Grimshawe's Secret, XIII, 67.

23. The Puritans, p.182.

24. Letter of March 7, 1837. Cited in George Parsons Lathrop, A Study of Hawthorne (Boston, 1876), pp.175-6.

25. The Philosophy of Evil (New York, 1951), p.23.

26. For the most cogent and insightful discussions, see: Hubert H. Hoeltje, Inward Sky; Leonard Fick, The Light Beyond; Newton Arvin, Hawthorne.

27. Works: Tales, Sketches, and Other Papers, XII, 26.

28. Mirrors are a favorite metaphor of Hawthorne's. They almost always represent moral truth and illuminate the inner self of a character, serving as "a kind of window or doorway into the spiritual world" (HSG, p.281). Not until Hooper looks at himself in the mirror does he see the full horror of his veil. In "Dr. Heidigger's Experiment," it is the mirror which reveals that the elixir has not penetrated in its effects beyond the surface of the four deceived imbibers. A mirror, moreover, reveals Giovanni's "shallowness of feeling and insincerity of character" (MFOM, p.140); and the mirrored surface of a suit of armor illuminates the extent of Hester's subjugation to her scarlet letter.

29. The American Novel and its Tradition (Garden City, 1957), p.11.

30. The Vision of Tragedy, p.134.

31. "The Theme of Hawthorne's 'Fancy's Show Box,'" American Literature, X (1938), 341.

32. The Darkened Sky, p.46.

33. Hawthorne's Tragic Vision, Chap. IV.

34. The question of free will, incidentally, is never clearly developed in Hawthorne's works. Often, as in the case of Reuben Bourne, when the protagonist faces a moral choice it is an impossible one. In some of the early stories we do get a suggestion of free will at work. Goodman Brown, for instance, sets out on "his present evil purpose" (TTT, p.90), and when the devil tells him he is late, we realize that he has made a conscious choice. Aylmer and Ethan Brand also consciously embark on some preselected course. But for the most part and increasingly so after The Scarlet Letter, we must place Hawthorne somewhere between Newton Arvin's observation that "resignation, inertness, passivity...take the place of conflict in all but a few of the tales (Hawthorne, p.67), and Richard Harter Fogle's comment: "Hawthorne does not deny his characters, though they may be deeply entangled, some opportunity of moral escape. In The House of Seven Gables every generation is permitted an awareness of the issues and a clear choice of actions. The chances could hardly be called even, but they nevertheless exist" (Hawthorne's Fiction: The Light and the Dark [Norman, 1964], p.174). Even The Scarlet Letter focuses in the first half on a sin of passion rather than principle and Dimmesdale seems, if anything, to be almost will-less. The latter half does, however, ultimately offer one of Hawthorne's few statements on free will, and it is one to which the Puritans, who considered sin a voluntary transgression, could easily have subscribed. For once Dimmesdale has voluntarily consented to go away with Hester, he must ask: "'Have I then wold myself...to the fiend?'" (p.222). And Hawthorne's answer is decidedly affirmative. Dimmesdale "had yielded himself with deliberate choice, as he had never done before, to what he knew was deadly sin. And the infectious poison of that sin had thus rapidly diffused throughout his moral system. It had stupefied all blessed impulses, and awakened into vivid life the whole brotherhood of bad ones. Scorn,

bitterness, unprovoked malignity, gratuitous desire of ill, ridicule of whatever was good and holy, all awoke to tempt, even while they frightened him" (p.222).

35. It is interesting to contrast Hawthorne and James on this point. James's concern lights on the effects of secret sin on the innocent victim. We are seldom if ever treated to the inner experience of his sinners. Hawthorne, as we see, occupies himself with the consequences of sin as they affect the perpetrator.

36. A Study of Hawthorne, p.219.

37. Rage for Order, p.91.

38. The Power of Blackness, p.55.

39. American Renaissance, p.341.

CHAPTER TWO: "BLACKNESS, TEN TIMES BLACK"

"It is the blackness in Hawthorne...that so fixes and fascinates me," wrote Melville in his anonymous review of Mosses from an Old Manse.¹ Although critics ever since have been discussing the darkness of Hawthorne's vision, both contextually and stylistically, none seems so intuitively perceptive about it as did his contemporary and friend. What Melville saw was that despite "all the Indian-summer sunlight on the hither side of Hawthorne's soul, the other side--like the dark half of the physical sphere--is shrouded in blackness, ten times black....Still more: this black conceit pervades him, through and through. You may be witched by his sunlight, transported by the bright gildings in the sky he builds over you, but there is the blackness of darkness beyond, and even his bright gildings but fringe and play upon the edges of thunder-clouds."² The younger writer, moreover, recognized--and this may help to explain how many of Hawthorne's intelligent critics can continue to read in his

work a quiet affirmation or easy religious faith--that the reader need not "fix upon that blackness in him if it suits you not. Nor, indeed will all readers discern it, for it is mostly insinuated to those who may best understand it, and account for it; it is not obtruded upon every one alike."³

Hawthorne made a similar comment about the double level of meaning in his work. After assigning "Rappiccini's Daughter" to the authorship of one M. de l'Aubepine, he notes that if the reader chance to take his works "in precisely the proper point of view," he may "amuse a leisure hour as those of a brighter man; if otherwise, they can hardly fail to look excessively like nonsense" (MFOM, p.108).

Hawthorne was himself only too aware of this blackness. Letter after letter reveals his attempts, sometimes successful, often not, to shed it. In 1850 he wrote to James T. Fields that The Scarlet Letter was "too sombre," but that he found it "impossible to relieve the shadows of the story with so much light as I would gladly have thrown in."⁴ He considered The House of Seven Gables a better book than The Scarlet Letter because it was brighter.⁵ Another letter to Fields posted while he was writing the later books admits that it was made so by conscious contrivance. "It darkens damnably towards the close," he writes, "but I shall try hard to pour some setting sunshine over it."⁶ A few months

later he again discloses his intention, this time in a letter to E. A. Duyckinck: "in writing it, I suppose I was illuminated by my purpose to bring it to a prosperous close."⁷ The abortive attempts to have what Melville called the "Indian-summer sunlight" dominate his work continued throughout his life. In 1859, we find him writing to Fields: "when I get home, I will try to write a more genial book; but the Devil himself always seems to get into my inkstand, and I can only exorcise him by pensful at a time."⁸ Obviously he failed. The Marble Faun which appears the following year is yet more sombre than his earlier work. The problem plagued him right up through the writing of Dolliver Romance, about which he laments that he lacks "the faculty of writing a sunshiny book."⁹

The darkness of Hawthorne's vision and his futile attempts to bathe it in sunshine characterize his career from its beginning to its sad and agonized close. The persistence with which he pursued the light and failed to grasp it prompts us to think of his work as Miriam in The Marble Faun thinks of her paintings: "'They are ugly phantoms that stole out of my mind; not things that I created, but things that haunt me'" (p.45). The darkness never abates. But the causative factors appear to change dramatically, concomitantly with the tentative answers to the question he asks

again and again: What is the reason for the existence of evil in the world?

I

Henry James remarked in his little book on Hawthorne that "to him as to [the Puritans] the consciousness of sin was the most importunate fact of life."¹⁰ We cannot argue with James on this observation. His position, as far as it goes, is unassailable. Sin as a positive and active principle is ever present in Hawthorne's work. Snake and serpent imagery is pervasive, especially in the tales. We find the staff of the devil wriggling like a snake in "Young Goodman Brown"; a snake in Roderick Elliston's bosom; the serpentine vines in "Rappaccini's Daughter"; the little reptile in "A Virtuoso's Collection." Sometimes Hawthorne's interest is psychological and the reptiles become, as Frederick Crews suggests, "demons of psychological necessity."¹¹ Then, Hawthorne may present a dramatic situation which places the devil within the human soul. He does so in "Young Goodman Brown" where the devil discourses "so aptly that his arguments seemed rather to spring up in the bosom of his auditor than to be suggested by himself" (MFOM, p.95). Or he may

take a more imagistic approach such as occurs in "Egotism; or, the Bosom Serpent" where the snake in Elliston's bosom represents his jealousy. At other times, Hawthorne's interest is theological and here he often borrows his material from Puritan thought.

But, as I've already suggested, the nature of his interest alters significantly and as it does his concerns move further away from those of his Puritan ancestors. To them as to the early Hawthorne, evil and sin were synonymous. Man was conceived of as agent of the evil that inhabited the universe. Until the early 1840s almost all of his writing appears to support the dogma articulated by Saint Augustine: "God, since He is supremely good, can be neither the source of evil nor responsible for evil. The only other possible source is man himself."¹² While Hawthorne subscribes to this conception, evil in his work is concretely embodied in certain character types: in the socially or spiritually proud, in the manipulators, in intellectuals, in egotists, in isolatoes. Evil can be both identified and located: its place of habitation is most often the human heart. Thus we find in the notebook entries of 1838, which are filled with descriptions of his fellow men, a disproportionate number of instances of man's cruelty to man.

Having established the human heart as the source of

evil, Hawthorne makes it clear that man must bear the full responsibility for his acts. The concrete manifestation of responsibility he chooses to explore in these early dramas of the human soul is the pain and anguish of a guilty heart. Fanshawe agonizes guiltily over his separation from the rest of mankind. Even the consummate villain of the book, Ellen's abductor, has his guilty feelings analyzed. The irrevocability of guilt, one of the convictions about which Hawthorne grows less sure, is treated in "Sights from a Steeple," where the narrator on his lofty perch muses about the guilt that inhabits the houses below him. "The Hollow of Three Hills," written the same year, depicts a secret sinner consumed by guilt, and introduces the hollow basic "where no mortal could observe" (TTT, p.228) as an image for the guilty heart. The parade of guilty hearts marches through the next decade joined by Reuben Bourne, Brown, Hooper, Lady Eleanore and a host of other secret sinners. That Hawthorne continues to assign responsibility for evil and suffering to the human heart is attested to by the degree of detachment with which he handles his sinners. We sense repeatedly that there is a lack of sympathy toward his characters of the early period, that of the two moral views treating of man's suffering-- assuming a man gets what he deserves and assuming a moral web in which man is caught by titanic forces he cannot

control--the writer at this time patronizes the former.

Then, in the 1840s, tentatively at first, new questions concerning the relation of man to evil, to other men, and to the Creator, begin to filter into Hawthorne's work. And as these questions become more pronounced the detachment typical of the early stories is gradually succeeded by an involvement which clearly affects his style. His art becomes progressively more ambiguous. Instances of what F. O. Matthiessen called the "device of multiple choice" intensify as does the use of a dialectical structure which never approaches any synthesis. Conjecture, rumor, gossip, replace direct statements about motives and even about events. More and more often, we discover narrative comment in conflict with concrete action. The highly moral quality of the authorial voice is repeatedly undercut by the unorthodox action and thought of the characters, both of which expose the most profane truths about the human condition.

In addition, important matters, those which appear to involve Hawthorne most at this time, are treated whimsically or with self-directed irony. The attacks on The Scarlet Letter by an orthodox audience who accused it of having an undercurrent of filth and of falsifying moral truth, provoked the facetious "Preface" to The House of Seven Gables in which the author mocks the use of facile morals--a device he

himself has frequently been guilty of using--and goes on to offer one which the book in no manner supports. The attacks also inspired the happy ending which so many readers rightly find incongruous. Nor is the problematic ending of this romance unique. Just as Hawthorne felt constrained to bring this book to a "prosperous close," he appears to have felt a similar compulsion to end The Blithedale Romance with a pat distribution of suitable rewards and punishments incompatible with the tragic quality of the story. The closing of The Marble Faun proves equally unsatisfactory, so much so that he was pressed by his publishers to tack on a post-script. Although their major complaint concerned "further elucidations respecting the mysteries of the story," that is to say, "such incidents and passages as may have been left too much in the dark" (p.463), the real mystery is why Hawthorne here as in The House of Seven Gables marries off his attractive, rebellious, and thus potentially dangerous protagonist to a saccharine emblem of piety.

These observations on Hawthorne's technique do not, of course, originate with me insofar as they illuminate inconsistencies and strategies developed to veil dissent and uncertainty. Hyatt Waggoner has noted that "where Hawthorne's beliefs are surest, he writes most traditionally. In effect this means that when his subjects have the strongest

theological implications, they are treated the most ambiguously, mythically, and subjectively; and when they are moral in the most limited sense, they are clearest, most rational, and most traditional."¹³ But Waggoner believes that Hawthorne suffers no theological uncertainty until the time of the unfinished romances. Frederick Crews adduces an equally provocative analysis of the novelist's style, observing that his "balance between confession and evasion is reflected in his style....The mediative poise, the polite irony, the antithesis, the formal fiction, and the continual appeal to sentiments that are generally shared, all serve to neutralize the dangerous knowledge that lies at the bottom of his plots."¹⁴ Crews's aim, however, is to demonstrate that Hawthorne's art is a screen for his guilty fantasies. My own stand is that the "dangerous knowledge" is of a theological nature, that the questions which have begun to plague him are not such as would receive the approbation of a pious wife or a moral--"in the most limited sense"--audience.

What happens to man when he sins? This was the question behind Hawthorne's study of human guilt for the first fifteen years of his writing career. And it was a safe one. But now there is a shift to such questions as Why does man sin? And even more agonizing, Should he bear the responsibility

for his sins? Supposing that man does have free choice, as Dimmesdale in The Scarlet Letter seems to have, Why did God make him so weak that he could not resist temptation and Why, having created so weak a being, does He then inflict suffering and death as the wages of yielding to a temptation that man was not equipped to resist?

Questions such as these characterize Hawthorne's change of vision. What was earlier treated as an established assumption--man's full responsibility for his sins--is subject to increasingly close scrutiny. And through all the evasiveness, all the screening, we detect the burden of responsibility shifting away from man and toward some cosmic agent. As it does so, a more certain connection is established between human and cosmic evil. The ultimate responsibility for evil goes beyond the perpetrators of sin. It may take the shape of the "dark necessity" that stands behind Chillingworth's sin, or it may be the dark Fate that links Miriam to the model. Sinners are depicted as at once villains and victims, hardly susceptible to moral categorization. It becomes accretively difficult to distinguish sin: Clifford must be treated "without censure" for his failure to return Hepzibah's affection for "a nature like Clifford's can contract no debts of that kind" (HSG, p.109); Beatrice Cenci is described as "fallen...yet sinless" (MF, p.67). It is

equally difficult to determine guilt, even one's own. Miriam's eyes may have "provoked or assented" to the fatal murder. But "she had not known it" (MF, p.174).

Dark indeed is Hawthorne's vision of evil. And as his concern moves from the good and evil within men's hearts, from the human situation and man's role in bringing it to pass, to the relation between man and God and the uncontrollable cosmic forces which thwart man, it becomes even darker, or as Melville would say, "ten times black." It is this dark pattern, this move from the positive confidence of his early art to the tortured cry for some affirmation with which he closes his career that we shall be tracing through the rest of this chapter, examining such areas as the light and dark imagery that reveals his changing vision; the transition to an altered conception of brotherhood; the concern he displays over man's insignificance in the cosmic scheme; and, finally, the role his Faust figures, cosmic rebels, play as he gropes for some explanation of the existence of evil in the world.

II

As Richard Harter Fogle has pointed out, much of

Hawthorne's imagery derives from a play on light and dark, sunlight and shadow.¹⁵ In the early work the dark side of this imagery relates primarily to the human heart which Hawthorne at this time sees as the source of evil. "There is evil in every human heart" (AN, p.43), he writes in his notebook in 1836.¹⁶ The black heart is frequently imaged in his tales as "a hollow basin" into which no one can see, or a tomb, a dungeon, a dark cavern. Or it is described, as in "Roger Malvin's Burial," as a secret dark place where motives lay hidden. Many variations appear, and they almost all center on man as the perpetrator of his own dark sorrow. In "The Celestial Railroad," for example, the dark that keeps thrusting itself through the intense brightness of the Valley of the Shadow of Death turns out to be human sin.

When the darkness inhabits setting, it is depicted as the locale of human sin. There are the "midnight streets" where Major Molineux is humiliated by his fellow men. There is the black forest in which Goodman Brown, by appointment, meets the devil and finds himself in the "heart of the dark wilderness" (MFOM, p.99, italics mine). What is especially significant here, in light of later treatments, is that when Brown looks up from his chosen dark environs, he finds a sky blue and bright with stars, a sign that heaven is veritably a reality.

What might appear to be a paradox if we did not have evidence of Hawthorne's battle with his own darkness, is the absence of sympathy, indeed the mockery, with which he treats those early characters who share his own bleak vision of mankind. Brown is made to bear total responsibility for cutting himself off from man and God. Whereas the religious doubts of later protagonists are sympathized with and often shown to be justified, Brown's are ridiculed: that "blue arch" of heaven remains clear and bright in spite of his doubt. What he sees as justification for his loss of faith is consistently undercut by qualifying language. The "staff that wriggled like a snake" must, of course, have been an "ocular deception"; the sounds he hears are "indistinct"; the multitude that gathers in sinful congregation is "unseen." There is, moreover, the suggestive repetition of variations on the word "doubt"--both pointing to Brown's religious doubt and planting doubts in the reader's mind concerning the reality of Brown's experience--directly preceding the appearance of the catalytic pink ribbon by which the distraught husband is brought to exclaim: "My Faith is gone!" (MFOM, p.99). Brown's voluntary journey into the forest and away from Faith signals a predisposition to seek out the dark side of his fellow men. Hawthorne obviously means us to see that Brown has made a conscious choice, that he is not a victim of

assault by the Prince of Darkness, that the devil, whose "arguments seemed rather to spring up in the bosom of his auditor than to be suggested by himself" (p.95), is, in fact, a creation of his own dark imagination. And the man of gloom pays the appropriate price for his dark vision.

Hooper is treated similarly. A bit of the ludicrous attaches itself to the dark crepe covering his face and militates against any sympathetic response from the reader. The minister, like Brown, cuts himself off from man and God. He loses Elizabeth; he frightens off all but the blackest sinners in his congregation. The veil throws "its obscurity between him and the page as he [reads] the Scriptures" (TTT, p.54), and thus suggests the erection of a barrier between himself and God. On the symbolic level, the veil represents the dark vision which Hawthorne both attacks and embraces. Hooper's black crepe gives a "darkened aspect to all living and inanimate things" (p.53). Whereas later protagonists seek out the sunshine that indicates a benevolent God, but find a cloud, Hooper's veil brings a "cloud into the sunshine" (p.65). What we find here is not the agonized cry for some assurance of heaven's existence but an obliteration of heaven caused by man's loss of faith in his fellow man.

The light and sunshine which emanate from a kindly Providence was for Hawthorne during these early years

available to all who would reach for it. "The Great Carbuncle" echoes the element of choice emphasized in "Young Goodman Brown" and "The Minister's Black Veil." Here the cynic is symbolically depicted as morally blind. Describing the motives of the adventurers, the narrator tells us that none were "so vain, so foolish, and so impious too, as that of the scoffer with the prodigious spectacles. He was one of those wretched and evil men whose yearnings are downward to the darkness, instead of heavenward, and who, could they but extinguish the lights which God hath kindled for us, would count the midnight gloom their chieftest glory" (TTT, p.182). As late as 1842, Hawthorne affirmed, in a notebook entry, the availability of light and sunshine. Or at least so he tried to convince himself (he was now keeping the journal with Sophia). He writes: "It is a comfortable thought, that the smallest and most turbid mud-puddle can contain its own picture of heaven" (AN, p.156).

Hawthorne could attack this dark view of human nature in his characters; he could assign its promptings to the devil as he does in "Earth's Holocaust" and more evasively in The Scarlet Letter. But while his faith in Providence remained reasonably firm he could not place the blame for life's pain and sorrow elsewhere than the human heart. Because evil at this time was for him almost synonymous with

sin, life was a dim and dark affair. "The world is so sad and solemn" (AN, p.21), he wrote in a notebook entry of 1835. This valuation remained constant. Life as it passes before the narrator of "The Haunted Mind" is described in terms of "ruined loveliness" and "Disappointment." The pursuit of pleasure in "The May-Pole of Merry Mount" is called a "wild philosophy" and a "daydream." Earth, "The Lily's Quest" tells us, is no place for a pleasure house. The Hall of Fantasy provides the only refuge from "the gloom and chilliness of actual life" and, significantly, we are asked to "thank God that there is such a place" (MFOM, p.203). Each of these utterances, moreover, follows upon the suggestion that man himself has brought about the conditions he must endure.

In the light of this persistent hammering away at the sinful side of man, one sketch stands out as an anomaly in the early Hawthorne, and it functions as a foreshadowing of the change in his vision of evil as the darkness takes on more cosmic implications. "Night Sketches: Beneath an Umbrella" furnishes one of the most illuminating examples of his use of light-dark imagery. The narrator, having spent all day with "shadowy materials" is impelled by a "gloomy sense of unreality" (TTT, p.478) to venture outside and assure himself that reality does indeed hold some light.

Turning his eyes earthward, he finds only enough light to "show and exaggerate...the perils and difficulties" which beset his path. "Beyond," he continues, "lies a certain Slough of Despond, a concoction of mud and liquid filth, ankle-deep, leg-deep, neck-deep,--in a word, of unknown bottom,--on which the lamplight does not even glimmer, but which I have occasionally watched in the gradual growth of its horrors from morning till nightfall. Should I flounder into its depth, farewell to upper earth" (p.479).

Had this been the essence of his experience, it would have been in character with the nature of Hawthorne's dark vision demonstrated in other works of the 1830s. But this is not at all the case. For when the narrator looks upward he discerns "no sky, not even an unfathomable void, but only a black, impenetrable nothingness"--comparable, I would venture, to Hemingway's "nada"--as though heaven and all its light were blotted from the system of the universe. It is as if Nature were dead, and the world had put on black, and the clouds were weeping for her" (p.479).

Here we have the first extended use--isolated, to be sure--of the light-dark metaphor as an expression of the religious doubt that will manifest itself again and again in later works. Hawthorne had, a year earlier, made a tentative and hasty allusion to moments of blackout in his faith. But

it was couched between assertions of belief. In "Sunday at Home," he remarks: "Doubts may flit around me, or seem to close their evil wings, and settle down." But he immediately backs away from the possibility of cosmic darkness, seeing it as a momentary lapse: "so long as I imagine that the earth is hallowed, and the light of heaven retains its sanctity, on the Sabbath--while that blessed sunshine lives within me--never can my soul have lost the instinct of its faith. If it have gone astray, it will return again" (TTT, p.34).

As is to be expected he also backs away from his dangerous revelation in "Night Sketches," offering one of those facile closing morals so typical of works which most probably deal with the question of religious belief. Speaking of a solitary figure who passes "fearlessly into the unknown gloom," the narrator concludes that "thus we, night wanderers, through a stormy and dismal world, if we bear the lamp of Faith, enkindled at a celestial fire, it will surely lead us home to that heaven whence its radiance was borrowed" (p.484). That the narrator does not bear the "lamp of Faith" seems clear. Yet the ending has prompted those critics who wish to prove Hawthorne's easy faith to see the sketch as a Bunyanesque allegory and draw the moral that he is preaching that without faith the world is cold and dark, but that Hawthorne himself can see the light.¹⁷ This is

difficult to accept. The emphasis throughout the sketch falls on the darkness from above and upon the impenetrability of that darkness. And sunshiny morals cannot lighten the cry of anguish which proceeds from the body of the sketch. As Hawthorne himself says of morals in the "Preface" to The House of Seven Gables: When romances do really teach anything, or produce an effective operation, it is usually through a far more subtle process than the ostensible one" (p.2).

