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NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE: THE ROMANCES

by

IRIS ROZENCWAJG-STOCKBRIDGE

A dissertation submitted to the
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4/25/78
date

Charles C. Walcutt
Chairman of Examining Committee

4/28/78
date

Allen Mandelbaum
Executive Officer

Charles C. Walcutt
Charles Child Walcutt

Irving Howe
Irving Howe

David Gordon

David Gordon

Supervisory Committee

ABSTRACT

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE: THE ROMANCES

by

Iris Rozencwajg

Adviser: Professor Charles Child Walcutt

This dissertation analyzes the four completed romances of Nathaniel Hawthorne, particularly with regard to imagery and characterization.

Hawthorne's romances are discussed in terms of their imagery as it represents a new departure in prose fiction. His enigmatic objects and stylized characters are the means by which the seen condenses the meaning of the unseen world which penetrates the world we know. The allegorical and romance traditions from which Hawthorne derives are discussed in the Introduction.

This study of Hawthorne's romances is chronological. Chapter I, on The Scarlet Letter, discusses the way in which characters and objects indicate the nature of displacement, of power and of love and indicate, too, the relationship between daily circumstance and the power of history, which makes sense of circumstance.

Chapter II, on The House of the Seven Gables, discusses Hawthorne's use of imagery and characterization to

create a romance of pure heroism and pure villainy which ends with the alignment of the historical and natural worlds in the union of Maule and Pyncheon.

Chapter III, on The Blithedale Romance, discusses the way in which Hawthorne presents characterization through imagery to create a romance of Community where only love prevails.

Chapter IV, on The Marble Faun, discusses Hawthorne's greatest work and the way in which, through complex symbols and allegorical implications, he presents an idealized but recognizable world in which art and the love of God are shown to be man's highest purposes.

The Conclusion discusses briefly Hawthorne's ability to depict the tacit dimension of life by means of images both obvious and mysterious and the way in which he conveys a vision of a moral world, his sublime endings to each romance an implicit indication of the permeation of our own historical and daily world by that other, better world.

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To the memory of my mother,
Olga Ross Rozencwajg

INTRODUCTION

Nathaniel Hawthorne's four completed longer works are without parallel in American fiction. Aside from his talent for telling a good story--a great talent--he demonstrated in these four works a genius for finding the image to correspond to his chosen themes and emotions. Each romance (which is what he called them, rather than "novel") reveals Hawthorne's abilities to choose vivid images and convey them with absolute precision as elements in his vision. His allusive, symbolic style conveys a picture of a moral world, one in which the deepest psychology of individual persons reveals the nature of will and of grace.

Hawthorne demonstrated in these works a masterly ability to portray, in a sustained tone, a perfectly conceived universe of figures--figures which move us not so much for what they do but for who they are. It is not his characters as persons in everyday life that are moving but as persons involved in archetypal struggles. They are different from us not in kind but in degree.

Many American writers have written imaginatively on guilt,¹ desire and moral struggle, writers from Hawthorne's time as well as our own (one thinks of Charles Brockden Brown, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Ambrose Bierce and Edgar Allan Poe).² But they have been unsuccessful in

presenting us with a memorable vision of such conflicts, not because their vision was less grand or less significant than his, but because they could not match Hawthorne's sheer ability to create a picture of moral circumstance.

Hawthorne's imagery is a new departure in prose fiction, even as it is clearly derived from earlier allegorical romances. His enigmatic objects--the scarlet letter is only the most famous--are the means by which the seen condenses the meaning of the unseen world which penetrates the world we know. There is an underlying sense in even the most mysterious or paradoxical situation that a higher "logic" informs the material circumstances of life. This higher logic, if you will, is indicated by means of Hawthorne's imagery. Thus it is not important that we believe the story actually happened. What matters is the perpetual symbolic indication of that subliminal reality which is confirmed for us as a reality by the imagery. Below the threshold of what we see lies the vastness of what we know. Hawthorne's imagery connects the seen to the known.

His great powers of organization, his enormous poetic gift³ and his genius for fitting the image to the emotion and to the moral climate surrounding it--these great talents created The Scarlet Letter, The House of the Seven Gables, The Blithedale Romance and The Marble Faun. These works, dealing respectively with love, family, community, and God as informing influences in human life, make up a kind of American epic, in which the elevated style dignifies the

humblest incidents, as well as the greatest adventures, with a tinge of the heroic. That elevated style, which colors each of the romances, permeates our perception of the common problems and relationships in life--that style, like grace itself, sanctifies the whole of each work.

Neither questions of right and wrong nor guilt itself are necessarily interesting;⁴ it is the poetic form which these subjects find in Hawthorne's fiction that continues to fascinate and move us. Bunyan was not the only poet writing allegories in his day; Spenser was not alone in writing to please his sovereign--yet they remain peerless. Hawthorne's moral vision, his preoccupation with the highest problems--of power, justice, mercy--found a perfect form in his "blasted allegories," as he called them. It is his singleminded dedication to finding the right image for that vision, rather than his exploration of these questions, naked and unadorned, which makes these romances great works of art.

It is this great formal talent which Lionel Trilling recognizes when he calls Hawthorne "the first fully developed American artist."⁵ He is, says Trilling, "an exquisite artist, yet he suggests to us the limitations of art and thus points to the stubborn core of actuality that is not to be overcome and seems to say that the transaction between it and us is after all an unmediated one. And by his ambiguities and ambivalences he seems to imply that we--each one

of us alone--must make our investigations and our terms as best we may."⁶

This experience of disjunction is part of the central (and deliberate) formal conflict in Hawthorne's work, a conflict that is echoed in the thematic conflicts but does not originate from them. Angus Fletcher, in Allegory, says that Spenser's Faerie-Queene is a "sublime poem" in the eighteenth-century sense partly because "it...is marked by ambivalence of attitude toward moral dichotomies,"⁷ an ambivalence we find also in Hawthorne, Spenser's heir. There is a perpetual conflict in Hawthorne (on the thematic level as enacted by the characters) between desire and will, between loyalties, between law and ambition, between morality and lust and between truth and deceit. The extremes among the characters, and the way in which they are typical of one or another vice or virtue emphasize this ambivalence and contribute to the formal tension in the works. The violence underlying the smooth surface of life breaks out in violent death--a climactic incident for which we are prepared by the images which have come before.

Conflict in these works manifests itself most often as the desire for power and domination (as in Bunyan, Spenser and Milton, Hawthorne's thematic and poetic forbears), and with the problems of interference by one person with another and the many fatal manifestations of that interference (the unpardonable sin of tampering with a human heart and the isolation which such pride indicates). These

themes of struggle for dominance and the shaking off of baleful influences, both internal and external, are part of quest romance. Hawthorne's symbols, including his characterization, initiate his choice of the romance form and follow from it, too. We can assume, in trying to understand his work, that the romance is mixed with the novelistic (no form is pure), that the allegory is intermittent, that the symbolism wavers between meanings and that the strength of the characterization varies according to the work (and even within a given work) between the mythic (heroic) and the romantic (tending more towards the humanly recognizable).⁸

Hawthorne's peculiar gifts, like those of Bunyan, Spenser and Milton, are ideal for the depiction of the conflict and coordination of inner and outward life. The relationship between them is paradoxical, and, according to Trilling, typically modern. "Never, in a secular culture, has the inner life seemed of such moment as it does in our culture. And never has the inner life been lived so publicly, so much in terms of significant associations and allegiances, of admirations and rejections which make plain how things stand within."⁹ The momentous importance of the conflict between inward and outward man has, for the artist, an even greater significance than for the rest of us. He exists in his art eternally and outside of time, but outwardly he lives in a temporal world. The garden of Adonis in Spenser, like the artists' party in The Marble Faun

and Gloriani's garden party in The Ambassadors represents that aesthetic world, forever self-renewing yet self-enclosed, of art and artists living within the temporal sphere (Faerie Land, Rome, Paris), for the moment enchanted. The images in Hawthorne's romances explicitly associate, by means of this enchanted medium in which all happens, the connection between the temporal and eternal worlds. The rose by the prison door in The Scarlet Letter is indeed a promise of salvation, for it is an image of nature's undiminished beauty. It lights our way through this sad tale, enlightening us as to the larger context in which the somber events take place, the natural world in which moral conflict takes place.

Hawthorne's work, whatever his antecedents, is all his own. He uses various aspects of particular genres and is thematically and imagistically a descendant of Bunyan, Spenser and Milton; but in his creation of these works he equals them, for he gives us--as they do--works to live by. His four major romances are didactic, as were the works of those predecessors; but they are our own. Hawthorne's romances are American and secular and modern; they give us a world we can recognize, continuing over a vast period of time (American history, that is), which is also connected somehow (the "somehow" is the texture of the works, as we shall see) with God--a sacred connection which is only made explicitly in The Marble Faun but which informs the other works as well.

We will first consider Hawthorne within the categories and genres he is said to employ, and then abandon that narrow terrain for an exploration of the romances themselves. It is as well to begin by mentioning a peculiar aspect of previous Hawthorne criticism, to wit, the generally unsympathetic tone of even the better-disposed among readers of his work. In fact, Herman Melville is the only previous American writer or critic to have read Hawthorne with the thoroughly sympathetic and appropriate reverence which we reserve for the "greats" but which we have denied to most American writers with the exception of Melville himself. It is hard to say why this should be so. Perhaps it is best to attribute this want of understanding to that natural rebelliousness (and secret self-deprecation) underlying even the most serious aspects of American literature (including literary criticism) from its earliest days.

Too much Hawthorne criticism comes about, or seems to, because the critic disapproves of the author. Ivor Winters considers "The four last romances [including Dolliver] ...unfinished."¹⁰ Leslie Fiedler finds Hawthorne "bathetic" and regards O felix culpa as the secret motto of all post-Scarlet Letter "novels."¹¹ But allegory is by nature open-ended, ambiguous and justificatory - Hawthorne's is no exception. He is hardly bathetic, however. If anything, his works, far from descending, seem to ascend, tending towards the sublime more intensely as they move to conclusion. Trilling's view is the more perceptive; he sees

Hawthorne as "modern..., our dark poet, charged with chthonic knowledge, whose utterances are as ambiguous as those of any ancient riddling oracle"¹² --but even he seems to throw up his hands at the impenetrable obscurity of the works.

Hawthorne's own "subterranean reminiscences" may indeed be responsible for his imagery, but the allegorical romance elements in his work give the imagery a logical superstructure which has been little regarded in previous studies of his work.¹³ It is important to read his works on their own terms and not to expect another kind of more naturalistic fiction where allegory is a predominant element. The correspondence between image and idea, the allegorizing narrative (however fitful) and the romance settings create a rich and complex world, a fictive world created for its own sake, full of the mystery and variety of real life but of a strange and significant beauty that we find only in great poetry.

Hawthorne and Allegory

Hawthorne employs allegory in these romances chiefly in the commentary on action and character by the narrative voice speaking directly to the reader. This commentary has got him into a lot of trouble with his readers, particularly those who prefer the novelistic to the romance form in fiction. All too many critics seem to hold to Poe's view that "In defense of allegory (however or for whatever object employed) there is scarcely one respectable word to be said."¹⁴

But then to Poe fiction was "mere prose."¹⁵ Most critics have nonetheless recognized the need to deal with allegorical aspects of Hawthorne, however distasteful. "Hawthorne, in his metaphysical moods," said James "is nothing if not allegorical."¹⁶ Says Robert Spiller, "The agency of his perspective was allegory which, because it is used primarily for aesthetic rather than moral purposes, serves to supply a symbolic level of meaning to the imagined events."¹⁷ Richard Chase finds Hawthorne most successful when most allegorical; he says that Hawthorne, "essentially an allegorist," was best in The Scarlet Letter, "pure allegory," and that the other two of his "most important long works" (The House of the Seven Gables and The Marble Faun) are "Failures," "impure novels, or novels with unassimilated allegorical elements."¹⁸

All more or less agree that "allegory says one thing and means another"¹⁹ and that, in Trilling's words, Hawthorne, "however successfully he may project illusion... must point beyond it to the irrefragible solidity"²⁰ of the real (seen) world. In this doubleness, indeed, Hawthorne is typically allegorical, as he is, too, in the immense control he exerts over characters, action and theme: "the greatest allegories," according to Fletcher, "are governed by that sort of rigid destiny which can only operate through magical ordinances such as those of the oracle or of an all-powerful diety."²¹ This rigidity runs counter to the general wildness of atmosphere we experience

in an allegorical world, perhaps because "in allegory there is clearly a disjunction of meanings."²² This disjunction is a structural element in Hawthorne's allegorical romances.

According to Frye, "Genuine allegory is a structural element in literature; it has to be there, and cannot be added by critical interpretation alone;"²³ in that sense, all literature contains an allegorical strain. "It is not often realized," Frye adds, "that all commentary is allegorical interpretation, an attaching of ideas to the structure of poetic imagery;"²⁴ thus we have in Hawthorne's insistent presence an allegorizing persona.

"In allegory," says Chase, "the signs or symbols have little or no existence apart from their paraphrasable meaning."²⁵ Spiller finds Hawthorne's use of allegory evidence of the conflicting urges to confession and secrecy which dominate his work.²⁶ But in this parallel understructure of assumption and presentation there are also (as, according to Harold Bloom, in the work of Blake and Wordsworth) "scaffoldings for a more imaginative vision."²⁷ Far from Hawthorne having "too limited faith in the imagination"²⁸ he has almost too much; when he says at the beginning of The Marble Faun that the idea which animated Praxiteles in the creation of the marble faun and which the narrator is trying to articulate "grows coarse as we handle it, and hardens in our grasp," he is imaginatively recreating for us the process by which the artist has imprisoned his dream

in marble, drawing on our own experience of creation (the metaphor of sculpting) at the same time that he presents us with his own difficulty in creating a form for his own idea. The implied assumption in this work is that the search for form is at the heart of life as well as of art.

Hawthorne is a genius at materializing the immaterial world in just this imagistic way, as Trilling recognizes: "This other world, in which the presence of divinity is to be dimly apprehended, interpenetrates the world of material circumstance, and, in doing so, provides the quotidian and actual world with its most intense significances."²⁹ His metaphors and way of characterizing situations are very like Bunyan's in this respect; he too shows how the moral life, for good or ill, is mysterious in its sources and in its effects. The reality of this world is perpetually confronting the mystery of that one, and it is the significance of that confrontation that Hawthorne continually seeks to represent for us.

Fletcher sees this aspect of allegory--as "a human reconstitution of divinely inspired messages, a revealed transcendental language which tries to preserve the remoteness of a properly veiled godhead"³⁰--as an old idea, the oldest about allegory. This godhead is explicit in Hawthorne; in a way peculiar to romance (which will be discussed shortly), that godhead and its inscrutable will are presented utterly without irony. That is, God's power--the presence of Divine Providence in the world of each romance--is a given.

There is no mockery, no humor, no duplicity in the old depiction of that implied presence. Words and images which allude to that power mean only what they appear to mean--not the opposite. Divine presence is represented in the world of the romances partly by the consciousness in various characters of a true moral viewpoint which dominates their perspective in the world. The unironic aspect of this divinely originating view is the way in which Hawthorne's --like others'--"allegories raise questions of values directly, by asserting certain propositions as good and others as bad."³¹

Hawthorne's masterly combining of the world of the actual with the world of the inscrutable (implicitly divine) is the source of his "freistimmige style in which allegory may be picked up and dropped again at pleasure."³² Fletcher describes this fluctuating allegorical strain as periodically receding in the face of commentary or "when the allegory becomes mythical and dreamlike" (as when, for example, we are in Donatello's villa or Governor Bellingham's mansion, or when Hepzibah and Clifford are in the train), "moments that require of the reader an acceptance of overwhelming paradox, since these moments create an ultimately inexplicable knot of imagery and action."³³ That knot of image and event is of course the work itself, a union "of categorizing and...doubt and anxiety and hope"³⁴ which is allegory.

The undoubted strain of allegory always present in

Hawthorne's romances has its disadvantages--"The reader can be anesthetized by the ritual order of enigma and romance...the typical allegory threatens never to end,"³⁵ observes Fletcher. But, he adds, "The strengths of the mode are equally clear. It allows for instruction, for rationalizing, for categorizing and codifying, for casting spells, and expressing unbidden compulsions, for Spenser's 'pleasing analysis,' and, since aesthetic pleasure is a virtue also, for romantic storytelling, for satirical complications, and for sheer ornamental display."³⁶ All of these we find in the romances, enhanced by combination with the romance form which allows greater looseness than allegory and does not require the same ideological commitment; it is a far freer form and tends away from that world of reality so necessary to allegory. For Hawthorne, who said of himself in his discussion of Samuel Johnson in the "Lichfield and Uttoxeter" section of Our Old Home, "my native propensities were toward Fairy Land," romance was even more important in the structure of his works than allegory.

Hawthorne and Romance

Romance elements in Hawthorne's longer works appear chiefly in his settings and in the creation of archetypal characters--it is the medium rather than the message. Most of modern Hawthorne criticism, like fiction criticism in general, is heavily novel-centered, and thus, for our

purposes, severely limited when it comes to understanding other forms of prose fiction. For Hawthorne the tradition of romance was far more important than the tradition of the novel. His characters are the characters of romance; his settings are the vague but detailed media in which heroic episodes occur. Still critics have been loath to consider him in this light. While D. H. Lawrence grants that "Nathaniel Hawthorne writes romance"³⁷ Henry James only granted that category to The Marble Faun. Frye tells us what Hawthorne knew--that "Pure examples are never found" and that "popular demand in fiction is always for a mixed form."³⁸

To the extent that Hawthorne employs romance elements in this fiction, he uses his imagination to the fullest. Fletcher points out that in allegorical romance "the story is what seduces the reader away from the allegorical message."³⁹ Chase sees romance as "a kind of 'border' fiction...in Hawthorne and later romancers, the field of action is conceived not so much as a place as a state of mind--the borderland of the human mind where the actual and the imaginary intermingle."⁴⁰ Since Hawthorne, he finds, the word romance "has appropriately signified the peculiar narrow profundity and rich interplay of lights and darks which one associates with the best American writing."⁴¹ Chase gives us the American definition of the form, one in which the "author feels free to render reality in less volume and detail. It tends to prefer action to character," although

this is not true of Hawthorne's fiction, "in which the author uses the allegorical and moral, rather than the dramatic, possibilities of the form." The two-dimensional characters are abstracted and idealized, "so much so in some romances that it seems to be merely a function of plot" and "will more freely veer toward mythic, allegorical, and symbolistic forms."⁴² Allegory and romance are in some sense one.

Northrop Frye sees romance as imbued with "the tendency to suggest implicit mythical patterns in a world more closely associated with human experience."⁴³ Hawthorne, in a process which Harold Bloom discusses in his essay on the subject, internalizes that romance, a process which "brought the concept of nature, and poetic consciousness itself, into a relationship they had never had before the advent of Romanticism in the later eighteenth century."⁴⁴ In Hawthorne nature is sometimes in opposition to poetic consciousness, sometimes in alignment with it, sometimes two kinds of nature--man's fallen nature and the pure nature of the world outside the sinful one--conflict. But nature is always an issue in these romances. There is a "grave idealizing of heroism and purity"⁴⁵ in a world which we can recognize, for it is unheroic and impure. While the novel is "an essentially temporal product,"⁴⁶ the romance moves in a timeless world--a world where heroism and purity are possible.

Hawthorne's use of romance is deliberate. In the

preface to each of the four works under discussion he calls the work at hand a romance, always apologizing for it, however, owing, no doubt, to "the prestige of the rival form."⁴⁷ The point of view of the major characters, as in the case of Spenser's Red Crosse Knight, is obscured--we see as the ignorant character sees, no matter how much the talkative narrator tells us (and he, too, is often ignorant). The allegory takes place, as it were, partly above our heads.

But the nature of a particular work is always more important than any generic tendency in the author. "The author's voice," Booth reminds us, "is as passionately revealed in the decision to write" a particular work "as it is in the most obtrusive direct comment."⁴⁸ The romance form allows Hawthorne full scope for his idealizing tendencies. Furthermore the romance form allows Hawthorne to write with and about that "great conservative"⁴⁹ the human heart, the same in every age. Like the novel, romance (especially in Hawthorne) deals in experienced and circumstantial reality rather than theoretical questions--questions of will, of good and evil are not empty ideas in his work, but vivid realities.

Romance characterization, as we shall see, is eminently suited to Hawthorne's talents for idealization, for subliminal and actual violence, for the creation of archetypes, particularly psychological archetypes. It is not that Hawthorne's "fiction does not make a very determined reference to the concrete substantialities of life, the

observation and imitation of which is the definitive business of novels,"⁵⁰ as Trilling would have it. Rather it transcends while including those concrete substantialities (most magnificently in The Marble Faun) and attains the creation of a timeless world in which the ideal and the human are in temporary conjunction, the parallel presentation of what we know and what we see. Romance works "by some form of simile: analogy, significant association, incidental accompanying imagery, and the like."⁵¹ This process of association, the commonest form of which is the use of symbols, is fundamental to Hawthorne's writing, and provides much of the textural richness of his romances.

Imagery and Symbolism in Hawthorne's Romances

Symbols and images are found, of course, throughout Hawthorne's fiction. Symbols, in the romances, are used both allegorically (chiefly as metaphors) and in the romance aspects of the work, i.e., in indicating character type or the significance of a particular setting. The imagery has, above all, an importance as the free-floating indication of something else which pervades the world of a work; it provides as nothing else could the evidence of the presence of God--most often not named--in the visible world, the presence of what is only felt and known but never seen. The symbolic objects and images thus act as agents of coherence; they indicate the underlying sense which informs the paradox and mystery which fill Hawthorne's work.

More has been written about Hawthorne's symbolism, with varying degrees of approval, than perhaps about any other aspect of his work, perhaps because nothing is more striking in it or seems more important. To Richard Chase, Hawthorne used allegory and symbolism interchangeably; "as 'symbol' is used in technical literary criticism, it means an autonomous linguistic fusion of meanings"⁵² and that the scarlet A stands for adultery. Well, so it does, but there is more of a fusion than that in the letter, as we shall see in our discussion of that work. D. H. Lawrence goes to the other extreme, insisting that "You must look through the surface of American art, and see the inner diabolism of the symbolic meaning. Otherwise it is all mere childishness"⁵³--the diabolism may be the demonic mythical pattern suggested in some ironic literature (and of course Lawrence sees it all as ironic, and therefore demonic).

Necessary to the making of symbols is a process Fletcher calls the "demonstration of the absurd": "by having a surrealist surface texture allegory immediately elicits an interpretive response from the reader...by bridging the silent gaps between oddly unrelated images we reach the sunken understructure of thought"; "isolation...makes a very precise delineation of the particular image not only possible, but actually highly desirable."⁵⁴ This is Hawthorne's surface--surreal, mysterious, begging for interpretation, forcing the reader to allegorize the meaning

connecting the symbols, so apparently unrelated. Symbol is, in this sense, the heart of allegory, the soul of romance. According to Fletcher, "If there is in fact a poetry of 'unmediated vision,' it is surely found in that borderland where one passes from allegory into myth, from allegory into what Goethe would have called 'symbol.' But the borderlines are not capable of clear delineation, except to say that in the case of allegory there is no intention of ultimate paradox, whereas in myth and 'symbol' the poet refused to admit that reason or perception provide the highest wisdom";⁵⁵ "allegory is only a mode of symbolizing."⁵⁶

Symbolizing, in turn, is a necessary part of reading. Frye observes that "whenever we read anything, we find our attention moving in two directions at once....Symbols so understood may here be called signs, verbal units which, conventionally and arbitrarily, stand for and point to things outside the place where they occur."⁵⁷ But Frye distinguishes between two kinds of symbols. In his discussion of the use of "free-style allegories" (such as Hawthorne writes) and their symbols, "ironic and anti-allegorical imagery,"⁵⁸ he notes a major paradoxical technique in such symbolism:

...closely related to if not identical with the objective correlative ['the image that sets up an inward focus of emotion in poetry and at the same time substitutes itself for an idea,'] is the heraldic symbol, the central emblematic image which comes most readily to mind when we think of the word 'symbol' in modern literature. We think, for example, of Hawthorne's scarlet letter....Such an image differs from the image

of the formal allegory in that there is no continuous relationship between art and nature. In contrast to the allegorical symbols of Spenser, for instance, the heraldic emblematic image is in a paradoxical and ironic relation to both narrative and meaning. As a unit of meaning, it arrests the narrative; as a unit of narrative, it perplexes the meaning. It combines the qualities of Carlyle's intrinsic symbol ['that which remains a mystery in itself no matter how fully known it is']⁵⁹ with significance in itself, and the extrinsic symbol ['The mystery of the unknown or unknowable essence']⁶⁰ which points quizzically to something else. It is a technique of symbolism which is based on a strong sense of a lurking antagonism between the literal and the descriptive aspects of symbols.⁶¹

That lurking antagonism is at the heart of Hawthorne's imagery, despite the fact that his symbols are not in themselves unusual.

This symbolizing, particularly in its antagonistic aspect, was what Melville referred to as "the power of blackness" in Hawthorne: "For, in certain moods, no man can weight this world without throwing in something, somehow like Original Sin, to strike the uneven balance."⁶² Whatever is "like" original sin, or "like" other forces in our lives--these are the symbols antagonistic to their selves; the letter A for adultery, is also for Arthur (Hester wears her heart on her sleeve) and for Amor and for able, and, to D. H. Lawrence, also for "Hester grayly Abelling."⁶³ But, as Frye points out, "the narrative aspect of literature is a recurrent act of symbolic communication: in other words a ritual";⁶⁴ the vision is always mediated by that ritual.

Through mediation symbols change--Hester's A changes for her, and it changes and shifts for the reader, too. As James observed, "It cannot be too often repeated that

Hawthorne was not a realist" [but] "He had a high sense of reality."⁶⁵ That sense of reality allowed him the irony which according to Frye "isolates from the tragic situation the sense of arbitrariness, of the victim's having been unlucky, selected at random or by lot, and no more deserving of what happens to him than anyone else would be."⁶⁶ "Ironic literature begins with realism and tends toward myth, its mythical patterns being as a rule more suggestive of the demonic than of the apocalyptic, though sometimes it simply continues the romantic tradition of stylization."⁶⁷ The imagery that accompanies this demonic vision (which we find mostly in the tales and less frequently, if at all, in the romances) is like this.

This demonic imagery is one in which, according to Frye, "The vegetable world is a sinister forest"⁶⁸ (we think of the scaffold in The Scarlet Letter, the forest itself in "Young Goodman Brown," the gallows in the small clearing of "The Gentle Boy"). "The inorganic world may remain in its unworked form of deserts, rocks and waste land. Cities of destruction and dreadful night belong here" (we think of the town in "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," of the Rome of mere ruins after Hilda vanishes, and for Hilda, the emptiness of the masterpieces after she witnesses the murder). "Images of perverted work belong here too: engines of torture, weapons of war, armor, and images of a dead mechanism...unnatural as well as inhuman"⁶⁹ (we think of

Governor Bellingham's armor, of the railway train carrying the two owls into a dead landscape, and of the catacombs in The Marble Faun).

The demonic is evident in all the romances but it permeates The Blithedale Romance so thoroughly that no single symbol stands out more than any other. That community represents "The demonic human world in a society held together by a kind of molecular tension of egos, a loyalty to the group...which diminishes the individual, or, at best, contrasts his pleasure with his duty or honor."⁷⁰ It is a world in which the mob seeks to rend Miles Coverdale, the Orpheus figure who dared to abandon them to save his own soul and who returned to the city (in this case more an image of desire than of destruction).

Frye speaks of "Hawthorne's inhibitions in regard to unexplained myth-making and symbolizing " and says they "seem to be at least in part self-imposed."⁷¹ But this inhibition, which insistently connects the symbols with the narrative (unlike Poe's, as Frye points out) is part of Hawthorne's use of "the analogy of experience, and which bears a relation to the demonic world corresponding to the relation of the romantic innocent world to the apocalyptic one. Except for this potentially ironic connection, and except for a certain number of hieratic or specially indicated symbols like Hawthorne's scarlet letter and Henry James' golden bowl and ivory tower, the images are the ordinary images of experience."⁷² These images from the world of experience

combine with demonic imagery to give us some of the most stunning images in Hawthorne.

These are the bleak and negative images of "the world that desire totally rejects: the world of the nightmare and the scapegoat, of bondage and pain and confusion; the world as it is before the human imagination begins to work on it and before any image of human desire, such as the city or the garden, has been solidly established; the world also of perverted or wasted work, ruins and catacombs, instruments of torture and monuments of folly" and in this world "the central idea that crystallizes from it is the idea of inscrutable fate or external necessity."⁷³ This is the world of Hester's Boston, all of it; the world of the garden before Phoebe enters it; the world of Blithedale that Coverdale flees; the world in which Miriam encounters the model who will haunt her until the murder. But these images are defeated in each work by the images of reconstitution, reunion, of love triumphant, of the soul victorious--by the images of Hester, the dignified and sanctified survivor returning unbowed and revered to the wasteland that sought to punish her; by the image of Phoebe rescuing the weak, the old and the broken and taking them to the green world of the country seat; by Coverdale's pure faithfulness to a love he can barely avow; by the union of Hilda and Kenyon, and the Etruscan bracelet, resurrected from seven sepulchers and the Tiber and worn by the angelic girl who witnessed murder but sees "sunlight on the mountaintops." That simple final image in The Marble Faun--

of dawn, hope, resurrection--is more powerful even than the concept of the marble faun, more powerful than murder, than death, than exile. For Hawthorne, in his sublime characterizations, ultimately presents us with images of heroism, of the ordinary person achieving greatness. That final image in the romance shows us that Hilda, though angelic, is human, in her hope as in her struggle.

Characterization in Hawthorne's Romances

Hawthorne's characters are most memorable as images of desirable or undesirable human nature. They transcend allegory, romance, symbolism and seem to move forever as eternal embodiments of recognizable human types in a world we recognize as our own, idealized.

In the best tradition of romance, as defined by Frye,

The romancer does not attempt to create 'real people' so much as stylized figures which expand into psychological archetypes....That is why the romance so often radiates a glow of subjective intensity that the novel lacks, and why a suggestion of allegory is constantly creeping in around its fringes. Certain elements of character are released in the romance which make it naturally a more revolutionary form than the novel....The romancer deals with individuality, with characters in vacuo idealized by revery, and, however conservative he may be, something nihilistic and untamable is likely to keep breaking out of his pages.⁷⁴

In each case, Hawthorne's main individualized characters are heroic--they possess outstanding courage and endurance, outstanding qualities or talents in other respects as well; they are worthy of our admiration; they are noble and in some sense larger than life, although they differ from us only in degree not in kind.

James said that Hawthorne's characters "are all figures rather than characters--they are all pictures rather than persons"⁷⁵ (he was referring especially to The House of the Seven Gables). Of The Marble Faun he said "there are no accessory figures."⁷⁶ Chase noted the same qualities in Hawthorne's characterization when he said that Hawthorne uses "mythic archetypes" in The Scarlet Letter.⁷⁷ Spiller complains that "The people of these tales never become much more than phantoms--vague symbols moving through a pattern of meaning which is an impersonal reading of life."⁷⁸

But as Harvey points out, although "It is tempting to draw parallels between our experience of life and of fictional characters" it is not very useful, even when we are discussing the novel.⁷⁹ Hawthorne's characters are not moving because they are like us, as in Tolstoy, but because of the vision of life they convey, as in Milton. Characterization in Hawthorne's romances is without personalized subtlety; complexity is introduced through the "moral opposite"⁸⁰ confronting a given character; the only characters who fall outside of these oppositions are those "who elude the moral antithesis of heroism and villainy" such as Pearl and Uncle Venner, "spirits of nature"⁸¹ who serve the hero but remain inscrutable. The hero himself has, however, an allegorical underside that if not positively unattractive is at least less than winning: "The well-known stubbornness, conscientiousness and idealism of the compulsive neurotic come through in fictional works as the undeviating, totally

committed, absolutist ethics of characters like the creative thinkers in Hawthorne."⁸² The hero of such a romance is very definitely placed in his peculiar world: "If superior in degree to other men and to his environment, the hero is the typical hero of romance, whose actions are marvellous but who is himself identified as a human being. The hero of romance moves in a world in which the ordinary laws of nature are slightly suspended: prodigies of courage and endurance, unnatural to us, are natural to him."⁸³

In addition to the hero (and in the case of Miles Coverdale, identical with him) there is the character of the narrator. Fletcher sees the "I" narrator (who functions in all of the works but least prominently in The House of the Seven Gables) as important; this persona depends upon Hawthorne's own feelings which are the same as the needs of the work--he is not separate from the characters, in other words.⁸⁴ He is a unifying consciousness, like that of the reader and trying always to urge that analogy on the reader. It is he who tries so hard to make sense of the disparate elements he puts before us. That struggle is the action of each work.

Conclusion

Hawthorne's allegory, his romances, his symbols and above all his imagery combine to give us works in which we are taught to see through the visible world and understand the other, higher, reality which pervades it. His characters

become elements in his imagery as poignant and stirring as the scarlet letter or The House of the Seven Gables. His stylized figures, far from being wind-up toys set off on a sterotypical quest, become larger than the life in which they move. The attributes he gives them, perfectly chosen to convey their separate powers, radiate a kind of magic glow--Hester's stature, Chillingworth's hump, Phoebe's cheerfulness, Clifford's beauty, the Judge's smile, Zenobia's flower, Priscilla's aura, Hollingsworth's brawn, Hilda's purity, Donatello's ears. On his choice of these attributes rests part of Hawthorne's greatness--his unerring ability to symbolize spiritual qualities in material objects, to define character by attribute, to present images for his ideas of struggle, of good, of evil, of history, of time. The scarlet letter, the House of the Seven Gables, the fires at Blithedale, the pictures, statues and ruins of Rome--these great images, transcending the works in which they appear, overpowering the narrative and thus transcending time itself, are the source of Hawthorne's greatness and of the power of the romances. In the discussion of each work which follows, we shall see the ways in which allegory, romance and symbol combine to create Hawthorne's unique fiction and how that fiction is unique because of the power of his imagery.

INTRODUCTION

NOTES

¹ Newton Arvin overemphasizes the importance of guilt in Hawthorne's work, but he thus provides a useful key to understanding Hawthorne's conception of sin:

Guilt was to become, out of all right proportion, his monotonous theme. It was to stain his whole view of human personality. And was this but the consequence of his having Puritan blood in his veins and the gloomy dogmas of the Puritans in his hereditary memory? The explanation holds water no better than a sieve. He had no more Puritan blood than Emerson and hundreds of other New Englanders of his time; and who will say that they were obsessed with the spectral presence of guilt? No: there are more things to sunder Hawthorne from the Puritans than to link him with them; and if, like them, he brooded on the black fatalities of human error and vice, it was the result not of any Calvinist theology, but of his own somber consciousness of separation from the ways of his fellow men--a consciousness in which the sense of guilt luxuriates like noisome growths in a swamp. Mark the form that guiltiness takes in his representation of it, and you will be in no doubt of its origin. The essential sin...lies in whatever shuts up the spirit in a dungeon where it is alone, beyond the reach of common sympathies and the general sunlight. All that isolates, damns; all that associates, saves. Hawthorne (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1929), pp. 58-59.

² Edgar Allan Poe was himself a supreme creator of images; but his creative powers were placed in the service of the dramatic rather than the allegorical possibilities of his archetypes. Northrop Frye calls him "clearly a more radical abstractionist than Hawthorne, which is one reason why his influence on our century is more immediate" (Anatomy of Criticism, New York: Atheneum, 1957, p. 139). Frye includes Poe and Hawthorne both in a group of writers in whom the demonic mythical pattern is more evident than the apocalyptic and sees his tales as bearing a relation to the romance form rather than the novel. But Poe, unlike Hawthorne, never gives us an image which lives by itself (except perhaps in his poetry). His archtypal gold bug, a scarab linked historically with the Egyptian sun, is a contrived and awkward image in comparison with the scarlet letter. The scarab is

a foreign object in every sense and must be manipulated, however significant it is. The scarlet letter generates the romance and seems to manipulate both plot and characters.

³These have been admirably discussed by Q. D. Leavis in "Hawthorne as Poet," Hawthorne, A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966, ed., A. N. Kaul.

⁴If these subjects were intrinsically interesting, the writings of Harriet Beecher Stowe would today be read for more than historical interest.

⁵Lionel Trilling, "Hawthorne in Our Time," (N.Y.: Viking, 1968), p. 179.

⁶Ibid., pp. 207-208.

⁷Angus Fletcher, Allegory (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1964), p. 269.

⁸These aspects of romance are derived from Frye's discussion of the genre in Anatomy of Criticism and will be explored in depth later on in this Introduction.

⁹Trilling, p. 190.

¹⁰Ivor Winters, Maule's Curse, in In Defense of Reason (Chicago: The Swallow Press, 1947), p. 174.

¹¹Leslie Fiedler, Love and Death in the American Novel (N.Y.: Dell Publishing Co., 1966), p. 448.

¹²Trilling, p. 185.

¹³The following discussions of Hawthorne as allegorist and romancer have, however, proved particularly useful, if not broad enough: John E. Becker, Hawthorne's Historical Allegory. Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1971; Peter Berek, The Transformation of Allegory From Spenser to Hawthorne, Amherst: College Press, 1962; Neil Frank Doubleday, "Hawthorne's Satirical Allegory," College English III (Jan. 1942) 329-333; Buford Jones, "The Fairy-Land of Hawthorne's Romances," ESQ #48 III Quarter, 1967; Jane Lundblad, Nathaniel Hawthorne and the Tradition of Gothic Romance. N.Y.: Haskell House, 1964; Hugo McPherson, Hawthorne As Myth-Maker, Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1969.

¹⁴Edgar Allen Poe, "Hawthorne's Tales," The Shock of Recognition, ed. Edmund Wilson, N.Y.: Random House, 1955, p. 159.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 162.

¹⁶Henry James, "Hawthorne," The Shock of Recognition, p. 474.

- ¹⁷Robert Spiller, The Cycle of American Literature.
N.Y.: The Free Press, 1955.
- ¹⁸Richard Chase, The American Novel and Its Tradition,
p. 157.
- ¹⁹Fletcher, p. 2.
- ²⁰Trilling, p. 206.
- ²¹Fletcher, p. 208.
- ²²Ibid., p. 18.
- ²³Frye, p. 54.
- ²⁴Ibid., p. 89.
- ²⁵Chase, pp. 81-82.
- ²⁶Spiller, p. 60.
- ²⁷Harold Bloom, "Internalization of the Quest Romance,"
Ringers in the Tower. Univ. of Chicago Press, 1971, p. 13.
- ²⁸Trilling, p. 206.
- ²⁹Ibid., p. 201.
- ³⁰Fletcher, p. 21.
- ³¹Ibid., p. 306.
- ³²Frye, p. 90.
- ³³Fletcher, p. 321.
- ³⁴Ibid., p. 367.
- ³⁵Idem.
- ³⁶Ibid., p. 368.
- ³⁷D. H. Lawrence, The Shock of Recognition, p. 984.
- ³⁸Frye, p. 305.
- ³⁹Fletcher, p. 313.
- ⁴⁰Chase, p. 19.
- ⁴¹Ibid., pp. 20-21.

⁴²Ibid., p. 13.

⁴³Frye, pp. 139-140.

⁴⁴Bloom, p. 21.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 306.

⁴⁶W. A. Harvey, Character and the Novel. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1965, p. 99.

⁴⁷Frye, p. 306.

⁴⁸Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction, p. 20.

⁴⁹Jan. 6, 1854 "If mankind were all intellect, they would be continually changing, so that one age would be entirely unlike another. The great conservative is the heart, which remains the same in all ages; so that common-places of a thousand years' standing are as effective as ever." Newton Arvin, The Heart of Hawthorne's Journals. N.Y.: Barnes & Noble, 1929, p. 162.

⁵⁰Trilling, p. 198.

⁵¹Frye, p. 137.

⁵²Chase, p. 80.

⁵³Lawrence, p. 984.

⁵⁴Fletcher, p. 107.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 322.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 358.

⁵⁷Frye, p. 73.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 91.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 88.

⁶⁰Idem.

⁶¹Ibid., pp. 91-92.

⁶²Herman Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses," The Shock of Recognition, p. 192.

⁶³Lawrence, p. 1001.

⁶⁴Frye, pp. 104-105.

- ⁶⁵James, p. 526.
- ⁶⁶Frye, p. 41.
- ⁶⁷Ibid., p. 140.
- ⁶⁸Ibid., p. 149.
- ⁶⁹Ibid., p. 150.
- ⁷⁰Ibid., p. 147.
- ⁷¹Ibid., p. 139.
- ⁷²Ibid., p. 154.
- ⁷³Ibid., p. 147.
- ⁷⁴Ibid., pp. 304-305.
- ⁷⁵James, p. 521.
- ⁷⁶Ibid., p. 553.
- ⁷⁷Chase, p. 79.
- ⁷⁸Spiller, p. 62.
- ⁷⁹Harvey, p. 31.
- ⁸⁰Frye, p. 195.
- ⁸¹Ibid., p. 196.
- ⁸²Fletcher, p. 288.
- ⁸³Frye, p. 33.
- ⁸⁴Fletcher, p. 319.

CHAPTER I

THE SCARLET LETTER

In The Scarlet Letter (1850) we find Hawthorne's most immediately moving and most readily comprehended work, yet one which conveys through its exotic landscapes and objects and its severely portrayed characters the same moral tension we find in the later works. The conflict between what is shown and what is told is central to the tension in the work. The ambivalent attitude which, allegorically, pervades the work dominates the setting. This is a romance of the past when that past was new: old New England is as much the subject as Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale. In the grotesquerie of the familiar--Boston, strange and frightful, and yet still the home of a better world than the Old World--we have the central implicit ambivalence underlying all the action.¹ This co-existence of two opposite emotions in the romance--that of reverence towards our own past, so much more noble and stirring than the daily life of the Custom-House and also the fear which that past inspires as we confront it, with Hester, in a daily way--is made vivid for us by Hawthorne's objects and images.

Because of "The Custom-House" chapter, because of the chapter breaks later on in the work, because of the many ways in which our attention is deliberately drawn to the

significance of the objects, images and settings themselves, we are made aware of the enormous struggles, individual as well as social, that have gone to make up our own, present, world--the world of the "Conclusion." Some of this image-making seems Spenserian: Una, motivated by her desire to free her parents (this is the source of her anxiety), reminds us of Pearl (Arthur's daughter in more ways than one); we are shown the way in which flesh breeds frailty, as in Book II; and we are given a landscape reminiscent of the Garden of Proserpina, with deadly plants --the place of ambition, New England, a place where not only Chillingworth is at home.

Angus Fletcher observes that there is always a tug between action and iconography in Hawthorne's work.² A definition of action in The Scarlet Letter is hard to isolate. Action is partly--even largely--the struggle we feel within the work to make connections between characters and the world they inhabit. They seem to struggle to make places for themselves. Objects and images indicate the nature of displacement and of the urge to connect. Action thus has much to do with Dimmesdale's desire for power, the overriding active force, greater even than Chillingworth's desire for revenge; that ambition is the mainspring of life in Hester's New England. That wish for power, which struggles intermittently with Dimmesdale's pride, of which it is also an aspect, and with his desire to escape the terrible lie he has brought on himself,

overwhelms every other action in the romance. In the end it is victorious, for Dimmesdale defeats both Chillingworth's revenge and Hester's love, and dies the premier figure in Boston.³

The iconography of The Scarlet Letter, especially the iconography of the letter itself, has been discussed in great detail by critics and not always with approval.⁴ Hawthorne's way of representing by striking images the other meanings of the scenes we witness is found in all four of the romances and in the tales as well. In The Scarlet Letter there is a pull between "naturalistic" action and "mythic" iconography. That dynamic conflict at the heart of the work can be better understood by a study of the ways in which Hawthorne uses images and objects. The "Custom-House" chapter, in its apparently casual description of the minor officials at the beginning of the work, and a kind of introduction to it, tends toward realism; but, as the scarlet letter makes its first appearance and the narrator's head rolls, that matter-of-fact prefatory chapter, one-fifth of the entire work, introduces the mythic implications of Office and of the historical roots of Custom and the power that is inseparable, in all its permutations, from it.⁵ Hawthorne's Boston is conventionalized by the mundane stories of the denizens of public office in modern Salem. But even in "The Custom-House," the uses and abuses of power manifest themselves, inhibiting creation (while the narrator is in office) and

then (when he is deposed) freeing him to devote himself to the creation of the romance in which the letter he has found while in office plays a central role.

