

Hawthorne's Gothic: "ON A FIELD, SABLE, THE LETTER A, GULES"

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Abstract

Various characteristics of Gothic fiction are evident in Hawthorne's tales and romances - the interest in man's primitive self, the concern with historical and psychological facts and with imaginative and intuitive experience, the delineation of the human conflict between spiritual aspirations and sensual needs, the emphasis on the ambiguity of good and evil as moral concepts, and the enactment of horror and terror. For Hawthorne these elements relate to the human struggle between mind and heart, between faith and passion - a struggle which is consonant with his own conflict with his Puritan conscience and his poetic imagination. They focus on the complexity of human feeling, yet help towards a final realization of man's significance and promise. They enable Hawthorne to resolve the eternal conflict between soul and body.

The thesis deals with Hawthorne's four romances - The Scarlet Letter, The House of the Seven Gables, The Blithedale Romance and The Marble Faun. In the first three, Hawthorne is hampered by his Puritan conscience so that passion is often subjugated by faith. In The Scarlet Letter the persecution of Hester and the ardent life she represents is at least justified in that it mirrors a historical truth. Moreover, Hawthorne achieves a certain ambivalence which, instead of signalling his own uncertainty and feebleness, enhances the complexity and mysteriousness of man's nature and situation. In The House of the Seven Gables and The Blithedale Romance, however, Puritan religiosity predominates and expresses itself in a wholly sentimental and repressive attitude. It is only in The Marble Faun that Hawthorne sees beyond the dilemma of man's dual aspects to realize the mythic and religious significance inherent in

his seemingly divided self. While, in doing so, he manifests the typical Gothic idea that primitive man has a certain magnificence, Hawthorne is more interested in the fact that feeling is uplifting and ennobling. Human passion has a spiritual aspect.

Preface

While Gothic fiction is usually seen as synonymous with the literature of terror, its deeper significance lies in its imaginative and ardent enactment of the inner world of feeling and intuitive experience. Stock Gothic devices and techniques may too easily create fantastical and sensational effects, but they can also be potently evocative in the portrayal of human nature in all its mystery and complexity.

Gothic, therefore, identifies those qualities of tortuous conflicts and deep passion, those moods of symbolic and poetic suggestiveness that characterize Hawthorne's writing, especially his major works. While many scholars recognize this Gothic element in Hawthorne's tales and romances, their treatment of it is often fragmentary and cursory. This thesis is an attempt to delve more deeply into this aspect of his writing in the hope that a better understanding of his art may be thus realized. While several tales and short stories are examined for their contribution to Hawthorne's Gothic art, emphasis is given to the four major romances; these do not only represent his mature period but also, being longer pieces, convey more fully his themes and techniques.

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Tang Soo-Ping

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A Note on Edition Used

Unless indicated otherwise, references to Hawthorne's works designate The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne, ed. William Charvat, Roy Harvey Pearce and Claude M. Simpson (Columbus: Ohio State University Press). Details regarding volumes and years of publication are as follows:

The Scarlet Letter, vol. 1, 1962.

The House of the Seven Gables, vol. 2, 1965.

The Blithedale Romance, vol. 3, 1964.

The Marble Faun, vol. 4, 1968.

Our Old Home, vol. 5, 1970.

True Stories, vol. 6, 1972a.

A Wonder Book; Tanglewood Tales, vol. 7, 1972b.

The American Notebooks, vol. 8, 1972c.

Twice-told Tales, vol. 9, 1974a.

Mosses from an Old Manse, vol. 10, 1974b.

The Snow Image and Uncollected Tales, vol. 11, 1974c.

The American Claimant Manuscripts, vol. 12, 1977a.

The Elixir of Life Manuscripts, vol. 13, 1977b.

Chapter 1

The Prison and the Rose

Nathaniel Hawthorne's interest in the Gothic romance is a well-established fact. In a book first published in 1946, Jane Lundblad (1964, 26) has meticulously traced the Gothic writings that Hawthorne had read. These include such English works as James Hogg's Tales, The Castle of Otranto, Caleb Williams and Melmoth The Wanderer; American Gothic romances such as those of Charles Brockden Brown and Washington Irving, and the works of European writers such as Tieck and Balzac.¹ Later commentators on Hawthorne's life and works have also testified to avid reading of Gothic writings. Mark Van Doren (1949, 34), for example, has declared:

John Neal and Charles Brockden Brown in America, and

¹ Jane Lundblad (1964, 27) recalls Poe's criticism of Mosses from an Old Manse where he accuses Hawthorne of having imitated Tieck.

in England William Godwin, Mrs. Radcliffe, Horace Walpole, and Maturin's Melmoth the Wanderer - he went through them all, nor afterward was free of their controlling symbols: the mysterious portrait, the moldy parchment, the deformed villain, the secret crime, the illicit elixir, the esoteric research, the devil's laugh, the gleaming eye, the portentous word. He was seldom free enough of these contraptions. . . .

It is clear from this statement of Van Doren's that not only did Hawthorne read the romances but he also borrowed extensively from this mode of writing. That his works thus became part of the tradition of Gothic writing is stated by numerous other writers and scholars. Robert D. Hume, in a distinguished article on the Gothic novel, has recognised Hawthorne's place among Gothic fiction writers. Although he does not include Hawthorne in his study, Hume (1969, 282) has asserted in a footnote: "The work of Poe, Hawthorne, and Charles Brockden Brown, though not discussed here, is actually part of the original Gothic tradition. . . ." In the studies of Jane Lundblad, Elizabeth MacAndrew, Maurice Charney and Neal Frank Doubleday, and in a thesis by Robert Kaftan, Hawthorne's employment of typical Gothic machinery outlined by Mark Van Doren is persistently traced and analysed. But none of these, and none among the vast store of critical works dedicated to the study of Hawthorne's romances and tales, have delved deeply enough into the exact nature and significance of the writer's preoccupation with the Gothic. Robert D. Hume's statement, quoted above may seem to imply that Hawthorne, like early original Gothic writers such as Walpole and Mrs. Radcliffe, merely subscribed to the earlier tradition that gave rise to terror fiction with its attendant props and stock symbols, but the truth is that he penetrated into the deeper moral and psychological

conflicts that form the crux of the Gothic view of life.²

It is the aim of this thesis, therefore, to examine Hawthorne's theme and attitudes, as exemplified in some of his best tales and his major romances, and to consider the way in which these, complemented by the characteristic Gothic symbols and devices, constitute a perspective, central to the Gothic tradition, but modified and heightened in such a way that it can be identified as Hawthorne's very own. Hyatt Waggoner's view about Hawthorne's development of the Gothic form surely indicates the relevance of such a study. He writes as follows (1963, 248):

. . . Hawthorne drew extensively upon this popular form, as Shakespeare used the revenge tragedy and James used the comedy of manners, but the form itself, as he found it existing, was not to his purpose. Taking from it certain elements and turning them to new purposes, he transformed what he used.

This transformation, he states elsewhere in the same book (1967, 247), created for Hawthorne "a form, a language, and a meaning that had never before existed." Mark Van Doren (1949, 34-35), speaking in the same vein, also stresses the way in which Hawthorne has enhanced the Gothic mode. Speaking of the writer's use of stock Gothic devices, he comments (1949, 34-35):

. . . at his best he made them serve him willingly and well; he forced them, that is, to do moral and metaphysical work. Godwin and Brown had done this before him, but at nowhere near the same natural depth. . . . The gothic novels of the age were mostly trash, and bits of the trash remain in him; but it is his distinction that he so often transformed it into something serious, beautiful, and humane.

²Some of Hawthorne's tales, however, are little more than tales of terror. Examples include "The Haunted Quack," "Howe's Masquerade," "The Wedding Knell" and "Edward Randolph's Portrait."

It could be argued that since both Waggoner and Van Doren have stressed the way in which Hawthorne has transformed the Gothic form, they may be suggesting that Hawthorne's achievement can no longer be regarded as typically Gothic; that indeed he has left the Gothic genre far behind. This argument can only hold if we go by the understanding that "the typically Gothic" referred to relates to the early Gothic mode of Walpole and Mrs. Radcliffe; both Waggoner and Van Doren have this kind of Gothic fiction in mind when they commend Hawthorne's skill. Van Doren, for example, specifically speaks of "the gothic novels of the age" and Waggoner points to Hawthorne's dissatisfaction with the form "as he found it existing." Going far beyond the cruder renderings of Walpole and Radcliffe, Hawthorne, in his profound brooding, has intensified and deepened those moral and psychological implications surrounding human existence that underline the Gothic mood. Instead of departing totally from tradition, however, he has merely reshaped, revitalised and enriched the genre, while still preserving its characteristic features and attributes. Hawthorne was by no means the only writer to have done this for the Gothic novel. As Robert D. Hume (1969, 290) has shown in the article mentioned above, Emily Brontë, Melville and Faulkner are among many writers who have brought to flower the "considerable aesthetic potential latent in the form crudely forged by Walpole and developed by Radcliffe and Lewis."

Hawthorne himself had used the term "romance" to describe his writings and by his definition of the word had clearly distinguished his "poetic or fairy precinct" (The Marble Faun 1968, 3) from the familiar

everyday world of the traditional novel.³ The term "Gothic" however, describes more precisely the particular slant that his writings take in their exploration into the mysterious inner world of man. To speak of Hawthorne's Gothic is to focus at once on the Gothic themes of moral ambiguity and irresolvable conflict which so fascinate the writer, and which are conveyed through such Gothic devices as mysterious portraits and mirrors representing two opposing selves and two conflicting sets of values, outer and inner. The term also clearly identifies Hawthorne's concern with the psychological life and the subterranean world of hidden fears and secret desires. As Joel Porte (1969, 98) remarks, for Hawthorne "romance grows out of dark meditations on guilt, sin and suffering - passionate experience of all kinds - and its value lies precisely in its ability to bring out the shadows and make available for us those ordinarily shunned emotions that deepen and humanize us."

Maurice Charney (1961, 49) affirms that for Hawthorne the romance "is conceived in the gothic style." Although, according to Charney, Hawthorne's inspiration is Gothic architecture rather than Gothic writing, the qualities that the writer is said to have drawn from Gothic churches are reminiscent of Gothic literature - the copiousness of detail, the variety and richness of ornamentation, the "majesty" and the "minuteness" (1961, 40), the juxtaposition and reconciliation of the sublime and the grotesque, and ultimately the sense of "the dim, awful, mysterious, grotesque, intricate nature of man" (1961, 44). Hawthorne's Gothicism, therefore, establishes his closeness to and

³ See the Preface to The House of the Seven Gables and to The Marble Faun.

reliance on an earlier tradition that provides the focus, the atmosphere and the symbols corresponding to his own vision of human nature and existence.

Hawthorne's Gothicism, may be seen in relation to other issues, such as his attitude towards art and artistic imagination. Millicent Bell (1962, 69), recalling the comments of Paul Elmer More in Shelburne Essays, has written:

. . . Hawthorne was a Gothic artist with a difference, using the same machinery as the German and English horror writers, but speaking from the profound moral depths of his time and country. Thus, he never - except in his weakest moments - uses the Gothic material for its own sake. We will see how a number of Gothic motifs - purely 'thriller' ingredients in the hands of inferior writers - have a relation to his view of the artist.

Rather than approaching Hawthorne's Gothicism from the point of view of other interests, however, the present study will concern itself with the very nature of Hawthorne's Gothic perspective.

In trying to show the process by which Hawthorne used and enhanced the Gothic mode, this thesis will demonstrate how the writer commences with a kind of Puritan Gothic, where, encompassing or reacting to Puritan beliefs and ancestral values, Hawthorne enacts the tragic condition of man in a world viewed to be sin-ridden and guilt-stricken. From this, however, he proceeds to a more penetrating, more intuitive study of man's existence, where, focusing on the primal, passionate psyche of man, and on the multitudinous facets of human experience and the manifold levels of man's personality, he brings out the horrors as well as the fascinating power and beauty of human nature.⁴ In this

⁴D.H. Lawrence (1962, 133-74) discusses at some length Hawthorne's preoccupation with the sensual mystery of man.

latter type of Gothic, the austere religious attitude and ancestral bond still prevail, but they are complemented by a poetic sensitivity that affirms and sympathizes with the natural and earthy aspect of man.

These two kinds of Gothic will be related to the dual aspects of Hawthorne's personality - one influenced by his Puritan heritage, and the other moved by an almost pagan sensibility. The tension that results from these two opposing forces created in Hawthorne an affinity for the Gothic mode of writing for, as will be shown, Gothic fiction is especially concerned with the depiction of the dark complexities of man's needs and the tortuous and irresolvable struggle between spiritual and sensual motives.

That Puritanism should figure prominently in Hawthorne's writing is hardly surprising, considering the fact that the tradition was firmly rooted in the nineteenth-century American consciousness, and that it was an essential part of Hawthorne's family heritage. Although, according to Herbert Schneider in The Puritan Mind (1958, 257), the writer professed "to hate his Puritan heritage" and although Hawthorne obviously did not regard himself a Puritan, this by no means implies that he managed to wean himself totally from the traditional values and outlook that had moulded his family history and the New England way of life. In "The Custom-House" chapter of The Scarlet Letter Hawthorne remembers his Puritan ancestors, and attributes to them his own sense of inadequacy and guilt. Critics too have pointed to the Puritan influence on Hawthorne's outlook which is reflected in his works.

Even in its crudest form, as in Walpole's novel, Gothic fiction has been deeply concerned with the inner secret life of the human unconscious, with the opposition between the sensual being and the

spiritual self. Manfred's desires, evil as they are, do not totally obliterate the capacity for remorse and repentance. Although the early Gothic romances often seem to descend to mere sensationalism with the evocation of terror and suspense, they are actually attempts, albeit rather clumsily rendered, to enact the moral and psychological terrors embedded in the very depths of the human mind. At its best, this form of fiction gives dramatic shape to the mysterious, nightmare world of man's unconscious, where the fierce impulses of the primitive self are contradicted by an opposing need to search for some spiritual good which is always elusive. Melville's Moby Dick and Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights are among the best exemplars of Gothic fiction at its most powerful. Delineating the realities of man's physical self and the loftiness of his spiritual aspirations, the Gothic romance portrays the villain hero, fearsome in his passions, and yet not unattractive in his deep yearning and suffering. As Elizabeth MacAndrew (1979, 50) describes it:

. . . the villain . . . is caught in his interesting soul-searching conflict and [is] unable to obliterate consciousness of the lost possibility of virtue. . . .

There is, therefore, a sense of "tragic grandeur" and of "compensatory greatness" (Robert D. Hume 1969, 288).

Moral ambiguity, usually depicted with intense psychological and imaginative insight, arises from the realisation that evil has extenuating reasons and that man is a composite of both good and evil. Going beyond the stark differentiation between good and evil as moral absolutes as seen in Walpole and Mrs. Radcliffe, later Gothic writings point to the fact that there can only be understanding and acceptance of, but no solution for, the light and dark sides of human nature, and

the anguish arising therefrom. On the one hand there are "high aspirations, great sensitivity, intellectual brilliance, and imaginative daring" (MacAndrew 1979, 226) and on the other there are pride and fear. Together these make up "the unresolvable, shifting, but perpetual paradox of human nature" (MacAndrew 1979, 250).

In the most extreme examples of Gothic fiction there is sometimes not even a hint of tragic stature to balance against the macabre horror of human evil. Faulkner's Sanctuary is a case in point. Often, however, amidst the brooding atmosphere of guilt, there glows man's invincible spirit, which never gives up but strives ceaselessly though helplessly and tragically for some means of resolving the conflicting aspects of his nature. A sense of death, therefore, is balanced by a keen awareness of life, terror is qualified by awe, and man, however destructive in his desires, grows in stature and achieves a dignity of his own. Indeed, the undaunted vigour of man, expressed in his capacity to feel, to yearn, to suffer and to stand up to adversity, seen together with his spiritual inclination to reach for the ideal contributes to a certain magnificence that is almost heroic.

Whereas ancient and medieval settings are common in early Gothic fiction, so that, as Elizabeth MacAndrew explains (1979, 47), the "remote historical time/[seems] in itself almost symbolic of the need to go back from the concealing refinement of civilisation to the fundamentals of human nature," contemporary locales are often used in later writings. But whether medieval or contemporaneous, the setting is invariably representative of the inner landscape. Night usually prevails, evoking a dreamlike or nightmare state, that, even without the backdrop of castles and ruins that inevitably appeared in the earlier tales, signals

the condition of dislocation and alienation from the daylight world of physical reality.

With symbols and the symbolic use of the supernatural, the inner world of man's secret self comes through more vividly as passions and psychological terror are carried to a much higher pitch. Apparitions and dreams give symbolic shape to desires, moral fears and psychological torments, but they also serve to illuminate the villain hero's intense imaginative sensitivity to beauty and good. Involvement in witchcraft and black magic is the standard indication of man's sinister motives and ambitions. Mirrors and portraits draw attention to man's outer and inner selves, but portraits too like old parchments and manuscripts symbolize the influence of the past, and/or the conflict between imagination and real life. Finally, as symbols continue to expand in meaning, and as their significance operates on multiple levels at one and the same time, moral distinctions become increasingly hazy, thus deepening the sense of ambiguity and confusion.

The method of mediated narration, by which a tale is presented as a manuscript written by someone else, is not new, but from the time of Walpole's The Castle of Otranto it has been particularly useful in the Gothic novel for establishing the separate world of the self. The interpolated story is a variation of the technique, which may be traced to Lewis' The Monk. These, together with the dream motif, contribute to the depiction of a closed isolated world - the world of the hidden self.

Hawthorne's use of Gothic devices is first and foremost an indication of his response to a current literary tradition that had become especially popular in nineteenth-century America, and which offered, according to Neal Frank Doubleday (1946, 250), a convenient and

effective method of "making romance from American materials."⁵ Hawthorne himself has remarked on the need to endow the present and the local setting with the distance and interesting aura of age and mystery. In 'Howe's Masquerade' (1974a, 255) he writes:

In truth, it is desperately hard work, when we attempt to throw the spell of hoar antiquity over localities with which the living world, and the day that is passing over us, have aught to do.

To this end, the Gothic tradition, with its ready offering of atmosphere and symbolic magic is relevant and appropriate. Hawthorne, therefore, makes frequent use of such Gothic devices as portraits, witchcraft and the Faustian figure. Other symbols, however, abound, that do not really originate from the Gothic tradition, but the symbolic use to which they have been put is reminiscent of it. Examples include the prison, the rose, the fair maiden and the dark lady. His use of the method of mediated narration is seen in The Scarlet Letter and The Blithedale Romance and a form of the interpolated story is seen in The House of the Seven Gables, The Marble Faun, The American Claimant Manuscripts and The Elixir of Life Manuscripts.

Hawthorne's main attraction to the Gothic tradition, however, derives from his own intense concern with the mysterious forces in human nature, and the irresolvable conflicts arising from them. The Gothic mode is the means by which he penetrates into and identifies the deeper truth behind human conduct and experience. Far from trying to evoke terror, Hawthorne's Gothic attempts to symbolize a condition of mind or soul.

⁵Edgar Allan Poe and Charles Brockden Brown had already made the Gothic tale their special province.

Hawthorne's Gothic, to begin with, is markedly Puritan in character and outlook.⁶ There is a zealous and uncompromising championing of such absolute ideals as innocence, purity and dedication to the spiritual life, and a hovering consciousness of evil and sin and of man's fallen nature.⁷ Failure to uphold these values is an indication of man's inability to break out of this evil mould, and gives rise to horror, outrage and a deep sense of doom. So in the case of "Young Goodman Brown" (1974b, 89) a young man, full of hope and confidence, once convinced of the indomitability of evil, becomes overnight "a stern, a sad, a darkly meditative, a distrustful, if not a desperate man. . . ." The policy of punishment and correction which frequently takes the form of persecution is the immediate response to human sinfulness. And emerging from this is the habit of fierce self-recrimination, the deep psychology of guilt that often erupts in some violent gesture of penitence. This is seen in "Roger Malvin's Burial." The youth, Reuben Bourne, carries the burden of his secret guilt for more than fifteen years and can only free himself by the terrible act of killing his own son.

His sin was expiated - the curse was gone from him;
and in the hour when he had shed blood dearer to him
than his own, a prayer, the first for years, went

⁶The term "Puritan" is not used in the strict theological sense. Rather, it merely refers to Hawthorne's portrayal of the religion, as he sees it practised in New England. According to Nina Baym (1970, 209-30), Hawthorne's Puritanism is a distortion of the religion even as it is observed in New England.

⁷Those stories which are only examples of tales of terror, mentioned on page 3 (see footnote 2), do not fall within this group, nor into any other to be discussed later.

up to Heaven from the lips of Reuben Bourne.
(1974b, 360)

New England Puritanism has thus contributed to the darksome thoughts and sombre events that characterize Hawthorne's writings. Early in 1850, Melville (see J. Donald Crowley ed. 1970, 115-16) had pointed to this Puritan gloom that predominated in Hawthorne:

. . . [I]n spite of all the Indian-summer sunlight on the hither side of Hawthorne's soul, the other side - like the dark half of the physical sphere - is shrouded in a blackness, ten times black. . . . This great power of blackness in him derives its force from its appeal to that Calvinistic sense of Innate Depravity and Original Sin, from whose visitations, in some shape or other, no deeply thinking mind is always and wholly free.