The book whose darkness caused Hawthorne so much concern makes, appropriately, much use of light-dark imagery. On the surface the imagery of The Scarlet Letter appears to be a continuation of earlier usage. There is the darkness of the forest where, it is rumored, Mistress Hibbens meets with the devil. There is also the sunshine which plays unstintingly with little Pearl because, as she points out, she is innocent--"I wear nothing on my bosom yet!" (p.183) --and repeatedly eludes Hester. The sunshine thus takes on the character of celestial radiance shining down as a token of God's approval and benevolence. In addition, there is the marvelously ironic but yet characteristic use of light and darkness to censure the Puritan community. The town beadle is described as a "black shadow emerging into the sunshine"

and then made to exclaim: "'A blessing on the righteous Colony of the Massachusetts, where iniquity is dragged out into the sunshine!'" (p.54). Father Wilson, likewise, is described as having caught the "distant shine of the celestial city," as being surrounded "with a radiant halo" (p.150), and then shown to be morally blind. The celestial radiance illuminates nothing for him. His eyes remain on the muddy path before him.

When Hester enters the forest with Pearl in order to accost the minister and propose that they escape to England, the imagistic setting appears to suggest that the light is withheld because God rightly condemns the plan, and that Hester's mistaken belief in its efficacy is a result of her wanderings in a moral wilderness. The path they take straggles

onward into the mystery of the primeval forest. This hemmed it in so narrowly, and stood so black and dense on either side, and disclosed such imperfect glimpses of the sky above, that, to Hester's mind, it imaged not amiss the moral wilderness in which she had so long been wandering....Overhead was a gray expanse of cloud, slightly stirred, however, by a breeze; so that a gleam of flickering sunshine might now and then be seen at its solitary play along the path. This flitting cheerfulness was always at the farther extreme of some long vista through the forest. The sportive sunlight...withdrew itself as they came nigh (p.138).

But then, after having firmly established light-dark imagery

patterns in which the former points to God or religious faith and the latter to the devil or doubt, the "little blue-eyed darling" as D. H. Lawrence calls him, overturns the traditional application of this imagery. In the crucial forest meeting between Hester and Dimmesdale, light is categorically separated from Providence or religious faith. What is Hawthorne doing here? Why midway in his career reverse the functions of the most dominant figurative language in his work only to return to standard usage in future works? Even before the "Flood of Sunshine" chapter, Hester asks herself as she watches Chillingworth walk away from their forest interview: "Did the sun, which shone so brightly everywhere else, really fall upon him?" (p.175). The question remains unanswered as do most of the questions posited in The Scarlet Letter.

The sky had been overcast for Hester ever since she made her unlawful decision. Now she communicates her resolve to Dimmesdale and sheds the scarlet letter, symbolic of her own penance. And what happens? "The gloom of the earth and sky" as if it "had been but the effluence of these two mortal hearts...vanished with their sorrow. All at once, as with a sudden smile of heaven, forth burst the sunshine, pouring a very flood into the obscure forest, gladdening each green leaf, transmutting the yellow fallen ones to gold,

and gleaming adown the gray trunks of the solemn trees. The objects that had made a shadow hitherto, embodied the brightness now" (pp.202-3). It would seem that Hawthorne is undercutting all the orthodox assumptions which the rest of the book has supported: God's approval does not, finally, manifest itself in light; the celestial radiance is not a gift for the innocence; dark clouds which obscure promises of heaven are not a result of rebellious thought. The whole cosmic scheme appears to work on gratuitous or arbitrary principle. But then, just as we have reached these conclusions, we are greeted by the usual evasiveness. For Nature, which functions as a metaphor for Providence not only throughout this romance, but in the tales and notebook entries which precede it, now becomes "that wild, heathen Nature of the forest, never subjugated by human law, nor illumined by higher truth" (p.203).

If this curious play with light and dark imagery is viewed in isolation, it, of course, does not offer sufficient proof of Hawthorne's change of vision. But, this most provocative and ambiguous of his romances offers other evidence of change. Earlier protagonists, such as Brown and Hooper, we recall, believed all too firmly in the sinfulness of mankind. And so it would appear did their creator. Yet, Hester Prynne, in contrast, "struggled to believe that no

fellow-mortal was guilty like herself" (p.87). She is described as wandering in a "moral wilderness" not because of her dark vision of mankind but because of the black thoughts she suffers concerning Providence, and she thus serves as one of a series of rebellious protagonists who question the cosmic order. Albeit more subtly, her author appears to share these black thoughts. Hawthorne had often toyed with the possibility that sin left ineradicable scars. The irrevocability of guilt appears, we remember, as early as "Sights from a Steeple" written in 1830. In The Scarlet Letter, as in The House of Seven Gables and The Blithedale Romance, he continues to maintain that the "breach which guilt has once made in the human soul is never, in this mortal state, repaired" (SL, p.200). But whereas early works almost invariably lightened the gloom of this thought by proposing the existence of a better state hereafter, in which the guilt might be repaired, The Scarlet Letter advances the possibility that there is no celestial happiness. Hester has sustained herself on the hope that earthly suffering would be redeemed by heavenly bliss. But when she proposes to Dimmesdale that they will be joined in the next world-- "'Surely, surely, we have ransomed one another, with all this woe'" (p.256)--he can offer no assurance concerning the future.

Hawthorne's deepening struggle against the failure of belief in a just Providence is intimated in several other passages. His dark vision of the human condition now appears to embrace the recognition that the good suffer most. Dimmesdale's conscience becomes a minister of torment. Had he been an atheist or had his devotion been less intense, the pains of conscience would have been correspondingly weaker. This realization apparently stands behind the growing sympathy Hawthorne expresses toward his sinners. In Dimmesdale's case the sympathy pervades the entire romance. In Chillingworth's it is, of course, tempered by the needs of a villainous portrait. But its existence is clearly evidenced. In an exchange with Hester, Chillingworth asks:

"Dost thou remember me? Was I not, though you might deem me cold, nevertheless a man thoughtful for others, craving little for himself,-- kind, true, just, and of constant, if not warm affections? Was I not all this?"

"All this, and more," said Hester.

"And, what am I now?...A fiend" (pp.172-3).

The Scarlet Letter, with its alternating proposals and retractions of the idea of cosmic darkness is in a way a transitional work whose dramatic tension derives from Hawthorne's own conflicting feelings about the source of evil. His contemplation of this romance as his darkest may well be a result of the tensions which must have distinguished its creation. While The House of Seven Gables, which he so

consciously attempted to make less sombre, offers more frequent allusions to cosmic darkness, it emerges as less tortured in tone and thus suggests that he may have reached at least a tentative resolution on the question of evil. Here the symbolic use of darkness no longer relates to the forest or the human heart, but refers instead and uniformly to the cosmic sphere. The retractions still appear but they are more and more qualified. Hepzibah's despondency, for example, is equated with "the heavy mass of clouds, which we may often see obscuring the sky, and making a gray twilight everywhere" (p.52). Granted, there follows the comment that "towards nightfall, it yields temporarily to a glimpse of sunshine," but the sunshine is temporary and "always envious cloud strives to gather again against the streak of celestial azure" (p.52). Whenever the characters look up to heaven, they see it as dense and grey. Hepzibah "strove hard to send up a prayer through the dense, gray pavement of clouds" but to no avail for "those mists had gathered, as if to symbolize a great, brooding mass of human trouble, doubt, confusion, and chill indifference, between earth and the better regions" (p.245).

Even more significant is our realization that the only character who fails to receive sympathetic treatment, the only one who emerges as villain rather than victim, is treated

comically. Dimmesdale's conscience was a source of ineffable pain; Judge Pyncheon's becomes, for author and reader, a source of laughter. The gentle mockery directed toward the petty sins of other characters, moreover, is always balanced by tender pity or admiration. No longer does Hawthorne appear to be agonizing over the "evil in every human heart." Now the human heart is seen as a fragile vessel, vulnerable to oppression by forces outside its control.

The obscurity of celestial light and the concomitant inscrutability of Providence appear repeatedly during the following decade. Now references to black places of the earth serve mainly as metaphors for cosmic darkness. Searching for Zenobia's body, Coverdale says that "so obscure...so awfully mysterious, was that dark stream, that --and the thought made me shiver like a leaf--I might as well have tried to look into the enigma of the eternal world, to discover what had become of Zenobia's soul, as into the river's depths to find her body" (BR, p.233). The English Notebooks offers a similar observation. Hawthorne, looking up at St. Pauls Cathedral on a dim London day, notes that the fog obscured the statues of the saints so that they looked down "dimly from their stand-points on high, faintest, as spiritual consolations are apt to be, when the world was darkest" (p.615).

What begins to dominate Hawthorne's dark vision by the time of The Marble Faun is the impossible task men face in their attempts to battle successfully against evil. His growing awareness of man's ineffectuality in the cosmic scheme and the accompanying change in his conception of fate contribute to a heightened sensitivity to the plight of his fellow humans. Sympathy becomes the keynote of his writing. A typical expression of his commiseration can be found in a notebook entry written two years before the story of Monte Beni. Describing Jesus in a picture of the Last Judgment, where He sits with "uplifted arm, denouncing eternal misery on those He came to save," Hawthorne remarks: "I fear I am myself among the wicked, for I found myself inevitably taking their part, and asking for at least a little pity, some few regrets, and not such a stern denunciatory spirit on the part of Him who had thought us worth dying for."¹⁸

In the last of the finished romances, his concern centers on the battle between good and evil. The Marble Faun opens with a metaphor which expresses the absurdity of a belief in free choice. The four friends stand in front of a statue described as a symbol "of the Human Soul, with its choice of Innocence or Evil close at hand, in the pretty figure of a child, clasping a dove to her bosom, but assaulted by a snake" (p.5). The metaphor becomes especially

apt when we come to the passage in which Hilda treats the battle as child's play and suggests that man can bridge the black chasm, representing human oppression, "with good thoughts and deeds" (p.162). Miriam exposes the fatuity of this concept of evil not only here but even more explicitly some dozen pages afterwards when, studying Guido's "Youthful Archangel," she describes for Kenyon her own conception of the battle between good and evil. Guido, like Hilda, has idealized the struggle so that good easily triumphs. But, asks Miriam,

"is it thus that Virtue looks, the moment after its death-struggle with Evil? No, No! I could have told Guido better. A full third of the Archangel's feathers should have been torn from his wings; the rest all ruffled, till they look like Satan's own! His sword should be streaming with blood, and perhaps broken half-way to the hilt; his armour crushed, his robes rent, his breast gory; a bleeding gash on his brow, cutting right across the stern scowl of battle....The battle never was such child's play as Guido's dapper Archangel seems to have found it!" (p.184).

Her conclusion is indeed dark. "'I am sadly afraid,'" she continues, "'the victory would fall on the wrong side. Just fancy a smoke-blackened, fiery-eyed Demon, bestriding that nice young angel, clutching his white throat with one of his hinder claws, and giving a triumphant whisk of his scaly tail, with a poisonous dart at the end of it! That is what they risk, poor souls, who do battle with Michael's

enemy'" (pp.184-5). The narrator supports Miriam's view, noting that the picture "was an image of that greatest of future events, which we hope for so ardently, (at least, while we are young,) but to find so very long in coming--the triumph of Goodness over the Evil Principle" (p.183). And Hawthorne's growing pessimism strongly suggests that he shares this view, in fact, offers it as a new depiction of his altered vision of evil. His sense of the blackness of life is pervasive in The Marble Faun. Every character, except Hilda, expresses it repeatedly. Kenyon not only greets Miriam's criticism of Guido's picture affirmatively but is himself drawn to a dark view of the struggle between good and evil delineated in "the group of the Laocoon which, in its immortal agony, impressed" him "as a type of the long, fierce struggle of Man, involved in the knotted entanglements of Error and Evil, those two snakes which (if no Divine help intervene) will be sure to strangle him and his children, in the end....In the Laocoon, the horror of a moment grew to be the Fate of interminable ages" (p.391).

Again we find the traditional qualification--"If no Divine help intervene." But now the provision not only appears less than effective but, when taken in the context of the preceding action, ironic. Where, we are constrained to ask, was the Divine intervention which might have kept

Miriam from victimization by "one of those fatalities which are among the most insoluble riddles propounded to mortal comprehension" (p.93) or might have kept Donatello from those two fatal snakes?

All the characters recognize that, as Kenyon articulates it, "'the entire system of Man's affairs, as at present established, is built up purposely to exclude the careless and happy soul'" (p.239). Miriam has come to believe that the very exquisiteness of enjoyment is proof enough that it is forbidden. Donatello, once innocent enough to see life as "'so rich, so warm, so sunny,'" grows to realize that beyond its verge there is "'nothing but the chilly dark!'" (p.260). When Kenyon sees "'the broad, sunny smile of God'" reflected on the landscape, the narrator undercuts him by remarking: "What made the valley look still wider, was the two or three varieties of weather that were visible on its surfaces, all at the same instant of time. Here lay the quiet sunshine; there, fell the great black patches of ominous shadow from the clouds; and behind them, like a giant of league-long strides, came hurrying the thunder-storm, which had already swept midway across the plain" (p.257).

The darkness of Hawthorne's vision continues to deepen during the last years. When little Ned, of Dr. Grimshawe's Secret, asks where he came from, his adoptive parent answers:

"Whence did you come? Whence did any of us come? Out of the darkness and mystery; out of nothingness; out of a kingdom of shadows; out of dust, clay, mud, I think, and to retrace it again. Out of a former state of being, whence we have brought a good many shadowy revelations, purporting that it was no very pleasant one. Out of a former life, of which the present one is the Hell!--And why are you come? Faith, Ned, he must be a wiser man than Doctor Grim who can tell why you or any other mortal came hither; only one thing I am well aware of,--it was not to be happy. To toil and moil and hope and fear; and to love in a shadowy, doubtful sort of way, and to hate in bitter earnest,--that is what you came for!" (pp.18-9).

Though we will never know whether Hawthorne would have allowed Dr. Grimshawe's outburst to reach the printed page, we do know that he conceived it as one way of interpreting human life, and we suspect, in light of what has led up to it, that he must have had moments of equal despair during these last years of his life. Twenty five years earlier he had said: "A few words, perhaps, might satisfy the feverish yearning of my soul for some master thought that should guide me through the labyrinth of life, teaching wherefore I was born, and how to do my task on earth, and what is death." At the same time he mocked those who ask vain questions and concluded that "Divine Intelligence has revealed" all that is needful to our guidance" (MFOM, p.195). But the needful revelations have presumably been cut off. Hawthorne certainly is, as the earlier mentioned letter to Fields discloses,

"a good deal changed since those [early] times."

II

Hawthorne's disposition toward the brotherhood of man furnishes another vehicle for tracing the change in his vision of evil. In the works of the 1830s and early 1840s, the focal point of this concern is the bond of sin which appears to unite mankind. Often it is difficult to discern whether this bond is real, that is, perceived by the author, or whether its perception is a consequence of some sin committed by a particular character, or whether, in fact, it may not be a combination of both. If we trace the theme through the works, however, certain patterns do emerge which recommend that the darker view of man proffered by some of Hawthorne's characters is treated with stronger qualification as he moves toward a vision more inclusive of cosmic questions. From the first he recognized that this dark view of man, which sees evil in every human heart, might well be the work of the devil. In "Young Goodman Brown," Brown feels a "loathful brotherhood by the sympathy of all that was wicked in his heart" (MFOM, p.102) only after he has discarded faith and joined the Prince of Darkness. And the repeated

references to "'the sympathy of...human hearts for sin'" (MFOM, p.103) are made by the devil himself. Likewise in "Egotism; or, the Bosom Serpent," it is the fiend who imparts the "evil faculty of recognizing whatever was ugliest in man's heart" (MFOM, p.310). Hawthorne, furthermore, condemns those protagonists for their dark vision as he does Hooper for seeing a Black Veil on every visage.

It might seem from these tales that Hawthorne eschews the concept of a brotherhood of sin, but, predictably, his attitude is rather more complex. For during the same period he also offers several sketches in which the narrator presents the concept as a real possibility. The two most striking instances occur in "Fancy's Show Box" and "The Procession of Life," and a comparison of the two sketches offers ample evidence of the change that has begun to take place. In the first, written in 1837, the narrator tells us that "Man must not disclaim his brotherhood, even with the guiltiest, since, though his hand be clean, his heart has surely been polluted by the flitting phantoms of iniquity. He must feel that, when he shall knock at the gate of heaven, no semblance of an unspotted life can entitle him to entrance there" (TTT, pp.256-7). Here we find no qualification. What we have is a straightforward statement of Hawthorne's belief in the pollution of the human heart. Six years later, however, the

statement comes to us tempered by the realization that though all men might carry the potential for sin, the inevitability is no longer certain and the potential, in fact, serves to turn the bond to one of sympathy rather than iniquity. After classifying mankind into brotherhoods of disease, intellect, and sorrow, the narrator reveals that even those in whom good predominates will not deride the "bond servants of sin" for they feel "within their breasts a shuddering sympathy, which at least gives token of sin that might have been" (MFOM, p.243).

The interval between the two sketches, moreover, is filled with tales that concern human bonds of a more sympathetic nature. We find the brotherhood of disease in "Lady Eleanore's Mantle," the brotherhood of sorrow and death in "Night Sketches," and again death as that which "levels us all into one great brotherhood" in "The Procession of Life" (MFOM, p.251). Even more provocative of our sympathy, as well as suggestive of the change in Hawthorne's conception of the source of sin, is "The Christmas Banquet" written during the year following "Procession." In the later story, the brotherhood consists not of sin but of sorrow, and the crown is offered "not for the worthiest, but for the woofulest" (MFOM, p.325). The guests at the banquet have griefs "worthy to stand as indicators of the mass of human suffering"

(MFOM, p.324). The move to a concern with sorrow rather than sin as characteristic of the human condition becomes especially vivid when the narrator, describing one of the guests, offers for speculation the idea of some kind of original sorrow, obviously meant to counterbalance the idea of original sin which Hawthorne had played with in many earlier tales. The guest's "wretchedness," we are told, "seemed as deep as his original nature, if not identical with it" (MFOM, p.326). There is, in addition, a clearly stated compassion for the protagonist's plight. Gervayse Hastings is not blamed, as are earlier characters, for his cold heart. Instead of presenting his lack of human warmth as a sin, the story advances the alternative view that Hastings is a victim of some unnamed force, and his coldness is a sorrow over which he has no control.

With The Scarlet Letter Hawthorne's attitude takes on greater complexity. There is, first of all, the playful ambiguity with which he treats Hester's recognition of a brotherhood of sin. When, through her own sin, she gains a "sympathetic knowledge of the hidden sin in other hearts," the narrator asks: could these revelations "be other than the insidious whispers of the bad angel who would fain have persuaded the struggling woman, as yet only half his victim,

that the outward guise of purity was but a lie, and that, if truth were everywhere to be shown, a scarlet letter would blaze forth on many a bosom besides Hester Prynne's? Or, must she receive those intimations--so obscure, yet so distinct--as truth?" (p.86). Hawthorne refuses to answer this query. In fact, he raises new questions. Hester, unlike Brown and Elliston, is as yet only half in the clutches of the devil. Is this then why she remains so "perplexed" by her feelings? And how are we to take Dimmesdale's similar experiences? There is no explicit mention of the devil's office in describing the minister's sympathies with the sinful brotherhood of mankind. But we have already been fed the suggestion in Hawthorne's ambiguous explanation of Hester's ordeal and we have been watching Dimmesdale become the victim of the allegorical devil, Chillingworth. There is, furthermore, an emphasis here on the painfulness of the recognition of sin in other humans which reinforces our perception of a continuing sympathy on the author's part: Dimmesdale's "heart vibrated in unison with theirs, and received their pain into itself, and sent its own throb of pain through a thousand other hearts (p.142, italics mine).

With the playfulness characteristic of his treatment of Hester's view of mankind, Hawthorne again, at the close of his romance, introduces the possibility that man does indeed

belong to a brotherhood of sin. Using his favorite device for creating ostensible ambiguity--multiple choice--he offers as one of the responses to Dimmesdale's revelation in the final scaffold scene, the view of some "highly respectable witnesses" who believe that the minister "had made the manner of his death a parable, in order to impress on his admirers the mighty and mournful lesson, that, in the view of Infinite Purity, we are sinners all alike. It was to teach them that the holiest among us has but attained so far above his fellows as to discern more clearly the Mercy which looks down, and repudiate more utterly the phantom of human merit, which would look aspiringly upward" (p.258). But Hawthorne makes his disagreement obvious with a marvelous double stroke of undercutting. First, he urges that "without disputing a truth so momentous, we must be allowed to consider this version of Mr. Dimmesdale's story as only an instance of that stubborn fidelity with which a man's friends,--and especially a clergyman's--will sometimes uphold his character; when proofs, clear as the mid-day sunshine on the scarlet letter, establish him a false and sin-stained creature of the dust" (pp.258-9). Second, he alerts us from the start to his dissention by using the word "respectable," a consistently pejorative designation in his work.¹⁹

The conclusion we draw from The Scarlet Letter is that

while Hawthorne himself no longer sees all mankind as a congregation of sinners, he still maintains that one of the consequences of sin is a darkened view of one's fellow man. Sin, paradoxically, both estranges the guilty one from humanity and unites him with it; for he develops a sympathetic bond with the evil he believes he sees in other human hearts. This paradox becomes a focal point of the inner dramas in The Marble Faun. Miriam and Donatello are drawn by their crime into a union "closer than a marriage-bond" (p.174). At first Miriam believes that they have been "released from the chain of humanity" (p.174). But, then, she comes to see the isolation as an illusion. Where, she asks herself,

was the seclusion, the remoteness, the strange, lonesome Paradise, into which she and her one companion had been transported by their crime? Was there, indeed, no such refuge, but only a crowded thoroughfare and jostling throng of criminals? And was it true, that whatever hand had a blood-stain on it--or had poured out poison, or strangled a babe at its birth, or clutched a grandsire's throat, he sleeping, and robbed him of his few last breaths--had now the right to offer itself in fellowship with their two hands? Too certain, that right existed. It is a terrible thought, that an individual wrongdoing melts into the great mass of human crime, and makes us--who dreamed only of our own separate sin--makes us guilty of the whole. And thus Miriam and her lover were not an insulated pair, but members of an innumerable confraternity of guilty ones, all shuddering at each other (pp.176-7).

The passage poses several important questions illuminative

of the change in Hawthorne's vision. First of all, there is no longer any suggestion--as there was, for example, in "Fancy's Show Box"--that sin unites all men. The proposition offered here clearly sets the sinners apart from the rest of humanity and establishes a "confraternity of guilty ones." In one sense, this appears to be a happier view of mankind. In another, however, Hawthorne's vision is a sadder one. For he has, it would seem, now become interested in the effects of evil on the innocent, a concern, incidentally, which brings him thematically closer to Henry James. Hilda introduces the notion in the limited terms of human sin: "'While there is a single guilty person in the universe, each innocent one must feel his innocence tortured by that guilt. Your deed, Miriam, has darkened the whole sky!'" (p.212). And, predictably, with censure. Miriam, expressing essentially the same recognition, offers a broader and more sympathetic interpretation of the relation of guilt and innocence, calling the situation "'a great trouble--an evil deed, let us acknowledge it-- which has spread out its dark branches so widely, that the shadow falls on innocent as well as guilty'" (p.429). But it is to the narrator that we must turn to understand the full import of Hawthorne's own sympathies. Describing Miriam's plight prior to the crime, the narrator's emphasis falls not on the perpetration of

human sin but on the fatality, on the cosmic responsibility, for the agony of the innocent. "Let us trust," he says, "there may have been no crime in Miriam, but only one of those fatalities which are among the most insoluble riddles propounded to mortal comprehension; the fatal decree, by which every crime is made to be the agony of many innocent persons, as well as of the single guilty one" (pp.92-3).