"The Custom-House" chapter, with its excessively chatty narrator, almost overwhelms the reader at first in apparently trivial detail. Yet it is full of indications of the drama to come. "My imagination was a tarnished mirror" (35)* says the narrator of his inability, while in office, to activate his characters with the warmth of life.⁶ These are the characters of "Hester Prynne's story" (34),⁷ on which he meditates "while pacing to and fro across my room, or traversing with a hundredfold repetition, the long extent from the front-door of the Custom-House to the side-entrance, and back again" (35). Power has corrupted him with the torpor of official life:

It was not merely during the three hours and a half which Uncle Sam claimed as his share of my daily life, that this wretched numbness held possession of me. It went with me on my sea-shore walks and rambles into the country, whenever--which was seldom and reluctantly--I bestirred myself to seek that invigorating charm of Nature, which used to give me such freshness and activity of thought, the moment that I stepped across the threshold of the Old Manse. The same torpor, as regarded the capacity for intellectual effort, accompanied me home, and weighed upon me in the chamber which I most absurdly termed my study. Nor did it quit me, when late at night, I sat in the deserted parlour, lighted only by the glimmering coal-fire and the moon, striving to picture forth imaginary scenes, which, the next day, might flow out on the brightening page in many-hued description. (35-36)

*This and all subsequent references to The Scarlet Letter are to the following edition: Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1962, page numbers in parentheses in text.

His greatest gift is lost, a loss the narrator attributes to his official tenure. The ordinary office, the banality of the Custom-House itself are responsible for his creative impotence.

Hawthorne is deprived of this enervating position by the power of the opposing political party, eager to exercise cruelty, "merely because they possessed the power of inflicting harm" (41). This version of the ordinariness of malevolence, familiar to us from Spenserian romance, is the donee of the romance we are about to read. It is the natural (a post-lapsarian version of human nature) circumstance underlying the events in the tale to come. The narrator is freed by his beheading, as he calls it, and leaves his native Salem for the "somewhere else" of which he is "a citizen" (45). He abandons any hope "to be of some importance" (45) to those he leaves behind, and yet he concludes "The Custom-House" with a statement of his dearest wish: "that the great-grandchildren of the present race may sometimes think kindly of the scribbler of bygone days," (45). He longs to be a hero to the natives who rejected him, to undergo an apotheosis similar to that of Hester Prynne.⁸ Indeed, his "figurative self" (43) was a hero to the daily press, while "the real human being" (43) was out buying paper preparatory to resuming his literary career--in "The Custom-House" we meet both.

The Scarlet Letter proper is to be considered as written "from beyond the grave" (44). Thus it is that

Hawthorne, haunted by old Salem which "induces a sort of home-feeling with the past, which I scarcely claim in reference to the present phase of the town" (8), takes it upon himself to aid in the redemption of official, historical New England. He dies officially to be reborn a romancer. The office which he ultimately fulfills is that of vindicator of that ancient race of old New Englanders of which he is a personal as well as an official descendant. His own bloody-minded ancestors give him his strongest "claim to a residence" (8), but he maintains the connection, by assuming their guilt: "At all events, I, the present writer, as their representative, hereby take shame upon myself for their sakes, and pray that any curse incurred by them--as I have heard, and as the dreary and unprosperous condition of the race, for many a long year back, would argue to exist--may be now and henceforth removed." (8) The "instinct" (10) of connection between man and place has been like a "spell" (10) on the writer, a spell he at last breaks when he leaves the Custom-House--a kind of "doom" (11) which attaches him to Salem even after his departure although its power over him weakens enough that he can write about it.

The questions, moral, historical, and artistic, which are raised in "The Custom-House" are those treated in The Scarlet Letter as a whole. These have to do with the influence of place on action, the tendency for power to corrupt, and the way in which what we see is an indication

of meaning which may appear to contradict the seen.

To begin with the Custom-House itself, we find the building powerful and threatening, despite the innocuousness of the officials within. It seems to have sucked the life out of all of them--and indeed with the narrator himself we have a first-hand account of the way in which the office ruins the man. The wasteland in which it exists, with remnants of other powers--Indian arrowheads, a once-thriving shipping industry--is an indication of the way power lays waste, even as it tames a wilderness. The racial memory of ancestral power overwhelms the narrator even as it inspires him. The brick edifice which participates with the office in robbing him of his gifts also inspires him with material for his first great romance. The way in which the place and the office combine to destroy and also to aid in recreating a person is the subject of the work as a whole. What is personalized for us in "The Custom-House" is dramatized in the rest of The Scarlet Letter.

In The Scarlet Letter proper, beyond the introductory chapter of provenance, we again encounter the meaning of power, of the "doom" of place--that "dark necessity" which roots Chillingworth to the spot, the town of his secret ignominy, and of the way in which these are inextricably connected. Our contempt for and our sympathy for Dimmesdale, our awe of and admiration for Pearl, our pity and revulsion for Chillingworth, the coldness we feel toward

Hester, our heroine--these conflicting feelings make the work engrossing, despite the fact that we know little of the complexity of their inner lives. Their various kinds of power are qualified repeatedly by objects connected with them.

The use Hawthorne makes of these objects appears to be arbitrary and primitive. They have a life of their own out of all proportion to the story line. Bellingham's hall exudes power; the dotard of a governor does not. The objects in his hallway indicate the thematic importance of the meeting that is about to occur between Hester and the elders of the settlement, including Dimmesdale, the father of her child.

The story told in The Scarlet Letter reaches a climax in that scene in Governor Bellingham's mansion. Hester Prynne, stigmatized by the community for her adultery with an unknown man, has come to find out whether she may keep her child, the fruit of that adultery. The society in which she and the minister live has virtually rejected her for that sin, while he goes undetected and unpunished. Their child, natural and wild, is like Hester rejected by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and yet remains in some mysterious way superior to the artificial laws which have cast her out and kept her apart. Dimmesdale, the child's unconfessed father, goes about with his secret gnawing at his vitals, unable to confess yet unable to ignore his own hypocrisy. In Bellingham's precincts we see

them meet--the minister weak and pathetic, the woman strong and admirable, the child, Pearl, different from both, refusing to participate in their ritual and rejecting their catechism publicly. The three are united momentarily by their secret bond, while the physician, dark participant in their mystery, malevolently looks on.

The secret continues unrevealed after this scene, but the true nature of the four characters is clear to us; the damage has already been done. When, in the end, Pearl, like Una, travels East, she leaves behind a settlement in which power has sterilized everything. All of this Pearl instinctively rejects in Governor Bellingham's mansion. Dimmesdale will escape that wasteland of power only in death; Hester, stronger than the vain ambition which surrounds her in New England, can return to it a beacon for those who suffer there. Chillingworth, a creature well-suited to the rank and poisonous place, shrivels up and dies when his desire for revenge (a form of ambition) is thwarted; he becomes, as it were, part of the landscape. All of these aspects of characterization are contained in the scene at the governor's mansion.

The things in the hall contain in their emblematic essences--in the visible signs intrinsic to them which suggest qualities beyond their actual selves--the premonition of conflict, even as the things themselves seem to be static, dead, just things after all. What James called "the passionless quality"⁹ of this work is belied by the

immense power of the things in Bellingham's hallway. The characters, as he said, are less "actual and personal"¹⁰ but the scene is intensely vivid nonetheless. In fact, the conflict which Hester has come to engage in is brief and resolved by Dimmesdale's intercession (that is, all decide that nothing will change). The plot, as it were, moves forward not at all as a result of this confrontation. Hester continues to keep Pearl; the minister continues to keep his secret. But we, the reader, are impressed by the power Hester has bearded; we understand fully the pressure she is under, the fear she must live with, the helplessness in the face of monolithic public power and the ever-present threat to her keeping her child. We understand it all because we have seen the governor's hall; and we have also seen with great relief the window out onto the garden with the vulgar, aggressive "natural" and unspoiled pumpkin ever gaining on the artificial and intimidating tower at the end of the hall. The vanity, uselessness, and pretence embodied in the hallway--with its Elizabethan relics and portraits of the dead¹¹--are transcended by Hester's simple endurance and her courage to retain her child, a "natural" child in every sense and Hester's purest attribute.

"The Custom-House" chapter foreshadows the themes of the inhibition of official life, the futility of imagination within public life, the hostility even of government towards the weaker citizenry who hope for protection, the

inutility of public service, the question of adaptation to position, the darker sides of power. Of all the scenes in The Scarlet Letter, the scene or scenes in "The Custom-House" are the most "naturalistic." We walk through the historical outskirts of what was once a "wild and forest-bordered settlement" (7), so like Hester's Boston. We see "in a border of unthrifty grass...a spacious edifice of brick" (3). Yet the dotards who inhabit, officially, the Salem Custom-House live there in a twilight untouched by real time or real space, enchanted persons fitted for institutional life by a naive ruthlessness which permits "the regularity of a perfectly comprehended system" (23) in which only the narrator is out of place.

Hawthorne is as out of place in the Custom-House as Hester is in Boston, and yet "I looked upon it as evidence, in some measure, of a system naturally well balanced, and lacking no essential part of a thorough organization, that, with such associates to remember, I could mingle at once with men of altogether different qualities, and never murmur at the change" (26). His literary friends from an earlier life melt into insignificance and Nature becomes invisible; his poetic gift vanishes utterly. "But I never considered it as other than a transitory life. There was always a prophetic instinct, a low whisper in my ear, that within no long period, and whenever a new change of custom should be essential to my good, a change would come" (26). He becomes the chief executive of the

Custom-House and there he vows to his predecessor, Mr. Surveyor Pue, that he will tell the story of Hester Prynne so that Pue's "'memory'" (34) will receive the credit which it is due for saving the letter and its tale. The work thus memorializes an official while implicitly deploring the world which makes system and office essential.

The externals of presentation--the story of Hester Prynne in seventeenth-century Boston--are as apparently cool and lifeless as the Custom-House. Underneath, however, lies a tale of passion, written by a dead surveyor (Hawthorne) writing from "the realm of quiet" (44) from whence "The life of the Custom-House lies like a dream behind me" (44). When The Scarlet Letter as the story of Hester Prynne begins (after the story of the scarlet letter as the significant object in the official life of the author ends), the scene shifts abruptly to a prison door in Hester's Boston. The scene becomes sharper, more colorful --it moves to the foreground in the romance and we confront the specific details of the presented life and through them the inner significance of that life, a significance at once historical and personal.

"The Prison-Door" chapter (the first) is full of the ambiguity which characterizes the romance as a whole. It is a chapter dominated by the object which establishes for us Hester's identity, her provenance in the tale as a living character--an object contrasted with the rose bush by that prison door, the efflorescence of natural life

amidst the darkness of institutional post-lapsarian power.¹² Hester emerges from that "first prison-house" (47) (the phrase rings like an epithet for the body and indeed it embodies a necessary evil for post-lapsarian man) with its heavy oak door "studded with iron spikes" (47) "as if by her own free-will" (53). The jail seems grim and ancient, although only fifteen or so years old: "The rust on the ponderous iron-work of its oaken door looked more antique than any thing else in the new world" (47). But close by this evidence of sin and crime in Utopia is a wild rose-bush, a "token that the deep heart of Nature" (48) pities the prisoner, a rose bush connected, too, in some way with Ann Hutchinson, hounded out of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and massacred by the Indians (i.e., rejected by the same system which persecutes Hester and martyred by savages with a system of their own).

This place, the prison-door hard by which grows the wild rose bush, is the beginning of Hester's new life. It is also "the threshold of our narrative, which is now about to issue from that inauspicious portal" (49). The romance comes out of the prison as meaning and poetry issue from dreadful circumstance. The rose, complex symbol, may do one of two things. "It may serve, let us hope, to symbolize some sweet moral blossom, that may be found along the track, or relieve the darkening close of a tale of human frailty and sorrow" (49). These two aspects of Hester's tale--her transcendence of system and circumstance and the

obscure ending of a narrative of ineluctable weakness and suffering--are the two opposing strains in The Scarlet Letter.

With the emergence of Hester into the marketplace, we meet the chief character in The Scarlet Letter. Like the other characters, she rarely speaks, nor do we see much presented inner life. Hawthorne himself tells us what she thinks and feels and remembers, often in the same tableau vivant plus narrative presentation as is given us in the other scenes of the romance. The settings, as in the first chapter, continue to enhance our awareness of the characters; like the scarlet letter, the settings are external manifestations of internal (in the case of character) and implied (in the case of society as a whole) conditions.

The setting, by the prison-door, indicates sadness, gloom, antiquity and hopelessness. The rose-bush, on the other hand, is an enigmatic counter to it--young, ever-blooming throughout history, outliving pine trees and oaks, delicate and lovely and not suborned, like the oak, to any punitive purpose. The setting which presents the narrative, from which it is "about to issue," is capable of being understood in two or more senses; and it is a setting which we are attracted to as well as repulsed by. The ambiguity and ambivalence attached to this setting will be connected with Hester as well--our response has begun before we even see her, but the tone has been set.

The conflict at the heart of Hester Prynne as a character, between law (in its most constraining, least sympathetic aspects) and passion is found in the first chapter. In the next three chapters--which take place in the market-place, on the scaffold, and inside the prison--we see several versions of her (roughly, public, private and conjugal). In the first of these chapters is Hester as the public sees her and as she remembers her early life. In the second is Hester as she is caught between the two men, husband and lover. And the third is Hester confronting and confronted by her husband. These views of the main character, staged according to the setting in which she is viewed and not the other way around, provide a strong concentration on one character--the one whose tale of passion, in every sense, The Scarlet Letter is. The shifting perspective from which we are always asked to view her starts here.

At the beginning of Chapter Two, "The Market-Place," we still do not know whom we are about to see, whether a witch, an Antinomian, a naughty child or a misbehaving servant. The members of the crowd who take the largest part are the women (a petty and bloody-minded lot), the midwives of Hester's rebirth into the settlement after a temporary banishment in prison. She re-emerges by herself, without the beadle's help, clutching her misbegotten infant over her scarlet letter, but shining in the midst of misfortune. It is the scarlet letter which "made a halo of

the misfortune and ignominy in which she was enveloped" (54)--"It had the effect of a spell, taking her out of the ordinary relations with humanity, and inclosing her in a sphere by herself" (54). Thus the first scaffold scene begins: with Hester a shining and seemingly inviolable creature on display in broad daylight, a symbol of beatified ignominy to the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

The scaffold itself is "a portion of a penal machine...instrument of discipline...The very ideal of ignominy" (55-56). Hester stands on it like a Madonna of sin, another aspect of the paradox she is. The scaffold reveals her ignominy to the colony, but it is also the place where she remembers her early life: "the scaffold of the pillory was a point of view that revealed to Hester Prynne the entire track along which she had been treading, since her happy infancy" (58). Her childhood, her home, her marriage and the vanity of her girlhood--these lead to the scaffold. Hester as pharmakos also embodies a natural woman, and thus a natural humanity, cruelly exposed.

Chapter Three, "The Recognition," begins immediately after Hester's recognition of the accomplishment of her destiny. Her reverie is interrupted by her discovery of her husband in the crowd; with that recognition and its acknowledgment the narrative leaves Hester and concentrates on the man who will be known as Chillingworth as he finds out, or rather fails to find out, the recent history of his wife. Hester then feels "a shelter" (63) from his gaze

in the publicity which surrounds her. But just as she is feeling grateful for that refuge, her attention is drawn to the gallery of the meeting-house above her where sit the elders of the colony arrayed in judgment: "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" (64). Among them, of course, is the Reverend Mr. Dimmesdale, least capable of all.

Her husband adjures her to silence with a glance; Hester's lover begs her to speak his name: "'What can thy silence do for him, except it tempt him--yea compel him, as it were--to add hypocrisy to sin?'" (66) he asks her, referring to himself. The power of that appeal is not lost on the woman. Although the crowd is profoundly moved by the minister's plea and "brought...into one accord of sympathy" (67) by it, Hester alone understands him. When she vows not to reveal his name, he retires to his seat "with a long respiration" (67), and she has complied with the wishes of both men. Hester's triple exposure--to husband, lover, crowd--ends with her returning to the prison, "and vanished from the public gaze within its iron-clamped portal" (68). The "lurid gleam" (68) of her letter is visible to those who stare after her; just as "the lurid fire" (163) of Chillingworth's heart is visible to Hester when he has been transformed by hatred and suffering. The two of them suffer from the broken law and,

they share an aura; Dimmesdale's suffering is self-inflicted and entirely inward.

During "The Interview" (Chapter 4), Hester and her husband make of "the dismal apartment" (69) a temporarily shared abode. In one of the most moving scenes in The Scarlet Letter they forgive one another and swear to keep their mutual secret from Dimmesdale and from Boston. Hester is subsequently released from prison, her "term of confinement...at an end" (75). With that release, however, comes another confinement, her continued residence in Boston.

She chooses to dwell in the same place as her lover; but there is also a significant inevitability about her residence there. She stays there because it is the place she most wants to be and because Boston is her appropriate home in this world:

It may seem marvellous, that, with the world before her,--kept by no restrictive clause of her condemnation within the limits of the Puritan settlement, so remote and so obscure...and having also the passes of the dark, inscrutable forest open to her, where the wildness of her nature might assimilate itself with a people whose customs and life were alien from the law that had condemned her,--it may seem marvelous, that this woman should still call that place her home, where, and where only, she must needs be the type of shame. But there is a fatality, a feeling so irresistible and inevitable that it has the force of doom, which almost invariably compels human beings to linger around and haunt, ghostlike, the spot where some great and marked event has given the color to their lifetime; and still the more irresistibly, the darker the tinge that saddens it. Her sin, her ignominy, were the roots which she had struck into the soil. It was as if a new birth, with stronger assimilations than the first, had converted the forest-land, still so

uncongenial to every other pilgrim and wanderer, into Hester Prynne's wild and dreary, but life-long home. All other scenes of earth--even that village of rural England, where happy infancy and stainless maidenhood seemed yet to be in her mother's keeping, like garments put off long ago--were foreign to her, in comparison. The chain that bound her here was of iron links, and galling to her inmost soul, but never could be broken. (76-77)

The Miltonic echo at the beginning of the passage serves to remind us that Hester's way is solitary and that her residence in New England is her necessary habitation, compelled by the first fall (as told to us in Paradise Lost), despite the two significant ties that bind her to Boston. Her sin makes the wilderness settlement her natural habitation. Her rebirth has acted on that wilderness: Hester has become like the settlement which has not yet thoroughly absorbed anyone else. She alone is at home in that wasteland, the Massachusetts Bay Colony which here becomes an explicit symbol for the human soul reborn after the fall--wild, dreary, life-long, like mortality itself.

Hester's life there is lonely because of the two obsessions which haunt her there--the first, that she walks with Dimmesdale "with whom she deemed herself connected in a union, that, unrecognized on earth, would bring them together before the bar of final judgment" (77); the second, that "Here...had been the scene of her guilt, and here should be the scene of her earthly punishment; and so perchance, the torture of her daily shame would at length purge her soul, and work out another purity than that which she had lost; more saint-like, because the result

of martyrdom. Hester Prynne, therefore, did not flee" (77-78). She walks in the town like a ghost among the living, yet she is haunted by the two men who only live by their connection with her.

Seven years later, physically transformed by the letter and the life that has gone with it, Hester is still the rebel underneath: "In her lonesome cottage, by the sea-shore, 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, could they have been seen so much as knocking at her door" (157). We see them, however, in this metaphor, not least because she is like those daring and dangerous thoughts: her borderland cottage keeps her on the outskirts of the system which condemned her, and keeps her a spiritual wanderer. She "wandered without a clew in the dark labyrinth of mind; now turned aside by an insurmountable precipice; not starting back from a deep chasm. There was wild and ghastly scenery all around her, and a home and comfort nowhere" (158). Hawthorne has earlier given her over "to the spot" (78) where she dwells, to which "A mystic shadow of suspicion immediately attached itself" (78). An abandoned woman--by her husband, her lover, her conduct--an abandoned cottage on sterile ground becomes her home; facing west, towards the certainty of death, and half-concealed from view, her "little lonesome dwelling" (78) becomes her outer shell. We never penetrate that cottage,

nor do the townspeople. Despite the title of the chapter-- "Hester at Her Needle"--we do not see her working; we only hear about the result. Hester lives like a revenant, "Apart from mortal interests, yet close beside them, like a ghost that revisits the familiar fireside, and can no longer make itself seen or felt" (81). But although she cannot make an impression, she is highly sensitive to sin in others. Like young Goodman Brown after his forest journey, Hester's consciousness of her own mixed feelings has sensitized her to duplicity in others.

Consciousness of ambivalence--her continued love for Dimmesdale and her guilt at that love--also estranges her from her child. Pearl is unapproachable in a real sense, partly because of her own nature, and partly because of Hester's. An ambiguous figure from infancy, she turns her face from the light of day as she is carried into the market-place, yet turns her arms towards her father only to be rejected by him. She has an "outward mutability... depth, too, as well as variety; but...it lacked reference and adaptation to the world into which she was born" (86). "The spell of life went forth from her ever creative spirit, and communicated itself to a thousand objects, as a torch kindles a flame" (90); but she has no friends. She lives with her mother "in a dismal labyrinth of doubt" (94), of unknown parentage, out of place.

The "structure of imagery"¹³ that makes up The Scarlet Letter is, according to Frye, "increasingly ironic

and paradoxical" in a way that severely limits the reader's interpretation. The straightforward and transparent narrative discourse on the action is countered by stunning and mysterious images presented to us as opaque elements in an otherwise comprehensible scene. An example of this fundamental structural opposition is found in Chapter 7, "The Governor's Hall," which begins abruptly with Hester on her way there; we have just as abruptly left the inexplicable and reputedly Satanic Pearl and her unanswered question as to where she comes from. Pearl is abruptly abandoned by the narrator after the catechizing of her mother, in order to concentrate more on Hester. But her question is repeated in the catechism by the elders at the mansion, and rejected by her.

Hester confronts the powerful because she must have Pearl by her in order to continue to survive her ostracism. She shows that radical approach to life that is part of the romance heroic: she threatens the governors in the Governor's mansion. Undaunted by the symbols of power (history in a book, shining armor) she finds there, she rises to the top of the moral hierarchy of Boston by threatening Dimmesdale and defying the elders. Furthermore, we as readers cannot but feel that we benefit from this confrontation: this is Hester's only active adventure in the romance and yet, in her history, we become increasingly aware that we are the outcome of this progression. The last page of The Scarlet Letter is appropriate to what Frye calls the

conception of history in which history is "not only...a progression but...a cycle of which the audience is the end, and, as the last page indicates, the beginning as well."¹⁴ The grave by King's Chapel in Boston, "as the curious investigator may still discern, and perplex himself with the purport" (147) now bears the symbol of the romance we are reading.

The scene at Governor Bellingham's mansion (Chapters 7 and 8) represents a crisis in Hester's life. The previous chapter break hinted that Pearl's reputation in the colony had caused trouble for Hester; but Pearl's reputation is not uniquely suspicious in that society, Hawthorne makes clear. Hester must confront power on her own initiative and for her own sake as part of the preliminary adventure leading up to her confrontation first with her husband and then with Dimmesdale. This, however, is the more crucial struggle, for it shows her her own strength, whatever the outcome of her later confrontations. Dimmesdale alone among the elders understands her strength and gives in to her as he does later in the forest. No one in Boston can harm her.

Governor Bellingham himself is a slightly ridiculous figure in his gown and cap, ruffed, "rigid and severe, and frostbitten with more than autumnal age" (103); in the best romance tradition he is a kind of helpless old king, "busy" (95) with the lesser details of his domain and in himself a source of the social sterility that appears to

afflict the colony. He is brother to a witch, and they all inhabit--Hester and Dimmesdale are explicitly said to do so, and Bellingham and his sister only by implication--the same labyrinth of error and doubt. The sterility of the community is not emphasized by Hawthorne, but Boston's is a wasted landscape as is apparent in the contrast with the forest scene so full of light and natural life, and in the implicit similarity to the Salem of the Custom-House, also a sterile place, a wasteland of official life and the seedy result of government in its most rigid and inhibiting aspects.

Chapters 7 and 8 focus on the conflict between Hester and her enemies--the body politic and Dimmesdale, too, insofar as he is hypocritically arrayed with them against her and their child. The governors think Pearl is "of demon origin" (95)--Dimmesdale is that demon, the answer to her catechism and theirs. In the conflict between Hester and Dimmesdale (for the elders are partly his shield) she is brave and eloquent, a heroic figure: "Alone in the world, cast off by it, and with this sole treasure to keep her heart alive, she felt that she possessed indefeasible rights against the world, and was ready to defend them to the death" (108). Dimmesdale is a pathetic figure by contrast: "He looked now more careworn and emaciated than as we described him at the scene of Hester's public ignominy; and whether it were his failing health, or whatever the cause might be, his large dark eyes had a

world of pain in their troubled and melancholy depth" (109). After speaking, he withdrew "and stood with his face partially concealed in the heavy folds of the window-curtain; while the shadow of his figure, which the sunlight cast upon the floor, was tremulous with the vehemence of his appeal" (111). His voice "reechoed, and the hollow armour rang with it" (109). He is the shadowy echo of all that the governor's hall represents--false power, the power that comes with office, and guilty pretence.

The scene is one of explicit conflict; Hester is aware, so Hawthorne tells us at the beginning, "that it seemed scarcely an equal match between the public, on the one side, and a lonely woman, backed by the sympathies of nature, on the other" (96). This very human heroine is associated with nature, youth, the natural order and strength. Those she confronts are wintry, weak, confused, sterile, old and (in the case of Dimmesdale) moribund. Foreshadowing the battle to come, little Pearl on the way to the mansion vanquishes the nasty Puritan children who taunt them; like "some...half-fledged angel of judgment,-- whose mission was to punish the sins of the rising generation" (97) she puts the little mud-slingers to rout.

At the mansion itself, the facade seems to indicate a place of mystery and oracular secrets now grown impenetrably hard and without meaning. The "strange and seemingly cabalistic figures and diagrams, suitable to the quaint taste of the age...hard and durable, for the

admiration of after times" (98) signifies the wealth and power inside, and perhaps the nature of the wisdom, too. Against this power--the power of authority, unquestioned and inscrutable despite its arcane rationale--Hester must defend her right to her child. They are an appropriate pair --invincible Nature (the natural law of motherhood) and fearless innocence--to fight against the undesirable law of the Puritan system.

The undesirability of the law is instantly apparent in the person of the bond-servant who admits them, "a seven years' slave" (98) under the very law that would take Pearl from her mother. This slave attempts to deny them entrance but Hester wordlessly overcomes him by "the decision of her air and the glittering symbol in her bosom" (99). Her talisman and her personal strength, both of which create an aura of immense power, cause her to be admitted into the inner sanctum of Puritan power.

Once in the hall, but not yet in the presence of her antagonists, Hester sees the accoutrements of that power; she stands in the central corridor off of which branch the implicitly labyrinthine "depth of the house" (99) with its many apartments. The illumination of two towers at one end and the still greater illumination of the bow window reveal on a cushion, like a relic, "a folio tome, probably of the Chronicles of England" (99) unread but revered. The tankard with ale still in it (but not much) is a symbol of sustenance of which we--but not Hester--are

made aware; the ghostly portraits of the Bellinghams--the patriarchal line--stare like ogres. The suit of armor, instrument of war, dwarfs Hester but enlarges her talisman --at once a diminution of her person and also a revelation of her power. The house is like a book to be read; Pearl "was as greatly pleased with the gleaming armour as she had been with the glittering frontispiece of the house" (101). And Hester (whether frightened or appalled we do not know, by the image of Pearl as an elf in the breastplate of the armor) turns to nature and a saving glance outside the hall. She calls her child to the bow window, and they look out on a lapsed English garden, "relinquished, as hopeless" (102) and abandoned to the hardy vegetables of the new world. The vigor of this newer, more sustaining garden is apparent in "a pumpkin vine, rooted at some distance, [which] had run across the intervening space, and deposited one of its gigantic products directly beneath the hall-window" (102), "as if to warn the Governor that this great lump of vegetable gold was as rich an ornament as New England earth would offer him" (102). This aggressive pumpkin is a kind of symbolic assertion of the power of nature lurking just outside the oppressive social structure with its obscure and threatening powers. It is also, growing as it does in a ruined flower garden, a reminder of the ambivalence underlying Puritan life; the governor has apparently tried to renew English life in New England. Ironically, the worst of old England--the law which allows

bond-slavery and would deprive a mother of her child-- survives, while the flowers perish. Hester, however, is restored by the sight of the pumpkin; like Antaeus touching earth she looks and her strength is renewed.

When the governor and his colleagues at last approach (the inherent drama in the scene has already been presented by the detailed description of the hall before they arrive) Hester is in the background. "The shadow of the curtain fell on Hester Prynne, and partially concealed her" (104) just as Dimmesdale is later concealed. Pearl is the foreground figure in this scene, despite the fact that it is her mother who does battle for them both. Pearl is here a neutral figure; her answers are enigmatic, non-committal. She cannot be catechized. The elders besiege her with questions, but, small temple of innocence, she is impervious to their doctrine and they are forced to turn their attention to the mother.

The perverse little catechumen, in the presence of her mother, her father and her mother's husband, refuses to answer as to who made her--and thereby endangers all of them. She is seized by Hester who defiantly answers for her:

"God gave me the child!" cried she. "He gave her, in requital of all things else, which ye had taken from me. She is my happiness!--she is my torture, none the less! Pearl keeps me here in life! Pearl punishes me too! See ye not, she is the scarlet letter, only capable of being loved, and so endowed with a million-fold the power of retribution for my sin? Ye shall not take her! I will die first!" (108)

Hester demonstrates at once her desperation and her power--
"Look thou to it! I will not lose the child! Look to it!"
(109) she warns Dimmesdale. Until now the reader has felt that Hester has been hard done by; with this show of her own power, she seems to take to herself some measure of the justice which she has suffered from, from the moment of her first ignominious scene on the scaffold when the public condemned her and her lover and her husband abandoned her. This scene in Bellingham's hall is Hester's first great adventure--even the forest scene, doomed to failure, cannot compare with it for an impressive display of her power, and the power of natural justice represented in her on this occasion.

"The affair being so satisfactorily concluded, Hester Prynne, with Pearl, departed from the house" (112); Hester has satisfied our sense of justice there. It is directly as a result of the struggle for justice in the governor's mansion that Hester can become the martyr of her closing years, "looked upon with awe, yet with reverence too" (246), a prefiguration of "some brighter period, when the world should have grown ripe for it, in Heaven's own time, when a new truth would be revealed, in order to establish the whole relation between man and woman on a surer ground of mutual happiness" (247). That struggle at the mansion is her only victory in the book, but it prefigures her eventual apotheosis.

The struggles of Hester in the declining phase of

The Scarlet Letter have to do with Chillingworth and Dimmesdale, the two figures who stand in the way of justice in the romance, the one by his rage the other by his weakness --two far greater moral frailties than Hester's passion and betrayal. "The Leech," as he is called (although he too declines) has wormed his way into the constant companionship of his victim, the minister, and soon the physician and Dimmesdale live together, two sinners. He thus lives with his wife's lover as once he lived with her--a man with nothing of his own to give, but with great needs of his own. Their apartments, in the house of a respectable widow, are "in a house covering pretty nearly the site on which the venerable structure of King's Chapel has since been built" (120). Next to it is the graveyard where Dimmesdale and Hester will rest--"in that burial-ground beside which King's Chapel has since been built" (247).

Dimmesdale's is the front, sunny apartment, "hung round with tapestry, said to be from the Gobelin looms, and, at all events, representing the Scriptural story of David and Bathsheba, and Nathan the Prophet" (120-121). Chillingworth lives on the otherside of the house (implicitly the dark and rearward side) where his study and laboratory are close at hand. "With such commodiousness of situation, these two learned persons sat themselves down, each in his own domain, yet familiarly passing from one apartment to the other, and bestowing a mutual and not incurious inspection into one another's business" (121). Chillingworth

has thus been able to lure the minister into his own domain; his ugliness, his bent and twisted body are signs of his malevolence and of his connection with the underworld of misshapen and perverted wisdom. From this place Hester will try to rescue her lover during the forest tryst; but in his confusion and his treachery towards her he has made himself vulnerable to deception. The malignancy that accompanies his death, and that contributes to his reputation as a martyred saint, is present within him in the wasting disease which consumes him, and is present of course in the attraction Chillingworth feels toward him. The tapestry in his apartment symbolizes to the reader the way in which he perceives himself, as a hapless David caught between a "grimly picturesque" (121) woman and a "woe-denouncing seer" (121). This fascinating tapestry is suggestive for more than one reason. It is a large pictorial reminder that, like David with Bathsheba, Dimmesdale took advantage of his office to obtain a woman. But it also gives the traditional implications of the relationships portrayed in The Scarlet Letter, in the view of the Old Testament so dear to the hearts of those church fathers and rabbinical scholars cherished by Dimmesdale. The great mystery of the story of David and Bathsheba is that they are forgiven: they produce Solomon, a triumph of divine mercy over law and what we can only call justice.

Chillingworth becomes "not a spectator only, but a chief actor, in the poor minister's interior world" (134).

He invades Dimmesdale's chamber while he sleeps, to find there the confirmation of what he already knows. Instead of exposing him, he feeds on him, walking around undetected in that interior world--a world of torment to Dimmesdale, who is aware of the veneration in which he is held by the colony and the foul deceit in which he lives. This foulness is oxygen to Chillingworth, who perishes without it--a leech without a host. But meanwhile Dimmesdale perpetually confesses his secret in veiled terms, keeps vigils in the dark and examines his face in a brightly lit mirror. In his darkened room he is haunted by visions of dead friends, dead parents and by Hester and Pearl, until he himself becomes a ghost, his "only truth...the anguish in his inmost soul, and the undissembled expression of it in his aspect" (140); the imperfection of his submission to hypocrisy saves him and damns him, too.

On the night when he ascends the scaffold, unable to bear another vigil in his apartment, he submits again to "that Remorse which dogged him everywhere, and whose own sister and closely linked companion was that Cowardice which invariably drew him back, with her tremulous gripe, just when the other impulse had hurried him to the verge of disclosure" (141). Although he screams aloud, he remains invisible, denied the comfort of exposure by that same hypocrisy which torments him. While he stands there with Hester and Pearl, watched only by Chillingworth, the meteoric "A" passes across the sky--"an immense letter,--

the letter A,--marked out in lines of dull red light" (148). To Dimmesdale it stands for Arthur, to the townspeople for "Angel" (in connection with the death that same night of Governor Winthrop). To the narrator it might stand "for the arch-fiend" (149) who confronts the family on the scaffold. These interpretations, by implication, pertain also to Hester's letter. But the next day, confronted by his sexton with news of "'A great red letter in the sky, --the letter A'" (151), the minister denies that he has heard of it, denying publicly what he has already accepted privately.

We have seen public and private views of Dimmesdale when we are presented with "Another View of Hester," Chapter 13, a view of her as she "wandered without a clew in the dark labyrinth of mind; now turned aside by an insurmountable precipice; now starting back from a deep chasm" (158), a labyrinth as tortuous as Dimmesdale's and as dangerous, for Hester is not repentant. "'There is no path to guide us out of this dismal maze!'" (165), she tells Chillingworth; "'there could be no good event for him, or thee, or me, who are here wandering together in this gloomy maze of evil, and stumbling, at every step, over the guilt wherewith we have strewn our path'" (165). To which Chillingworth answers, "'It is our fate'" (166); "'it has all been a dark necessity'" (166), an interpretation of these events which is confirmed and transcended by the conclusion of the romance. Dimmesdale and Chillingworth submit to

that fate, but Hester at first resists it and then transcends it in her more perfect submission to it.

Hester has put herself in the way of Chillingworth to confront him with the harm he has done to the minister. She has found her husband "stooping along the ground, in quest of roots and herbs to concoct his medicines withal" (159) at the end of the chapter where we have seen her recognize Chillingworth's desire for revenge and her duty to rescue Dimmesdale from it. He is a weak, if serpentine, figure now that she recognizes his evil and her duty. Bidding Pearl to play by the shore, Hester confronts the old man. At the end of that confrontation, the crooked figure "betook himself again to his employment of gathering herbs" (166); nothing has happened to change him in his course of vengeance, either. It is his intransigence which now fills her with revulsion and regret for her marriage. She imagines that he will leave a scene of devastation and blight behind him, "deadly nightshade, dogwood, henbane, and whatever else of vegetable wickedness the climate could produce, all flourishing with hideous luxuriance" (167) in his path. He makes a wasteland of nature, but that particular landscape is receptive to him, as if the New England they all inhabit, far from being either garden or lush wilderness (except for the forest with Hester and Dimmesdale) is a savage waste already.

Hester is equally intransigent as, unrepentant, she turns to look for her child and finds her decked in "A

letter,--the letter A,--but freshly green, instead of scarlet!" (168): as if the mother's confrontation with the vengeful man has magically renewed her talisman. This letter, so ambiguous from the moment of its first appearance, now prepares us for the scene with her old lover. The fresh green letter on the child's bosom prefigures the sinning again--and the renewed love--that will come to Hester in the forest tryst when she and her lover wander again in the memory of passion. In that green world apart from the wasteland scavenged by the physician the two former lovers contemplate a life lived under a desirable law, represented by the greenness of the forest around them and of Pearl's letter. The child's "inevitable tendency to hover about the enigma of the scarlet letter" (171) here is literalized metaphor, for she cannot leave it alone; when she is not wearing it, she is commenting on her mother's not wearing it.

Although the forest scene with the old man does not take place on the same day as that with Dimmesdale, they seem to be part of a continuous adventure, one in which Hester tries to bring to some conclusion her relationships with the two men who are the human boundaries to her life (more even than Pearl is). Hester demands something from each man which he is incapable of giving her. She lies in wait for the minister as she lay in wait for the physician. She sought her husband on the peninsula; she must go to the mainland for her lover, via a footpath

which "straggled 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" (74). Hester at last has the power to understand what she sees, and this time again she enters the forest with her eyes open. Mother and child sit in a dell by a brook, a pleasant wooded scene, shady, near the murmuring of the water, and again Hester sends Pearl away. As she sees the dying man approach, the chapter ends. The next chapter begins with Dimmesdale's continued approach; indeed he almost passes by before she calls him from the forest. They meet like shades in another world, "inhabitants of the same sphere" (180) again as they join hands in the forest. The memory of erotic love does not enter the scene until Pearl reappears on the other side of the brook, separated from her parents by a sexual barrier she refuses to cross until her mother resumes the badge of her transgression.

They sit together, however, the man and the woman, "on the mossy trunk of the fallen tree" (185) after Dimmesdale's accusation and his forgiveness of her, two figures in a fallen world. "The forest was obscure around them, and creaked with a blast that was passing through it" (185); they sit on a tree like the tree of knowledge of good and evil, in a forest darkened by the memory of

passion. Hester plots their escape, and more, speaks to him of it: when she says to him, "'Thou shalt not go alone!'" (188) the chapter ends, as if with the violence of renewed transgression. The next chapter opens with the "Flood of Sunshine" (188) which the renewal of their vow inspires in the dark forest.

The two of them, in this Arcadia beyond the settlement and its laws, are in a world apart, physically and morally. Hester is at home in this wood:

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. 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 fire-side, or the church. The tendency of her fate and fortunes had been to set her free. The scarlet letter was her passport into regions where other women dared not tread. (189)

As for Dimmesdale, "At the head of the social system... he was only the more trammelled by its regulations, its principles, and even its prejudices" (189). Together they go through "the ruined wall" (190) again, and Hester attempts to cast from her the stigma she has worn, and with it her social identity.

Loosing her hair she rejoins "the sympathy of Nature--that wild, heathen Nature of the forest, never subjugated by human law, nor illumined by her truth" (192). Not the Nature of her motherhood, the nature which aided her in her fight at the governor's mansion, but the morally ambiguous, neutral, nature of the forest as "the wood's

heart of mystery...had become a mystery of joy" (191). But when she calls her child, "gentler here than in the grassy-margined streets of the settlement, or in her mother's cottage" (194), the girl comes slowly back (the chapter ends) and we see her parents as they watch her approach (the beginning of Chapter 19)--they are now her joyful mother and her "unquiet" (195) father, who "'dreads this interview, and yearns for it'" (196).

Pearl is thoroughly assimilated into this natural world; but they are not. This is what they will learn, the closer she comes to them. Dimmesdale admits to "'a strange fancy...that this brook is the boundary between two worlds, and that thou canst never meet thy Pearl again'" (197). The double Pearl--in flesh and in the perfect reflection of the pool--confronts them but does not approach. The "nymph-child, or...infant dryad, or whatever else was in closest sympathy with the antique wood" (194) is excluded from "the sphere in which she and her mother dwelt together, and was now vainly seeking to return to it" (197). The child will not rejoin her mother until she resumes the letter and covers her hair; "a gray shadow seemed to fall across her" (200) as the relapse ends and the family depart the solitary dell. But Pearl has washed off the minister's kiss, as if it were dirty; she alone is the same everywhere, and she will not accept a double nature in either her mother or in Dimmesdale.

Dimmesdale departs as part of the continuous

narration of this scene, rushing back into town like young Goodman Brown after his forest interview. An embracing of evil also awaits him in Boston; the culmination of his hypocrisy must be brought about in the city of men and their laws. His false holiness will fool the settlement as it has done already, but it will also provide him with an avenue for escaping that fraud and for transcending it.

When he leaves the forest (ahead of Hester and Pearl) he looks back and sees them:

...there was Hester, clad in her gray robe, still standing beside the tree-trunk, which some blast had overthrown a long antiquity ago, and which time had ever since been covering with moss, so that these two fated ones, with earth's heaviest burden on them, might there sit down together, and find a single hour's rest and solace. And there was Pearl, too, lightly dancing from the margin of the brook,--now that the intrusive third person was gone,--and taking her old place by her mother's side. So the minister had not fallen asleep, and dreamed! (202)

Hester is connected with that fallen tree by her association with Dimmesdale, by that "dark necessity" which Chillingworth names. The scene Dimmesdale looks back on is one of blasted nature, order overturned, surcease based on fatigue and decay. The only element in that world which is without these associations is Pearl, and he himself is excluded from her society.

Dimmesdale himself has been ill-suited to Massachusetts life; he can be at "home only in the midst of civilization and refinement; the higher the state, the more delicately adapted to it the man" (202). He longs for the Old World to which they plan to flee, but only

after achieving the summit of his New England career-- only after preaching the Election Sermon. He returns from the forest as Goodman Brown returned, a changed man, to whom the familiar is bizarre. An "importunately obtrusive sense of change" (204) pervades every street and person; "the minister's deepest sense seemed to inform him of their mutability" (205) but not to inform him of the change in himself. The church itself seems changed; "It was the same town as heretofore; but the same minister returned not from the forest" (205). Transformed, "He might have said to the friends who greeted him,--'I am not the man for whom you take me!'" (205) but he does not, for he is now given over wholly to his hypocrisy, estranged by his guilt.

The combination of impulse, "at once involuntary and intentional" (205) which controls him and incites him "to do some strange, wild, wicked thing or other" (205) is the spell of the forest working in him, the return of the repressed passion and his guilty knowledge of it. "Tempted by a dream of happiness, he had yielded himself with deliberate choice, as he had never done before, to what he knew was deadly sin" (209) he is "awakened into vivid life" (210) of evil impulse. Possessed by evil, he sits down to write his Election Sermon, his swan song before leaving New England. But of course none of them is destined to leave for very long. Only Pearl departs and never returns. The other three, as Hawthorne told us in his

description of why Hester stayed, are bound to say--the meaning of their lives is there, although desire bids them elsewhere.