When we consider that Hawthorne was descended from a long line of stern Puritans and relentless persecutors and that, as Melville had implied in his comment, Puritanism constituted the moral ethos of the time, Hawthorne's melancholy seems inevitable and quite unextraordinary.

This hovering sense of darkness also derives from the fact that the kind of Puritanism that Hawthorne was drawn to was very different from what was practised in New England. Indeed, according to Herbert Schneider (1958, 261), Hawthorne rediscovered the religion of Calvin as it was before it was corrupted and distorted by "ecclesiastical politicians like Cotton Mather." Recalling the gospel preached by Jonathan Edwards, he perceived that the real concern should be that "of each soul for its own salvation and the sense of one's own worthlessness in the sight of God" (Schneider 1958, 261). Thus, whereas Puritanism in New England was turned outward to doing good, for Hawthorne it was a religion of individual conscience and the judgement and the punishment of sin were recognized to be not man's concern but God's or nature's. Arguing in this vein Schneider (1958, 262-63)

points to Hawthorne's rediscovery of the true spirit of Puritan piety and humility, that is directed inward toward oneself. The Puritan gloom reflected in his works, therefore, marks Hawthorne's disapproval and criticism of the patriarchal code, and of the practice of doing good by patronage and discipline, both of which are manifestations of "the distortions and delusions of Puritanism" (F.O. Matthiessen 1966, 205). The religion in New England has become steeped in evil and guilt, made worse no doubt by the unchallengeable habit of persecution and correction. In Hawthorne's Puritan Gothic, therefore, that inordinate striving for piety that extends to a vindictive righteousness casts a perpetual shadow over human existence.

"Young Goodman Brown" and "Roger Malvin's Burial" are just two examples where Hawthorne depicts the Puritan sense of evil and guilt. The sinister atmosphere of sin and depravity in the former tale, and the terrible self-flagellation of Reuben Bourne in the latter stem directly from the moral and psychological pressures inherent in a Puritan conscience. Hawthorne, therefore, saw not only the corruption of Puritanism in new England but also the overwhelming constraints that this faith had come to impose upon human action and experience.

Perceiving evil looming up on all sides, Puritan man is severely constricted in a grim and narrow existence, where youth is inevitably persecuted and ultimately broken by a relentless patriarchal authority. Significantly, a large number of Hawthorne's tales depict the conflict between youths and elders. It is no coincidence that young Reuben Bourne's excruciating feelings of guilt and shame derive from his failure to keep his pledge to old Roger Malvin. In the old man's request that young Reuben should return and bring his body home for burial, there

is already the assertion of the patriarchal bond which forms the basis of Puritan society. And Young Goodman Brown's nightmarish experience, although seemingly an enactment of the youth's confrontation with human corruption and depravity, may also be a mocking comment on the malevolent effects of patriarchal instruction. For Brown's journey into the forest of evil is guided by patriarchal figures, one (the Satan-like figure) who could be his father, another who is the Church Minister and another who turns out to be deacon Gookin. Ironically, therefore, the ritualistic immersion in evil, carrying heavy overtones of witchcraft and black magic, may be symbolic of the terrible Puritan teachings that rigorously confront the young with the horrors of sin and depravity.

Puritanism and the patriarchal authority which it upholds are most bitinglly derided in "The Gentle Boy." Here, the tyrannical tendencies of the Puritans are starkly demonstrated together with the smug fanaticism of the Quakers. Against the cold and wintry landscape, the fruitlessness of religious creeds is accentuated by the theme of homelessness. The denial of love and parental duty, not only by Catherine but by the Puritans as well, puts to question the sanctity of the patriarchal bond.

The suffering and torment in Hawthorne's Puritan Gothic proceed from two kinds of situation:

- (i) where Hawthorne assumes and reflects the Puritan view that fallen man is essentially sinful and prone to evil, that life is therefore a ceaseless struggle against overwhelming forces within man's corrupt nature
- (ii) where Hawthorne, bitterly observing the effects of Puritan

repression, perceives the tragically narrow confines within which man must live and act.

In both cases, human existence is seen as darkly circumscribed by restrictions and prohibitions. But whereas, from the Puritan viewpoint, it is man's spiritual growth that is hampered by his physical nature, Hawthorne, in the second perspective, laments the suppression of the passionate life by too stringent a religiosity. In both instances, the prison symbol predominates with its attendant images of chains, closed doors, graves and tombs, and an accompanying atmosphere of death and decay.

"The Minister's Black Veil" points clearly to the Puritan concept of man's dismal condition of exile and spiritual alienation. The mortal veil of secret sin hangs between him and eternity, and keeps him locked in "that saddest of all prisons, his own heart" (1974a, 50). The veil then becomes a symbol of spiritual death and of the soul's confinement and isolation in the mortal life.

In another tale, "Egotism; or, The Bosom Serpent" the prison symbol, though not explicitly conveyed, is implied in the idea of a man shut up in a lonely and loveless existence by a dastardly evil nature characterized by pride and selfishness. The isolation, also identified with disease and sterility, at the same time indicates a withdrawal into the materialistic and physical life. However, Hawthorne shows that man may move out of this cell-like existence by means of the spiritual influence of love. In Rosina, the virtuous and loving wife, Hawthorne establishes the precursor of the fair madonna-like female type, which

symbolizes the spiritual ideal that is the soul's inspiration.⁸ Only when Roderick Elliston opens his heart to his wife does he banish the evil that has kept him imprisoned in that sickly narcissistic condition.

The corruption of man's spiritual potential resulting in spiritual isolation and possibly death is repeated in "Young Goodman Brown" and "Roger Malvin's Burial." But here, Hawthorne also incorporates the other perspective, that is, that man's existence in a Puritan state is a condition of deprivation and emasculation, where the primary, sensual life force and the dynamic impulse of humanity are crushed and sapped. Whereas in "Young Goodman Brown" the prison symbol is not directly employed to reinforce this idea (it is, however, clearly suggested in the obsession/possession of Brown with/by evil) it appears recurrently in the other tale in the form of images closely associated with this symbol. Thus the sense of guilt in Reuben Bourne, intensified by the consciousness of the patriarchal bond, is said to act "like a chain binding down his spirit" (1974b, 350). This guilt inevitably cripples the youth's participation in all aspects of human life so that his social and economic situations deteriorate, and he is inexorably compelled backward in time and space to the event of the old man's death. As his name "Bourne" (meaning "limit" or "boundary") suggests, his progress in life is circumscribed by the one fateful experience:

His steps were imperceptibly led almost in a circle;
 . . . He was musing on the strange influence that

⁸This madonna figure is derived from Hawthorne's own perception of his wife, whose angelic influence he describes in words such as the following: ". . . you will show me the images of my inward life, beautified and etherealized by the mixture of your own spirit." (Julian Hawthorne 1968, 211)

had led him away from his premeditated course, and so far into the depths of the wilderness. (1974b, 355)

This kind of constriction, though not portrayed to the same degree, has apparently caused the young lovers in "The Canterbury Pilgrims" to run away to live their lives their own way in the world. That Hawthorne approves of this show of spirit and independence is clear in his closing remarks where he associates the "cold and passionless security" of the ancestral Puritan home with "that other refuge of the world's weary outcasts, the grave" (1974c, 131). The images convey the idea of a death-in-life kind of existence that contrasts with the more vital life that goes by human hopes and fears that Josiah and Miriam choose to live.

However, Hawthorne's expression of the need to break out of the Puritan hold and away from patriarchal domination is more forceful in "My Kinsman, Major Molineux." The tale is frequently read as a symbolic description of the revolution and the emergence of the new American nation. But the initiation theme itself is built upon the now familiar concepts of patriarchal authority and filial obligation so that it is possible to say that whatever Hawthorne's other intentions in this tale, some intimations of the struggle against Puritan repression are included here. Robin's departure from home is preparatory to his initiation into adulthood. But he comes away armed with paternal exhortations and an eagerness to seek the protection of another paternal figure, his kinsman, Major Molineux. The people he meets are all father figures, the first three of whom show fierce disapproval of his departure from his ancestral seat - the man with "the sepulchral hems" (1974c, 211) who rebukes him for his apparent disrespect, the innkeeper who proclaims

Robin to be a runaway bond-servant, and the watchman who tries to drive him away ("Home, vagabond, home" [1974c, 218]). The other two characters he encounters, however, (one is a recurring character), one representing life (his red and black complexion symbolizing good and evil, hope and fear), the other, a gentleman, standing for democracy (equality and individual rights as against hierarchy, paternal domination and suppression) take Robin through the ritual of deposing the paternal symbol, and initiate him into a new world of free choice that challenges the youth's sheltered upbringing. As the gentleman says to Robin when the latter instinctively turns toward home, after the excitement of the procession has left him:

"No, my good friend Robin, - not to-night, at least. . . . Some few days hence, if you wish it, I will speed you on your journey. Or, if you prefer to remain with us, perhaps, as you are a shrewd youth, you may rise in the world without the help of your kinsman, Major Molineux."
(1974c, 231)

The night setting and spectral figures exemplify Robin's tortuous journey through guilt and terror into the unknown.

Hawthorne projects the deep, dark and crushing horror of the prison symbol through the vivid use of the supernatural element. Ghostly visitations and apparitions surround the guilt-stricken character and take him to new depths of fear as the persecuted Puritan conscience erupts in violent contortions that bring it close to madness. In "The Hollow of Three Hills" and "Egotism; or, The Bosom Serpent," therefore, psychological stress and superstition coalesce to create a new dimension of terror and despair. Witchcraft and black magic also contribute to the heavy atmosphere of evil and sin. In "Alice Doane's Appeal" the wizard's wicked machinations to cause Leonard's murder of

his twin brother may be taken to represent human corruption and decadence. But in another respect, the black arts also serve to cast a sinister light on the fanatical obsessiveness of the Puritan creed. In "Young Goodman Brown," the Satan-like figure who seems to be a kind of sorcerer becomes identified with the Puritan patriarchs. And in "The Hollow of Three Hills" the eerie atmosphere of evil and death, merging with the foulness of the old witch, creates a Satanic presence that seems to be identified more with the old woman who appears to play the part of the would-be punisher, than with the pathetic young sinner who dies under the burden of psychological and supernatural persecution.

Hawthorne's references to the black arts continues as he portrays scientists as wizards, necromancers and alchemists who, recalling the tradition of the Gothic Faust, are seen as exemplars of "the religion of infinite striving" (Millicent Bell 1962, 71). But these scientists and their obsessive concern with isolating sin and evil, and with making man perfect, as in the case of Ethan Brand in "The Unpardonable Sin" and Aylmer in "The Birthmark," parallel the Puritans, whose intense analysis of conscience and fervent interpretations of the bible already mark them as persistent seekers of knowledge. In both, there is a similar disregard for the mixture of good and evil that is typical of human nature.

Significantly, most of Hawthorne's scientists seem to pursue their knowledge with the help of the Devil and become more and more fiendish. Ethan Brand seeks counsel with a fiend evoked from the furnace fire, and Aylmer is assisted by the earth-fiend Aminadab; in the same way, the Puritans are shown to barter their humanity for religious piety.

In both, knowledge is sought without feeling or heart, and if Hawthorne shows that the energy of the scientists is "the Devil's gift" (Millicent Bell 1962, 73), so does he also imply that Puritan zeal without sympathy and love is ungodly, and therefore suspect. In the Faustian endeavours of Hawthorne's scientists, then, is suggested the Puritanical pursuit of spiritual truth. Through the reference to the black arts, Hawthorne brings together Faustian, Satanic and Puritanical elements, and, as he does so, ironically comments on the way in which the overreaching is in itself self-destructive.

In Hawthorne's Puritan Gothic, then, the religious heritage provides the writer with the central impulse from which he draws two kinds of situations. The first depicts an intense preoccupation with sin of which Hawthorne himself, for all his criticism of and aloofness from the New England tradition, is not completely free. In the process of contemplating and struggling against sin, the highlighting of spiritual ideals, in the form of madonna-like female figures, serves either to intensify the sense of horror or to inspire the denial of the passional life or both.⁹ A separative attitude that alienates and disclaims the natural physical life is seen to prevail. The second situation contains the author's objection to the Puritan view of life, and describes the desperate attempts of youths to free themselves from its deadly hold.

Ultimately however, the sense of constraint and repression goes beyond subjection to the authority of the Puritan fathers and elders.

⁹ The purity and gentleness of Rosina in "Egoism: or, The Bosom Serpent," and Ellen Langton in "Fanshawe" bring out all the more, by way of contrast, the vileness and corruption of human nature.

Although the patriarchal bond is first and foremost identified with those duties and feelings of filialty demanded by a theocratic society and its concept of social relations, broadly speaking, patriarchy is seen as indigenous to man's condition, especially in New England. It symbolizes the authority of age, family and history - all the traditional forces that constitute man's environment and heritage. The patriarchal bond, therefore, not only signifies the immediate religious and social rules that bind individual conduct, but represents the ancestral ties and the historical consciousness that inhibit personal feeling and expression. This perhaps is what Joel Porte means by "the burden of memory" (1969, 97) that he perceives in Hawthorne's works. All this is manifested in the persistent sense of the past that sometimes enriches but more often than not undermines individual freedom and fulfilment. "The Grey Champion" and "Endicott's Red Flag" are tales in which the glory and valour of the past are recalled with a sense of enchantment and pride, but even here the battle that is described is a battle against oppression and authority. Elsewhere, as in "Peter Goldthwaite's Treasure," "Lady Eleanore's Mantle" and "Old Esther Dudley," the past wields a sinister influence that cripples the mind and causes sickness and death. This is seen in Peter Goldthwaite's self-destructive delusion, Lady Eleanore's terrible disease of pride and Esther's blind superstition. Ultimately, therefore, Puritanism and its oppressive influence become symbolic of all forms of "authority and repression in both society and the self" (Nina Baym 1970, 209).

From his criticism of the Puritan view of life is derived the other aspect of Hawthorne's Gothic vision - that which contains a deep sympathy for and an exciting fascination with the natural dynamic mystery that

makes up the passional life of man - with human passion, in short, that consists of all those "powerful responses of feeling to the demands of experience" (Helen T. Spigel 1969, 5) and the potential for hope and fear. The defiance against Puritan restrictions and narrowness which is a defiance against authority and the past combines with a bold and sensuous delight in the human impulses and the vivacity and rich complexity of human passion. In the recurrent dark lady figure in Hawthorne's tales and romances - in Drowne's wooden image, in Beatrice Rappaccini, in Hester, Zenobia and Miriam - are at once expressed Hawthorne's awareness of and reaction to the vibrant, sensuous and erotic power of humanity. Sexual passion and allure are the most obvious trait of this dark lady type, but they are only part of her total attraction. The following description of Drowne's sculptured woman shows the sexual appeal and provocativeness of this kind of feminine beauty:

In the dark eyes, and around the voluptuous mouth, there played a look made up of pride, coquetry, and gleam of mirthfulness, which impressed Copley with the idea that the image was secretly enjoying the perplexing admiration of himself and other beholders. (1974b, 314)

In the dark lady are also assembled the spirit and vigour of deep human emotions as symbolically demonstrated in the radiant image of Beatrice Rappaccini:

Soon there emerged from under a sculptured portal the figure of a young girl, arrayed with as much richness of taste as the most splendid of the flowers, beautiful as the day, and with a bloom so deep and vivid that one shade more would have been too much. She looked redundant with life, health, and energy; all of which attributes were bound down and compressed, as it were, and girdled tensely, in their luxuriance, by her virgin zone. (1974b, 97)

Hawthorne's sensual imagination potently expresses the movement and vigour of human passion in rich and colourful symbolic forms. Flowers especially the vivid and exotic species, and gardens are means by which he captures the dynamic force and sensuous fecundity of the natural human personality. The gorgeous purple flower in Rappaccini's garden, for example, described in its overwhelming voluptuous beauty -

[t]here was one shrub in particular, set in a marble vase in the midst of the pool, that bore a profusion of purple blossoms, each of which had the lustre and richness of a gem; and the whole together made a show so resplendent that it seemed enough to illuminate the garden, even had there been no sunshine (1974b, 95)

- is quickly identified with the passion and luscious splendour of Beatrice:

Nor did he fail again to observe, or imagine, an analogy between the beautiful girl and the gorgeous shrub that hung its gemlike flowers over the fountain, - a resemblance which Beatrice seemed to have indulged a fantastic humor in heightening, both by the arrangement of her dress and the selection of its hues. (1974b, 102)

Hawthorne's other dark ladies are similarly associated with brilliantly coloured blossoms. Drowne's image wears a hat laden with "the strange, rich flowers of Eden . . .; the complexion so much deeper and more brilliant than those of our native beauties" (1974b, 314). Later, in the romances, the vibrant beauty of Hester, Zenobia and Miriam will also be evoked through the magnificent flowers they wear.

But more than any flower, the rose is most frequently employed by Hawthorne to symbolize the sensuous appeal and exciting and erotic

promise of the dark lady.¹⁰ It is contrasted with the white lily that he uses to evoke the chaste and spiritual beauty of the fair Puritan maid.¹¹ In the "Maypole of Merry Mount" the sexual energy and natural vigour of humanity, suggested through the phallic symbol of the Maypole (which represents the recurrent tree of life image) is complemented by the reference to roses:

Garden flowers, and blossoms of the wilderness,
laughed gladly forth amid the verdure, so fresh
and dewy that they must have grown by magic on
that happy pine-tree. Where this green and flowery
splendour terminated, the shaft of the Maypole was
stained with the seven brilliant hues of the
banner at its top. On the lowest green bough hung
an abundant wreath of roses, some that had been
gathered in the sunniest spots of the forest, and
others, of still richer blush, which the colonists
had reared from English seed. O, people of the
Golden Age, the chief of your husbandry was to
raise flowers! (1974a, 55)

After this, the rose symbol in "David Swan" assumes a deeper significance. In this tale a young girl is tenderly described in terms of her provocative feminine allure and sweet youthful demureness.

The carriage could not have gone above a mile
or two, when a pretty young girl came along, with
a tripping pace, which showed precisely how her
little heart was dancing in her bosom. Perhaps it
was this merry kind of motion that caused - is there

¹⁰In a two-part article, Q.D. Leavis (Spring 1951, 179-205 and Summer 1951, 426-58) discusses in some detail the significance of the rose symbol.

¹¹This association of the lily with spiritual life is clearly depicted in "The Lily's Quest" (1974a, 442-50). Hawthorne also uses the image to refer to his wife, Sophia, and her angelic purity (Julian Hawthorne 1968, 288). Furthermore, in The American Notebooks (1972c, 319) he writes about heredity and environment in the following way: "A few assimilate none but good influences; and their emblem is the spotless and fragrant pond-lily, whose very breath is a blessing to all the region roundabout."

any harm in saying it? - her garter to slip its knot. Conscious that the silken girth - if silk it was - was relaxing its hold, she turned aside into the shelter of the maple trees, and there found a young man asleep by the spring! Blushing as red as any rose that she should have intruded into a gentleman's bedchamber, and for such a purpose too, she was about to make her escape on tiptoe. (1974a, 186)

The rose-red blush expresses the girl's virginal modesty, and yet the unmistakable erotic appeal that is suggested here is subtly reinforced by the familiar rose symbol. And in The Scarlet Letter Hawthorne will continue to use the rose as evocative of the dark lady and the natural fervour and energy that she represents.

Apart from the use of flower symbols, Hawthorne borrows from traditional folk-lore and superstition and creates a supernatural and pagan world, richly endowed with the aura of magic and enchantment, to bring out the wonder and dynamic mystery of man's passional life. The very quick of man's natural being is captured as it were in all its colour, joy and fire through the strange tales and legends that Hawthorne weaves and recreates in his writings. "The Snow Image" that describes the miraculous coming-to-life of a little snow girl, may be seen to portray the sparkling exuberant life force that exists in man, in all its primordial purity. The little snow girl is vibrant and joyous but also fragile and vulnerable, all too easily destroyed. The woman's wonder and belief in the snow girl manifest an innate sensitivity to and affinity with the primary life force, a sensitivity and affinity which in the man have been replaced by the "rational or upper or spiritual mind."¹²

A childlike superstitiousness or a readiness to believe which

¹²The phrase is used by D.H. Lawrence in his book The Symbolic Meaning (1962, 139).

Hawthorne (1974c, 20) calls "a childlike simplicity and faith" in "The Snow Image": this is what constitutes the native imagination and the natural fervour of the passionate being. In "The Battle Omen," "The Grey Champion" and "The Antique Ring" Hawthorne beautifully describes strange supernatural happenings which are moving expressions of the simple ardour and sensitivity of this primitive life force that lies beneath the conscious and/or religious mind. Indeed, the mysterious hues and luminous glow of the jewel in "The Antique Ring" seem evocative of the power and vitality of this natural force in man:

The diamond . . . glittered like a little star,
but with a singular tinge of red (1974c, 341)

and again elsewhere:

The spark of brightness within the diamond . . .
gleamed like an intenser than earthly fire. . . .
The glow of festal torches - the blaze of perfumed
lamps - the bonfires that had been kindled for him
. . . - the splendour of the royal court . . . -
all seemed to have collected their moral or
material glory into the gem, and to burn with a
radiance caught from the future, as well as
gathered from the past. (1974c, 344)

Yet Hawthorne infuses into the enthralling glitter of the jewel a sinister aspect that hints of evil and disaster. For a wizard's art had made the diamond "the abiding place of a spirit, which, though of fiendish nature was bound to work only good, so long as the ring was an unviolated pledge of love and faith, both with the giver and receiver. But should love prove false, and faith be broken, then the evil spirit would work its own devilish will . . ." (1974c, 342). The Earl of Essex refers to this darker property of the gem when he exclaims:

". . . Do you observe this red glow - dusky, too, amid all the brightness? It is the token of his presence; and even now, methinks, it grows redder and duskier, like an angry sunset." (1974c, 342)

Hawthorne, therefore, not only perceives the remarkable fecundity and fascinating beauty of man's sensual and passionate nature; he now asserts the potential destructiveness of this very vigour and vitality.