A guiltless brotherhood obtains also in the penultimate unfinished romance. Here there is a return to the notion of death as the ultimate bond between men. Speaking of Septimus, the narrator notes: "It seemed to him...as if it were Death that linked together all; yes and so gave warmth to all...all that warm mysterious brotherhood that is between men" (SF, pp.417-8). The brotherhood, then, remains mysterious, but it is now founded not in sin but in the pain, sorrow, and finally death, shared by innocent and guilty alike.

III

As Hawthorne began to shift the responsibility for evil from man himself to Providence, he became more and more preoccupied with man's insignificance in the cosmic scheme and

with the futility of human aspirations.²⁰ The notion of the inefficaciousness of human endeavor had occurred to him sporadically from the early years of his writing career. But he had seldom pursued it in his fiction and when he did he refrained from explicitly linking the observations to any cosmic force. Several notebook entries for 1835 offer plot outlines demonstrating the failure of man's influence over his own destiny. On October 17, he writes: "A person to consider himself as the prime mover of certain remarkable events, but to discover that his actions have not contributed in the least thereto. Another person to be the cause, without suspecting it" (AN, p.27). In an October 25, entry, he submits a similarly projected instance of ineffectuality: "A person to be writing a tale, and to find that it shapes itself against his intentions; that the characters act otherwise than he thought; that unforeseen events occur; and a catastrophe comes which he strives in vain to avert" (AN, p.28). Although these outlines are never fictionally developed, two stories of the same year do touch on the theme. "Little Annie's Ramble" presents mankind as so many toys. "The Ambitious Guest" reveals that human aspirations and precautions are for naught. The earthquake acts in defiance of both.

For almost a decade there is no exploration of the

subject. Then, with the Faust figures of the 1840s, there reappears an oblique treatment in which those who aspire to dominion over God's realm of action are defeated. The first causal relationship between man's insignificance and some cosmic force materializes in "The Intelligence Office" where the narrator notes that "the strangest wishes--yet most incident to men who have gone deep into scientific pursuits, and attained a high intellectual stage, though not the loftiest--were to contend with Nature, and wrest from her some secret or some power which she had seen fit to withhold from mortal grasp. She loves to delude her aspiring students, and mock them with mysteries that seem but just beyond their utmost reach" (MFOM, p.375). The same mockery of human intent occurs in "Main Street." Here the Puppeteer would have shown the audience many wonders, "but these, like most other human purposes, lie unaccomplished" (SI, p.476). And it is echoed in a notebook entry of the following year. "Happiness in this world," Hawthorne writes, "if it comes at all, comes incidentally. Make it the object of pursuit, and it leads us a wild-goose chase, and is never attained. Follow some other object, and very possibly we may find that we have caught happiness without dreaming of such luck; but, likely enough, it is gone the moment we say to ourselves--'Here it is!'--like the chest

of gold that treasure-seekers find" (AN, p.140).

Beginning with The House of Seven Gables, the theme dealing with man's insignificance in the cosmic scheme becomes pervasive, appearing in almost every work until the close of Hawthorne's career. His vision now rests on the assumption that "man's bewilderment is the measure of his wisdom" (p.178). Whereas earlier treatments of protagonists who sought to better man's lot wavered between admiration and mockery, his attitude toward Holgrave has taken on a new dimension. Youthful faith in the possibility of success is, according to Hawthorne's altered vision, a healthy part of the daguerrotypist's growth. For he will come to love his fellow man "all the better as he should recognize his helplessness in his own behalf" and his haughty faith will be humbled "in discerning that man's best-directed efforts accomplishes a kind of dream, while God is the sole worker of realities" (p.180).

Again and again in this romance, Hawthorne reiterates King Lear's lament: "As flies to wanton boys, are we to the Gods." And the novelist's God is no more benevolent than is Lear's. For if He does not kill us for His sport, he extinguishes our dignity, makes our lives a torment. We read that Clifford saw

in the mirror of his deeper consciousness, that he was an example and representative of that great chaos of people, whom an inexplicable Providence is continually putting at cross purposes with the world; breaking what seems its own promise in their nature; withholding their proper food, and setting poison before them for a banquet; and thus--when it might so easily, as one would think, have been adjusted otherwise --making their existence a strangeness, a solitude, and torment (p.149).

If this were an isolated comment, we might take it as the self-pitying expression of a distorted mind. But the observation is repeated at length by the narrator. The puppet metaphor introduced twenty years earlier in "The Seven Vagabonds," but never developed, here becomes an image for man's insignificance and helplessness. After describing the organ grinder's little wooden figures as they pursue their respective goals, "all at the same turning of a crank," the narrator suggests that "possibly, some cynic, at once merry and bitter, had desired to signify, in this pantomimic scene, that we mortals, whatever our business or amusement--however serious, however trifling--all dance to one identical tune, and, in spite of our ridiculous activity bring nothing finally to pass." Once he has set up this analogy with man, he vividly images for us the failure of all the wooden figures to effect any progress:

at the cessation of the music, everybody was petrified at once, from the most extravagant life into a dead torpor. Neither was the

cobbler's hoe finished, nor the blacksmith's iron shaped out; nor was there a drop less brandy in the toper's bottle, nor a drop more of milk in the milk-maid's pail, nor one additional coin in the miser's strongbox; nor was the scholar a page deeper in his book. All were precisely in the same condition as before they made themselves so ridiculous by their haste to toil, to enjoy, to accumulate gold, and to become wise. Saddest of all, moreover, the lover was none the happier for the maiden's granted kiss!

Practicing an evasiveness characteristic of his flirtations with the idea of a hostile universe or an unsympathetic God, Hawthorne has the narrator conclude by retreating: "But, rather than swallow this last too acrid ingredient, we reject the whole moral of the show" (p.163). The point, however, has been made and even underscored by the retreat itself which suggests not that the moral is untrue but only that it is too painful. The "cynic, at once merry and bitter," is, we may conclude, Hawthorne himself.

A similar conception of man's ineffectuality appears in the Life of Franklin Pierce. But because it deals only with God's omnipotence rather than with His benevolence or despotism, Hawthorne's feelings hide behind no comic subterfuges. Though a political reading of the biography inclined his contemporaries, and probably some of ours, to react unfavorably to his anti-activist policy, the philosophical

import of his attitude toward slavery is really quite humanistic and most significant in disclosing his growing tendency to absolve man from the responsibility for evil, for its commission as well as its eradication. Slavery, he writes, is

one of those evils which divine Providence does not leave to be remedied by human contrivances, but which, in its own good time, by some means impossible to be anticipated, but of the simplest and easiest operation, when all its uses shall have been fulfilled, it causes to vanish like a dream. There is no instance, in all history, of the human will and intellect having perfected any great moral reform by methods which it adapted to that end; but the progress of the world, at every step, leaves some evil or wrong on the path behind it, which the wisest of mankind, of their own set purpose, could never have found the way to rectify (SK, p.417).

That this sentiment remains constant is evidenced in an expression, almost identical in import, which appears ten years later in "Chiefly About War Matters." Here Hawthorne writes: "No human effort, on a grand scale, has ever yet resulted according to the purpose of its projectors. The advantages are always incidental. Man's accidents are God's purposes. We miss the good we sought, and do the good we little cared for" (SK, p.332).

This conviction continued to spread its pervasive influence over his fiction during the intervening time. In The Blithedale Romance Coverdale imparts a variation of it

to Priscilla: the only thing we may be sure of is that the good we seek will not be accomplished. Whenever the condemnation becomes too stringent, as it does when Coverdale, with Hardy-esque sentiment, discourses on fate--

How much Nature seems to love us! And how readily, nevertheless, without a sigh or a complaint, she converts us to a meaner purpose when her highest one--that of conscious intellectual life, and sensibility--has been untimely baulked! While Zenobia lived, Nature was proud of her, and directed all eyes upon that radiant presence, as her fairest handiwork. Zenobia perished. Will not Nature shed a tear? Ah, no! She adapts the calamity at once into her system, and is just as well pleased, for aught we can see, with the tuft of ranker vegetation that grew out of Zenobia's heart, as with all the beauty which has bequeathed us to earthly representation, in this crop of weeds (p.244).

--Hawthorne hides behind some less committal designation for God. Here, as in many other instances, it is Nature that bears the burden of responsibility.²¹ Septimus Felton refers to his fellow men (once again evoking recall of Lear's famous lines) as "the playthings and fools of Nature, which she amuses herself with during our little lifetime, and then breaks for mere sport, and laughs in our faces as she does so" (SF, p.312). And Dolliver becomes the object of Nature's laughter as she teases him with a spurt of vigor before "age comes on with redoubled speed" (DR, p.57).

In the final years of his life, the consciousness of man's insignificance gains so important a hold on

Hawthorne's thinking that it no longer serves as a companion to other interests in his work but becomes the foundation stone of several of the unfinished romances. As Edward H. Davidson has discovered in editing the manuscripts, Hawthorne was trying to effect in Ancestral Footstep and Dr. Grimshawe's Secret "'a bitter commentary' on the presumption of man to be a claimant for anything in this shifting and fallible world."²² Scenario J of Septimus Felton, moreover, confirms the presence of this preoccupation. Here Hawthorne writes: "'Some satire on man's philanthropic aims might be introduced by this view of Septimus; their short sighted aims, their absurd hope of success in a single lifetime, the fragmentary way in which the strife against evil is necessarily carried on.'" Perhaps, he continues, "'the moral will turn out to be, the folly of man thinking that he can ever be of any importance to the welfare of the world; or that any settled plan of his, to be carried on through a length of time, could be successful.'" The conclusion to this passage is especially significant for nowhere else is Hawthorne so direct--and we shall never know if the passage would have been deleted had he readied the work for publication--in appraising man's insignificance as a consequence of God's display of his omnipotence: "'God wants short lives, because such carry on

his purpose inevitably and involuntarily; while longer ones would thwart and interfere with His purpose, by carrying their own."²³

IV

Fate, destiny, evil doom, act as correlatives of Hawthorne's dimming view of human influence or effectiveness. As his conviction about man's insignificance grows, the role that fate plays in human affairs increases--both in nature and in the frequency with which it appears in his fiction. What is most illuminating in terms of our discussion is the metamorphosis of his definition of fate. In "The Haunted Mind," he defines fatality as "an emblem of the evil influence that rules your fortunes; a demon to whom you subjected yourself by some error at the outset of life, and were bound his slave forever, by once obeying him" (TTT, p.346).

In other words, man's fate is dictated by his own past actions. He is thus responsible for his own destiny. All the early works dramatize this proposition. In "Wakefield," the narrator says, "Then might I exemplify how an influence beyond our control lays its strong hand on every deed which

we do, and weaves its consequences into an iron tissue of necessity" (TTT, p.160). But blame for the original act has already been placed on Wakefield. The same condition obtains in "The Great Carbuncle" where the aged Seeker is doomed to continue the search "'because the vain ambition of my youth has become a fate upon me in old age'" (TTT, p.178). Where the original act cannot be located within the doomed man, destiny is molded not by some inexplicable cosmic force but by a fellow man. Such is the case in "Prophetic Pictures." Here the painter is the "chief agent of the coming evil which he had foreshadowed" (TTT, p.209).

By the time of The Scarlet Letter, an element of doubt materializes concerning the controlling agent in man's destiny. Chillingworth tells Hester that "'by thy first step awry, thou didst plant the germ of evil; but, since that moment, it has all been a dark necessity'" (p.174). This often quoted statement appears to be a reiteration of Hawthorne's earlier attitude. But is it not qualified by Chillingworth's admission just one page before that had Hester "'met earlier with a better love than mine, this evil had not been'" (p.173)?

The Marble Faun offers abundant evidence that Hawthorne has finally come to terms with the question of fate. The romance features a fatalistic vocabulary which has never

before appeared in his work. References to fate, fatal spell, evil doom, fatality, thraldom, fatal chance, appear on almost every page, creating an oppressive atmosphere which cannot accomodate free will. This general sense of an ironhanded fate hanging over the lives of the characters is reinforced by the narrator speaking of a "fatal spell that removes [Eden] beyond the scope of man's actual possessions" (p.73). The major characters, moreover, see each other as moved by some inexplicable force, by what Henry James has called "the common Doom." Miriam tells Donatello that a "'sad fatality'" has brought him to Rome; Kenyon shudders at the fatality that haunts Miriam's footsteps.

The spectral figure of the catacombs, who comes to be known as the model, both demonstrates to Miriam the futility of attempting to escape fate and himself acts as a symbol of doom, being referred to by the narrator as the "Evil Fate that haunted [Miriam] through life" (p.432). He holds the "iron chain, of which some of the massive links were round" her waist (pp.92-3). As he points out to Miriam, his efforts to break the tie between them have proved abortive: "'Our fates cross and are entangled. The threads are twisted into a strong cord, which is dragging us to an evil doom'" (p.95). Miriam may object that he mistakes his "'own will for an iron necessity'" (p.96), but these words

appear to be more expedient than sincere for, temporarily separated from him, she thinks to herself: "As in these busts in the block of marble...so does our individual fate exist in the limestone of Time. We fancy that we carve it out; but its ultimate shape is prior to all our action" (p.116).

The fatalistic vocabulary is carried into Dr. Grimshawe's Secret where Redclyffe's conscious self, which wants to abandon pursuit of his claim, battles against an "indefinable spell" under which he is powerless to follow his safer instincts. Septimus Felton feels himself under a similar spell. "How else," he wonders, "in the infinite chances of human affairs" (SF, p.274) could the document have found its way to him. He "felt his fate was in it; and truly, it turned out to be so" (p.275).

V

Hawthorne's strengthening conviction about man's insignificance and fate's dominion in the cosmic scheme was accompanied by increasing sympathy with and admiration for those of his characters who dared to step outside the perimeters of ordinary human endeavor. Much has been made

of these Faustian figures in Hawthorne, especially in discussions of his attitudes toward the over developed intellect and the self-isolating protagonist. The readings of his treatment are so diverse and often contradictory that they merit some study; for we are provoked to ask what he can be doing with these figures to summon such varying responses.

Several critics offer a non-judgmental analysis. William Bysshe Stein, for example, maintains that Hawthorne "submits the thesis that man's spiritual unrest derives from his Faustian desire to apprehend the eternal truths of the universe."²⁴ Leslie Fiedler also offers an objective analysis: "For Hawthorne," he writes, "the Faustian man is one who, unable to deny the definitions of right and wrong by which his community lives, chooses nonetheless to defy them. He is the individual, who, in pursuit of 'knowledge' or 'experience' or just 'happiness' places himself outside the sanctions and protection of society. His loneliness and alienation are at once his crime and his punishment for he commits a kind of suicide when he steps outside of society by deciding to live in unrepented sin."²⁵

Other critics, often those who embrace the concept of Hawthorne's easy faith, read his Faust figures didactically, as exemplifications of sinners whom the novelist would, so

to speak, urge to know their allotted places. Newton Arvin represents this school. From Hawthorne's pitiless introspections, he claims, arose the doctrine "that the worst of all sins is pride, that he who holds himself aloof from ordinary men and arrogates to himself more than ordinary prerogatives is the least forgivable of sinners."²⁶ Hyatt Waggoner takes a similar unilateral stand: "Hawthorne's most cutting irony," he maintains, is "usually reserved for the type most like himself--dreamer, artist, seeker after significance."²⁷

What seems to me to be more accurate are those readings which perceive the dual quality of Hawthorne's attitude. But even among this group there are more questions provoked than answered. Roy R. Male, for instance, discussing "Ethan Brand," suggests as Hawthorne's thesis that "Man's knowledge is necessarily incomplete and fragmentary. His noblest impulses urge him to transform these particles into a unified structure, and if he does not make this effort he remains little better than an animal. But if he does realize a single unified view and proudly insists upon it, his 'one idea' inevitably becomes a crazy distortion."²⁸ Male is, of course, correct. But he does not go on to explore why these "noblest impulses" inevitably meet their disastrous fate. Frederick Crews does attempt to probe this

question. Like most of the critics, he defines the Hawthornean Faust as an "idealist who has determined to do something that will separate him apart from the mass of ignorant men." Then Crews goes on to assert that Hawthorne neither "approves nor disapproves of his driven heroes, but...is ambiguously involved with them--and that he thereby has an intuitive grasp of their motives." In an effort to prove his psychological screen hypothesis, however, Crews ends up by undercutting his own position, for his probing results in the conclusion that Hawthorne's "idealist is invariably an escapist; his quest for truth or power or immortality amounts to regressive flight from the challenges of normal adult life, and the knowledge he acquires or embodies is nothing other than an awareness of his own guilty fantasies."²⁹ Richard Fogle basically agrees with Male in pointing out the duality in Hawthorne's depictions: "Hawthorne condemns his strange seekers, his Aylmers, his Ethan Brands, but he makes them noble." But then Fogle adds the observation that Hawthorne's "reconciliation is not finally in logic, for he accepts the mystery of existence."³⁰ Had Hawthorne ended his writing career in the early 1840s, Fogle might well have a valid proposition. But obviously he did not. What he did do was to begin to question the "mystery of existence"--and this is what the substantial

body of criticism just cited fails to deal with--almost simultaneously in the notebooks and tales, where we witness both an increased interest in Faust figures and a change of habitude toward them.

Notebook entries originating in August, 1842 and continuing through the next decade repeatedly pose such questions.³¹ In these commentaries, Hawthorne frequently sets up an analogy between man and nature and proceeds to probe, with an increasing sense of despair, the very mysteries that, according to Male, he greets with easy acceptance. Talking of his garden in 1843, he comes to resemble the Faust figures who like himself desire to "penetrate Nature's secrets" (AN, p.186). Ten years later we find him questioning the fate of birds destroyed by "the radiance that proves the salvation of other beings" (AN, p.267).

What I am suggesting, then, is that the change in Hawthorne's vision is responsible for, indeed encourages, the conflicting critical approaches, all of which, depending on the period under discussion, can be supported. Let us, therefore, trace the Faust theme as it progresses through his career. If we return to the earliest treatments, those of the 1830s, we discover that his orientation is either non-committal or antagonistic. The first portrait of a Faust figure appears in Fanshawe where the hero, who has

devoted himself to the acquisition of knowledge beyond that commonly afforded ordinary human intellect, comes to recognize the futility and price of his quest. His reward is his punishment: an untimely death. Hawthorne solicits no sympathy for his hero's strivings but, on the contrary, provokes comparison with the happy fate of Ellen and Edward who do not stray from the common path. "Sights from a Steeple" furnishes no clue to the fate of the protagonist, from which we might draw some glimpse of the authorial stance. The narrator's own disposition is not condemnatory but fearful. His Faustian exclamation--"oh that I could soar up into the very zenith, where man never breathed, nor eagle ever flew, and where the ethereal azure melts away from the eye"--if followed by the admission that he shivers at "that cold and solitary thought" (TTT, p.219). In "Prophetic Pictures" we find the first direct reference to the Faust figure as usurper of God's dominion. The enthusiastic painter who, with God-like omniscience is able to read and illustrate the fates of his subjects, cries out: "'O glorious Art....thou art the image of the Creator's ownO potent Art! as thou bringest the faintly revealed Past to stand in that narrow strip of sunlight, which we call Now, canst thou summon the shrouded Future to meet her there? Have I not achieved it? Am I not thy Prophet?'"

(TTT, p.207). But Hawthorne's approach to this early aspirer is decidedly antagonistic. Unlike later Fausts, the painter is nowhere described as attempting to improve the human condition; he lacks any redeeming feature; and his prophecy works as a tool of destiny.

Beginning with "The Birthmark" Hawthorne's attitude toward his rebels becomes more complex. His sympathy and admiration, though guarded and qualified, are markedly present. Contrary to most critical comment which sees his Faust figures as mere extensions of the intellect, lacking in human feeling, the narrator of "The Birthmark" includes more than the cerebral part of man as the source of Faustian inspiration, telling us that "The higher intellect, the imagination, the spirit, and even the heart might all find their congenial aliment in pursuits which, as some of their ardent votaries believe, would ascend from one step of powerful intelligence to another, until the philosopher should lay his hand on the secret of creative force and perhaps make new worlds for himself" (MFOM, p.47, italics mine). Aylmer's aims, furthermore, are noble: he wishes to correct "what Nature left imperfect" (p.53). In Georgiana's birthmark he finds a symbol of "the ineludible gripe in which mortality clutches the highest and purest of earthly mould, degrading them into kindred with the lowest, and

even the very brutes." He perceives in it "the fatal flaw of humanity which Nature, in one shape or another, stamps ineffaceably on all her productions" (p.50), an expression redolent of Melville's reference to Billy Budd's stammer as a reminder that "the arch interferer, the envious marplot of Eden, still has more or less to do with every human consignment to this planet of Earth."³² In attempting to fathom Nature's process, Aylmer is not very far from his creator who, as we remember, himself evinced a desire to "penetrate Nature's secrets."

As my opening remarks suggest, I do not mean to imply that Aylmer suffers none of Hawthorne's censure. Far from it. The sacrifice of Georgiana to his idealism is unforgivable and her dying words--"you have aimed loftily; you have done nobly" (p.69)--are surely meant to encourage us to see this devoted wife, who sacrificed for love, as the more noble of the two. But in calling him "my poor Aylmer," Georgiana seems to be expressing Hawthorne's sympathy as well; and this is certainly a new note in his outlook. Aylmer is, after all, matched with an unequal opponent, much as Melville's Ahab is, and his primary guilt lies in his failure to recognize "that our great creative Mother, while she amuses us with apparently working in the broadest sunshine, is yet severely careful to keep her own

secrets" (p.54). The scientist's journal provokes even further sympathy in being "the sad confession and continual exemplification of the shortcomings of the composite man, the spirit burdened with clay and working in matter, and of the despair that assails the highest nature at finding itself so miserably thwarted by his earthly part" (p.62). The final word of sympathy lies with the narrator who tells us that Aylmer "redeemed himself from materialism by his strong and eager aspiration toward the infinite" (p.62).

The critical tendency has been to group Rappaccini with Aylmer, Ethan Brand, and Septimus Felton. But the evidence furnished by a close reading would prove this approach unfeasible. First of all, on a technical level, Rappaccini is not a protagonist. We seldom see him; we learn about him from an unsympathetic competitor; we do not witness, except for a moment at the end, the effects of failure on him. The victims of his scientific aspirations are our major concern. And it is, thus, to them, at least to Beatrice, that our sympathy is directed. Secondly, unlike Aylmer, Rappaccini's scientific aspirations do not reach heavenward; on the contrary, the experiments with poison appear as a diabolical scheme. Aylmer's experiment aims at perfecting man; Rappaccini "'cares infinitely more

for science than for mankind. His patients are interesting to him only as subjects for some experiment" (MFOM, p.116). Finally, there are none of the references to loftiness, nobility, eager aspiration that provoke our admiration for Aylmer and none of the sad confessions that arouse our compassion.