Dimmesdale is another man in his study than the one who left for the forest, "a wiser one; with a knowledge of hidden mysteries which the simplicity of the former never could have reached. A bitter kind of knowledge that!" (210). After writing all night, "There he was, with the pen still between his fingers, and a vast, immeasurable tract of written space behind him!" (212). He thinks he has written himself out of New England. In fact he is now firmly entrenched in that labyrinth he wandered before, entrenched and committed to it.

But more than the labyrinth appears in the Election Sermon. There is a continuous narrative which begins with Hester's resolve to confront her former lover in the forest (in Chapter 16) and with Pearl catechizing her mother-- "'tellest me all'" (176). During part of this narrative Hawthorne makes an explicit connection between Pearl and the brook in the forest: "Pearl resembled the brook, inasmuch as the current of her life gushed from a well-spring as mysterious, and had flowed through scenes shadowed as heavily with gloom" (177). This observation reminds the reader of the pastoral erotic love of her parents, a love beyond as well as outside of law, and the desirable natural law which they obeyed in conceiving her--with such disastrous consequences for themselves. That continuous

narrative which begins with Pearl's question to her mother ends only with the immeasurable Election Sermon, a tract which induces "rapture" (233) in the auditors ignorant of its source. The power, so complex and ambiguous, of the forest--both the first innocent, erotic forest and the second forest scene of experience comprehended--have been conveyed to the colonists. They know not what they hear but they are profoundly moved by the mysterious import of the minister's sermon. It tells them of "passion and pathos" (229) and asks, "never in vain" (230), for forgiveness. Thus it expresses, too, an understanding of error and sin and also redemption.

The Election Sermon draws on this double source for its power. "His subject...had been the relation between the Deity and the communities of mankind, with a special reference to the New England which they were here planting in the wilderness" (234), a conventional Puritan topic. Hawthorne, however, gives us in The Scarlet Letter the spiritual, emotional and social underpinning of Puritan convention--the relationship, in all of its many aspects, between God and man in New England. Dimmesdale speaks prophetically but in a fashion very different from the "woe-denouncing seer" in his tapestry; "it was his mission to foretell a high and glorious destiny for the newly gathered people of the Lord" (234). This vision has been given him only since his return from the forest, and it secures for him "the very proudest eminence of superiority

...a lofty pedestal" (234-235) obtained only partly by "the gifts of intellect, rich lore, prevailing eloquence and a reputation of whitest sanctity" (234). His great endowments and great deception of himself and others are expressed in that sermon, and so is an awareness of God's mercy towards him, and towards the New England of which he is so logical an outgrowth. Mr. Dimmesdale is, in his sermon, more supremely human than he has hitherto been, as he speaks for the first time not just from hypocrisy but from a profound consciousness of mutability and of guilt and shame. He alone understands the meaning of change, for he--man of the forest dell and man of the meeting-house--has experienced the inconstancy of his own nature. He conveys to them the instability of life and of man and thrusts himself away from mutability into death, defying the wilderness to claim him.

The meeting-house from which he speaks we never enter. We stand with Hester in her "magic circle...a forcible type of the moral solitude" (220) she inhabits outside, near the scaffold. That meeting-house is the immanence of God in New England; we never enter it because it pervades the world of the romance. The indwelling presence of God in New England and the wilderness which threatens the community from within and without are the parallel planes within which Dimmesdale's "immeasurable tract" of eloquence exists. We are never told exactly what he said; implicitly The Scarlet Letter is a revelation of

"the relation between the Deity and the communities of mankind, with a special reference to the New England" of the work. The four characters we know of in the romance are our special reference and clue to the details of that relationship. Thus is Chillingworth's "dark necessity" explained; there are circumstances--which we can call fate, destiny, the will of the gods--and which compel the existence of events in our lives, and these cannot be eluded. But though that obscure compulsion which surrounds our life cannot be escaped, there is another, "a high and glorious destiny" beyond material circumstance. Hawthorne writes of New England as Aeneas wrote of the fall of Troy and the founding of Rome; the conflict between destiny and desserts is only resolved by history. Just as the fates decreed that Troy should fall, however brave and glorious her people, so the little lives of old New England were doomed to suffering and hardship, inexplicable and unavoidable, so that a better race might grow up out of the wilderness--Dimmesdale's "mission" is to foretell, with that "spirit of prophecy" (234), our world.

Dimmesdale thus emerges into the open air the hero and saint of New England, to ascend "the well-remembered and weather-darkened scaffold, where, long since, with all that dreary lapse of time between, Hester Prynne had encountered the world's ignominious stare" (236) seven years earlier. Time and weather have made their mark on the scaffold where Dimmesdale now goes to escape

Chillingworth, to escape the further bonds of mortality which Hester would bind him with. The noonday sun, as of the Judgment Day, "shone down upon the clergyman, and gave a distinctness to his figure, as he stood out from all the earth to put in his plea of guilty at the bar of Eternal Justice" (230). God alone understands that plea, although Hester and Chillingworth understand part of it.

Dimmesdale's dramatic confession, so ambiguous and so horrible to the multitude who hear it, is at once a continuation of the deception and a revelation of it. That is, it takes place in time and also defines the time that has passed. His "death of triumphant ignominy before the people" (241) is subject to several interpretations in the Massachusetts Bay Colony which he leaves behind him. But that is the little world, and we, the reader, are in the larger world of history--the world in which "the curious investigator may still discern" (247) (in the eternal present) the scarlet letter on a New England gravestone. And from that vantage point in time we can recognize, because we are told in no uncertain terms by the romancer himself, that "A spell was broken" (241) with Dimmesdale's confession and Pearl's kiss. The world of Judgment, the apocalyptic world to which Dimmesdale has addressed his confession, and the world of Nature, Pearl's world (and the brookside world of her parents' passion and her conception) are brought into alignment by her kiss. That "drama of guilt and sorrow" (238) in which the four characters have

participated is ended; but in the last chapter, "Conclusion," the reader contemplates, outside the narrative, the significance of that drama which has been acted out before us, a contemplation of the romance which is not inside it.

Pearl is transformed into an heiress and transported across the sea, a symbolic break with the drama in which she was ever an ambiguous and ambivalent participant. Hester's return to New England, and her participation in the renewal of the cycle of nature--"Hester was seen embroidering a baby-garment" (246)--relax the iron bands of the tragedy which we have just witnessed. We return to the world of "Mr. Surveyor Pue, who made investigations a century later" (246), the world in which what Frye calls "the themes of the lonely old men, the intimate group, and the reported tale are linked."¹⁵ Hawthorne in the Custom-House and Pue in his papers, we (the author's group) and The Scarlet Letter (the reported tale) create together the contemplative phase of the romance. Indeed, Hester herself contemplates the coming change in "the whole relation between man and woman" (247) as we contemplate "the semblance of an engraved escutcheon" (247) which we were asked to examine in "The Custom-House" chapter at the very beginning of the work. The Scarlet-Letter is a contemplation of the meaning of history--an epic view of the relationship between God and man in America.

The cemetery near King's Chapel, next to the former apartments of Dimmesdale and Chillingworth, is, like

"This old town of Salem" (6) "in the wild and forest-bordered settlement" (7) where Hester lived and where Mr. Pue and Mr. Hawthorne were "Surveyor of...Customs for the port of Salem, in the Province of Massachusetts" (30). Hawthorne's "gallery of Custom-House portraits" (18), like the gallery of official and familial portraits in Governor Bellingham's hall, is a long and narrow passage into the life inside the work. They are the somewhat boring personae of history beneath whose exteriors we never penetrate, except, by implication, as we penetrate the lives of Hester, Dimmesdale, Chillingworth and Pearl.

The Pue papers, deposited, said Hawthorne "with the Essex Historical Society" (32) in Salem, where his own papers reside, have given us a total picture of old New England. "Neither the front nor the back entrance of the Custom-House opens on the road to Paradise" (12); but Hawthorne has won from it "a pleasant memory in this abode and burial-place of so many of my forefathers" (45). There, at the Custom-House, he realized that "the past was not dead" (28), and that, above all, is the theme of The Scarlet Letter. The "red tape" (30) of Massachusetts Bay contains documents "not official, but of a private nature" (31). It is the connection between the official and the private which The Scarlet Letter has so thoroughly explored. Love in its familial, conjugal and social aspects has been but part of the theme of the work. We have also been given a glimpse into history, and not only the

history of social and political power as it affects the lives of individuals, but also the history of the profoundest relationship in New England, the relation between God and man. For each of our four characters--Hester, Dimmesdale, Chillingworth and Pearl--has been in a perpetual state of being connected with the God of Dimmesdale's sermon. Their relationships with one another have fluctuated, but in the end they are brought into harmonious relation only when the possibility of their being together has been abandoned. When Hester realizes that Chillingworth will leave with them on the boat--and that therefore they would take their worst problem with them--she despairs. But Dimmesdale recognizes that all power, like all love, resides with God. His confession--made to God and not to the public who hear him--is a recognition of that ultimate fact of the holy life. Once he at last abdicates power in his own life--gives up control of his secret--he is truly unviolable, as Chillingworth recognizes when he says, "'there was no place so secret...where thou couldst have escaped me,--save on this very scaffold'" (238).

The scaffold in the market-place of Boston has become again the pivotal object in the work. Like the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden of Eden, like the cross on Calvary, it is the place to which man returns. All suffering in the work is from it and there the spell of that suffering is at last broken. That most plausible and mundane machine, symbol of a fallen world in

which punishment is necessary and terrible, connects the events in the romance with the real world of history (that is, time) and the mythic world of eternity. It is the ironic and paradoxical object at the heart of the work; Dimmesdale has feared it above all things, and only when he embraces the opportunity which it offers does he find peace. The scarlet letter itself, the sign, at last of apocalypse, is its eternal opposite.

Hester and Chillingworth, sharing the prison cell for a while (their only home in the New World), like Dimmesdale and Chillingworth sharing two sides of the same house by the cemetery, are imprisoned in a world of inhibiting circumstance from which they struggle in vain to escape. Like Hawthorne in the Custom-House they chafe against enclosure and, implicitly, the ties that bind them to each other, and make the worst of it. Chillingworth's healing arts, Dimmesdale's eloquence, Hester's embroidery remind us of the gifts which circumstance has all but muffled. But those gifts are a sign of the power for good which has also been given to those who make each other suffer so dreadfully.

The scenes in which we find them are a perpetual reminder that more is here than meets the eye. The scaffold is more than a place of punishment; it also offers the possibility of what punishment seeks to induce --sincere repentance. The forest is more than a wilderness, it is also a place where passion, in every sense,

can issue forth and create new life, and new sin. The meeting-house is more than a place of worship, it is also a presence which itself encloses the community it seems to occupy. God is in New England, just as history itself is pervaded by an everlasting relationship between the men who people her and that God outside of time.

CHAPTER I

NOTES

¹Henry James responded with disapproval to this most unnovelistic bizarreness: "The faults of the book are, to my sense, a want of reality and an abuse of the fanciful element--of a certain superficial symbolism. The people strike me not as characters but as representatives, very picturesquely arranged, of a single state of mind; and the interest of the story lies, not in them, but in the situation, which is insisently kept before us." ("Hawthorne," The Shock of Recognition, p. 513). He admits nonetheless that the work is "the masterpiece... of the author" (an opinion different from Hawthorne's, which gave that distinction to The Marble Faun, for reasons which will become lear in Chapter IV).

²Fletcher, pp. 82-83.

³D. H. Lawrence sees Dimmesdale as "escaping into death" (p. 993), "leaving Hester dished and Roger, as it were, doubly cuckolded. It is a neat last revenge." (Nathaniel Hawthorne and The Scarlet Letter," The Shock of Recognition, p. 1001).

⁴See, for example, F. I. Carpenter's "Scarlet A minus" American Literature and the Dream, N.Y.: Philosophical Library, 1955. Among still more eminent critics the letter has often fared equally poorly. James found "The idea of the mystic A" annoying (p. 515). Lawrence sees the letter as standing for American, Alpha, new Adam and Abel (p. 989), which it very well may, but he seems to interpret it thus only to dismiss its importance in the face of the more "demonic" aspects of the work. R. Stephens thinks the A stands for art and not adultery ("A is for Art in The Scarlet Letter," ATQ #1 first quarter 1969, p. 23) an exclusive interpretation as limiting as it is enhancing. Leslie Fiedler sees it as "the single 'A," that represents the beginning of all things, and that, in the primers of New England, stood for Adam's Fall--in which we (quite unspecifically) sinned all" (p. 223). All of these interpretations are interesting, but of course the most powerful quality of the letter on Hester's breast is its talismanic quality, which results partly from its never being defined for us. Like the shield of the Red Crosse Knighte in the Faerie-Queene it is simply itself, and,

like grace, a powerful protection against harm. It allows the wearer to be accessible to grace while keeping her invulnerable to real, final, worldly danger.

⁵Perhaps this is why James called "The Custom-House" "one of the most perfect of Hawthorne's compositions" (p. 506).

⁶This image of a mirror as the source of fictive creation is an apt one, with its implication of silent pictorial reflection and auctorial identity with the work. Richard Chase said of this work, "The Scarlet Letter is almost all picture"; the scenes "are like the events in a pageant or a dream, not like those of a stage drama." He also remarks "The author's powerfully possessive imagination" at work here, and the "tight monolithic reticence" throughout the romance (p. 70).

⁷James sees Hester as "an accessory figure" to that of Dimmesdale. He thinks that "To Hawthorne's imagination the fact that these two persons had loved each other too well was of an interest comparatively vulgar; what appealed to him was the idea of their moral situation in the long years that were to follow" (p. 511). Hester's apotheosis at the end of the work confirms her importance in it; all major detail, iconographic and dramatic, originate and accrue to her.

⁸In each of the four romances there is a major character whose name begins with H, and it is that character in each work whose suffering is brought into the foreground as the normative emotion in the work. Hester, neither saint nor demon like the two men in her life, returns to Boston to live out her days like any old woman. Holgrave, the bohemian radical, gives up his family grievance and is changed into a bon bourgeois. Hollingsworth, his pride crushed, lives out his life a broken (but a married) man. Hilda, too, changes--from faithful virgin copyist to New England housewife, participator in the life she reproduced at two removes, yet with a truer faith than formerly.

⁹James, p. 514.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 515.

¹¹Winters' observation that "The portraits are obviously intended as an apology for the static portraits in the book" (p. 166) is an example of the puny and superficial symbol interpretation which informs much Hawthorne criticism.

¹²Frye tells us that "the rose has a traditional priority among apocalyptic flowers" (p. 144).

¹³Ibid., p. 91.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 202.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 203.

CHAPTER II

THE HOUSE OF THE SEVEN GABLES

Hawthorne's use of imagery, especially as it pertains to romance setting, in The House of the Seven Gables is at once more obvious and more subtly all-pervasive than in his other works. The endogenous events which take place during the few months encompassed in this romance emanate from within the House of the Seven Gables, "the circle of...connections" (172)* that is the house of Pyncheon. The connection between Hepzibah and Clifford and "their kindred enemy" (245), and the connection of the old couple with their country cousin is impossible without the house on Pyncheon Street--a house essential to plot, character, theme, and allegory. Imagery and characterization both serve in the depiction of that "circle" but they are of a romance world of pure heroism (Phoebe) and pure villainy (the Judge). In a very real sense this aspect of the work is a psychomachia,¹ a struggle between the unconscious strength, life and will of the pure Phoebe and the wicked and fierce resolution of the Judge.

*This and all subsequent references to The House of the Seven Gables are from the following edition: N.Y.: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1967.

In his "Preface" to the work, Hawthorne gives his statement of intention. The "humble...texture" (2) of the narrative, he claims, militates against success in the romance form; but Hawthorne's use of "the Marvellous" (1) in the service of presenting "truth under circumstances, to a great extent, of the writer's own choosing or creation" (1) is subtle and harmonious, entirely suited to the truth of local legend which is the provenance of this romance. What Frye calls the "glow of subjective intensity"² is present in the well-developed incidents and the idealized characters, elements of the author's most partisan view of family life.

The point of view in which this Tale comes under the Romantic definition, lies in the attempt to connect a by-gone time with the very Present that is flitting away from us. It is a Legend, prolonging itself, from an epoch now gray in the distance, down into our own broad daylight, and bringing along with it some of its legendary mist, which the Reader, according to his pleasure, may either disregard, or allow it to float almost imperceptibly about the characters and events, for the sake of a picturesque effect. (2)

Keeping "undeviatingly within his immunities" (2), Hawthorne gives us again a picture of the way in which history lives and shapes the present, the way in which time past is the profoundest influence on life, an enchantment which afflicts us all. The "picturesque" here makes vivid what we might otherwise ignore.

Hawthorne's legendary romance is provided with a moral: "the truth, namely, that the wrong-doing of one

generation lives into the successive ones, and, divesting itself of every advantage, becomes a pure and uncontrollable mischief; and [the author] would feel it a singular gratification, if this Romance might effectually convince mankind (or, indeed, any one man) of the folly of tumbling down an avalanche of ill-gotten gold, or real estate, on the heads of an unfortunate posterity, thereby to maim and crush them, until the accumulated mass shall be scattered abroad in its original atoms (2).

This moral is, paradoxically, at the heart of the nihilism implied in this romance: we are consistently confronted with the immorality of material accumulation (especially by real estate), although the comedic outcome of the incidents in the work leads to wealth and material happiness for those who "deserve" it (the idea of justice is a powerful one and eludes any single definition in this romance).

The critics have liked the work. Chase found it to be a sort of novel of manners.³ James found it "a rich, delightful, imaginative work"⁴ but essentially "a magnificent fragment."⁵ The romance elements--"the book may be read strictly as a Romance" (3)--with their deliberate chiaroscuro effects in which the romancer "may so manage his atmospherical medium as to bring out or mellow the lights and deepen and enrich the shadows of the picture" (1) presents a series of episodes, moving and fascinating in themselves. The plot, such as it is, involves the attempt by two weak and broken characters to survive in adverse circumstances. They are beset by the malice of one evil cousin and aided by a good cousin. The separate incidents reveal to us various aspects of their situation. By the

judicious, economical and highly pictorial use of various symbolic objects and by vivid metaphors we are gradually made more and more aware of the natures of the various characters and of the situation in which they find themselves.

That situation is central to The House of the Seven Gables. A greedy and powerful man seeks to acquire more property and is willing to crush his already ruined cousin (whose downfall he has caused) to do so. This pathetic cousin, a figure of ruined beauty and thwarted hopes, is helped by his decrepit old sister who, although weak herself is fiercely protective of her brother. Their situation seems hopeless until the advent of another cousin from the country--i.e., the world outside the realm of barren and fruitless conflict. This young and beautiful girl, full of life and strength, by her very presence seems to deter the evil man. She does not do battle with him, but when she temporarily abandons the territory she has unwittingly guarded by her pure and strong presence, he penetrates behind the lines and perishes (by his own bad blood). Pride has thus destroyed itself, like the dragon in The Faerie-Queene. And Phoebe, by the grace of God queen of the restored and harmonious family, gathers them all up and removes them to the country--a world unspoiled by the predations of fallen man, where all is harmony and balance.

But there is more here than even an understanding of romance or allegory indicates. The characters are richer than the above sketch indicates and the texture of the world

in which they move is made dense and fascinating by certain images, loaded with significance, which appear at critical points in the narrative.

As is usual in the romances of Hawthorne, there is also a projection of ideals by the narrator, presented here in the form of characterization. Holgrave, for example, is a character whose search for Utopia (a hope, inward, that is, rather than a roaming) is countered by the narrator's more rational and humane view of the good life, presented in his allegorizing commentary which admires and also qualifies the Holgrave presented to us. Hepzibah's nostalgia, connected explicitly with the house and implicitly with ideas of family grandeur, like Holgrave's Fourierism, is countered by the idealization of purity, sentience and naturalness of Phoebe. The emotional significance attached to the martyrdom of Clifford, and the malignancy of him who caused it, are important but mostly as they pertain to the contrast between Phoebe and the Judge, the good Pyncheon and the bad. Just as Hepzibah and Holgrave are moral opposites--the one harking back to a past that has never been, the other looking forward to a future that will never be--and great friends, so Jaffrey and Phoebe are representative, respectively, of the force which destroys social organization and the force which redeems it. Clifford, the broken weakling, the erstwhile sensualist and aesthete, crushed for his fragility, is the only character who shows fear; but his mutilated spirit is also the price of the secret, in this case a non-secret,

which he holds and which holds the evil Judge entrallled just long enough for Nature (the Judge's own nature, in this case) to take its course and free them all. Jaffrey's death alone frees them. They have no hope of reforming him --a radical solution to the problem of bad character and family conflict.

The House of the Seven Gables on Pyncheon Street embodies Hawthorne's multiple theme: the nature of family power. Families by their very nature exist as ongoing collective entities, passing through time in the aggregate as well as individually. We see the Pyncheon House through time from various points of view, as it is amenable to reform (by Phoebe) and as it is not, as it shelters, harbors, expels its members, as recidivist (claiming the Judge) and as a purged and empty shell--just an old house--at last. The house allows an exploration of Hawthorne's "truth, namely, that the wrongdoing of one generation lives into the successive ones, and, divesting itself of every temporary advantage, becomes a pure and uncontrollable mischief" (2). This blatant beast aspect of family misconduct--or original sin in its dynastic implications--is the governing theme of the work. The power of evil to transcend time (generations), that is, to be eternal, and the nature of various kinds of power and weakness within a family, that is, a representative group of persons in a given society, are the two aspects of original sin as explored in this romance. The house itself, with parlor, gables, cent-shop,

garden; the train and the town where the two owls debark; the street outside and how each character acts in these places are the elements of The House of the Seven Gables.

The house at the heart of it all is the Pyncheon house; "the circumstances amid which the foundation of the house was laid" (6) provide the legendary background of the romance, give it that realistic provenance so necessary to romance while at the same time, by giving no name to the town, Hawthorne takes care that the house exists in a vacuum; the story therefore comes down from the past and is historical though not verifiable. This house is explicitly personalized--"The aspect of the venerable mansion has always affected me like a human countenance" (5)--and is thus an immediate presence in the work, giving a strong subjective tinge to the sense we have of the continuation (rather than progress) of the family.⁶ The house's aspect is human in its effect on the observer, "bearing the traces not merely of outward storm and sunshine, but expressive also of the long lapse of mortal life, and accompanying vicissitudes, that have passed within" (5). The house appears to have suffered; it indicates feelings we never see from the inside of any human character and is the more poignant for that reason.

Hawthorne denies that this was "the first habitation erected by civilized man, on precisely the same spot of ground" (6) attaching, by paronomasia an even greater antiquity to it than we had heretofore supposed it to

possess.⁷ Its origins are bloody, a result of "an iron energy of purpose" (7) in the acquisition of real estate and real power that we encounter for ourselves in the villain in the romance, in Jaffrey Pyncheon. The early conflict between those whom we recognize as "first" Pyncheon and "first" Maule--a primal conflict in every way--was one "between two ill-matched antagonists" (7), one of whom eradicated the other in a witch trial and took "his humble homestead...an easy spoil" (8). That early murder--in which social power was the instrument--on which the house of Pyncheon was founded is important not only to the plot of The House of the Seven Gables (that particular battle does not repeat itself in the present tense of the work but does so in the interpolated tale of Alice Pyncheon) but to characterization in it as well. For the house in both senses (family and mansion) continues to suffer blood-guilt unto the present generation. Jaffrey Pyncheon is ruthless and greedy, just like his predecessors the Colonel and Alice's father--they will do anything for property, and they have been born into the family with this unchanging, uncontrollable, never-diminishing lust, a perpetuation of their original sin. That these dynastic propensities are not present in the family after the Judge's death is a blessing qualified by their resurgence in Holgrave. The more things change the more they remain the same, a comedic variant on the idea of mutability in this work. It is as if the hunger for property is so human an evil that it can never be wholly

eradicated; it is the dark side of family life and the thing which connects ancestry and posterity in the worst sense; it is the present tense of family.

The Pyncheon "family-mansion--spacious, ponderously framed of oaken timber, and calculated to endure for many generations" (9)--lives up to its early expectations. Like the scarlet letter and the scaffold, like the pink ribbons on Faith's cap in "Young Goodman Brown," this house is an ironic object at the heart of a totally unironic work. It results in an apprehension of circumstance--the surface narrative--opposite to and in mockery of its original, appropriate purpose. It is the chief symbol in a work designed to show the power of inherited guilt. The irony resides partly in the ambition of the man who built that house, and in the continued power-hunger of those who come after him; the house militates against the growth of the family for whose aggrandizement it was built.

The first chapter in which the historical circumstances are presented under which the house was built is entitled "The Old Pyncheon Family," for it deals as much with the family itself as with the house in which they live. Descended from a common progenitor, these characters are the usual stylized figures of romance; not one of them is complex and moving like the house itself--"this desolate, decaying, gusty, rusty, old house of the Pyncheon family" (28).⁸ "It was itself like a great human heart, with a life of its own, and full of rich and sombre reminiscences"

(27). The house embodies a sense of the passing of time, a note of resignation that is part of the elegiac mood of all romance. The House of the Seven Gables is partly a song of mourning, a lamentation for the dead. The story of the house is a story of the wastefulness of a misplaced desire--of how two families, Maule and Pyncheon, were disrupted by violence attached to the acquisition of the house; of how Alice died, a victim of the vengeance of Maule and the greed of Pyncheon; of how one cousin destroyed another. This mournful story is embodied in the isolation of the house--"it rose, a little withdrawn from the line of the street, but in pride, not modesty" (11)--and in its early contamination (the spring has lost its savor).⁹ We are told of the treachery surrounding its foundation and are made aware of the irony of Colonel Pyncheon's death on opening day--"the happy seasonableness of his death... duties all performed,--the highest prosperity attained, --his race and future generations fixed on a stable basis, and with a stately roof to shelter them, for centuries to come" (17).

But "the breed had not thriven" (24) down to the present tense of the book, despite this early prosperity, despite the grant of an "unmeasured tract of eastern lands" (18) which no Pyncheon is destined to possess. One thing alone clings to the Pyncheons down to the day of our own romance--"an absurd delusion of family importance, which all along characterized the Pyncheons" (19). This quality

every member of the present family evinces, save Phoebe:

It caused the poorest member of the race to feel as if he inherited a kind of nobility, and might yet come into the possession of princely wealth to support it. In the better specimens of the breed, this peculiarity threw an ideal grace over the hard material of human life, without stealing away any truly valuable quality. In the baser sort, its effect was to increase the liability to sluggishness and dependence, and induce the victim of a shadowy hope to remit all self-effort, while awaiting the realization of his dreams. (19)

This family delusion is a neutral quality which takes on the aspect of him who adopts it. It makes Hepzibah a silly old maid, Clifford a pathetic husk of an aesthete, Jaffrey a ruthless climber. Only Phoebe has a sphere outside the house.

Instead of discussing her claim to rank among ladies, it would be preferable to regard Phoebe as the example of feminine grace and availability combined, in a state of society, if there were any such, where ladies did not exist. There, it should be woman's office to move in the midst of practical affairs, and to gild them all...with an atmosphere of loveliness and joy. (80)

Because "Such was the sphere of Phoebe" (80), "the battered visage of the House of the Seven Gables, black and heavy-browed as it still certainly looked, must have shown a kind of cheerfulness glimmering through its dusky windows, as Phoebe passed to-and-fro in the interior" (81).

Phoebe is the heroine of this work; it is she who saves the Pyncheon house from the villainous greed and pathetic helplessness of the other members of the family.

Phoebe embodies the ideals of the work and harks back to a golden age when flowers grew and chickens bred. It is part of her power that she subdues the bitter conflict surrounding

the house to the benignity of the animal and vegetable world; typically (in such a democratic work as this) that world is the world of the cottage garden. Phoebe's heroism is pure and untrammelled by irony; her innate power is contrasted with the pathos and melancholy sense of tragic waste connected with the house. She arrives at a crucial moment in Pyncheon history. All of the reader's hopes, from the moment she appears, are bound up with Phoebe and the fresh hope she represents for the conflict to come.

The Judge, on the other hand, is a frightening and disgusting old man, greedy, ruthless, unbending, without mercy. He is the perversion of law, the epitome of the "practical" philosophy of might-makes-right, a living example of the way in which, in a fallen world, law of an undesirable kind attains ascendancy. He is "The Pyncheon of To-Day." Phoebe is in every way his opposite--she is associated with "the east" (70), with "a rose-bush" (71); she is "May" to Hepzibah's "November" and possessed of a kind of natural magic" (71), "the magnetism of innate fitness" (76) but with "a strain of pathos" (138) in her nature after she joins the family in town. Jaffrey, all gloom and iron will, is unaware of her power to charm her surroundings, and thus unaware of her power to repel him and all that he represents.

Clifford, the helpless man of the house, has as much need of Phoebe's help as does Hepzibah who "like the dragon which, in fairy tales, is wont to be the guardian

over an enchanted beauty" (126) has no power to break the spell that binds them. Clifford, with "his altered, aged, faded, ruined face" (114) and "the lack of vigor in his character" (113), with "a charm of wonderful beauty" (107) with "nothing intellectual to temper it" (107), with his "look of appetite" (107) and his unawakened "moral nature" (108) "always selfish in its essence" (109), is the Judge's appropriate victim. Upon Phoebe's values we are to "heap up our heroic and disinterested love" (109) as she enters and sets things to rights.

She represents the salvation of the Pyncheons. Jaffrey represents their curse. He is an archetypal villain. His changing face reflects his own magical attribute: "ambition is a talisman more powerful than witchcraft" (274):

It was quite as striking...as that betwixt a landscape under a broad sunshine, and just before a thunder-storm; not that it had the passionate intensity of the later aspect, but was cold, hard, immitigable, like a day-long brooding cloud.... It implied that the weaknesses and defects, the bad passions, the mean tendencies, and the moral diseases which lead to crime, are handed down from one generation to another, by a far surer process of transmission than human law has been able to establish, in respect to the riches and honors which it seeks to entail upon posterity. (118-119)

Jaffrey Pyncheon's face, so like that of his murderous forebear in the portrait in the parlor, is the true property which he has inherited along with the real estate; "he had exchanged his velvet doublet and sable cloak...for a white collar and cravat...and...the Colonel Pyncheon, of two centuries ago, steps forward as the Judge, of the

passing moment" (120). The simile which described his changed face enlarges the man to a symbol of all that is fierce and amoral in Nature--to the fierce and relentless nature of bad weather.

This "too fruitful...subject...of hereditary resemblances" (123) Hawthorne pursues relentlessly, discussing the Colonel and the Judge, both "greedy of wealth"; "of great animal development" (122); guilty of conjugal cruelty, both enslavers of women (as was Alice's father, too). The Judge, moreover, gurgles in his throat like the earlier Pyncheons of his stamp. He is a man of "resolute purpose" (129) and "'a heart of iron'" (131); his aspect is hideous in "that it seemed not to express wrath or hatred, but a certain hot fellness of purpose, which annihilated everything but itself" (129). To Phoebe, who inhabits our own natural world, in which evil is present but not necessarily dominant, the vision of demonic evil which is Jaffrey Pyncheon is unacceptable--"the trim, orderly, and limit-loving class, in which we find our little country-girl" (131) does not encourage the speculation that "since there must be evil in the world, a high man is as likely to grasp his share of it, as a low one" (131). She concludes that the conflict between Hepzibah and Jaffrey is the result of "one of those family feuds, which render hatred the more deadly, by the dead and corrupted love that they intermingle with its native poison" (132). But Phoebe need not accept the legendary evil of the Judge to be herself a force for good.

The conflict, therefore, between good and evil which is central to The House of the Seven Gables takes place in the recognizable middle world of ordinary nature--a world of violent family feeling which is familiar in kind, if not in degree, to any reader. Within the labyrinth of the haunted house (the dead manifest themselves in the portrait and in the legend) only Phoebe lives untouched by death and violence. She is untouchable because, in the logic of romance, she is unaware of the danger which surrounds her. But for the Judge to die in the house, Phoebe must be out of it. When she returns, the bloody but poetically just resolution of the conflict has occurred. Jaffrey Pyncheon has fallen victim to that "fellness of purpose," which at last annihilated even itself.

Phoebe redeems the little family; from the moment of her arrival, whatever the perilous struggles which intervene, the family fortune is on the upturn. When Hepzibah opens up her shop, an "old maid...alone in the old house" (30), she is a brave but pathetic figure who is not aware that help is on the way. When she steps into the passage from the depths of the house, the room is irradiated by the dawn, harbinger of Phoebe on the first day of the book. With Hepzibah we contemplate the central room of the House of the Seven Gables, the interior of the behemoth which has devoured the family since it was built. This room is countered by Phoebe's garden and the world of Alice's posies. It is the heart of the house, and the origin of its

desolation; in this room the old Puritan died. The family, laid waste by ambition, dates its incurable decline from that death in this most pretentious room in the house that was to have been the foundation of a great dynasty. Ambitious pride is the curse under which the breed has failed to thrive. The house must be rescued by a heroine at once inside and outside it. Hepzibah, "'this antiquated, poverty-stricken, old maiden lady'" (216) as Holgrave calls her, protects it; but Phoebe is the one who disenchants the family. The useless old virgin is glad to make way for the potent young one who arrives, a true heroine, just in the nick of time. The nick of time exists between past and future on the brink of possible disaster; it is the suspended time of romance.

The room into which Hepzibah emerges is the seat of enchantment; it is a wonderful room in every sense of the word:

...low-studded...dark....There was a carpet on the floor, originally of rich texture, but so worn and faded, in these latter years, that its once brilliant figure had quite vanished into one indistinguishable hue...chairs...so ingeniously contrived for the discomfort of the human person, that they were irksome even to sight, and conveyed the ugliest possible idea of the state of society to which they could have been adapted. One exception...was...a very antique elbow-chair...that made up by its spacious comprehensiveness, for the lack of any of those artistic curves which abound in a modern chair. (32-33)

The parlor's two anchoring objects are the "map of the Pyncheon territory at the eastward" (33) and the portrait of the Colonel holding sword and Bible, the two poles of

family ruin. "All this time, however, we are loitering faint-heartedly on the threshold of our story" (34), for the story emanates from that enchanted room at the heart of the house.

The room is fit only for Jaffrey. When he resumes that ancient seat, the other Pyncheons take over his country-seat. This dark mysterious room is not Phoebe's sphere, either, "for she was by nature as hostile to mystery, as the sunshine to a dark corner" (218). Although she reclaims her own "waste, cheerless, and dusky chamber" "all overgrown with the desolation, which watches to obliterate every trace of man's happier hours" (72), she does not tamper with this parlor. She goes to Hepzibah's room and into the kitchen, the shop and the garden. She is Pyncheon enough to gain admittance to the house (and Holgrave deduces from the hens' response to her that she is indeed a Pyncheon) but more than a Pyncheon--"I have not been brought up a Pyncheon," (74) she tells her cousin.

The contrast between Phoebe and the house is repeatedly emphasized. At her arrival, she brings with her at once confusion and relief, for Hepzibah expects Clifford, a love from the past; Phoebe in her innocent freshness is outside of the Time which oppresses the house. When she sees the bus stop outside the house, "Hepzibah's heart was in her mouth. Remote and dusky, and with no sunshine on all the intervening space, was that region of the Past, whence her only guest might be expected to arrive!" (68). Instead

when she looks out the door she sees

...the young, blooming, and very cheerful face, which presented itself for admittance into the gloomy old mansion. It was a face to which almost any door would have opened of its own accord.

The young girl, so fresh, so unconventional, and yet so orderly and obedient to common rules...was widely in contrast...with everything about her. The sordid and ugly luxuriance of gigantic weeds...and the heavy projection that overshadowed her, and the time-worn framework of the door;--none of these things belonged to her sphere. But--even as a ray of sunshine, fall into what dismal place it may, instantaneously creates for itself a propriety in being there--so did it seem altogether fit that the girl should be standing at the threshold. It was no less evidently proper, that the door should swing open to admit her. (68-69)

Youth unspoiled by time confronts Hepzibah through the dark "side-lights of the portal" (68). Phoebe is innocence unspoiled by irony and without qualification, and she arrives at the crucial moment when Hepzibah, incapable as she is, is about to confront once more the outer world.

Phoebe is associated with primordial innocence and order; she immediately attempts to set right the house, an old building whose material structure "seemed to constitute only the least and meanest part of its reality" (27), its "very timbers...oozy, as with the moisture of a heart" (27). She is another version of Alice Pyncheon whose posies still grow on the roof; but she is stronger and better than the weak, proud Alice. Phoebe is above all able--vigorous, young, shining, a working angel as Uncle Venner that repository of humble wisdom, calls her: "'I've seen a great deal of the world...and I'm free to say... that I never knew a human creature do her work so much like

one of God's angels, as this child Phoebe does!" (82).

Hepzibah, absorbed in the contemplation of her household gods (the miniature of Clifford and the portrait of the Colonel) even when she is not actually looking at them, is incompetent to run the shop that must support the Pyncheon household. At the moment we encounter her, however, she represents in herself Pyncheon history; in a single sentence descriptive of her in that capacity, Hawthorne brings the best of Pyncheon up to date:

Let us behold, in poor Hepzibah, the immemorial 1 y--two hundred years old, on this side of the water, and thrice as many, on the other--with her antique portraits, pedigrees, coats of arms, records, and traditions, and her claim, as joint heiress, to that princely territory at the eastward, no longer a wilderness, but a populous fertility--born, too, in Pyncheon Street, under the Pyncheon-elm, and in the Pyncheon-house, where she has spent all her days--reduced now, in that very house, to be the hucksteress of a cent-shop! (38)

The woman is ridiculous and admirable in her efforts, "mean and ludicrous...purest pathos" (41), the embodiment of the maxim that "Life is made up of marble and mud" (41), for "What is called poetic insight is the gift of discerning, in this sphere of strangely mingled elements, the beauty and the majesty which are compelled to assume a garb so sordid" (41). Hers is fruitless sacrifice, for "Hepzibah, though she had her valuable and redeeming traits, had grown to be a kind of lunatic by imprisoning herself so long in one place, with no other company than a single series of ideas, and but one affection, and one bitter sense of wrong" (174). When we meet her, "The crisis was upon

her" (42), and she is nearly overcome when Phoebe descends from the bus like a goddess out of a machine to save her.

Before she arrives, however, Holgrave makes his first appearance. He will be the youthful companion to Phoebe, a chaste figure like herself and one who inhabits a world which is not of action (he is an artist and writer) but a pastoral world of ideas (before she arrives he has sole charge of the garden) in which his Fourierism is but the external and superficial sign of the malaise that afflicts him until he falls in love with her. Only when they speak their love and plan to leave for the country does he reveal himself, "with a half-melancholy laugh" (315) as a descendant of Matthew Maule; a kind of wizard who enchants Phoebe with "love's web or sorcery" (310) and tells the Pyncheons the now worthless secret of the parchment in the wall. This lost secret, once recaptured, is disenchanted and no longer has the power to harm, or to help, any Pyncheon or any Maule; the differences between them are thus dissolved.

Holgrave, the Maule of today, is Hepzibah's only friend, the one who encourages her "'to be a true woman'" and asks her, rhetorically, if she is not about to do "'a more heroic thing'" than ever was done "'since the house was built'" (45). This is the beginning of the release of Hepzibah, for after she makes her first sale she feels "the invigorating breath of a fresh outward atmosphere, after the long torpor and monotonous seclusion of her life"

(51), even questioning the Providence which allows an idle lady, passing in the street, to live by the toil of others. A change comes over her, preparing her to confront her evil cousin Jaffrey and to receive Phoebe. That first sale clears her vision. She returns to the parlor after seeing the Judge outside on the street and sees for the first time the truth about the portrait: "the face of the picture enabled her...to read more accurately, and to a greater depth, the face which she has just seen in the street" (59). She looks again at the picture of Clifford and thinks to herself "'He never was a Pyncheon'" (60) just as "'Phoebe is no Pyncheon'" (79). She has begun to repudiate the family in its worst, most ambitious aspects.

Her reverie is interrupted by Uncle Venner, "the patriarch" (286), "deficient...in his wits" (61), "the venerable man made pretensions to no little wisdom, and really enjoyed the credit of it. There was likewise, at times, a vein of something like poetry in him...his name was ancient in the town" (61). His pronouncements in this romance may be taken as truth; he gives the reader the only truly objective view of the Pyncheons and their story. He has seen a great deal of time pass and appears to have known generations of Pyncheons. When he condemns the Judge for his coldness to his cousins and praises Hepzibah for her decency and for opening the shop, his is the normative view in the romance. Hepzibah is unable to understand him, that is, to receive what he has to give; she thinks instead

of how she will be rescued from her cent-shop by the English Pyncheons of Pyncheon Hall. Only the reader understands Uncle Venner.

Once Phoebe is in charge in the house--and power accrues to her from the moment she arrives--things begin to change. The house is illuminated from within and the cent-shop prospers. Her "gift of practical arrangement" (71) and her "homely witchcraft" (72) rescue the dismal household. Without knowing anything of either Clifford or Jaffrey, she nonetheless becomes a power in their lives. She is the salvation of the one, if not the destruction of the other. "Whatever she did, too, was done without conscious effort, and with frequent outbreaks of song which were exceedingly pleasant to the ear" (76). Her song is "natural" and "conveyed the idea that the stream of life warbled through her heart, as a brook sometimes warbles through a pleasant little dell. It betokened the cheeriness of an active temperament, finding joy in its activity, and therefore rendering it beautiful; it was a New England trait--the stern old stuff of Puritanism, with a gold thread in the web" (70). She is a descendant of Puritans but also an improvement on them, an "example of feminine grace and availability combined, in a state of society, if there were any such, where ladies did not exist. There, it should be woman's office to move in the midst of practical affairs, and to gild them all--with an atmosphere of loveliness and joy" (80). During that first day in the shop Hepzibah

initiates Phoebe into Pyncheon family history, by which the girl is unmoved. History can mean nothing to her who seems to exist in the timeless realm of angels. Hepzibah is a different kind of angel but Phoebe's kin nonetheless. "Angels do not toil, but let their good works grow out of them; and so did Phoebe" (82). Hepzibah, on the other hand, "like the angel whom Jacob wrestled with,...ready to bless you, when once overcome" (82), soon cleaves to the girl she first tried to expel.

On that first day after her arrival, Phoebe enters the garden with its ruined summer-house embodying "The evil of these departed years" (86), a place where nothing flourishes but "such rank weeds (symbolic of the transmitted vices of society) as are always prone to root themselves about human dwellings" (86). Only Holgrave's vegetable garden is in order and thriving: "The eye of Heaven seemed to look down into it, pleasantly, and with a peculiar smile; as if glad to perceive that Nature, elsewhere overwhelmed, and driven out of the dusty town, had here been able to retain a breathing-place" (87). A couple of robins nest there, and "there was one other object in the garden, which Nature might fairly claim as her inalienable property, in spite of whatever man could do to render it his own" (88); this is the broken fountain, remnant of Maule's well. Phoebe tends the chickens who "recognize" (89) her call; "wise as well as antique...they were the descendants of a time-honored race..had existed,

in their individual capacity, ever since the House of the Seven Gables was founded, and were somehow mixed up with its destiny" (89). These immortal birds are restored to their former potency by Phoebe's care. "'Whatever health, comfort, and natural life exists in the house is embodied in your person,'" (216) Holgrave tells her. The hens become symbols of sustenance, too, for under her care they lay eggs later eaten by Clifford.

In the garden Phoebe meets Holgrave, who shows her his "'pictures out of sunshine'" (91). He works with the sunshine and is connected therefore with the same benign power attached to her, sister of the Dawn (86). The two young people discuss three pictures--the daguerreotype of the Judge, the portrait of the Colonel and the miniature of Clifford. Holgrave turns "'over these flowers, and those ancient and respectable fowles, to your care.... My own sphere does not so much lie among flowers....So, we will be fellow-laborers, somewhat on the community-system'" (93). They at once begin to work together in the garden until Holgrave vanishes, releasing her from "a certain magnetic element in the artist's nature, which he exercised towards her, possibly without being conscious of it" (94). But Holgrave's witchcraft, like Phoebe's, is a power for good.