Hawthorne's awareness of the qualities of beauty and danger that are inherent in the human heart was already indicated in his notes written in 1842:

The human Heart to be allegorized as a cavern; at the entrance there is sunshine, and flowers growing about it. You step within, but a short distance, and begin to find yourself surrounded with a terrible gloom, and monsters of divers kinds; it seems like Hell itself. You are bewildered, and wander long without hope. At last a light strikes upon you. You press towards it yon, and find yourself in a region that seems, in some sort, to reproduce the flowers and sunny beauty of the entrance, but all perfect. These are the depths of the heart, or of human nature, bright and peaceful; the gloom and terror may lie deep; but deeper still is this eternal beauty. (1972c, 237)

However, the cavern symbol demonstrates that, although the monsters that lurk in the human heart are real enough, for Hawthorne, the evil that they represent ultimately gives way to an "eternal beauty" that is realized once this dark region is penetrated. Although, at this point, he is not too clear as to how this can be so (it is only in The Marble Faun that he perceives exactly how man is ultimately good and beautiful), there is a keen sense of human promise that prevails over and above the sense of evil. This predominant idea of beauty that is not obliterated by the realization of the darker side of man is what constitutes the ultimate human mystery as perceived by Hawthorne's poetic imagination. Thus, if in "The Antique Ring" beauty and evil are equally felt, this only points to the assertion of his more cautious rational self and the persistence of the Puritan influence that he cannot quite discard.

Hawthorne's second kind of Gothic that focuses on the exciting

richness and strange mystery of man's passional life, is derived from the second perspective established in the Puritan Gothic - where the writer laments the crippling iron-cage existence which Puritanism has imposed on man. Hawthorne, however, does not abandon the Puritan view altogether in what may be termed the Gothic romance of passion. The Puritan conscience persists because as Mark Van Doren remarks:

Sin for Hawthorne . . . is . . . a solemn fact, a problem for which there is no solution in life.
(Bradley, Beatty and Long 1962, 296)

But Hawthorne becomes increasingly emphatic, especially in the romances, that life is not all black, that despite his fall and the evil that mars his existence, there is much in man's nature that is admirable and beautiful.

Against the dark consciousness of sin, Hawthorne perceives the richness and power of human passion to which he ascribes the colours scarlet and green. In "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" the figure representing life in the adult world has a two-tone complexion - red and black - denoting the natural vigour and the sinfulness of man (corresponding with the writer's sensual imagination and Puritan outlook). Later, in The Scarlet Letter Hawthorne firmly declares:

ON A FIELD, SABLE, THE LETTER A, GULES (1962, 264)

where scarlet is seen against black, though significantly more striking and much more vivid. In "The Maypole of Merry Mount" Hawthorne includes green and other colours to evoke the sense of natural growth and fecundity:

Down nearly to the ground, the pole was dressed with birchen boughs, and others of the liveliest green, and some with silvery leaves, fastened by ribbons that fluttered in fantastic knots of twenty different colours, but no sad ones. Garden flowers, and blossoms of the wilderness, laughed gaily forth amid the verdure, so fresh and dewy, that they must

have grown by magic on that happy pine tree.
 Where this green and flowery splendour terminated,
 the shaft of the Maypole was stained with seven
 brilliant hues of the banner at its top. (1974a, 55)

In effect, and by his intense contemplation of the human condition, Hawthorne has taken the idea central to the Gothic tale, that of the moral ambiguity of human nature, a step further. Good and evil are not just intermixed in characters, but have relative moral implications as well. In this way does he question Puritan spiritualism and its methods of correction and discipline, showing, therefore, the malevolent aspects of a seemingly benevolent system of faith. In the same way, human passion, generally condemned as wicked and degenerate, is also shown to be vital and beautiful.

By balancing the dark Puritan conscience against colourful sensual life, Hawthorne also brings out the multiple facets of human personality, and the manifold levels of human experience: the physical and the spiritual, the unconscious and conscious, the creative and destructive and so forth. However, by combining scarlet with black, the light with the dark, Hawthorne does not only portray the mysterious aspects and complex nature of man, but reveals also the conflicting sides of his own character. The balance between Puritan conscience and a sensual view is an uneasy one for the writer. He was never quite able to resolve the dichotomy between his moralistic attitude and his poetic imagination, what Randall Stewart (1958, 83) calls "the Puritan and romantic tendencies." The conflict between the two impulses in fact, while enriching his perception of human experience, has also created a tortuous dilemma for the writer himself, where he is torn between horror and fascination where man's nature is concerned. The ambiguity and the uncertainty of his attitude, then, define the central situation

in Hawthorne's Gothic of passion, even as they fit in with the paradoxical tone of Gothic fiction as a whole: the emphasis on the irresolvable and shifting nature of the human condition.

Edward Wagenknecht (1961, 17) has remarked on the duality of Hawthorne's character: "Hawthorne was no extremist. He stood poised between past and present, the dream and the reality, sense and soul, heart and mind." And Wagenknecht quotes Julian Hawthorne to further establish the split in the writer's attitude:

"My father," says Julian, "was two men, one sympathetic and intuitional, the other critical and logical; together they formed a combination that could not be thrown off its feet." (1961, 17)

This duality in Hawthorne appears in the conflict between the writer's private attitude and the conscious public role he assumes. Personally driven by a strong need for poetic expression, he is also deeply aware of his responsibilities as a writer and of how his work will be regarded by his Puritan forefathers. In "The Custom-House" chapter of The Scarlet Letter his Puritan conscience has moved him to write:

Doubtless, however, either of these stern and black-browed Puritans would have thought it quite a sufficient retribution for his sins, that, after so long a lapse of years, the old trunk of the family tree, with so much venerable moss upon it, should have borne, as its topmost bough, an idler like myself. No aim, that I have ever cherished, would they recognise as laudable; no success of mine - if my life, beyond its domestic scope, had ever been brightened by success - would they deem otherwise than worthless, if not positively disgraceful. . . . And yet, let them scorn me as they will, strong traits of their nature have intertwined themselves with mine. (1962, 10)

The result is that very often, in his tales and especially in his romances, Hawthorne ends by abandoning the poetic insight that affirms and celebrates the richness and power of man's primary physical being

in order to endorse the bleak Puritan concept of human evil and of the need for spiritual dedication. This is seen especially in The Scarlet Letter and The Blithedale Romance. D.H.Lawrence has described this surrender of Hawthorne's in forceful terms:

He is divided against himself. Openly he stands for the upper, spiritual, reasoned being. Secretly he lusts in the sensual imagination, in bruising the heel of his spiritual self and laming it for ever. All his reasoned exposition is a pious fraud, kept up to satisfy his own upper outward self. (1962, 141)

Already in some of the earlier writings, a recurrent self-defeating attitude prevails. In "The Birthmark" and "Rappaccini's Daughter," the men characters (Hawthorne himself?) usually lose the very objects of their desire, that is, women of voluptuous beauty and passion, as soon as these come within reach, and all because, much as they want these women, the men would try to change or interfere with their human nature to make them spiritually perfect. Aylmer in "The Birthmark," by the use of science and its 'magical' powers, tries desperately to drive out the crimson stain on his wife's cheek, only to find that when the stain disappears, he is left with a dying woman. Hawthorne mocks at Aylmer's pathetic idealism at the end of the tale:

Yet, had Aylmer reached a profounder wisdom, he need not thus have flung away the happiness which would have woven his mortal life of the selfsame texture with the celestial. The momentary circumstance was too strong for him; he failed to look beyond the shadowy scope of time, and, living once for all in eternity, to find the perfect future in the present. (1974b, 56)

But Hawthorne himself tends to be just as unrealistic and sentimental. In "The Haunted Mind" he guiltily abandons his night dreams of dark, erotic fantasies - in which "Passion and Feeling assume bodily shape" (1974a, 306) - and seeks the safety of Puritan chastity:

As your head falls back upon the pillow, you think - in a whisper let it be spoken - how pleasant, in these night solitudes, would be the rise and fall of a softer breathing than your own, the slight pressure of a tenderer bosom, the quiet throb of a purer heart, imparting its peacefulness to your troubled one, as if a fond sleeper were involving you in her dress. (1974a, 308)

From the conflict between Puritan ideals and human needs and from Hawthorne's struggle between his public role and his private poetic imagination evolves the theme of separation in the tales and romances. This theme not only depicts the isolative and distortive attitude of the Puritans but also establishes the state of dislocation that entraps Hawthorne and his passionate characters. The use of paired or opposing characters and situations - one representing the spiritual conscience and the other the sensuous physical aspect - signals the separative attitude and delineates the rejection of the passionate life. This is seen in "The Maypole of Merry Mount," "Rappaccini's Daughter" and in the major romances, especially in The Scarlet Letter, The Blithedale Romance and, to some extent, in The Marble Faun. In "The Maypole of Merry Mount" Hawthorne juxtaposes the erotic, voluptuous nature of man with the Puritan ascetic discipline through two groups of characters - the Merry Makers of Merry Mount and the militant group that marches with Endicott. The opposition of the two ways of life is established by the use of such contrasting symbols as silk and iron, tree and sword, youth and old age.¹³ However the ambiguity of Hawthorne's attitude toward each symbol or each group of characters is still evident. For example, the joyousness of the natural spirit that rediscovers the

¹³ Hawthorne's use of silk and iron symbols is discussed by Q.D. Leavis (Spring 1951, 179-205).

harmony between man and beast and nature is celebrated in a religious ritual that goes back to the ancient vegetation festivals and natural religion of the pagans, when tree and animal and man were all accepted and respected as belonging to the natural order:

On the shoulders of a comely youth, uprose the head and branching antlers of a stag; a second, human in all other points, had the grim visage of a wolf; a third, still with the trunk and limbs of mortal man, showed the beard and horns of a venerable he-goat. There was the likeness of a bear erect, brute in all but his hind legs, which were adorned with pink silk stockings. And here again, almost as wondrous, stood a real bear of the dark forest, lending each of his fore paws to the grasp of a human hand, and as ready for that dance as any in that circle. (1974a, 55)

Yet Hawthorne also disclaims this latter-day joyousness as a vanity that borders on anarchy and savagery:

Their leaders were men who had sported so long with life, that when Thought and Wisdom came, even these unwelcome guests were led astray, by the crowd of vanities which they should have put to flight. Erring Thought and perverted Wisdom were made to put on masques, and play the fool. . . . The elder spirits, if they knew that mirth was but the counterfeit of happiness, yet followed the false shadow wilfully, because at least her garments glittered brightest. (1974a, 59)

In the same way, the grim iron-cast righteousness of the Puritans is qualified by a capacity for kindness that Endicott shows toward Edgar and Edith:

Truly, as Endicott had said, the poor lovers stood in a woeful case. Their foes were triumphant, their friends captive and abased, their home desolate, the benighted wilderness around them, and a rigorous destiny, in the shape of the Puritan leader, their only guide. Yet the deepening twilight could not altogether conceal, that the iron man was softened; he smiled, at the fair spectacle of early love; he almost sighed, for the inevitable blight of early hopes. (1974a, 66)

In "Rappaccini's Daughter" Hawthorne's characters are again paired

and juxtaposed one with another. Although the tale is set in Italy, the Puritan creed is clearly represented here in the persons of the youth, Giovanni, whom Richard B. Hovey (1962, 144) calls "a Puritan in Latin disguise," and the elderly Baglione, whose position of responsibility for and authority over the younger man is reminiscent of that of a Puritan patriarch. In these two characters also, Hawthorne presents the Puritan hostility to and condemnation of the passionate and erotic qualities in human nature depicted here through Beatrice. As Hovey sees it, the Puritan distrust of the sexual appeal of the girl (and her passionate response to experience) conjures up for Giovanni, reacting under the influence of Baglione, all those suspicions of Beatrice's terrible power to destroy life. Hovey shows how Hawthorne is deliberately vague about the deaths of the lizard and the insect, and about the withering of the bouquet, which the youth is quick to attribute to the poisonous influence of the girl. In each case, Giovanni's impressions are recorded - he thinks he sees the cause of death and decay, and yet he is never quite sure what it is he actually sees. Each time, the young man's vision is said to be distorted by something or other - wine, fancy and so forth. Hawthorne himself, in the instances mentioned above, emphasises that the youth is also too far away to see anything clearly.¹⁴

¹⁴Hawthorne writes (1974b, 102-103): "But now, unless Giovanni's draughts of wine had bewildered his senses, a singular incident occurred. A small orange-coloured reptile, of the lizard or chameleon species, chanced to be creeping along the path, just at the feet of Beatrice. It appeared to Giovanni - but, at the distance from which he gazed, he could scarcely have seen anything so minute - it appeared to him, however, that a drop or two of moisture from the broken stem of the flower ascended upon the lizard's head. For an instant, the reptile contorted itself violently, and then lay motionless in the sunshine." Again, in the incident when Giovanni's bouquet seems to wither at Beatrice's touch,

To take Hovey's ideas a little further, Giovanni's impressions could have been mere delusions, derived from his Puritan belief that passion and sexuality which Beatrice conveys so potently, are destructive and dangerous to spiritual life. Beatrice's poison may in fact not be there at all; it may be just symbolic of the threat that Giovanni sees in her. And all the time, it is Giovanni who is really sick. When the flowers wither in his hands and the spider dies, they are poisoned by the youth's own denial of life and nature.

In contrast to Baglione and Giovanni who stand for Puritan repressiveness, Rappaccini takes the physical aspect of life to the extreme, experimenting with natural life in plants and humans without scruple, to the extent of distorting the basic qualities of these. Hovey's suggestion of an incestuous relationship completes this idea of unnatural interference with and disruption of what is healthy, good and orderly. In Beatrice Rappaccini are encapsulated human passion and vigour at their most potent and promising. Her beauty is physical, sexual and voluptuous but there is also a spiritual wholesomeness and a purity. This kind of mixture - unlike cross-breeding - is natural to the human state and Hawthorne cannot reject or disapprove of it. When the girl dies, her death and Baglione's triumph give rise to a poignant sense of tragic waste and an indelible impression of the destructiveness of Puritan righteousness. And yet, as an extension of Georgiana's birthmark, Beatrice's poison could indicate the one flaw, the inherent evil that can push passion to the point of lust and decadence. The

Hawthorne comments (1974b, 104): "It was an idle thought: there could be no possibility of distinguishing a faded flower from a fresh one at so great a distance."

poison in the girl then comes through as a very real danger that cannot be ignored. This is the crux of Hawthorne's ambiguity.

The pairing of characters continues in the romances. Puritan types are always contrasted with figures representing human passion. In The Scarlet Letter for example Hester, the dark lady of vibrant beauty and imagination, is pitted against Dimmesdale, the Puritan ascetic type; in The Blithedale Romance the voluptuous Zenobia is juxtaposed against the fair and demure Priscilla, and in The Marble Faun the passionate and mysterious Miriam is seen against the virginal, dove-like figure of Hilda. Among the other tales, "The Gentle Boy" and "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" are also centred around the pairing of opposing characters or situations.

More significantly, however, the balance between poetic sensibility and Puritan conscience has given rise to a kind of sexual polarization in Hawthorne's writings. Puritanism, with its typical intellectual, spiritual bent and conformity, is identified with the masculine principle, and for this purpose, Hawthorne's Puritan characters are predominantly male, ascetic, dogmatic and severe. Eroticism and vitality, which he has implied to be archetypal qualities inherent in human nature, are isolated and ascribed to women, and are resplendantly represented by the dark lady.

The gap between the two sexes is almost unbridgeable, and it is enhanced by further differences in attitudes. The Puritan mind is caught in an obsessive time-consciousness; there is a frantic concern with past and present conduct to gauge retributions and rewards waiting ahead. This is paralleled by a fervent loyalty to tradition and ancestral ties, and a persistent desire to shape the present according

to the past. The feminine temper, meanwhile, works freely in an ever-present, timeless world of personal feeling and native instinct. This is seen in Beatrice Rappaccini's unquestioning acceptance of her situation and her spontaneous response to Giovanni. We recall also the joy of the children and the mother in "The Snow Image," as they celebrate the coming to life of the little snow girl, untroubled by the anxiety that afflicts the father.

That withdrawn, self-examining conscience of the Puritan male cripples the self and imprisons it in a condition of utter self-centredness that subverts all relationships based on feeling and sympathy. This is clearly seen in Ethan Brand, Richard Digby ("The Man of Adamant"), and Wakefield. The female character however, is usually warm, generous, loving and supportive, for her eroticism is combined with maternal qualities. This is exemplified in Beatrice Rappaccini, Mary Goff ("The Man of Adamant"), and Georgiana ("The Birthmark").

Elsewhere, the two-way journey that Hawthorne describes in some of his tales and in the romances reflects conflicting attitudes in the writer that incline him towards opposite directions at the same time. In "The Canterbury Pilgrims" the young lovers' attempt to move away from the Shaker community, to establish a new life in the world outside is balanced against the arrival of a group of people who have come to seek refuge in the Shaker settlement. Although Hawthorne (1974c, 131) mocks the life of "passionless security" which the Shakers offer, and hails the courage of the young couple in seeking a more fulfilling life of their own, the coming of this group of people checks the lovers' thoughtless dash for freedom, and makes them more aware of the value of an ordered life against the uncertainty and vulnerability of the personal quest.

Thus as they proceed toward the outside world, the life they leave behind will continue to remind them of an alternative way of living.

In "The Man of Adamant" and "The Ambitious Guest" Hawthorne repeats this kind of balance, where the journey in one direction is always countered by a move or a suggested move in the opposite direction. In these two tales, however, the opposite goals are not so clearly associated with the polarities in Hawthorne's own nature, but the juxtaposition may still be seen as indicative of the duality in the writer's attitude.

"The Man of Adamant" describes the influence of religious fanaticism that draws a man away from his loved ones to go into solitary confinement in order to dedicate himself to the 'true' religion he believes he has found. Mary's plea to Richard Digby to come back to her and to the society he has abandoned constitutes the opposing return movement that he refuses to take, and Digby continues in that proud, loveless condition and dies because of it.

In "The Ambitious Guest" Hawthorne demonstrates the opposing attractions of a worldly existence and a life close to nature. A traveller's journey in search of worldly fame and distinction brings him to a wild and mountainous region, where nature rules in awesome majesty and power. Here, secluded in the midst of the raw elements, a family lives in rustic simplicity, fed by "a continual flow of natural emotions," bred by "a poetry of native growth" (1974a, 327), and fostered by warm and tender feelings, music and mirth. A simple, superstitious belief and candour constitute the natural religion of these people. Yet, in this condition of fresh and unspoilt simplicity and natural harmony, there is a secret yearning for a more worldly life,

that is fired by the stranger's expressed ambitions. Thus, the father expresses his long-suppressed desires:

. . . I was wishing we had a good farm in Bartlett, or Bethlehem, or Littleton, or some other township around the White Mountains; but not where they could tumble on our heads. I should want to stand well with my neighbours and be called Squire, and sent to General Court for a term or two. . . .
(1974a, 329)

There is, then, a lack of complete acceptance of the existence close to nature, and close to the primal forces of the human self. The fear the family still harbours towards the mountains, their readiness to move at the slightest hint of an avalanche and the shelter they have built as a second home, therefore, become significantly indicative of their in-between state. That they end tragically as they do, in violence and total annihilation at the hands of nature, is the ironic result of their divided situation, where choice of directions becomes ultimately a matter of life and death.

If "The Ambitious Guest" seems to show the beauty and charm of the natural life, this is in line with Hawthorne's interest in the primary self of man and in the archetypal forces that make up this self. His fascination stems from a kind of pagan attitude that is a spontaneous response to the natural and the elemental, what one writer has referred to as the "intrinsically heathen" in Hawthorne.¹⁵ The garden symbol, drawn from the actual American pioneer landscape, is most expressive of his preoccupation with the passional life and of his rediscovery of the primeval nature of man. In "The Maypole of Merry

¹⁵ Klara Johansson's comment, quoted by Jane Lundblad (1964, 10-11) goes as follows: "Hawthorne is a Puritan heir only collaterally with his artistic exertions which are intrinsically heathen."