With Ethan Brand we once again confront the Faust figure. As James E. Miller, Jr. has noted, "Brand, in his dedicated search for the unpardonable sin, takes upon himself the heavy knowledge which man was not meant to have, the unbearable knowledge of the supreme evil which only God can determine....To tamper with the soul of a fellow creature is to interfere with, perhaps desecrate, that which above all is God's province."³³ But, as with Aylmer, this dark view of the Faustian rebel is only one side of a complex portrait. For Brand is treated with similar sympathy and admiration. Unlike Rappaccini, who experiments out of a love for science, he begins his investigation out of love for his fellow man.

He remembered with what tenderness, with what love and sympathy for mankind, and what pity for human guilt and woe, he had first begun to contemplate those ideas which afterwards became the inspiration of his life; with what reverence he had then looked into the heart of man, viewing it as a temple originally divine, and, however desecrated, still to be held sacred by a brother; with what awful fear he had deprecated the

success of his pursuit, and prayed that the Unpardonable Sin might never be revealed to him (SI, p.494).

There is, in addition, a species of the "sad confession" here, a strong self-condemnation, that evoked our sympathy for Aylmer. On the threshold of suicide, Brand cries out: "'O Mother Earth...who art no more my Mother, and into whose bosom this frame shall never be resolved! O mankind, whose brotherhood I have cast off, and trampled thy great heart beneath my feet! O stars of heaven that shone on me of old, as if to light me onward and upward!--farewell all, and forever'" (p.496). And the close of his confession--"'Come, deadly element of Fire,--henceforth my familiar friend! Embrace me, as I do thee'" (p.496)--intimates that he is headed for hell. But then a curious description of nature follows:

Old Graylock was glorified with a golden cloud upon his head. Scattered likewise over the breasts of the surrounding mountains, there were heaps of hoary mist, in fantastic shapes, some of them far down into the valley, others high up towards the summits, and still others, of the same family of mist or cloud, hovering in the gold radiance of the upper atmosphere. Stepping from one to another of the clouds that rested on the hills, and thence to the loftier brotherhood that sailed in the air, it seemed almost as if a mortal man might thus ascend into the heavenly regions. Earth was so mingled with sky that it was a day-dream to look at it (p. 497).

One interpretation that offers itself and that is confirmed by the boy, is that the world is a better place because of Brand's extinction. But certain phrases suggest that this reading is too pat, that Hawthorne refuses to take a stand. We read that scattered "over the breasts of the surrounding mountains, there were heaps of hoary mist, in fantastic shapes." If we recall the reference to "dim shapes of horror and anguish" that haunted Bartram and his son as Ethan Brand was flinging himself into the fire, our response is to identify the "fantastic shapes" with the spirit of Brand. Continuing on in the passage we discover that some of these shapes are far down in the valley but others are "high up towards the summits, and still others of this same family of mist or clouds hovering in the gold radiance of the upper atmosphere." Is there not here a suggestion that Brand's soul, so pure in its original motivation, is moving toward heaven? And is this suggestion not reinforced in the next line where the narrator says: "It seemed almost as if a mortal man might thus ascend into the heavenly region?"

There is, furthermore, at the crucial ending of the tale the feeling that we are to compare Brand with his successor, "the rude lime-burner." Bartram responds to his predecessor's death with the callous remark that "'taking all the bones together, my kiln is half a bushel richer for

him'" (p.498). He is thus shown to be guilty of materialism, the lack of which, we recall, redeemed Aylmer from the harshest censure. And Brand is, by contrast, elevated to a high place among our sympathies.

Septimus Felton is the last of Hawthorne's Faust figures who tries to improve the human lot by penetrating Nature's secrets. Like the originator of the elixir recipe, an English Lord, he "was a just man by nature, and if he had gone astray, it was greatly by reason of his earnest wish to do something for the poor, wicked, struggling, bloody, uncomfortable race of man, to which he belonged" (SF, p.239). In prolonging human life, Septimus believed, man would have time to learn what lies beneath the surface of life's mysteries.

Our sympathy for Septimus begins to build even before he embarks on his Faustian quest. For it is the depth and warmth of his feeling for the young English soldier, whom he inadvertently kills, that converts his vague musings into a course of action. There appears to be, moreover, repeated emphasis on Septimus as a victim as he falls prey both to his own obsession and to the document which provides the recipe. "It was strange," we read, "how every little incident thus brought him back to that one subject

which was taking so strong hold on his mind; every avenue led thitherward" (p.242). Though he senses that the document itself is deceptive in seeming not to be "discordant with the rules of social morality," he is caught up by a "cold spell," a "magic" which even offers religious sanction by appearing to have been written "by some greatly wise and worldly-experienced man, like the writer of Ecclesiastes" (p.338). His recognition of the price he must pay for his quest reinforces our sympathetic feelings toward him. Again and again he argues with himself as to the value of an experiment which demands that he sacrifice love, friendship, all that makes life beautiful and holy.

Septimus is, like his Faustian predecessors, guilty of the destruction of a fellow human. William Bysshe Stein suggests that in having Septimus give Aunt Keziah the elixir, "Hawthorne succeeds in bringing [him] to a stage of moral degradation similar to that of Faust's at the time when he is indirectly responsible for the death of Gretchen's mother and brother."³⁴ Although the analogy is a valid one, it is important to scrutinize carefully the qualifications which attend this show of moral degradation. First of all, Septimus is made to undergo torturous self-examination concerning his behavior. Furthermore, the suggestion of possible guilt comes not from the narrator but from Septimus

himself. Finally, having already heard Sybil's legend which treats of the sacrifice of an innocent young girl by the author of the document, we are invited to compare Septimus' victim with the original. Aunt Keziah is not only a very old woman, already dying, not only an infidel whose thoughts turn with enthusiasm to the delights of being a witch; but she herself has concocted the elixir to which her nephew may or may not be adding the fatal ingredient. But if Septimus' guilt here is attenuated by the circumstances which surround his aunt's death, he remains guilty, though nobly so, of a mistaken belief in man's ability to effectually invade God's province in order to reverse the course of human life. His delusion leads him to believe that "'nature had intended, by innumerable ways, to point out to us, the great truth that death was an alien misfortune, a prodigy, a monstrosity, into which man had only fallen by defect.'" As Aylmer had held on to the illusion that he could perfect the Creator's handiwork by removing the birthmark, Septimus believes that he can perfect nature by aping God. He sees the elixir as "'the very perfection of the natural, since it consists in applying the powers and processes of Nature to the prolongation of the existence of man, her most perfect handiwork; and this could only be done by entire accordance and co-effort with Nature'" (pp.411-2).

Sybil's death may, of course, be construed as evidence of his delusion. But Hawthorne, with characteristic reluctance to let any assertion pass unquestioned, offers an alternative contingency--possibly undercut by placing the impression in Septimus' raving mind³⁵--in the description of nature that accompanies the young aspirer's reveries: "It seemed as if Nature were inclined to celebrate his triumph over herself; for above the woods that crowned the hill to the northward, there were shots and streams of radiance, a white, a red, a many-colored lustre, blazing up high towards the zenith, dancing up, flitting down, dancing up again; so that it seemed as if spirits were keeping a revel there" (p.398).

The failure which follows this description may incline the reader, whose mind is not raving, to interpret the revel as Nature's recognition that she has once again outsmarted her "playthings and fools," as Septimus calls mankind. But even this reading does not negate the sympathy and admiration which is called forth on the final page of the book. After Septimus has fled the scene of his abortive experiment, the narrator comments: "I should be rather sorry to believe that after such splendid schemes as he entertained, he should have been content to settle down into the fat substance and reality of English life, and die

in his due time, and be buried like any other man" (p.430).

Septimus has failed as have Aylmer and Ethan Brand before him. And their failures serve as testimonials to man's ineffectuality in the cosmic scheme. But their aspirations, impious as they are, establish them as heroes, as "grand, ungodly, god-like" men and reveal how much the objects of Hawthorne's admiration have indeed changed.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1. Herman Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses," The Portable Melville, ed. Jay Leyda (New York, 1952), p.407.
2. Ibid., p.406.
3. Ibid., pp.408-9.
4. Yesterdays with Authors, p.51.
5. Letter to Horatio Bridge, March 15, 1851, in Horatio Bridge, Personal Recollections of Nathaniel Hawthorne (New York, 1893), p.125.
6. MS, Collection of Norman Holmes Pearson. Cited in "Introduction" to The House of Seven Gables, p.xxii.
7. Cited in "Introduction" to The House of Seven Gables, p.xxii.
8. Yesterdays with Authors, p.89.
9. Letter to Fields, October 18, 1863, ibid., p.109.
10. Hawthorne, p.10.
11. Sins of Fathers, p.72.
12. De Libero Arbitro, III, 18.
13. Hawthorne: A Critical Study, p.261.
14. Sins of Fathers, p.12.
15. Hawthorne's Fiction: The Light and the Dark.
16. It is interesting to compare this entry with one written shortly before the first traces of a shift in Hawthorne's perception of the source of evil begins to appear in his fiction. In the later entry (1842) he writes: "The human Heart to be allegorized as a cavern; at the entrance there is sunshine, and flowers growing about it. You step within, but a short distance, and begin to find yourself surrounded with a terrible gloom, and monsters of divers kinds; it seems like Hell itself. You are bewildered, and wander long without hope. At last a light strikes upon you. You

peep towards it, and find yourself in a region that seems, in some sort, to reproduce the flowers and sunny beauty of the entrance, but all perfect. These are the depths of the heart, or of human nature, bright and peaceful; the gloom and terror may lie deep; but deeper still is the eternal beauty" (AN, p.98).

17. See, for example, Hyatt Waggoner, "Art and Belief," Centenary Essays, ed. Roy Harvey Pearce (Columbus, 1964), p.187.

18. Works: The French and Italian Notebooks, X, 204-5. In light of comments such as this one as well as the attitudes revealed in the tales and romances of the previous fifteen years, it is difficult to understand the body of criticism, typified by Marius Bewley, which denies an increase of sympathy on Hawthorne's part. Bewley writes: "In view of the inexorable fate that overtakes the men and women who err in Hawthorne's stories and to mark a termination to their punishment--in view of these things, it is tempting to say that Hawthorne's conception of human nature continued to be corrupted by Calvinism" (The Eccentric Design, p.172). This point of view appears to me to confuse the novelist's sentiments with the conditions of human existence. It is not Hawthorne but life that refuses to forgive. His ultimate attitude seems, on the contrary, to be one of such deep sympathy and forgiveness that it culminates in his wondering how his characters can help but err.

19. In The House of Seven Gables, for example, the most "respectable" character is Judge Pyncheon; in Dr. Grimshawe's Secret it is the "respectabilities of the town" who attack the doctor and his benefactor.

20. Disillusionment with the Romantic and Transcendental vision of man's divinity is not peculiar to Hawthorne. It is very much in the mainstream of American thought. Melville, for instance, writes in his "Supplement to Battle Pieces" that "To treat of human actions is to deal wholly with second causes" (The Works of Herman Melville [London, 1924], XVI, 184). Mark Twain offers a similar observation. His Autobiography furnishes one of the most graphic laments over man's plight: "A myriad of men are born; they labor and sweat and struggle for bread....Age creeps upon them; infirmities follow; shames and humiliation bring down their prides and their vanities....The burden of pain, care,

misery, grows heavier year by year....At last...they vanish from a world where they were of no consequence; where they achieved nothing; where they were a mistake and a failure and a foolishness; where they have left no sign that they have existed" (The Autobiography of Mark Twain, ed. Charles Neider [New York, 1959], p.191).

21. In using "Nature" to designate God, Hawthorne is borrowing from both the Puritans and the Transcendentalists who shared the belief that nature was God's Providence in operation.

22. "Hawthorne's Unfinished Romances," Centenary Essays, ed. Roy Harvey Pearce (Columbus, 1964), p.157.

23. Edward H. Davidson, Hawthorne's Last Phase, p.112.

24. Hawthorne's Faust: A Study of the Devil Archetype (New York, 1968), p.68.

25. Love and Death in the American Novel (New York, 1960), p.516.

26. Hawthorne, p.62.

27. Hawthorne: A Critical Study, p.82.

28. Hawthorne's Tragic Vision, p.88.

29. Sins of Fathers, p.98.

30. Hawthorne's Fiction: The Light and the Dark, p.7.

31. See, for example, entries for August 6, 1842, p.147; August 7, 1842, p.148; June 2, 1843, p.185; August 26, 1843, pp.182-3.

32. Billy Budd, Sailor, p.53.

33. Quests Surd and Absurd (Chicago, 1967), p.224.

34. Hawthorne's Faust, p.139.

35. I say "possibly" because Hawthorne's madmen almost invariably speak or think the truth. See discussion of madness, p.222.

CHAPTER THREE: HAWTHORNE AND GOD

One of the most curious phenomena of Hawthorne scholarship is its defensive quality. Only rarely do we find an extensive piece of criticism that does not attempt to assert the novelist's piety. Family members, biographers, literary analysts--all appear constrained to prove that Hawthorne had an easy faith, an unshakable faith, an abiding faith in a benevolent God. The question which emerges, of course, is why expend all this effort to defend that which has not, to any significant extent, been contested. No critic would, for example, bother to prove that Bunyan had an unshakable faith or that Emerson was a religious man. Of the earliest analysts of Hawthorne and his work, only Melville appears to have detected a strain of doubt. But the blackness and darkness he discovers in his friend is not explicitly discussed in cosmic terms nor can we be quite sure to what Hawthorne "says NO! in thunder."

The next suggestion of want of religious faith does

not appear until D. H. Lawrence's concentration, in Studies in Classic American Literature, on the subversive quality of Hawthorne's fiction. "You can please yourself, when you read The Scarlet Letter," says Lawrence, "whether you accept what that sugary, blue-eyed little darling of a Hawthorne has to say for himself, false as all darlings are, or whether you read the impeccable truth of his art-speech."¹ Lawrence goes on and on pointing out the "dubiety" and "duplicity" of Hawthorne's imagination:

The Scarlet Letter isn't a pleasant, pretty romance. It is a sort of parable, an earthly story with a hellish meaning.²

The blue-eyed darling Nathaniel knew disagreeable things in his inner soul. He was careful to send them out in disguise.³

Listen to the diabolic undertone of The Scarlet Letter.⁴

It is truly a law, that man must either stick to the belief he has grounded himself on, and obey the laws of that belief, or he must admit the belief itself to be inadequate, and prepare himself for a new thing.

There was no change in belief, either in Hester or in Hawthorne or in America. The same old treacherous belief, which was really cunning disbelief.⁵

Yet, the defenders of the faith they find expressed in Hawthorne's writing never take Lawrence to task for his damning observations. They merely ignore him.

The tendency to disregard Lawrence's insights into the

"duplicity" and "dubiety" is rather curious in light of the abundance of evidence which corroborates them. There is, first of all, the excessive use of paradox, irony, playful evasiveness and other devices--including what Frederick Crews so appropriately calls "a jarring dissonance between the 'sweet moral blossom' that is served up with an obliging flourish and the 'human frailty and sorrow' that compose the story"⁶--that obscure rather than illuminate meaning and thus suggest a layer of hidden purport beneath the surface. In addition, there are both the comments of friends who find Hawthorne so paradoxical and mysterious and the references he himself makes to a protective, and perhaps deceptive, covering.

Melville was among the first to recognize that "this Man of Mosses takes great delight in hoodwinking the world --at least with respect to himself."⁷ Cilley, one of Hawthorne's closest friends, once said: "I love Hawthorne; I admire him; but I do not know him. He lives in a mysterious world of thought and imagination which he never permits me to enter."⁸ George Hillard saw Hawthorne as "quite a puzzle." "I should fancy, from your books," Hillard wrote to him, "that you were burdened with some secret sorrow, that you had some blue chamber in your soul, into which you hardly dared to enter yourself; but when I see you, you

give me the impression of a man as healthy as Adam in paradise."⁹

As we read on in this list of intimates who never really knew their distinguished friend, we find the appraisals are not very different, albeit more affectionately phrased, than are Lawrence's. We grow less inclined to "accept what that sugary, blue-eyed little darling of a Hawthorne has to say for himself" and more disposed to consider the possibility that he did know "disagreeable things in his inner soul" and "was careful to send them out in disguise."

George Parsons Lathrop, his son-in-law, who also found Hawthorne to be such an enigma, claims that the writer was "a mystery even to himself."¹⁰ Whether or not this is true, it is certain that at least part of Hawthorne's mysteriousness was intentional. In the "Custom-House" section of The Scarlet Letter, he talks of keeping "the inmost Me behind its veil" (p.4), an especially interesting admission in light of the almost obsessive use of veil imagery in his work. There is the veil which gives "a darkened aspect" to things in "The Minister's Black Veil" (TTT, p.53); the "veil, under which far more of [Clifford's] spirit was hidden than revealed" (HSG, pp.144-5); and the veils worn literally or figuratively by most of the characters in The

Blithedale Romance. There is also the admission in his notebooks that "A veil may be needful" (AN, p.35) and the confession in "The Old Manse" that "so far as I am a man of really individual attributes I veil my face" (MFOM, p.44). Publicizing his intent not to reveal himself, he warns his readers in the "Preface" to The Snow Image that "with whatever appearance of confidential intimacy, I have been especially careful to make no disclosures respecting myself which the most indifferent observer might not have been acquainted with, and which I was not perfectly willing my worst enemy should know" (p.385). If you want to know the "inmost Me" of any writer, he continues, you must "look through the whole range of his fictitious characters, good and evil, in order to detect any of his essential traits" (p.386).

Almost a half century elapses before Hawthorne's faith in God is again exposed to question. Frederick Crews expresses some profound doubts about the easy faith theory. But his interest is psychological rather than theological. "Hawthorne's orthodoxy," Crews maintains, "can be upheld only at the price of refusing to examine the psychological implications."¹¹ He concludes, however, that Hawthorne's keynote was neither piety nor impiety but ambivalence. Only James E. Miller, Jr., in a comparison of Melville and

Hawthorne takes a strong stand against the easy faith approach: "Both writers were saying No! in their different ways to easy religious belief which falsified the 'visible truth' of worldly experience. Neither writer placed his faith--or the faith of his perceptive characters--in an easy and comfortable and shielded relationship with an 'infinitely wise, powerful, loving, and just' God--explicable or inexplicable."¹² But Miller's examination, because it is but a small part of a study of American literature, is brief and desultory and thus fails to satisfactorily support his position.

Dozens of books and hundreds of essays meanwhile continued to embrace the conventional view of Hawthorne's religious faith. The attempts by his wife and son to hide any aspect of his character which revealed a less than perfect relation with God, man, or himself are notorious. Randall Stewart has elucidated the deletions and alterations in Sophia's edition of the American Notebooks. Edward Davidson describes Julian's tamperings with the manuscripts of Dr. Grimshawe's Secret which resulted in omissions of entire meditative passages. And the latter publicly attacked Lathrop's biography on the grounds of the "revelations" it offered about his father. Julian speaks several

times in his Memoirs about Hawthorne's religious faith and although there is the typical "but" clause that is commonplace with defenders of the firm faith theory, he holds up a portrait of piety. "Hawthorne," he claims, "was a radical in the profoundest sense of the term but if he tests the pillars of the universe, he leaves them still apparently upholding the frame of things." Or, Hawthorne "'believed' in God, but never sought to define Him...He deeply accepted his wife's rejoicing faith, and perceived the limitations of reason. Our mother upon occasions expressed her faith and reverence in speech; our father in caverns submarine and unsounded, yet somehow apparent"¹³ (*italics mine*).

Those qualifying "buts" characterize the equally affirmative statements of other early biographers. Lathrop proposes that Hawthorne had "a very profound faith in Providence" and that he "was one of the great believers of his generation; but his faith expressed itself in the negative way of showing how fragile are the ordinary objects of reverence in the world"¹⁴ (*italics mine*). James T. Fields, friend and publisher of the novelist, echoed this view. "Hawthorne's religion was deep and broad," he wrote, "but it was irksome for him to be fastened by a pew door"¹⁵ (*italics mine*).

Contemporary critics agree that there is a problematic element in Hawthorne's work. Several find a dichotomy between intuition or instinct and understanding; others see him as a man and writer of many faces. Hyatt Waggoner, for example, asks "Which is the 'real' Hawthorne?" and goes on to suggest that "there were in fact several Hawthornes" and all of them are to some degree masks. He then discusses paradoxes that emerge when we contemplate the man "who longed all his life for a home, yet discovered reasons for rejecting every home he found or made; who took part in Brook Farm utopianism, yet despised reformers; who considered his Christian faith unshakable, yet never went to church, disliked theological writings and usually was repelled by preachers of the gospel."¹⁶ Charles Feidelson sees Hawthorne as using allegory because it was safe and notes that "the symbolistic and the allegoric patterns in Hawthorne's books reach quite different conclusions."¹⁷ And Leonard Fick discerns that Hawthorne "found it difficult to decide whether to rely more upon his intuitions and deeper perceptions than upon his understanding."¹⁸

Yet, after paying lip service to the ambiguity, ambivalence, and evasiveness, all go on to assert, inexplicably, that this man who was inconsistent in all things had a constant faith. To Waggoner, Hawthorne was a writer who "had

a sure faith in Providence." He "believed all the more firmly because he had explored the depths of doubt."¹⁹ For Fick the keystone "of Hawthorne's theology is an unshakable belief in an inscrutable Providence."²⁰ Henry G. Fairbanks writes that "Any survey of Hawthorne's life makes it apparent that he was not a churchgoing man. On the other hand, a study of Hawthorne's works discloses that he was a religious man in whose outlook the Christian heritage was cardinal."²¹ John T. Frederick seconds the notion: "Primary in his thinking was an unquestioned belief in God--in the reality of an Omnipotent and Omniscient One who is also a God of love, with whom the human spirit possesses a permanent personal relationship."²² Edward Wagenknecht follows suit: "For Hawthorne Providence was a loving Providence, because God was a loving God."²³

When the evidence fails to coincide with the easy faith theory, we often find Hawthorne being faulted for failing adequately to dramatize his intent. Even so perceptive a critic as F. O. Matthiessen falls into this trap. Referring to The Marble Faun Matthiessen remarks: Hawthorne "clearly intended Kenyon and Hilda to be attractive...but the unintended impression of self-righteousness and priggishness that exudes from these characters brings to the fore some extreme limitations of the stand that Hawthorne took for

granted."²⁴ Hyatt Waggoner takes a similar position. When Hawthorne's work does not square with that of a man whose faith is unshakable, Waggoner attempts to prove the discrepancy between intention and achievement by sending us back to the early work, thus discounting the possibility of change. Of the scene in which Zenobia's body is found, Waggoner writes: "When the water's veil was finally lifted it revealed something so grotesque and fearful that Coverdale was moved, for once, to a profound emotion.... Such meanings as these were almost certainly not the ones Hawthorne intended to express. Once again, the sketches may be drawn on to discover intention."²⁵

On and on run the affirmations of Hawthorne's faith.²⁶ Some of them are intent on proving merely that he believes in the existence of God. Fick, for instance, asserts that "Whereas the evil in the world has in every age been reconstrued into an argument against a belief in an all-good and an all-wise God, Hawthorne would seem to have used the evil in men's lives as an argument in favor of God's existence."²⁷ That Hawthorne does not question the vital connection between man and God is indisputable. The questions that he does pose are those which concern the nature of God. Is God the "loving God" that Wagenknecht and Fick see in his work?