Hepzibah soon evinces "a certain rich depth and moisture, as if...steeped in the warmth of her heart" (95), brought out in her by the arrival of Clifford. When Phoebe

re-enters the house after meeting Holgrave the old maid's "desolate old heart" (96) has warmed towards her. Phoebe has arrived just in time to take care of Clifford. The following morning (on the third day) she rescues Hepzibah from an old and useless English cookbook, and herself prepares American dishes amid "the ghosts of departed cook-maids" (99) and starving rats. The resurrection of the House of Pyncheon is well underway. Hepzibah labors fruitlessly over the fire, "as if her own heart were on the gridiron, and her immortal happiness were involved in its being done precisely to a turn" (100). Her metaphorical sacrifice is bootless.

The kitchen is a sacred place, where the breakfast table is a kind of altar, a "small and ancient table... covered with a cloth of the richest damask" where "The vapor of the broiled fish arose like incense from the shrine of a barbarian idol; while the fragrance of the Mocha might have gratified the nostrils of a tutelary Lar, or whatever power has scope over a modern breakfast-table"; where "Phoebe's Indian cakes were the sweetest offering of all--in their hue, befitting the rustic altars of the innocent and golden age--or, so brightly yellow were they, resembling some of the bread which was changed to glistening gold, when Midas tried to eat it" (100). Jaffrey Pyncheon, "Midas-like" (57), is excluded from this sacred place hallowed by Phoebe and her influence. It is a pre-lapsarian place of order and peace. "The early sunshine--as fresh

as that which peeped into Eve's bower, while she and Adam sat at breakfast there--came twinkling through the branches of the pear-tree, and fell quite across the table" (101). Phoebe's "sunny and tearful sympathy" (102) reverberates to Hepzibah's agitation as together they prepare for the unknown guest, "with a dim veil of decay and ruin betwixt him and the world" (106), "a Sybarite" (108) overcome by misfortune. Clifford longs to "'go to the south of France'" (111) away from the house, his now "grosser; almost cloddish" (111) nature incapable of returning Hepzibah's selfless love. He is a figure whom Phoebe regards with "grief and pity" (114) and whom her presence restores to some semblance of manhood, however, weak.

Hepzibah "had responded to the call" (133) to take care of her brother; but although she is "ready to do her utmost, and with affection enough, if that were all, to do a hundred times as much" (134) she is not able. Her love is not enough. When she reads aloud to him from his favorite books, she reads badly. She almost attempts the harpsichord, but "the threatening calamity was averted" (135) "possibly by the unrecognized interposition of the long-buried Alice, herself" (135). Worse, he cannot stand the sight of her grief-stricken aged face:

Had it pleased Heaven to crown the heroic fidelity of her life by making her personally the medium of Clifford's happiness, it would have rewarded her for all the past, by a joy with no bright tints, indeed, but deep and true, and worth a thousand gayer ecstasies. This could not be. She therefore turned to Phoebe, and resigned the task into the young girl's hands. The

latter took it up, cheerfully, as she did everything, but with no sense of a mission to perform, and succeeding all the better for that same simplicity. (136)

Phoebe becomes essential to the invalid, but she is unconscious of her power and is strong beyond the largeness of her nature.

A nature like Phoebe's has invariably its due influence, but it seldom regarded with due honor. Its spiritual force, however, may be partially estimated by the fact of her having found a place for herself, amid circumstances so stern, as those which surrounded the mistress of the house; and also by the effect which she produced on a character of so much more mass than her own. (137)

Although she cannot wholly appreciate Clifford's fineness and delicacy, unlikely "traits, to be perfectly appreciated by one whose sphere lay so much in the Actual as Phoebe's did" (140), "nothing more beautiful--nothing prettier, at least--was every made, than Phoebe" (140) and Clifford, at least, can appreciate her. He is grateful because "She was real! Holding her hand, you felt something; a tender something; a substance, and a warm one; and so long as you should feel its grasp, soft as it was, you might be certain that your place was good in the whole sympathetic chain of human nature. The world was no longer a delusion" (141). Phoebe connects people--there is no equivalent to her in Hawthorne's other works. She is naturally good; she is poetry itself.

Clifford listens "to her, as if she were a verse of household poetry, which God, in requital of his bleak and dismal lot, had permitted some angel, that most pitied him, to warble through the house. She was not an actual fact...but

the interpretation of all that he had lacked on earth, brought warmly home to his conception; so that this mere symbol or lifelike picture had almost the comfort of reality" (142). It is not necessary that Phoebe should appreciate her; she is all things to all men--helper to Hepzibah, to Clifford the symbol of life; to Jaffrey an object of conquest, defeating him when he seeks to overpower her "by the sultry, dog-day heat...of benevolence, which this excellent man diffused out of his great heart into the surrounding atmosphere;--very much like a serpent, which, as a preliminary to fascination, is said to fill the air with his peculiar odor" (119). Rejecting him, she elicits from him the "queer and awkward ingurgitation" (124), the symbol of the Pyncheon curse. Phoebe brings out the true nature of others, what they are the most capable of--"delight" (143) in Clifford; and in Jaffrey a "cold, hard, immitigable" (119) "ugly sternness" (119); she is a touchstone, a helper and a servant to others, "the nurse, the guardian, the playmate" (144) to Clifford, and nothing at all to the Judge, not even an adversary (in the end it is Hepzibah who bars his way into the house; Phoebe can have nothing to do with him).

But even Phoebe's activity in the house is limited, for she has more to do with the garden. It is part of the idealization of her innocence that she be the attendant spirit "of this garden-life. It was the Eden of a thunder-smitten Adam, who had fled for refuge thither out of the

same dreary and perilous wilderness, into which the original Adam was expelled" (150); "the ruinous arbor"(144) has been restored, since her advent, by Uncle Venner and Holgrave. A new vine grows. Bees return "and plunged into the squash-blossoms, as if there were no other squash-vines within a long day's flight, or as if the soil of Hepzibah's garden gave its productions just the very quality which these laborious little wizards wanted" (147); "God sent them thither to gladden our poor Clifford" (148). Clifford there becomes "a child again" (148), as he watches the hummingbirds (drawn to the garden for the first time in forty years by Holgrave's scarlet flowers). His broken nature feeds on Phoebe's strength and simplicity. He is a helpless old man, suffering incurably but restored if not to strength then to the benign simplicity of infancy.

But the past colors even the garden. The hens wander loose because Clifford, remembering prison, cannot bear to see them caged. In the garden Phoebe and Clifford are in the foreground, connected with the vegetable and animal life of nature in its most beneficent forms. Those chickens are like the Pyncheons. The most favored chick, says Holgrave, "'was a symbol of the life of the old house; embodying its interpretation, likewise, although an intelligible one, as such clues generally are. It was a feathered riddle; a mystery hatched out of an egg, and just as mysterious as if the egg had been addle!'" (152). The mystery of the chick's energy, sprung anew out of an old and degenerate stock,

is a riddle like Phoebe whose freshness is as mysterious as the rottenness evinced by the rest of the Pyncheons-- life itself is the mystery, in whatever form it takes in a family.

The society in the garden is most itself on Sunday, after Phoebe returns from church: they have "a sober little festival in the garden" (154) "under the ruinous arbor" (155). The three Pyncheons are joined by Uncle Venner and Holgrave. The old man, "as ready to give out his wisdom as a town-pump to give water" (155), looks forward, out loud, to going to his farm. Why he has not gone until now is hard to say, except that he seems to be waiting for the Pyncheon drama to resolve itself. This wise old figure makes the following observation about real estate; his word, as usual, is the truth: "It does seem to me that men make a wonderful mistake in trying to heap up property upon property. If I had done so, I should feel as if Providence was not found to take care of me; and, at all events, the city wouldn't be! I'm one of those people who think that Infinity is big enough for us all--and Eternity long enough! (156) Uncle Venner understands time and space in their cosmic, that is to say their "real," aspects; Holgrave interprets his remarks as Fourierism; Phoebe merely observes, "'But, for this short life of ours, one would like a house and a moderate garden-spot of one's own'" (156). The homely wisdom and the cosmic are expressed in this garden, and the group come as close to "happiness" (158) as is possible for

a family who has seen better days (and since, they are implicitly, representatives of the whole human race, this is not a bad kind of happiness at all). At dusk enchantment ceases, and Clifford senses that this is not a world of perfect uncorrupted beauty. After all, of that happy group one is very old, one is very ugly, one is very ill, one is a kind of wizard and even Phoebe cannot understand "a more delicate intelligence than her own" (146).

But Phoebe and Clifford are true companions, and she does what she can for him, reading to him, and in keeping with her realness, "sometimes suggested that he should look out upon the life of the street" (159). From his arched window Clifford becomes a kind of seer, watching and absorbing the sights of the town: "A cab; an omnibus, with its populous interior, dropping here-and-there a passenger, and picking up another, thus typifying that vast rolling vehicle, the world, the end of whose journey is everywhere, and nowhere" (160). He has the poet's ability to pierce through the veil of reality and see the profound significance in the ordinary. But he cannot confront the strange, and the present, calmly. The railroad with its "obstreperous howl of the steam-devil" (160) and its "terrible energy" (161) is still more disagreeable to him, and overwhelming.

The "power to deal with unaccustomed things and to keep up with the swiftness of the passing moment" (161) is a power, Hawthorne tells us, without which immortality is pointless. Life exists in time. "We are less than ghosts

for the time being, whenever this calamity befalls us" (161). That phrase, "for the time being," will dominate that section of the romance in which Hepzibah and Clifford, "two owls," flee the parlor and its corpse, and attempt to confront and enter the world of the steam engine. In that train they participate in the life which frightens Clifford from his window--"they could see the world racing past them" (256). "Sleep; sport; business; graver or lighter study;--and the common and inevitable movement onward! It was life itself!" (257) which surrounds them. To Clifford the train is rich with life and the promise of renewed power away from the house,¹⁰ but to Hepzibah there is no other world than the house.

That world of the swiftly passing moment, of daily life, of varied pursuits and varied encounters is the proper world of Jaffrey Pyncheon, a world in which his power is absolute. When he dies time stops for him, but the tumbrils of the world's race roll on into the future which was his only care. Clifford, caring only for the past, loves all the ancient carts on the street below his arched window, loves even the sound of the scissor-grinder's hissing wheel which "however disagreeable, had very brisk life in it, and appeared to give him a more vivid sense of active, bustling, and sunshiny existence, than he had attained in almost any other way. Nevertheless, its charm lay chiefly in the past; for the scissor-grinder's wheel had hissed in his childish ears" (162). He lives in memory and his sense of

beauty; his diminished intellect augmented by a vivid imagination make present life uncomfortable and disturbing to him.

These unfortunate qualities--amounting to faults in Clifford--make him susceptible to the horror of the organ grinder's monkey and his dancing figures. His sensitivities are weak points and threaten him with destruction. The horrid figures on the organ case are trapped in time in the most futile way, for they are the same at the beginning of the song as at the end; perhaps, too, says Hawthorne, "we mortals...all dance to one identical tune, and, in spite of our ridiculous activity, bring nothing finally to pass" (163). Although "we reject the whole moral of the show" (163), Hawthorne will not allow the reader to reject "how nearly his own moral condition was...exemplified" (164) by the monkey. We see him not through Phoebe's eyes, as they watch together, but with Clifford's ruined nature, his extra-sensitive morbidity:

The mean and low, yet strangely man-like expression of his wilted countenance; the prying and crafty glance, that showed him ready to gripe at every miserable advantage; his enormous tail (too enormous to be decently concealed under his gabardine), and the deviltry of nature which it betokened;--take this monkey just as he was, in short, and you could desire no better image of the Mammon of copper-coin, symbolizing the grossest form of the love of money. (164)

The ordinary passer-by notices none of this. "Clifford, however, was a being of another order" (164) and he weeps at the "horrible ugliness, spiritual as well as physical" (164) represented before him. He responds to image and simile; his nature responds only on that level and that is a sign of

his sickness--he is only in touch with the allegorical implications of life around him.

This sensitive response of Clifford's to every passing scene incorporates a danger for him. He is, for example, the first to recognize Phoebe's womanhood and her inevitable abandonment of him. He experiences acutely the passing of time, and that is the root of his suffering. One day when a political procession passes beneath his window he is overcome by a sense of his own isolation:

If an impressionable person, standing alone over the brink of one of these processions, should behold it, not in its atoms, but in its aggregate--as a mighty river of life, massive in its tide, and black with mystery, and, out of its depths, calling to the kindred depth within him--then the contiguity would add to the effect. It might so fascinate him, that he would hardly be restrained from plunging into the surging stream of human sympathies.

So it proved with Clifford. (165)

Hepzibah and Phoebe are unaffected by the procession. They do not understand what has come over him. Clifford, "a lonely being, estranged from his race, but now feeling himself man again, by virtue of the irrepressible instinct that possessed him," (166) temporarily overcomes his unbearable isolation by his Dionysian response, almost leaping into the street, and the procession--and filling the two women with fear and horror.

An isolate, separate and sick, Clifford longs to fulfill "A...yearning to renew the broken links of brotherhood with his kind" (167). Inspired by the Sabbath itself and by the sight of Phoebe on her way to church, Clifford recognizes "God's care and love towards him--towards this poor, forsaken

man, who, if any mortal could, might have been pardoned for regarding himself as thrown aside, forgotten, and left to be the sport of some fiend, whose playfulness was an ecstasy of mischief" (167). He longs to go to church; the Sabbath is the day on which care and love are made manifest to him, and he longs for active participation in that blessing.

It was the Sabbath morning; one of these bright, calm Sabbaths, with its own hallowed atmosphere, when Heaven seems to diffuse itself over the earth's face in a solemn smile, no less sweet than solemn. On such a Sabbath morn, were we pure enough to be its medium, we should be conscious of the earth's natural worship ascending through our frames, on whatever spot of ground we stood. (167)

Clifford feels that even breathing is prayer on such a day and as he stands with his sister and watches Phoebe go to church, he connects the immanence he senses with her, "throwing upward a glance and smile of parting kindness to the faces at the arched window" (167-168).

Phoebe is the spirit of the Sabbath, and the resurrection it foreshadows:

In her aspect, there was a familiar gladness, and a holiness that you could play with, and yet reverence it as much as ever. She was like a prayer, offered up in the homeliest beauty of one's mother-tongue. Fresh was Phoebe, moreover, and airy and sweet in her apparel; as if nothing that she wore--neither her gown, nor her small straw bonnet, nor her little kerchief, any more than her snowy stockings--had ever been put on, before; or, if worn, were all the fresher for it, and with a fragrance as if they had lain among the rosebuds. (168)

She is "a Religion in herself, warm, simple, true, with a substance that could walk on earth, and a spirit that was capable of Heaven" (168). Phoebe is the romance heroine par excellence, presented in pristine simplicity as never before

or since in Hawthorne's fiction. She is human, not divine, but with extraordinary perfection of attributes. Although she does not engage in direct conflict with the enemy, her advent into the Pyncheon world, which previous to her arrival contained only the incapable Hepzibah and the wicked Jaffrey, and was made all the more vulnerable by the weakness of Clifford, initiates the return of order. Her power is respected unwittingly by Jaffrey, and also by Hepzibah, but only the mutilated Clifford with his poetic sensibility sees it as epiphany, the manifestation of God's and nature's worlds in one person. We need his perception--in that recognition is also the vision of a happier society beyond the romance, a world in which holiness and good combine to create a benign society.

Holgrave abandons his Fourierism in recognition of the beneficent power which Phoebe represents--the power of life and of afterlife, of family and immortality, and of a real happiness akin to immortal bliss. This view of Phoebe is first apparent to the reader through Hawthorne's commentary on her, and next by the emphasis of Clifford's similar perception of her. Her beauty is opposed to the sordid money values represented by the Judge and by the monkey, too; her natural temperance and continence are opposed to the arbitrary Law created by man to serve his own ends and also represented by the unjust Judge. He seeks his own advantage in the world of experience, ceaselessly struggling to bend external objects to his will; she contains her own good within

her perfect nature. She is nature as order. Jaffrey's is the nature of the fallen world, "'powerful in his own strength, and in the support of society on all sides'" (218) as Holgrave says. All this Clifford senses when he sees Phoebe walking to church, knowing somehow that she is the Judge's--his enemy's --polar opposite.¹¹

The sight of Phoebe is grace to Clifford; he thinks that he can pray. And when Hepzibah looks at him she "beheld ...a soft, natural effusion; for his heart gushed out, as it were, and run over at his eyes, in delightful reverence for God, and kindly affection for his human brethren" (168). The sister, ignorant of the vision which has been vouchsafed the broken man, suggests that they go to church themselves. But they cannot emerge from the house; a spell binds them there:

They pulled open the front-door, and stept across the threshold, and felt, both of them, as if they were standing in the presence of the whole world, and with mankind's great and terrible eye on them alone. The eye of their Father seemed to be withdrawn, and gave them no encouragement. The warm, sunny air made them shiver. Their hearts quaked within them, at the idea of taking one step further. (169)

They are the cynosure of a Godless world, "'ghosts'" (169) as Clifford recognizes, doomed to haunt the house of Pyncheon, a place "tenfold more dismal" (169) because they now recognize that no "jailor is so inexorable as one's self!" (169)

The childlike Clifford, telling his dreams to Phoebe and Hepzibah, is a seer. His memories, thus reconstructed, are always accurate. Like a romancer he is "enveloped...as in a robe" (170) by his dreams and "slept open-eyed, and

perhaps fancied himself most dreaming, then" (170). Children are close to him, he sympathizes with them from the top of his tower-like room. He is a holy innocent, capricious in his moods but accurate in his perceptions. Phoebe admits that she dare not intrude upon certain of his moods: "'He has had such a great sorrow, that his heart is made all solemn and sacred by it. When he is cheerful--when the sun shines into his mind--then I venture to peep in, just as fast as the light reaches, but no further. It is holy ground where the shadow falls!'" (178). His smile, "spiritual and immortal" (178) after the trials he has undergone, shines from the arched window upon the games beneath. But he is powerless against the evil Jaffrey. One day, blowing bubbles down into the street, he makes contact with his cousin, who responds with a "smile, which might be conceived as diffusing a dog-day sultriness for the space of several yards about him" (172). Clifford is overcome by fear inspired by "the presence of massive strength" (172); "'this abortive lover of the Beautiful'" (216), who alone appreciates the transcendent purity of Phoebe, is confused and full of dread in the presence of this other cousin. "Strength is incomprehensible by weakness, and therefore the more terrible. There is no greater bugbear than a strong-willed relative, in the circle of his own connections" (172). That circle will be broken by Jaffrey's death and reformed in the idyllic world of the country, where his power, ironically, has provided a place for the sick, the old, the virtuous and the meek to inherit. The ending of the

romance itself is not ironic: it is the victory of virtue over vice--simple justice, not the justice of which the Judge is the representative (the wrong law of the fallen world) but the simple justice of natural order reasserting itself.

In the implicit conflict between the values of Judge Pyncheon and the values represented by Phoebe, Holgrave the Daguerreotypist is a kind of neutral figure. He has "the rare and high quality of reverence for another's individuality" (212) which combines with his active aspect--scientist, artist and philosopher contemplating society from the outside--that make him a foil to Phoebe's perfectly unconscious simplicity. If Phoebe is the hero of the piece, then Holgrave is the maiden. They wander together in the chaos surrounding and enveloping the House of the Seven Gables, making order together in the ruined garden, emerging together from the labyrinth when they confess their love. He too has a mysterious rapport with nature, for he has tamed the sunlight and uses it in magic revelation. He is a kind of helpful fairy who is later revealed to have been a possibly harmful figure, tamed early on by the perfect goodness of Phoebe.

Holgrave is also Phoebe's relief from "the precincts of the old Pyncheon-house" (173). Her selfless care of Clifford lasts only till dusk, when his fatigue releases her from that duty and she is "free to follow her own tastes" (174). Then she goes to lectures, or for a walk, or shops or reads the Bible. Her only intercourse with another young person is with Holgrave: "Both...were characters proper to

New England life" (175) although dissimilar. The artist is an American Gil Blas, as Hawthorne tells us paraleptically:

A romance on the plan of Gil Blas, adapted to American society and manners, would cease to be a romance. The experience of many individuals among us, who think it hardly worth the telling, would equal the vicissitudes of the Spaniard's earlier life; while their ultimate success, or the point whither they tend, may be incomparably higher than any that a novelist would imagine for his hero. (176)

This hero has travelled the world in various occupations, "self-dependent" (176) from boyhood on, of a "natural force or will" (176) something "of an adventurer" (177). He is an anarchic figure, "Homeless...continually changing his whereabouts, and therefore responsible neither to public opinion nor to individuals--putting off one exterior, and snatching up another, to be soon shifted for a third--he had never violated the innermost man, but had carried his conscience along with him" (177).

He is also "an observer" (177), although well-disposed towards the Pyncheons and "ready to do them whatever good he might" (177). He is a wise young man, but "his premature experience of life" (179) had not spoiled him. He is the prophet of a renewed golden age: "he had that sense, or inward prophecy...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" (179). He is a man ready to go to Blithedale, and the narrator sees his as a laudable enthusiasm. The outcome is predictable: "He would still have faith in man's

brightening destiny, and perhaps love him all the better, as he should recognize his helplessness in his own behalf; and the haughty faith, with which he began life, would be well bartered for a far humbler one, at its close, in discerning that man's best-directed effort accomplishes a kind of dream, while God is the sole worker of realities" (180). All this comes to pass, we may assume, when he joins his lot with Phoebe's and takes up a conventional life in the country. The author sees this as the only way that "the moss-grown and rotten Past represented by the "old house" with "both the dry-rot and the damp-rot in its walls" (174) is to be torn down, and lifeless institutions to be thrust out of the way, and their dead corpses buried, and everything to begin anew" (179). He is ambitious in the best sense (as Jaffrey is in the worst)--ambitious of a better life, in a new house, and eager to make the golden age return.

Holgrave is not an individual man but a type of the idealized youth of America's flowering manhood. He consciously pursues that quest of which Phoebe is the natural exponent--the search for the good life, the affirmation of the best in man, in family and in society. Together they will begin to redeem the mouldy world represented by the House of the Seven Gables. Their joint virtue represents the millenium to come. Holgrave is a stalwart figure, promising great things. Little read, he thinks of himself as a thinker; but his real strength lies in the consciousness of his own inner strength, "which made all his past vicissitudes seem merely like a change

of garments" (180) and in his warm enthusiasm for life, and in his ambition, as part of his generosity, and the kind of ambition which "might solidify him from a theorist into the champion of some practicable cause" (181). He is crude but practical, and with a "magnanimous zeal for man's welfare" (181) and a reckless disregard for tradition which bode well for his future. And "in his faith, and in his infidelity" (181), in what he has and does not have, "the artist might fitly enough stand forth as the representative of many compeers in his native land" (181). Phoebe tames this man; "she made the House of the Seven Gables like a home to him, and the garden a familiar precinct" (182). She is also his alter ego; "He poured himself out as to another self" (182). Although he is aware of the dangers of real estate, of the incubus of the past which "'lies upon the Present like a giant's dead body'" (182), she is aware that "'so long as we can be comfortable in them'" (183) houses are just homes.

Holgrave, like Hepzibah and Jaffrey, is obsessed by the past, but for different reasons. His preoccupation arises from an understanding of what the past has done to others; and when he tells Phoebe the tale of Alice Pyncheon it is incorporated into the romance exactly as are the rest of the chapters; it is chapter XIII, and written in a style indistinguishable from Hawthorne's own. The House of the Seven Gables is a romance of the past transcended by love, of love reborn out of the ashes of history

and a bloody past--"'the flower of Eden'" (308) as Uncle Venner calls it, for he can recognize with his age-old wisdom, the love which is at the source of his own nature and which his name also implies. The tale of Alice is a reminder of what has once happened, of love perverted, and the tragic result.

Holgrave's tale is the story of love abused, and it qualifies, by countering, their own pure love. Although the house at this point in its gradually worsening history is still "a substantial, jolly-looking mansion" (191), Alice herself already demonstrates the Pyncheon malaise we have recognized in Hepzibah and Clifford. "The fair Alice bestowed most of her maiden leisure between flowers and music, although the former were apt to droop, and the melodies were often sad" (192) cf., "A flower...as Phoebe herself observed, always began to droop sooner in Clifford's hand, or Hepzibah's, than in her own" (174) . That malaise, also familiar to us from "Rappaccini's Daughter," is the sign of incurable sickness in an Eden of the present world. Just as "by the same law as that which applied to the flower, that is, Natural law , converting her whole daily life into a flower-fragrance for these two sickly spirits, the blooming girl must inevitably droop and fade, much sooner than worn on a younger and happier breast" (174). Phoebe, like Beatrice Rappaccini in this respect, is endangered by those who love her and use her. Beatrice and Alice are types of Phoebe. Alice "could not take kindly

to the New England modes of life, in which nothing beautiful had ever been developed" (192). Phoebe is that later development; she is the flower of New England, a girl who does not voluntarily stay in the parlor of the House of the Seven Gables. That parlor, which we first saw after the Colonel had just furnished it, has changed in the years before Alice, but it is just as indicative of Pyncheon life as it was then:

It...was provided with furniture...principally from Paris; the floor...being covered with a carpet, so skilfully and richly wrought, that it seemed to glow as with living flowers....Through all this variety of decoration, however, the room showed its original characteristics; its low stud, its cross-beam, its chimney-piece, with the old-fashioned Dutch tiles; so that it was the emblem of a mind, industriously stored with foreign ideas, and elaborated into artificial refinement, but neither larger, nor, in its proper self, more elegant, than before. (193).

This is the same parlor, too, that Hepzibah steps on the threshold of, before Clifford and Phoebe arrive--the figure in the carpet by that time obliterated, the room shabby, but still pretentious. The Colonel's portrait and the map of the eastern lands are still there, of course. And when young Maule asks Alice's father for the House of the Seven Gables and the old garden ground in requital for the secret to those lands, the portrait frowns and clenches its fist. The present Pyncheon in the tale, Alice's father, is the boy who found the Colonel dead. He anticipates returning to England--just as Hepzibah looks to England for help, and he consents.

It is not just his surrender of house, and then of

daughter, which dooms Alice, however. The carpenter's interpretation of her glance at him--"as if I were a brute beast" (201)--sees in her that false pride which distinguishes her family. He hypnotizes her, and she, unlike the lady in Comus whom we are briefly reminded of in this tale, without any trust in her own virtue and with faith only in that Pyncheon pride, says to him: "I certainly shall entertain no manner of apprehension, with my father at hand....Neither do I conceive that a lady, while true to herself, can have aught to fear from whomsoever, or in any circumstance!" (202. Like Hepzibah after her, she puts her trust in that false gentility which is at the root of Pyncheon trouble. "She was very proud...this fair girl deemed herself conscious of a power--combined of beauty, high, unsullied purity, and the preservative force of womanhood--that could make her sphere impenetrable, unless betrayed by treachery within" (203). Pride is the treachery which betrays her.

Alice's father turns his back on her, and she is spell-bound. Her vision is useless, for Maule recognizes during her trance that the secret of the parchment is unobtainable and disdains the house. Alice is not released from her spell and dies a martyr to her father's greed, Maule's vindictiveness and her own pride. At the end of Holgrave's tale, we find Phoebe partially mesmerized herself. But the daguerreotypist refrains from entrancing her--"Let us allow him integrity...forever after to be confided

in," says Hawthorne, "since he forbade himself to twine that one link more, which might have rendered his spell over Phoebe indissoluble" (212).

Thus Phoebe awakes at dusk in a garden so "'like a bower in Eden'" (214) "that the summer Eve might be fancied as sprinkling dews and liquid moonlight, with a dash of icy temper in them, out of a silver vase" (213). Hograve is influenced by this light.

These silvery beams were already powerful enough to change the character of the lingering daylight.... With the lapse of every moment, the garden grew more picturesque;....The common-place characteristics--which, at noontide, it seemed to have taken a century of sordid life to accumulate--were now transfigured by charm of romance. A hundred mysterious years were whispering among the leaves, whenever the slight sea-breeze found its way thither, and stirred them...the moonlight flickered to-and-for, and fell...with a continual shift and play, according as the chinks and wayward crevices among the twigs admitted or shut out the glimmer. (213)

Time lapses and falls backwards as the shadows fall. The romance of the present moment [and cf., from "The Custom-House" chapter of The Scarlet Letter, "Moonlight, in a familiar room...is a medium the most suitable for a romance-writer to get acquainted with his illusive guests" (op. cit., p. 36)] is also the past recaptured for the two lovers in the summer house, under a tree in a ruined garden which they have together restored. His decision to leave Phoebe unmesmerized--not to invade her inner being--becomes the source of Holgrave's sense of well-being: "'After all, what a good world we live in! How good, and beautiful!'" (214). But the experience leaves Phoebe feeling older, a feeling, Holgrave

tells her, "'essential to the soul's development'" (215), for "'the sadness and the rapture'" (215) which they feel together is the beginning of love.

Their union is deferred, however, until the demon of greed and ambition can be exorcised from Pyncheonlife. For that to happen, Phoebe must leave. Jaffrey must die in the Pyncheon parlor and he cannot enter the house while she is in it, for she is the blessing on the place which "'will vanish when you leave the threshold'" (216) as Holgrave tells her. As for her cousins, "'They both exist by you,'" (216) he tells her, and when she leaves they are indeed threatened by annihilation. When she bids them good-bye the following day, she is completely in touch with the life of the house: "look where she would, lay her hand on what she might, the object responded to her consciousness, as if a moist human heart were in it" (219). Although she is "'going home by the railroad'" (221), when she takes the train "Phoebe took the wings of the morning, and was soon flitting almost as rapidly away, as if endowed with the aerial locomotion of the angels" (222). Her experience is very different from that of "the desolate couple" (220) she leaves behind. She becomes part of the dawn that is her name.

Once she is gone, the house reverts to its old dead self. "Nothing flourished in the cold, moist, pitiless atmosphere, drifting with the brackish scud of sea-breezes, except the moss along the joints of the shingle-roof, and

the great bunch of weeds, that had lately been suffering from drought, in the angle between the two front gables" (223). Clifford is "cut off" (223), isolated once more by her absence. Hepzibah becomes "the East-Wind itself, grim and disconsolate, in a rusty black silk-gown, and with a turban of cloud-wreaths on its head!" (223):

Everything--even the old chairs and tables, that had known what weather was, for three or four such lifetimes as her own--looked damp and chill as if the present were their worst experience. The picture of the Puritan Colonel shivered on the wall. The house itself shivered, from every attic of its seven gables, down to the great kitchen-fireplace, which served all the better as an emblem of the mansion's heart, because, though built for warmth, it was now so comfortless and empty. (224)

When the "storm-demon" (224) lays siege to the house, Clifford takes to his bed and Hepzibah sits miserably alone, hearing in the distance the melodious sound of Alice Pyncheon's harpsichord, "prelusive of death in the family" (225). And at the same moment, the gurgle of Jaffrey Pyncheon is heard at the door.

The house has been made miserable and vulnerable by Phoebe's departure. It has reverted to its pre-Phoebe wasted state, comfortless and forlorn. It is ready for Jaffrey Pyncheon, when he comes to invite Clifford into "'society--the society, that is to say, of kindred and old friends'" (226). The Judge, always associated with the east wind and never more so than now as, imperceptibly, a storm builds up around the house, talks too much--as usual--smiles too much, and insists too much. In the idyllic world

which has come about by Phoebe's presence, there is little talk. We understand the characters because of Hawthorne's metaphors in describing them. Jaffrey is the only one, save Holgrave (who allegorizes for us) who talks at length. Phoebe, Hepzibah and Clifford simply are. Harmoniously they live together, without explanation or discussion. Holgrave necessarily relates the history of house and family to the extent that Hawthorne himself does not. But Jaffrey's long speeches seek to obfuscate; he lies and would entrap. Holgrave clarifies. Now, at Jaffrey's entreaties to Hepzibah for permission to see Clifford, the Judge is hypocritically self-righteous, actuated by "a daily guilt...continually renewed, and reddening forth afresh, like the miraculous blood-stain of a murder, without his necessarily, and at every moment, being aware of it" (229).

But for all the things he says, and all the ways he looks at Hepzibah who he feels to be in his grasp at last, nothing makes Jaffrey so clear to us at this juncture as Hawthorne's simile describing him. He is, like the early Pyncheons, a man

...to whom forms are of paramount importance. Their field of action lies among the external phenomena of life. They possess vast ability in grasping, and arranging, and appropriating to themselves, the big, heavy, solid unrealities, such as gold, landed estate, offices of trust and emolument, and public honors. With these materials, and with deeds of goodly aspect, done in the public eye, an individual of this class builds up, as it were, a tall and stately edifice, which, in the view of other people, and ultimately in his own view, is no other than the man's character,

or the man himself. Behold, therefore, a palace!
And beneath the show of a marble palace, that pool
 of stagnant water, foul with many impurities, and perhaps
 tinged with blood--that secret abomination, above
 which, possibly, he may say his prayers, without remem-
 bering it--is this man's miserable soul! (229-230)

Jaffrey, with his "admirably arranged life" (231), is worse than a Pharisee. He is generalized evil in the world; to Hepzibah he epitomizes the worst in the family: the "'hard and grasping spirit has run in our blood, these two hundred years! You are but doing over again, in another shape, what your ancestor before you did, and sending down to your posterity the curse inherited from him'" (237).

Hepzibah is too weak to resist him. She admits him, as he tells her that "'Time flies'" (309). He dies with his watch in his hand, but his cousin, not realizing this, is overcome with the "scene of passion and terror, through which she had just struggled" (240). As she looks out into the garden she sees an old Grimalkin, devilish (280) and unlike the denizens of the garden when Phoebe was there. Not it is she who looks helplessly and aimlessly out of Clifford's arched window and is filled with despair at the thought of how "Might and wrong combined, like iron magnetized, are endowed with irresistible attraction" (243); "the Judge would draw all human aid to his own behalf" (244). Her despair is reasonable under the circumstances, but she suffers terribly from it.

She realizes that "Little Phoebe Pyncheon would at once have lighted up the whole scene," (244) but in the

"desert" (245) of the house, without even Holgrave, she feels "without the possibility of aid" (245). This is the low point in the romance, for the old maid cannot even pray. "But," says Hawthorne, "Hepzibah 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" (245). She fears only for Clifford, imagining him walking abroad in the town "like a ghost" (247), until, "on the threshold of the parlor" (249) she finds him, joyful at the death of the enemy.

The roles of brother and sister become reversed. She chokes with fear at the sight of the dead Judge and must be led away by Clifford, now momentarily strong again. Leaving the "defunct nightmare, which had perished in the midst of its wickedness, and left its flabby corpse on the breast of the tormented one, to be gotten rid of as it might!" (252), they leave for the moment history itself, the dead corpse on the breast of the present, the incubus of history which has haunted them both for so long. But they wander abroad in an east wind--the same that killed Alice and that shone forth from Jaffrey's face--"on precisely such a pilgrimage as a child often meditates, to the world's end," (252). It is like the end of the world as they wander, by railroad, and then are deposited some strange place. The world in which they are abroad is a dead world, a fallen world, leaves "torn off untimely by the blast" (245), muddy ways that will not be cleaned by

the rain. They themselves "were felt to be in keeping with the dismal and bitter weather" (255).

From their window in the train, "they could see the world racing past them" (256); "Everything was unfixed from its age-long rest, and moving at whirlwind speed in a direction opposite to their own" (256). They are moving counter-clockwise, as it were, against time that flies. They are in a world outside The House of the Seven Gables at last, in the world of "life itself!" (257). But Hepzibah feels more isolated "than even in the seclusion which she had just quitted" (257). To Clifford, inspired, life is "lurid" (257) and thrilling. To him they seem "'in the world...in the midst of life!'" (258); but to her "This one old house was everywhere!" (258). She and the house are in sympathy, and the separation is torture to her.

Clifford admires the railroad, his "winged nature" (258) responds to the speed and annihilation of distance -- "'all human progress is in a circle; or, to use a more accurate and beautiful figure, in an ascending spiral curve'" (259); he feels an accession of power as he is whirled along. In a more high-flown version of Holgrave's diatribe, he rails against the House of the Seven Gables: why should a man "'make himself a prisoner for life in brick, and stone, and old worm-eaten timber, when he may just as easily dwell, in one sense, however--in a better sense, wherever the fit and beautiful shall offer him a

home'" (260). Hawthorne has told us that Holgrave and his ilk "are the harbingers abroad of a golden era" (179). Clifford sees "'the harbingers of a better era are unmistakeable'" (263). "'The house ought to be purified with fire'" (184) Holgrave told Phoebe. Clifford says, "'it were a relief to me, if that house could be torn down, or burnt up'" (262). He too has a revolutionary vision, like Holgrave, and says to the stranger, "'A bank-robber-- and what you call a murderer, likewise--has his rights, which men of enlightened humanity and conscience should regard in so much the more liberal spirit, because the bulk of society is prone to controvert their existence'" (264). But his vision cannot sustain him and debark they must.

They alight "'as the birds do,'" (266) because they cannot think what to do next. When the train stops, "The world had fled away from these two wanderers" (266) and they are their dreary, bereft selves again. The dismal landscape in which they find themselves is symbolic of their desolation. The landscape is the house in landscape form, in fact, damp, cold, gloomy and decayed.

At a little distance stood a wooden church, black with age, and in a dismal state of ruin and decay, with broken windows, a great rift through the main body of the edifice, and a rafter dangling from the top of the square tower. Farther off was a farm-house in the old style, as venerably black as the church, with a roof sloping downward from the three-story peak to within a man's height of the ground. It seemed uninhabited. There were the relics of a wood-pile, indeed, near the door, but with grass sprouting up among the chips and scattered logs. The small rain-drops came down aslant; the wind was not turbulent, but sullen, and full of chilly moisture. (266)

This landscape of ruin and desolation, of the past crumbling into the present, of the ruined institutions pitifully created by men to take the place of the law broken in Eden, is the real world of the House of the Seven Gables. It is a sterile, lifeless, uninhabited world, without cultivation or worship, a world reclaimed by chaos. In this bleakness Hepzibah prays for mercy, prays to God the "Father" (267) of all and asks, "are we not thy children?" (267). Her prayer renews a tie that has long been broken by family pride. That prayer is answered by the return of Phoebe.

Time stops in the romance after Hepzibah's prayer, and the chapter ends. The next event in the sequential course of the narrative is the return of Phoebe from the country. But before that can happen we are given one last view of the lower world inhabited by Jaffrey, "keeping house" (268) together with the House of the Seven Gables. The meditation on "Governor Pyncheon" that is Chapter XVIII is also a meditation on justice and power and their social, external and false aspects.

Time no longer flies for the Judge; instead we are allowed to penetrate his hopes, dreams and ambitions, in the bitter knowledge of how they have come to nothing. Jaffrey is invaded, because he is dead. No other character in Hawthorne ever is subjected to this violation of integrity. But Jaffrey, evil and dead, must submit. We hear about his villainous exploits. The chapter is full of the possibilities of action, past action and plans for future action.

The disingenuous commentary is an indication of the strength of the villain, even in death, and also a most bitter kind of irony. The longer Jaffrey sits there, a man who wanted to be governor, is governor now, though dead, the bolder becomes his commentator: "It was he, you know, of whom it used to be said, in reference to his ogre-like appetite, that his Creator made him a great animal, but that the dinner-hour made him a great beast" (275). The gloom gradually fills the parlor where he lies, until, his face and blood-stained shirtfront absorbed at last by the irresistible darkness, the Judge has been annihilated at last by the house he so long besieged: "There is no window! There is no face! An infinite, inscrutable blackness has annihilated sight! Where is our universe? All crumbled away from us; and we, adrift in chaos, may hearken to the gusts of homeless wind, that go sighing and murmuring about in quest of what was once a world! (276-277) The Judge is adrift in the chaos of that time between night and morning; "for him that has died to-day, his morrow will be the resurrection-morn" (276). He is solidly and forever in the present.

But the wind changes around him, coming at last from the north-west, one that will return the other four characters to the house. The Pyncheon of today has become the "Pyncheon of tonight" (278), and the ghosts of his dead family, including his last son, gather to welcome him. When the morning comes, it comes not for the Judge but for Phoebe--

"cloudless morn. Blessed, blessed radiance!....part of the universal benediction, annulling evil, and rendering all goodness possible, and happiness attainable" (282). None of this, of course, is available to Jaffrey, for "it is our belief," Hawthorne tells us, "whatever show of honor he may have piled upon it, that there was heavy sin at the base of this man's being" (283). And armed with this conviction, the narrator at last attacks the corpse head on:

Rise up, Judge Pyncheon!...Rise up, thou subtile, worldly, selfish, iron-hearted hypocrite, and make thy choice, whether still to be subtile, wordly, selfish, iron-hearted, and hypocritical, or to tear these sins out of thy nature, though they bring the life-blood with them! The Avenger is upon thee! Rise up, before it be too late! (283)

Annihilated for the second time, this time by irony, the Judge is abandoned and a dark chapter in the life of the house comes to an end.

The morning which follows is like a blessing, the very garden seems happy. The tree in front of the house is mysteriously whole after the storm, "except a single branch, that by the earlier change with which the elm-tree sometimes prophesies the autumn, had been transmuted to bright gold. It was like the golden branch, that gained Aeneas and the Sibyl admittance into Hades." (284-285) The idyllic stage of the romance is now in the foreground. We have a pleasing and picturesque view of the natural order reasserting itself after the crisis of human history has passed. Without the darkness and mystery of the early garden chapters, the bitter history of the house is detached

from our present view of it. The secrets of the house are now revealed; the house becomes "inviting....Its windows gleamed cheerfully...moss...seemed pledges of familiarity and sisterhood with Nature....A person of imaginative temperament...would conceive the mansion to have been the residence of the stubborn old Puritan. Integrity, who, dying in some forgotten generation, had left a blessing in all its rooms and chambers the efficacy of which was to be seen in the religion, honesty, moderate competence, or upright poverty, and solid happiness, of his descendents, to this day" (285-286). The confirmation of this utterly beneficent view of the house is the blooming of Alice's posies, the crimson flowers found in the front gables, "a mystic expression that something within the house was consummated" (286).

Uncle Venner is the first to reappear, articulating for Holgrave the connection between the artist and Phoebe. There is, during this prelude to her arrival, a recapitulation of all the previous external activity of the street--housewives come to buy from Hepzibah, the little boy wants gingerbread, the two quidnuncs come by and make their usual observation on the futility of cent-shops; and the mob of small children with the Italian puppeteer and his monkey park themselves in front. Phoebe returns with "the quiet glow of natural sunshine over her" (297) and all is restored, in balance again.

Neither had she forfeited her proper gift of making things look real, rather than fantastic, within her sphere. Yet we feel it to be a questionable venture, even for Phoebe, at this juncture, to cross the threshold of the seven gables. Is her healthful presence potent enough to chase away the crowd of pale, hideous, and sinful phantoms, that have gained admittance there, since her departure? (297)

The answer is yes. She goes first to the garden, chasing away the Grimalkin that like "the devil for a human soul" (281) watches at the window the corpse of Jaffrey Pyncheon.

The garden has reverted; weeds overrun flowers and vegetables. Maule's Well has breached the stone wall and made a huge pool in the garden. "The impression of the whole scene was that of a spot, where no human foot had left its print, for many preceding days--probably, not since Phoebe's departure--for she saw a side-comb of her own under the table of the arbor, where it must have fallen, on the last afternoon when she and Clifford sat there. (200). She is admitted to the house by the unseen hand of Holgrave who takes her into the drawing room and tells her the story of the Pyncheon family, including the story of Clifford and Jaffrey. He chronicles for her the family she is part of, that is, he connects her with time. He also enjoys their joint isolation in the secret which "hastened the development" (305) of their love. As they realize their love for each other, "They transfigured the earth, and made it Eden again, and themselves the two first dwellers in it....At such a crisis, there is no Death; for Immortality is revealed anew, and embraces everything in his hallowed atmosphere" (307).

Their love annihilates the death in the next room. Clifford, returning with his sister, recognizes that "'the flower of Eden has bloomed, likewise, in this old, darksome house, to-day!'" (308).