"Mount" the pastoral setting projects the primitive culture and life of the early American settlers. The dance around the Maypole and the parade of the May Lord and May Lady re-enact the motions of the fertility rites, so that the tree and garden symbols come together to culminate in a vivid celebration of nature and its fecundity. Planting and sowing symbols are also apparent:

On the lowest green bough hung an abundant wreath of roses, some that had been gathered in the sunniest spots of the forest, and others, of still richer blush, which the colonists had reared from English seed. Oh, people of the Golden Age, the chief of your husbandry, was to raise flowers. (1974a, 55)

These images again are suggestive of growth and fulfilment, which are associated with nature, with human passion and vitality. In "Rappaccini's Daughter" intimations of life and fertility are also conveyed by the garden and planting symbols:

Every portion of the soil was peopled with plants and herbs, which, if less beautiful, still bore tokens of assiduous care. . . . (1974b, 95)

But Hawthorne's pagan sensibility does not blind him to the sense of disorder and of the barbaric that underlies primitive nature. In "The Maypole of Merry Mount" already, the destructive potential of the natural life is clearly felt. Hawthorne shows how the brutish tendencies in man threaten to prevail, even as he rediscovers the elemental closeness between man and beast and tree:

Had a wanderer, bewildered in the melancholy forest, heard their mirth, and stolen a half-affrighted glance, he might have fancied them the crew of Comus, some already transformed to brutes, some midway between man and beast, and others rioting in the flow of tipsy jollity that foreran the change. (1974a, 56)

There is, then, in Hawthorne's garden symbol a suggestion of the wilderness, a hint of the dark, untamed forest, that conveys a sense of

evil that sharply contrasts with the suggestion of growth and life and fulfilment in nature.¹⁶ Such evocations of the wild and the savage, already implied in "The Antique Ring," are also evident in the dark forest symbol in "Young Goodman Brown," "Roger Malvin's Burial" and "The Hollow of Three Hills." In Hester, therefore, the unflagging spirit and imaginative fire of the dark lady are again associated with the wilderness of the primitive forest; and this forest becomes a threat to the individual and civilised society, however meagre the latter may be, under Puritan influence. For Hawthorne does not subscribe to a wild, uproarious life, given to the total and uninhibited expression of the natural, primitive self. Such abandon, like all forms of excessive behaviour, is often described in terms of witchcraft and other Satanic activities. In Hawthorne's world, the spontaneity and vitality of the primitive self is to be subtly contained and delicately ordered, though never forcibly repressed. For what he tries to do is to preserve the passional life, without allowing it to become totally wanton or depraved. The garden then presents a cultured landscape; it is a well-kept garden that is quite distinct from the dark forest and primitive wilderness of the savage life. This sense of careful planting and tending of nature is seen in The House of the Seven Gables, where Holgrave's plants, through the constant, tender care of Phoebe, are brought to full bloom and maturity.

Hawthorne's well-kept garden by no means indicates his ability to

¹⁶This view is held by R.W.B.Lewis (1955, 113) who says of Hawthorne: ". . . while he was responsive to the attractions of the open air, and to the appeal of the forest, he also understood the grounds for the Puritan distrust of the forest."

resolve the conflict between Puritan prudishness and poetic heathenism. For Hawthorne, despite the persuasiveness of this artistic insight, expressed through this garden symbol, is still driven to perpetually different conclusions in his works, influenced as he is in varying degrees by one or the other of the two aspects of his nature. Puritan values usually triumph over the primeval human spirit, but there are times when human passion is strongly asserted. At still other times, as in The Blithedale Romance, the passionate life is somewhat repressed and man is reduced to a ghostly death-in-life existence. Essentially, there seems to be a great need for a firm centre of belief and moral conviction, and Hawthorne's vacillations between the two forces that influence his heart and mind may be seen to be a search for this centre, that in turn seems to parallel his life-long search for a permanent place that he could call home.¹⁷ It is not until the writing of The Marble Faun that Hawthorne succeeded in reconciling the two sides of his personality, to achieve a harmony between heart and mind, passion and ideal, between the human and the divine aspects of man. This final resolution happily puts an end to the mood of ambiguity in his writing and closes the theme of separation that isolates the spiritual from the passionate.

¹⁷ Among the constant changes in environment which Hawthorne experienced from early boyhood, some were especially traumatic; these include the move from Raymond, Maine, back to Salem and then to Bowdoin College, Brunswick, Maine; from the paradise of the old Manse in Concord to Salem once more and from the Wayside, Concord, to England and Italy.

Chapter 2

The Scarlet Letter: "Between two worlds"¹

The Scarlet Letter, published in 1850, is Hawthorne's first major work. It is also his finest achievement that proves his power and talent as a writer. Continuing from his earlier, narrow depictions of human compulsions towards sin, guilt and expiation in a context of conflicting Puritan aspirations and human ardour, The Scarlet Letter establishes a perfect balance between detachment and feeling, romance and drama, to create a deep tragedy of human suffering. Here the density of symbolic mode, together with the naturalness of plot and action, has contributed to that sense of poetic evocativeness and power that has made The Scarlet Letter the masterpiece of Hawthorne's genius. Henry James's comment sums up the kind of critical reception that has met The Scarlet

¹The Scarlet Letter. (208).

Letter since its first appearance:

... it has about it that charm, very hard to express, which we find in an artist's work the first time he has touched his highest mark - a sort of straightness and naturalness of execution, an unconsciousness of his public, and freshness of interest in his theme. (1967, 87)

In a narrow sense, The Scarlet Letter may appear as a typical piece of Puritan Gothic that focuses on human sinfulness and probes unceasingly into the depths of human guilt and anguish, to evoke a condition of horror and despair. Hawthorne, indeed, has called it "a hell-fired story, into which [he] found it almost impossible to throw any cheering light" (Horatio Bridge 1893, 112). Seen in this context of human depravity, fear and suffering, The Scarlet Letter immediately recalls some earlier tales that had portrayed the dark plight of the soul. The torment of Reuben Bourne, Young Goodman Brown and Roderick Elliston is even more painfully re-enacted in Arthur Dimmesdale. Here an unyielding Puritan conscience combines with a keen sensitivity to exact an even heavier penalty of shame and fear which, even as it compels Dimmesdale towards total penitence and expiation of his guilt by way of confession, paralyzes him in a lonely existence of subterfuge and hypocrisy, which in turn deepens the guilt and horror. Dimmesdale's feverish condition of hallucinations and compulsive gestures of self-betrayal (his hand on his heart and his midnight sojourn at the scaffold) are, therefore, the result of his self-persecution and secret yearning.

As Puritan Gothic, The Scarlet Letter has penetrated more deeply into the psychology of guilt and reached further into the areas of faith and fear that motivate a tormented Puritan soul. The end, however, is joyous. From the Puritan viewpoint, Dimmesdale's triumphant emergence from terror and deceit to an almost heroic confession of his secret

guilt sanctifies him, so that his death is felt to be a manifestation of his exaltation and beatification. In such a way, Hawthorne, going further than he has in the earlier tales, not only defines the nature of Puritan conscience but enacts its very rhythm and describes its spiritual ideals as well. Dimmesdale's terrible agony, indeed, may be seen in Puritan terms to represent the soul's pilgrimage through evil and sin to achieve higher knowledge and spiritual transcendence.²

Hawthorne's attitude, however, is not wholly sympathetic. His detachment and irony come through on numerous occasions, for example when he voices the opinion of the townsman concerning the Puritans' 'merciful' treatment of Hester:

"Now, good Sir, our Massachusetts magistracy, bethinking themselves that this woman is youthful and fair, and doubtless was strongly tempted to her fall; - and that, moreover, as is most likely, her husband may be at the bottom of the sea; - they have not been bold to put in force the extremity of our righteous law against her. The penalty thereof is death. But, in their great mercy and tenderness of heart, they have doomed Mistress Prynne to stand only a space of three hours on the platform of the pillory, and then and thereafter, for the remainder of her natural life, to wear a mark of shame upon her bosom." (62-63)

In The Scarlet Letter Hawthorne shows up more openly than before Puritan self-righteousness and repressiveness, so that eventually it is to be wondered if Dimmesdale's sanctimonious surrender at the end is a triumph at all in Hawthorne's eyes. That he is critical of Puritan moralism is seen right from the start when he questions the chastity of Puritan matrons who take delight in witnessing the shame of another

²Edward Davidson (1963, 358-370), however, sees this as part of Dimmesdale's self-delusion.

woman:

It was a circumstance to be noted, on the summer morning when our story begins its course, that the women, of whom there were several in the crowd, appeared to take a peculiar interest in whatever penal infliction might be expected to ensue. (50)

Commenting on their manliness of demeanour and hard features, Hawthorne observes their desire for a harsher punishment for the sinner:

"The magistrates are God-fearing gentlemen, but merciful overmuch, - that is a truth," added a third autumnal matron. "At the very least, they should have put the brand of a hot iron on Hester Prynne's forehead. Madam Hester would have winced at that, I warrant me. But she, - the naughty baggage, - little will she care what they put upon the bodice of her gown! Why, look you, she may cover it with a brooch, or such like heathenish adornment, and so walk the streets as brave as ever!" (51)

And towards those Puritan patriarchs who sit in judgement over Hester's conduct, and later deem it improper for her to bring up her child, Hawthorne's attitude is just as mocking:

They were, doubtless, good men, just, and sage. But, out of the whole human family, it would not have been easy to select the same number of wise and virtuous persons, who should be less capable of sitting in judgement on an erring woman's heart, and disentangling its mesh of good and evil, than the sages of rigid aspect towards whom Hester Prynne now turned her face. (64)

Thus Chillingworth's words to Hester when she pleads with him to stop persecuting Dimmesdale in secret, are significant even though they are uttered more for his own exoneration and justification: "It is not granted me to pardon . . ." (174). So too Hester's words to Dimmesdale in the forest - "Let God punish! . . ." (194) - while expressing her defiance against human law, are also relevant. Each remark, seen in connection with Hawthorne's own attitude, contains a comment on the extent of man's power over man. Only God can judge, pardon or punish.

Indeed, as Hyatt Waggoner (1963, 155) has pointed out, the readiness of the Puritans to judge and persecute ironically calls to mind Christ's injunction to the Jews, when he is called upon to judge the adulteress they have brought before him: "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her" (St. John 8.7).

Against this, the solemnity and earnestness with which the Puritans impose their authority over 'vagrant' individuals is doubly ironic. Hawthorne's mocking description of the crowd that has gathered to witness Hester's punishment at the scaffold is an obvious gibe at the Puritans in their belief that they are but performing a sacred duty:

Amongst any other population, or at a later period in the history of New England, the grim rigidity that petrified the bearded physiognomies of these good people would have augured some awful business in hand. It could have betokened nothing short of the anticipated execution of some noted culprit, on whom the sentence of a legal tribunal had but confirmed the verdict of public sentiment. But, in that early severity of the Puritan character, an inference of this kind could not so indubitably be drawn. It might be that a sluggish bond-servant, or an undutiful child, whom his parents had given over to the civil authority, was to be corrected at the whipping-post. It might be that an Antinomian, a Quaker, or other heterodox religionist, was to be scourged out of town, or an idle and vagrant Indian, whom the white man's fire-water had made riotous about the streets, was to be driven with stripes into the shadow of the forest. It might be, too, that a witch, like old Mistress Hibbins, the bitter-tempered widow of the magistrate, was to die upon the gallows. In either case, there was very much the same solemnity of demeanour on the part of the spectators. . . . Meagre, indeed, and cold, was the sympathy that a transgressor might look for, from such bystanders at the scaffold. On the other hand, a penalty which, in our days, would infer a degree of mocking infamy and ridicule, might then be invested with almost as stern a dignity as the punishment of death itself. (49-50)

In the above description, the long list of victims and varied forms of punishment, ranging from whipping to scourging, to exile and hanging, is

another dig at Puritan zeal and devotion that leaves little room for feeling. Such evidence of a ruthless moralism and an inflexible system of justice contributes to the theme of persecution which describes the extent of human suffering in the face of an implacable machinery of retribution. As Hawthorne remarks of the pillory, that instrument of Puritan punishment:

There can be no outrage, methinks, against our common nature, - whatever be the delinquencies of the individual, - no outrage more flagrant than to forbid the culprit to hide his face for shame; as it was the essence of this punishment to do. (55)

In "The Custom-House" chapter, Hawthorne has prepared for this theme of persecution, when he describes his own victimization by a brutal political system:

But it is a strange experience, to a man of pride and sensibility, to know that his interests are within the control of individuals who neither love nor understand him, and by whom, since one or the other must needs happen, he would rather be injured than obliged. Strange, too, for one who has kept his calmness throughout the contest, to observe the bloodthirstiness that is developed in the hour of triumph, and to be conscious that he is himself among its objects! There are few uglier traits of human nature than this tendency - which I now witnessed in men no worse than their neighbours - to grow cruel, merely because they possessed the power of inflicting harm. (40-41)

Hawthorne's words echo through The Scarlet Letter, as Puritan moralism wields its own vengeance on fallen souls. Seen in such a context, Dimmesdale's adherence to the Puritan code at the end is indeed suspect.

From being a Puritan Gothic romance then, that depicts and criticizes the nature of Puritan discipline and ideals, and their impact on individuals, The Scarlet Letter broadens out to a larger view of human nature and its needs, over and beyond the Puritan perspective.

Going by the inevitable inflexibility of Puritan thought, Hawthorne, as in the earlier tales, once again poses the problem of religion against passion, mind and intellect against heart, man's law against nature. The Scarlet Letter, therefore, centres around the soul's predicament under the conflicting pressures of Puritan values and human ardour. It broods on the moral and psychological complexities underlying human action and desire in such a struggle. Whereas seen as a Puritan Gothic romance, The Scarlet Letter has Dimmesdale cast in the role of protagonist whose moral struggle relegates Hester to the secondary function of being, like Chillingworth, a mere catalyst in his journey through guilt to expiation, this broader reading places her directly opposite Dimmesdale, representing the other end of the problem which the tale poses. The two thus become the protagonists, whose isolation from each other gives rise to that condition of separation, that is so tragic and yet inevitable in a situation of conflicting moralities, each as powerful as the other in its influence on the sensitive nature which it moves. The tragedy is made more terrible, as separation is achieved through persecution, entrapment and guilt, for ultimately, separation involves suppression and renunciation of one point of view, and the imposition of the other.

The Scarlet Letter then, is essentially a Gothic romance of passion, where Hawthorne tries to assert the validity of human passion even as he shows the struggle against it, and its ultimate suppression by the stringency of Puritan righteousness, that only recognises spiritual ideals and aspirations. Here, indeed, is one of Hawthorne's strongest statements affirming the place of passion and desire in human existence. For even as Hester's supreme beauty and power are vanquished in the end,

they remain hauntingly vibrant against the gloom of Puritan asceticism, signalling and ultimately justifying the needs of the passional self that repeatedly show themselves in the current of submerged feeling that parallels the theme of tragic separation.

The force and beauty of human passion are resplendently conveyed in the fantastic gorgeousness of Hester's personality:

The young woman was tall, with a figure of perfect elegance, on a large scale. She had dark and abundant hair, so glossy that it threw off the sunshine with a gleam, and a face which, besides being beautiful from regularity of feature and richness of complexion, had the impressiveness belonging to a marked brow and deep black eyes. (53)

Her urgent responsiveness to life, her sexual fervour and imaginative vigour weave a magical spell as enticing as the colour and artistry of the scarlet letter on her breast - that brand of shame and ignominy which mysteriously becomes a symbol of fecundity and fulfilment:

But the point which drew all eyes, and, as it were, transfigure the wearer, - so that both men and women, who had been familiarly acquainted with Hester Prynne, were now impressed as if they beheld her for the first time, - was that Scarlet Letter, so fantastically embroidered and illuminated upon her bosom. It had the effect of a spell, taking her out of the ordinary relations with humanity, and inclosing her in a sphere by herself. (53-54)

Dimmesdale, meanwhile, the pale minister, scholarly and ascetic and nervously earnest in his deep concern with spiritual piety is the Puritan prototype:

He was a person of very striking aspect, with a white, lofty, and impending brow, large, brown, melancholy eyes, and a mouth which, unless when he forcibly compressed it, was apt to be tremulous, expressing both nervous sensibility and a vast power of self-restraint. Notwithstanding his high native gifts and scholar-like attainments, there was an air about this young minister, - an

apprehensive, a startled, a half-frightened look,
 - as of a being who felt himself quite astray and
 at a loss in the pathway of human existence. . . .
 (66)

Sensitive and yearning, Arthur Dimmesdale is a tender youth, fondly patronized by the Puritan elders, and venerated for his 'godly' aspect. His deep responsiveness and ardour, however, have another side even though they seem to be identified with religious fervour. For this is the same man who has committed adultery with Hester. This hint of sexual desire suggests a capacity for passion that is not out of keeping with Dimmesdale's keen sensitivity and zeal, which, admittedly, for the most part, are directed towards Puritan beliefs and aspirations. Hawthorne himself has remarked on Dimmesdale's fervent nature when he refers to his "thought and imagination . . . so active, and sensibility so intense . . ." (124). Chillingworth, even more succinctly, has noted the latent passion that underlies Dimmesdale's Puritan zeal and earnestness:

"This man," said he, at one such moment, to himself, "pure as they deem him, - all spiritual as he seems, - hath inherited a strong animal nature from his father or his mother. . . ."
 (130)

This he repeats on another occasion when Dimmesdale reacts violently to the physician's question about his ailment. Chillingworth observes:

". . . But see, now, how passion takes hold upon this man, and hurrieth him out of himself!
 As with one passion, so with another! He had done a wild thing ere now, this pious Master Dimmesdale, in the hot passion of his heart!" (137)

The theme of separation, therefore, describes Dimmesdale's struggle against human passion and desire. But it is not just a struggle against Hester who is the living expression of this natural force. Dimmesdale is also striving against his own nature which, deep down, is ardent and

extravagant. Although it may be argued that this passionate aspect is more often than not absorbed by his fierce Puritan faith, it does not seem to have been totally stifled. This is seen not only in his affair with Hester, which, after all is over, but also in his subsequent preoccupations. According to Frederick Crews (1968, 93-104), even Dimmesdale's self-flagellation (whether physical or mental) offers a kind of psychological relief which also has sexual implications. It is, in a way, an outlet for his passionate life, for Dimmesdale's penance has "incorporated and embodied the very urge it has been punishing" (Crews 1968, 96). Sexual energy, in other words, has expressed itself in another, more acceptable form. As Crews (1968, 97) describes it:

The original sexual desire has been granted recognition on the condition of being punished, and the punishment itself is a form of gratification.

Even if we go by Edward Davidson's view (1963, 364) that Dimmesdale's surrender to guilt and anguish are motivated by the belief that the intensity of suffering is a sign of spiritual exaltation, and that he believes himself to be embarked on "the Puritan quest for self-awareness through pain and the darkness of the soul," this is merely self-deception.³ In any case, such a delusion merely establishes the fact that Dimmesdale is indeed undergoing a double deception, one concerning his soul's pilgrimage through evil, and the other concerning the successful suppression of his passionate self. Dimmesdale may only feel guilt for his one transgression against the ascetic code, but that he "has never surmounted the libidinal urge that produced his sin" (Crews

³As Davidson (1963, 358) points out: "He is that truly damned man who convinces himself at every stage of his spiritual pilgrimage that he is really 'saved'."

1968, 96) is obvious not only from the sexual overtones that may be read into his self-punishment, but also in the way in which he is susceptible to voluptuous thoughts after his meeting with Hester in the forest:

Before Dimmesdale reached home, his inner man gave him other evidences of a revolution in the sphere of thought and feeling. In truth, nothing short of a total change of dynasty and moral code, in that interior kingdom, was adequate to account for the impulses now communicated to the unfortunate and startled minister. At every step he was incited to do some strange, wild, wicked thing or other, with a sense that it would be at once involuntary and intentional; in spite of himself, yet growing out of a profounder self than that which opposed the impulse. (217)

Even his earlier agreement to Hester's wild proposal to run away, notwithstanding his desperate condition at the time, may also be seen to be another indication of this passional self.

Dimmesdale's plight, therefore, may be seen on two levels. Consciously, he, the virtuous Puritan minister, is aware of his lapse into passion, and is overcome by the fear of making this lapse known. Unconsciously, he is still caught up with the passional aspect of his nature, which underlies his attempts at penance and purgation. Dimmesdale's inner suffering, therefore, is more secret than he realizes - not only is it hidden from public knowledge, but it is kept from his own consciousness as well, for at no time does he recognize the conflict in himself. The theme of submerged feeling identifies this deeper current of human passion.

Persecution and a rigorous Puritan conscience cannot totally negate the fervour of human hearts, however much they may try to suppress them. In Hester and Dimmesdale, therefore, feeling merely goes into hiding, turns inward, to give rise to an intense secret life. In Hester, the vitality and zest remain undaunted although they may assume a quieter

manner. The relentlessness of Puritan condemnation and persecution only means that Hester's passionate nature becomes submerged, but there is still a deep yearning for self-expression and individual assertion, that seeps through in subtle, imaginative ways. Her magnificent embroidery, her exquisite dress-sense (seen in the clothes she makes for Pearl), and her irrepressible participation in social work, are all expressive of this inner life that remains predominant. Her psychological withdrawal during her agony on the scaffold, by means of reviving memories of other times (57-58), her increasing audacity of thought and speculation during her exile which culminates in her bold suggestion to Dimmesdale to run away, and her sustained tenderness and sympathy for the minister are other manifestations of her forceful nature that unashamedly erects its own barriers against total subjugation.