Or is He the puppeteer, alluded to in The House of Seven Gables, who grinds out the tunes to which men dance, the cosmic joker who, as Septimus Felton believes, treats men as "playthings and fools"? If man is a victim of Fate, which he is shown to be in the later works, what kind of God directs this Fate? If man is innately corrupt, who has made him so? Can man be redeemed? And what is the price Hawthorne's God puts on redemption?

Curiously enough, one of the earliest tales offers a devastating condemnation of a God that Frederick Crews accurately, if strongly, describes as the "archsadist of a lunatic universe."²⁸ In "The Gentle Boy," Catherine, who has sacrificed her motherhood in order to devote herself to God, is repaid with the death of little Ilbrahim. When the old man reminds her of God's "love, displayed in chastenings" (TTT, p.122), she replies: "Tell me, man of cold heart, what has God done to me? Hath He cast me down, never to rise again? Hath He crushed my very heart in his hand?" (p.123). Granted, Hawthorne is condemning Catherine for her fanaticism. But does this satisfactorily explain the severity of her punishment or the suffering imposed gratuitously upon the innocent child?

Hawthorne, however, quickly drops this conception of God in his works. Other isolated moments of doubt appear,

but they are decidedly tentative and controlled, the occasional doubts that the minister of Septimus Felton claims as the heritage of all thinking men. The one which surfaces in "Sunday at Home," for example, is speedily resolved by a recognition that the "blessed sunshine" residing within him will render the doubt transitory. A somewhat more anguished cry emerges in "Monsieur du Miroir." The narrator, appealing to the mirror for proof of spiritual reality cries, "Break down the barrier between us! Grasp my hand! Speak! Listen! A few words, perhaps, might satisfy the feverish yearning of my soul for some master thought that should guide me through the labyrinth of life, teaching wherefore I was born, and how to do my task on earth, and what is death" (MFOM, p.195). But, here too, doubts are resolved, in this case through the faculty of reason which sets up an analogy between the unseen worlds of the physically blind and the spiritually blind. God may be inscrutable, veiled in mystery, but he works in our best interest, his "Divine Intelligence" revealing all that is "needful to our guidance" (p.195). It is especially enlightening to compare the resolution of this doubt with the depiction of a similar situation in Septimus Felton where the Protagonist asserts not that the doubts are "vain questions" but that they provide the reality, that they are "a hundred times as real as the

dull, quiet moments of faith" (p.237).

The doubting moments in the early works are brief and intermittent and except for "Night Sketches," discussed earlier, his writing during the next five years centers almost exclusively on man's sinfulness. Those who, like Goodman Brown, doubt (and even here Brown's loss of faith has as its primary object man rather than God) are mocked or pitied. When infrequent references to God do creep back into his work they invariably depict the "loving God" suggested by Wagenknecht and Fick. The Providence who rules the world of "The Village Uncle" is indeed a benevolent one. And the narrator here feels secure in the knowledge that heaven is reflected in even the pools of water along the shore. He can thus conclude with one of those "sweet moral blossoms": "In chaste and warm affections, humble wishes, and honest toil for some useful end, there is...the prospect of a happy life, and the fairest hope of heaven" (TTT, p.363). How revealing is a comparison between this appropriate moral and the implied message of "The Celestial Railroad" or the mockery of Hilda's point of view in The Marble Faun. In "The Village Uncle," sustaining religious faith does appear to be child's play, whereas in the later works a severely harsher view of reality obtains. "The Celestial Railroad" is as much an allegorical attack on the transcendental

belief in the easy road to faith as it is a satire on societal evils. And, as such it marks the not so coincidental beginning of Hawthorne's own plaguing doubts.

God emerges as both benevolent and protective in "David Swan" where His care of David provokes another appropriate moral: "Does it not argue a superintending Providence that, while viewless and unexpected events thrust themselves continually athwart our path, there should still be regularity enough in mortal life to render foresight even partially available?" (TTT, p.218). A sunny and kindly God also lights the pages of the American Notebooks. "God," Hawthorne writes, "does not let us live anywhere or anyhow on earth without placing something of Heaven close at hand, by rightly using and considering which, the earthly darkness or trouble will vanish, and all be Heaven" (pp.97-8). A similar conception surfaces in "Egotism; or, the Bosom Serpent," written the following year. Here an authorial comment attributes both wisdom and benevolence to God: "God, who made us, knows, and will not leave us on our toilsome and doubtful march, either to wander in infinite uncertainty, or perish by the way!" (MFOM, p.252).

During the same year that saw the publication of "Egotism," facsimiles of those agonized questions which had not been asked since the writing of "The Gentle Boy" a decade

earlier, begin to appear with regularity in Hawthorne's notebooks. The entries, however, refer not to God, Himself, but to Nature which, along with such terms as Providence, destiny, fate, will hereafter serve as metaphors for God. One explanation for this metaphoric use of Nature may be that Hawthorne, who has been married for a year, has taken to keeping a joint notebook with the decidedly more pious Sophia. But the substitution of Nature for God does not change the purport of these entries. The alteration in Hawthorne's conception of God is unmistakable. After a frost which has ruined his garden, he notes: "It is sad that Nature will play such tricks with us poor mortals, inviting us with sunny smiles to confide in her, and then, when we are entirely within her power, striking us to the heart" (AN, p.185). The entry ends, as expected, with a reference to Sophia followed by a note of affirmation: "God can restore all. Let us trust that He will."

If the entry had stood alone, as did the expression of doubt in "The Gentle Boy," the reference to Nature coupled with the affirmative closing might well undermine my reading. But several weeks later a similar comment appears, one more explicit both in its condemnatory quality and in the equation it sets up between the natural and moral worlds. Hawthorne is talking of his garden:

Why is it, I wonder, that Nature has provided such a host of enemies for every useful esculent, while the weeds are suffered to grow unmolested, and are provided with such tenacity of life, and such methods of propagation, that the gardener must maintain a continual struggle or they will hopelessly overwhelm him! What hidden virtue is there in these things, that it is granted them...always to mock their enemies with the same wicked luxuriance! It is truly a mystery....Perhaps, if we could penetrate Nature's secrets, we should find that what we call weeds are more essential to the well-being of the world than the most precious fruit or grain. This may be doubted however; for there is an unmistakable [sic] analogy between these wicked weeds and the bad habits and sinful propensities which have overrun the moral world; and we may as well imagine that there is good in one as in the other (p.186).

Again, the entry ends with a characteristic retreat--Sophia, after all, shares the notebook--but the questions have already been asked. Why is evil allowed not only to exist but to proliferate? Why must the condition of life be a constant struggle against this evil? And, finally, what is the nature of the force that controls such a universe? Subsequent entries ask the same questions. In a notation that leads to Coverdale's similar reflection at the time of Zenobia's death, Hawthorne writes: "Nothing comes amiss to Nature--all is fish that comes to her net. If there be a living form of perfect beauty instinct with soul--why it is all very well, and suits Nature well enough. But she would just as lief have the same beautiful, soul-illuminated body,

to make worm's meat of, and to manure the earth with" (p. 118). The flowers of earlier entries, the fish here, it is clear, represent not the lower orders of nature, but the "soul-illumined body" of man whose fate at the hand of Hawthorne's God is indeed a sad one. The "loving God" of the 1830s has been replaced and the replacement is, alas! too close to Crews's "archsadist of a lunatic universe."

In the midst of these illuminating entries comes a new expression of Hawthorne's questions about the nature of God. "The Christmas Banquet" offers the first depiction of a series of rebels whose thoughts would have been held by his pious forefathers "to be a deadlier crime" (SL, p.164) than any active sin. The yearly banquet, held significantly at Christmas, honors not the sinners of the world but the sufferers. The tale functions as a turning point in the direction of Hawthorne's sympathy. For the protagonist, for the first time in his work, incurs no blame for the coldness of his heart. Thus the implied question throughout the tale is "Who is responsible?" The announcement of the Testator's purpose provides the answer. He holds the banquet so that "the stern or fierce expression of human discontent should not be drowned, even for that one holy and joyful day, amid the acclamations of festal gratitude which all Christendom

sends up." The discontent that he wishes to keep alive is a dissatisfaction with the ways of God. His aim is to "perpetrate his own remonstrance against the earthly course of Providence" (MFOM, p.323).

Those critics who support the "loving God" theory may, of course, rightly point out that a character does not necessarily represent his author. Yet, it remains difficult to separate this character from his creator. Not only, as I previously noted, is the Testator followed by a number of other religious rebels but his fictional life is located in the same year that witnesses the appearance of a similarly conceived tale: "Rappaccini's Daughter." Read on an allegorical level, Rappaccini, creator of the edenic garden, represents God. But what kind of God is He? Gloria Chasson Erlich has accurately described Rappaccini as "author of a diabolic scheme, the corruption of man."²⁹ He creates a poisonous world and then contrives to tempt innocent man, represented by Giovanni, into his trap; that is, he plays the allegorical roles of both God and Satan. What are we to make of this? Does Hawthorne see them as one? Is he offering a corrective to the benevolent conception of God, ascribing to Him instead satanic qualities?³⁰

We might discount this allegory and its provocative questions as a playful excursion into possibility rather

than a serious attempt to explain the existence of evil in a world created by a supposedly omniscient and beneficent God. But a situation disturbingly similar is hinted at in The Scarlet Letter. Here we find a description of Pearl which sounds uncannily like Ishmael's references to the white whale whose ambiguous God/devil symbolism has so frequently been discussed. The description of Pearl uses language so provocatively that in almost every line our minds are compelled to recognize a comparison with God. Pearl's "look" is portrayed as "intelligent, yet inexplicable, so perverse, sometimes so malicious"; she is "incapable and unintelligent of human sorrow"; she is invested "with a strange remoteness and intangibility" and referred to as "a glimmering light." The narrator talks of her as "terrible in her...wrath" (a term Donatello later applies to God) and asks if she has "any principle of being" (pp.92-4). Each of these phrases has long been a commonplace in descriptions of God. What is so unique about Hawthorne's description of Pearl is that it goes on to offer, directly afterwards, equally commonplace phrases of satanic portraiture. Pearl is an "imp of evil," a "demon offspring"; her face, "fiend-like, full of smiling malice," harbors "a shadowy reflection of...evil." It was "as if an evil spirit possessed" her (pp.94-9).

Nor did Hawthorne drop this notion. The mingling of divine and satanic reappears in Septimus Felton where he consciously establishes a state of confusion over the source of an elixir which is itself a mixture of good and evil. Referring to the old Indian chief's concoction, the author writes in brackets: "Perhaps the Devil taught him the drink, or else the Great Spirit,--doubtful which" (p.319).

To return to The Scarlet Letter: in what may be an attempt to atone for this blasphemous indulgence, Hawthorne depicts in the rest of the romance a God who alternates in conception between benevolence and vengeance. The rosebush acts as a "token" to suggest "that the deep heart of Nature," and by extension God, "could pity and be kind to man" (p.48). At one point Hawthorne demonstrates God's beneficence by showing it to be supremely greater than man's. "Man had marked this woman's sin by a scarlet letter, which had such potent and disastrous efficacy that no human sympathy could reach her, save it were sinful like herself. God, as a direct consequence of the sin which man thus punished had given her a lovely child, whose place was on that same dishonored bosom, to connect her parent forever with the race and descent of mortals, and to be finally a blessed soul in heaven!" (p.89).

But Pearl is a symbol of retribution as well as a

blessing. If she is a source of joy to Hester, enough so to cause the mother to fight for her child, she is also a "messenger of anguish." The "lovely child" at times resembles "an infant pestilence,--the scarlet fever or some such half-fledged angel of judgment,--whose mission was to punish the sins of the rising generation" (pp.102-3). And this God who sends agents of retribution and anguish is the One whom Dimmesdale sees as "all-good and all-wise." When Hester asks if their intense suffering on earth has not redeemed them and entitled them to meet in heaven, Dimmesdale replies that he does not know and implies that he fears not. But, he continues, "God knows; and He is merciful. He hath proved his mercy, most of all, in my afflictions. By giving me this burning torture to bear upon my breast! By sending yonder dark and terrible old man, to keep the torture always at red-heat! By bringing me hither to die this death of triumphant ignominy before the people! Had either of these agonies been wanting, I had been lost for ever!" (pp.256-7).

Can Hawthorne really mean for us to accept Dimmesdale's view? It may be argued that the minister shares the orthodox Puritan conception of man's relation to God. Granted. But surely his author--who wrote in his notebook, "my business is merely to live and enjoy" (AN, p.154)--does not. Nor would he expect his mid-nineteenth century audience to

do so. More likely Dimmesdale's final words are offered to the reader as an ironic comment on a God Hawthorne no longer conceives of as "all-good" or "all-wise."

The doubts which appear to assail Hawthorne's faith in a benevolent Providence are reflected in at least one major character in each of the four completed romances. Although in the first of these the precise nature of the doubting is, for the most part, left ambiguous, subtle hints lead us to perceive that it is the nature of a God who does nothing to alleviate the pain of her isolation that Hester ultimately questions. There are frequent references to her rebellious thoughts. We are told, for instance, that she "assumed a freedom of speculation" (p.164), that she experienced "no genuine and stedfast penitence" (p.84). Her heart which "had lost its regular and healthy throb, wandered without a clew in the dark labyrinth of mind; now turned aside by an insurmountable precipice; now starting back from a deep chasm" (p.164). And she "wandered without rule or guidance, in a moral wilderness; as vast, as intricate and shadowy, as the untamed forest, amid the bloom of which they were now holding a colloquy that was to decide their fate. 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....The tendency of her fate and fortunes had been

to set her free" (p.199).

Free from what? Surely, it cannot be merely free from an adherence to Puritan doctrine. Why, if that were the case, would Hawthorne keep the nature of her doubts so obscure, especially when he has so clearly illuminated the guilt of the Puritan community in treating her so harshly. The implication is, rather, that she has been freed of the bonds that tied her to God and kept her from earlier proposing to Dimmesdale what she knew would compound their sin in God's eyes. What supports this reading is, first of all, that the similar expression of freedom, which appears on the next page, clearly indicates a break, albeit temporary, from God. Having agreed to flee with Hester, Dimmesdale experiences the "exhilarating effect...of breathing the wild, free atmosphere of an unredeemed, unchristianized, lawless region" (p.201). Secondly the comparison of Hester with the "wild Indian" suggests not a failure of orthodoxy but a state of paganism. And, finally, her doubt is concretely attached to God in the passage where Pearl, stubbornly asserting that she has no heavenly father, asks who sent her. Hester's response is implicative of her religious state of mind. She "could not resolve the query, being herself in a dismal labyrinth of doubt" (pp.98-9).

The question remains as to whether or not the author

shares these rebellious thoughts, whether he too finds himself "in a dismal labyrinth of doubt." The answer, I believe, must be in the affirmative. For in addition to all the internal evidence presented in this chapter, there is the external corroboration found in a letter to Horatio Bridge where Hawthorne writes of The Scarlet Letter not that he has written a book with a "hell-fired" character but that the book itself "is positively a hell-fired story."³¹

Ironically, The House of Seven Gables, which Hawthorne most studiously tried to make genial, is the most subversive of his romances. Filled as it is with facile morals and an ideal distribution of rewards and punishments, it cannot hide the author's growing discontent with the ways of Providence. Even the paradox, the irony, the playful ambiguity used to attenuate God's responsibility for the human condition cannot obscure completely the change which is taking place in Hawthorne's vision of evil. In incident after incident, Clifford and Hephzibah look to God for help. They are consistently disappointed.

The persistent rejection of their pleas is foreshadowed in the opening scene of the narrative. Hephzibah, about to embark on the first constructive enterprise of her life, begins by seeking the "Divine assistance through the day."

And what is the reward for this devotion? According to the narrator, we might, "without all the deepest trust in a comprehensive sympathy above us...be led to suspect" that "the iron countenance of fate" greets its devotee with "the insult of a sneer, as well as an immitigable frown" (p.41). Once Hepzibah has reached the shop, we are treated to another authorial comment: "As a general rule, Providence seldom vouchsafes to mortals any more than just that degree of encouragement, which suffices to keep them at a reasonably full exertion of their powers" (p.52). Here, it would seem, Providence acts, if not generously, at least in a manner beneficial to man. But, in what emerges as a controlling pattern of ironic juxtapositions, the action which follows directly upon this statement and which, we must assume, offers the more reliable evidence of Hawthorne's point of view, contradicts the sentimental truisms articulated by the narrator. The "degree of encouragement" falls short of Hepzibah's needs and she almost immediately relapses into a state of despondency that "threatened, ever and anon, to return" (p.52). That Hepzibah, hearing from a dissatisfied customer "some unintelligible words, which had the tone and bitterness of a curse," does not view the Providential aid as sufficient is obvious from her instinctive response. For she throws "up her eyes, unintentionally scowling in the

face of Providence" (p.53).

A similar pattern appears in the scene where Hepzibah and Clifford attempt to "renew the broken links of brotherhood" by attending church. The narrator reveals that "there was a touching recognition, on Clifford's part, of God's care and love towards him." But then what a marvelous double stroke of irony follows! The narrator himself illuminates Clifford's delusion. "Care and love" indeed! "This poor forsaken man" has been "thrown aside, forgotten, and left to the sport of some fiend, whose playfulness was an ecstasy of mischief" (pp.166-7). Who is this "fiend"? Who else but the God in whose "care and love" Clifford mistakenly believes. Should any doubt remain as to the identity of the mischief-maker, we need only turn the page where we find that when Hepzibah and Clifford try to cross the threshold, "the eye of their Father seemed to be withdrawn, and gave them no encouragement" (p.169).

Hepzibah, of course, is no rebel in the sense that the Testator of "The Christmas Banquet" and Hester Prynne are. Her scowling at heaven, though justified, is not premeditated. But she does ask the same question that stands behind the rebellious thoughts of her fictional predecessors. When their abortive attempt to reenter life comes to an end, and the "Two Owls" are left on the deserted railroad station,

she cries out: "'Oh, God--our Father--are we not thy children? Have mercy on us!'" (p.267). The narrator's playful commentary in this scene does not undermine the disturbing truth of the situation. In fact, it increases it. For it suggests, when he says "it was no hour for disbelief;--no juncture this, to question that there was a sky above, and an Almighty Father looking down from it!" (p.267), that Hepzibah has cause to doubt but has no choice other than to continue to believe.

Several other authorial comments reinforce the idea that a less than perfect deity rules the universe. At one point the narrator notes that fate has not been kind to Clifford, that one "would have felt tempted to hold an argument with Destiny, and affirm, that either this being should have been made mortal, or mortal existence should have been tempered to his qualities. There seemed no necessity for his having drawn breath, at all" (p.139). A little later he talks of an inexplicable Providence who has put a "great chaos of people...at cross purposes with the world; breaking what seems its own promise in their nature; withholding their proper food, and setting poison before them for a banquet; and thus--when it might so easily, as one would think, have been adjusted otherwise--making their existence a strangeness, a solitude, and torment" (p.149).

When, therefore, we come upon one of those sunny morals affirming the benevolence of God we cannot help but suspect that it is offered as a subterfuge, a balm designed to inspire the affection of more conventional readers and to satisfy Sophia's--and Hawthorne's--desire for a genial book. The most ingenious of these disguises dominates the scene where Hepzibah's mildly rebellious thoughts have brought her to the "wretched conviction, that Providence intermeddled not in these petty wrongs of one individual to his fellow, nor had any balm for these little agonies of a solitary soul, but shed its justice, and its mercy, in a broad sunlike sweep, over half the universe at once." So far, so good: Hepzibah has merely resigned herself to the acceptance of a general rather than a special Providence. But then, sandwiched in between this acceptance and the sunny moral comes the clinching blasphemy. Of the "sunlike sweep" the narrator says: "Its vastness made it nothing." The moral that directly follows intimates that Hepzibah is wrong. She "did not see, that, just as there comes a warm sunbeam into every cottage-window, so comes a love-beam of God's care and pity for every separate need" (p.245). Can we really take this seriously? Where was God's "lovebeam" of care during Clifford's dark years in prison?

Although The Blithedale Romance is less persistent than

The House of Seven Gables in questioning the nature of Providence, its dramatic presentation of Zenobia's rebellion, unmitigated as it is by playful evasiveness, is more horrifying an indication of Hawthorne's growing disillusionment. Shortly before the suicide Zenobia, lamenting her fate, has noted that "a little kinder smile on Him who sent me hither ...might have made me all that a woman can be" (p.218). When Coverdale discovers the body, he at first tries to believe that Zenobia is frozen into a rigid posture of prayer. But he finally admits that although "it may be" so, the evidence suggests the greater probability of rebelliousness. "Her arms!" he exclaims. "They were bent before her, as if she struggled against Providence in never-ending hostility. Her hands! They were clenched in immitigable defiance." Try as he may to chase away "the hideous thought" (p.235), he cannot. Neither can we; nor, I suspect, does the author mean for us to do so.

The letters are considerably more guarded than the notebooks in their admission of doubt. But two features of this correspondence merit our attention. The first involves the frequent references to Providence contained in almost every letter. The second concerns the persistent attempts to justify the ills that plague man. Reading through these

letters we cannot help but sense a "thou dost protest too much" quality. Again and again Hawthorne explains, in one variation or another, that Providence sends us an equal share of joy and grief, that, as he writes to Bridge in 1856, for example, "The bitter is very apt to come with the sweet....In this view of the matter I am disposed to thank God for the gloom and chill of my early life, in the hope that my share of adversity came then."³² Or, as he says in a conversation with William Story two years later: "a piece of good fortune is apt to be attended by an equivalent misfortune....Indeed it is very hard if we cannot enjoy a little sunshine in this short and hard life without a deadly shadow gliding close behind."³³ Characteristic of all the correspondence is a lack of assurance. It is full of "ifs." At best he can hope.

The notebooks, however, are more revelatory. When he discovers that large quantities of birds die by flying against the lantern of the lighthouse, he asks: "How came these little birds out of their nests at night? Why should they meet destruction from the radiance that proves the salvation of other beings?" (AN, p.267). We are reminded of Thomas Hardy's *Jude* as he perceives "the flaw in the terrestrial scheme, by which what was good for God's birds was bad for God's gardener."³⁴ And, indeed, the comparison is

apt. Hardy, too, does not question the existence of God; rather, like Hawthorne, he asks repeatedly "What is the nature of God?" and concludes that the "President of the Immortals" as he refers to Him at the end of Tess of the D'Ubervilles,³⁵ uses man for his sport.³⁶

The combination of aloofness and malice continues to be reflected in Hawthorne's view of God. On seeing a monkey in the zoo, he remarks, "In a future state of being, I think it will be one of my enquiries, in reference to the mysteries of this present state, why monkies [sic] were made. The Creator could not surely have meant to ridicule his own work" (EN, p.209). Why? Why? Why? becomes the keynote of the notebooks. "Why did Christ curse the fig-tree?" he asks in an entry of 1856. "It was not in the least to blame; and it seems most unreasonable to have expected it to bear figs out of season. Instead of withering it away, it would have been as great a miracle, and far more beautiful--and, one would think, of more beneficent influence--to have made it suddenly rich with ripe fruit" (EN, p.276). The implied question in this passage is, obviously, why did God create sin or evil, depriving man's life of beneficence and fruitfulness? Hawthorne's contact with poverty in Liverpool strengthened his conviction that Providence was responsible for the evils that afflict mankind. Speaking

of the prostitutes that line the streets, he notes: "Unless your faith be deep-rooted and of most vigorous growth, it is the safer way not to turn aside into this region so suggestive of miserable doubt. It was a place 'with dreadful faces thronged,' wrinkled and grim with vice and wretchedness."³⁷ A visit to the workhouse on the same day as the fig-tree entry provokes another "Why?" This time the question relates to suffering and the conclusion offers one of the most forthright statements of Hawthorne's loss of faith in a loving and caring God. Referring to a child whose "pain and misery seemed to have given...a sort of intelligence" to its face, he cries out in anguish: "Did God make this child? I'm afraid not" (EN, p.276).