Nothing is left for the characters save that departure for a happier world outside the drama of the romance. The social world of the town is abandoned for the pleasanter natural world of the country. But, Hawthorne, reminds us, time still governs the lives of some of the characters-- not only Phoebe and Holgrave, in their Eden at the start of time, but also Clifford, "evidently happy" (314) is still somewhat feeble. "Time, the continual vicissitude of circumstances, and the invariable inopportunities of death, render it impossible" (313) that wrongs are righted here on earth. For "no great mistake, whether acted or endured, in our mortal sphere, is ever really set right" (313); that is part of the Eden of the present. Holgrave identifies himself to his former hereditary enemies as a Maule and shows them the secret spring behind the Colonel's portrait. The deed therein is now worthless. History's secret has been no secret at all; and yet many have suffered for it.

The group of happy folk depart in a "dark-green barouche" (318) symbolic of the renewal they will seek in the green world of the country. Uncle Venner remains behind for the time being, to watch the Well and the elm. And, "passing slowly from the ruinous porch, seemed to hear

a strain of music, and fancied that sweet Alice Pyncheon... had given one farewell touch of a spirit's joy upon her harpsichord, as she floated heavenward from the HOUSE OF THE SEVEN GABLES!" (319). Her spirit is exorcised at last. The "present happiness" of the family is the beginning of the future, our own present. The world of history (which must end at the end of the world) symbolized by Jaffrey's sudden death and the natural world (eternal and ever-renewing) symbolized by the union of Phoebe and Holgrave are in alignment in the present, allowing a manifestation of divinity which is apparent in the golden bough on the Pyncheon elm. That golden bough is the talismanic image which indicates to the reader the mythic nature of history and the promise of an heroic future.

CHAPTER II

NOTES

¹M. Pauline Parker, in discussing The Faerie-Queene, states that "psychomachia which is the underlying theme of so much allegory is a struggle of the will, not of the intellect, and the graces the knight needs and receives are of strength and life, not of enlightenment." (The Allegory of the Faerie-Queene, Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1960), p. 103.

²Northrop Frye, p. 304.

³Richard Chase, p. 158.

⁴Henry James, p. 519.

⁵Ibid., p. 520.

⁶D. H. Lawrence sees The House of the Seven Gables as concerned with "The passing of the old order" (p. 1005). In fact the old order refuses to pass, that's one of the things wrong with family history as Hawthorne makes plain.

⁷Angus Fletcher refers to "this compression of history" which is imposed on the house (p. 217). Before we meet the first character, we feel that he is, like Everyman, born into an ancient, long-suffering House whose fortunes have sadly declined; this impression is essential to the romance.

⁸Newton Arvin says that no Pyncheon "is a normally developed human being, living in the right and genial relations with his fellow men or with the others" (Hawthorne, Boston: Little, Brown, 1929, p. 193). In fact "normally developed" persons belong to novels; this romance deals with what Frye calls "characters idealized in vacuo" that we may contemplate their peculiar qualities not their ordinary ones, however common those peculiar qualities are.

⁹The fountain in the garden is full of significance. Hawthorne said in The American Note-books that there was "No fountain so small but that Heaven may be imaged in its bosom" (Riverside edition, vol. 9, p. 37). Maule's well gone brackish also symbolizes the possibility of grace,

spoiled at the source (just as man is a well of salvation, by the grace of God) but amenable to redemption.

¹⁰Leo Marx sees the railroad as a symbol of power (The Machine in the Garden, NY: Oxford University Press, 1964, p. 350) and this is surely what terrifies Clifford, and what he later seeks to participate in, at least once in his life, when he takes his journey with Hepzibah--the power of mechanization, relentless, soulless. D. H. Lawrence's observation that "No ghost could stand up against a vacuum cleaner" (p. 1005)--implying that obsession is incompatible with the railroad--is not borne out by Hepzibah's continued obsession with the house as she looks out of the window of the train during that journey. Clifford, himself a kind of ghost, is, however, appalled when he first sees the railroad from his window (it has, presumably, been invented during his imprisonment, and represents the changed world into which he returns).

¹¹In this sense, Clifford is, as T. S. Eliot said, "simply the intersection of a relation to three other characters" (Shock of Recognition, p. 862). By his very existence he makes sense out of their lives.

CHAPTER III

THE BLITHEDALE ROMANCE

The Blithedale Romance presents us with a world full of incident, the skeleton of romance.¹ It is a work above all in which characterization is presented by imagery rather than by action, a work which Frye sees as epitomizing the "reflective idyllic view of experience, or part" of the mythos of summer.² It is the only one of the works here considered with the word "romance" in the title, and like the various books of The Faerie-Queene it is the exploration of a moral idea, the idea of Community. In the preface Hawthorne says that he "considers the institution itself as not less fairly the subject of fictitious handling than the imaginary personages whom he has introduced there" (7).^{*} Action and characterization are both subordinated to the drama inherent in a moral situation.

[The author's] whole treatment of the affair is altogether incidental to the main purpose of the romance; nor does he put forward the slightest pretensions to illustrate a theory, or elicit a conclusion, favorable or otherwise, in respect to socialism.

In short, his present concern with the socialist community is merely to establish a theatre, a little removed from the highway of ordinary travel, where the

^{*}This and all subsequent references to The Blithedale Romance are to the following edition: NY: Doubleday, 1961. (page numbers in parentheses in text).

creatures of his brain may play their phantasmagorical antics, without exposing them to too close a comparison with the actual events of real lives. (7)

Blithedale becomes the approximation of that "Faery Land, so like the real world, that, in a suitable remoteness, one cannot well tell the difference, but with an atmosphere of strange enchantment, beheld through which the inhabitants have a propriety of their own" (8) (for example, Zenobia's flowers, Priscilla's purses, Coverdale's hermitage).

The characters are idealized types of social creatures: "The self-concentrated Philanthropist; the high-spirited Woman...the weakly Maiden...the Minor Poet" (9).³ The setting is more than "BROOK FARM...the most romantic episode of..." (8) the author's life, Brook Farm of memory, perhaps, liberated as "an available foothold between fiction and reality" (8). The idea of Community explored in the work deals with holiness, temperance and chastity (each one a subject of a book in The Faerie-Queene). The images Hawthorne uses here illustrate attributes and qualities of various characters and are in some kind of correspondence with events with the conflict between the ideal world and the actual. Hawthorne's familiar themes of displacement and the urge to connect are conveyed to us through his use of objects and images often ominous, always indicative of the problems (of love, of fellowship) underlying life at Blithedale.

Many critics have confronted with some unhappiness the difficulties of Hawthorne's way of seeing, the sense

we have when we read him of a double reality.⁴ "He perceives," Stein says, "the apocalyptic value of the image,"⁵ particularly of the Devil. And indeed, the character of Westervelt, for example, appears on the scene and Blithedale is lost. But Westervelt, that whited sepulcher with his handsome face and false teeth, is not an instrument of destruction so much as a harbinger. He merely makes use of the essentially exploitative spirit of Blithedale; it does not emanate from him. Those false teeth are a sign of the falseness in him, but they do not alert us to the falseness in the Paradise he enters--attributes, symbolic and imagistic, of the other characters do that. Richard Fogle takes a broader view of Hawthorne's images: "Allegory is organic to Hawthorne, an innate quality of his vision. It is his disposition to find spiritual meaning in all things natural and human. This faculty is an inheritance from the Puritans, who saw in everything God's will."⁶ It is important to understand, as Irving Howe points out, that Hawthorne "did not see what the Puritans had seen, he saw as they had seen."⁷ His attention to symbols, not a preoccupation with the devil, comes out everywhere in The Blithedale Romance.

Feidelson, in discussing Puritanism in general as an influence in American literature, finds that "In the best Puritan writing [he is thinking here specifically of Cotton Mather] the images are frankly illustrative, and sometimes, all unawares, they quicken into symbols as idea

and illustration coalesce."⁸ This is precisely the case with Hawthorne's symbols. James noted that "Hawthorne is perpetually looking for images which shall place themselves in picturesque correspondence with the spiritual facts with which he is concerned, and of course the search is of the very essence of poetry"⁹--in this James is closer to the truth about Hawthorne's symbolizing than anyone else. Ultimately it is Hawthorne's ability to choose the right image--not his Puritan descent or his allegorizing compulsion or his apocalyptic vision--which makes him a great romancer, a great writer of poetic fiction.

In The Blithedale Romance we seem to experience this awareness of the correspondence between objects and ideas in the character of the narrator. Through his eyes we see what at first appears to be a confused jumble of obviously symbolic objects and disconnected incidents. We see with him and through his eyes as we see from the point of view of the Red Crosse Knight in The Faerie-Queene. Miles in his own imperfect way sees imperfectly, but idealistically. He sees how heroism and purity are combined with a desire for power in Hollingworth and a sick frailty in Priscilla. Mutual treachery spoils the Utopian dream, goes almost disregarded until it is too late. The structure of the romance is complete and unspoiled, however; it starts and ends with Miles, whose contemplation the work represents. The Modern Arcadia failed, he tells us; but he himself has loved and worked as he will never love and work again.

The character of Coverdale is most important. He tells the story in his own voice, and it is his relation to each character which is important, rather than their relations to each other. Miles Coverdale pursued by the communards indicates to us the ritual death he has gone through, the painful separation which has resulted in his inordinate wisdom, the wisdom with which he speaks to us. His rewards are all of the spirit; his chief reward is understanding, although he rails at it in the beginning. The Blithedale Romance is his contemplation or experience.

The work is circular; it starts and ends with Miles Coverdale in town. The Blithedale interlude seems but a dream, although in the beginning of the work nothing is more real than Blithedale as an idea, not even Coverdale's other ideas. When we first meet him in the first chapter, he tells how he met old Moodie, a meeting which might have been crucial in Coverdale's understanding of the Blithedale personae. Instead of taking advantage of this meeting in the "real" world of the romance, Coverdale, bent on talking to the reader, tries to ignore the old man who meets him in the street in order to explain to us about the Veiled Lady, the mysterious figure at the heart of the conflict to come. She is a sybil not because she prophesies but because her very existence betokens the mysterious, the secret, the dark place which the poet would sacrifice all to obtain but which he does not know how to approach.

Moodie is the Veiled Lady's father and the key to

what Coverdale would know. As he tells the reader, "the interest of the spectator was further wrought up by the enigma of her identity" (16), and she remains an isolated figure even when he is in the presence of her father, and even when he meets her at Blithedale and recognizes her aura, without recognizing that same insulation her perceived in her on stage. The conflict surrounding Priscilla will epitomize the conflict between the ideal and the actual at the heart of the Blithedale romance. She functions in both worlds as a passive figure. Her importance as a magical center is attested by the fact that Miles has just turned away from the first real character, aside from himself, to tell the reader about her. The wordy explanation to the reader is more important than any "naturalistic" dialogue between characters. It tells us about the poet. Miles is on a quest for a better life, even before he leaves town, and his initial errors of judgment are part of the journey.

Just as Coverdale idealizes the Veiled Lady, whose reality is a sordid one, so he idealizes heroism in Hollingsworth and purity in Priscilla when he meets them at Blithedale. And, with a realistic and compassionate understanding of their natures, he comes to see, without irony, how lamentably they each fall short of the ideal. Coverdale allegorizes the events for us (his commentary moralizes and connects the events), but his first-person perspective has severe limitations. In the passage about the Veiled Lady

we feel as if we are being drowned in words, in "explanations" far beyond what the situation seems to call for. His earnest pedantry, his wish to explain and understand is part of his nature as a searcher--he wants to know. And he will ignore what he sees before him in order to concentrate on his own ideas about significance.

Much of his Blithedale life is spent in a forest tree-house. From there he observes the incidents that aid him in his contemplation of his friends, and it is his sanctuary amid the strife, the only one for him. After Coverdale's journey through the snowstorm, the warmth of Blithedale is attained, but it is no safe haven. There awaits him a most bitter struggle with Hollingworth, a man he loves and had admired, and the renunciation of Priscilla both as an ideal and as a woman. But Miles is exalted at the end of the work; his values triumph. Like all romantic heroic victories, however, that of Miles Coverdale is pyrrhic; he does not get the princess or regain his friend --he lives out a lonely life of precious memories in his rooms in town. But he has proven himself a hero nonetheless, for he alone has been utterly selfless in his love and principled in his conduct, the idealist stubbornly vindicated if lonely.

The world in which Coverdale fights his moral battles is our world--the world of work and love, of friendship and jealousy, of competition and treachery. Miles and his friends have come to Blithedale in the hope of embarking

on an experiment which will free the land from hostile competition.¹⁰ This is the problem of a fallen world, blasted by struggle and misery, a world--as it turns out--incurably ill, which only makes Miles's victory over personal weakness even more impressive. Although he is unable to redeem society, his values help to correct much of what is wrong with Blithedale. Although he himself does not rescue the bride from danger behind her veil, he is present when she is rescued by a man less worthy and it is his presence which somehow enables that rescue (partly because Zenobia knows that he knows that Priscilla is helpless in their grasp). After he retires from the world of action, Miles is sad but without his earlier malaise. He has maintained the integrity of innocence against the assault of experience represented by Westervelt and her whom he has corrupted. Miles retains that vision of a happier society, which, although defeated at Blithedale, remains a powerful idea and a worthwhile hope. Hollingsworth, the monster of pride now controlled by a virgin, is a pitiful wreck in the end; but there is hope in Priscilla's invincible innocence.

Coverdale, at the end of The Blithedale Romance, makes his confession to the reader from an advanced point in time--"I am now at middle age,--well, well, a step or two beyond the midmost point" (272)--as well as space, for he has "annihilated" space by traveling. He has attained "a fair elevation among our minor mistrelsy, on the strength of my pretty little volume" (272). He is an Orpheus, telling

his tale from beyond our world, from his tower, after experience unsullied by personal corruption. From that vantage point he confesses the purest kind of love, unattained and unattainable, and reaffirms his willingness to die for "any cause, in this whole chaos of human struggle, worth a sane man's dying for, and which my death would benefit" (272-273). His ironic qualifications are not for himself but an appraisal of experience itself, for he admits, "I exaggerate my own defects" (273). His "unsatisfied retrospect that I fling back on life, and my listless glance towards the future" (273) reveal that advanced state of inanition which is the final phase of romance. Coverdale is emptied out, his confession the last expulsion of emotion.

The epiphany Miles experiences at Zenobia's graveside is the climax of his life and of the romance. Nature weeps not at that graveside, for "she adopts the calamity at once into her system....It is because the spirit is inestimable that the lifeless body is so little valued" (270). Coverdale's perception of the benign absorption by Nature of human corruption is an affirmation of life and life's spiritual essence.

Throughout the romance we are made aware of the ending by various remarks Coverdale makes to us, commenting as if in the future (our present) on something that happens in the present (our past). For that reason, an elegiac mood pervades the romance--a melancholy sense of the passing

of time, an undertone of lamentation at the failure of this dream of the perfectability of human systems. In Coverdale's own person that dream is both doomed and transcended. The seeds of that doom are found in the first chapter (just as the seeds of renewal are found in the last chapter), when Coverdale resists helping the old man. Old Moodie tries to get Coverdale's attention; but Coverdale is only interested in the sibyl, and in the reader. He is aware of the picturesque aspects of Moodie, but not of man as in any way connected with the undertaking he will embark on tomorrow. Miles, like the other characters in the work (except for Priscilla) sees only the differences between them; his ironic answer to the old man insists on the gulf between them, a gulf that must be eliminated if the Blithedale experiment and the dream on which it is founded are to succeed. If Coverdale respected Moodie, there would be achieved community. By focusing on the sibyl (a phenomenon), he ignores the man. Coverdale eventually comes to love that sibyl as Priscilla. For the time being, however, he is only interested in the idea of community (and not in an individual man) and in the idea of the mysterious woman.

Coverdale sees and appreciates "the pale, elderly face...and likewise saw something characteristic in the old fellow's way of standing under the arch of a gate" (16-17). But he does not want to do the man a favor, as the wise old man understands. Nonetheless he is inexorable and brings Priscilla into communication with Zenobia and therefore

also with Hollingsworth and Coverdale and thus sets the wheels of the external conflict in motion. When Moodie asks about Zenobia, Coverdale mocks him--"have you a literary turn, Mr. Moodie? or have you taken up the advocacy of women's rights?" (18). And he returns to his room and his selfish pleasures--sherry, cigar, coal fire and solitary contemplation--after rejecting the key to the sybil's and to Zenobia's identities and to the Blithedale romance. That key--Moodie, their father--is to Coverdale's exalted perception of him, a lowly and insignificant intrusion into his own more acute, more profound contemplation of them.

This rejection of Moodie is not merely ironic, however; it is also the necessary first step in Coverdale's quest for the better life, the key to which cannot be given, but must be hard won. That is the way Coverdale at last gets it, by the loss of friends, by not attaining the love of Priscilla, by failing to prevent a death.

It is Blithedale contemplated in lonely old age that we have in Coverdale's description, and as it is first presented to us it is a neutral place a new Eden under the shadow of the old. Miles and his friends arrive there in a post-lapsarian spring, in a blizzard. But it is not through that blizzard that we first see Blithedale where they hope to begin "the life of Paradise anew" (20). Rather it is the hearth, contemplated in the tranquillity of old age by a group of old romantics, that means Blithedale, and that is the first image of it we encounter.

There can hardly remain for me (who am really getting to be a frosty bachelor, with another white hair, every week or so, in my moustache), there can hardly flicker up again so cheery a blaze upon the hearth, as that which I remember, the next day, at Blithedale. It was a wood-fire, in the parlor of an old farm-house, on an April afternoon, but with the fitful gusts of a wintry snow-storm roaring in the chimney. Vividly does that fireside re-create itself, as I rake away the ashes from the embers in my memory, and blow them up with a sigh, for lack of more inspiring breath. Vividly, for an instant, but, anon, with the dimmest gleam, and with just as little fervency for my heart as for my fingerends! The stanch oaken logs were long ago burnt out. Their genial glow must be represented, if at all, by the merest phosphoric glimmer, like that which exudes, rather than shines, from damp fragments of decayed trees, deluding the benighted wanderer through a forest. Around such chill mockery of a fire some few of us might sit on the withered leaves, spreading out each a palm towards the imaginary warmth, and talk over our exploded scheme for beginning the life of Paradise anew. (20)

The paradise that Blithedale attempts to recreate is doomed to failure, and Coverdale tells us so from the first. The attempt was the braver for the impossibility of achievement: "Nobody else in the world...at least, in our bleak little world of New England,--had dreamed of Paradise that day, except as the pole suggests the tropic. Nor, with such materials as were at hand, could the most skillful architect have constructed any better imitation of Eve's bower than might be seen in the snow-hut of an Esquimaux. But we made a summer of it, in spite of the wild drifts" (20-21). It is the courageous attempt to re-create a communal paradise in an already failed utopia (New England) which is the theme of Blithedale. Blithedale thus becomes a kind of image of a final element in a symbol of infinite regress (out of New England out of Old England out of Paradise lost before the

gates of Eden were shut against Adam and Eve). We are early reminded of the courage, the blind leap of faith, required in the attempt--these qualities are more important than the failure.

"The greater, surely, was my heroism," says Coverdale, "when puffing out a final whiff of cigar-smoke, I quitted my cosy pair of bachelor-rooms...and plunged into the heart of the pitiless snow-storm, in quest of a better life" (21). The allegorical commentary so plentifully provided reminds us of the perpetual conflict between the dream of heroism and its reality, between the hope of the man and what he attains. By his own definition Coverdale is our hero: "The greatest obstacle to being heroic is the doubt whether one may not be going to prove one's self a fool; the truest heroism is, to resist the doubt; and the profoundest wisdom, to know when it ought to be resisted, and when to be obeyed" (21). Furthermore, he has the right attitude for a hero: "Let us acknowledge it wiser, if not more sagacious, to follow out one's day dream to its natural consummation, although, if the vision have been worth the having, it is certain never to be consummated otherwise than by a failure" (21-22). Coverdale embodies in himself the wisdom of experience as well as heroic innocence. This paradox is his legacy as a poet, for he is a survivor who is not corrupt and a lover who remains chaste. When he passes out of the fallen natural world of Blithedale (natural in the sense of epitomizing the world of fallen human nature),

a kind of death, the "Arcadia" crumbles. He is brave and capable, the willing poet to whom failure is not frightening, so long as the ideal it attempts be worthwhile.

Its airiest fragments, impalpable as they may be, will possess a value that lurks not in the most ponderous realities of any practicable scheme. They are not the rubbish of the mind. Whatever else I may repent of, therefore, let it be reckoned neither among my sins nor follies that I once had faith and force enough to form generous hopes of the world's destiny,--yes!--and to do what in me lay for their accomplishment; even to the extent of quitting a warm fireside, flinging away a freshly-lighted cigar, and travelling far beyond the strike of city clocks, through a drifting snow-storm. (22).

Despite the ironic tone of this observation, Coverdale's is a heroism unspoiled by irony. He makes huge sacrifices in his quest of a better life, for he exposes himself to be hurt and rejected by the other three figures, all in the interests of holding to his ideals. The fireside, the cigar, the clocks and the snowstorm represent the pride and sensuality Coverdale abandons for his idealism and the timeless world (the natural world) of nebulous danger he enters in search of that ideal.

Coverdale's insistence on his bravery and on the beauty of the dream is easily interpreted as irony, but that is only his way of second-guessing the reader, the better to put him on the right track. This occasional ironic tone is thus a form of allegorizing in The Blithedale Romance. For example, Coverdale makes a remark which appears to be utterly ridiculous and therefore ironic, but that is a way of making the reader (who instantly interprets it as irony) aware that it is not. His subsequent explanation of the

observation we have not taken at face value gives us the deeper meaning of an apparently absurd statement. As he rides through the snowstorm, which prefigures the cold of Blithedale and her denizens despite the warmth of their fire, he remarks, "'How very mild and balmy is this country air!'" (23) and is chided for the remark. But he alone perceives the truth about the air:

The snow-fall...looked inexpressibly dreary...coming down from an atmosphere of city smoke, and alighting on the sidewalk only to be moulded into the impress of somebody's patched boot or over-shoe. Thus the track of an old conventionalism was visible on what was freshest from the sky. But, when we left the pavements, and our muffled hoof-tramps beat upon a desolate extent of country road, and were effaced by the unfettered blast as soon as stamped, then there was better air to breathe. Air that had not been breathed once and again! Air that had not been spoken into words of falsehood, formality and error, like all the air of the dusky city! (22)

Thus it is that Coverdale remarks the mildness of the country air, it is full of gentle promise, pure and uncorrupted by those who breathe it. The air is pleasant and Coverdale finds it full of hope.

His hope and faith are not met with a similar response on the part of those who meet them on the way: "This lack of faith in our cordial sympathy...was one among the innumerable tokens how difficult a task we had in hand" (23). When he is seated with his comrades, he thinks theirs very like a Pilgrim fire: "I felt so much more that we had transported ourselves a world-wide distance from the system of society that shackled us at breakfast-time" (24). The space they have traversed is psychological as well as

historical and geographical.

But it is still a human world they are in. Their handshakes precede the entrance of Zenobia, an "imperial" (24) figure with "as much native pride as any queen" (25), wearing an exotic flower. With her, pride enters. Hollingsworth had not joined Coverdale and the others, and so their own entrance was pure, "the blessed state of brotherhood" (24). But Zenobia's presence changes things. Like *Lucifera* in The Faerie-Queene she has the power to make those who observe her and surround her pleased. She is an artist whose "free, careless, generous modes of expression, often had this effect, of creating images, which, though pure, are hardly felt to be quite decorous when born of a thought that passes between man and woman" (20). And she is a type of the first woman: "one felt an influence breathing out of her such as we might suppose to come from Eve, when she was just made, and her Creator brought her to Adam, saying, 'Behold! here is a woman!'" (29).

Zenobia represents a threat to Coverdale, for she is at once appealing and dangerous. Her appeal is the appeal of pride, of the flesh, She flatters him with admiration of his own poetry--thereby appealing to his own pride--but he sees through her charm and her unassuming dress, so admirably arranged, and concentrates on the single blossom she wears in her hair.

It was an exotic, of rare beauty, and as fresh as if the hot-house gardener had just clipt it from the stem. That flower has struck deep root into my

memory. I can both see it and smell it, at this moment. So brilliant, so rare, so costly, as it must have been, and yet enduring only for a day, it was more indicative of the pride and pomp which had a luxuriant growth in Zenobia's character than if a great diamond had sparkled among her hair. (27)¹¹

Zenobia's flower is the natural forced and contrived, like her, of artificial cultivation. Whatever may be her appeal, she is false, seductive in the worst sense, most alive "if there were a spice of bitter feeling" (28) in her conversation, "indolent" (28) when quiet. And she is rebellious, looking forward to the day when women will go to the fields and not just stay at the farmhouse; but she is a terrible cook, her burnt porridge a sign of her wickedly ruined gifts. She encourages Coverdale to imagine her naked and already, because of her, she has regrets "'that the kitchen, and the house-work generally, cannot be left out of our system altogether!'" (28). Not from anything she has said, but as an emanation of her nature, a glimmer of pessimism has been allowed into the "Knot of Dreamers" on that first night. It is her food that they eat that night, in more ways than one. Westervelt later talks of "'her uncomfortable surplus of vitality'" (113) and Coverdale sees her as Pandora--what comes from her vitality (the wrong kind because destructive) is bad.

By the time Silas Foster enters, a wise, earthy figure of the land, the mood has changed. To Coverdale, the storm he found balmy when he was in it now seems "to have arisen for our especial behoof,--a symbol of the cold,

desolate, distrustful phantoms that invariably haunt the mind, on the eve of adventurous enterprises, to warn us back within the boundaries of ordinary life" (31). Since he has met Zenobia he has fought despair, but now a perception of the awkwardness and ambiguity of the Blithedale experiment overwhelm him.

We would not allow ourselves to be depressed by the snow-drift....We had left the rusty iron frame-work of society behind us; we had broken through many hindrances that are powerful enough to keep most people on the weary tread-mill of the established system. ...And, first of all, we had divorced ourselves from pride, and were striving to supply its place with familiar love. (31)

...as regarded society at large, we stood in a position of new hostility, rather than new brotherhood....Constituting so pitiful a minority as now, we were inevitably estranged from the rest of mankind in pretty fair proportion with the strictness of our mutual bond among ourselves. (33)

Alas that mutual bond is already weak, for "the presence of Zenobia caused our heroic enterprise to show like an illusion, a masquerade, a pastoral, a counterfeit Arcadia, in which we grown-up men and women were making a play-day of the years that were given us to live in" (33-34).

Coverdale's pessimism is of the moment only. In the "frosty" present of retrospect, Coverdale reaffirms the value of that heroic enterprise.

...if we built splendid castles (phalansteries, perhaps they might be more fitly called), and pictured beautiful scenes, among the fervid coals of the hearth around which we were clustering, and if all went to rack with the crumbling embers, and have never since arisen out of the ashes, let us take to ourselves no shame. In my own behalf, I rejoice that I could

once think better of the world's improvability than it deserved. It is a mistake into which men seldom fall twice in a lifetime; or, if so, the rarer and higher is the nature that can thus magnanimously persist in error. (32)

The dream dreamt by Coverdale and his comrades around that fire is worthwhile, a magnanimous dream in the Aristotelian sense of the word; it remains an ideal, untarnished by the actual failures which beset it.

Personal interests, from the beginning, overwhelm that ideal. Coverdale and Zenobia await Hollingsworth, the promise of whose presence has drawn them both to Blithedale. Zenobia finds Hollingsworth's philanthropic obsession "grimy, un-beautiful and positively hopeless" (34). Coverdale is opposed to all systems. Typically, her objection is to the surface, his is to the substance. But the advent of the philanthropist affects them both profoundly. He arrives with Priscilla, who is out of place,¹² and who seems an unlikely participant in the experiment; in fact she is a touchstone for it. Priscilla will survive it best, for she is without guile, pride or ambition; her only strength is in her true-hearted loyalty to persons. Like Una taming the lion, she tames Hollingsworth who later saves her from danger; she confronts Zenobia and escapes Westervelt. She is the caretaker of grace in The Blithedale Romance.

The kitchen, where Hollingsworth and Priscilla join the group, is the place of a new communion. There is also a fire, an adequate (if extravagant) buttress against despair:

But it was fortunate for us, on that wintry eve of our untried life, to enjoy the warm and radiant luxury of a somewhat too abundant fire. If it served no other purpose, it made the men look so full of youth, warm blood and hope, and the women--such of them, at least, as were anyway convertible by its magic--so very beautiful, that I would cheerfully have spent my last dollar to prolong the blaze. As for Zenobia, there was a glow in her cheeks that made me think of Pandora, fresh from Vulcan's workshop, and full of the celestial warmth by dint of which he had tempered and moulded her. (36-37)

That combination of the fiery and the celestial which is Zenobia is a human and also an apocalyptic mixture, found throughout the romance. Blithedale itself partakes of that quality, at once hot with fires and cold with snow.

The symbols and imagery which attach to Blithedale are far more important than the narrative content of the tale. We rarely see the communards farming. Instead we see them in small, often vague spaces, vignettes which indicate the meanings of the experiment. At the supper table in the kitchen, Coverdale hopes that their lighted windows will be a "'beacon-fire which we have kindled for humanity'" (38). When Priscilla arrives, the kitchen is no longer a kitchen; the room becomes a moral space within which the sisters meet and where Zenobia rejects Priscilla.

The failure of that first communion in the kitchen is mended in the parlor, where Zenobia at last takes Priscilla's hand and "she melted in quietly amongst us" (48). But in the parlor, Coverdale is conscious that the company itself is enclosed in a small moral space, one in which a drama of ethics and principles will take place.

The sense of vast, undefined space, pressing from the outside against the black panes of our uncurtained windows, was fearful to the poor girl, heretofore accustomed to the narrowness of human limits, with the lamps of neighboring tenements glimmering across the street. The house probably seemed to her adrift on the great ocean of the night. A little parallelogram of sky was all that she had hitherto known of nature, so that she felt the awfulness that really exists in its limitless extent. (49)

That awareness, seen through Coverdale, makes Blithedale more interesting and more significant as a place, while enlightening us little as to Priscilla. Throughout the evening Coverdale is aware of outer space surrounding the farmhouse: "The outer solitude looked in upon us through the windows, gloomy, wild and vague, like another state of existence, close beside the little sphere of warmth and light in which we were the prattlers and bustlers of a moment" (51). Eternity lies outside that self-important little room, ready to impinge its vastness and overwhelm them all. The amorphous nature of the physical space combines oppressively with the sharpness of the characters' attributes. In the midst of this tense presentness of the inner life of the farmhouse, Coverdale gets a headcold, a sign of his obscure awareness and his attempt to fight that awareness of what surrounds him at Blithedale: coldness, miserableness.

With the entrance of Hollingsworth and Priscilla two new elements are added to the Blithedale experiment. She, like Una in The Faerie-Queene, is truth (about Zenobia's parentage) and goodness, beauty of a fragile and spiritual kind, order (for her arrival reconnects her family), and like

Una she is a type of the woman who fled into the wilderness from the great dragon--that system of competition which Coverdale also wishes to flee and which is embodied in Westervelt, exploiter of Priscilla. Zenobia, by contrast, is henceforth gradually revealed to be imperfect, false, identified with chaos, earthly. Her gaudy flower identifies her as an indolent and luxurious poseur, proud and sensual. She has the wrong values and has come to Blithedale to be near Hollingsworth, himself in the grip of his demonic ideology. The irony and tragedy of the philanthropist is bound up with these two women; he turns towards the false one, Zenobia, as a means of philanthropy; but is united with the true one, Priscilla, in the end, for his personal salvation, the only attainable good in this life.

Priscilla is sorely tried throughout the Blithedale conflict which is initiated that first night, by the restlessness of Zenobia. She recognizes Hollingsworth's gentleness and clings to that while Zenobia lusts after him and Coverdale abandons him; she is faithful. Priscilla is at first repulsed by Zenobia. She is later betrayed and made homeless until Hollingsworth rescues her.

But Zenobia is the most interesting of these characters, not least because she perishes. At that haven of human pride which is Blithedale, she is an appropriate queen. Her world is all vanity, and like *Lucifera* in the first book of The Faerie-Queene she is a powerful character because of her own perfect pride. She is also part of art, very

explicitly, as well as artifice: when Westervelt asks Coverdale about Zenobia in the forest--"'You call her, I think, Zenobia'"--Coverdale answers, "'That is her name in literature'" (110). When Coverdale mentions her real name, we are not told it. Her "real" nature is not our concern.

Westervelt, with his "wizard mark" of a smile, and his gold band, a kind of Orgoglio figure, is the epitome of disgusting carnality. Coverdale's flesh creeps when Westervelt enters Zenobia's drawing room. With her he is in a temporary ascendancy, that of mystery and abomination. Miles, like the Red Cross Knight, is helpless against him until Hollingsworth, regaining his strength, rescues Priscilla and defies both Westervelt and Zenobia. In this blasted allegory, however, the victory is bitterly ironic, for Hollingsworth, still a creature of pride, condemns Zenobia, not realizing he too is proud. At Eliot's pulpit, a scene reminiscent of one in the first book of The Faerie-Queene occurs: Zenobia is stripped of her finery (her standing as a rich woman) and released, revealed as corrupt and deceitful; she runs off into the wilderness and kills herself. This episode (like the climax in Spenser's romance, when Red Crosse and Una preside over the unmasking of Duessa as a filthy, toothless hag and she runs off into the wilderness, naked and powerless) is the climax of The Blithedale Romance.

Hollingsworth is another character who is in error, but he is not malicious. We first see him standing in the doorway at Blithedale, "his shaggy great-coat all covered

with snow, so that he looked quite as much like a polar bear as a modern philanthropist" (39); he is identified from the beginning with rough nature, corrupted. A shaggy beast, he is appealing rather than formidable. He is Priscilla's guardian as later she is his. He carries her into the room "and the little space which she seemed to fill in his arms" (39) is her aura. Her shadow vibrates on the wall, angering Coverdale, who thinks of her as "some desolate kind of a creature, doomed to wander" (41). But she is the only one who is really at home at Blithedale, for she is with those she loves.

Priscilla with her mysterious craft of making silk purses is like "a domestic sprite, who had haunted the rustic fireside, of old, before we had ever been warmed by its blaze" (48). She is prankish and well-loved, although "unserviceable" (91). She is God's fool and thus very different from the other characters. When Coverdale wonders "'What is the use or sense of being so very gay?'" (91), she answers, "'I never think about it at all....How can I be dismal, if my heart will not let me?'" (92). She is naturally graceful and there is the hint of some threat hanging over her. Furthermore, "a slight mist of uncertainty still floated about Priscilla, and kept her, as yet, from taking a very decided place among creatures of flesh and blood" (64). Westervelt deplores "'the gradual refining away of the physical system'" (113) in her.

Her lightness and weakness are the opposite of

Hollingsworth's massive strength. His bear-like tenderness is touching, but he also has an other-worldly quality about him, but unlike Priscilla's his is obsessional and not spiritual. His philanthropy "grows incorporate" (86) within him, a ruling passion a ruthless "idol" (86) whom he worships. Hollingsworth's is a typical egotism: "And the higher and purer the original object, and the more unselfishly it may have been taken up, the slighter is the probability that they can be led to recognize the process by which godlike benevolence has been debased into all-devouring egotism" (87). Coverdale's enthusiasm for observation leads him to typify the man's pride, and at the same time apologize for the exaggerated images he gives us of him.

Coverdale himself is in the grips of an obsessional need to know others from the outside, and to capture their essence in images. He alternates between thinking Hollingsworth "'that steel engine of the devil's contrivance, a philanthropist'" (87) and "'a man, after all...his Maker's own truest image, a philanthropic man'" (87) he sees in him a danger to Priscilla. The girl, "as perilously situated as the maiden whom, in the old classical myths, the people used to expose to a dragon" (88), is drawn to the philanthropist, however, and indifferent to the poet who loves her. Hollingsworth, too, rejects Coverdale who will have no part in striving with him "'towards the great object of my life'" (72). Coverdale sees him as "an exemplification of the most awful truth in Bunyan's book of such;--from the

very gate of heaven there is a by-way to the pit!" (270).

Priscilla, the weakest of all of them alone survives the catastrophe which ensues on their relationships. Zenobia, so apparently strong and in opposition to all that Priscilla represents, Priscilla's strong, proud, willful, dark sister, perishes. Priscilla who says "'I never have any free will'" (194), who is "only a leaf floating on the dark current of events, without influencing them by her own choice or plan" (191) is inadvertently the cause of that destruction, as Zenobia--the sybil's sister and an artist--prophesies to Coverdale:

Since you see the young woman in so poetical a light ...you had better turn the affair into a ballad. It is a grand subject, and worthy of supernatural machinery. The storm, the startling knock at the door, the entrance of the sable knight Hollingsworth and his shadowy snow-maiden, who, precisely at the stroke of midnight, shall melt away at my feet in a pool of ice-cold water, and give me my death with a pair of wet slippers!" (46)

Art is the real victor, in The Blithedale Romance, for the only sense to be made of these entanglements is in such images as this one. Zenobia's own script for her destiny is far more compelling than the puny and incomprehensible conflict between her and the philanthropist. Her mythic conception of her doom at the hands of her sister is what we are left with in the end.

Zenobia's is in every way a powerful influence on Blithedale and a compelling presence in the work. Although she is a good friend to Coverdale, the only person he can really talk to, she is less than meets the eye. Very

intelligent, "her mind was full of weeds" (58). She is rebellious and resentful of the relations between the sexes. Despite "the queenliness of her presence" (58), "womanliness incarnated" (59), Zenobia's daily hothouse flower, her "'talismán'" identifies her as "'a sister of the Veiled Lady'" (59), next to prophecy's gift of divination but with the worst aspect of that gift herself--the ability to prophesy only the worst, and to have it come true. She is Fauntleroy's eldest daughter, hers a character without control. "There was good in it, and evil. Passionate, self-willed and imperious, she had a warm and generous nature, showing the richness of the soil, however, chiefly by the weeds that flourished in it, and choked up the herbs of grace....The sphere of ordinary womanhood was felt to be narrower than her development required" (213). She had come to Blithedale "in a kind of recklessness" (213), followed by her sister--"the poor girl was enthralled in an intolerable bondage, from which she must either free herself or perish" (213-214). Priscilla is in the toils of Westervelt, and Zenobia is the unwilling Duessa to his Archimago.

Blithedale is thus a place out of their ordinary sphere but polluted by the world they have fled. Coverdale, with a headcold, sees out of the window "the snowy landscape, which looked like a lifeless copy of the world in marble" (51). He realizes that first night, "How cold an Arcadia was this!" (52), and then succumbs to his "fixed idea," an anticipation of "several of the chief incidents

of this narrative, including a dim shadow of its catastrophe" (51).

In his sick room, after his intimation of disaster, Coverdale is desperate. "What, in the name of common sense, had I to do with any better society than I had always lived in?" (54). He begs to be allowed to return to town and expects to die. Hollingsworth tends him with a "'tenderness ...the reflection of God's own love'" (57), but even this early, Hollingsworth contradicts him in this perception, saying, "'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'" (57). Egotism is his dark necessity, and Coverdale, so insensitive to him and to Zenobia who also nurses him, with kindness and foul porridge, makes the romance¹³ from the significances with which he loads these other characters; but they are their own allegorizers too, and point the moral each to his own vignette, as Hollingsworth does by Coverdale's bedside.

When Priscilla enters the sick room, she seems to the poet to resemble Margaret Fuller, through "a singular anomaly of likeness coexisting with perfect dissimilitude" (67). Coverdale's perceptions bridge any anomaly. The poet recognizes that all of them "whose present bivouac was considerably further into the waste of chaos than any mortal army of crusaders had ever marched before" (68) and that they are on a dangerous journey.¹⁴ The major battle, of course,

takes place behind the lines.

Hollingsworth, with his abomination of Fourier whom, with a terrible irony, he resembles, is the promulgator of his own egotism in the guise of an institution for the reformation of criminals.¹⁵ Coverdale sees the seeds of catastrophe, and not only in that "terrible egotism which he mistook for an angel of God" (71) in Hollingsworth. He sees the "gleam of latent mischief--not to call it deviltry --in Zenobia's eye" (74), epitomized by her decking Priscilla with rank and ugly weeds as well as spring flowers. After his illness Coverdale has passed through a neutral space, created by the illness, and emerges on the other side in Faery Land: "My fit of illness had been an avenue between two existences....In this respect, it was like deathI was quite another man" (76-77). He has lost flesh in his illness and is reborn "into the genial sunshine" (77), chastened by "Nature, whose laws I had broken in various artificial ways" (77).

Coverdale emerges into a Blithedale of youth and hope. He looks for a better life and will be disappointed in its attainment. He will have only the original dream, itself a worthy token of his early and unstained, even in hoary age, idealism. The reality of Blithedale swiftly disappoints. The communards long to enact "delectable visions of the spiritualization of labor" (81) but the reverse happens. "Our thoughts, on the contrary, were fast becoming cloddish" (82). But Coverdale never exploits anyone and if

he is too rigid in his idealism, still no one dies from it.

Chapter IX, "Hollingsworth, Zenobia, Priscilla," like Chapter XXV, "The Three Together" (and, for other reasons, like the first and fiftieth chapters of The Marble Faun which deal with all the four characters and emphasize the cyclical nature of the romance) is a demonstration of Coverdale's attitude towards the other characters--his fault, a devotion too exclusive and minute "to the study of individual men and women" (85), and therefore also a manifestation of pride:

If the person under examination be one's self, the result is pretty certain to be diseased action of the heart almost before we can snatch a second glance. Or, if we take the freedom to put a friend under our microscope, we thereby insulate him from many of his true relations, magnify his peculiarities, inevitably tear him into parts, and, of course, patch him very clumsily together again. What wonder, then, should we be frightened by the aspect of a monster, which, after all,--though we can point to every feature of his deformity in the real personage,--may be said to have been created mainly by ourselves. (85)

Coverdale does not make one in this group, and, in a sense, he creates them as we see them. The love triangle--which is what the relationships are on the surface--takes on a deeper meaning as an exploration of pride, in the context in which Coverdale shows it to us.

Thus Coverdale sees "a great wrong" (85) he did to Hollingsworth by his minute examination of his character. "But I could not help it. Had I loved him less, I might have used him better. He--and Zenobia and Priscilla, both for their own sakes and as connected with him--were separated

from the rest of the Community, to my imagination, and stood forth as the indices of a problem which it was my business to solve" (85). His loneliness is a result of this objectivity. And on the other hand, they are far more important to Coverdale, those three, than he is to them.

This perversion of love which causes Coverdale to scrutinize Hollingsworth so minutely is the love of artist for subject, and for the object which he makes of that subject. Blithedale encourages affections "regardless of what would elsewhere be judged suitable and prudent" (88); those of the two women towards the philanthropist and those of Coverdale also; and it encourages a justification for Hollingsworth's pursuit, if it can be called that, of Zenobia. Coverdale understands the misprision so often at the heart of any love, but is undaunted by it:

...if we could look into the hearts where we wish to be most valued, what should you expect to see? One's own likeness, in the innermost, holiest niche? ...It may not be there at all. It may be a dusty image, thrust aside into a corner, and by and by to be flung out of doors, where any foot may trample upon it. If not to-day, then to-morrow! And so, Priscilla, I do not see much wisdom in being so very merry in this kind of a world. (92-93)

In the telling of his love he has moved from metaphor to allegory, creating the perfect image for his own rejection and a shield for his own romanticism. Coverdale longs for eternal friendship, immortalizes it in this tale (the romance) and loves Priscilla forever.

Coverdale's ability to catch in his observations one just and perfect image for scene or character conveys the

poetic "truth" about what we see--the truth that underlies the visible act or character. The doubleness of Zenobia is such a truth, as when Coverdale tells us how she takes her younger sister into the farmhouse at the end of a day, and betrays something other than solicitude towards her: "It would have made the fortune of a tragic actress, could she have borrowed it for the moment when she fumbles in her bosom for the concealed dagger, or the exceedingly sharp bodkin, or mingles the ratsbane in her lover's bowl of wine or her rival's cup of tea" (95). He foresees a "tragic catastrophe, though the dagger and the bowl go for nothing in it" (96), a premonition of her watery suicide.