The condition of submerged feeling is even more acute in Dimmesdale's case. But it is not only that passion and sensitivity have divorced themselves from human needs, to become the very agents of an excruciating conscience, giving rise to a dark sense of guilt and terror all the more terrible because it must be silent. There is also the deeper anguish of an unconscious yearning for passion that has been deliberately denied. This is subtly expressed in the secret bond between Hester and Dimmesdale. It is a bond, not only of shared guilt as Dimmesdale fervently believes, but is more a bond of shared feeling, that continues to keep them close. Communicating through the silence between them, in a kind of private language that only they can understand, Hester and Dimmesdale are still able to respond to each other's feelings under the very eyes of the watchful Puritans. Thus, in answer to Dimmesdale's public address to her, wherein she is called

upon to name her lover, Hester, reacting to his secret torment, refuses to do so, saying fiercely:

" . . . And would that I might endure his agony, as well as mine!" (68)

In the same way, Dimmesdale feels keenly Hester's anxiety about losing Pearl, and argues vehemently for her to keep the child:

" . . . This child of its father's guilt and its mother's shame hath come from the hand of God, to work in many ways upon her heart, who pleads so earnestly, and with such bitterness of spirit, the right to keep her. It was meant for a blessing; for the blessing of her life! It was meant, doubtless, as the mother herself hath told us, for a retribution too; a torture, to be felt at many an unthought of moment; a pang, a sting, an ever-recurring agony, in the midst of a troubled joy! Hath she not expressed this thought in the garb of the poor child, so forcibly reminding us of that red symbol which sears her bosom?" (114)

It could be argued that he is merely doing so to assuage some of his own guilt, or is even perhaps instinctively responding to Hester's forceful plea that he does so, but in Hester's appeal is already an indication of his capacity for feeling, especially feeling for her:

"Speak thou for me!" cried she. "Thou wast my pastor, and hast charge of my soul, and knowest me better than these men can. I will not lose the child! Speak thou for me! Thou knowest, - for thou hast sympathies which these men lack! - thou knowest what is in my heart, and what are a mother's rights, and how much stronger they are, when that mother has but her child and the scarlet letter! Look thou to it! . . ." (113)

" . . . Thou hast sympathies which these men lack! . . ." - besides referring to the fact that Dimmesdale is her pastor and spiritual adviser, Hester's words could also suggest that Dimmesdale understands her suffering better than anyone else, because he is going through the same loneliness. But, since Dimmesdale has already been shown to be

intense and ardent by nature, and since he and Hester have come together in passion, the words imply more subtly that Dimmesdale can feel for Hester more deeply than others can, because of what lies between them.

Because of this secret bond of sustained feeling between them, Hester and Dimmesdale feel no uneasiness with each other, when they finally meet in the forest, alone together for the first time in seven years. Indeed, there is a sense of overwhelming intimacy as the two call out to each other. Fraught with a joy tinged with dread, Dimmesdale especially experiences a deep relief, as pent-up emotions are let loose for a brief moment:

. . . the crisis flung back to them their consciousness, and revealed to each heart its history and experience, as life never does, except at such breathless epochs. The soul beheld its features in the mirror of the passing moment. It was with fear, and tremulously, and, as it were, by a slow, reluctant necessity, that Arthur Dimmesdale put forth his hand, chill as death, and touched the chill hand of Hester Prynne. (190)

The gloom of the forest, while emphasising the secrecy of the meeting, also enacts a kind of secret sphere where hidden emotions can at last show themselves. The meeting, therefore, is charged with a luminous beauty that vividly evokes the magical sense of remembered passion and intimacy:

No golden light had ever been so precious as the gloom of this dark forest. Here, seen only by his eyes, the scarlet letter need not burn into the bosom of the fallen woman! Here, seen only by her eyes, Arthur Dimmesdale, false to God and man, might be, for one moment, true! (195-96)

Here at last, with the silence between them broken, Hester and Dimmesdale strengthen that bond of feeling between them. But Dimmesdale's conscience, ruled by a rigid Puritan code, cannot acquiesce for long in this assertion of his human needs. And his answer to this lapse into feeling

is an even more zealous and vehement advocacy of Puritan piety. His election sermon and public confession, therefore, are direct reactions to the horror of his latest transgression. Ironically, however, even in his moment of exaltation, there is an undercurrent of pain and yearning in his voice, unheard by all except Hester:

Muffled as the sound was by its passage through the church-walls, Hester Prynne listened with such intentness, and sympathized so intimately, that the sermon had throughout a meaning for her, entirely apart from its indistinguishable words. (243)

That this cry is an expression of anguish stemming from a secret sense of guilt is not to be doubted, but Hawthorne's description is sufficiently ambiguous as to suggest that the undertone of pain and suffering is also an unconscious lament for the denial of the human heart. Hawthorne writes:

But even when the minister's voice grew high and commanding, - when it gushed irrepressively upward, - when it assumed its utmost breadth and power . . . - still, if the auditor listened intently, and for the purpose, he could detect the same cry of pain. What was it? The complaint of a human heart, sorrow-laden, perchance guilty, telling its secret, whether of guilt or sorrow, to the great heart of mankind; beseeching its sympathy or forgiveness, - at every moment, - in each accent, - and never in vain! It was this profound and continual undertone that gave the clergyman his most appropriate power. (243-44)

Dimmesdale's renunciation of himself and his passional impulses, therefore, betrays a stubborn blindness to the truth of his own humanity - a blindness, however, which is mixed with righteousness as he piously decides that his lapses into passion and his subsequent anguish constitute a kind of affliction to purge his soul and so bring it closer to its spiritual essence:

". . . God knows; and He is merciful! He hath proved his mercy, most of all, in my afflictions.

By giving me this burning torture to bear upon my breast! By sending yonder dark and terrible old man, to keep the torture always at red heat! By bringing me hither, to die this death of triumphant ignominy before the people! . . ."
(256-57)

This is a blindness which the Puritans share, as they try to interpret his words and gestures, without perceiving the feelings behind them.

As an earnest Puritan minister, Dimmesdale is consciously alive to the Puritan tenets of chastity and piety. But his unconscious self cannot keep well away from natural human passion and impulses. That he is young and sensitive inclines him all the more to these passional instincts, and yet his very youthfulness also makes him all the more malleable under the patriarchal authority of the Puritans. That the patriarchal bond - of duty, reverence for elders, and compliance to authority - holds sway is established by Hawthorne:

In that old day, the English settler on these rude shores, - having left king, nobles, and all degrees of awful rank behind him, while still the faculty and necessity of reverence were strong in him, - bestowed it on the white hair and venerable brow of age. . . . (237-38)

Dimmesdale's submissiveness to his elders is demonstrated in the way in which he falls in with the wishes of the Rev. John Wilson, "his professional father" (150), and Governor Bellingham and, despite his own horror and dread, urges Hester to name her secret lover. It is partly this sense of patriarchal duty, this feeling of "paternal affection and patriarchal privilege" (217), that prompts Dimmesdale to submit to the desire of the elders and to accept the ministrations of Roger Chillingworth. That their suggestion is based on religious arguments is another reason for his quick acquiescence:

Was he weary of his labours? Did he wish to die?
These questions were solemnly propounded to Mr.

Dimmesdale by the elder ministers of Boston and the deacons of his church, who, to use their own phrase, "dealt with him" on the sin of rejecting the aid which Providence so manifestly held out. (122)

Although Chillingworth tries to cement the relationship between him and Dimmesdale by pretending to regard the minister as his spiritual guide even as he is Chillingworth's patient, for the young clergyman it is once again his customary observance of the patriarchal code that makes him so susceptible to Chillingworth's influence and power. For Dimmesdale is very conscious of the physician as "the kind old man" (137), "with his concord of paternal and reverential love for the young pastor" (125). Thus, when in his nervous anxiety, he breaks out in a violent temper against Chillingworth, Dimmesdale is full of remorse afterwards and loses no time in making "the amplest apologies" (137).

Sensitive as he is to his filial obligations, Dimmesdale must agonise over his hypocrisy all the more as he realizes that not only has he transgressed against Puritan morality, but against the patriarchal code as well. On the night when he climbs the scaffold to secretly proclaim his adultery, Governor Bellingham and the Reverend John Wilson make their appearance in the vicinity, as if to drive home to Dimmesdale the extent of his guilt. Thus, as Dimmesdale fantasizes on the event of his public confession, his mind, full of his sin against the patriarchal bond, focuses on the old patriarchs, the elders and the deacons, and he sees them coming forth together with the dames and the virgins, to witness his acknowledgement of guilt:

Then . . . old patriarchs would rise up in great haste, each in his flannel gown, and matronly dames, without pausing to put off their night-gear. . . . Hither, likewise, would come the elders and deacons of Mr. Dimmesdale's church, and the young virgins who so idolized their minister. . . . (151-52)

Such thoughts and the sight of Governor Bellingham and John Wilson make Dimmesdale cringe all the more, even as he yearns to clear his conscience, especially when he observes the pious John Wilson, whose lantern takes on the appearance of a halo for the old man.

With his deep attachment to the Puritan faith and his earnest belief in the patriarchal code, Dimmesdale's dilemma is threefold. There is the need to confess his adultery, the desire to end his silence which has led to the deception of his elders, even as there is the secret inclination towards passion and feeling. Dimmesdale, then, is subject to a host of conflicting needs and emotions. But his final confession establishes the dominance of his Puritan conscience and filial sense over and above his natural, passionate self. Thus, not only does Dimmesdale acknowledge his sin of adultery but proclaims his hypocrisy and falseness as well:

" . . . At last! - at last! - I stand upon the spot where, seven years since, I should have stood; here, with this woman, whose arm, more than the little strength wherewith I have crept hitherward, sustains me, at this dreadful moment, from grovelling down upon my face! Lo, the scarlet letter which Hester wears! Ye have all shuddered at it! Wherever her walk hath been, . . . it hath cast a lurid gleam of awe and horrible repugnance roundabout her. But there stood one in the midst of you, at whose brand of sin and infamy ye have not shuddered!" (254-55)

Puritanism, and the patriarchal code which it upholds, dictate the narrow confines within which he moves and acts. For the most part, he is passive, more acted upon than acting. For, other than his one act of passion with Hester, which occurs before the tale begins, and except for the meeting in the forest, where for a brief while he takes off on a wild spree of voluptuous thoughts, Dimmesdale is mostly persecuted by a Puritan conscience, or manipulated by a patriarchal authority. Even

his silence during Hester's agony on the scaffold is not so much an act of choice as an inability to act, a failure to detach himself from his fear. His silence, indeed, signals a lack of will that results in a mere drifting with the current of his fear, shame and anxiety. His final confession, however, would appear to be the one positive move that ends a lifetime of passive existence. Yet even in this proclamation of guilt, Dimmesdale is not brave enough to acknowledge his sin without trying to indulge his Puritan conscience with the illusion that his adultery and subsequent anguish are but a kind of transcendental tribulation for the exaltation of his soul. Even to the end, therefore, Dimmesdale cleaves to the Puritan code which will not allow him to face up to the realities regarding his sin and suffering, that is, that he has transgressed against the Puritan ideals of chastity and virtue, and that his adultery is part of his passional self, which cannot be denied. And the Puritans, on their part, are ironically incapable of grasping the import of his confession, not just because his revelation is too sudden to be taken in at once, but more because it is unthinkable that one of their staunchest, most devout and exemplary sons has broken the code in more ways than one. As Hawthorne puts it, this is "an instance of that stubborn fidelity with which a man's friends - and especially a clergyman's - will sometimes uphold his character; when proofs, clear as the mid-day sunshine on the scarlet letter, establish him a false and sin-stained creature of the dust" (259).

Dimmesdale, frail and nervous in temperament yet earnest in his dedication, regards Puritanism as his sanctuary, in spite of its constraints and crippling influence on his individuality. As Hawthorne observes: ". . . it would always be essential to his peace to feel the

pressure of a faith about him, supporting, while it confined him within its iron framework" (123). But his whole condition throughout The Scarlet Letter enacts the state of entrapment and imprisonment, even up to his final moment, when his 'release' marks another kind of enslavement, that necessitates self-delusion and an evasion of the truth. Starting from the first chapter, which describes the early Puritan colony and its inevitable need for the prison, the tale closes in on the dark condition of Dimmesdale, which complements the public degradation and immolation of Hester. Like Hester, Dimmesdale is forced into a state of isolation, as guilt and the fear of condemnation fix him to a tortuous existence in "the dungeon of his own heart" (201). This prison of inner torment is horrifyingly described in terms of secret rooms and locked closets, where the dire agonies of the soul are vividly enacted, paralleling Hester's actual imprisonment:

In Mr. Dimmesdale's secret closet, under lock and key, there was a bloody scourge. Oftentimes, this Protestant and Puritan divine had plied it on his own shoulders; laughing bitterly at himself the while, and smiting so much the more pitilessly, because of that bitter laugh (144)

and elsewhere:

And now, through the chamber which these spectral thoughts had made so ghastly, glided Hester Prynne, leading along little Pearl, in her scarlet garb, and pointing her forefinger, first, at the scarlet letter on her bosom, and then at the clergyman's own breast. (145)

Mindful of Hester's punishment, the scaffold becomes, for Dimmesdale, a fixed point to which he is inexorably bound, so that he must compulsively retrace his steps and come back to it time and again to proclaim his guilt. The scarlet letter that he sees in the sky, and feels on his breast, is another indication of his mind's entrapment. References to

bond-servants and slaves, therefore, reflect his condition of bondage as much as they do of Hester's.⁴ Ultimately, for Dimmesdale, imprisonment takes the form of the submergence of feelings to the unconscious level. His persistent but unacknowledged feelings for Hester are clear evidence of this. And just as darkness aptly describes this situation of bondage and repression, and the condition of submerged emotions, the whipping post, the gallows, the scaffold and the scarlet letter are vivid symbols of constriction. Together, they embody and intensify the theme of persecution.

The fact that Dimmesdale is more a victim of self-persecution does not detract from the terrible power of Puritanism. Indeed, in Dimmesdale especially we see more fully the dire influence of the Puritan code, for whereas Hester, although publicly tormented, is never completely subjugated by the severity of Puritanism, Dimmesdale, because he is so zealous a Puritan, is utterly swamped by Puritan values most of the time.

The persecution of Hester, though less tortuous in effect, is no less terrible in kind. Whereas for Dimmesdale, the stringency of a Puritan moralism results in a compulsive mood of self-persecution, for Hester it imposes an outright policy of public punishment and humiliation. Besides these forms of public condemnation, imprisonment is the least of her sufferings. The branding with the scarlet letter on

⁴The first mention of bond-servants occurs in the description of the various forms of Puritan punishment: "It might be that a sluggish bond-servant, or an undutiful child . . . was to be corrected at the whipping-post" (49). When Hester calls on Governor Bellingham, the door is opened by a bond-servant: "Lifting the iron hammer . . . Hester Prynne gave a summons, which was answered by one of the Governor's bond-servants; a free-born Englishman, but now a seven years' slave" (104).

the front of her gown, and her degradation at the scaffold, meant to correct her vagrant nature, have the effect of brutally violating her dignity and scarring her mind:

It was no great distance, in those days, from the prison-door to the market-place. Measured by the prisoner's experience, however, it might be reckoned a journey of some length; for, haughty as her demeanor was, she perchance underwent an agony from every footstep of those that thronged to see her, as if her heart had been flung into the street for them all to spurn and trample upon.
(55)

For, in their attempt to ensure that "iniquity is dragged out into the sunshine" (54) the Puritans have made Hester into a public spectacle, "an object of severe and universal observation" (60), whose human sensitivities especially in her hour of shame are brutally ignored.

As Hawthorne remarks:

It was almost intolerable to be borne. Of an impulsive and passionate nature, she had fortified herself to encounter stings and venomous stabs of public contumely, wreaking itself in every variety of insult; but there was a quality so much more terrible in the solemn mood of the popular mind, that she longed rather to behold all those rigid countenances contorted with scornful merriment, and herself the object. (57)

Although Hester is spared the outrage of the pillory, her public parade, and her being made to stand on "her pedestal of shame" (118), are shocking enough in their abuse of her humanity and womanly modesty. The disregard for her privacy, amounts to a kind of false possession and ravishment, where the human heart is treated as no more than an object to be taken over, pried into and searched mercilessly.

The theme of false possession, falling back on the idea of bondage, recalls the bond-servants and slaves, each of whom is "the property of his master, . . . as much a commodity of bargain and sale as an ox, or

a joint-stool" (104). Hester's plight is not so different from that of the serfs, and in the same way is she regarded, for Hawthorne repeatedly refers to her as an "object," to be branded and displayed in the market-place (57 and 60).⁵ For the Reverend John Wilson, therefore, and for the multitude, she becomes no more than the scarlet letter in his sermon:

So forcibly did he dwell upon this symbol, for the hour or more during which his periods were rolling over the people's heads, that it assumed new terrors in their imagination, and seemed to derive its scarlet hue from the flames of the infernal pit. (68-69)

The power to dictate the fate and condition of an individual life demonstrates the total authority of Puritanism, that reaches not only to the point of ownership but to a kind of ravishment of the individual soul. In Hester's case especially, because she is a seventeenth-century woman compelled to bear the atrocities of public exposure, when, as Hawthorne observes, she "should have been seen only in the quiet gleam of the fireside, in the happy shadow of a home, or beneath a matronly veil, at church" (63), the violation is almost sexual, amounting to a rape. Thus the profuse eye images, while pointing to the blindness of the Puritans, combine with the references to "bosom" to suggest the abuse of Hester's womanliness:

The unhappy culprit sustained herself as best as woman might, under the heavy weight of a thousand unrelenting eyes, all fastened upon her, and concentrated at her bosom. (56-57)

These, coupled with the clear portrayal of Hester's voluptuous beauty,

⁵On both occasions Hawthorne uses the term "object" to refer to Hester being the recipient of unwanted attention. But the word also suggests 'commodity' or 'article,' following the theme of false possession and bondage.

bear out the sexual implications underlying her punishment. The desire to strip her of her colourful gown further points to a violation of her humanity, which borders on sexual abuse:

"It were well," muttered the most iron-visaged of the old dames, "if we stripped Madam Hester's rich gown off her dainty shoulders; and as for the red letter, which she hath stitched so curiously, I'll bestow a rag of mine own rheumatic flannel, to make a fitter one!" (54)

Conversely, Hester's fascination with clothes, gorgeously and splendidly decorated, like her own with the magnificent letter A, while projecting her spontaneity and imaginative vitality, also seems to suggest a corresponding desire to shield herself from the shame of public exposure. Clothes, therefore, become for her a kind of armour. This elaborate dressing-up extends to Pearl, whom Hester clothes in the most resplendent garments, as if to insulate her from the public gaze:

Her mother, with a morbid purpose that may be better understood hereafter, had bought the richest tissues that could be procured, and allowed her imaginative faculty its full play in the arrangement and decoration of the dresses which the child wore, before the public eye. (90)

Persecution in the form of a merciless prying into Hester's heart by the multitude links up with Chillingworth's secret probing into Dimmesdale's inner state to discover his guilt and subterfuge. Both events involve the taking over and search into a human heart. If, therefore, Chillingworth's conduct is regarded as Satanic, and condemned as a kind of Faustian encroachment, then the kind of persecution that Hester is subjected to is just as evil. Dimmesdale asserts that Chillingworth violates "in cold blood, the sanctity of the human heart" (195). This significantly echoes his feelings regarding the degradation of Hester, when, as John Wilson tells the multitude, the young minister

holds that "it were wronging the very nature of woman to force her to lay open her heart's secrets in such broad daylight, and in the presence of so great a multitude" (65). Although Dimmesdale may have other reasons for opposing the terrible persecution of Hester, his concern that the human heart should be inviolate is voiced by John Wilson himself, when the latter admonishes Chillingworth for his too avid interest in Pearl's nature:

"A strange child!" remarked old Roger Chillingworth. "It is easy to see the mother's part in her. Would it be beyond a philosopher's research, think ye, gentlemen, to analyse that child's nature, and, from its make and mould, to give a shrewd guess at the father?"

"Nay; it would be sinful, in such a question, to follow the clew of profane philosophy," said Mr. Wilson. "Better to fast and pray upon it; and still better, it may be, to leave the mystery as we find it, unless Providence reveal it of its own accord. . . ." (116)⁶

That Dimmesdale's concern is valid is indicated finally by the fact that Hawthorne himself shares this view, for, during the interrogation of Hester at the scaffold, the writer refers to "the mystery of a woman's soul, so sacred even in its pollution" (66-67).

Although the persecution of Hester, seen beside Chillingworth's diabolical torture of Dimmesdale, is not as sinister nor as devious, basically the two are not very different in that they convey a similar disregard for human dignity. Both the Puritans and Chillingworth

⁶John Wilson's objection, however, is only directed towards scientific research into the mystery of the human heart. When it comes to searching into the human heart for the sake of correction, the idea that the natural mystery of man should be left alone, no longer applies. Wilson, therefore, rejects Dimmesdale's argument that Hester should not be forced to lay bare her heart's secrets, least of all in public.

display a relentless will, directed towards retribution and vengeance. But whereas the Puritans are motivated by a spiritual cause, Chillingworth is only driven by the desire for personal satisfaction and knowledge. Nevertheless, the brutality and inhumanity of the Puritans come close to that demonstrated by the physician in his wicked manipulation of the minister. This is shown in the way in which the two kinds of persecution are described in similar terms.