1858 must have been an exceptionally difficult time for Hawthorne in his striving to believe in an "all-good" and "all-wise" God. Three entries appear in his note-books during the summer of this year, which must indeed seem puzzling to those who support the easy faith theory. Having visited the Duomo, he describes the windows as shining "like a million of rubies, sapphires, emeralds, and topazes,--bright in themselves, but dim with tenderness and reverence, because God himself was shining through them." But then, in one of those rare moments of naked truth he exclaims: "I hate what I have said" (F&IN, pp.278-9). Several days

later, after seeing Michel Angelo's "Fates" and noting the lack of sympathy recorded in their visages, he again utters the now frequent cry: "God give me the sure belief in His Providence" (pp.300-1). The third of these entries appears after a study of Carlo Dolce's portrait of the Eternal Father. Instead of the Omnipotent Being usually depicted, Dolce's portrait features an "All-powerless...soft, consumptive deity" unequal to the "task of ruling the universe." Hawthorne does not reveal his own feelings, except to say that if the portrait were a true representation, it would be "no wonder that wrong gets the better of right." But he does close the description by saying, "Heaven forgive me for such thoughts as this picture has suggested!" (pp.369-70). And in light of his explicit expressions over the past decade, it is not hard to conjecture what those thoughts might be.

The heterodox thoughts for which he might seek heavenly forgiveness are articulated in The Marble Faun. Only Hawthorne has now found an artistic method for presenting them dramatically. Although he still relies heavily on ambiguity and irony to disguise his unpopular conception of God, he has shifted part of the burden of obfuscation to what I earlier called a dialectical structure, a development

that grows organically out of the change in his vision. What he does here is to have his characters present opposing views of Providence. He offers no direct commentary on these views, ostensibly leaving the reader to draw his own conclusions. But, only ostensibly. For if read carefully, the romance tells much about Hawthorne's own attitude. And it does so mainly by a control of sympathy that mocks the characters who support one view and empathizes with and admires those who stand behind the other.

The first of the dialectical exchanges deals with the question of the help man may expect from Providence. Hawthorne sets up the catacombs as a metaphor for the "labyrinth of darkness." Then, when Miriam emerges after having been assumed lost by her friends, Hilda exclaims: "'Blessed be Providence, which has rescued you out of that miserable darkness!'" To which Miriam replies, "'Are you quite sure that it was Heaven's guidance which brought me back? If so, it was by an odd messenger, as you will confess'" (p.29). Indeed it was. For the messenger she points to is the model who later becomes not her guiding angel but her dark Fate. Hawthorne's intent is fairly clear here: we are being invited to question Hilda's innocent reading of the incident.

Other exchanges, however, offer no such explicit indication of Hawthorne's disposition. Speaking of the chasm

in the Forum, Miriam remarks that "'every person takes a peep into it in moments of gloom and despondency; that is to say, in his moments of deepest insight'" (p.162). Hilda, of course, has never peeped into it, which might well suggest, if we are to embrace Miriam's thesis, that she lacks the necessary insight. Miriam continues: "'The chasm was merely one of the orifices of that pit of blackness that lies beneath us, everywhere. The firmest substance of human happiness is but a thin crust spread over it, with just reality enough to bear up the illusive stage-scenery amid which we tread'" (pp.162-3). Needless to say, Hilda is shocked. It seems to her "'that there is no chasm, nor any hideous emptiness under our feet, except what the evil within us digs'" (p.162).

Whose view do we accept? Hawthorne refrains from providing any immediate direction. But he has already given us many subtle clues concerning his attitude toward these women. One of the most definitive concerns some deficiencies in Hilda's moral make-up. Like many other passages, this one depicts Hilda as a Puritan who embodies the qualities Hawthorne found most distasteful in his forebears. He attributes to Hilda the same narrow vision and concomitant moral blindness that characterizes Father Wilson in The Scarlet Letter as he keeps his eyes glued to the muddy path

before him instead of looking at the whole landscape which at that moment includes the exposed guilt of Dimmesdale. It was not, Hawthorne tells us, Hilda's "general practice to attempt reproducing the whole of a great picture, but to select some high, noble, and delicate portion of it, in which the spirit and essence of the picture culminated--the Virgin's celestial sorrow, for example, or a hovering Angel, imbued with immortal light, or a Saint, with the glow of Heaven in his dying face" (p.58). Hilda sees only what she wishes to see and what she wishes invariably excludes the real, the unpleasant aspects of life. She "had an elastic faculty for throwing off such recollections as would be too painful for endurance" (p.382).

It is this inability to draw the necessary distinctions between ideal and real, between heavenly truth and human truth, that classes Hilda with the worst of the Puritans in her lack of sympathy and her refusal to recognize that life is a complex affair, an amalgamation of good and evil. Not only does she close the window on Miriam when the latter cries out, "'Pray for us, Hilda! We need it!'" (p.177), but she exiles the sinner from her affections as the Puritans in The Scarlet Letter exiled Hester from their community. Thus, she violates the major tenet of Hawthorne's moral code: "Man must not disclaim brotherhood even with the

guiltiest" (TTT, p.257). When, moreover, Kenyon says of Miriam, "'might we not render some such verdict as this?-- Worthy of Death but not unworthy of Love!'" she replies, "'Never!....There is, I believe, only one right and one wrong; and I do not understand (and may God keep me from ever understanding)'"--more of the moral blindness--"'how two things so totally unlike can be mistaken for one another; nor how two mortal foes--as Right and Wrong surely are--can work together in the same deed'" (p.384). Even Kenyon, the man so desperately in love with her that he will later sacrifice his freedom of thought to her orthodoxy, does not fail to see that her theory is "'unworldly and impracticable.'" Can Hawthorne, then, whose aesthetic strength lies in his ability to depict with such tender sympathy the complex mixture of good and evil that resides in all things, who wrote in The House of Seven Gables that "life is made up of marble and mud" (p.41), have chosen this unworldly and unseeing character for his spokesman? In the light of the struggle, evinced by the notebook entries and earlier romances, to regain his faith, is it not more likely that Miriam, who confesses that "'I would give all I have or hope--my life, Oh, how freely!--for one instant of your trust in God!'" (p.166), represents a more appropriate choice?

The dialogue between Kenyon and Donatello also proffers

two opposing views of the nature of God. Kenyon is a more sympathetic character than Hilda and although he does ultimately retreat into a safer, orthodox position, his experience, unlike hers, provokes moral growth. His position in the dialogue with Donatello, however, is repeatedly undercut. In an early exchange the two friends stand atop the tower at Monte Beni. Kenyon, who believes in a loving and caring God, comments on the scene beneath. "'How it strengthens the poor human spirit in its reliance on His Providence, to ascend but this little way above the common level, and so attain a somewhat wider glimpse of His dealings with mankind! He doeth all things right! His will be done!'" Donatello believes otherwise. He sees "'sunshine in one spot, and cloud in another, and no reason for it in either case'" (p.258). We are meant, it would seem, to interpret the elevation from which Kenyon views God's Providence as symbolizing the ideal state. For subsequent descriptions of the countryside, seen from an earthly vantage point, militate against a belief that "He doeth all things right." The narrator, describing the "Scenes by the Way," tells us that "Immediately about them...there were abundant tokens that the country was not really the paradise it looked to be, at a casual glance" (p.295). And soon afterwards: "From village to village, ragged boys and girls

kept almost under the horses' feet...blind men stared them out of countenance with their sightless orbs; women held up their unwashed babies; cripples displayed their wooden legs, their grievous scars, their dangling, boneless arms, their broken backs, their burthen of a hump, or whatever infirmity or deformity Providence had assigned them for an inheritance" (pp.307-7).

In another exchange Kenyon again suggests a loving God while Donatello's God is no longer merely uncaring but now wrathful:

"The pictures are most brilliant in themselves, yet dim with tenderness and reverence, because God Himself is shining through them!"

"The pictures fill me with emotion, but not such as you seem to experience," said Donatello. "I tremble at those awful Saints, and, most of all, at the figure above them. He glows with divine wrath!"

"My dear friend," exclaimed Kenyon, "how strangely your eyes have transmuted the expression of the figure! It is divine Love, not wrath!"

"To my eyes," said Donatello stubbornly, "it is wrath, not Love. Each must interpret for himself" (pp.305-6).

Hawthorne refrains from taking sides and the only evidence the romance itself offers to support Donatello's position is to be found in the incommensurate degree of suffering which he and Miriam experience. But, if we turn to the earlier quoted passage³⁸ in the notebooks where Hawthorne writes precisely the same words uttered by Kenyon and then

concludes with "I hate what I have said," it becomes clear that he cannot be supporting Kenyon's view of God.

If we are not yet convinced that Hawthorne does not share Kenyon's ideal view of Providence, we need only look to the chapter in which Hilda's absence is discovered. Kenyon comforts himself with the idea that Hilda's "sanctity" is a "sufficient safeguard," that Providence would surely protect her from harm. A commentary on these reflections notes that "no doubt they were the religious truth." "Yet," continues the authorial voice, using the favorite of Hawthorne's undercutting words, "the ways of Providence are utterly inscrutable; and many a murder has been done, and many an innocent virgin has lifted her white arms, beseeching its aid in her extremity and all in vain; so that, though Providence is infinitely good and wise, (and perhaps for that very reason,) it may be half an eternity before the great circle of its scheme shall bring us the superabundant recompense for all these sorrows!" (p.413). Both the reference to Kenyon's reflections as "religious truth" and the use of heavenly measure of time--half an eternity--demonstrate the inefficacy of God's "Love-beam of care" when applied to the real world.

Ironically, in light of the narrator's comment, Hilda is protected and her protector may likely as not be God.

But if so, the chances are that it was a random "Love-beam" that was responsible. For when the sanctified Hilda had earlier called on God in her most extreme moment of need, she had "'groped for Him in the darkness, as it were, and found Him not, found nothing but a dreadful solitude'" (p.359).

Hawthorne uses Hilda's dilemma to reintroduce an idea which has inhabited his consciousness for almost a decade, namely the appeal of Catholicism. What strikes us as particularly significant is evidence of an inverse correlation between his waning faith and the growing attractiveness of Catholicism. It is almost as if he is seeking some mediating force to intervene between man and a not so kindly God, an idea recommended by an earlier reference in The Blithedale Romance. Coverdale comments: "I have always envied the Catholics their faith in that sweet, sacred Virgin Mother, who stands between them and the Deity, intercepting somewhat of His awful splendor" (pp.121-2). In The Marble Faun Hawthorne talks of "the attractions of a faith which so marvellously adapts itself to every human need" (pp.344-5) and finds especial comfort in the knowledge that the "divine auditors" at confession "had not always been divine, but kept within their heavenly memories, the tender humility of a human experience. Now, a Saint in Heaven,

but, once a man on earth!" (p.346).³⁹ Again, we find an indication of Hawthorne's painful recognition that the demands of the ideal, that is to say, the demands made by an unsympathetic God, leave man in an impossible position.

When Kenyon attempted to convey to Hilda the possibility that God, although for laudable reasons, was responsible for the evil in the world, the saintly maiden was shocked. His creed, she replied, was a mockery "'not only of all religious sentiment, but of moral law and...annuls and obliterates whatever precepts of Heaven are written deepest within us'" (p.435). It would be amusing to imagine Hilda's shock had she stepped off the pages of The Marble Faun and onto those of Septimus Felton. For in the former romance, although Hawthorne postulates a theory which shifts the blame for evil from man to God, he is still attempting to justify the ways of Providence. In Septimus Felton, by contrast, he is attempting to justify not God, but man's doubt in God's Providence.

In the first scene Rose asks Septimus if he finds fault with Providence, thus introducing the central question of the book. When she suggests that God gives such lovely things as the Spring day and even better ones in afterlife, Septimus can only reply: "'We hope so....But who

knows?" (p.234). Certainly not Septimus who sees, instead of the gifts of Providence, a universe in which the best of men, the English soldier, is "something that nature had held out in mockery, and then withdrawn" (p.260) or in which men "are the playthings and fools of Nature" (p.312).

On one level this unfinished romance is a study of the doubting mind, and although the dangers of assigning a character's stance to his author are obvious, the temptation to do so here is irresistible for a number of reasons. First of all, if we compare the dialectical structure of Septimus Felton with its use in The Marble Faun we discover a decided change. In the former work, the characters engaged in the dialogue were equally developed and our sympathies, though ultimately directed toward Miriam and Donatello, were at least allowed free play to consider the merits of thesis and antithesis. In the latter work, however, only Septimus is a fully realized character and his sparring partners, albeit they present opposing views, emerge more as sounding boards than as representatives of alternate possibilities. Their arguments are short and underdeveloped, usually nothing more than a question or brief statement, and almost always a truism of orthodox thought. Septimus' responses, on the other hand, are lengthy meditative speculations which provoke the reader's imagination. The minister, for

example, tells his pupil that "'doubts may occasionally press in; and it is so with every clergyman. But your prevailing mood will be faith.'" In reply, Septimus offers a comprehensive counter-argument: "'it is not the prevailing mood, the most common one, that is to be trusted. This is habit, formality, the shallow covering which we close over what is real, and suffer to be blown aside. But it is the snakelike doubt that thrusts out its head, which gives us a glimpse of reality. Surely such moments are a hundred times as real as the dull, quiet moments of faith or what you call such" (p.237). In addition, we not infrequently find confirmation of Septimus' point of view spoken in the authorial voice. In Study K, Hawthorne wrote:

It was, in short, a moment with Septimus such as many men have experienced, when something that they have deemed true and permanent, appearing suddenly questionable, the whole scenery of life shakes, jars, grows tremulous, almost disappears in a mangled and confused mass....

True; the scene soon settles itself again, and looks as substantial as before; but a haunting doubt is apt to keep close at hand, persecuting us forever with that troublesome query-- "Is it real? Am I sure of it? Did I not once behold it on the point of dissolving?"⁴⁰

Another factor which contributes to our temptation to apply a biographical reading to these expressions of doubt stems from a description of Septimus which so closely parallels descriptions of Hawthorne by his friends. The

narrator here classes Septimus among the kind of men vulnerable to assault by infidel ideas, "a misfortune frequently befalling speculative and imaginative and melancholic persons, like Septimus, whom the Devil is all the time planning to assault, because he feels confident of having a traitor in the garrison" (p.415). The close of this passage hints at the appropriateness for Hawthorne of an observation that Lawrence Thompson has made about Melville. "In The Age of Reason," Thompson writes, Paine had foreshadowed Melville's viewpoint, thus: 'But there are times when men have serious thoughts, and it is at such times, when they begin to think, that they begin to doubt the truth of the Christian religion; and well they may for it is too fanciful and too full of conjecture, inconsistency, improbability, and irrationality, to afford consolation to a thoughtful man. His reason revolts against his creed.'"⁴¹

That Hawthorne's mood during the composition of Septimus Felton was a troubled one seems indisputable. What I am proposing, obviously, is that the trouble was at least partly inspired by a loss of religious faith which had been deepening over the past two decades. A note in the second draft of the manuscript confirms the notion that his doubting had now gained control of his thoughts. "I

find myself dealing with problems and awful subjects," he writes, "which I but partly succeed in putting aside."⁴² In addition to the expression of these doubts as they appear in the direct references to Providence which this chapter discusses, there are two recurrent themes in Hawthorne's work that reinforce our perception of his deepening loss of faith: the Fall of man and the quest for earthly immortality.

II

On the question of the Fall, as on other themes that tend to reveal a weakening religious faith, Hawthorne's evasiveness provokes two contradictory schools of criticism, both of which fail to deal with change and thus portray the novelist as taking either a favorable or an antagonistic stand or as remaining consistently ambivalent. John T. Murphy maintains that "Sin in Hawthorne is synonymous with experience and experience is necessary to gain the loftier paradise."⁴³ Stein suggests that Hawthorne "calmly accepts the existence of evil and argues that it alone confers upon men the mantle of tragic dignity."⁴⁴ Henry Arlin Turner asserts that according to Hawthorne, "sin is not only the accompaniment of good, but that it is often the cause of good, and is essential for educating man and for subjugating

his sensual nature."⁴⁵ On the other side of the controversy stands Fick, one of the rigorous supporters of Hawthorne's continuing belief in a just and benevolent God, who argues against Turner, granting that whereas for Hawthorne "sin can, in the Providence of God, be the occasion' of good, it cannot be the cause of it."⁴⁶ Randall Stewart adopts the ambivalent posture. For him Hawthorne is dramatizing a view in which "the knowledge of evil may be good or bad, depending on its effects."⁴⁷

These seemingly irreconcilable readings are all partially valid. For they each present Hawthorne's vision at some particular stage in his career. But, as we shall see, none takes into account what happens to the vision over the course of thirty years.

"My Kinsman, Major Molineux"--with its hedging, its ambivalence, its recognition rather than commission of evil --is typical of the early parables of the Fall. Robin arrives in town, a shrewd naif, filled with the confidence in his own worth that is allowed only to Hawthorne's uninitiated. His shrewdness, an object of irony, is repeatedly shown to be a lack of the moral preparedness necessary to cope with a complex world. Robin himself actually commits no sin. His gradually developing awareness of the evil which inheres in the fallen world around him is clouded in

ambiguity. Although he is caught up in the contagious laughter, and eventually shouts the loudest, the only indication of his initiation into this fallen world is a pale cheek and dimmer eye. The gentleman assumes that Robin's initiation has prepared him for the complexities of life and that it will allow him to rise in the world. But the boy's own behavior offers no confirmation of this assumption. His last two speeches suggest, on the contrary, that he rejects the lesson. He begins "'to grow weary of town life'" (SI, p.641) and he twice asks to be shown to the ferry. Hawthorne remains non-committal. His reluctance to take a stand on the consequences of the Fall is underscored by his attempt to remove the apparent initiation from the realm of felt experience by first assigning to Robin's night in town the quality of nightmare and by later suggesting that the procession has been a dream.

The inconclusiveness with which the tale ends gives way to a series of stories which, although they invariably contain an awareness of shadows in the background, look upon the innocent state with great sympathy, perhaps longing. The young couple in "The Seven Vagabonds" see the world in its golden age untouched by weariness and sorrow. Here, innocence has a salutary effect on the fallen world. For "wherever they might appear in their pilgrimage of bliss,

Youth would echo back their gladness, care-stricken Maturity would rest a moment from its toil, and Age, tottering among the graves, would smile in withered joy for their sakes. The lonely cot, the narrow and gloomy street, the sombre shade, would catch a passing gleam like that now shining on ourselves, as these bright spirits wandered by" (TTT, pp.401-2).

"Little Annie's Ramble," while it advances the idea that innocence is a circumstance only of childhood, also pictures uncorrupted vision as shedding light and joy on the dark world. Sympathy for the Arcadian life continues in "The May-Pole of Merry Mount." Here, however, the emphasis shifts, falling now upon the impossibility of maintaining this state. Although the innocence of the maypole dancers softens the austere and rigid Endicott and tempts nature to join in with their merriment, the "wild philosophy of pleasure" is pictured as a daydream and the revelers as grotesque.

"The Lily's Quest" provides evidence of Hawthorne's sustained interest in the fate of innocence in a fallen world. Walter Gascoigne's shadow hovers over the young couple's attempts to build a pleasure palace and his implicit message is that there is no place on earth fit for the site of a pleasure house because all the earth has been

saddened by grief or soiled by crime. Only the hallowed grave can serve as an appropriate site, a sign that unqualified joy cannot be the permanent condition of life. That Gascoigne is portrayed as a madman might be construed as another instance of Hawthorne's evasiveness. But actually, the choice of a madman, in light of his other work indicates, rather, that Gascoigne speaks for his creator. Of Ellwood in "The Wedding Knell," we learn that "None, that beheld [Ellwood and his bride] could deny the terrible strength of the moral which his disordered intellect had contrived to draw" (TTT, pp.49-50). Gervayse Hastings, likewise designated mad, is the one who sees the truth about Lady Eleanore. And a significant passage in "The Artist of the Beautiful" eliminates any doubt concerning the substantive use of madness in Hawthorne's work. "The townspeople," he tells us

had one comprehensive explanation of all [of Warland's] singularities. Owen Warland had gone mad! How universally efficacious--how satisfying, too, and soothing to the injured sensibility of narrowness and dullness--is this easy method of accounting for whatever lies beyond the world's most ordinary scope! From St. Paul's days down to our poor little Artist of the Beautiful, the same talisman had been applied to the elucidation of all mysteries in the words or deeds of men who spoke or acted too wisely or too well" (MFOM, p.521).

With "The New Adam and Eve" we perceive Hawthorne's

growing wonderment as to whether or not pure innocence and joy might ever have existed. The narrator tells us that these conditions have been tainted from the start, that "there must have been shadows enough even amid the primal sunshine of their existence to suggest the thought of the soul's incongruity with its circumstances" (MFOM, p.301). And although Hawthorne returns to the fate of pure innocence in "The Snow Image" his stance remains unaltered. Our sympathies are directed toward the innocence of Mrs. Lindsey while we are simultaneously made aware, both through her ineffectuality in the confrontation with her husband and through her identification with the children, that the reality seen through unworldly eyes is not consistent with that of the pragmatic world.

Other speculations on the Fall during the period in which the tales were written concern those protagonists who, although they themselves commit no particular criminal act, acquire a knowledge of sin. Goodman Brown and Hooper, of course, provide the primary examples of this situation. The results in both instances are indeed ruinous. The former becomes "a stern, a sad, a darkly meditative, a distrustful, if not a desperate man" (MFOM, p.106). The latter lives out his life, fearful of his own image, lonely, isolated from all but the most sinful of his congregation. No moral

growth occurs in either. Brown gains no wisdom, no greater understanding of evil. Neither he nor Hooper comes to understand that evil is part of the condition of life, part of its complexity.

What we find, then, in the early contemplations of the Fall is a steadily developing conviction that innocence, attractive as it may be, is an impossible state of being in a fallen world and that the fall from innocence usually leads to a warped vision of the human condition. But the conviction held during the first two decades of Hawthorne's productive period does not extend itself to the questions addressed in the romances, questions concerning both the cause and the positive consequences of sin.

The criticism which proposes that Hawthorne is ambivalent about the consequences of sin can find its most categorical support in The Scarlet Letter, where a balance of growth and loss obtains for both Hester and Dimmesdale. On the one hand, they suffer a withering of natural life forces. The "light and graceful foliage" of Hester's character dries up: "there seemed to be no longer any thing in her face for Love to dwell upon" (p.163). Dimmesdale loses his physical energy, becomes emasculated. On the other hand, there develops in each a deeper kinship with sin and

suffering that leads to their increased service to their fellow men. Able Hester ministers to the physical suffering of the community. Dimmesdale, whose sin has lifted him from the class of merely saintly men to a preacher with "a tongue of flame," has gained the power of addressing the whole human brotherhood in "the heart's native language" and thus of ministering to the spiritual needs of the settlement.