And although we never see conflict between Zenobia and Priscilla we feel it through such imagistic vignettes as the above. We feel the darkly overbearing older woman as she seems to lean over the little seamstress. In every mention of Priscilla's frailty we feel Zenobia's strength. But this character-depiction by comparison and contrast of attributes, usually implicit, is part of the plot, too. Priscilla is implicitly in opposition to another character, Westervelt. His demonic opposition to the law of God, nature and man encourages Zenobia to betray her sister; he thus disrupts a family, and with it Blithedale. Westervelt is unqualified evil, just as Priscilla is unqualified good. They are each portrayed without irony from start to finish, and they are the principal survivors of the catastrophe, for each survives unchanged--the conflict between good and

evil is eternal.

Westervelt is also in implicit contrast to old Moodie, father of Zenobia and Priscilla. The father's impotence has allowed them to be taken over by the wizard who threatens them both and exploits them. Coverdale and Hollingsworth treat him "like priests offering dainty sacrifices to an enshrined and invisible idol" (100-101). The old man is "cold and lifeless" (101-102), like a dead god, and when Coverdale sees momentarily as Moodie sees, it is "as if looking through a smoke-blackened glass at the sun. It robbed the landscape of all its life" (101). Moodie's world is a blasted wasteland. Blind in one eye, derelict in his duties towards his daughters, he can do nothing but explain the history of his life to Coverdale at a critical juncture in the romance--when his daughters are both enthralled by Westervelt. Moodie cannot act. When he leaves Blithedale after his secret visit, Westervelt enters, usurper of daughters, spoiler, wizard, demon.

Coverdale sees much of this without understanding. He is aware of baleful influences at Blithedale and must retreat to the woods periodically, "a yet further withdrawal towards the inner circle of self-communion" (106). It is part of Miles's character as poet and slightly obtuse but completely honest hero that he must return to nature periodically, "even in a life like that of Blithedale, which was itself characterized by a remoteness from the world" (106). He is isolated by his own nature, a spiritual and

semi-religious figure, a devotee of the Truth in its highest form. As he walks away from Blithedale, on his small "holiday" (106) consecrated by him to self-communion, he is careful to speak with no one lest he lose "the better part of my individuality" (106) by communion with others.

At first, I walked very swiftly, as if the heavy floodtide of social life were roaring at my heels, and would outstrip and overwhelm me, without all the better diligence in my escape. But, threading the more distant windings of the track, I abated my pace, and looked about me for some side-aisle, that should admit me into the innermost sanctuary of this green cathedral, just as in human acquaintanceship, a casual opening sometimes lets us, all of a sudden, into the long-sought intimacy of a mysterious heart. (106-107)

Coverdale longs for intimacy with God and Nature, and solitude is the way he seeks that closeness. At that moment, Westervelt appears, a key to the mysterious relationship between Priscilla and Zenobia which he has been wondering about.

Westervelt in his person is, from the first moment of his appearance, a disturbing figure, despite the fact that Coverdale feels ashamed of his instantaneous hatred of the man. His instincts, which he does not trust but we do, are, however, entirely correct. The "indecorum" of the man's countenance, the want of "fineness of nature," "the naked exposure of something [in his eyes] that ought not to be left prominent" and the "intuitive repugnance" (111) Coverdale feels as he looks at him, as well as his fashionable dress, "gold chain" and firey gemstone and serpentine walking stick denote the presence of a devil. But despite this first impression Westervelt gains access to Zenobia through Coverdale--"it would be quite a superogatory

a piece of Quixotism in me to undertake the guardianship of Zenobia" (111)--and the poet notices from Westervelt's glance a look "as if the devil were peeping out of" (111) his eyes. This repudiation of novelistic values, as it were, in Coverdale's assertion that evil cannot be denied access to another person, is part of his recognition that Zenobia is already lost, is countered by Coverdale's refusal to admit that he knows Hollingsworth when the wizard asks after him. But the handsome man, with his false teeth, nonetheless seduces Coverdale into laughing with him at the philanthropist who pursues Zenobia only for her money. Coverdale's own perception of Hollingsworth's flawed nature has led him into momentary fellowship with the fiend, just as he suspected it might when he deplored his own scrutiny of the other three characters.

Indeed, after declining to help the man find Priscilla, Coverdale regrets breaking off intercourse with Westervelt, whose information about the three friends the poet values. The similarity in their names points up the similarities in the two outsiders; they are neither of them sympathetic towards Hollingsworth, Zenobia and Priscilla so much as interested in them. Although Zenobia is loved by Westervelt (if one can call it that, in such a carnal sphere) and Priscilla by Coverdale, Hollingsworth is loved by both women, and not very interested in either of them. Westervelt's is the materialistic side of Coverdale's nature, both are given to inquiry and scrutiny, but Coverdale is an artist

and Westervelt an exploiter, the former loves and imaginatively recreates, the latter only uses others. Thus Coverdale sees himself as "the Chorus" (114) in this drama and Westervelt is the personification of evil. Thus Coverdale sees himself as the "one calm observer" selected by destiny; "It is his office to give applause when due, and sometimes an inevitable tear, to detect the final fitness of incident to character, and distil in his long-brooding thought the whole morality of the performance" (114-115). The better to observe and contemplate what he sees, Coverdale hides himself in a natural tower in the woods.

If the typical setting of romance is forest, then Coverdale's Hermitage, the subject of Chapter XII, is the ideal vantage point for a romancer (which he also is by virtue of his first-person narration). There he obtains the material for his "long brooding" (123), for he does not understand what he hears. He vows silence there, and when he overhears Zenobia and Westervelt, "I resolved that to no mortal would I disclose what I had heard. And, though there might be room for casuistry, such, I conceive, is the most equitable rule in all similar conjunctures" (123). The result of that casuistry is the narrative of The Blithedale Romance, a work in which there is a profound examination of the science of dealing with cases of conscience and of resolving questions of right or wrong in conduct, on the basis of knowledge. Coverdale's instinctive choice of the right side in every moral issue in the romance, and his perpetual mistrust of

his motives are the two sides of his quest for the truth about his friends, and part of his search for the right way in his own conduct. He is part of the fallen world, and how bitterly he knows it! But at the same time, he recognizes the possibility of moral conduct and is constantly sifting what he sees to make moral sense out of it.

For this process of observation and analysis of matters right and wrong, his hermitage is ideally suited. It becomes simultaneously the right place and the right image for the character's nature.

It was a kind of leafy eave, high upward into the air, among the midmost branches of a white-pine tree. A wild grape-vine, of unusual size and luxuriance, had twined and twisted itself up into the tree, and after wreathing the entanglement of its tendrils almost around every bough, had caught hold of three or four neighboring trees, and married the whole clump with a perfectly inextricable knot of polygamy....Far aloft, around the stem of the central pine, behold a perfect nest for Robinson Crusoe or King Charles! A hollow chamber of rare seclusion had been formed by the decay of some of the pine branches, which the vine had lovingly strangled with its embrace, burying them from the light of day in an aerial sepulchre of its own leaves. It cost me but little ingenuity to enlarge the interior, and open loopholes through the verdant walls....

It was an admirable place to make verses...or to meditate an essay from the Dial...it was just the nook, too, for the enjoyment of a cigar....So there I used to sit, owl-like, yet not without liberal and hospitable thoughts. (116-117)

From there, too, Coverdale preys on the life beneath, "those sublunary matters" (117) which he contemplates somewhat under the influence of Westervelt; "it was through his eyes, more than my own, that I was looking at Hollingsworth, with his glorious, if impracticable dream, and at the noble earthliness of Zenobia's character, and even at Priscilla,

whose impalpable grace lay so singularly between disease and beauty. The essential charm of each had vanished" (119). Westervelt's understanding of them taints them, spoils them, just as Coverdale's, in the romance as a whole, idealizes them.

The Professor--and what he professes is a worldview devoid of hope or morality--is the spokesman "of worldly society at large, where a cold scepticism smothers what it can of our spiritual aspirations, and makes the rest ridiculous" (120). Coverdale hates him not least "because a part of my own nature showed itself responsive to him" (120) even in his hermitage. The connection between Zenobia and Westervelt which Coverdale witnesses, and overhears, from his hermitage is dropped at the end of that chapter, as if it had never happened. But the next chapter, a venture into the world of art, is an evening of story-telling, and what comes out of it is "Zenobia's Legend," the interpolated tale which is Chapter XIII. The legend offers a further clue to the relations between Zenobia and Westervelt.

Zenobia is an artist, longing to remove herself and others "'into an imaginary sphere'" (125). The story she trumps up "'on the spur of the moment'" (125) is inspired by Priscilla, and is the story of the Veiled Lady whom Coverdale mentioned to us in the first chapter. The lady, according to Zenobia, is all things to all men, and a youth named Theodore hides himself hoping to find out what her exact nature is. Like Coverdale, the youth tends toward the

skeptic rather than the faithful and when the lady offers herself to him, sight unseen as it were, he hesitates, laughs, and, rejecting her, loses forever a beautiful girl whose "dim, mournful face,--which might have been his life-long household fireside joy" (133). Theodore and the Veiled Lady have reenacted the fall; he has chosen knowledge, whether of good or of evil, and has rejected faith. His fate is to mourn his loss and seek the face forever. As Zenobia tells the tale, she concludes by saying that the maiden "rose up amid a knot of visionary people, who were seeking for the better life...they took her to their hearts" (133). There, too, the lady to whom she is most attached is warned by a magician that the maiden is her enemy and despite the piteous "glance of mortal terror, and deep, deep reproach" (135) gives over the maiden to the magician "who had bartered away his soul...and she was his bond-slave forever-more" (135). This act of betrayal, reminiscent of the crucifixion, loses for the community its chance for renewal.

But Zenobia is a flawed artist as she is a flawed person. She herself has begged Westervelt, in Coverdale's hearing, to be released "'from this miserable bond!'" (123), and so her perception of bondage is colored by her own despair and powerlessness in the grip of evil.

Although at the climax of the tale Zenobia throws the veil she is holding "over Priscilla's head" (135), she cannot thus annihilate her rival and her sister. The spiritual power of the little seamstress remains

proleptically inviolate. When the knot of dreamers, involved in a kind of polygamy by now, like the vines of Coverdale's hermitage, reassemble at Eliot's pulpit on the Blithedale sabbath, a different drama takes place. There, gathered like "descendants of the Pilgrims, whose high enterprise, as we sometimes flattered ourselves, we had taken up, and were carrying it onward and aloft, to a point which they never dreamed of attaining" (138), they sit and listen to Hollingsworth and Zenobia. And there Coverdale sees how Hollingsworth "had engrossed into his own huge egotism" (147) the two women, and how Priscilla appears to be losing ground to Zenobia. But that is only on the material level of the struggle between the values represented by the sisters.

The legendary aspects of the Blithedale romance are becoming apparent to Coverdale, who tells Hollingsworth, "'In a century or two, we shall, every one of us be mythical personages, or exceeding picturesque and poetical ones, at all events'" (150). Indeed, Coverdale tells us, Hollingsworth and he evinced titanic strength that day, and then the two men part, estranged by Hollingsworth's egotism and monomania and by Coverdale's acceptance of that rejection. Coverdale returns to the city to heal his wounds.

Coverdale's desertion creates a ripple in the community. His departure forfeits his right to be part of the drama engulfing the others and from then on he is the isolated chronicler. His departure also loosens a bond which tied the other three characters together and prevented their harming

each other overtly. His departure thus hastens the collapse he foresaw. In this romance the relationships between the characters are the plot--not so much what they do to each other (action) as how they regard each other (feeling). Appropriate to a drama of right and wrong, feelings play a dominant part in theme and plot, and those feelings determine and are determined by who the characters are. Coverdale and Hollingsworth become "mutually invisible" (165) once they have rejected one another. Coverdale is embittered by his experience at Blithedale, saying to Silas Foster that it were better if the pigs ate them than the reverse, "'and bitter and sour morsels we should be!'" (166). The communards have been turned to swine, by Coverdale's image of them, and he himself has changed drastically since his hopeful arrival at Blithedale.

He takes up residence in a back room of a hotel, in a day of east wind and lowering rain, weather we have met at critical points before in Hawthorne's fiction. Coverdale is estranged from Blithedale, but has trouble distancing himself from it, while at the same time it also seems far away in time from his room. He has moved from the world of innocence to the world of experience, and he stays in his room, energies depleted, overcome by malaise as he watches the urban life spectacle from his window "just as valuable, in its way, as the sighing of the breeze among the birch-trees that overshadowed Eliot's pulpit" (169). The city appears to him a haven, a locus amoenus, especially compared

to the coldness and hardness of Blithedale. From his window he contemplates the backyard with pleasure.

There were apple-trees, and pear and peach trees, too, the fruit on which looked singularly large, luxuriant and abundant...in a situation so warm and sheltered...enriched to a more than natural fertilityThe blighting winds of our rigid climate could not molest these trees and vines; the sunshine...yet lay tropically there, even when less than temperate in every other region. (170)

There too a romantic vista opens itself up to him, for he has a backview of the house behind his hotel, a place where he can penetrate the "concealment" of a boarding house; "Realities keep in the rear, and put forward an advance-guard of show and humbug" (171). There he contemplates the first scene of ordinary domestic happiness in the work, a family in the boarding-house opposite. And from there he will see Westervelt, Zenobia and Priscilla together.

The first sign of what is coming is a dove which Coverdale has seen from his window through the rainstorm. He has dreamt of his three friends and wakes again to the dove and to thoughts of Blithedale in the rain, "how cheerless...my hermitage" (176), and thinks too that he is unhumanized by prying. And then, with real insight, he leaves off blaming himself and says: "But 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." (176) The guilt he feels towards his friends is but a manifestation of helplessness.

The phrasing of their names, the same as the title of Chapter IX, indicates that this work is also a meditation on the three of them in particular as well as a dramatization of the institution of Community. Coverdale does not penetrate the magic circle the group of three represents, nor does he participate successfully in Community. He remains perforce an observer.

When he sees Zenobia, Priscilla and Westervelt in the apartments opposite, he thinks that only the philanthropist and Mo die are missing "to complete the knot of characters, whom a real intricacy of events, greatly assisted by my method of insulating them from other relations, had kept so long upon my mental stage, as actors in a drama" (170). The drama he shapes for us begins to control him. The poet and aesthete has stripped these five of other relations the better to see the underlying design in their lives. Marveling at the "fatal...coincidence that had borne me to this one spot" (179), he "began to long for a catastrophe" (179). The catastrophe he feared at the beginning is now a wished-for dramatic climax, the third act in the tragedy. We see him as he sees the group in the boarding-house opposite; as Zenobia drops the curtain of their drawing room, at once excluding him insisting on the gulf between them and heightening the drama of their unexpected encounter, Coverdale becomes, for us, part of the impending crisis; he is our protagonist. The curtain "fell like the drop-curtain of a theatre, in the interval between the acts" (181);

but whereas we are put into a mood of keen expectation of the encounter which must somehow follow this, Coverdale himself "had a keen, revengeful sense of the insult inflicted by Zenobia's scornful recognition, and more particularly by her letting down the curtain" (182). He interacts in that recognition scene with Zenobia who has upstaged him by that one cool gesture. We are aware that he and she have joined battle.

On the level of the actual ongoing life in the work, Coverdale is wounded by being treated as merely vulgarly curious. His "fitness for the office" (182) of searcher of human hearts has been impugned, and he is stung and rendered in active by her scorn, so that for two days he cannot think how else he can gain access to those "other lives" (182) in which he admits that he lives. The fact that it does not occur to him to visit her indicates that he regards her as an object for inquiry, an object regarded at least partly dispassionately and even reverently, and not as a subject for low speculation.

When they meet again, however, it is on terms of mutual resentment. Each has been the other's appropriate confidante, but each has been forced by circumstance into an antagonistic position, partly because of loyalties to other characters. In terms of the logic of the romance, they are natural enemies for the same reasons that they are each other's true appreciators: the poet alone can appreciate the artist and the work of art, and of artifice, that is

Zenobia; only the bluestocking, the actress manqué, can appreciate the superior sensitivities of the poet and value the depth of his perceptions. In Zenobia's drawing room Coverdale is overwhelmed by his double vision of her. First he sees her as impure, superficial, and then as great and magnificent. He succumbs to her superficial glory as the Red Crosse Knight succumbs to Lucifera's magnificence, but it is only a temporary victory of error over truth:

...I was dazzled by the brilliancy of the room. A chandelier...separate lamps...on marble brackets.... The furniture was exceedingly rich...here was the fulfillment of every fantasy of an imagination revelling in various methods of costly self-indulgence and splendid ease. Pictures, marbles, vases--in brief, more shapes of luxury than there could be any object in enumerating...and the whole repeated and doubled by the reflection of a great mirror, which showed me Zenobia's proud figure, likewise, and my own. It cost me, I acknowledge, a bitter sense of shame, to perceive in myself a positive effort to bear up against the effect which Zenobia sought to impose on me. I reasoned against her, in my secret mind, and strove so to keep my footing. In the gorgeousness with which she had surrounded herself,--in the redundance of personal ornament, which the largeness of her physical nature and the rich type of her beauty caused to seem so suitable,--I malevolently beheld the true character of the woman, passionate, luxurious, lacking simplicity, not deeply refined, incapable of pure and perfect taste. (187)

In that moment he sees Zenobia as utterly deceitful, vain and proud. But she is not Lucifera, she is a woman grand and doomed; that woman is the one who conquers the poet who contemplates her:

But, the next instant, she was too powerful for all my opposing struggles. I saw how fit it was that she should make herself as gorgeous as she pleased, and should do a thousand things that would have been ridiculous in the poor, thin, weakly characters of other

women. To this day, however, I hardly know whether I then beheld Zenobia in her truest attitude, or whether that were the truer one in which she had presented herself at Blithedale. In both, there was something like the illusion which a great actress flings around her. (187).

He longs to "exorcise her out of the part which she seemed to be acting" (188) and to that end he speaks slightly of Hollingsworth; and Zenobia flushes, even in her luxurious drawing room. Coverdale is impressed by Hollingsworth's power, and touched by her passion.

In that drawing room he sees the connection between Zenobia, Priscilla, who shortly appears, and Westervelt who leads them both away. This visit leads him to seek out Moodie "for the purpose of ascertaining whether the knot of affairs was as inextricable on that side as I found it on all others" (197). Westervelt, Moodie and Coverdale are outsiders in the drama which takes place among Hollingsworth, Zenobia and Priscilla, but the repeated use of "knot" to describe various elements in the work--the triangle, the communards, the hermitage--indicates that the central part of that drama is a result of other influences; the three outsiders are also in some way influential, because conscious, participants in the drama which they only seem to observe; they feed the central knot.

The paintings in the saloon where Moodie and Coverdale meet are a silent indication of the old man's nature--nature mort, a character from genre art. He is a clichéd figure of the ruined gentleman, and his interpolated tale,

"Fauntleroy," is like Zenobia's the story of the teller's life, and also about Priscilla. Fauntleroy, "a mere image" (206) without substance, and his second daughter who worships the first "as a grapevine might strive to clamber out of a gloomy hollow among the rocks" (210) though she has never seen her, are but feeble figures compared to Zenobia, the absent but powerful influence in this story. Priscilla's negative attributes attract Westervelt, who takes "advantage of Priscilla's lack of earthly substance to subject her to himself" (211) and exploit her sybilline attributes. The "intolerable bondage" (213) in which she finds herself is, unknown to her, shared by her sister, whom she finds at last at Blithedale. The story, like Zenobia's legend, is told without supererogatory comment. It is a parable of the "real" life of the romance.

Coverdale abandons this story, taking himself away from Moodie and the saloon and wanders up and down, with the clue to the mystery at last in his hand. He is full of "a morbid resentment of my own pain," (217), however, and reluctant to associate with the others again. In the thrall of the drama he sought to portray, he realizes that "Our souls, after all, are not our own. We convey a property in them to those with whom we associate; but to what extent can never be known, until we feel the tug, the agony, of our abortive effort to resume an exclusive sway over ourselves...Hollingsworth, Zenobia, Priscilla! These three had absorbed my life into themselves" (217). His analytic

view of them, and his insistence on characterizing them by images outside themselves have proved to be a form of appropriation in which he has lost himself. There is an almost fatal connection between him and them; when he goes to a Massachusetts village to hear the Veiled Lady, in the literalization of metaphor he finds himself in the audience as Hollingsworth rescues Priscilla from Westervelt, and, by implication, Zenobia. The image of the theater mentioned in the preface to The Blithedale Romance comes to life. We see acted out the drama of failed Community, as sister escapes sister and the lover of two women chooses between them.

Like Una, Priscilla is safe in a crowd of what might as well be satyrs--"shrewd, hard...cynical"--who, pagans as they are, do not exactly worship her; but they have come for an entertainment which uses materialism as a type of new religion, the religion of intellect, of that institutionalized spirituality which seeks "the lecture" (219) and various debased forms of fine art as a systematization of the spiritual. In that crowd Coverdale hears strange stories amid "a knot" (221) of new mystics, or exponents of "mystical sensuality" (221), stories of satantic influences and demonic power. This vision of blackness is repudiated by Coverdale, but it is not countered with another vision until Coverdale stands by Zenobia's grave. He repudiates this vision of life as the sign of "an evil age" (22), and shudders as he sees Westervelt come onto the stage.

This false prophet, who speaks of a new age dawning, is a dreadful parody of Hollingsworth. He is odious to Coverdale but Hollingsworth, in the audience, appears to be unmoved by him--he is monomaniacal--he has come to save Priscilla only. Priscilla too appears unmoved, "free and unembarrassed" (224) on the stage. Like the Lady in Comus, she is still at the center of commotion. When Hollingsworth calls her, she "fled...like one escaping from her deadliest enemy, and was safe forever!" (227). This ending of her enchantment is different from that of Zenobia's tale and different from Coverdale's fear for her. The catastrophe to come does not strike Priscilla but Zenobia, and Hollingsworth lives to repent.

But after the incident at the lyceum, Coverdale, with that naivete familiar to us from the Red Crosse Knight, considers that the drama is over, and his part is finished. He returns to Blithedale "being now free" (229-230) and expects "another spot, and an utter strangeness" (230); he is entering dangerous ground. The point of view in The Blithedale Romance is a major element in this romance and it comes directly out of the character of Miles Coverdale. He is influenced in turn by every power in the work and overreacts to each--the idealism of the communards, Zenobia's art, Priscilla's frail beauty, Westervelt's perspicacity, Moodie's lifelessness. But as the caretaker of the desire for truth in the work, he also shows us the complex truths at the heart of the other characters. His is the "dawning

idea"(33) that Blithedale is an exercise in estrangement. He fights the "fixed idea...a dim shadow of catastrophe" (51) hovering over Blithedale. He alone is aware that Hollingsworth is a "bond-slave" (71) to his philanthropy and egotism. He alone recognizes from the beginning "'that the good we aim at will not be attained'" (92). He recognizes in Westervelt "a moral and physical humbug" (112) despite his beauty. And he realizes that he himself must struggle with Zenobia to realize the truth about her, that she is a work of art in the worst sense as well as in the best. These revelations come to Coverdale alone. They come to him because he is a man whose faith is strong; more than once he offers to die for it, and even when he mocks himself for that faith, we feel it to be present.

The melancholy sense of the passing of time which he conveys to us--"Alas, my countrymen, methinks we have fallen on an evil age!"--contributes to our sense of his exaltation. He is the finest character in The Blithedale Romance and a thorough hero. Coverdale remains isolated, for he does not marry; but curiously this celibacy, or chastity, also maintains the integrity of the innocent world against the assault of the world of experience (represented not only by Westervelt and Zenobia but by Hollingsworth and Moodie). Coverdale is a continent, temperate man; he contains his own good within him. He is an ideal figure of an ordinary man, unchanging in his goodness on the last page of the work (although wiser from experience) which is the

beginning, for the reader who lives in a post-Blithedale world. Truth is always homeless and it is right that Coverdale should remain so.

The Blithedale he returns to has changed. The world of "A Modern Arcadia" (Chapter VIII)--and the sense of time forcing certain kinds of Arcadia is ironic here--gives way to the attempted sparagnos of "The Masqueraders" (Chapter XXIV). Like Lucifera's minions a fantastic pageant appears, a shouting mob in pursuit of Coverdale whose presence is a reproach to the vanity and chaos which has overtaken Blithedale.¹⁴ He is "an intruder" in "a circle" of "peril" (230). But he is not afraid of danger. It is a spot he is drawn to as surely as Hester to Boston. In Coverdale reposes the new as well as the old Adam, and he is the only one who recognizes the connection:

The curse of Adam's posterity--and curse or blessing be it, it gives substance to the life around us--had first come upon me there. In the sweat of my brow I had there earned bread and eaten it, and so established my claim to be on earth, and my fellowship with all the sons of labor. I could have knelt down, and have laid my breast against that soil. The red clay of which my frame was moulded seemed nearer akin to those crumbling furrows than to any other portion of the world's dust. There was my home, and there might be my grave. (230-231)

The literalization of Coverdale's descent, the adamization of his nature, or his awareness of it as he describes it, makes him fearless of fate. He yields to an "ominous impression" (231) and "shifting fantasies...that some evil thing had befallen us, or was ready to befall" (231), but in himself he is strong.

Before the attempted sparagnos, Coverdale wanders

on "the outskirts of the farm" like a "revistant" who longs to be told "how all things were" (231-232). He is on the other side of experience and those he meets are partridge, wild ducks, squirrel--natural creatures. Prophetically he looks at the dark pool and wonders if it holds a "drowned wretch" (232). He wanders like a revenant, eating grapes from his old hermitage, seeing the farmhouse windows like "a dead man's unshut eyes" (233). He is there to perform that office. The figures like "Comus and his crew" (233) which he sees wildly coming in a procession are from history and romance, disenchanted by the presence of Silas Foster, the only authentic farmer at Blithedale. The ultimate knot of conflict masquerading as community, the communards dance until "they became a kind of entanglement" (235). They turn on him, "a mad poet hunted by chimeras" (236), and he runs until he stumbles over a pile of logs, imagining a "long-dead woodman, and his long-dead wife and children" (236) and the unbuilt fire which the logs represent. That family never had the Blithedale fire which has warmed him, and, he tells us elsewhere, warms him still, but they were a family. He is moved at the thought of their resurrection for the purpose of making that fire and the image of the unbuilt fire is strong in him, just as the image of the promise of that Blithedale fire is strong in him. His faith is in possibility--of resurrection as of idealism.

He comes upon his three friends at Eliot's pulpit, and again, as with old Moodie in the beginning, wishes

himself elsewhere. He sees Zenobia on trial and all insist he stay. He stays as an artist; for his perception is of Hollingsworth as Puritan judge and Zenobia as witch, and thinks "Had a pile of fagots been heaped against the rock, this hint of impending doom would have completed the suggestive picture" (239). In the peculiar process of displacement intrinsic to this romance, the unbuilt fires--of woodsman, of witchtrial--are as powerful as the built one--that Blithedale fire of idealism which came to naught. He perceives that the crisis is over, whatever it was, and that "If their heart-strings were ever intertwined, the knot had been adjudged an entanglement, and was not violently broken" (241). Zenobia curses Hollingsworth for a "'self-beginning and self-ending piece of mechanism'" (243) and pities Priscilla: "'the fire which you have kindled may soon go out'" (245). But fires have a way of doing something else than they are expected to in this work, and, till the end of the romance, Priscilla and Hollingsworth are together; he is as absorbed in remorse as he was in pride, but they are together nevertheless.

Coverdale left alone with Zenobia recognizes with her "'the genuine tragedy'" (248) of Blithedale. She charges the balladeer to be her messenger, suspecting that he has turned the tragedy into a ballad. But she is already getting cold, and after they part, Coverdale, full of foreboding lies down underneath Eliot's pulpit to a second dream of catastrophe. He awakes to Zenobia's death and to a

confirmation of the Blithedale tragedy, for "some of the Arcadian affectation that had been visible enough in all our lives" (263) is apparent to him in her corpse. That suicide, in which the evidence of artful posturing is apparent, seals the doom of Blithedale, but is not the last word concerning Zenobia.

The power of love which animates this romance through the character of Miles Coverdale is allowed the last word at Zenobia's graveside. Wishing that "Heaven deal with Westervelt according to his nature and deserts!--that is to say, annihilate him" (267), the poet affirms the power of the natural world, the world of cycles of birth and death. Although the weeds that infested her character grow out of her grave, Coverdale imagines "that the grass grew all the better...for the decay of the beautiful woman who slept beneath" (270). Coverdale experiences an epiphany by that graveside--"It is because the spirit is inestimable that the lifeless body is so little valued" (270)--and is able to accept the paradox of human life: "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 balked" (270). That is the final affirmation of The Blithedale Romance the power of love to assimilate everything to its greater good. This is Priscilla's victory, and Coverdale's too.

Coverdale's confession, the last chapter of the book,

takes us down to our own time; we the audience are left with his confession of his love for Priscilla, and the renewed possibility for love in any circumstances. For Coverdale does not die, although he loves Priscilla and she does not love him. His love for her is still at large at the end of the romance, the evidence of renewal; the romance thus becomes a place of seeds. The man who does not take chances is the one who remains pure, and who is, paradoxically, the most connected with the other characters. Coverdale's confession of his love for Priscilla is the vision which rests with the audience, of unfulfilled, unrequited yet undaunted love. This love, like the self-generation and autonomy in Spenser's Garden of Adonis (in book III of The Faerie-Queene) is love itself, unchanging, inalterable and perpetually renewing, love "subject to mortalitie,/ Yet is eterne in mutabilitie" (FQ, VI, 47). It is with that love that The Blithedale Romance ends, with our awareness of it, not Priscilla's, for this allegory is for us not for her.

CHAPTER III

NOTES

¹M. Pauline Parker reminds us that "Romances are not read as one reads a detective story, galloping through to see which solution is the right one, but taking pleasure in each separate incident for its own sake." (p. 105)

²Frye, p. 273.

³Despite Richard Chase's contention that Zenobia is "a novelist's success" (p. 83), the characters as Hawthorne himself indicates, are romance types, elements in a Utopian community.

⁴Parker remarks on a similar way of depicting objects and situations in Spenser: "Spenser's legacy from the Middle Ages included the ability to perceive visible things both as they were in themselves, and as they represented other things in the mind, thus existing on two planes of reality at once." (p. 27) She uses, as examples of, respectively, simile, metaphor and allegory, the following idea in three forms: Time is like an old man; Time is an old man; Father Time.

⁵William Bysshe Stein, Hawthorne's Faust, no city: Archon Books, 1968, p. 9.

⁶Richard Harter Fogle, Hawthorne's Fiction: The Light and the Dark, Norman: U. of Oklahoma Press, 1964, p. 7.

⁷Irving Howe, Politics and the Novel, N.Y.: Avon Books, 1967, p. 168.

⁸Feidelson, p. 83.

⁹James, pp. 516-517.

¹⁰The double meaning in this phrasing underlies the idea in the romance as well.

¹¹That bloom also reminds us of Lucifera, whose amazing headdress connected her with the wrong kind of power --seductive, faintly Oriental, but erroneous.

¹²Indeed all four main characters are out of place. The romance schema of the work demands an apparently realistic setting (in this case a suburban farm) in which idealized characters make their way amid metaphysical conflicts and problems. Charles H. Foster maintains that Hawthorne's "intent for the most part was not to make a dream world like that of The Faerie-Queene or The Orlando Furioso but to idealize life in the manner of Greek tragedy, with which his tragic insight and fine restraint also link him" ("Hawthorne's Literary Theory," p. 254). In that sense The Blithedale Romance is tragedy. James said, "there is indeed nothing so tragical in all of Hawthorne...as the suicide of Zenobia" (p. 527), perhaps because she is a tragic figure--full of great strengths, wonderful, human, and terribly flawed. Frye sees her as "the pharmakos or sacrificed victim, who has to be killed to strengthen the others," in what is essentially "the sinister human world," a world where Hollingsworth is a kind of "tyrant-leader, inscrutable, ruthless, melancholy, and with an insatiable will, who commands loyalty only if he is egocentric enough to represent the collective ego of his followers" (p. 148). That Hollingsworth is himself an attractive figure, respected at Blithedale, is beyond dispute; Blithedale exists for him, and, he thinks, for his reformatory which presupposes a world which Blithedale itself hopes to negate. The tragic death of Zenobia is confirmation of his tyranny and also of the irrefragably evil world in which we live--a world in which capital punishment and not reform is the end of transgression.

¹³Everyone says this, of course, but no one so well as Henry James: "Coverdale is a picture of the contemplative, observant, analytic nature, nursing its fancies, and yet, thanks to an element of strong good sense, not bringing them up to be spoiled children" (p. 523). He is actually a very perfect gentle knight (the morbidity is James's--Miles would nurse his fancies if he were a character in a James novel, but he is not). Frye sees him as an "eiron ...the man who deprecates himself....Such a man makes himself invulnerable, and...there is no question that he is a predestined artist" (p. 40). Coverdale, though hounded and rejected, is, as mentioned before, a triumphant figure--his values are upheld and he has the last word.

¹⁴The attempted sparagnos of Miles Coverdale confirms him as an Orpheus figure who speaks to us from another world in a manner which confirms the values he has upheld, throughout the work, as a character.

CHAPTER IV

THE MARBLE FAUN

Of all Hawthorne's romances none has been so poorly read and remains so unappreciated by contemporary critics as The Marble Faun. Richard Chase, in his otherwise thorough and penetrating work, The American Novel and Its Tradition, does not deal with the romance at all. Robert Spiller, in The Cycle of American Literature, also avoids discussing it. Jean Normand complains that "The Hawthorne arabesque...loses its tension in the later works and becomes a thing of fluttering tatters."¹ Frederick Crews is only stating the truth when he says, "There is general agreement that Hawthorne's career after The Scarlet Letter turns toward self-consciousness, impaired dramatic illusion and prolix elaboration of symbolism." And he adds, "All three developments must strike the psychologically-minded critic as partaking of a single retreat from painful themes. Hawthorne, always a self-doubting writer...becomes at once more obsessed and less capable of studying obsession as a detached analyst."²

Even Henry James said of Hawthorne's "beautiful romance, Transformation"³ that "the art of narration... seems to me more at fault than in the author's other

novels. The story straggles and wanders, is dropped and taken up again, and towards the close lapses into an almost fatal vagueness,"⁴ despite the fact that in James's day it was "the most popular of Hawthorne's four novels."⁵ In fact, if we read The Marble Faun as Hawthorne's greatest work-- he thought it was and in the Preface looked for "that all sympathizing critic, the one to whom the author "implicitly makes his appeal whenever he is conscious of having done his best" (v)*--we find in it a use of images unsurpassed anywhere in his fiction. Nowhere more than in The Marble Faun does Hawthorne use more complex symbols; nowhere else are the allegorical implications more insistent, the romance elements more engagingly obtrusive. In these respects The Marble Faun is Hawthorne's greatest work, the culmination of his efforts to create a completely idealized world which is nonetheless recognizably connected with our own.

The images in this work sometimes seem almost autonomous, even though they are intrinsic to the Italian setting and the themes of art and the spiritual life. E. H. Gombrich observes that "Images apparently occupy a curious position somewhere between the statements of language, which are intended to convey a meaning, and the thing of nature, to which we can only give a meaning."⁶ This "curious position" in the no-man's land between language and nature Hawthorne maintains

*This and all other references to The Marble Faun are from the following edition: NY: New American Library, 1961.

most especially in The Marble Faun. This work, his last completed and most complex romance, re-examines the fall of man (a universal condition) in a modern, even an ordinary context. Briefly, it is the story of four friends, three artists and a count, who live, all temporarily, in Rome of modern times. Of the two Americans, Kenyon is a sculptor, Hilda a copyist. Miriam, a painter of obscure origins, is haunted by a spectre whom Donatello, the faun-like Count who loves her, kills. After the murder, inadvertently witnessed by Hilda, the characters temporarily fall away from one another as they seek to re-establish themselves in this new context. Kenyon alone, who guesses at the crime, remains more or less serenely unchanged by it. For him the transforming reality of his life becomes his love for Hilda. For Hilda, seeing the murder becomes a test of faith and friendship. As to Miriam, accessory in spirit to the murder, it isolates her once and for all from the rest of the world while at the same time enabling her to love for the first time. Donatello, the murderer, is transformed after his crime first into a remorseful and then a repentant and suffering man who realizes as never before the consequences of mortal sin and also the possibility of God's grace and mercy. This simple story, however, is laden with significant images and symbols, indicating an absolute and authoritative viewpoint underlying the often enigmatic surface.

The absolute and unquestioned creed in the work is a conviction that God's will and his grace permeate a fallen

world. The idea of a fortunate fall is utterly denied. Although Donatello changes after the murder from faun to sentient man, his transformation is not a result of his "fall" but subsequent to it, a sign of God's grace to a sinner and not a reward for sin.

The enlightenment sought by Hilda and Donatello and denied to Miriam comes to Kenyon unbidden. Kenyon, our representative in the work, articulates the connections between the physical symbols (the ineluctable nature of things in this world) and the larger, the cosmic significance that attaches to everything in the moral universe, the universe in which God manifests himself, usually unnamed and often unrecognized. The images in The Marble Faun become evidence, signs of a sublime influence permeating the ordinary world. Kenyon alone faces the tragic and problematic aspects of life with the grace to understand what he sees. He is a gifted artist, but he is an ordinary man, like the reader. His gifts--like those of the readers who make up the "tapestry" which is the book--enable him to give himself to the creation of a work of art, as its material as well as its shaper. This inextricable joining of a man's functions--as the one who defines and the one who is also part of the definition--is an aesthetic as well as a spiritual process. In The Marble Faun we see the way in which Hawthorne's use of images indicates the inseparable nature of the two manifestations of man's fate--of free will and of grace, as it were--and the way in which the connection between the

marble faun and The Marble Faun is but one form which this use of images takes.

The characters are stylized figures expanded into the psychological archetypes familiar to us from the earlier romances. The disingenuous narrator is only barely seen as a peripheral member of the group of persons on whom we are asked to focus our attention. His point of view--that of an artist in Rome who created these characters and made The Marble Faun out of an insight derived from contemplating an unfinished bust of Donatello--is the governing one. And, as in the earlier work, the romance elements of setting and characterization and the allegory (of commentary) are constant and, if read aright,⁷ far from unsatisfactory, creating a total fusion of detail and vision, image and pattern.

In this romance Hawthorne presents his transcendent vision of grace and heroism in Donatello--"the living faun"⁸ as James called him, the faun incarnate (art made flesh), the word incarnate (God's word made flesh), the one who enables us to see the life-giving grace that can animate a pristine creature however tragically circumstanced. The interaction between man and circumstance is significant in the story of each character, as the nature of heroism is explored not only in Donatello but also in his three friends. The possibility of animation by grace informs the action and characterization in the work. The microcosm which is the Rome of artists also allows us to see the

connection between the aesthetic and the spiritual worlds. Art and religion both create aetiological myths about life--the former creates them for their own sake, the latter as a means to an end. The romance allows us to contemplate both types of creation--and in the end they are one and the same, as form and function of art merge in the consciousness of Hilda--and to understand, by implication, the nature of creation itself in the powerfully generative images presented to us in the work.

One of the most important questions in The Marble Faun has to do with causes and origins--the problematic origin of sin, especially the nature of tragedy and of the sublime as they relate to man's destiny since the fall. No symbol in the work is more significant in connection with the question of origins than the chasm of Curtius. This chasm, an aetiological myth invented to explain an ancient swamp, inspires Hilda and Miriam to express conflicting views of the nature of evil, Hilda the innocent and optimistic one that it may be bridged "over with good thoughts and deeds" (122), Miriam that it is a "'pit of blackness that lies beneath us, everywhere'" (122). They stand with the Capitoline Hill (and the marble faun) above them and "the crumbs of...ruin" (123) beneath them, amid the wreckage and detritus of history. We stand too, spectators "on the spot" and standing over a pit, as Hawthorne, in a single sentence, reviews Western history from the time of the Romans: "We forget that a chasm extends between it and

ourselves, in which lie all those dark, rude, unlettered centuries, around the birth time of Christianity, as well as the age of chivalry and romance, the feudal system, and the infancy of a better civilization than that of Rome" (124). We are able to forget--that is, to ignore--Time: "The reason may be that the old Roman literature survives, and creates for us an intimacy with the classic ages, which we have no means of forming with the subsequent ones" (124). Art bridges the chasm; time, annihilated by the intimacy of literature (art), is

'the great, dusky gap, impenetrably deep, and with half-shaped monsters and hideous faces looming upward out of it, to the vast affright of the good citizens who peeped over the brim!...Within it... there were prophetic visions--intimations of all the future calamities of Rome--shades of Goths, and Gauls, and even of the French soldiers of today. It was a pity to close it up so soon! I would give much for a peep into such a chasm,' (121-122)

says Kenyon, fearless voyager among ideas and a genius in his art.

Time is the primordial swamp out of which history comes; to look ahead is to look down into an abyss. On that same evening, "On the Edge of a precipice" as Chapter XVIII is called, the four friends continue their walk through "lower Rome" (126), and come upon a lonely parapet which is one side of the Tarpeian Rock "built right on the edge of a steep precipice" (126) with a view of the city, including, through the mist, St. Peter's, the spiritual center of the city. The precipice itself is a mixture of "ancient stonework" and "primeval rock" (126). Hilda

admires the view; Kenyon admires the rock--his powers of interpretation never sleep:

'It symbolizes how sudden was the fall in those days from the utmost height of ambition to its profoundest ruin.'

'Come, come; it is midnight,' cried another artist, 'too late to be moralizing here. We are literally dreaming on the edge of a precipice. Let us go home.'

'It is time, indeed,' said Hilda. (127)

It is midnight, the precipice of time. The unidentified artist who speaks here is the same one who sees the bust of Donatello, unfinished yet impressive, in the sculptor's studio. It is Hawthorne himself, the fifth member of the group, part of it yet perpetually excluded, the same as he of the Conclusion who asks the other characters what became of Miriam and Donatello and receives such unsatisfactory answers. Miriam and Donatello remain on the edge of this precipice, unable to leave, the one because of her past, the other because of his love for her which will cause him to join his fate to her own. As they stand in the courtyard two other figures are there, too. From "a deep, empty niche, that had probably once contained a statue...a figure now came forth" (128), the spectre. He is one kind of living statue, a model of evil; Donatello is another, as we shall see. As Hilda looks unseen into the courtyard, Donatello, acting on a plea in Miriam's glance, throws the model over the precipice to his death, "a deed which took but that little time to grave itself in the eternal adamant" (129). Life is utterly changed for Miriam, Donatello, Hilda (and

of course the model) by that act, and yet it is clear by the image of engraving that the act was in no way predestined: the future is a tabula rasa only waiting for human action to engrave itself upon eternity.

From that instant Donatello--"the young man, whose form seemed to have dilated, and whose eyes blazed with the fierce energy that had suddenly inspired him--is transformed: It 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. But that simple and joyous creature was gone forever" (129). Mortal sin is the origin of Donatello's manhood; the experience of evil brings out in him latent powers of reason and perception; God's grace allows this change from faun to man. But there is an end of simple joy, and no good fortune in his sin; reason and perception, as we see, are weak if adequate tools given him to deal with his calamity.

Miriam and Donatello stand there alone together, enclosed by mutual guilt; "a new sphere, a special law, had been created for them alone. The world could not come near them; they were safe!" (131). This newly occupied space, "the moral seclusion that had suddenly extended itself around them" (131), is actually the heart of a wasteland: "how close, and ever closer, did the breath of the immeasurable waste, that lay between them and all brotherhood or sisterhood, now press them one within the other!" (131) They have become part of history in the worst sense: "They trod through

the streets of Rome, as if they, too, were among the majestic and guilty shadows that, from ages long gone by, have haunted the bloodstained city" (132). Instead of inhabiting a "Strange, lonesome Paradise" (132) corrupted by evil, the world, as Miriam suddenly realizes, just as Goodman Brown does when he returns from the forest, has changed: "an individual wrongdoing melts into the great mass of human crime, and makes us--who dreamed only of our own little 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" (133).