As in the case of Hester's persecution, Chillingworth's intrusion into Dimmesdale's privacy is described in terms of prying and false possession:

So Roger Chillingworth - the man of skill, the kind and friendly physician - strove to go deep into his patient's bosom, delving among his principles, prying into his recollections, and probing every thing with a cautious touch, like a treasure-seeker in a dark cavern. (124)

Eye images again abound:

. . . in all the subsequent relations betwixt him and Mr. Dimmesdale, not merely the external presence, but the very inmost soul of the latter seemed to be brought out before his eyes, so that he could see and comprehend its every movement. (140)

Chillingworth's actions are more wicked because they are secret and disguised under the cover of friendship and medical advice. The fact that the evil of his deeds goes very much deeper is clearly manifested in the way in which the sense of false possession is intensified by images of desecration and thieving:

He now dug into the poor clergyman's heart, like a miner searching for gold; or, rather, like a sexton delving into a grave, possibly in quest of a jewel that had been buried on the dead man's bosom . . . (129)

and:

He groped along as stealthily, with as cautious a tread, and as wary an outlook, as a thief entering a chamber where a man lies only half asleep, - or, it may be, broad awake, - with purpose to steal the very treasure which this man guards as the apple of his eye. (130)

But to some degree, the wickedness of Chillingworth's actions must reflect on the Puritans and their persecution of Hester, since the latter have also violated the sanctity of the human heart. Thus, even while the similar images of prying and false possession link the two groups and their actions, the inhumanity of Chillingworth, described in terms of disease and deformity, extends somewhat to the Puritans, not only because they are similarly unfeeling in their treatment of Hester, but also because through their very intolerance and harshness they have rendered Dimmesdale an easier victim for the physician.

The Puritans and Chillingworth, in fact, represent opposite sides of the same idea - that of alienation from human feeling and from the natural life. For both parties demonstrate distorted views of human existence, each as obsessive and as exclusive as the other. Whereas the Puritans are solely preoccupied with lofty ideals of piety and with "the truths of heaven and earth" (110), Chillingworth is in pursuit of knowledge concerning the delicate workings of the human body. Thus, while the Puritans devote themselves to the "highest truths" (142), Chillingworth interests himself with "researches into the human frame" (119). Both parties overlook the natural human impulses and feelings that express themselves constantly in the people around them. Indeed, the Puritans, aloft on their "high mountain-peaks of faith and sanctity" (142), condemn passion, and shame its indulgence as typical of "her of Babylon" (110). Chillingworth, meanwhile, keeping close to science as he does, is "like a miner searching for gold" (129), to whom human feelings

are part of the treasures to be unearthed, noted and studied.

For the Puritans and Chillingworth, the result of this alienation from natural passion is a withering of the heart, a kind of drying-up of the "well-spring of human tenderness" (161). The Puritans, scornful as they are, and sternly withdrawn from "the impulses of youth" (64), are, therefore, wrinkled old men (and women), distinguished by "a ponderous sobriety" and a "grave and weighty" (238) sagacity.

Chillingworth is characterised by deformity and impotence, both of which conditions are emphasised by his association with weeds. Hester clearly makes this connection between his barren condition and destructive influence and the "unsightly plants" (131) that he gathers, when she describes his actions towards Dimmesdale:

". . . You search his thoughts. You burrow and
rankle in his heart! Your clutch is on his life,
and you cause him to die daily a living death. . . ."
(170-71)

Old age and sterility - the two are mirror reflections of one another, conjoining to reiterate once more the correspondence between the Puritans and Chillingworth. Caught between the two, Dimmesdale is of the opinion that by fighting off the secret and evil influence of Chillingworth, and by submitting himself to Puritan standards of morality and piety, he is saved and sanctified. By the terms of the relationship between the Puritans and Chillingworth, however, he is sadly mistaken. For although Puritanism may seem to lead him to spiritual ideals, its actual influence is just as fruitless.

Whereas under Chillingworth's power, Dimmesdale is in danger of being kept in perpetual anguish, wallowing in a secret guilt which he will never be able to expiate, under the Puritans and their code, he is faced with the prospect of self-delusion and moral blindness. Both deny

the recognition and acceptance of human passion and feeling. In each case, there is only a strict adherence to a rigid system of thought and action, void of heart, mostly derived from logic and intellect. For Chillingworth, ideas and demeanour are shaped by a scientific discipline that shows itself by the constant process of rational deduction. This is evident in Chillingworth's diagnosis of Dimmesdale's illness:

" . . . He to whom only the outward and physical evil is laid open knoweth, oftentimes, but half the evil which he is called upon to cure. A bodily disease, which we look upon as whole and entire within itself, may, after all, be but a symptom of some ailment in the spiritual part. . . . You, Sir, of all men whom I have known, are he whose body is the closest conjoined, and imbued, and identified, so to speak, with the spirit whereof it is the instrument." (136)

That this intellectual discipline can give rise to warped logic, however, is perceived in his interview with Hester, where he puts forward Dimmesdale's debt to him, completely overlooking, for the moment, the terrible effects of his secret persecution of the minister:

"What evil have I done the man?" asked Roger Chillingworth again. "I tell thee, Hester Prynne, the richest fee that ever physician earned from monarch could not have bought such care as I have wasted on this miserable priest! But for my aid, his life would have burned away in torments, within the first two years after the perpetration of his crime and thine. For, Hester, his spirit lacked the strength that could have borne up, as thine has, beneath a burden like thy scarlet letter. . . . What art can do, I have exhausted on him. That he now breathes, and creeps about on earth, is owing all to me!" (171)

Such distorted reasoning is again evident when Chillingworth tries to justify his continued persecution of Dimmesdale:

" . . . He has but increased the debt!" answered the physician. . . . "Dost thou remember me, Hester, as I was nine years ago? Even then, I was in the autumn of my days, nor was it the early autumn. But all my life had been made up of earnest, studious,

thoughtful, quiet years, bestowed faithfully for the increase of mine own knowledge, and faithfully, too, though this latter object was but casual to the other, - faithfully for the advancement of human welfare. No life had been more peaceful and innocent than mine; few lives so rich with benefits conferred. Dost thou remember me? Was I not, though you might deem me cold, nevertheless a man thoughtful for others, . . . kind, true, just, and of constant . . . affections? Was I not all this?"

"All this and more," said Hester.

"And what am I now?" demanded he. . . . "I have already told thee what I am! A fiend! Who made me so?" (172-73)

For the Puritans too, reason and intellect predominate to inform and order faith and religion. The process of rational argument is demonstrated in the debate between John Wilson and Dimmesdale, which the former relates to the multitude, concerning the propriety of searching too relentlessly into Hester's shame and in public:

". . . he opposes to me, (with a young man's over-softness, albeit wise beyond his years,) that it were wronging the very nature of woman to force her to lay open her heart's secrets in such broad daylight, and in the presence of so great a multitude. Truly, as I sought to convince him, the shame lay in the commission of the sin, and not in the showing of it forth. . . ." (65-66)

It is only through a series of logical reasoning that Dimmesdale manages to convince Governor Bellingham and John Wilson that Pearl should remain with her mother (114-15). As in the case of Chillingworth, however, intellect and logic are not without their dangers where the Puritans are concerned. As Dimmesdale shows, in his debate with the physician, reason, for the Puritans, can also be twisted to produce the desired justifications for actions. Thus it is that Dimmesdale argues for his continued secrecy and hypocrisy:

"That, good Sir, is but a fantasy of yours," replied the minister. "There can be, if I forebode

aright, no power, short of the Divine mercy, to disclose, whether by uttered words, or by type or emblem, the secrets that may be buried with a human heart. The heart, making itself guilty of such secrets, must perforce hold them, until the day when all hidden things shall be revealed. Nor have I so read or interpreted Holy Writ, as to understand that the disclosure of human thoughts and deeds, then to be made, is intended as a part of the retribution. That, surely, were a shallow view of it. No; these revelations, unless I greatly err, are meant merely to promote the intellectual satisfaction of all intelligent beings, who will stand waiting, on that day, to see the dark problem of this life made plain. . . ." (131-32)⁷

And when he at last confesses his guilt, Dimmesdale again interprets the meaning of his sufferings and torments by a distorted kind of reasoning:

"By giving me this burning torture to bear upon my breast! By sending yonder dark and terrible old man, to keep the torture always at red-heat! By bringing me hither, to die this death of triumphant ignominy before the people! Had either of these agonies been wanting, I had been lost for ever! Praised be his name! His will be done! . . ." (256-57)

The Puritan multitude too is susceptible to false argument, especially when they refuse to believe in Dimmesdale's guilt even after his public confession. They resort to self-delusory explanations and assurances:

According to these highly respectable witnesses, the minister, conscious that he was dying, - conscious, also, that the reverence of the multitude placed him already among saints and angels, - had desired, by yielding up his breath in the arms of that fallen woman, to express to the world how utterly nugatory

⁷Edward Davidson (1963, 362) says of Dimmesdale: "He reasons with Chillingworth on a most curious, and insinuatingly wicked, argument: he suggests that the judgement on that Last Day will not be God's punishment of the damned and reward of the saved. Quite the contrary: judgement day will be the final revelation of human guilt and the opening of the mysteries of this world 'merely to promote the intellectual satisfaction of all intelligent beings. . . .'"

is the choicest of man's own righteousness. After exhausting life in his efforts for mankind's spiritual good, he had made the manner of his death a parable, in order to impress on his admirers the mighty and mournful lesson, that, in the view of Infinite Purity, we are sinners all alike.
(259)

For the Puritans, therefore, as in the case of Chillingworth, intellect and logic have only contributed to self-justification and wilful blindness, that ultimately give rise to an unbearable self-centredness and pride. Just as Chillingworth, while understanding Hester's adultery, will do nothing to help her, and is more absorbed in his desire to avenge his pride on the man who has wronged him, so Dimmesdale, while sensitive to Hester's sufferings, is more concerned with his own anguish. In Dimmesdale especially, intellect and self-centredness have resulted in a deliberate distortion of the truth. He convinces himself that his guilt is one of the secrets that "may be buried with a human heart" (131). In this he seems almost to be arguing that this secret of his belongs with the sacred mystery of the heart, which should not be probed too deeply, lest one sins against "the sanctity of a human heart" (195). He makes no distinction between sin that is hidden, and the innermost nature of man, which constitutes the human mystery.

In Chillingworth and the Puritans, then, intellect and logic, divorced from feeling, are identified with the masculine perspective, which has little place for women. What women there are, appearing with the Puritans, are also defined by this masculine attitude. They are manly and hard-featured, and are relentless in their argument for reason and logic. This is evident in the dames who watch, unmoved, the bitter humiliation of Hester on the scaffold, and who indeed advocate a harsher penalty for the victim. The truly feminine perspective is characterized

by passion and tenderness, as are represented in Hester, whose warmth, generosity and spontaneity are seen in her ready response to Dimmesdale's need for solace and sympathy. Against masculine righteousness and warped logic, however, feminine feeling is helpless. Hester, therefore, becomes the ultimate victim, abandoned and denied time and again. Chillingworth leaves her after exhorting her to silence with a threat. Dimmesdale rejects her, but continues to lean on her to draw comfort and relief. The Puritans condemn and punish her; they make use of her services as nurse, helper and as someone who sews beautiful embroidery, but they will not give due recognition to her capacity for feeling and imagination. Thus, Hester, at the very end, can only hope for some change in the future, when, "at some brighter period, . . . a new truth would be revealed, in order to establish the whole relation between man and woman on a surer ground of mutual happiness" (263).

Yet, for all her vain struggle against masculine pride and logic, Hester is no pathetic martyr, utterly routed by an inflexible authority and narrow-mindedness. Instead, she is heroic, for her very vivacity and imaginative fire hold up magnificently, despite repeated humiliation and harassment. Furthermore, her nursing, her sewing and her care of Pearl, into which she pours her abundant feelings and imagination, are natural and fruitful employments that contrast significantly with Chillingworth's scientific research, Dimmesdale's sickly labours and the Puritans' ethereal preoccupations on the one hand, and ruthless administration of justice on the other. In Hester, therefore, is mirrored the essence of natural humanity at its most fecund, that shows up the unnaturalness of the other ways of life. Her passion, however, because it is human, is not faultless. In all its resplendent richness

and promise, it has a darker side, that links it with its primitive aspect. Even in Pearl, this hint of latent evil is already suggested. Amidst her spritely charm and elfin joyousness, Hester perceives at times "a face, fiend-like, full of smiling malice," so that "it was as if an evil spirit possessed the child . . ." (97). And in Hester herself, passion and imagination can result in recklessness. In the moral wilderness of the forest, her bold suggestion to Dimmesdale that he should flee to another place, and her defiant throwing away of the scarlet letter, may be her direct response to the other's plea for help and comfort, but they also stem from an attitude of defiance and aggressiveness that has been hardening over the period of lonely exile and bitter rejection. In this sense, Hester's wildness may be the result of her treatment at the hands of a severe society, that has cut her off from the softening influence of human contact. Hester's conduct, then, shows up the evil of Puritan society. Yet it is surely her own passion, her intense responsiveness and vibrant energy that, reacting to Puritan persecution, can possibly produce such fierce rebellion and daring. Ultimately, therefore, Hester's vivacity and independence are as much to blame as Puritan severity and intolerance for the impulse to break away. In a sense also, Hester's boldness is linked to her passionate conviction that her love for Dimmesdale is not sinful, but has "a consecration of its own" (195). But however fervent her belief, she cannot ignore the social environment in which she lives, and its values. Hawthorne has remarked, right at the beginning, on the impossibility of her cutting herself off from the society that condemns her so relentlessly: "The chain that bound her here was of iron links, and galling to her inmost soul, but never could be broken" (80). Hester

herself, in her observation of Pearl's character, has also acknowledged the need for some social framework, that will provide some order to life. It is her fear that, living with her mother in exile, and cut off from society, Pearl will not have this frame of reference:

Her nature appeared to possess depth, too, as well as variety; but - or else Hester's fears deceived her - it lacked reference and adaption to the world into which she was born. The child could not be made amenable to rules. (90-91)

It is this thought that makes Hester feel, however much she may reject the Puritan code, that in her love for Dimmesdale, she may have violated the order of things.⁸ This is seen in her thoughts regarding Pearl's conception:

In giving her existence, a great law had been broken; and the result was a being, whose elements were perhaps beautiful and brilliant, but all in disorder; or with an order peculiar to themselves, amidst which the point of variety and arrangement was difficult or impossible to be discovered. (91)

The realization of the need for a social framework as a point of reference may, for a while, be eclipsed during her long period of isolation; it may even have been deliberately refuted in her concern over Dimmesdale; but Hester cannot ignore it for long. It is possible that, for Dimmesdale's sake, she might have gone through with her idea of running away, but for herself, the need to relate to a social order, one especially which is familiar, is demonstrated by her return to Boston at the end of the tale. And in her return, Hester indicates her

⁸This point is raised by John C. Gerber (1968, 108): "The great law which Hester feels she has broken, therefore, is the law of order. Not conscious of being a sinner in the orthodox sense of the word, she is nevertheless bitterly aware of the fact that she and Dimmesdale have introduced an act of disorder into an orderly universe."

readiness at last to curb her own feelings and desires, and shows her consent to channel her efforts to the comforting and counselling of women who, like herself, are caught in "the continually recurring trials of wounded, wasted, wronged, misplaced, or erring and sinful passion, . . . unvalued and unsought . . ." (263). Nevertheless, in this last phase of Hester's life, she is ever fervent still in the hope that woman and her primeval capacity for love will be brought to a whole new relationship with man somewhere in a brighter future. Her epitaph, therefore, "ON A FIELD, SABLE, THE LETTER A, GULES," in one sense points to the containment of her vivacity within the Puritan order, even as it may also indicate its being partly overshadowed by Puritan gloom and discipline. But the letter A still gules, as if to say that her spirit and energy are never totally suppressed.

Hester's realization that she has to relate to the moral and social order of the Puritans, and her recognition that she has to balance her individual vitality and imagination with an established code of conduct, are shared by Hawthorne in "The Custom-House" chapter. Here, in this introductory sketch of his tenure at the Salem Custom House, which prepares for the narrative shift to Boston in the seventeenth century, Hawthorne already establishes the inescapable fact of the social, moral and political framework that circumscribes one's life. Going back first of all to his own situation in Salem, Hawthorne shows that a social and moral consciousness has generated in him a strong sense of history and ancestry, which in turn imparts to him a feeling of belonging and identity:

And yet, though invariably happiest elsewhere, there is within me a feeling for old Salem, which, in lack of a better phrase, I must be content to call

affection. The sentiment is probably assignable to the deep and aged roots which my family has struck into the soil. . . . (8)

Puritanism characterizes the moral tradition which he has inherited:

The figure of that first ancestor, invested by family tradition with a dim and dusky grandeur, was present in my boyish imagination. . . . He was a soldier, legislator, judge; he was a ruler in the Church; he had all the Puritanic traits, both good and evil. . . . His son, too, inherited the persecuting spirit, and made himself so conspicuous in the martyrdom of the witches, that their blood may fairly be said to have left a stain upon him. (9)

Significantly, it is this Puritan consciousness in Hawthorne that has enabled him here to see his literary career sardonically, from an external point of view:

Doubtless, however, either of these stern and black-browed Puritans would have thought it quite a sufficient retribution for his sins, that, after so long a lapse of years, the old trunk of the family tree, with so much venerable moss upon it, should have borne, as its topmost bough, an idler like myself. (10)

Although Hawthorne's tone here is light and comic, his words also reflect an uneasy guilt complex regarding his writing and his withdrawal from the public life. Responding thus to the Puritan code, Hawthorne may look upon his stint at the Custom House, apart from its financial benefits, as an opportunity to balance his own personal imaginative pursuits with some participation in society and public life:

. . . it was time, at length, that I should exercise other faculties of my nature, and nourish myself with food for which I had hitherto had little appetite. (25)

And if Hawthorne is finally ejected from office, by means which are unjust, but nonetheless unchallengeable, this merely confirms his realization that he is only an individual whose life is bound to an

external order, which in this case is political. His bitterness and rancour intensify his sense of persecution but inevitably, he has to abide by the system. Hawthorne subsequently departs from Salem, to be "a citizen of somewhere else" (44) and he is amazed at the ease with which he is able to dismiss the memory of it and its people:

". . . how little time has it required to disconnect me from them all, not only in act, but recollection" (44). But apart from what he has already established earlier, that Salem constitutes his roots, his ancestry and a significant part of his life, Hawthorne, in the very writing of "The Custom-House" chapter has enacted a kind of return that suggests the psychological link that can never be broken. The sketch itself, therefore, is a mocking comment on his claim to be "a citizen of somewhere else." Hester's return to Boston, at the end of The Scarlet Letter, bears out this compulsive need to retrace one's footsteps.

"The Custom-House" chapter is thus a fitting introduction to The Scarlet Letter. Apart from establishing the grounds upon which the essential ideas concerning private and public needs are derived, it also sets the theme of persecution and isolation with the description of the writer's own plight. The light mockery is double-edged, so that the individual and the external, social world are both satirized. And this dual perspective, the moving from the inner to the outer, is to prevail throughout The Scarlet Letter, achieving for it a remarkable balance and distance that establish the lucidity of its moral vision.

The relationship between the public and private aspects is achieved by Hester at the end of the tale. Her ability to accommodate the Puritan attitude of restraint, even as she nurtures her own fervent

nature, in tending to the needy, and in hoping for a more fruitful life for women, is an admirable task of balancing the inner world with the outer. That Hawthorne has prepared for this final condition of human passion delicately ordered by social rules, is perceived in his method of counterpointing the two aspects by way of their related symbols and images. Seen from the broad perspective of Hawthorne's moral outlook, the public and private aspects should complement one another, but in effect, they become directly opposed. Often, therefore, the juxtaposition merely points to the distance between the passional self and the rational, Puritan attitude, and their attendant symbols.

This one-sided view is indicated in the preoccupation with mirror reflections, without reference back to the event or person standing opposite the images. Such reflections, therefore, are mostly distortions, as for example Dimmesdale's perception of his guilt in the mirror:

In these lengthened vigils, his brain often reeled, and visions seemed to flit before him; perhaps seen doubtfully, and by the faint light of their own, in the remote dimness of the chamber, or more vividly, and close beside him, within the looking-glass. (145)

The exaggeration of Hester's scarlet letter on the breast-plate of the suit of armour in Governor Bellingham's house suggests the over-reaction of the Puritans, and implies the need to refer back to the actual object:

. . . she saw that, owing to the peculiar effect of this convex mirror, the scarlet letter was represented in exaggerated and gigantic proportions, so as to be greatly the most prominent feature of her appearance. In truth, she seemed absolutely hidden behind it. (106)

That the mirror essentially comprises a two-sided view, consisting of the

inner and the outer, is indicated in Hawthorne's description of Pearl and her reflection in the forest brook. Representing "the boundary between two worlds" (208), the private and the public, the brook shows the child's image in a purer aspect than the actual, that is evocative of Puritan ideals and aspirations:

Just where she had paused the brook chanced to form a pool, so smooth and quiet that it reflected a perfect image of her little figure, with all the brilliant picturesqueness of her beauty, in its adornment of flowers and wreathed foliage, but more refined and spiritualized than the reality. This image, so nearly identical with the living Pearl, seemed to communicate somewhat of its own shadowy and intangible quality to the child herself. (208)

Pearl herself, vibrantly glowing in "a ray of sunshine" (208) embodies the human aspect which balances with this ethereal image, made almost divine by the corresponding "ray of golden light" (208) about her. And just before this description of Pearl's reflection in the brook, Hawthorne has pointed to her closeness to nature:

The great black forest . . . became the playmate of the lonely infant, as well as it knew how. Sombre as it was, it put on the kindest of its moods to welcome her. It offered her the partridge-berries the growth of the preceding autumn. . . . The truth seems to be . . . that the mother-forest, and these wild things which it nourished, all recognized a kindred wildness in the human child. (204-05)

That the two aspects of Pearl, the spiritual and the human, should be seen together, to complement one another, is suggested in the way in which the first pure image of the child soon gives way to another reflection, showing a wrathful Pearl, caught in one of her tantrums:

Seen in the brook, once more, was the shadowy wrath of Pearl's image, crowned and girdled with flowers, but stamping its foot, wildly gesticulating, and, in the midst of all, still pointing its small fore-finger at Hester's bosom! (210)

This countering of one point of view with another continues. It is seen in the juxtaposition of colours. In Hester and Pearl, representing the individual or human aspect, passion and ardour are expressed in such vibrant colours as crimson and gold. These adorn the scarlet letter on Hester's breast:

On the breast of her gown, in fine red cloth, surrounded with an elaborate embroidery and fantastic flourishes of gold thread, appeared the letter A. (53)

The same colours illuminate the child's personality -

The mother's impassioned state had been the medium through which were transmitted to the unborn infant the rays of its moral life; and, however white and clear originally, they had taken the deep stains of crimson and gold, the fiery lustre, the black shadow, and the untempered light, of the intervening substance (91)

- and are enhanced by the gorgeousness of her clothes. Green, the colour of nature and growth, is also seen in the letter A that Pearl fashions out of eel-grass.⁹ It is as if Hester's attempt, through the use of colours and magnificent embroidery, to make the A into a symbol of her passionate self, is taken up by Pearl who, child-like, adorns it simply but succinctly with green, the colour of natural life.