Much of the criticism on this romance submits that alternate possibilities of the Fall are dramatized by contrasting the consequences of sin as they affect each of the two lovers. On one level this approach would appear to be valid. Hester is coerced by the externalization of her guilt into a perpetual consciousness of it whereas Dimmesdale, harboring his secret sin for seven years, has fallen into a kind of moral torpor in which he substitutes penance for penitence, rationalization for self knowledge. Consequently Hester's responses to her Fall--both positive and negative--are immediate while many of Dimmesdale's are delayed until the fateful decision in the forest inaugurates a new set of reactions. But ultimately we come to see that the gap between these responses is not substantive but only temporal, that the larger consequences are almost identical for each of the sinners. Each, for example, experiences a sense of freedom. Of Hester, Hawthorne writes:

She assumed a freedom of speculation...which our forefathers, had they known it, would have held to be a deadlier crime than that stigmatized by the scarlet letter....Thoughts visited her, such as dared to enter no other dwelling in New England; shadowy guests, that would have been as perilous as demons to their entertainer (p.164).

Or,

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....The tendency of her fate and fortunes had been to set her free (p.199).

And of Dimmesdale:

The decision once made, a glow of strange enjoyment threw its flickering brightness over the trouble of his breast. It was the exhilarating effect...of breathing the wild, free atmosphere of an unredeemed, unchristianized, lawless region (p.201).

Each gains the knowledge of human sin that customarily accompanies the Fall. Hester

felt or fancied, then, that the scarlet letter had endowed her with a new sense. She shuddered to believe, yet could not help believing, that it gave her a sympathetic knowledge of hidden sin in other hearts....Sometimes, the red infamy upon her breast would give a sympathetic throb, as she passed near a venerable minister or magistrate....Again, a mystic sisterhood would contumaciously assert itself, as she met the sanctified frown of some matron, who according to the rumor of all tongues, had kept cold snow within her bosom throughout life....Or, once more, the electric thrill would give her warning,--"Behold, Hester, there is a companion!" and, looking up, she would detect the eyes of a young maiden (pp.86-7).

Dimmesdale's burden

gave him sympathies so intimate with the sinful brotherhood of mankind; so that his heart vibrated in unison with theirs, and received their pain into itself, and sent its own throb of pain through a thousand other hearts, in gushes of sad, persuasive eloquence (p.142).

His passage through town after the forest meeting is almost a re-enactment of Hester's earlier experiences. He discovers a bond of sin in the most pious and virginal of his parishioners, in the "hoary-bearded deacon" of "venerable age" and "upright and holy character," in a "pious and exemplary old dame," in a "young girl fair and pure as a lily" (pp.218-9).

Throughout the romance the good and evil consequences of the Fall have been held in tenuous balance. The closing chapters reiterate this ambivalence. Hester's Fall, the narrator tells us, "had made her strong, but taught her much amiss" (p.200). Dimmesdale's had made him a wiser man, "with a knowledge of hidden mysteries which the simplicity of the former [man] never could have reached. A bitter kind of knowledge that!" (p.223). What we are left with is the sense that although the Fall and its consequences have for the first time been treated in great detail, probed from many angles, Hawthorne's attitude remains inconclusive.

Despite a profusion of Edenic imagery and a fallen

garden setting--much of which seems superfluous and un-
 portive of the major themes in the book--The House of Seven
Gables does not really offer any significant revelation of
 a change in vision. This ostensibly genial romance for the
 most part retreats into areas of speculation which had
 interested Hawthorne in the tales: the study of the effects
 of sorrow and the impossibility of sustaining an innocent
 state. References to the consequences of sorrow, however,
 offer a consistently positive conception of the Fall and
 thus serve to foreshadow the vision which will dominate The
Marble Faun. Hepzibah has "been enriched by poverty, devel-
 oped by sorrow, elevated by the strong and solitary affec-
 tion of her life, and thus endowed with heroism, which never
 could have characterized her in what are called happier cir-
 cumstances" (p.133).

Phoebe's moral growth is also attributed to her
 acquaintanceship with sorrow and we suffer no doubt that
 the good outweigh the evil consequences. Though the change
 was "partly to be regretted," "whatever charm it infringed
 upon was repaired by another, perhaps more precious. She
 was not so constantly gay, but had her moods of thought,
 which Clifford on the whole, liked better than her former
 phase of unmingled cheerfulness; because now she understood
 him better....She was less girlish, but more a woman!"

(p.175). Phoebe herself comes to recognize the change and when she reveals her observation to Holgrave, we do not, in light of earlier authorial comment, hesitate to identify the daguerrotypist's view with the author's: "You have lost nothing, Phoebe, worth keeping, nor which it was possible to keep" (p.215).

The decade that elapses between The House of Seven Gables and The Marble Faun both increases Hawthorne's convictions about the educative value of human sin and extends his speculations to include the cosmic level of responsibility for the continued re-enactment of the Fall. Although the structure of the latter novel is dialectical, little doubt can remain concerning Hawthorne's final resolution. The Fall is fortunate.

The world of The Marble Faun is a decidedly fallen one. And we are not permitted to forget that it is in a fallen world that the human drama must be worked out. In almost every chapter we discover references to the "evil scents of Rome" (p.53), "the corrupted atmosphere of the city" (p.54), "thousands of evil smells" (p.110), "wretched cottages" and "dreary farmhouses" (p.295). The streets through which Hilda passes in order to deliver the packet contain "a confusion of black and hideous houses, piled massively out of

the ruins of former ages....Dirt was everywhere, strewing the narrow streets, and incrusting the tall shabbiness of the edifices...it lay upon the thresholds, and looked out of the windows, and assumed the guise of human life in the children, that seemed to be engendered out of it." That the father of these children "was the Sun, and their mother--a heap of Roman mud!" (p.388), provides a horrifying contrast with the glimpses we get of an edenic world no longer extant. Repeatedly, throughout the romance, we are reminded of the change. As Miriam tells Donatello, "'The world is sadly changed, now-a-days; grievously changed, poor Donatello, since those happy times when your race used to dwell in the Arcadian woods'" (p.42). Kenyon later picks up the lament--"'the world is sadder now'" (p.288) and sighs "'to think how the once genial earth produces, in every successive generation, fewer flowers than used to gladden the preceding ones....Mankind are getting so far beyond the childhood of their race, that they scorn to be happy any longer. A simple and joyous character can find no place for itself among the sage and sombre figures that would put his unsophisticated cheerfulness to shame. The entire system of Man's affairs, as at present established, is built up purposely to exclude the careless and happy soul'" (pp.238-9). Eden, we are told, is no longer available to man; it has

been removed "beyond the scope of man's actual possessions" (p.73).

The use of a fallen world as setting for a tale about the move from innocence to experience serves two purposes. First of all, by juxtaposing descriptive passages of corrupt Rome with those of Arcadian life, Hawthorne is able to reinforce his dialectical structure. Secondly, and more important, placing sinful man in this setting supports the idea that initiation in the modern world is not a matter of free choice but rather an inevitable submission to forces beyond man's control.

The discussion of the mythic faun in the opening pages signifies a kind of pleasing nostalgia for the idea of innocence. The prelapsarian Adamic being represented by the statue would be true and honest and suffer no throbs of "conscience, no remorse, no burthen on the heart, no troublesom recollections of any sort; no dark future neither!" (pp.13-4). But even here the deficiencies of both intellect and heart, referred to later in the book, are hinted at. The faun's innocence stems from a lack of moral principle and the intelligence which is concomitant with this principle of virtue. The innocent being, moreover, cannot be heroic. And, as Miriam tells Donatello shortly after this discussion, the inability to suffer deeply carries with it

a commensurate inability to enjoy deeply.

Similar deficiencies, although seldom sketched in detail, have been implied in earlier treatments of innocence. What is startlingly new here is the notion that innocence may harbor the seeds of evil. Hilda's innocence has bred a selfish and cruel righteousness which, despite criticism to the contrary, decidedly does not attract Hawthorne's sympathy. Hyatt Waggoner perceives a conflict in Hawthorne's thinking. "If Miriam's view of life is closer to Hawthorne's own than is Hilda's," he notes, "Hawthorne admired Hilda more and wished he might more fully share her unquestioning faith."⁴⁸ The conclusion Waggoner draws appears to me to be unjustified by the evidence offered in the romance. Granted, Hawthorne wished he might share Hilda's unquestioning faith. But like other nineteenth-century American novelists who also would have wished away their doubts, Melville and Twain to name two of the more obvious cases, he did not. And the incisive irony directed at Hilda hardly suggests a wistful identification with her. More likely he was attempting to justify to himself the most explicit of his literary denunciations of Providence by showing the pitfalls of the state of innocence which she embodies. Again we can compare him to the two earlier mentioned novelists. Melville wrote to him: "Try to get a

living by the Truth--and go to the Soup Societies."⁴⁹ Twain went so far as to ban publication of his more irreverent writings. Hawthorne, writing to Fields shortly after publication of The Marble Faun, complains: "What a terrible thing it is to try to let off a little bit of truth into this miserable humbug of a world!"⁵⁰

And thus while he appears to sympathize with Hilda and her view, he persistently undercuts his sympathetic projection. The repeated use of such words as "pure," "innocent," "delicate," takes on a sinister quality. The diabolical undertone which D. H. Lawrence finds in The Scarlet Letter is equally present in the portrayal of Hilda. She is more truly represented by the marble and snow imagery which is slyly injected into her characterization. When Miriam calls to her in her moment of greatest need, she disappears "from behind the snowy curtain" (p.177, italics mine). Hawthorne, of course, prefaces this telling image with his ever increasing use of evasive devices by informing us that he does not know "whether Hilda heard and recognized the voice" (p.177). But the coldness of snow has been suggested. And it is repeated in Kenyon's statue of Maidenhood, a "tribute" to Hilda, where the pure maiden is gathering a Snow-Drop; and in the title of the chapter on Hilda: "Snow Drops and Maidenly Delights." And, how ironically appropriate--

especially when we recall the use of marble imagery applied to the Unpardonable Sinner, Ethan Brand, and the man of adamant--is Kenyon's innocent exclamation when he uncovers the Venus de Medici: "'I seek for Hilda, and find a marble woman!'" (p.423).

The connection between innocence and cruel severity is reiterated again and again and always by those closest to Hilda. Kenyon tells her: "'I always felt you, my dear friend, a terribly severe judge, and have been perplexed to conceive how such a tender sympathy could coexist with the remorselessness of a steel blade. You need no mercy, and therefore know not how to show any'" (p.384). Perplexed indeed! No wonder Kenyon is perplexed! Nowhere in the story does Hilda actually demonstrate any tender sympathy for anyone but herself. Her deepest concern is that her purity will be stained, "her own spotlessness impugned" (p.329). It is she, not the narrator or one of the other characters, who uses words such as "poor," "lonely," "weak," to describe herself. Her self pity emerges even more strongly in the confession scene where she expresses neither compassion for Miriam or Donatello, nor outrage at a fallen world which created the circumstances of the crime, but only sympathy for the poor, weak girl (who is herself), and relief over the fact that "her bosom was as pure now as in her childhood"

(p.358). Miriam's denunciation of Hilda's lack of sympathy, which includes a distinction between appearance and reality, is more accurate than was Kenyon's. Echoing his steel blade metaphor, she exclaims, "'Oh, Hilda, your innocence is like a sharp steel sword....Your judgments are often terribly severe, though you seem all made up of gentleness and mercy'" (p.66).

Hilda is, moreover, one of Hawthorne's idealists. But unlike the Faust figures discussed earlier, she lacks any of their heroic qualities. She does not, as do Aylmer or even Hollingsworth and Ethan Brand, attempt to improve the lot of man by usurping the power that belongs to God. What she does share with these idealists is the function of illuminating the wide gap between the real and ideal as well as the coldness, the lack of human feeling, that characterizes them. So apt an analogy does Hollingsworth provide for her behavior that we might easily envision Hilda, had she even his limited self knowledge, mouthing one of his speeches. Coverdale has just mentioned Hollingsworth's tenderness and the reformer answers: "'You call me tender!.... I should rather say, that the most marked trait in my character is an inflexible severity of purpose. Mortal man has no right to be so inflexible, as it is my nature and necessity to be!'" (BR, p.43).

Hawthorne was well aware of the need to preserve the distinction between these two levels of human thought. In writing on Dr. Johnson's *Uttoxeter*, he comments: "A sensible man had better not let himself be betrayed into...attempts to realize the things which he has dreamed about, and which, when they cease to be purely ideal in his mind, will have lost the truest of their truth, the loftiest and profoundest part of their power over his sympathies" (OOH, p.135). His fiction demonstrates a similar disposition. Often the failure to recognize the distinction between the real and the ideal is treated comically, enveloped in Hawthorne's marvelous sense of the ludicrous. At times, however, especially when the incongruity falls between religious orthodoxy and the realities of earthly life, his irony takes on a bitter flavor and closely resembles Melville's dramatization of protagonists who court disaster by trying to live according to religious truth rather than commonplace reality. Catherine, in "The Gentle Boy," is representative of this group. Out of an ideal conception of duty to God, she fails her earthly responsibility and, as the narrator tells us, she "violated the duties of the present life and the future, by fixing her attention wholly on the latter" (TTT, p.104). Father Ephraim, in "The Shaker Bridal," shares her guilt. He exalts spiritual love at the expense of earthly affection.

Hilda partakes of the same guilt. Miriam expresses what we must in the light of these almost identical instances of misdirected idealism take to be Hawthorne's point of view: "I have always said, Hilda, that you were merciless....You have no sin, nor any conception of what it is; and therefore you are so terribly severe! As an angel, you are not amiss, but, as a human creature, and a woman among earthly men and women, you need a sin to soften you!" (p.209). Even Kenyon, whose love constrains him to retreat into an orthodox position which his experience contradicts, recognizes the gap between Hilda's abstract moral stance and the realities furnished by life. When she idealistically asserts that there is "only one right and one wrong," he answers: "Alas, for poor human nature, then!" and smiles at Hilda's "unworldly and impracticable theory" (p.384).

This exchange on the moral question offers a delightful instance of Hawthorne's subtle use of undercutting in exposing the absurdity of Hilda's position. After her statement on right and wrong, she goes on to say: "I do not understand (and may God keep me from ever understanding) how two things so totally unlike can be mistaken for one another" (p.384). What Hilda essentially is saying is "Dear God, please keep me blind to reality." This is her attitude to reality throughout the novel. It "perplexes" her; she does

not like to think about it. Even her original paintings reflect this predilection. They are "scenes delicately imagined, lacking, perhaps, the reality which comes only from a close acquaintance with life" (p.55).

Hilda's relation to reality provides still another indication of the coldness of heart with which Hawthorne endows her. As we recall from earlier tales and romances, one of the consequences of an inability to love is a loss of the sense of reality.⁵¹ Though Hilda ultimately succumbs to Kenyon's attempts to convert her from friend to wife, her desire through most of the book to remain romantically unattached seems somewhat unnatural. If, however, we can take a statement of Hawthorne's made over two decades earlier as still representative of his view on the subject, we may have an explanation which the book itself does not explicitly offer. In "The May-Pole of Merry Mount," he had said of the Lord and Lady of the May-Pole that "From the moment that they truly loved, they had subjected themselves to earth's doom of care and sorrow and troubled joy" (III, p.75). Love, then, demands knowledge of evil; and Hilda's refusal of this knowledge may well explain her reluctance or inability to love.

Another aspect of the critical stance which predominates

in discussions of The Marble Faun appears to me to need re-examination, for it is crucial to reaching any conclusion concerning Hawthorne's position. A common observation holds that Hilda and Kenyon also represent modes or responses to the recognition of sin and thus embody the question of the Fortunate Fall. Certainly, this is a valid reading, as is Randall Stewart's suggestion that the experience has "broadened and deepened the sympathies of Kenyon."⁵² For Kenyon moves from a state where, as Miriam tells him, he is "'as cold and pitiless as his own marble'" (p.129) to acceptance, again voiced by Miriam, of the idea that the battle against evil is not child's play. Where he earlier repulses her confidences, he later seeks out Donatello's in the belief that it will ease the sinner's soul to unburden himself--a sharp contrast to Hilda's attention only to her own soul. He, furthermore, willingly involves himself in the lives of the sinful couple without heed for the effects on his own purity. Kenyon's recognition and exposure to evil, then, does result in moral growth, in broadened sympathy for the human condition.

It still remains difficult, however, to agree with Waggoner's assertion that "Kenyon is much more a spokesman for Hawthorne than is Miriam, and Kenyon too rejects the implications of his own and Miriam's question."⁵³ We cannot

disagree with Waggoner that in terms of surface action, Kenyon does, in fact, reject Miriam's proposition. But under what conditions? How tempting to apply the old Love-Conquers-All adage to the idea that it conquers moral insight. Kenyon has just "shocked" his beloved "beyond words," hardly the way to install himself permanently in her affections. If the disparity between his growth up to this point and his acquiescence to Hilda's view does not suggest that there may be something more than surface action here--perhaps that diabolical undertone--then surely the following lines do. For what a mockery they make of the forthcoming union. Kenyon, who has recognized that Hilda is an "'ethereal type,'" that is to say, "'incompatible with any shadow of darkness or evil'" (p.128), and has himself grown from a marble featured man with an "ideal forehead," to an earthly being, is marrying not a woman but an ideal being, one who is "coming down from her old tower to be herself enshrined and worshipped as a household Saint, in the light of her husband's fireside" (p.461).

Nor is it easy to agree with Stewart when he proposes that the experience "has enlightened and softened Hilda"⁵⁴ or with Stubb's comment that "after a time Hilda is able to move out of her isolation toward an affirmation of the human condition."⁵⁵ Certainly the description, just discussed, of

Hilda coming down to be "enshrined and worshipped," is hardly indicative that she moves "toward an affirmation of the human condition," or indeed that she plans to become part of it. What has apparently led critics to this questionable conclusion are those passages in which Hilda takes a little step down from her pedestal to ask herself "whether there were not other questions to be considered, aside from that single one of Miriam's guilt or innocence" (p.385) and to admit that she failed her friend. But on the very next page, she retreats. Her next thought confirms the status quo. She and Miriam "are separated forever." Hilda obviously has no intention of reversing her actions. No real change has occurred. On the contrary, the description that immediately follows is that of the old virginal maiden. "With respect to whatever was evil, foul, and ugly, in this populous and corrupt city, she had trodden as if invisible, and not only so, but blind. She was altogether unconscious of anything wicked that went along the same pathway" (p.387). Hawthorne concludes the passage with what we are inclined to read as a silent chuckle: "Thus it is, that, bad as the world is said to have grown, Innocence continues to make a Paradise around itself, and keep it still unfallen" (p.387). The unspoken question is at what price to herself and others has Hilda managed what Hawthorne has consistently demonstrated

to be impossible.

What I have been attempting to do in this somewhat digressive discussion of Hilda is to prove that having erected a dialectical structure in which he dramatizes conflicting attitudes toward the good and evil consequences of a fall from innocence, Hawthorne rejects the point of view embodied in Hilda and supports that proffered by Miriam at the end of the book. His position seems clear throughout. There is in this work a primitivistic strain that laments the condition under which human beings born for happiness are thwarted by the destructive nature of modern existence. But recognizing this as an implacable truth, he underwrites the Fall as fortunate and considers sin as a source of good, as a spur to moral awareness and growth. And, finally, he carries his conviction to a conception of the causes of this aspect of the human condition, concluding that not man but Providence bears the responsibility for it.

Ambivalence toward the good or evil consequences of the Fall has been replaced here by an affirmative posture. The sinner, of course, pays a price: there is a separation from nature; there is a loss of simple joy; there is much suffering. But the gains, Hawthorne submits, are well worth the losses. And even the losses are converted into something

higher: pleasure, "darkened with those shadows that bring it into high relief," is transformed into "Happiness" (p.84).

Hawthorne expresses his conviction with such explicitness and frequency, through both the narrator and Kenyon, that the critical debate over the issue is perplexing. The narrator says of Donatello that the young man's experience "had kindled him into a man; it had developed within him an intelligence which was no native characteristic of the Donatello whom we have heretofore known" (p.172). When Donatello calls out to Miriam in Perugia, the narrator notes that "that tone, too, bespoke an altered and deepened character; it told of a vivified intellect, and of spiritual instruction that had come through sorrow and remorse; so that--instead of the wild boy, the thing of sportive, animal nature, the sylvan Faun--here was not the man of feeling and intelligence" (p.320). He projects Donatello's experience to include all mankind, by suggesting that "Adam saw [Eden] in a brighter sunshine, but never knew the shade of pensive beauty which Eden won from his expulsion" (p.276).

Kenyon echoes these sentiments. He talks of darkness "'into which all men must descend, if they would know anything beneath the surface and illusive pleasures of existence.'" He goes on to propose that when these men "'emerge, though dazzled and blinded by the first glare of daylight,

they take a truer and sadder view of life, forever afterwards'" (p.262). And he tells Donatello: "'it was needful for you to pass through that dark valley'" (p.273). Not only do Kenyon's observations show the Fall to be necessary, but beneficial to the soul. Donatello, he recognizes, now shows "a far deeper sense, and an intelligence that begins to deal with high subjects...a more definite and nobler individuality" (p.262). After Kenyon has been with him at Monte Beni for some time, he sums up his perceptions for Miriam: "'A wonderful process is going forward in Donatello's mind....The germs of faculties, that have heretofore slept, are fast springing into activity. The world of thought is disclosing itself to his inward sight. He startles me, at times, with his perception of deep truths'" (p.282). Donatello may be "'bewildered with the revelations that each day brings,'" but "'out of his bitter agony, a soul and intellect...have been inspired into him'" (p.282).

When it comes to assigning the responsibility for sin to Providence, Hawthorne's courage appears to fail him somewhat. But the subterfuge is at times so transparent that we are tempted to apply to the author Kenyon's comment on Donatello: "'he compels me to smile by the intermixture of his former simplicity with a new intelligence'" (p.282). Miriam's argument begins with two questions: "'Was the crime

--in which he and I were wedded--was it a blessing in that strange disguise? Was it a means of education, bringing a simple and imperfect nature to a point of feeling and intelligence, which it could have reached under no other discipline?" (p.435). For the previous two hundred pages Hawthorne has had Kenyon articulate descriptions of Donatello's growth which are essentially composed of observations identical to Miriam's. Each of his comments confirms the educative value of sin. Why, then, the fearfully violent reaction to Miriam's iteration?

When, moreover, Miriam extends her observations to include all mankind--

"The story of the Fall of Man! Is it not repeated in our Romance of Monte Beni? And may we follow the analogy yet farther? Was that very sin--into which Adam precipitated himself and all his race--was it the destined means by which, over a long pathway of toil and sorrow, we are to attain a higher, brighter, and profounder happiness, than our lost birthright gave?" (p.435).