Donatello whose face "had taken a higher, almost an heroic aspect, from the strength of passion" (131-132) has joined his Eve (and the look on his face tells us about heroism as much as about passion) like the old Adam; the fall is always epic--mankind's primary (though not ultimate) adventure in the world. Like the new Adam, Donatello will wander in the world alone and deserted by his powers. He will be saved by the grace of God although his deed be eternally recorded. His Transformation has been from innocence to experience and from simple existence to the possibility for heroism that experience brings with it. It is not that his crime is in any way fortunate or that it enables his heroism; it is just that once the crime has been committed heroism is possible. Hawthorne's power to compel our obedience to his view of things, his insistent

and authoritative pronouncements create an absolute and therefore implicitly trustworthy vision of the world. Characters seem to express less than they think or feel, but whatever we are given is given to us with the absolute authority of the narrator (confirmed, in this instance, by the narrator's ignorance of the whereabouts of two of his characters at the end--where in the world they are is immaterial by then). This is the narrative style of the Bible, especially the Old Testament.⁹

Eric Auerbach, discussing this style as it relates to the story of Abraham and Isaac observes:

Doctrine and promise are incarnate in [stories from Scripture] and inseparable from them; for that very reason they are fraught with 'background' and mysterious, containing a second, concealed meaning...even the factual and psychological elements which come between ...are mysterious, merely touched upon, fraught with background; and therefore they require subtle investigation and interpretation, they demand them. Since so much in the story is dark and incomplete, [the reader's] effort to interpret it constantly finds something new to feed upon.

Reality thus takes on a new meaning in the context of such a work, for the physical elements in the work--setting, objects, landscape, person of each character--are part of that doctrine, elements in what Auerbach calls "the search for enlightenment."

Doctrine and the search for enlightenment are inextricably connected with the physical side of the narrative--the latter being more than simple 'reality'; indeed they are in constant danger of losing their own reality, as very soon happened when interpretation reached such proportions that the real vanished....Far from seeking...merely to make us forget our own reality for a few hours, it seeks to overcome our reality: we

are asked to fit our own life into its world, feel ourselves to be elements in its structure of universal history.¹⁰

Profoundly historical and social as The Marble Faun is, it is also in this work that we see most clearly how "the sublime, tragic, and problematic"¹¹ is depicted in vignettes from recognizable life (a life which is or could be commonplace). This is the immanence of God in the world, the sublime influence of one who though largely unnamed by Hawthorne (a sign of the deepest most awful reverence), permeated New England in The Scarlet Letter and The House of the Seven Gables and even The Blithedale Romance, and who sees down through the Pantheon in Rome, penetrating the place of lesser gods as he penetrates all the mysteries of the universe. As in the world of the Old Testament, "The sublime influence of God here reaches so deeply into the everyday that the two realms of the sublime and the everyday are not only actually unseparated but basically inseparable."¹²

Hawthorne's style, so full of chiaroscuro effects, interruptions (in the form of chapter breaks) underlain by unexpressed significance which demands allegorizing, is designed to portray the problematic and to show the interpenetration of the everyday and the sublime. His images and symbols, which call attention to themselves yet remain enigmatic, are chosen precisely to show the mystery in the ordinary, an intrinsic element in Hawthorne's exploration and presentation of the problems of life in a universe

permeated by a non-interfering God (Milton's universe in modern times). All of his works have been leading up to the great questions raised and contemplated in The Marble Faun--the nature of guilt and innocence, innocence and experience in a fallen world, the meaning of salvation. Within that contemplation not an image, not a symbol in this fourth romance is misspent.

Northrop Frye, in Anatomy of Criticism, describes romance as the mythos of summer and within that context The Marble Faun may be seen as a resurrection of that world of romance from those dark and forgotten ages after the fall of Rome. Thus it is that we may see Donatello's nature as mutilated by his murder of the model (a mutilation demonstrated for us by the way the animals, except the reptile, at Mone Beni refuse to respond to him). This mutilation, in a way peculiar to romance, the mythos of summer, is the price of intelligence, the ability to know. Thus he also gains a bride, Miriam, whom he has rescued in a perilous, forbidden, tabooed place (the catacombs), rescued her from the threat of an older and loathesome embrace of the man who haunts her, amid the suggestion of incest. This is the plot of The Marble Faun as a pure romance, as if written in the dark ages after the fall of Rome, the world of chivalry and romance which we forget as we stand with Hawthorne beneath the Capitoline Hill. This romance form is also transformed from the traditional story embodying ancient and (implicitly) outworn supernatural

concepts (such as the idea represented by the faun of Praxiteles) into the myth of the fall of man--the true supernatural concept of sin and redemption; The Marble Faun thus supercedes the marble faun.

Throughout the terrible struggle of Donatello to find redemption, we have the implicit promise of a happier society, present in Kenyon's love for Hilda. When they marry that vision is confirmed. In the romance context, that marriage is an affirmation of the integrity of the innocent world against the assault of experience. Hilda and Kenyon return home to create a kind of domestic bliss as a bulwark against chaos; thus the domestic and the spiritual merge in their marriage which reestablishes order in the romance. Hilda emerges as a figure of invincible innocence which has been sorely tried. The true lovers, Kenyon and Hilda, transcend every event and circumstance which concerns them. They are privy to every secret, including that concerning the shape of Donatello's ears.

But if The Marble Faun is, as Frye suggests, a work "dominated by an interest that looks back to fictional romance and forward to the ironic mythical writers of the next century--to Kafka, for instance, or Cocteau,"¹⁴ it is also a work dominated by Hawthorne's attempt at his grandest theme--the recapitulation of the story of the Fall from a modern perspective. And like Milton, his belief in the power, the authority and the presence of the Absolute in our world is implicit in the work. His choice of Rome as a

setting is intrinsic to that tacit belief--Rome after the fall where there can be no new sin, where art and history and Christianity exist in every combination, every disjunction, Rome the worldly and the spiritual, traditional center of earthly grandeur and power. The Marble Faun also shows us how even the worship of God and beauty have been systematized since the Fall; after the Fall there are only systems, and all systems are from man and therefore flawed. It shows us, too, how it is impossible to differentiate system and essence without imagination, that is, enlightened faith. Hilda fulfills the promise of St. Paul (Rom. v, 19): "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one man shall many be made righteous." Hawthorne is our St. Paul, and we are his Romans. Hilda like Jesus in Paradise Regained rejects fame (to become a copyist); she rejects all false glory. She is innocent like Donatello, but she is not an innocent like Donatello, for she has a conscious and deliberate (if at first untried) faith to sustain her throughout her trial. When she leaves her tower, and the lamp she has tended goes out, the tower stands contrary to the old myth. This is, in The Marble Faun, equivalent to that scene in Paradise Regained when Satan tempts Jesus (the Son, that is, the man) and he stands in mid-air.

Hilda's tower stands, an affirmation of the power of a pure and simple faith such as hers against the corrupt mythology of Rome. The tower stands, too, as an affirmation

of God's power. It is sustained, as Hilda is, by the power of the heavenly father--an affirmation, too, of the "'precepts of Heaven...written deepest within us'" (329).

The event (for even though nothing, rather than something, happens, it is an event which counters in some way the murder itself) is central to the problem of salvation in the work. The Marble Faun, like Paradise Regained, asks what man shall do to be saved. We see, for this is allegory, that Hilda's faith redeems the Virgin's shrine from destruction--not a faith like Hilda's but that very one. She, like the Son in Paradise Regained, "Recover'd Paradise to all mankind,/By one man's obedience fully tried/...And Eden rais'd in the waste wilderness" (PR,1,3-7): "innocence continues to make a paradise around itself and keep it still unfallen" (279), we are told as Hilda ventures out in Rome with "a kind of malignant spell" (280) over it.

If Donatello generates the fable of the Fall in this work, Hilda counters with her presence which implies redemption; the ending belongs to her (and it is also our beginning, for it debouches into our own time, as it were): "But Hilda had a hopeful soul, and saw sunlight on the mountaintops" (330). That "But" is at once a recognition of the tragedy of Miriam and Donatello and a transcendence of that tragedy by faith in redemption. In The Marble Faun man must have faith to be saved; one must perceive the mercy of God, as Miriam, Donatello and Kenyon do in Perugia: "all three imagined that they beheld the bronze pontiff endowed

with spiritual life. A blessing was felt descending upon them from his outstretched hand" (235). They experience the grace of God, although Miriam, trapped in an older law, cannot profit from it in the same way the others can. Hilda's faith is regenerated by her experience of sin; this, like sin itself, is a potentially universal human experience. The weak girl epitomizes consummate virtue. She is connected repeatedly with doves; she is the Dove (an incarnation of the Holy Spirit). She is "a pure soul, in whom religion and the love of beauty were at one" (291). She lives according to the precept of Paradise Regained: "he who receives/Light from above, from the fountain of light,/ No other doctrine needs, though granted true" (PR, iv, 288-290). The age-old controversy between history (truth, i.e., the world is in ruins, as in Hawthorne's designation of Rome as "a long-decaying corpse" [235]) and art familiar to us from Paradise Regained, IV (art, that is, as lies which "cannot comfort the heart in affliction" [246] as Hilda is unconsoled in the picture galleries during her torment) is fruitless; only the divine light of grace offers hope to a mankind struggling as Hilda struggles. The structure of the work depends on this transcendence of the implicit tension between history and art; it is resolved, of course, in Hilda's faith.

The Marble Faun, like Paradise Regained, is a drama of the inner life. All action is inward; that is why we do not actually see the murder but only Hilda's response to it, a

response identified with "the eternal" (129). It is the effect of the act on the inner person which matters. Even Donatello, a kind of hero in the romance--because he is active, does a deed, as well as because he kills the evil spectre (about which more later)--eventually, for the peace of his soul which also enables it, takes up the contemplative life (in the dungeon), a happy end for him. Only there can he cultivate virtue. The conflict in this work is thus spiritual and dramatic, but the dramatic tension is not resolved but transcended by Hilda's beatitude. The recognition of self essential to good tragedy is present in the work, but it is transcended by the promise of eternal life, of resurrection, of God's mercy. After her confession, Hilda is "as if... just now created" (266). Child-like she contemplates the muddy Tiber and invents the idea of "'a mystic story or parable, or seven-branched allegory, full of poetry, art, philosophy, and religion" (267), as good a definition as any of The Marble Faun (an implication perhaps that our life is a romance--full of danger, error, adventure and the possibility for heroism and salvation). What was lost by the Jews at Ponte Molle is recovered for us by Hilda in "'The Recovery of the Sacred Candlestick.'" Gibbon tells us that the Jews alone, of all the subject peoples under Constantine, refused accustomed tribute to Rome, disdaining every other form of worship as "impious and idolatrous." They were "a race of fanatics" who massacred in every Roman colony, secure in the belief "that a conquering Messiah would soon

arise...to invest the favourites of heaven with the empire of the earth." But they were not alone in their intransigence.

This problem of Roman history, and our own, with regard to religion and conflict is pertinent to our romance. According to Gibbon, (again The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, I, xvi-xviii), "The whole body of Christians unanimously refused to hold any communion with the gods of Rome, of the empire, and of mankind." "Their problem, in the eyes of Rome, lay in the incorporeality of their faith; they were thus regarded as atheists." "The pure and sublime idea which they entertained of the Supreme Being escaped the gross conception of the Pagan multitude, who were at a loss to discover a spiritual and solitary God, that was neither represented under any corporeal figure or visible symbol, nor was adored with the accustomed pomp of libations and festivals, of altars and sacrifices." Gibbon quotes Minucius Felix: "Cur nullas aras habent? templa nulla? nulla nota simulacra?...Unde autem, vel quis ille, aut ubi, Deus unicus, solitarius, destitutus?"--even the Jews had a better religion, he says. Hilda, for whom God is everywhere,--in picture galleries, in St. Peter's, in the Palazzo Cenci, in the Ghetto--unites in her persona faith in Divine Unity maintained by Jews and Christians. Christians, "dreaming enthusiasts" according to the author of the *Philopatris*, believed in a man-god "who, in a recent age, and among a barbarous people, had fallen a sacrifice either to the malice of his own

countrymen, or to the jealousy of the Roman government." Immortality, benevolence, all the advantages of magnanimity in the Aristotelian sense "were insufficient, in the opinion of those carnal men, to compensate for the want of fame, of empire, and of success"--all, in The Marble Faun, in ruins, a rubble amidst which walks Hilda, sublime in her simple faith. "Those who survey with a curious eye the revolutions of mankind may observe that the gardens and circus of Nero... polluted with the blood of the first Christians, have been rendered still more famous by the Triumph and by the abuse of the persecuted religion." Constantine, received Gibbon tells us, by the Italians "as their deliverer," was in any case "The master of the Roman world." He was prodigal in building Constantinople, and through him "the simplicity of Roman manners was insensibly corrupted by the stately affectation of the courts of Asia." He is regarded as innovating practices which "prepared the ruin of the empire." He was a hero to the Christians, a tyrant to the heathen. Magnanimous and glory-loving, ambitious beyond everything, he was wise and just, "a hero" who degenerates into cruelty and dissolution. Hilda's faith re-illuminates the resistance of the Jews to the carnality and false glory of Rome. Kenyon "sees" her conception and is inspired by it.

Hilda's vision, literally, is the dominant one, in the end, in this work. She, as a copyist (none better, for she seems to copy with the assistance of the original artist) and as source for the candlestick allegory just subjected

to exegesis raises also the question of the importance of the spectator of art, and the reader of romance. The emphasis on and the importance of the one for whom the work is offered (reader, spectator) is apparent explicitly and implicitly throughout the romance. Says Kenyon, "'It is the spectator's mood that transfigures the Transfiguration itself. I defy any painter to move and elevate me without my own consent and assistance'" (21). To Miriam, this means that he lacks one of his senses; but she, a mannerist since the reappearance of her spectre, paints in a style which "presupposes an educated spectator"¹³ rather than a sensitive one. Hilda, on the other hand, is a copyist, who copies perfectly Guido Reni's Beatrice Cenci¹⁴ from memory, and is herself painted with the same expression in a picture that is later misinterpreted and then comes to be widely reproduced (thus does Hawthorne provide us with a unique symbol of infinite regress). It is not certain, that the subject of the painting really is Beatrice Cenci and later on the picture of Hilda is not the suffering of erotic love but of spiritual love which is depicted. When Hilda marries Kenyon "to be herself enshrined and worshipped as a household saint, in the light of her husband's fireside" (330) her bridal gift is an Etruscan bracelet, a talismanic confirmation of her entry into the human race (the race she has "redeemed" by sympathizing with the suffering of all three parties occasioned by the murder and then being freed from that sympathy by her confession and release from the weight

of it under which she has suffered) and also a promise of resurrection (the gems were taken from sepulchers).

Man's fate is transformation, from innocence to experience, from sinner to saved, from living to dead to eternally living. As the classicism of the Graeco-Roman Empires was absorbed into Christianity, the statues and myths of the earlier time took on new meaning. The Transfiguration by Raphael, Hilda's own favorite painting and a work of art very nearly diminished by her changed perspective after she witnesses the murder, is itself an icon of this fundamental truth about life--that particular transfiguration is the highest form of transformation. Kenyon's bust of Donatello, which harmonizes its own elements just when Kenyon gives up on it, is another example of the reforming of irrefragible material into something better than it was, something symbolic and spiritualized. These images--and that of the Jewish candlestick allegorized and the Etruscan gems resurrected--are reminders of infinite possibility of beneficial change within time.

Of all the works of art in this romance none finds such favor with the narrator, however, as the stained glass windows which Hawthorne himself admired above everything else in the Gothic cathedrals and which combine history and art to yield spiritual significance.

It is the special excellence of pictured glass that the light, which falls merely on the outside of other pictures, is here interfused throughout the work; it illuminates the design, and invests it with a living radiance; and, in requital, the unfading colors transmute

the common daylight into a miracle of richness and glory in its passage through the heavenly substance of the blessed and angelic shapes which through the high-arched window. (221)

Kenyon, the authoritative voice in the work, and the one more immediate than the author's, whom we have just heard, allegorizes the symbol for us:

"There is no other such true symbol of the glories of the better world, where a celestial radiance will be inherent in all things and persons, and render each continually transparent to the sight of all."

"But what a horror it would be," said Donatello sadly, "if there were a soul among them through which the light could not be transfused!"

"Yes, and perhaps this is to be the punishment of sin," replied the sculptor, "not that it shall be made evident to the universe, which can profit nothing by such knowledge, but that it shall insulate the sinner from all sweet society by rendering him impermeable to light, and, therefore, unrecognizable in the abode of heavenly simplicity and truth. Then, what remains for him, but the dreariness of infinite and eternal solitude?" (221-222)

This question is answered by the work; what remains is the possibility of repentance and redemption, re-illumination as it were.

The abruptness of the chapter divisions in The Marble Faun, like these stained glass windows, is a kind of authoritative depiction of events. In stained glass there is no shadow and no perspective. There is only a combining of arbitrary elements, with meaning which is sometimes moral and sometimes purely aesthetic, coloring that which it illuminates. The carefully chosen vignettes in the romance, and the arbitrary chapter breaks are part of the same process of illuminating and combination, revealing yet still imbued with mysterious significance. The chapter which

follows the "Pictured Windows," for example, is Chapter XXXIV, "Market Day in Perugia," which appears to be merely a set piece. But implicit in this arbitrariness is also the arbitrariness of history, and of geography; the stained glass windows have been found in a nameless town in the Tuscan hills, in the midst of Etruscan and Gothic buildings of immemorial antiquity, in "a fossilized town" (220), like other "lifeless towns" (220) which were once "each the birthplace of its own school of art" (220) hundreds of years ago. They go from the Gothic cathedral--evidence of an otherwise vanished time which Gibbon calls "the dark ages which succeeded the translation of the Empire"--to Perugia, Gothic, Christian, alive.

The two men are there to meet Miriam, although Donatello does not realize this. They go, specifically, toward the statue of Pope Julius the Third in the public square in Perugia. In a scene which parallels the one in which Miriam knelt to the model who haunted her, she openly declares her love for Donatello to Kenyon beneath the statue, urging him back to Rome and Hilda. Here, too, Donatello and Miriam confront each other for the first time since the murder. She realizes that though his love is "indestructible" (232) he himself has changed: "That tone ...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 now the man of feeling and intelligence" (232). This assertion with its implication of the fortunate fall, begs to be discussed and interpreted. What we see in Donatello is not a manifestation of felix culpa but rather a manifestation of the miracle of grace. Almighty God can transform a sinner into a man of feeling using ("through") the occasion of sin as yet another opportunity for divine mercy; this is how, in fact, he is almighty. Kenyon raises the question explicitly at the end of The Marble Faun, when he says to Hilda:

Here comes my perplexity....Sin has educated Donatello, and elevated him. Is sin, then--which we deem such a dreadful blackness in the universe--is it, like sorrow, merely an element of human education, through which we struggle to a higher and purer state than we could otherwise have attained? Did Adam fall, that we might ultimately rise to a far loftier paradise than his? (329)

Hilda's horror at this question is unfeigned--"it annuls and obliterates whatever precepts of Heaven are written deepest within us" (320). But the reader longs to have this question answered once and for all in the work, which it never explicitly is. It is, as Hilda and Kenyon admit, a matter of "'creed'" (329) and when Kenyon says "'I never did believe it!'" (329), he also asks Hilda to marry him; "'Were you my guide, my counselor, my inmost friend, with that white wisdom which clothes you as a celestial garment, all would go well'" (329). Kenyon lives, as an artist, both an active and a contemplative life. He is like Guyon in the second book of The Faerie-Queene as his name indicates, a

human ideal of temperance, a reasonable man who believes in the rational order of a moral world. But he needs the true, spiritual "wisdom" which Hilda possesses. Theirs is a marriage of reason and grace, of earthly and divine wisdom.

The terrible dark mystery of Donatello's maturing is not "solved" but it is thoroughly explored in the romance. The reality of his transformation overcomes every interpretation as to the source of the change. The doctrine of redemption which he embodies and the promise that the doctrine implies are incarnated in him; Donatello incarnates again the promise of the word made flesh. We are, however, incompletely initiated into the mystery of his redemption that we may better investigate and interpret life as we ourselves know it. Donatello, who was like pre-lapsarian Adam, sinned like Adam and is redeemed from sin by God's mercy. Kenyon, after Miriam and Donatello beg each other's forgiveness, urges them, like God in the similar scene in Paradise Lost, to find their destiny together:

...here, Miriam, is one whom a terrible misfortune has begun to educate; it has taken him, and through your agency, out of a wild and happy state, which, within circumscribed limits, gave him joys that he cannot elsewhere find on earth. On his behalf, you have incurred a responsibility which you cannot fling aside. And here, Donatello, is one whom Providence marks out as intimately connected with your destiny. The mysterious process by which our earthly life instructs us for another state of being was begun for you by her....The bond betwixt you, therefore, is a true one, and never--except by Heaven's own act--should be rent asunder. (233)

That mysterious process is possible but not inevitable as

we have seen by the futility with which Donatello commits his acts of charity, desperately trying to do right and to gain the prayers on his behalf which charity engenders. Under the stained glass window, blessed by seven old crones, Donatello begins to change again--we know not why or wherefore.

The Gothic cathedral in Perugia overshadows the piazza and shelters the crowd. Life swirls around them; "The life of the flitting moment," Hawthorne tells us in the midst of this crowded and noisy scene, "existing in the antique shell of an age gone by, has a fascination which we do not find in either the past or present, taken by themselves" (227). There is "a kind of poetic" (227) interaction between past and present, a sense of time passing. In the midst of municipal buildings, cathedrals, palaces and the statue of the old pope (all evidence of post-lapsarian systems and of the dark history implicit in those systems) Kenyon and Donatello contemplate no longer the "petty tumult" (227) which surrounds them in the crowd, but the "benignly awful representative of divine and human authority" (228) in the statue. Donatello becomes "healthier" (228); he thinks "'The pope's blessing...has fallen upon'" (228) him. But the more reasons are given for the change over Donatello--"The change of scene, the breaking up of custom, the fresh flow of incidents, the sense of being homeless, and therefore free"... "the bright day, the gay spectacle of the market place, and the sympathetic

exhilaration of so many people's cheerfulness" (228-229) "he was magnetically conscious of a present that formerly sufficed to make him happy" (229)--the less convinced we are. All of these conditions have existed before this moment; Miriam was in the Villa, had he but known. When the narrator says "Be the cause what it might, Donatello's eyes shone with a serene and hopeful expression while looking upward at the bronze pope, to whose widely diffused blessing, it may be, he attributed all this good influence" (229), we do not so attribute it. The narrator's casual and implicit disparagement of all the reasons he himself has given makes invincible the real and hidden explanation--Donatello's second transformation is upon him; it is mysterious and benign, and therefore must come from God. The clock strikes noon, the hour of Miriam's reappearance, a figure of a suffering woman "as if she deeply felt--what we have been endeavoring to convey into our feeble description--the benign and awe-inspiring influence which the pontiff's statue exercises upon a sensitive spectator" (230). At noon, the hour of the crucifixion, the dramatic, spiritual and mystical elements in the romance converge.

Miriam, like Donatello, is profoundly affected by "the Bronze Pontiff's Benediction" (subject of Chapter XXXV). Hawthorne universalizes this parochial object by saying, "No matter though it were modeled for a Catholic chief priest, the desolate heart, whatever be its religion, recognizes in that image the likeness of a father" (230).

Dramatically, Donatello and Miriam are forgiven, in the context of the romance, their sin. From here Donatello will go to prison and later, implicitly, to heaven. Thus the author implicitly adopts the iconographic object and fits it to his own purpose. As Donatello himself says,

"I have heard...that there was a brazen image set up in the wilderness, the sight of which healed the Israelites of their poisonous and rankling wounds. If it be the Blessed Virgin's pleasure, why should not this holy image before us do me equal good?..."

"I did wrong to smile," answered Kenyon. "It is not for me to limit Providence in its operations on man's spirit." (229)

Providence is unlimited in scope and power. A "mute mystery" (16) such as we feel in the presence of the marble faun of Praxiteles (or as the characters feel in the presence of the bronze pope) is attached to the idea behind the conception as to the object itself. That object-- "The being here represented" (16) is the marmoreal representation of pre-lapsarian man. "It is possible...that the Faun might be educated through the medium of his emotions, so that the coarser animal portion of his nature might eventually be thrown into the background, though never utterly expelled" (16); so much for the faun of Praxiteles, that pre-Christian sculptor who did not know what Hawthorne knows, and what Kenyon knows, that man has fallen and is yet saved.

As Hawthorne's imaginative contemplation plays around the idea--comparing prose to marble ("The Idea grows coarse and hardens in our grasp"), sculpture to poetry,

the faun to Donatello, the statue to the romance--he presents to us a view of time which encompasses all art, and a view of time and art transcended. The great task at hand, transcendence of what we see, is that of the reader. Chapter X of the romance, entitled "Miriam, Hilda, Kenyon, Donatello," is recapitulated in Chapter L as the fates of Miriam and Kenyon are discussed by Hilda and Kenyon. It begins with a disclaimer "of those minute elucidations which are so tedious, and, after all, so unsatisfactory, in clearing up the romantic mysteries of a story" (325). Mysteries are for pondering not for clearing up, as Hawthorne's use of the tapestry image makes clear. The "apology" in Chapter L asks that "If any brilliant, or beautiful, or even tolerable effect have been produced, this pattern of kindly readers will accept it at its worth, without tearing its web apart with the idle purpose of discovering how the threads have been knit together; for the sagacity by which he is distinguished will long ago have taught him that any narrative of human action and adventure--whether we call it history or romance--is certain to be a fragile handiwork, more easily rent than mended" (325). The prime agency of coherence is the reader. The pattern is beautiful, obscure and mysterious.

Moreover, the readers have themselves become the tapestry; "The gentle reader, we trust, would not thank us for one of those minute elucidations which are so tedious, and after all, so unsatisfactory, in clearing

up the romantic mysteries of a story. He is too wise to insist upon looking closely at the wrong side of the tapestry, after the right one has been sufficiently displayed to him, woven with the best of the artist's skill, and cunningly arranged with a view to the harmonious exhibition of its colors" (325). The "pattern of kindly readers" is part of the "narrative of human action and adventure," the pattern in the carpet of Hawthorne's allegorical romance (or, in James's other metaphor, "the very beads on which the string is strung"). The mysteries of the work are more important than what is known. Just as the Bible invites minute and personal interpretation of incident and just as The Faerie-Queene is about the Christian reader, so The Marble Faun invites an immersion in the apparently disjointed but significant events of the romance.

Lionel Trilling correctly observed that "for Hawthorne the world is always and ineluctably there and in a very stubborn and uncompromising way"¹⁵ and that "he means to define the relation in which the artist stands to the world."¹⁶ More even than the artist, however, it is the ordinary struggling person whom Hawthorne seeks to define. Kenyon is a temperate rational man, and an artistic genius. Miriam is first of all a suffering, tormented woman whose art suffers from her weak and passionate nature inhibited from growth by the old law to which she is implicitly bound. Hilda is a votary first and therefore a copyist. The kind of artist each is comes out of their primary

nature. Donatello's professional identity in the work, so to speak, is similarly significant. Hawthorne has given the youth the name of "the greatest Florentine sculptor before Michelangelo....Practically every later sculptor, including Michelangelo, was deeply indebted to him; while the heroic types he invented have coloured our whole conception of fifteenth century Florence...his later work is saturated in the spirit of antiquity, which he understood more fully than any other fifteenth century artist...."¹⁷ In his name Donatello is an old Adam of art, as it were, an art antique and heroic.

For Donatello is not just a sinner. His murder of the spectre which haunts Miriam (a Jewess) is also reminiscent of the conflict in Paradise Regained between Jesus and Satan. The spectre of the catacombs, who after his death is revealed as a Capuchin is fatally wounded by Donatello who thereby saves Miriam from him. By her agency, Kenyon tells her, Donatello killed him. We may take this to be a symbolic representation of the way in which Christ redeemed the old race from original sin. The spectre is darkly robed and reminds us of Archimago as he appears to the Red Crosse Knight: "An aged sire, in long blacke weeks yclad....And all the way he prayed as he went,/ And often knocked his breast, as one that did repent" (FQ, I, i, . 2, 7-9) and reminds us, too, of the Satan who appears in Paradise Regained as "an aged man in rural

weeds" (PR, I, 314). His death is at once a destruction and a consummation. Like Antaeus he perishes in the air; in Paradise Regained (IV, 563-568) Milton stresses the comparison between Satan and Antaeus, and the fall of Satan (IV, 562-581) seems very long, as does the fall of the model. He is a model, a type, of evil whom Donatello destroys, and he has been thrown, like the traitor he is, off the Tarpeian rock; in Paradise Regained he was thrown from the "Citadel/impregnable" (IV, 49-50) of "great and glorious Rome, Queen of the Earth" (IV, 45), an interpretation borne out by Donatello's repeating the act when he throws the worm--like the "noxious worm" or serpent of Paradise Regained (I, 312)--off the tower at Monte Beni. Donatello vanquishes evil when he murders the model; Miriam for whom no real redemption is possible although she is "upright" is on the other side of history from Kenyon and Hilda, "on the other side of a fathomless abyss" (330), like the chasm of Curtius, the abyss of history.

Rome itself is an appropriate medium for this drama of sin and redemption. Rome's power, and her pretence to be not of this world and her significance as an element in and a symbol of the vicissitudes of history, that is, of life since the fall, underlie the struggles of the characters to overcome the world--Kenyon and Hilda eventually leave Rome behind. "'In Rome,'" says Hilda at last, "'there is something dreary and awful, which we can never quite escape'" (267). In Chapter L, Hilda and Kenyon find

themselves at the Pantheon, Hadrian's version of St. Peter's, a brick-faced rotunda with central skylight and "richly coffered dome," "a sumptuous interior, decorated in marble."¹⁸ There, underneath the eye of God, Hilda asks Kenyon if Donatello was a faun, and he says yes, offering two morals: "'take your choice!'" (329)--(1) "'human beings of Donatello's character, compounded especially for happiness, have no longer any business on earth or elsewhere'" (32); (2) "'He perpetrated a great crime; and his remorse, gnawing into his soul, has awakened it'" (329). The pantheon with its mute tribute to pagan gods (who were really demons as we know from Paradise Lost I, 361-352) and its heavenly aperture, contains within it the false gods of post-lapsarian man. Underneath the dome of St. Peter's itself, after her confession, Kenyon tells Hilda that the surrounding tombs might make a "'marble Eden'" (266) for delicate lovers, and it is there, in "The World's Cathedral," that Hilda finds a calm and sinless peace again. It is the world's cathedral but it becomes a place where she regains her spiritual strength.

The campagna into which Kenyon descends after the disappearance of Hilda is another significant place. At the excavation site he finds a beautiful but headless statue and replaces the head on the shoulders, effecting a transformation:

The effect was magical. It immediately lighted up and vivified the whole figure, endowing it with personality, soul, and intelligence. The beautiful Idea at once

asserted its immortality, and converted that heap of forlorn fragments into a whole, as perfect to the mind, if not to the eye, as when the new marble gleamed with snowy luster; nor was the impression marred by the earth that still hung upon the exquisitely graceful limbs, and even filled the lovely crevice of the lips. Kenyon cleared it away from between them, and almost deemed himself rewarded with a living smile....

Here, then was a treasure for the sculptor to have found! How happened it to be lying there, beside its grave of twenty centuries?....The world was richer than yesterday, by something far more precious than gold. Forgotten beauty had come back, as beautiful as ever; a goddess had risen from her long slumber, and was a goddess still. (304)

Kenyon is momentarily an agent of coherence, not only an ideal artist but an ideal appreciator of art. He "was endowed with an exceedingly quick sensibility, which was apt to give him intimations of the true state of matters that lay beyond his actual vision" (141). He is gifted, and if the statue falls apart again into "only a heap of worthless fragments" (305) it was still "the divine statue" (305) though incomparably weaker than Kenyon's love for Hilda which causes him to let it fall apart again.

The above scene is the preface to the carnival. Donatello (and the Orphic attached to him by implication) recapitulates human history as Christ recapitulated mortal life; relentless iteration of the story of the fall and redemption induce the reader to re-interpret even the most obvious symbols and events so as to extract a variety of meanings. Each aspect of the work is subject to several interpretations, all of which are valid and non-conflicting. A version of the significance of the Miriam-Donatello story occurs on the campagna; harbinger of that significance is

the buffalo calf, a part of the pre-lapsarian faun world still loose on the field. In the campagna Miriam tells a story which reveals yet another connection between Donatello and the model, and the story of her life. The more she explains, the greater the mystery. And we, of course, are not told all; "She went on to say," Hawthorne paraphrases for us, and thus we are left out of the direct explanation. She tells how she fled one criminal "and speedily created a new sphere, in which Hilda's gentle purity, the sculptor's sensibility, clear thought, and genius, and Donatello's genial simplicity had given her almost her first experience of happiness" (309) until the spectre found her again in the catacombs. He, the model and Capuchin, was, like Donatello after he killed him, overcome with remorse; but he was a very different figure, for he, unlike Donatello, was unable to resolve the remorse and instead found refuge in the artificial sanctity of a monastery, subject still to evil impulses which came upon him unawares and did so in the catacombs. We see from this story that the model, like Donatello, is a sinner but unable to find grace, no matter how hard he tries.

Donatello is arrested by the soldiers at the exact moment when Kenyon reestablishes connection with Hilda, "returned to the actual world" (324), "summoned forth from a secret place, and led we know not through what mysterious passages" (324). She stands on the balcony and "looked through the grotesque and gorgeous show, the chaos of mad

jollity, in quest of some object by which she might assure herself that the whole spectacle was not an illusion" (325). She and Kenyon have to go through the Dionysian chaos of the Carnival to find one another--"and there was Hilda, in whose gentle presence his own secret sorrow and the obtrusive uproar of the Carnival alike died away from his perception" (325). They are reconnected and she returns to her tower and the lamp is re-lit.

The narrator, so obtrusive and insistent yet never explicit, constantly seeks to show us the part each character plays in this world. The places which are associated with them--the three studios and the villa Monte Beni--are symbolic of their occupants. And the art which attaches itself to each of them also symbolizes their essential natures, otherwise so mysterious to even the most careful reader. Miriam, the Mannerist (a style she adopts after the spectre becomes her model) works from preconceived notions "rather than direct visual perceptions...deliberately flouting the 'Rules' deduced from classical art and established during the Renaissance."¹⁹ Her works therefore evince the primacy of the human figure (but distorted) and a use of vivid harsh color. "It is essentially an unquiet style, subjective and emotional,"²⁰ rebellious and legalistic, an art of the letter and not of the spirit.

Hilda, Rome's best copyist, loves Raphael the architect of St. Peter's whose Sistine Madonna is a super-human being. She regards herself as an amanuensis through

whom the great painters work again. She, like Kenyon, is aware that the present Rome in which they live is a wreck of rubble compared with its historical grandeur. Hawthorne too is aware of the disjunction between the seen (the scene) and the reminiscence or association. In the area near the Coliseum where the four friends go on a moonlight walk, the picturesque scene is "too distinctly visible," (116) Hawthorne tells us; "Byron's celebrated description is better than the reality" (116)--by analogy The Marble Faun is better than the faun of Praxiteles and the myth of the chasm of Curtius is better than the swamp it was invented to explain (the myth says that Curtius, in obedience to an oracle and to save his country leaped armed and on horseback into the chasm which suddenly opened in the Forum-- a myth both heroic and superstitious, but possessing a charm without which a swamp is only a swamp).²¹ Although Hilda and Miriam have differing versions of the nature of chasms, Kenyon is thrilled by the imaginative possibilities of the abyss (as Hawthorne obviously is). The Tarpeian Rock over whose rim traitors and murderers were thrown, and over which the model will be hurled by Donatello, overhangs this Forum. Its historic purpose will be revived within the poetic reality of the romance.

Other images are reiterated in The Marble Faun. The picture of the Archangel Michael trampling a demon (supposedly also by Guido Reni, the painter of the putative Beatrice Cenci) is found in the Church of the Capuchins

(to which order the model belongs). There is a mosaic copy of it in St. Peter's and a sketch for the painting--recognized only by Hilda--reveals that the demon looks exactly like Miriam's model. By a process of multiple reflection, that scene of virtue triumphant appears in one place where it seems to explain one meaning of the model's death (good triumphing over evil) and to be enshrined amidst the greatest works of Christian art as a mere artifact. The model, moreover, resembles the demon in the sketch, which looks merely a scribble save to the discerning eye of Hilda at the party of some unnamed aesthete in Rome--indicating that although evil may be perpetual, its discovery is ever possible to the true in heart.

Donatello's family which originated in Etruria in a sylvan epoch before the fall of Rome produced a pre-lapsarian wine, Sunshine, which cannot leave the estate. This wine is fraught with significance, not the least of which is that it has a fugitive charm (towards the end not quite so delicious as at the beginning). When Donatello returns with Kenyon to the ancient pool (a symbol of polluted innocence) on the grounds, he tells him, in "Myths," the story of the fall in his own familial terms. We find that indeed he is descended from a faun. Kenyon's voice, responding to Donatello's tale of bloodshed and lost power, modulates the horror of the story: "'We all of us, as we grow older...lose somewhat of our proximity to nature. It is the price we pay for experience'" (183). To which Donatello, with new-found insight

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answers, "'It is a grief, I presume, to all men, to find the pleasant privileges and properties of early life departing from them. That grief has now befallen me. Well, I shall waste no more tears for such a cause'" (183)-- and he never looks back again. Donatello, unlike the spectre, is not perpetually consumed with morbid remorse nor haunted by an unnatural need for penance or a vicious need to sin again. With this painful recognition of his lost innocence when the animals no longer respond to his voice, except to run from it, he turns his back on Monte Beni and goes out into the world in hopes of expiating by pilgrimage and charity the sin he has committed.

This turning his back on Monte Beni is another reminder of his resemblance to the hero of Paradise Regained. There in Book II, 253-264 Satan takes the Son of God on top of a mountain and offers him glory:

It was a Mountain at whose verdant feet
 a spacious plain outstretcht in circuit wide
 Lay pleasant; from his side two rivers flow'd,
 Th'one winding, th'other straight, and left between
 Fair Champaign with less rivers intervein'd,
 Then meeting join'd their tribute to the Sea:
 Fertile of corn the glebe, of oil and wine'
 With herds the pastures throng'd, with flocks the hills;
 Huge Cities and high tow'r'd, that well might seem
 The seats of mightiest Monarchs; and so large
 The Prospect was, that here and there was room
 For barren desert fountainless and dry.

The Son rejects this temptation as a man (and not because the world is his anyway). "All men are Sons of God," he tells Satan (PR, IV, 520) before going into the world to live out a life at once heroic and yet small compared to his eternal life. That mountain, as we shall see, strongly

resembles the tower in the Appenines where Donatello, and Kenyon with him, contemplates the world from an eminence so exalted that varying kinds of weather are apparent from its summit.

The four main characters in The Marble Faun, have, as we have said, great symbolic significance, not least as it is implied by where they live. Their places of residence become the external image of who they are. We must look closely at the studios of Kenyon, Hilda, Miriam and at the Villa Monte Beni of Donatello to understand how character emanates from the images presented there. Miriam's studio, the subject of Chapter V, is up a stair case from the courtyard of a palace. Amid the squalor of broken statues and "Bas-reliefs, the spoil of some far older palace...in the surrounding walls, every stone of which has been ravished from the Coliseum" (34) there is a fountain in the style of Bernini (a mannerist, like Miriam). The scene is one of pillage, rape, ruin, a weary re-building of used-up materials. But it is Bernini and the bas-reliefs, overcome by weeds, that "tell us that Nature takes the fountain back into her great heart" (35). The palace is now an apartment building, of sorts, inhabited by "people of every degree" (35) but utterly uncomfortable for all of them. This discomfiting image is appropriate residence for Miriam, suffering daughter of an outworn creed. In the "Alpine region, cold and naked in its aspect" (36) we, in the company of Donatello, visit Miriam, who is mending a glove as we enter.

As she sits there he looks at her and we are presented with an emblem of troubled woman. In the vignette we see her "busied with the feminine task of mending a pair of gloves." The moral, as the narrator moralizes the vignette for us, is

There is something extremely pleasant, and even touching...in this peculiarity of needlework, distinguishing women from men....A needle is familiar to the fingers of them all. A queen...the woman poet...the woman's eye that has discovered a new star....A vast deal of human sympathy runs along this electric line. ...Methinks it is a token of healthy and gentle characteristics when women of high thoughts and accomplishments love to sew; especially as they are never more at home with their own hearts than while so occupied. (36)

The action of the emblem follows: "And when the work falls in a woman's lap...and the needle...ceases to fly, it is a sign of trouble....This was what happened to Miriam...while Donatello stood gazing at her, she seemed to have forgotten his presence, allowing him to drop out of her thoughts, and the torn glove to fall from her idle fingers" (36-37).

She is worried woman, any woman, woman idealized as ordinary in the best sense and trying to understand her life; when she stops sewing "something was amiss" (37). This set piece --the action could have been related in a sentence--gives the reader a chance to see Miriam moralized as it were, without her mysterious aura of grief or rage. She is Every-woman, about to fall, again. The emblem--the vivid pictorial image of action with commentary--presented here gives us an opportunity to contemplate womanhood before the action presses irresistably onward.

Miriam's is, like all painters' studios, "one of those delightful spots that hardly seem to belong to the actual world, but rather to be the outward type of a poet's haunted imagination" (37), a Faerie Land of art, of a sort. Donatello, who cannot tell the difference between art and life, is frightened by a tragic figure in the corner, merely a mannequin. The mannequin is Miriam's other model, her tragic woman just as the spectre is her model. He examines Miriam's sketches of murderesses--"the idea of woman acting the part of a revengeful mischief towards man" (39)--with various implications, some only of murder, one of "love and endless remorse" (40). These, says Miriam, are the phantoms which haunt her. They are also, like the mannequin, Miriam herself, variously seen. There too are her domestic sketches which "intimated such a force and variety of imaginative sympathies as would enable Miriam to fill her life richly with the bliss and suffering of womanhood, however barren it might individually be" (41). But Miriam "relinquished, for her personal self, the happiness which she could so profoundly appreciate for others" (41). Miriam, the idealized Jewess and representative of the old dispensation is barren, a symbol of the fruitless bondage of an old and outworn spiritual life. There is also a figure in the sketches "always depicted with an expression of deep sadness" (41), a figure like Miriam's, looking at the scenes of domestic happiness from outside. Then, in the only head-on view we have of Miriam, we see her self-portrait as she shows it

to Donatello, a beautiful, Jewish, Judith-like woman: "we forbore to speak descriptively of Miriam's beauty earlier in our narrative, because we foresaw this occasion to bring it perhaps more forcibly before the reader" (43). Images presented obliquely are more powerful than those presented directly. Donatello's response to the portrait is enlightening. He is unhappy with it because of the sad expression; but he vows, after seeing it, that "'I must needs follow you'" (44). He is like the model, a specter to haunt her, with a family as old and illustrious but Orphic, like the faun of Paraxiteles whom Miriam explicitly reminds us that he resembles when she speaks of him as the Faun. Like that faun he has music about him but without any pipe; he dances a faun-like dance in her studio. Donatello is the model from another angle, thoughtless, passionate, devoted to Miriam, strange and mythic and unexplorable.