Set against the radiant colours and sunshine of Hester's world, are the black, gray and white colours that represent the Puritan aspect. Whereas the blackness of Hester's eyes, and the glossy darkness of her hair epitomize her rich and vibrant personality, black, in the Puritan world, is associated with a repressive conscience, which in turn is

⁹Hawthorne writes: ". . . Pearl took some eel-grass, and imitated, as best she could, on her own bosom, the decoration with which she was so familiar on her mother's. A letter, - the letter A, - but freshly green, instead of scarlet!" (178)

symbolized by the prison, "the black flower of civilised society" (48). Black, then, is the colour of Dimmesdale's secret,¹⁰ and is evocative of his isolation in "the dungeon of his own heart" (201). Clad in "sad-coloured garments and gray, steeple-crowned hats" (47), the Puritans also identify the twilight world in which they live, shut away from the radiance of natural passion. The description of the town-beadle, who leads Hester from her cell, hints at the shadowy existence of the Puritans, which the prisoner is compelled to endure in a symbolic sense, to an even more extreme degree, by her enforced imprisonment and subsequent exile:

The door of the jail being flung open from within, there appeared, in the first place, like a black shadow emerging into the sunshine, the grim and grisly presence of the town-beadle, with a sword by his side and his staff of office in his hand. This personage prefigured and represented in his aspect the whole dismal severity of the Puritanic code of law. . . . (52)

Dimmesdale's attitude further contributes to this impression of a twilight world:

It was his genuine impulse to adore the truth, and to reckon all things shadow-like, and utterly devoid of weight or value, that had not its divine essence as the life within their life. Then, what was he? - a substance? - or the dimmest of all shadows? (143)

Another colour that typifies the Puritan aspect is white, the colour that suggests Dimmesdale's youth, his frail health, and terror. But more significantly it is expressive of his spirituality and "ethereal attributes" (142) that bind him to the Puritan faith. References, therefore, to "the paleness of the young minister's cheek" (120), to

¹⁰ Hawthorne talks of "the black secret of his soul" (143).

"the holy whiteness of the clergyman's good fame" (182), and to his "reputation of whitest sanctity" (249) abound throughout the tale. In this stringent world of Puritan piety, sunlight is replaced by the "spiritual lamp" (120) that is associated especially with John Wilson, whose lantern, on the night of Dimmesdale's vigil at the scaffold, seems to be transformed into a halo around him:

As the light drew nearer, he beheld, within its illuminated circle, his brother clergyman, . . . the Reverend Mr. Wilson. . . . And now, surrounded, like the saint-like personages of olden times, with a radiant halo, that glorified him amid this gloomy night of sin. . . . Father Wilson was moving homeward, aiding his footsteps with a lighted lantern. (150)

For all their repressiveness and spirituality, however, the Puritans' way of life is not totally devoid of ornamentation. Hawthorne describes their indulgence in ceremonial splendour that accounts for the popularity of Hester's embroidery:

Public ceremonies, such as ordinations, the installation of magistrates, and all that could give majesty to the forms in which a new government manifested itself to the people, were, as a matter of policy, marked by a stately and well-conducted ceremonial, and a sombre, but yet a studied magnificence. (82)

This propensity for official grandeur extends to the elaborate decoration of homes and buildings. Governor Bellingham's house is a typical example:

It had indeed a very cheery aspect; the walls being overspread with a kind of stucco, in which fragments of broken glass were plentifully intermixed; so that, when the sunshine fell aslant-wise over the front of the edifice, it glittered and sparkled as if diamonds had been flung against it by the double handful. The brilliancy might have befitted Alladin's palace, rather than the mansion of a grave old Puritan ruler. (103)

Such ornamentation may be ascribed to the taste of the age, and yet, as

Hawthorne ironically remarks, these "stern progenitors" of his have managed to "cast behind them so many fashions which it might seem harder to dispense with" (82). There seems, therefore, to be an unconscious susceptibility for the colourful and the magnificent, which in turn indicates an innate sensuousness that cannot be denied even though it is so vigorously suppressed in other aspects of life.

Like colours, and in relation to them, flowers also portray the voluptuous beauty and imaginative fervour of Hester and Pearl. The wild rosebush that grows by the prison door, making a vivid contrast with "the black flower of civilized society" (48), is an early evocation of human feeling and spontaneity. It is the first of many flower symbols that relate to Hester and Pearl. Pearl especially, herself "a lovely and immortal flower" (89) with her "wild-flower prettiness" (90), is seldom seen without them. Once, she gathers "handfuls of wild-flowers" (97) to throw at her mother's scarlet letter, and, on another occasion, she becomes a nymph-child, all adorned with "violets, and anemones, and columbines" (205). The Reverend John Wilson calls her Red Rose, and when asked the question - "Who Made thee?" - Pearl defiantly insists that she was "plucked by her mother off the bush of wild roses, that grew by the prison-door" (112).

These flower symbols set Hester and Pearl apart from the Puritans, who, in contrast, are associated with "the black flower" of the prison, and with "oaken flowers" (105) that are carved on Governor Bellingham's chairs. Significantly too, the hard soil of the governor's garden can only yield cabbages, and pumpkins, those "lump(s) of vegetable gold" (107), and just a few rose-bushes. It is in this setting that Pearl cries for a red rose: "Pearl, seeing the rose-bushes, began to cry for

a red rose, and would not be pacified" (107). The flower and vegetable symbols, which the Puritans are associated with, are representative of the severity and gravity of Puritan life, and cohere with references to an iron-hard discipline, that is most succinctly manifested in the iron-studded prison-door. These "iron men" (197) with their "ponderous sobriety" (238), recall, by contrast, the energy and vivacity of Pearl, who appears as "an airy sprite" (92), a "bird of scarlet plumage" (109) and a butterfly.¹¹ She is further described as an "elfe-child" (178), thus enhancing the atmosphere of witchcraft and magic, that surrounds her and her mother, and which is first evoked by Hester's artistry with her needle.

There is one flower that portrays the religious piety and ascetic spirituality of the Puritans. This is the lily, that may already be suggested in "the holy whiteness" (182), and "whitest sanctity" (249), to which Dimmesdale aspires, and which he seemingly represents. More specifically however, the lily is identified with the virginal innocence and purity of the young maiden whom Dimmesdale is tempted to corrupt on his emergence from the forest meeting with Hester:

She was fair and pure as a lily that had bloomed in Paradise. The minister knew well that he was himself enshrined within the stainless sanctity of her heart, which hung its snowy curtains about his image, imparting to religion the warmth of love, and to love a religious purity. (219)

The ethereal essence of the lily throws into relief the luxuriance of the red rose and its jewel-bright loveliness:

¹¹This last reference is made in the following description: "The dress, so proper was it to little Pearl, seemed an effluence, or inevitable development and outward manifestation of her character, no more to be separated from her than the many-hued brilliancy from a butterfly's wing. . . ." (228)

But, one side of the portal, and rooted almost at the threshold, was a wild rose-bush, covered, in this month of June, with its delicate gems, which might be imagined to offer their fragrance and fragile beauty to the prisoner as he went in. . . .
(48)

In the letter A, however, with its two-sided meanings and implications, the juxtaposition of symbols begins and ends. For the letter A in itself represents Puritan and human viewpoints, so that it also becomes the symbol of the conflict between the two attitudes. From the Puritan point of view, the letter A is a brand for Adultery and Puritan Anger, and is, therefore, almost a pictorial equivalent of the scaffold. In the human perspective, however, it signifies Ardour and Art and even perhaps Adam. And yet, looking at the shape of the letter A itself, where two vertical lines diverge from a single point, to be held together by a horizontal arm, it is possible to see the A as a symbol of that balance between the two aspects that Hawthorne advocates in the tale, and which Hester seems finally to achieve. Symbolically, therefore, the letter A shows up, on the one level, the conflict between Puritanism and natural humanity, even as on another, it suggests a relationship between the two.

Hester's success in changing the meaning of the A from Adultery and Anger, to Ability and Acceptance, is a reflection of her determined move away from the blight of persecution and isolation to a resourceful, and independent existence. Dimmesdale's compulsion, however, towards full acknowledgement of guilt, is a movement in reverse that completes his separation from Hester.¹² Structurally, the scaffold marks the

¹²The bond of feeling between them is broken as Hester realizes when she observes Dimmesdale in the procession: "She hardly knew him now! He, moving proudly past, enveloped, as it were, in the rich music, with

progress of Hester and Dimmesdale in opposite directions, that represents their conflicting attitudes. The first scaffold scene describes Hester's degradation and condemnation, from which she soon emerges, vibrant as ever in her zestful employment of her skills to eke out a purposeful existence. The second scaffold scene, however, represents the first stage of Dimmesdale's efforts towards confession, which finally takes place in the third scaffold scene. The scaffold, therefore, is still a means of juxtaposing the two points of view and, framing The Scarlet Letter as it does, it locks the tale in a perpetual condition of opposition and conflict. It is only in the concluding chapter, outside this dismal framework, after the death of Dimmesdale, and with the lapse of many years, that Hester is able to achieve a certain balance in her attitude. The same goes for Pearl, for she is finally able to relate to the world outside her own private sphere. It is said that Pearl is "married, and happy, and mindful of her mother . . ." (262).

While it keeps to the Gothic preoccupation with the unresolvable and paradoxical in human nature and conduct, The Scarlet Letter demonstrates the power of stock Gothic devices when they are used effectively. The method of mediated narration that Hawthorne employs through his retelling of the tale written by Surveyor Pue sets the romance at a further distance, in the past, in a dream-world of stark contrasts and spectral action. In such a world the blight of persecution and guilt fuses with the magic of passion and love; symbols

the procession of majestic and venerable fathers; he, so unattainable in his worldly position, and still more so in that far vista of his unsympathizing thoughts, through which she now beheld him!" (239)

have a life of their own, for the letter A takes on the shape of Pearl (who is in turn the personification of Hester's beauty and wildness) and the image of the scaffold merges with the figure of Chillingworth to become Dimmesdale's private cross and cruxifixion.

In The Scarlet Letter Hawthorne's moral vision is clear and sure. The dual problem of traditional religiosity and natural humanity which constitutes the Gothic conflict is all too familiar, but here in this first major work, he has achieved a poise that has only been made possible by a sustained ironic and critical approach to both sides of the problem. Here, detachment and restraint, mingled with imaginative delicacy, have contributed to those multifarious implications and ambiguities that serve to enhance the sense of the mysterious and unfathomable in life and human nature. There is, therefore, little sign of that conflict in Hawthorne himself, in which the Puritan and human aspects represent a division between conscience and artistic bent. For this reason The Scarlet Letter not only surpasses the earlier tales that Hawthorne has written but towers over subsequent romances such as The House of the Seven Gables and The Blithedale Romance. Only in The Marble Faun will he re-establish this control over himself and his subject and bring it to a higher level of artistic vision.

Chapter 3

The House of the Seven Gables: The Secret of the Human Heart

In his desire to identify with the established New England culture that is typified by its idealistic new-world outlook, Hawthorne had been somewhat troubled by the morbidness and gloom of The Scarlet Letter. He was, therefore, gratified by the sunshine he managed to infuse into The House of the Seven Gables. Started in August 1850 and completed in January 1851, this second romance was proclaimed by Hawthorne in a letter to E.A.Duyckinck, dated 27 April 1851, as a "more natural and healthy product of (his) mind" (The House of the Seven Gables 1965, xvi). Elsewhere, he also declared that it was "a work more proper and natural for (him) to write, than The Scarlet Letter" (Horatio Bridge 1893, 126). Written for and about his wife, Sophia, this romance describes the nurturing qualities of feminine grace and domesticity, and the uplifting

power of love.¹ Yet, for all its propriety and sunniness, The House of the Seven Gables is steeped in shadows, and haunted by a sense of inherited guilt and inevitable suffering. Notwithstanding the genial influence of Phoebe's feminine and angelic charm, the theme of separation and entrapment prevails and moves pathetically but undeviatingly towards a gloomy end. Hawthorne himself had voiced his frustration over the direction of the plot when he wrote to James T. Fields in a letter dated 29 November 1850: "It darkens damnably towards the close, but I shall try hard to pour some setting sunshine over it." (The House of the Seven Gables 1965, xxii). The apparent cheerfulness at the end of the romance, therefore, seems to be the result of a deliberate attempt on Hawthorne's part to bend the action to a happier conclusion, in order to fulfil his public role and to indulge popular taste. By this contrivance, however, he has sacrificed the book's organic form and his own poetic integrity. Milton R. Stern observes:

The absolute nature of the happy ending is, in effect, denied by all the rest of the book, and the ending arises not from the directions of the romance's energy but from the conventions of Hawthorne's literary marketplace and - in 1850 - his unaccustomed happiness and his relatively complacent and willing participation in those conventions. (1981, xxxii)

Seen from another point of view, however, this ending may be regarded as appropriate for, despite the seemingly happy resolution that comes at the close, the dark realities of the situation persist still. The end, indeed, emphasizes sad truths about human guilt and sinfulness, and even suggests some ominous developments that belie the book's general

¹ Alfred J. Levy (1961, 189-203) discusses the theme of love in The House of the Seven Gables.

atmosphere of hope and promise. Clifford and Hepzibah are too set in their paralysis to benefit much from the change in circumstances. Holgrave's absolute reversal to property-ownership and tradition is a disturbing reminder of Pyncheon vanity.

For all its sunshine, then, The House of the Seven Gables is no freer than The Scarlet Letter of the dark visions that had prevailed in the tales. In writing this second romance Hawthorne seemed to be grappling still with the meaning of good and evil, with the idea of beauty and deformity, imagination and repression, and with human vitality and depravity. The Gothic perspective that concerns itself with the dual aspects of man is thus prevalent even in this work, which at first appears to be written with so much charm, humour and sentimentality about the joys of progress, and of love and fulfilment in America's new democratic society. Hawthorne's Gothic vision may be seen on two levels:

- (1) where it describes the legacy of human evil and depravity, and the theme of separation and entrapment, thus re-enacting Hawthorne's Puritan Gothic and
- (2) where it studies the inner psychological life and the subject of dispossession, so that it is reminiscent of Hawthorne's Gothic romance of passion.

The House of the Seven Gables, however, is first of all a traditional Gothic piece. With its sustained evocation of ghostly influences and enveloping shadows, it relies on stock Gothic devices and techniques. Clark Griffith, therefore, even in his defence of Hawthorne's achievement in this romance has conceded that the writer "underwrote its conclusion,

relied too much upon Gothic devices and a tedious love story."² The House of the Seven Gables is particularly steeped in traditional Gothic superstition and mystery. Superstition prevails in that overwhelming sense of an ancient past which creates "a ghostly sphere" (34), an atmosphere of mouldy decay, death and insidious corruption, made more dreadful by the persistent reminder of Maule's curse. This superstitiousness is felt in another sense, in the deep veneration for lineage and family heritage that issues from the same awareness of the past, and in turn contributes to it. As for Gothic mystery, the romance abounds with secrets and the secretive. The mystery begins with Hepzibath's secret preparations for a mysterious guest, Clifford, who in turn nurses a secret of past degradation and present dread. Elsewhere, Jaffrey's hidden self parallels Holgrave's undisclosed identity. The house, too, is secretive in keeping to itself the secret of Jaffrey's death, just as it withholds the ancient papers that the Pyncheons have been seeking for generations.

The Gothic influence in The House of the Seven Gables, then, is usually to be seen in its narrowest and crudest sense, creating a novel of atmosphere, where Hawthorne's skill is perceived to be limited to the artful evocation of pity, terror and suspense against a background of degeneracy and corruption. But even this Gothic atmosphere is not sustained, not merely because of Phoebe's intrusion, but also because of Hawthorne's own tendency towards humour and ironic comment. Indeed, much of this Gothic gloom may just reflect Hawthorne's mockery of Hepzibah and Clifford, the one for her sterile existence in proud seclusion

²Clark Griffith (1954, 188 footnote 3).

that is only enlivened by a disturbingly intense adoration of her brother, and the other for his singular self-absorption and utter helplessness. Irony, therefore, accompanies Hawthorne's playful exaggeration of the mystery that surrounds Hepzibath's tremulous preparations for Clifford's homecoming:

We heard the turning of a key in a small lock; she has opened a secret drawer of an escritoir, and is probably looking at a certain miniature. . . . It is the likeness of a young man. . . . Can it have been an early lover of Miss Hepzibah? (31-32)

Clifford, too, is teased in a similar manner when, for instance, the Gothic darkness of his plight is dramatized in an extravagant gesture of desperation at the arched window:

He shuddered; he grew pale, he threw an appealing look at Hepzibath and Phoebe, who were with him at the window. . . . At last, with tremulous limbs, he started up, set his foot on the window-sill, and, in an instant more, would have been in the unguarded balcony. As it was, the whole procession might have seen him, a wild, haggard figure, his gray locks floating in the wind that waved their banners; a lonely being, estranged from his race, but now feeling himself man again, by virtue of the irrepressible instinct that possessed him. (165-66)

More significantly, the superstition and mystery surrounding and supporting the Pyncheon tradition are undercut by the single ironic symbol of the Pyncheon chickens that encapsulates the shrivened condition of the race:

Queerly indeed they looked! Chanticleer himself, though stalking on two stilt-like legs, with the dignity of interminable descent in all his gestures, was hardly bigger than an ordinary partridge; his two wives were about the size of quails; and as for the one chicken, it looked small enough to be still in the egg. . . . (151)

Hawthorne's satirical portrayal of Jaffrey Pyncheon, that finally gives

way to outright taunts and jeers, poses another disruption of the Gothic atmosphere.

On another level, Phoebe's sunny presence changes the direction of the plot from one of dreadful gloom to one of joyous fulfilment and release. Seen from this point of view, the Gothic romance gives way to a sentimental tale. For Phoebe's virginal influence and homely beneficence in part recall the demure but indefatigable virtues of sentimental heroines. In her spiritual ambience, the Gothic atmosphere of depravity, isolation and terror gives way to a cosy homeliness that is full of a sense of love and tenderness.

The Gothic element in The House of the Seven Gables is, however, not completely dispelled. The immediate atmosphere may be lightened by Hawthorne's ironic humour and by Phoebe's healing presence, but the underlying strains of bewilderment and torment, and the immanence of unknown and dark mysteries of the heart persist and remain unresolved right to the end of the book. Jaffrey's death and the improved circumstances of Hepzibah and Clifford can do little to remove the ingrained effects of evil and suffering, and even Holgrave's attachment to Phoebe will not erase the fact of human vindictiveness. Moreover, there is a hint of pride in Holgrave's conversion to home-ownership that is reminiscent of, if not similar to, that of the Pyncheons. For the deeper Gothic mystery relates to the dark depths of human evil and to the intriguing maze of human motivations and compulsions. The book's brooding insight into "the buried life" (Joel Porte 1969, 116) delineates the realities of human nature that contrast with the facile social concerns of the world of sunlight and day. This Gothic vision is portrayed as in The Scarlet Letter, through the magical spectrum of symbols and heightened

events.

Compared with The Scarlet Letter, however, The House of the Seven Gables is more diffuse in its plot, and lacks the highly intense and dramatic situation and action of the earlier masterpiece. As a Gothic romance, therefore, The House of the Seven Gables is less gripping and penetrating in its exploration of the human mystery. Apart from the disruptive effects of Hawthorne's ironic humour, the depiction of human behaviour and suffering is less probing, and feelings generally tend towards a single direction; in other words, there is a marked absence of sustained internal conflict. The tragedy of Hester and Dimmesdale in The Scarlet Letter that arises from the very nature of the characters and the influences of social and historical forces on them is fraught with conflicts on several levels, not all of which are fully resolved. In The House of the Seven Gables, however, the pattern of frustrated and perverted relationships is broad, less tied up with a central code, so that it lacks moral urgency. Even the love story is passionless.