--Kenyon again overreacts, referring to her idea as "'too dangerous.'" But isn't this exactly what Hawthorne has his narrator do in an earlier quoted passage?⁵⁶ Miriam's proposal that this idea will "'account for the permitted existence of sin, as no other theory can'" (p.435), meets with the same horrified response. Yet, neither Kenyon nor the narrator attempts any countering explanation. Even when

Hawthorne has Miriam back down a step, offering as an alternative that man himself makes the choice in favor of sin, and thus he, rather than God, is initially responsible, even here, where "'Omniscience and Omnipotence'" are given credit for turning man's sinful nature to good ends so that "'whereas our dark Enemy sought to destroy us by it, it has really become an instrument most effective in the education of the intellect and soul,'" (p.435), Hawthorne attacks the proposition by having his narrator assert that Kenyon "rightly felt" these meditations "to be so perilous" (p.435). But, when we recall that the narrator himself has expressed, with just a little twist, the very sentiment proffered by Miriam, we must question the sincerity of his reaction. Speaking of Hilda, the narrator has told us that "the young and pure are not apt to find out that miserable truth, until it is brought home to them by some guiltiness of some trusted friend....some mortal, whom they reverence too highly is commissioned by Providence to teach them this direful lesson" (p.204, italics mine).

With all the evasiveness, the backing down, the subterfuge, what we sense at the end of The Marble Faun is that Hawthorne's religious doubts, his loss of faith, have increased steadily over the past decade. What he appears to be doing in this romance is offering a justification for the

universality of human sin as well as a justification for his own loss of faith. In The Scarlet Letter the descriptions of Hester, reinforced by direct narrative statement, posit the idea that "loss of faith is ever one of the saddest results of sin" (p.87). The Marble Faun proposes that the Fall is a necessary stage in the maturation of the soul. If these two propositions are taken together, we arrive at the conclusion that loss of faith is inevitable in all those who have been elevated above Arcadian simplicity. And Hawthorne is not exempt.

III

Hubert Hoeltje has written that "Inextricably interwoven with his faith in Providence was Hawthorne's faith in the immortality of man....The sense of man's and earth's incompleteness which tantalizingly permeated Hawthorne's thoughts from boyhood through manhood was to him assurance that man must elsewhere find what earth can only suggest."⁵⁷ Hoeltje's observation contains several partial truths. Hawthorne's belief in heavenly immortality is interwoven with his belief in Providence and his dissatisfaction with earthly existence does lead him to conclude that "All the

misery we endure here constitutes a claim for another life; --and, still more all the happiness, because all true happiness involves something more than the earth owns, and something more than a mortal capacity for the enjoyment of it" (EN, p.101).

But the picture is substantially more complex than Hoeltje's statement would indicate. The interdependency of a belief in heavenly immortality and a belief in Providence is both positive and negative, for as Hawthorne's faith in the latter wanes, his belief in the former splits off in two directions. At first, the frequency and gratuitousness of references to heavenly immortality hint at a state of uncertainty, an attempt to convince himself that the future does indeed offer eternal bliss. At times, as in the anxiously assertive tone of the quotation from the English Notebooks, his references to immortality suggest that he is seeking to explain away doubts which have begun to plague him concerning a benevolent and caring God. Later, however, he appears to have given up on the idea of heavenly immortality as a viable explanation for the earthly suffering allowed by Providence and he turns his attention to the possibilities of earthly immortality, moving away from the total rejection of this idea expressed in the 1830s and 1840s and toward, if not affirmation, at least a serious consideration.

Speaking of Hawthorne twelve years before his marriage, Julian says his father was then beginning to evolve his two great themes. One was the Unpardonable Sin; "the other was the conception of the Deathless Man."⁵⁸ Julian is, of course, correct. But even more obsessive and obviously interrelated with Hawthorne's interest in the "Deathless Man" is his concern with death itself. Well over half of the early tales and sketches portray the death of one or more characters, and a random glance at the notebook entries for the 1830s and 1840s reveals at least one reference to death, funerals, graves, or tombstones on almost every page. Most of these references present death as a frightening and unworthy end for man. In "The Haunted Mind," the idea of death is "hideous," evoking, as it does, a picture of "how the dead are lying in their cold shrouds and narrow coffins, through the drear winter of the grave" (TTT, p.345). In "Fragments from the Journal of a Solitary Man," the narrator speaks of the "terrible necessity imposed on mortals to grow old, or die" (SK, p.27). Occasionally, in moods of heavy despondency, death becomes a welcome escape or a release from troubles (AN, pp.102,107).

Although Hawthorne could at this time envision, with chilling horror, the spectacle of dead bodies in their cold graves--or perhaps because he could do so--his attitude

toward the fate of the spirit at death was optimistic. In the biographical sketch on Thomas Green Fessenden, he offers a clear distinction between our corporeal and spiritual destinies, remarking of Fessenden's death: "Dark would have been the hour, if when we closed the door of the tomb upon his perishing mortality, we had believed that our friend was there" (SK, p.263). Heaven, moreover, is not only a reality but promises the paradise unattainable on earth. Adam, in "The Lily's Quest," learns that there is no place on earth for a pleasure house; the only pleasure comes after death: eternal pleasure.

The question of earthly immortality appears intermittently during the two early decades. Until 1842, Hawthorne's stance is invariably negative. "Dr. Heidigger's Experiment" demonstrates that men given a second chance at earthly life would behave no better than they did the first time. The narrator of "A Virtuoso's Collection," furthermore, turns down the elixir on the grounds that an extended earthly existence would leave the spirit "choked by the material, the sensual" (MFOM, p.551). But, then, in a notebook entry of June 1, 1842, we find Hawthorne toying with the idea of "the advantages of a longer life than is allotted to mortals --the many things that might be accomplished;--to which one life-time is inadequate" (AN, p.100), an idea which is to

gain steadily in conviction through Septimus Felton. And while the attractions of earthly immortality become a greater reality for him, the promise of heavenly immortality correspondingly fades. When Hester asks Dimmesdale, "Shall we not meet again?...Shall we not spend our immortal life together?" (SL, p.256) he cannot answer with any confidence.

The confidence which characterized earlier references to immortality and displayed a concomitantly strong religious faith continued to fade. Hawthorne's own advancing age, no doubt, contributed to his fears. Almost every letter to Fields during the last six years of the novelist's life mentions white hair, weariness, grandfatherliness. The concern appears somewhat obsessive for a man only in his late fifties. So does the frequency with which he refers to the question of a future life in The English Notebooks, a journal devoted to relating incidents of daily life and describing sights and scenes. An agonized strain now creeps into shaky assertions of sustained faith. Whereas earlier expressions of horror at the state of the human corpse were softened by a belief that the soul was not housed in the cold grave, those of the 1850s and 1860s are cries for assurance that a better state exists after death. Commenting on the unpleasantness of dead bodies, Hawthorne now remarks that it would be helpful "towards our faith in

a blessed futurity, if the dying could disappear like vanishing bubbles, leaving, perhaps, a sweet fragrance diffused for a minute or two throughout the death chamber. This would be the odor of sanctity!" (EN, p.194). An even more revealing instance of his increasing doubts, one that links belief in immortality with religious faith in general, materializes in The Marble Faun. "The cemetery of the Capuchins," Hawthorne's narrator notes,

is no place to nourish celestial hopes; the soul sinks, forlorn and wretched, under all this burthen of dusty death; the holy earth from Jerusalem, so imbued is it with mortality, has grown as barren of flowers of Paradise as it is of earthly weeds and grass. Thank Heaven for its blue sky: it needs a long upward gaze, to give us back our faith! Not here can we feel ourselves immortal, where the very altars, in these chapels of horrible consecration are heaps of human bones! (p.194).

Several years later a similar revulsion will prompt Septimus Felton to the pursuit of an elixir for continuing life. Looking at the young English soldier he has just slain, Septimus thinks it dreadful to have reduced "this gay, animated beautiful being to a lump of dead flesh for the flies to settle upon, and which in a few hours would begin to decay; which must be put forwith into the earth, lest it should be a horror to men's eyes....Had he been gifted with permanence on earth, there could not have been a more admirable creature than this young man; but as fate had turned out, he was a mere grub, an illusion, something that

nature had held out in mockery, and then withdrawn" (p.260).

It is indeed difficult to share the views of those critics who see Hawthorne sustaining a quiet affirmation to the end of his life, when we come across the passage in Our Old Home describing slum children in Liverpool. I quote it at length because it offers one of the most straightforward expressions of doubt found in the works Hawthorne saw through to publication:

It might almost make a man doubt the existence of his own soul, to observe how Nature has flung these little wretches into the street and left them there, so evidently regarding them as nothing worth, and how all mankind acquiesce in the great mother's estimate of her off-spring. For, if they are to have no immortality, what superior claim can I assert for mine? And how difficult to believe that anything so precious as a germ of immortal growth can have been buried under this dirt-heap, plunged into this cess-pool of misery and vice! As often as I beheld the scene, it affected me with surprise and loathsome interest, much resembling, though in a far intenser degree, the feeling with which when a boy, I used to turn over a plank or an old log that had lain on the damp ground, and found a vivacious multitude of unclean and devilish looking insects scampering to-and-fro beneath it. Without an infinite faith, there seemed as much prospect of a blessed futurity for those hideous bugs and many footed worms as for these brethren of our humanity and co-heirs of all our heavenly inheritance.⁵⁹ Ah, what a mystery! Slowly, slowly, as after groping at the bottom of a deep, noisome, stagnant pool, my hope struggles upward to the surface, bearing the half-drowned body of a child along with it, and heaving it aloft for its life, and my own life, and all our lives. Unless these slime-clogged nostrils can be made capable of inhaling celestial air, I know not how the purest and most intellectual of us can reasonably expect

ever to taste a breath of it. The whole question of eternity is staked here. If a single one of those helpless little ones be lost, the world is lost (p.281).

More than one, we must assume--nor could Hawthorne help holding the same assumption--was lost.

Certainly Hawthorne's allusions to immortality during the years preceding this piece do not indicate the "infinite faith" which the passage describes as necessary for a continued belief in futurity. He is here, at least, at the breaking point in his long struggle to sustain his faith. By the time of Ticknor's death, shortly before his own, he has obviously passed this point. What anguish must have stood behind his last painful pleas for assurance: "Why does Nature treat us like children! I think we could bear all if we knew our fate; at least it would not make much difference to me now what became of me."⁶⁰

Equally difficult to support, in fact almost comprehensible, are those readings of Septimus Felton which take a unilateral view of Hawthorne's attitude toward earthly immortality. Hubert Hoeltje writes of the romance that "Nowhere has Hawthorne, again and again, more persuasively or more beautifully expressed his conviction of the necessity and the blessing of death."⁶¹ Edward Davidson supports this reading, maintaining that the failure of the unfinished

romances stems from Hawthorne's lack of "sympathy with Septimus' infatuation with elixirs of life."⁶² Davidson's assertion is especially puzzling since it is in his excellent editing of the original studies for the romance that we find explicit statements of Hawthorne's intention for the book, statements which are unmistakably confirmed by the final text. The intention is clearly an expression of ambivalence. In one of the later studies, for example, "Hawthorne suggests that the search for the elixir is to debase Septimus, deprive him of affection and sympathy 'at the same time that his intellect has acquired wonderful force and expression.'"⁶³ The final published draft is itself dialectically structured, presenting opposing views on the desirability of earthly immortality. And in light of the direction in which Hawthorne's mind has been moving for the decade prior to its writing, how much more likely it is that the failure of the romance stems not from his lack of sympathy for Septimus' aims but rather from a decided sympathy which his desire not to offend either Sophia or his public--remember his complaint uttered at this time about the difficulty of trying "to let off a little bit of truth"--with an obvious condemnation of Providence, would constrain him to suppress.

The ambivalence in both the studies and the final version is pervasive. If, in Study G he notes that "It shall

be observed that the requisitions of the scheme for prolonging life deprive a man of the glow and gush of life, of generous impulses, of youth, and all that makes life desirable,"⁶⁴ in Study D he reminds himself to "express strongly the idea that the shortness &c of life shows that human action is a humbug."⁶⁵ Here we have the essence of Hawthorne's argument in favor of earthly immortality. The theme is introduced in one of the typical discussions of the book's dialectical structure. Robert Hagburn and Rose represent the common sense point of view, Septimus the unorthodox. Though the former are ostensibly meant to be attractive, we cannot help noticing that Robert has a bit much of the country bumpkin in him and that Rose materializes as too simple and good a portrait of the country maiden. Septimus, significantly, has chosen to devote himself to the ministry and this choice of profession for the young Faust figure foreshadows the subtle but persistent allusions to the search for earthly immortality as expressions of a dissatisfaction with Providence. In Scenario J, Hawthorne had written: "God wants short lives, because such carry on his purpose inevitably and involuntarily; while longer ones would thwart and interfere with his purpose, by carrying their own."⁶⁶ In the published version, the point is made again. Rose asks if Septimus finds fault with Providence. Although he refrains from admitting directly

that he does, we cannot but conjecture an affirmative answer in light of the next exchange. Here, in response to Rose's expression of faith in God's benevolence, both in this life and the next, Septimus says: "'All the certainty that can be had lies on the surface....If we try to grope deeper, we labor for naught, and get less wise while we try to be more so. If life were long enough to enable us thoroughly to sift these matters, then, indeed!--but it is so short!'" (p.233). His complaint concerning the shortness of life appears repeatedly. He wants to live "'forever!'" and considers eternity "'none too long for all I wish to know'" (p.234). He doubts whether, if the choice had been proffered, he "'would have taken existence on such terms; so much trouble of preparation to live, and then no life at all; a ponderous beginning, and nothing more'" (p.233). He laments that the rich world is thrown away on us because we live such a little time in it and that the grave never waits for us to accomplish anything.

That Septimus serves here as his author's spokesman is corroborated by both the notebooks and letters. "God himself cannot compensate us for being born, in any period short of eternity," Hawthorne writes in the English Notebooks (p.100). Additional confirmation of this sentiment appears in a letter to Ticknor: "We have not time, in

our earthly existence, to appreciate what is warm with life."⁶⁷

But this, of course, is just one side of the dialectical picture. Interspersed with all the support for earthly immortality are dramatic renderings of its pitfalls, arguments proffered both by other characters and by Septimus himself. The search for the elixir does promise to debase Septimus by "depriving him of affection and sympathy." As the rules catalogued in the Document illustrate, the price of earthly immortality is a deadened heart. Hate, love, all emotion must be suppressed; imperfect or sick people must be shunned; great poets must be avoided because they tend to stir up the heart. All desire, in fact, must be modulated; even the desire for life itself cannot be too fervent. At times Septimus envies Robert's enthusiastic love for Rose and fears that his own heart is gradually drying up.

Arguments in favor of and against earthly immortality persistently counteract each other. When Sibyl Darcy says: "'What a kindness of Providence, that life is made so uncertain; that death is thrown in among the possibilities of our being; that these awful mysteries are thrown around us, into which we may vanish! For, without it, how would it be possible to be heroic'" (p.323), Septimus answers that to him the grave is not a blessing but a pitfall which turns life

into "'a jest and a farce'" (p.324). And we recall Hawthorne's repeated treatments (here as well as in earlier works) of man's role as a plaything of the gods. Robert Hagburn, in turn, echoes Sibyl's statement on the necessity of death: "'If there were to be no death, the beauty of life, would be all tame'" (p.393). When, furthermore, the minister answers Septimus' laments about the shortness of life by explaining that what is left undone in this world may be accomplished in the next, Septimus points out the folly of confusing real, earthly existence, with ideal, heavenly being: "'we might as well train a child in a primeval forest, to teach him how to live in a European court'" (p.239).

On occasion, the dialectic takes place within Septimus. He is always aware of the price he must pay in order to attain his goal. Life, he senses, is rushing past him and he feels himself "ajar with the human race," doomed, if he pursues his goal to be "dissevered from it" (p.250). Even worse, at times, he loses his sense of reality. Everything appears to him "all unreal, all illusion" (pp.335-6). Yet, here again, Hawthorne's ambivalence intrudes; for at other times, as if to mitigate the negative consequences, Septimus is portrayed as having gained a heightened sense of reality during which his perceptions become "most acute." Septimus

and his author waver throughout the story between censure and approbation of the notion of earthly immortality. The protagonist's inner conflict is reflected--and thus reinforced--on a comic level in Aunt Keziah who at once longs for a witch's life and urges Septimus to avoid it, who claims to be a God-fearing christian but wishes her nephew could be an Indian, implying that pagans have more fun.

Hawthorne maintains a careful balance in his dialectical structure. Near the end of the romance it would seem that he has reached some sort of conciliatory conclusion. For Septimus opts finally not for eternal earthly existence but merely for prolonged life, for "'removing death to an indefinite distance'" (p.411) and justifying his Faustian endeavor on the grounds that "'it is the most natural thing in the world,--the very perfection of the natural, since it consists in applying the powers and processes of Nature to the prolongation of the existence of man, her most perfect handiwork; and this could only be done by entire accordance and co-effort with Nature. Therefore Nature is not changed, and death remains as one of her steps, just as heretofore'" (pp.411-2).

The nature of Septimus' defeat might be construed as mockery and thus urge us momentarily to agree with critics who adjudge Hawthorne opposed to the vision of earthly

immortality. But the closing lines suggest, on the contrary, that he has, with sorrow, left the mockery to nature or Providence--whome he several times in the book accuses of this behavior--and feels admiration and sympathy for his hero's endeavors: "I should be rather sorry," the narrator tells us, "to believe that after such splendid schemes as he had entertained, he should have been content to settle down into the fat substance and reality of English life, and die in his due time, and be buried like any other man" (p.430).

The attitudinal distance that Hawthorne has traveled from the mockery of early aspirants toward earthly immortality to the admiration for the "splendid schemes" of Septimus is only one facet of a pattern that we have been tracing in the last two chapters. His changing vision of evil is, as I have tried to demonstrate, also reflected in the distance that separates his early and late conceptions of brotherhood, of man's insignificance in the cosmic scheme and concomitantly the role of fate in human life, of Faustian rebels, and, finally, of the Fall. The shift in attitude toward each of these concerns, moreover, is directly linked to his changing relation with God. As the easy faith of the early years surrenders to increasing doubt

in an "all-good" and "all-wise" Providence, the burden of responsibility for evil moves from man to the cosmic arena, to the "forces without...that make for man's destruction." The brotherhood of man thus becomes a bond of sorrow and pain; fate becomes a controlling determinant in men's affairs; cosmic rebels gain in heroic stature; the Fall becomes decidedly fortunate for innocence fails to breed the sympathy which the human condition, directed by forces it cannot control, demands. And Hawthorne's career becomes reflective of the American experience: his changing vision of evil is a journey toward disillusionment.

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

1. Studies in Classic American Literature (New York, 1923), p.3.
2. Ibid., p.121.
3. Ibid., p.122.
4. Ibid., p.123.
5. Ibid., pp.134-5.
6. Sins of Fathers, p.7.
7. "Hawthorne and His Mosses," p.417.
8. Cited in Waggoner, Hawthorne: A Critical Study, p.7.
9. Cited in Lathrop, A Study of Hawthorne, pp.286-7.
10. Ibid., p.298.
11. Sins of Fathers, p.7.
12. Quests Surd and Absurd, p.205.
13. The Memoirs of Julian Hawthorne (New York, 1938), p.16.
14. A Study of Hawthorne, pp.296-7.
15. Yesterdays with Authors, p.74.
16. Hawthorne: A Critical Study, pp.6-7.
17. Symbolism and American Literature (Chicago, 1953), p.15.
18. The Light Beyond, p.38.
19. "Art and Belief," p.84.
20. The Light Beyond, p.173.
21. "Sin, Free Will, and 'Pessimism' in Hawthorne," PMLA, LXXI (December, 1956), 975.

22. The Darkened Sky, p.29.
23. Nathaniel Hawthorne: Man and Writer (New York, 1961), p.189.
24. American Renaissance, pp.356-7.
25. Hawthorne: A Critical Study, p.207.
26. See additional references, Notes to Introduction, pp.16-7.
27. The Light Beyond, p.174.
28. Sins of Fathers, p.71.
29. "Deadly Innocence: Hawthorne's Dark Women," New England Quarterly, XLI (June, 1968), p.170.
30. A curious work appears in the same year during which "The Christmas Banquet" and "Rappaccini's Daughter" are written. Hawthorne, who almost never even refers to other authors in his work, now pens a sketch entirely about the romantic poets: "P's Correspondence." And what is the subject matter of this sketch but the relation between religious fidelity and artistic merit, and we are led to suspect that its composition entails the working out of a problem which he begins to face as his own doubts creep into his work. The infidels --Byron, Shelley, Keats--have all reformed, but in consequence their art has become mediocre. The expurgated and amended edition of Byron's complete works omits the "passages of highest inspiration." Whatever is "disrespectful to the sacred mysteries of our faith...has been unrelentingly blotted out." The verdict? "The result is not so good as might be wished" (MFOM, p.112). Of course, the sketch is not without the "duplicity" and "dubiety" that characterizes much of Hawthorne's unorthodox writing. He presents the narrator as a madman. This tactic, however, does not undermine the import of the piece. For not only does the text itself hint at the accuracy of the narrator's perceptions but our reading of Hawthorne's other work reveals that his so called mad characters invariably speak the truth.
31. Personal Recollections of Nathaniel Hawthorne, p.112.
32. Ibid., p.152.

33. Cited in Julian Hawthorne, Nathaniel Hawthorne and his Wife (Cambridge, Mass, 1893), p.201.
34. The Writings of Thomas Hardy (New York, 1929), III, 12-3.
35. Ibid., I, 508.
36. The entry also recalls Mark Twain's conception of God: "'No one who thinks can imagine the universe made by chance. It is too nicely assembled and regulated. There is, of course, a great Master Mind, but it cares nothing for our happiness or our unhappiness.'" Cited in Albert Bigelow Paine, Mark Twain: A Biography (New York, 1912), IV, 1353.
37. Our Old Home, Centenary Edition, V (Columbus, 1970), p.286.
38. See p.204
39. See also F&IN, p.287.
40. Davidson, Hawthorne's Last Phase, p.119.
41. Melville's Quarrel with God (Princeton, 1952), pp.356-7.
42. Davidson, "Hawthorne's Unfinished Romances," p.40.
43. "The Function of Sin in Hawthorne's Novels," Emerson Society Quarterly, L (1968), 66.
44. Hawthorne's Faust, p.5.
45. Unpublished Dissertation, "A Study of Hawthorne's Origins," University of Texas, 1934, p.169.
46. The Light Beyond, p.121.
47. Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Biography, p.263.
48. Hawthorne: A Critical Study, p.213.
49. Letters, p.127.
50. Yesterdays with Authors, p.98.

51. See discussion, pp.49-50.
52. Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Biography, p.263.
53. Hawthorne: A Critical Study, p.213.
54. Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Biography, p.263.
55. The Pursuit of Form: A Study of Hawthorne and the Romance (Urbana, 1970), p.154.
56. See p.243.
57. Inward Sky, p.556.
58. Hawthorne and his Circle (New York, 1903), p.21.
59. See also AN entry of December 1, 1850, p.133.
60. Letter to Fields, Yesterdays with Authors, p.117.
61. Inward Sky, p.551.
62. Hawthorne's Last Phase, p.151.
63. Ibid., p.89.
64. Ibid., p.88.
65. Ibid., p.82.
66. Ibid., p.112.
67. Cited in Caroline Ticknor, Hawthorne and his Publisher (Port Washington, 1969), pp.169-70.

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