After Donatello leaves Miriam's studio, she leaves to go to Hilda's, "The Virgin's Shrine" and the subject of Chapter VI. Hilda too lives in a palace, but hers is older, with "a medieval tower, square, massive, lofty, and battlemented and machicolated at the summit" (45), guarded by "angelic or allegorical" (44) trumpeters. Up at the top is "a shrine of the Virgin...at a height above the ordinary level of men's views and aspirations" (45) where Hilda tends the lamp which must burn, according to an old legend, if the tower is to stand. Silver-winged doves guard the tower, fed by Hilda: they are Hilda's familiars just as she herself

is a familiar of the Holy Spirit they represent. She is the form of virtue--Miriam thinks "'how like a dove she is herself'" (45) and ascends to visit her by "a staircase which, for the loftiness of its aspiration, was worthy to be Jacob's ladder, or, at all events, the staircase of the Tower of Babel" (45). One type of aspiration is Hilda's, the other--vain ambition--has victimized Miriam. Antoninus's column shares that eminence with Hilda, far above "the tumult of the world" (46). She, like St. Paul, has the right attitude, and lives in the allegorical kingdom of God, even while she is in the world.

Miriam threatens Hilda with sainthood on this visit, but Hilda protests that she pays honor only "'to the idea of divine Womanhood'" (46). Her divinity, as a votary of divinity, is her safeguard in Rome. She seems to create pictures that make the spectator "to be looking at humanity with angels' eyes" (47). Artists call Hilda "the Dove" (48) for her mildness and holiness. She is a copyist; "the girl was but a finer instrument"; "she had been enabled to execute what the great master had conceived in his imagination, but had not so correctly succeeded in putting upon canvas" (50); she improves masterpieces and is "the best copyist in Rome" (50); "she wrought religiously, and therefore wrought a miracle" (51). Her art and life are both divinely inspired and influenced.

In this chapter she is unequivocally admired; we are told directly and explicitly of her beautiful nature, for

she is an exemplum, woman idealized. She is compared to the masterpieces she copies. "She chose the better and loftier and more unselfish part, laying her individual hopes, her fame, her prospects of enduring remembrance, at the feet of those great departed ones, whom she so loved and venerated; and therefore the world was the richer for this feeble girl" (51). She, too, is like the Son in Paradise Regained, for she rejects glory, fame, and even learning to live through her own understanding of the right way. In an explicit image of Hilda--which we are called upon to contemplate as well as to emulate--Hawthorne connects the faculty for appreciating art with the capacity for personal aspiration--"Hilda's faculty of genuine admiration is one of the rarest to be found in human nature; and let us try to recompense her in kind by admiring her generous self-surrender, and her brave, humble magnanimity in choosing to be the handmaid of those old magicians, instead of a minor enchantress within a circle of her own" (51). Like the Son, she is magnanimous in the Aristotelian sense. While she is in her studio we see nothing else, for she shines with virtue, a holy center in the room. We are asked to venerate her as she reveres Raphael; and perhaps we are also implicitly urged to copy her example.

As Donatello was the Faun to Miriam--a pre-lapsarian figure whom she, with her bitter and desperate knowledge of good and evil can love, but not take seriously--so in Chapter VII, "Beatrice," Hilda is "the Dove" (52). Again,

this is not mere simile but allegory--she is the Dove, not like it. She lives "in her turret home" (52), venturing out to "haunt the galleries till dusk" (52) like a spirit from another world. She is the Virgil of the galleries--the perfect guide through the masterpieces, and herself a worthy subject for art. Even in the flesh there is that about her which makes "her appear like an inhabitant of picture land, a partly ideal creature, not to be handled, nor even approached too closely" (53). Like God himself she is approachable but unattainable. Her greatest work is her copy of the Beatrice Cenci of Guido which she has memorized, "'photographed'" (54) in her heart. Hilda sees the Cenci as "'a fallen angle--fallen, and yet sinless'" (54)--she is what Hilda will become after witnessing the murder. Christ-like she will descend and suffer for the sins of others and survive the pain and hardship of a world she is hardly part of.

Miriam leaves with her a packet to be delivered to the Cenci Palace in four months unless Miriam tells her otherwise. Hilda is an ideal medium for Miriam as for art --"'Guido wrought through me'" (56) she says, disclaiming credit in connection with her perfect copy of his "Beatrice." She is the medium for Miriam's errand--incorruptable and therefore in a sense transparent--and the medium through which we understand the impact of murder on an innocent but developed human soul. Hilda is us idealized, just as Donatello is us historicized. Even after she has witnessed

the murder, Hilda remains unpolluted: "bad as the world is said to have grown, innocence continues to make a paradise around itself, and keep it still unfallen" (279). She walks untouched through the worst most hellish part of Rome to the Palazzo Cenci. It is a wasteland onto which she steps, a moral plain where we cannot but feel the threat of evil influences impinging on the places where she must step. It is the Ghetto, the place where Jews, still suffering under the old law, are walled in, "the foulest and ugliest part of Rome"--the unredeemed moral space containing unregenerate human history, a place of the damned:

Hilda passed on the borders of this region, but had no occasion to step within it. Its neighborhood, however, naturally partook of characteristics like its own. There was a confusion of black and hideous houses, piled massively out of the ruins of former ages, rude and destitute of plan, as a pauper would build in his hovel, and yet displaying here and there an arched gateway, a cornice, a pillar, or a broken arcade that might have adorned a palace. Many of the houses, indeed, as they stood, might once have been palaces, and possessed still a squalid kind of grandeur. Dirt was everywhere, strewn the narrow streets, and incrusting the tall shabbiness of the edifices, from the foundations to the roofs; 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. Their father was the sun, and their mother--a heap of Roman mud. (279)

This old, dirty, destitute world Hilda has nothing to do with. The chaos and ruin, poverty and squalor, the decaying grandeur which still, without a spark of divinity, seems to reproduce if but the semblance of humanity--these are horrible to us, but Hilda is impervious to the scene. Unlike us, she is perfect and therefore in no danger.

Because Hilda is modern man idealized, she is also the medium between this world and Providence and therefore cannot be "approached too closely." When we are with Miriam in Hilda's studio we are not allowed to look around. The tyranny of the narrative draws our attention only to what Miriam sees and says. Our attention is not allowed to wander, so that although we have been given the minutest description of the location of Hilda's tower in the Via Portoghese, once we enter our gaze is averted from the outward maiden herself. We see her in portrait (as we did Miriam) but not in the flesh although her presence irradiates the scene. We are told her inward attributes but not what she looks like. But after "the mask in which love and death had performed their several parts" (286), Miriam sends Kenyon to Hilda's tower; he goes there and we see her tower first, and then her rooms, made ordinary by her absence, but still imbued with her presence:

...the old palace stood before him, with its massive tower rising into the clouded night; obscured from view at its midmost elevation, but revealed again, higher upward, by the Virgin's lamp that twinkled on the summit. Feeble as it was, in the broad, surrounding gloom, that little ray made no inconsiderable illumination among Kenyon's somber thoughts; for...a fantasy had seized him that he should find the sacred lamp extinguished.

And, even while he stood gazing, as a mariner at the star in which he put his trust, the light quivered, sank, gleamed up again, and finally went out, leaving the battlements of Hilda's tower in utter darkness. For the first time in centuries, the consecrated and legendary flame, before the loftiest shrine in Rome, had ceased to burn. (286-287)

The chapter goes out with the light. The romance, like the tower, still stands, however; the tower, which we are

about to see the inside of for the first time, is a sacred place with which we may become familiar only after it is no longer inhabited. Hilda's presence alone sanctified it, not the light itself. When she leaves it still stands because her faith is unshaken. The world of nature and the world of judgment come together to create that moment when divinity manifests itself. As in Paradise Regained, when the Son stands in mid-air off the tower, Hilda's tower stands in mid-air against all the laws of tradition. And Kenyon, the ordinary but idealized man of our own world, is the witness to this miracle.

We stand there with him and like him, we can scarcely believe our eyes. "The Deserted Shrine," subject of Chapter XLIV, is about Hilda's studio without her. Kenyon asks a passer-by for confirmation of what he has seen; the frightened superstitious man articulates the ordinary fear that misfortune will follow the extinction of the lamp. The blessing and the light are one to the materialist. But we can see, or rather we are being made to realize, that the Virgin's blessing on the Palazzo del Torre is separate from the light itself; grace is an invisible force. Although the entire building seems deserted and the doves themselves are despondent, the building stands the next day when Kenyon visits it again. He gains access to her empty room (she has been gone three days), "the daily haunt of a pure soul, in whom religion and the love of beauty were at one" (291). Her snowy bed, "this cool, airy, and secluded bower" (291),

make him acutely conscious of her absence. He finds his own bouquet of flowers at the shrine of the Virgin, for to Hilda all love is one. Hilda will return once before descending to become a bride; her faith transcends her act of devotion and she carries it into the ordinary domestic life she embarks upon, a life that, with children and daily life in America, connects her to us, to the reader in the present.

Kenyon is the ordinary man of this allegorical romance. His own studio is "A Sculptor's" (idealized rather than particularized, that is). Miriam, lost soul, visits him there in the hopes of confidence. "Standing on the utmost verge of that dark chasm" (88) which separates her from her friends she cannot break through her own isolation and something in her manner warns him away. Hilda's is a "remote and shy divinity" (94), but Miriam's is "an infinite, shivering solitude" (88). Kenyon, the ordinary man (though a genius and an artist) whose life intersects those of the other three characters, gives us an idea of the way in which an ordinary man can live among the sacred and the profane without being either. He lives in Canova's old rooms amid works of his own conception but of others' manufacture. His studio houses a prodigious collection of statuary. Like the other characters he is "worthy subject for as good an artist as himself" (90) (and of course in The Marble Faun he is the subject of another genius and an artist). More than an educated man, though he is that, he

is a sympathetic spectator and an ideal reader. In his studio there is a symbol of his attainment, his gifts, his inspiration and, implicitly, Hawthorne's model:

a grand, calm head of Milton, not copied from any one bust or picture, yet more authentic than any of them, because all known representations of the poet had been profoundly studied, and solved in the artist's mind. The bust over the tomb in Grey Friars Church, the original miniatures and pictures, wherever to be found, had mingled each its special truth in this one work; wherein, likewise, by long perusal and deep love of the "Paradise Lost," the "Comus," the "Lycidas," and "L'Allegro," the sculptor had succeeded, even better than he knew, in spiritualizing his marble with the poet's mighty genius. And this was a great thing to have achieved, such a length of time after the dry bones and dust of Milton were like those of any other dead man.
(91)

Kenyon's Milton is original, an aesthetic resolution of all other representations as well as a marmoreal contemplation of the poet. Neither Paradise Regained nor Il Penseroso is mentioned as having been either loved or perused by the sculptor, perhaps because those two works are incorporated in The Marble Faun itself rather than in the bust of Milton. They are companion pieces to the romance, which seems a contemplation from a "high and lonely Tower."

Paradise Regained has already been mentioned as an influence on The Marble Faun, but a re-reading of Il Penseroso in this connection is also fruitful. Donatello gives up the "vain deluding joys" of his Sylvan existence for a "peaceful hermitage" and "Mossy Cell" underground. He takes up the contemplation of life, a task, after his recapitulation of the fall, for which he is eminently fitted. Hilda is

like the "pensive Nun, devout and pure, Sober, steadfast, and demure." Kenyon walks in "arched walks of twilight groves" at Monte Beni--where the nymphs are undaunted by the sound of axes: "It had just that rarest quality of remoteness from the actual and ordinary world...even Donatello's grief and Kenyon's pale, sunless affection lent a charm to Monte Beni, which it would not have retained amid a more abundant joyousness...the shade of pensive beauty" (201) it has for him is the post-lapsarian loveliness of contemplation--God is still in the world. Kenyon is far away from "the domain of chaos" (193) at Monte Beni and to him it seems a fresh world, a world that is, still imbued with possibility of life.

Melancholy may be said to be the patron saint of The Marble Faun--the dark-clad eminence "whose saintly visage is too bright/To hit the Sense of human sight" but who is heard in the narrative's tone of high seriousness. The spirit of Melancholy is urged:

Come...with ev'n step, and musing gait,
And looks commercing with the skies
Forget thyself to Marble, till
Thou fix them on the earth as fast. (37-43 Pens.)

This gazing between heaven and earth is the point of view implicit in The Marble Faun--the romance is the middle point between heaven and earth. This, Hawthorne's last complete romance, marks the end of his contemplation of life and of the questions of good and evil which haunted him throughout his life. It is what Frye calls the "penserose phase"²²

of the collected works where the substance of the work is from contemplative towers and the active adventure--the murder--is the given in the work, and not the main event. The main event is the contemplation of the moral life, and in Kenyon's studio we pause with Miriam to contemplate the greatest contemplator of the moral life. If the portrait of "Beatrice" inspired Hilda and in some way lies behind the romance, we are meant to regard these works of art--the bust of Milton and the bust of Donatello as well as the marble faun of Praxiteles--as the inspiration for The Marble Faun, as Beatrice was to Dante, the inarticulate but significant presences in the work.

The other two objects in Kenyon's studio which are of interest to us are the marble hand of Hilda--symbol of that which Kenyon hopes to win--and the statue of Cleopatra in clay. The queen as portrayed by Kenyon is the embodiment of wickedness, "implacable as a stone and cruel as fire" (97), "fierce, voluptuous, passionate, tender, wicked, terrible, and full of poisonous and rapturous enchantment" (97). The statue is, to Miriam, of a marvelous "'womanhood'" (97) and when she sees it she longs to confide in Kenyon, but the moment passes; he is not in accord with her confiding mood. Miriam recognizes in the Cleopatra the potential for evil in herself. Her own passionate nature responds to the violence in the clay figure. She leaves with her secret and we only see Kenyon's studio in the narrator's anecdote of the provenance of The Marble Faun.

When Kenyon goes with Donatello to his ancestral home, the Villa Monte Beni, we see the fourth house in the romance, and one as indicative of the symbolic significance of the character who resides there as the studios were. Chapter XXIV, "The Tower Among the Apennines," initiates the center of the book, the part concerned with the Villa which continues through Chapter XXXI. This tower in the mountains is a place apart from Rome, from history and from art. It is in the midst of unspoiled nature but not of nature. It is the place from which Donatello contemplates the murder and what he has become through it. It is the place where he confronts the old myths connected with his family for the last time and from which he leaves to go out into the world hoping for salvation. He leaves to perform his acts of charity on the way to Perugia: "'a religious act...has more than the efficacy of a prayer'" (292) the Roman matron tells Kenyon (and this is implicitly confirmed by Hilda's devotion in her tower, and also denied by the grace which accrues to her when she deserts her post). The tower has been a place of morbid contemplation. He must go out into the world, leaving his lost paradise behind him, decaying, mysterious and strangely horrible. But that is because Donatello is a sinner. The tower is different things to Kenyon.

The remote Tuscan castle--"Thither we must now accompany him, and endeavor to make our story flow onward, like a streamlet, past a gray tower that rises on the hillside,

overlooking a spacious valley, which is set in the grand framework of the Apennines" (157)--is where Kenyon goes to find Donatello, and where, according to this strange metaphor, the romance flows too, but bypassing the tower, like a stream, part of a grander design than the castle itself, part of the world which we will contemplate from Monte Beni. This moss-grown square tower with its machicolated summit presents a belligerent aspect to the visiting sculptor. The more modern residence and the chapel alike yield no answer to his knock, until the Count himself "leaning from an embrasure of the battlements, and gazing down at him... flinging down his voice out of the clouds, as it were" (159) promises to come down himself. Even his greeting is a reenactment of the crime, and Kenyon recognizes "that this was not the young friend...not the sylvan and untutored youth... whose identity they had so playfully mixed up with that of the Faun of Praxiteles" (160). He is *Il Penseroso* himself: "His very gait showed...a certain gravity, a weight and measure of step, that had nothing in common with the irregular buoyancy which used to distinguish him" (160) (cf. the "ev'n step, and musing gait" of *Melancholy* in Milton's poem). To Kenyon the tower is like an illuminated letter: "'Its tall front is like a page of black letter, taken from the history of the Italian republics'" (16); he is aware of history, and therefore bloodshed, from the moment he arrives. Donatello evinces "repugnance...at the idea of this gloomy staircase and these ghostly, dimly lighted rooms" (160)

where he watches every night, but they are his daily haunts.

Kenyon had expected to find "'a sort of Arcadian life'" (161), but the Count tells him, tritely, Kenyon thinks, that "'I am not a boy now. Time flies over us, but leaves its shadow behind'" (161)--an observation which strikes the reader as not trite but simple and profound. The whole of The Marble Faun has been tending towards this observation, that the shadows of Time hover over the innocent, the guilty, that Rome itself is history, an enchanted place where the shadows of Time are embodied in stone and picture--and only the artist (Byron, Milton, Hawthorne) escapes time and contingency by writing about them.

The entrance hall of the castle itself is like "an Etruscan tomb" (162), reminding the romantic sculptor "of the hundred rooms of Bluebeard's castle, or the countless halls in some palace of the Arabian Nights" (162), places, indeed, where the threat of death hangs heavily over the residents. Chapter XXV, "Sunshine," concerns the wine of Monte Beni, symbolic of the race which once dwelt in this Paradise, and symbolic too of Donatello himself. Donatello tells the sculptor of the happy forefathers who used to live there--"'I am the last'" (162) (but the last, in his case, shall be first, for he alone of his race finds peace). The reason for the extinction of the line is that with Donatello the race of old Adam dies out, and he goes underground with the hope of salvation secured. The race of the new Adam continues through Hilda in her union with Kenyon.

Kenyon and Donatello drink Sunshine, onto which so much symbolic significance is heaped. Kenyon says of it, "'The flavor must be rare, indeed, if it fulfill the promise of this fragrance, which is like the airy sweetness of youthful hopes, that no realities will ever satisfy!'" (164); "to drink it was really more a moral than a physical enjoyment'" (164). "'This is surely the wine of the Golden Age,'" (164) says Kenyon, but as Donatello tells him, once uncorked, the wine rapidly declines in flavor. It cannot leave the grounds and even there it weakens. Kenyon looks about him at the dining saloon with its Arcadian frescoes--the only Arcadia at Monte Beni is ephrastic (only art fulfills hopes). But "the figures showed like the ghosts of dead and buried joys--the closer their resemblance to the happy past, the gloomier now" (166). The sculptor suggests that the room be converted "'into a chapel; and when the priest tellshis hearers of the instability of earthly joys, and would show how drearily they vanish, he may point to these pictures, that were so joyous and are so dismal'" (166). Donatello instantly acquiescing, suggests seriously that an altar be situated there--"'A sinful man might do all the more effective penance in this old banquet hall'" (167). Donatello has a morbid consciousness of sin, Kenyon a healthy consciousness of mutability.

Kenyon is appalled at the change which has come over his friend. When Donatello follows with his gaze one of the figures on the wall, "the principal link of an allegory,

by which...the whole series of frescoes were bound together, but which it would be impossible, or, at least, very wearisome, to unravel" (167). The figure resembles Donatello, last of the Monte Benis, the link and resolution of the others' history. Donatello also resembles the old chapel at Monte Beni, "one among the numerous apartments; though as it often happens that the door is permanently closed, the key lost, and the place left to itself, in dusty sanctity, like that chamber in man's heart where he hides his religious awe" (202). Donatello's heart--where the holy water has turned to mud--is still like the incorruptible marmoreal chapel, a vessel for grace. In that room Kenyon and Miriam --those who love Donatello--meet. With the ordinary eyes of an ordinary man, Kenyon marvels at the subjection into which Miriam has thrown herself, with regard to Donatello. And with the same ordinary (i.e., typical, commonplace or accessible to all) perception, he divines Hilda's marmoreal purity and perfect judgement in matters of right and wrong, telling Miriam, with regard to the rift between the two women since the murder that Hilda "'was right...the white shining purity of Hilda's nature is a thing apart; and she is bound, by the undefiled material of which God molded her, to keep that severity which I, as well as you, have recognized'" (209); the standard in The Marble Faun is of marmoreal indestructibility; the romance is a severe portrait of human life illuminated nonetheless by an idea of mercy and grace which transcends even that severity.

An image of the intractability of life and art and the frustrations which beset genius is the bust of Donatello. Even Kenyon's "acuteness and his sympathies... were both somewhat at fault in their efforts to enlighten him as to the moral phase through which the Count was now passing" (197), and he is unable to capture the man in the sculpture. Only when the sculpture gives up any "preconceptions about the character of his subject, and let his hand work uncontrolled" (198) does the more accurate representation emerge, "combining animal fierceness with intelligent hatred" (198) in the first version, remorseful and gloomy Donatello. Before they leave the room, Kenyon hastily wipes away the rage on the face of the bust, and it attains "a higher and sweeter expression than it had hitherto worn" (199), and we know that Donatello has inexplicably found the grace he has sought.

Walking alone at Monte Beni, Kenyon comes upon a scene which symbolizes what Donatello may hope for. At the sight of a contadino trampling Donatello's grapes, he pauses: "here, then, was the very process that shows so picturesquely in Scripture and in poetry, of treading out the wine press and dyeing the feet and garments with the crimson effusion as with the blood of a battlefield" (200). This scene, analogous to the one celebrated in "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," reminds the reader that Donatello lives under a new dispensation. God's mercy will descend on the faun, for the grapes of wrath have been trampled

down. As Kenyon strolls around the vineyards, orchards, shrubs and hills, he is a kind of pilgrim, "an adventurer who should find his way to the site of ancient Eden, and behold its loveliness through the transparency of that gloom which has been brooding over those haunts of innocence every since the fall. Adam saw it in a brighter sunshine, but never knew the shade of pensive beauty which Eden won from his expulsion" (201). This is not "an" Eden of analogy, it is the very one, the Eden of Allegory, of Monte Beni allegorized as Eden. And "in the decline of the afternoon" (201), in very truth the afternoon of our faun, Kenyon contemplates the fallen world; he is pensive but pensive as only an artist can be, seeing everything in "a dim religious light" as Milton and Hawthorne see, an artist beyond time and circumstance vouchsafed a vision of the world after paradise lost when God's transparent gloom-- a darkness pervious to light--ponders the place to which innocence always returns: the quality of the light betokens the presence of God, a presence toneless, valueless (in terms of being both light and dark) and total, a presence in which opposites (light and dark, innocence and experience) are reconciled. This is Kenyon's epiphany.

Kenyon is our man in the romance. He has perfect ability to recognize divinity in Hilda without the rigidity which might make him reject the darker nature of Miriam with her "natural uprightness" (156) and her obscure secret. He regrets the change in Donatello and also rejoices in it;

he has the ability to understand the value of the world as it is. Even when he tries out the idea of the fortunate fall on Hilda at the end, he does not himself believe it. His previous responses to the other characters have shown us that he, a pilgrim pricking on the plain (not just the "aimless journeyings" [211] he shares with Donatello, but his own sojourn in Rome as well) can, if he trust in God and have Hilda as his guide, find out the nature of things (the end of art). We know this from his bust of Donatello, unfinished, but a perfect expression of a changing nature, and obtained only when the hands that sculpted them were allowed to go their own way. He appreciates the post-lapsarian world, the penseroso world of Monte Beni, but he does not rejoice in it. In this, Hawthorne's greatest work, we are made aware of a great acceptance of the world as it is which we feel, but more dimly, in the preceding romances. The overwhelming beauty of lost paradise, and of the world outside it (Rome and the history which fills and crumbles there), becomes in The Marble Faun part of an affirmation of life, and also a glimpse of another, better world beyond, giving us a transcendent vision of life-- of this life and of the life we glimpse beyond it (through history and art and the perfect character of Hilda).

The "Myths" of Chapter XXVII are exploded in The Marble Faun, a work which creates its own myths even as it shows a modern version of some old ones. Donatello tells Kenyon of the story of his ancestor and the nymph who

spurned him after he planted a bloodstained kiss on her brow. With the voice "of the natural man" (181) the Count calls to the woodland creatures but they run away, all except a lizard, "venomous reptile" (182) alone not afraid of the scent of death. After this joint experience of the consequences of the murder, interpreted differently by Kenyon, as the price of experience, the friends separate. Donatello ascends his tower; Kenyon reads Dante. Both are aspects of the contemplative life, but Donatello is brooding from a six-hundred-year-old tower and Kenyon is, through an equally old book, having "all Heav'n before" his eyes, a true Penseroso. When Kenyon is allowed to ascend "The Owl Tower" with his friend they are securely in an allegorical tower, once visited by a necromancer who said the place was fit subject for poetry (which it becomes in The Marble Faun). The sculptor analogizes for us the lonely summit of the tower "'with its difficult steps, and the dark prison cells you speak of, your tower resembles the spiritual experience of many a sinful soul, which, nevertheless, may struggle upward into the pure air and light of Heaven at last!'" (185). Kenyon has faith and hope; he is fit mate for Hilda who sees sunlight on the mountaintops even after she has witnessed a murder. He is also fit companion for the remorseful count, and stays with him "Till old experience do attain/To something like Prophetic strain" and Donatello is at peace with himself.

They ascend to the tower, "traversed the great

wilderness of a house through some obscure passages, and came to a low, ancient doorway" (185), the end of a labyrinthine journey. Donatello's bedchamber, behind the worm-eaten oak door, is simple but full of religious objects--crucifix, holy water, prints, emblems and a skull supposedly a copy in marble of that of the first faun to shed blood (an objet d'art on the theme "memento mori" more moving than mere bone). Ascending to the summit, the men see the trinkets replaced by a vista of all Italy, "and lakes opened their blue eyes in its face, reflecting heaven, lest mortals should forget that better land when they beheld the earth so beautiful" (188). Like the "Fair Champaign" of Paradise Regained, III, the vista is a microcosm, with varied weather, town and country, of the world we have seen up close until now. Old cities, "varieties of weather," (188), "this majestic landscape" (188) brings from Kenyon an exclamation of joy at the world in all its variety and beauty.

"Thank God for letting me again behold this scene!" said the sculptor, a devout man in his way, reverently taking off his hat. "I have viewed it from many points, and never without as full a sensation of gratitude as my heart seems capable of feeling. How it strengthens the poor human spirits 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!" (188)

Kenyon's affirmation of faith precedes Donatello's reenactment of his crime, when he throws the worm which has eaten the shrub off the battlements. Kenyon has remarked

that "'The shrub has its moral, or it would have perished long ago. And, no doubt, it is for your use and edification, since you have had it before your eyes all your lifetime, and now are moved to ask what may be its lesson'" (189). When the Count throws the worm over the side, saying "'it teaches me nothing'" (189), we realize that in destroying the model he has also destroyed evil, but that in killing the creature he has committed murder. Instantly Donatello is suddenly able to empathize with the horror of being thrown over a precipice; then, in an access of morbidity, he longs to throw himself over it. He is fighting despair, and the narrator pities him: "how ill-prepared he stood, on this old battlefield of the world, to fight with such an inevitable foe as mortal calamity, and sin for its stronger ally" (191-192). Now, in the ever-shifting romance perspective of the work he is Everyman in his mortal sin struggling against the consequences of sin, despair.

Kenyon realizes "the Faun had found a soul, and was struggling with it towards the light of heaven" (196). At that moment they hear the voice of Miriam singing-- "more is meant than meets the ear" in her song, and the auditors are puzzled as the voice ascends the summit and emotion peaks in the romance, for all the anguish in the work comes together before breaking and leaving Donatello purged of his suffering. Both men weep at the song without words, although the penitent Count says he dares not receive the message in the song, he has received it anyway. This song

of bewilderment and pathos, an expression of anguish, initiates Donatello's recovery from his sin; with its dying fall he begins to join the saved human race.

Of all the early chapters, Chapter XV, "An Aesthetic Company," contains the seeds of the aesthetic and moral concerns of the romance. The artists and Donatello meet in a faded palace for a weekly reception of artists (cf. Gloriani's garden in The Ambassadors). Hawthorne expatiates on Rome, "their ideal home" with "its enchanted air" (100) and a place where artists are free and at home. Rome, the enigmatic center at the heart of The Marble Faun, allows the aesthetic company to find one another and at the same time nearly ruins them as artists. Hawthorne talks of artists he has known in Rome but creates for us the ideal sculptor (our own Kenyon, as it turns out) and not one of those under discussion at the moment, although he is portrayed in detail later in the book:

A sculptor, indeed, to meet the demands which our preconceptions make upon him, should be even more indispensably a poet than those who deal in measured verse and rhyme. His material, or instrument, which serves him in the stead of shifting and transitory language, is a pure, white, undecaying substance. It insures immortality on whatever is wrought in it, and therefore makes it a religious obligation to commit no idea to its mighty guardianship, save such as may repay the marble for its faithful care, its incorruptible fidelity, by warming it with an ethereal life. Under this aspect, marble assumes a sacred character; and no man should dare to touch it unless he feels within himself a certain consecration and a priesthood, the only evidence of which, for the public eye, will be the high treatment of heroic subjects, or the delicate evolution of spiritual, through material beauty. (103)

This is not only Kenyon but also Hawthorne, whose faithfulness

to materials and to the treatment of heroic subjects and the delicate evolution of spiritual through material beauty is The Marble Faun, a sacred work which relies not only on words but on images, on making concrete that which is spiritual, in grasping from shifting language the permanence of images which coalesce and remain after language--narrative, which moves in time, as it does past the tower in the Apennines--goes on, leaving them behind.

At that aesthetic party, an event of moment occurs: in a collection of objets d'art which the host has strewn carefully about the room, Hilda finds the sketch, in Guido's own hand, of "the picture of the Archangel Michael setting his foot upon the demon, in the Church of the Cappuccini" (106). The demon who resembles "'Cardinal Pamphili'" (106) in the original, resembles Miriam's model in the sketch--"the utmost of sin and misery" (107) manifest to Guido as also to Miriam, who refuses to acknowledge the resemblance (this is a decision which ties her still more firmly to the old law, for she assumes that her antipathy to the creature is her own, and not that evil is at large in the world and may be vanquished by one stronger than she who has been sent to deliver her). They leave the party to ramble through Rome and the model is killed. That sketch which Hilda sees through at once is like the obscurity of Rome itself, which she alone penetrates thoroughly and safely.

The ultimate symbolic edifice in Rome itself is the

Pantheon, "almost at the central point of the labyrinthine intricacies of the modern city" (326), "The city of all time, and of all the world" (86). Like the presence of God, it has a way of appearing, manifesting itself when it is not sought; it is unique and Hilda goes there to visit the tomb of Raphael. She goes there at last with Kenyon. To him it is "'heathenish...so unlike all the snugness of our modern civilization" (327); but to Hilda it is a way to see angels and focus on the sunlight. Yet the Pantheon is also the place where the normal world of our own time and space reestablishes itself, where "we ourselves" (327) have gone. As Kenyon asks Hilda to kneel under the central aperture, Hilda looks and sees Miriam there. In the Pantheon underneath the aperture, with an unobstructed view of Heaven, Miriam is mute--the old law silenced but as the blessing shows able to invoke divine favor for those whom life is truly full of "human promise" (330). They do not speak to her but after the question of Donatello's fall has been raised, by Kenyon, and after Hilda has stated her faith, the veiled figure blesses them, and at the same time repels them from her.

Hilda and Kenyon marry and return to the New World. They take with them Miriam's gift, the circle of seven Etruscan gems, a bracelet which is also "the connecting bond of a series of seven wondrous tales" (330) gloomy as the sepulchers they were dug out of. That bracelet brings tears to Hilda's eyes, but she also sees beyond those seven

sepulchers, for "Hilda has a hopeful soul, and saw sunlight on the mountaintops" (330). Thus ends Hawthorne's great romance of sin and redemption--with the image of death undone, catastrophe transformed into artifact and with, implicitly, the image of empty tombs and thus of the one empty tomb, harbinger, of eternal sunlight, which is the source of Hilda's perfect hope.

CHAPTER IV

NOTES

¹Jean Normand, Nathaniel Hawthorne: An Approach to an Analysis of Artistic Creation (Cleveland: The Press of Case Western Reserve Univ., 1970), p. 350.

²Frederick Crews, The Sins of the Fathers (New York: Oxford Press, 1966), p. 154.

³Henry James, "Hawthorne," p. 547. This is the name given to The Marble Faun by its British publisher but not favored by Hawthorne.

⁴Ibid., pp. 555-556.

⁵Ibid., p. 552.

⁶E. H. Gombrich, "Aims and Limits of Iconology," in Symbolic Images. (London: Phaidon Press, 1972), p. 2.

⁷Murray Krieger, in his "Afterword" to the most commonly used edition of The Marble Faun (the one used in this dissertation) is a prime example of misreading despite, the best will in the world. He speaks of Hawthorne's "uncertainty," Hilda as "an intolerably pallid New England version of a human being" (335), of the "unresolved double vision in the Notebooks" (338) (as if only the monolithic is acceptable to the tidy reader and observer), of Hawthorne's "great...dependence on relatively unaltered materials from life" (330), of "The failings of The Marble Faun...they occur because Hawthorne tries to ground his "lunar" elements in the precise and detailed realities provided by his Notebooks" (340). In a triumph of dialectical engineering over critical understanding, he wonders "whether the aesthetic difficulties we have seen him fall prey to in the novel are not the reverse side of the moral perplexities and indecisiveness we have seen him fall prey to in Italy. Could it not be that his inability to choose consistently between actuality and symbolic overlay [whatever that is] or to synthesize them into his 'neutral' realm of romance is a reflection of his inability to choose consistently between the inhuman austerity of New England moralism and the all-too-human license of aged Italian aestheticism or to

synthesize these?" (pp. 341-342). His penultimate observation--"Of course, all the awarenenses that are loosed in the novel have not yet achieved their total fusion in it and often seem rather to be mutual blockages" (346)--is worthy, and typical, of the friendly critics Hawthorne has so often been afflicted with.

⁸James, p. 552.

⁹I am indebted, for these ideas, to the chapter "Odysseus' Scar" in Mimesis, by Eric Auerbach, Princeton Univ. Press, 1953).

¹⁰Ibid., p. 15.

¹¹Ibid., p. 22.

¹²Ibid., pp. 22-23.

¹³Penguin Dictionary of Art.

¹⁴For a twentieth-century view of this famous painting, we can look to Mario Praz: "Of the fascination it exerted on Shelley, Dickens and Melvill he says "To such an extent were the Romantics able to clothe with their dark imaginings even the most innocent and positively stupid facial expressions: they tried with the so-called Beatrice Cenci of Guido Reni, and they succeeded fully with Leonardo's Gioconda." (The Hero in Eclipse, Oxford, 1969), p. 449. This observation reminds us, bad temper aside, that the Guido, like the Leonardo, has an unknown as well as for some an unforgettable subject--a final triumph of art over history.

¹⁵Lionel Trilling, "Hawthorne in Our Time," p. 199.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 200.

¹⁷Penguin Dictionary of Art and Artists.

¹⁸Oxford Classical Dictionary.

¹⁹Penguin Dictionary of Art and Artists.

²⁰Idem.

²¹Oxford Classical Dictionary.

²²Frye, p. 202.

CONCLUSION

In the four romances we have just discussed, Hawthorne achieved masterly depiction of what we may call the tacit dimension of life. By his use of images at once obvious and mysterious he conveys a vision of the world, a world in which what is unspoken but understood is more important than what is said. Characters different only in degree from ourselves act in recognizable ways enhanced by the enlargement of romance heroism. Hawthorne's genius for finding the images to correspond to the emotions and inner experiences in each romance gives us four works unparalleled in American fiction.

The tacit in these works--the unspoken, implied and symbolically indicated elements--offers demonstrations of the ways in which we know (about ourselves, about each other, about life, about God's presence in the universe) but cannot speak what we know. The universal poignancy of the emotions of love, hate, anger, and fear which are depicted obliquely in the fiction is heightened by the use of symbols and images: the scarlet letter, the House of the Seven Gables and its portrait and garden, Blithedale, Zenobia's flower, the marble faun, the towers, cathedrals and Pantheon. Despite Hawthorne's reputation as an intrusive narrator, he is ultimately taciturn, and highly

pictorial. Habitually silent, he talks about the action in front of us while silently indicating by some mute image a further significance present in a situation.

If to Poe secrets and mysteries were decipherable, and if to Melville they remained obstinately impenetrable, in Hawthorne we find neither a rationalist-materialist view of mystery nor a mystical one. Rather, Hawthorne indicates in these four romances that life has its secrets which are accessible to all of us, but which we may not violate. Thus the secret nature of love, which we come to understand in its multifarious manifestations in The Scarlet Letter, is never infringed on explicitly. We see the ways in which Hester, Dimmesdale, Chillingworth and Pearl love one another and the peculiar signs of that love--including implicit and explicit threats as well as covert and unexpressed adoration. But the silent essence of that love is never violated by straightforward explanation of it. Many other things are explained but not the love itself. Pearl, like Una, manages somehow to free her parents from their terrible curse; her kiss breaks the spell that holds Dimmesdale to his hypocrisy and to life itself and reunites the three of them. But we are never told that she loves them, although we know it. We know of her love for them by the way she fixes on the letter and worries it, trying to tease it into submission. In the end it remains intractable, but we have seen its importance to her, and we have understood how all that the letter implies is part of Pearl's love.

In The House of the Seven Gables, the house itself is the implicit dimension of family life. Those who live there never tell--not even to each other--what they know, either about the family as it really is, or about their own natures. Yet we come to know those secrets as we see how the house is, whom it resembles, whom it responds to and how the house, the garden, the chair, the portrait, the chickens and the cat are. Without any infringement on the inner natures of Hepzibah, Clifford, Phoebe or Holgrave, we come to understand their secrets: Hepzibah, outside so rusty, inside so noble and brave; Clifford, his wasted beauty and derelict sensuality concealing a sensitive aesthete with the highest ideals; Phoebe, her commonsensical competence an aspect of her perfect innocence and benignity; Holgrave, the man of the hour whose strength and imagination portend a brighter future than the present. Only the Judge, after his death, is utterly violated and despoiled for us as he sits, dead, in the chair of his ancestors. We feed on him like ghouls--and the violence of that intrusion is most unpleasant for the reader, despite as well as because of the evil nature of Jaffrey Pyncheon. We know at last all of his secrets--they are puny and disgusting. And what we have learned explicitly about him is as nothing compared to what we know from signs and images unexplained but significant throughout the preceding work as a whole. We know, finally, how families are connected, and how fragile and yet strong is that bond. We have seen how such accidental bonds

which connect Phoebe, Holgrave, Hepzibah and Clifford, can yield salvation, healing, happiness and mutual joy. Because we have seen the worst side of family relationships we can also understand the best. None of this is explained to us, but we are made to understand it nonetheless.

In The Blithedale Romance, we are shown the nature of Community in both its ideal and its real aspects. We stand as it were perpetually at the threshold of the place, of Blithedale itself yet we never enter it. We never break into the community there but we see through Coverdale's acute sensitivity to such symbols as Zenobia's flower and Priscilla's aura the way in which those with the best intentions for community isolate themselves and are isolated from it. We see the way in which a community offers friendship, love, sisterhood and cooperation and how these aspects of fellowship are betrayed by community and by the ways in which it is perceived by those who strive to create it. We see, through the symbolic fires and the significant places and things which are so subtly brought to our attention how much community can give, and the rich rewards of self-sacrifice and idealism. If we also see ruined friendship and terrible death it is not to say that community itself has done this but only that the individuals who put their wills above their souls--precious above everything else--have developed one aspect of community (the material aspect) at the expense of the other.

In The Marble Faun, finally, we are made to understand

the great secret of the universe--that God is everywhere. As we are taken through the maze of Rome, one presence--unseen and undiscussed--pervades her mysteries. Through the powerfully generative images of statue, pictures, sepulchers, catacombs, St. Peter's, the Pantheon, the towers and parapets, we understand the architecture of the world we live in. It is a world of enclosed spaces and open spaces, hidden places and exposed places, a world where history repeats itself, as it does at the Tarpeian Rock, in more ways than one, and as it does, too, in Hilda's steadfastness. We see through the pictures and the landscapes, the statues, sketches and buildings, the sometimes confusing but always comprehensible world in which all must make their way. It is a world, above all, in which hope--the ongoing expectant desire--for redemption (as Hilda is described as hopeful) is the governing emotion of the work. We see, too, the way in which the faithful expectation of salvation enlightens Donatello after the murder--and thus the way even the blackest sinner may experience grace. In that same murder--and by means of the rock from whence the model is hurled--we also see that each man must conquer for himself the evil dogging his path and the path of those he loves.

We are shown repeatedly various ecphrastic objects--paintings, sculptures, sketches, objets of one sort or another--which indicate to us the mysterious nature of the characters and of Time, the medium in which we live. Through

this masterly use of images, Hawthorne leads us to an understanding of the inner natures of his personae, and thus the inner natures of idealized figures from our own world. Because he does not thoroughly explore their inner lives (although inwardness is essential to their depiction) in an intimate, novelistic way, but rather shows their inwardness in a formal way, we are made to understand the sacredness of the inner person; the soul is never desecrated by intimacy in his works. We see what each character knows but we know that they like the rest of us can never tell what they know although they are actuated by that knowledge. So Miriam remains forever locked into her old law, her intellectual and Mannerist morality, upright but dark, unenlightened. And Donatello, natural man, is permitted to live out his days in contemplation of his life--a life which has recapitulated pre-lapsarian innocence, mortal sin, remorse, repentance and the hope of salvation. Kenyon, our idealized rational and temperate man, is preserved from both mortal danger and mortal sin, and, gifted with the insight borne of genius and temperance, granted a mate whose innocence and purity are at once his reward and his appropriate complements. Hilda, her perfect innocence and faith undiminished by what she has experienced as witness to murder, becomes a bride, allowed to perpetuate, with Kenyon, the best that is human yet with a knowledge of the worst of experience. All of this is made clear to us by Hawthorne's brilliant imagery which plays about these idealized characters like a lambent flame, illuminating

a center which is itself.

Hawthorne conveys to us in these works a vision of a moral world in which the profoundest nature of individuals creates the drama--ethical as well as emotional--of the works. These individuals, portrayed from the outside in, so to speak, are portrayed in the solemn (in Milton's sense of the word) grandeur of idealized personae. They are recognizable figures but idealized types, characters involved in the archetypal struggles for salvation against evil, in the search for truth which animates everyone in his world and our own. In these works the reader is ultimately the most significant actor, the one agent of coherence without whom the tacit dimension of life remains unrevealed. Hawthorne's genius for choosing the right image for a given circumstance and for choosing the perfectly sustained tone in each work--at once sombre and yet with an undercurrent of celebration--gives us in these four romances a vision of life full of the sublime despair and suppressed hope familiar to us from the greatest works of art, music and poetry.

Hawthorne's apparent ambiguities and ambivalences, his mysterious symbols and images, his insistent allegorizing and apparently vague romancing all create an experience of disjunction, a central tension that is at the aesthetic heart of the work. That perceived conflict between what is seen and what is known is the formal indication of the themes in these works. The struggle for dominance which we experience

--the feeling that a given image or object is desperately claiming our attention for a reason we cannot at that moment fathom--is part of the way in which Hawthorne indicates to us the conflict between inner and outer worlds, the central conflict in life. He thereby materializes the conflict between the moral and spiritual worlds and their interpenetration. The world beyond material circumstances is the actual world, the one with true significance, revealed to us by the material objects and images which are permeated by it. Hawthorne's is thus a transcendental vision of a world in which the immanence of God is manifest in even the most apparently insignificant things. His characters, strangely impenetrable themselves, thus become elements in his imagery, idealized components, like his other symbols, of a world in which everything is known but in which the inner secret of persons and of things is never betrayed.

Hawthorne's works can therefore be seen as prose epics, or at least as parts of one prose epic. Each romance, perfectly told and full of incident, gives us part of an ongoing depiction of our world, idealized. Allusive, symbolic, the meanings which emerge and subside and sometimes elude us are part of a shifting pattern of significance. Like an epic audience we can see our own history unfold before us in the lives of characters different from us only in degree. Underlying all the romances is the implicit belief that earthly events and circumstances are pervaded by the influence

of another world which sometimes overwhelms the everyday world, flooding it with significance and then subsiding for a time. This belief, made explicit in Hilda's statement of her creed in The Marble Faun, underlies the poetry of Hawthorne's romances, works which show the way in which the inner life holds firm amid external flux. Finally, Hawthorne's works have an epic strain in that, although they deal with deception, violence and treachery, they end by giving us a glimpse of a better life--one in which good transcends evil circumstance and in which peace, hope and harmony are possible. These sublime endings so full of the promise of reconciliation, are Hawthorne's implicit indication to us that the other, better world permeates our own; his poetic eloquence and power of imagery is the proof that it does.

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