Notwithstanding the fact that The House of the Seven Gables as a Gothic romance is timid and less satisfying in its penetration into the deeper and larger mysteries of human nature, its Gothic flavour is unmistakable. As Puritan Gothic, it is preoccupied with the Puritan concern with human evil and depravity. This is manifested in the theme of pride. The ancient Pyncheon desire to dignify the family name with an immortal monument of a home is at once reminiscent of the colonial and imperialistic quest, even as it signifies a class complex. Pyncheon pride, therefore, relates to a social/political and historical situation. It not only binds all Pyncheon patriarchs to a tradition of self-aggrandizement, but entraps the Maules in an inevitable condition of

subservience and subversion. In the words of Milton R. Stern: "The crimes of greed associated with power and wealth deprive both victims and victimizer of what might have been a birthright of refreshment and peace" (1981, xxiii). In so far as this pride is related to a feudalistic tradition of aristocratic privilege and segregation, it is juxtaposed against the principle of democracy that Holgrave proclaims; but this latter political ideal is ultimately eclipsed by Holgrave's own conversion to the patriarchal system and the theme of separation and pride persists. More significant however, and closer to the Gothic perspective, is the fact that this theme of pride, carrying with it the idea of inherited guilt and evil suggests also the legacy of the Original Sin. In this sense, pride with its attendant qualities and manifestations assumes an archetypal role that has mythic implications. This in turn may correspond to what John Gatta, Jr. calls the mythopoeic perspective, dealing with "sacred or visionary history" through "a teleological drama of redemption" (1978, 38). If this is the case the book becomes that kind of Puritan Gothic that describes the Puritan quest for spiritual exaltation through the darkness of the soul - a quest upon which Dimmesdale believed himself to be embarked. But this view of The House of the Seven Gables as "sacred history progressing toward a final apocalyptic fulfilment" (1978, 46), with Phoebe cast as a female saviour is unconvincing, even for John Gatta, Jr., since the spiritual theme cannot take off successfully from the earthy framework of contemporary life in Salem. He writes:

Unfortunately, Hawthorne did not entirely succeed in his attempt to fuse the visionary dimension of his tale, with a portrayal of present-day life in Salem. (1978, 47)

Moreover, the theme of guilt and suffering is not satisfactorily resolved, outside the convenient removal of Jaffrey Pyncheon, and despite the angelic influence of Phoebe.

As a Puritan Gothic romance then, The House of the Seven Gables is more convincingly involved with the portrayal of human sinfulness and the suffering it inflicts. From this point of view, pride, which is related to the Original Sin, and, therefore, archetypal of all human evil and guilt, is not exclusive to the Pyncheons. Pyncheon ambition, greed and unfeelingness, which are manifestations of this pride are matched by Maule vindictiveness, defiance and secrecy, all of which may be seen to be also derived from a certain egoism, arrogance and self-esteem. The cruel tyranny of young Matthew Maule, for example, is motivated by this pride, for the enslavement and destruction of Alice Pyncheon would otherwise seem too malevolent even in the face of the girl's initial slight and the long-standing feud between the families. One kind of pride is a mirror-reflection of the other. But whereas Pyncheon pride is directed towards material goals only, the anger of the Maules is channelled towards more sinister psychological and almost supernatural effects. Maule's curse and the mesmeric bewitchment of Alice Pyncheon are clear examples of this. The pride of the Maules is, therefore, more dangerous and devastating in the suffering and destruction that it causes, although its expressions may seem too fantastic to be credible. Compared with Pyncheon pride which is derived from a feudalistic attitude, the pride of the Maules is feeling turned to cold calculating revenge. Thus, whereas Pyncheon pride reflects an essentially social trait, Maule pride, apart from being an expression of plebeian defiance, signals an inwardness turned perverse, and is considerably more bewildering and frightening.

Pyncheon pride, defined as a devouring greed and a monstrous drive, is significantly paralleled by an ominous masculinity and sexual animalism. Colonel Pyncheon, called "the progenitor of the whole race" (120), is said to have "worn out three wives . . . by the remorseless weight and hardness of his character in the conjugal relation" (123). Jaffrey Pyncheon, like the Colonel whom he resembles, is a man of "large sensual endowments" (275). Exuding "a kind of fleshly effulgence" (116), his sexuality is deftly implied through the symbol of the Pyncheon bull and also suggested in the fate of his wife, who is said to have "got her death-blow in the honeymoon" (123), and died in "the third or fourth year of their marriage" (123). When Jaffrey Pyncheon comes to call on Hepzibah for the first time after Clifford's return, Phoebe shrinks from his kiss and from the crude sexuality that he emits:

The man, the sex, somehow or other, was entirely too prominent in the Judge's demonstrations of that sort. Phoebe's eyes sank, and, without knowing why, she felt herself blushing deeply under his look. Yet she had been kissed before, and without any particular squeamishness. . . . Then why not by him? (118)

This sexual threat that Jaffrey poses is realized in his ultimate storming into Hepzibah's house later to force a meeting with Clifford. His insistence in the face of Hepzibah's spinsterish helplessness may be perceived as a kind of sexual violation.

In keeping with the sexual character of the Pyncheons, and corresponding to the masculine aggressiveness and sexual animalism of Colonel and Jaffrey Pyncheon, the vulnerability and apathy of the weaker members of the clan are seen in terms of a kind of sexual impotence and withdrawal. The blighted existence of Hepzibah and Clifford, therefore, consists among other things, of a form of sexual castration, but this is as much an indication of their own feebleness as it is a mark of their

victimization by Jaffrey, and in the case of Hepzibah, by the whole race of Pyncheons and its proud tradition of aristocratic aloofness. Hepzibah has remained a "time-stricken virgin" (34), and Clifford has "never quaffed the cup of passionate love" (141). Deformity and old age are part of this condition. Hepzibah's femininity is an ugly distortion of the charm of Phoebe's womanliness, and Clifford, pale and emaciated, demonstrates "the spirit of [a] man, that could not walk" (104). The diminutive chickens, "old, withered, wizened" (151), are symbolic of this recessive strain that constitutes the opposite side of the sheer brutish animalism of the stronger Pyncheons.

The sexual threat that characterizes the power of the Pyncheons, however, is paralleled by the more sinister sexuality of the Maules. Indeed, this danger posed by the Maules is more fatal, and moves mysteriously. Its effect is total paralysis of the will and perpetual enslavement, so that the woman is rendered utterly helpless and dependent until she is finally destroyed. This is the fate of Alice Pyncheon under the mesmeric influence of Matthew Maule:

Setting aside all advantages of rank, 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. She instinctively knew, it may be, that some sinister or evil potency was now striving to pass her barriers; nor would she decline the contest. So Alice put woman's might against man's might; a match not often equal, on the part of woman. (203)

Her death immediately after her humiliating task of attending to Maule's bride on his wedding night completes the underlying suggestion of Alice's sexual bondage and dependence.

Phoebe is threatened by the same mesmeric power that extends to a sexual violation. She falls under the spell of Holgrave's hypnotic

gesticulations during his narration of Alice's story:

It was evident, that, with but one wave of his hand and a corresponding effort of his will, he could complete his mastery over Phoebe's yet free and virgin spirit; he could establish an influence over this good, pure, and simple child, as dangerous, and perhaps as disastrous, as that which the carpenter of his legend had acquired and exercised over the ill-fated Alice. (211-12)

That Holgrave refrains from pressing this sexual advantage is not only fortunate for Phoebe, but proves redemptive for his own humanity.

Hawthorne's Puritan Gothic romance thus explores human evil and depravity by focusing on the sin of pride, seen in its many aspects and effects. With Pyncheon pride so well matched by Maule anger, guilt is no longer attributable to any one party exclusively, although Colonel Pyncheon is the perpetrator of the initial transgression.

Against such greed and vengeance as the Pyncheons and Maules represent respectively, which keep them in perpetual confrontation, Phoebe's human goodness strikes a note of feeling and love. Dimpling with charm and warmth, she is "like a prayer" (168), that comforts and soothes, so that in the face of the masculine ruthlessness of the Pyncheons and the Maules and the helpless childishness of Clifford, Phoebe symbolizes natural womanliness in all its fecundity and generosity. But Phoebe cannot really resolve the situation completely. Even though she ends the conflict between Pyncheons and Maules through her union with Holgrave, she is unable to check the latter's slide from an initial attitude of total non-conformity to one of proud conservatism. Holgrave's self-acclaimed conversion - "You find me a conservative already" (315) - suggests, as Alfred H. Marks (1956, 367) observes, that "thanks to wealth and real estate a new curse may be acquired or the old one, in a way, be perpetuated." Certainly, Holgrave's complete turnaround from a bold

dismissal of the past to a desire for family and continuity is ominously reminiscent of the Pyncheon concern with property and tradition. He comments on Jaffrey's country-house:

"But I wonder that the late Judge - being so opulent, and with a reasonable prospect of transmitting his wealth to descendants of his own - should not have felt the propriety of embodying so excellent a piece of domestic architecture in stone, rather than in wood. Then, every generation of the family might have altered the interior, to suit its own taste and convenience, while the exterior, through the lapse of years, might have been adding venerableness to its original beauty, and thus giving that impression of permanence, which I consider essential to the happiness of any one moment." (314-15)

Holgrave's desire for permanence may be but a joyous celebration of his newfound love with Phoebe - a love that has brought him "hope, warmth, and joy" (306) - and his words may merely express a need to conserve and immortalize this love. But Hawthorne is vague about this, and it is impossible not to be reminded of the Pyncheons as one listens to Holgrave.

On the other hand, Holgrave's conversion to a Pyncheon-like pride in property and tradition by no means suggests his reconciliation with the Pyncheon family as such. Although his love for and marriage to Phoebe may be said to mark the end of the conflict between Maules and Pyncheons, this is not so much because of any change in his attitude towards the other family as because the last Pyncheon who constitutes a challenge to Maule pride - Jaffrey Pyncheon - is dead. Holgrave's new preoccupation with family tradition, therefore, merely signals his shift from the kind of self-esteem that distinguishes the Maules to the more feudalistic pride that characterizes the Pyncheon attitude. If, as in his refusal to hold Phoebe entranced by his almost mesmeric powers, Holgrave's marriage suggests a new capacity to feel, his new-found feeling does not really take him out of that typical Maule attitude of self-advancement.

The warmth and joy he finds in Phoebe, that seem to promise a shift out of the condition of proud self-preoccupation to a desire for relationship, is cancelled out by his new pride in property and tradition. In Holgrave plebeian pride in the self extends to regard for heritage and family.

Phoebe's role, therefore, in helping to bring about the change in Holgrave's otherwise aloof attitude, is only partly successful. Her influence on Hepzibah and Clifford, however beneficial, is also limited. She cannot undo the past nor heal the scars suffered by both sister and brother. Hawthorne himself stresses on the indelible wrong done to Clifford:

After such wrong as he had suffered, there is no reparation. The pitiable mockery of it, which the world might have been ready enough to offer, coming so long after the agony had done its utmost work, would have been fit only to provoke bitterer laughter than poor Clifford was ever capable of. It is a truth . . . that no great mistake, whether acted or endured, in our mortal sphere, is ever really set right. . . . The better remedy is for the sufferer to pass on, and leave what he once thought his irreparable ruin far behind him. (313)

Whatever 'happiness' that may come must, therefore, be viewed within this context. It amounts to no more than a lightening of the burden by more congenial circumstances. Hawthorne remarks:

[Clifford] never, it is true, attained to nearly the full measure of what might have been his faculties. But he recovered enough of them partially to light up his character, to display some outline of the marvellous grace that was abortive in it, and to make him the object of no less deep, although less melancholy interest than heretofore. (314)

In Hawthorne's Puritan Gothic romance, therefore, the shadows prevail right to the end. If he had intended to write a happier book, as his own declarations seem to testify, he had nevertheless evoked a darker world,

which though he left unacknowledged, is perceived throughout the book and even in the seemingly happy ending.

In so far as human depravity and sinfulness relate to Pyncheon pride, they are more specifically concerned with a material greed and a worldliness that seek to overcome time, even as they are bound to its immediate chronology. Colonel Pyncheon had first taken avid delight in appropriating property and planting the family in the largest tract of land he could lay his hands on. Urged by the prospect of immortalizing the family name, of triumphing over time and death as it were, he could nevertheless make good use of time itself to further his ambition. For the event of Matthew Maule being suspected of witchcraft was propitiously used by the Colonel to remove the one obstacle to his claim, and all under the guise of righteousness. In the same way Jaffrey Pyncheon, in a determined effort to succeed to the Pyncheon patriarchate, takes advantage of immediate events to establish his place in the family. When his uncle dies suddenly, therefore, as a result of the shock of finding the young Jaffrey searching through his papers, the latter seizes the opportunity it affords to advance himself "at the expense of Clifford, his rival" (312). The success of the Pyncheons in amassing wealth and attaining power thus arises from and contributes to a worldliness that indicates an enslavement to the material and the temporal, even as its concern with the idea of continuity is also ironically derived from a vain hope of attaining permanence and triumphing over time.

The Pyncheon house is the main symbol of this desire for glorification and permanence. Apart from this, there is also the Colonel's portrait, with its persistent malevolent influence, that establishes the Pyncheon ambition to hold on to life even after death. That the effort is futile,

however, is driven home in the chapter called "Governor Pyncheon," where Hawthorne mocks at Jaffrey's way of life that moves by the tick of the clock, that depends so much on timing for the achievement of long-term objectives. For this living by the clock, this planning to squeeze in every opportunity for self-advancement and material gain, is ironically defeated by time itself. Jaffrey Pyncheon dies suddenly and many plans are left unrealized. Hawthorne, therefore, writes: "Time, all at once, appears to have become a matter of no moment with the Judge" (271).

Jaffrey's attempts to make time work for him are finally foiled when he is about to achieve the highest honour of all - that of being Governor. This calls to mind the similar inopportune death of Colonel Pyncheon. As Hawthorne reports, the founder of the Pyncheon tradition "died too soon" (18), just when his claim to the eastern lands was about to be realized. Human lives and efforts are puny "while the great world-clock of Time still keeps its beat" (281-82). Yet the Pyncheons will continue vainly to hope and plan for the future.

Even Holgrave, whose contempt for the past, for tradition and fame, is part of his democratic idealism, falls prey to the thought of endowing a family for the future. The past, felt "like a giant's dead body" (182), which he scorns in his youthful effervescence, is soon perceived to possess a "venerableness" (314), which gives "that impression of permanence" (314-15) that he considers essential to the happiness of any one moment. Viewed against the Pyncheons, therefore, Holgrave ultimately shows a similar kind of pride that strives against time. He has managed to contain the mysterious power of mesmerism and the sinister influence that the Maules have maintained against the Pyncheons for generations, but he has done so merely to subscribe to the Pyncheon weakness for property and tradition.

For all his political idealism and philosophy, for all his youthful clamour for change and independence, Holgrave is ultimately almost as worldly and conservative as the Pyncheons.

There is thus a prevailing contrast between appearance and reality throughout the book. The contrast shows up not only the hypocrisy and wickedness of Jaffrey Pyncheon's public mask of benevolence and benign respectability, but also Holgrave's susceptibility to the idea of family heritage. Pyncheon pride, therefore, is matched by Maule pride, not only in the parallel between aristocratic arrogance and plebeian defiance and determination, but also in the correspondence between Jaffrey Pyncheon's acquisitiveness and Holgrave's attitude of conservation.

The theme of appearance and reality shows up the double irony in the conflict between Pyncheons and Maules. After the initial defeat of old Matthew Maule, it would seem that Maule pride wins out in the end, notwithstanding the apparent power and authority of the Pyncheons. This is not so surprising, in view of the fact that throughout the years of Pyncheon history, the portrait of Colonel Pyncheon has become the symbol of an ineffective pride, and the control of the family's destiny has mysteriously rested in Maule hands. Holgrave, in his story about Gervayse and Alice Pyncheon, thus describes the threat made by old Maule's ghost, that unless the ground-rent was paid or the mansion given up by the Pyncheons, "he, the ghostly creditor, would have his finger in all the affairs of the Pyncheons, and make everything go wrong with them" (189). There are constant reminders of Maule domination throughout Pyncheon history. Colonel Pyncheon himself was ironically robbed of his moment of triumph by a death that was prophesied if not actually caused by old Maule before his execution. Gervayse and Alice Pyncheon found their plans crushed by

young Matthew Maule. Holgrave's disclosure of the secret hiding-place for the claim documents underlines the fact that the Pyncheons have been driven to years of frustration by the mockingly adroit cunning of builder Maule. Even Holgrave himself, by his cool withholding of the secret to the very last, has controlled in part the lives of Hepzibah, Clifford and Jaffrey Pyncheon. Recalling the plight of Alice, Hepzibah and her brother are the present-day victims of the power struggle between Pyncheons and Maules, although Jaffrey is blithely unaware that it is Holgrave he is up against, and although the contest in this present generation is very low-keyed indeed as a result. Holgrave's power also extends to a secret knowledge of Jaffrey's true nature, for his artistic insight and mysterious faculty of "inward prophecy" (179) which are part of his Maule heritage, enable him to penetrate beneath the bright facade of amiability and benignity that the Judge presents. His portrait of Jaffrey which he shows to Phoebe subverts the former's careful posturing. It displays the real judge, "sly, subtle, hard, imperious, and withal, cold as ice" (92). The iron will and "iron energy of purpose" (7) of the Pyncheons are thus neatly countered by the subtler power of the Maules.

In the end, however, Holgrave's victory is questionable as he becomes dependent on Phoebe Pyncheon for his happiness, although the girl may not be regarded as a true Pyncheon. Furthermore, Holgrave slides into a Pyncheon kind of preoccupation with property and with enshrining the family in time. The blooming of Alice's posy at the end, therefore, may be more significant than it seems. Even as the blossoms signal the flowering of love and feeling after years of repression and denial, thus marking the defeat of Pyncheon tyranny, they also point to the release

from the Maule curse and Maule vengeance. The flowers may even signify Holgrave's surrender to the Pyncheon tradition of pride in family and possession. Alice's posy, therefore, may contain an ironic and even ominous comment on Holgrave's new life.

Amidst a deepening sense of ambiguity and complexity the theme of appearance and reality gathers increasing significance. Clothes and manners are part of the external facade that hides the dark twists and turns of characters and actions. The Pyncheon image of wealth, prestige and authority is defined by solid furniture, luxurious dressing and studied manners. Hawthorne's descriptions bear this out:

It was a low-studded room, with a beam across the ceiling, panelled with dark wood, and having a large chimney-piece, set round with pictured tiles, but now closed by an iron fireboard. . . . Half a dozen chairs stood about the room, straight and stiff. . . . One exception there was, however, in a very antique elbow-chair, with a high back, carved elaborately in oak, and a roomy depth within its arms. . . .
(32-33)

Elsewhere Hawthorne describes Jaffrey in the following manner:

. . . the snowy whiteness of his linen, the polish of his boots, the handsomeness of his gold-headed cane, the square and roomy fashion of his coat, and the fineness of its material, and, in general, the studied propriety of his dress and equipment; the scrupulousness with which he paid public notice, in the street, by a bow, a lifting of the hat, a nod, or a motion of the hand, to all and sundry his acquaintances, rich or poor; the smile of broad benevolence wherewith he made it a point to gladden the whole world; - what room could possibly be found for darker traits, in a portrait made up of lineaments like these! (231)

Among the Pyncheons, therefore, Jaffrey, especially, is a figure of impressive grooming and manner, and these are part of the disguise with which he cloaks an evil and tyrannical will. Against this image of substance and influence the Maules present a picture of reserve and

submissiveness:

To all appearance, they were a quiet, honest, well-meaning race of people, cherishing no malice against individuals or the public, for the wrong which had been done them; or if, at their own fireside, they transmitted from father to child, any hostile recollection of the wizard's fate, and their lost patrimony, it was never acted upon, nor openly expressed. (25)

In actual fact, however, this quiet demeanour contains the same anger that old Matthew Maule had demonstrated just before his death. Holgrave, with his plebeian attire, unaffected manner and youthful spontaneity presents an image of idealistic candour. But again this only masks an inner scorn and biding watchfulness that are as thwarting as outright aggression and hostility.

Ultimately, the house is symbolic of pride. It stands not only for Pyncheon pride but for Maule disdain and scorn. If pride imprisons the Pyncheons and isolates them in that house which is its manifestation, so too does it entrap the Maules, and bind them to this monument of their persecution and revenge. Whereas the hut originally built by old Maule, with its cow-path and "natural spring of soft and pleasant water" (6), had once represented the original simplicity of the Maules, the Pyncheon house - "an imposing edifice" (11) - soon signals the rising anger and determination of these Maules, and the deepening wiliness of their demeanour. But more than this even, "this stately mansion" (13) symbolizes finally the pride of Holgrave which is no longer confined to defiance and revenge but has become a Pyncheon-like desire for "venerableness" (314) and permanence. Ironically recalling the little cottage of old Maule, Jaffrey's "elegant country-seat" (314) is too frail, too new for Holgrave:

"The country-house is certainly a very fine one, so far as the plan goes," observed Holgrave. . . .
 "But I wonder that the late Judge - being so opulent, and with a reasonable prospect of transmitting his wealth to descendants of his own - should not have felt the propriety of embodying so excellent a piece of domestic architecture in stone, rather than in wood. Then, every generation of the family might have altered the interior, to suit his own taste and convenience; while the exterior, through the lapse of years, might have been adding venerableness to its original beauty, and thus giving that impression of permanence, which I consider essential to the happiness of any one moment." (314-15)

The house of pride is, therefore, a prison and a tomb, and its inhabitants, mere shadows and ghosts mocked at by time, and yet committed to the sepulchral life of perpetual persecution and revenge. Hawthorne refers to the house as tomb and dungeon when he writes:

The gloomy and desolate house, deserted of life, and with awful Death sitting sternly in its solitude, was the emblem of many a human heart, which, nevertheless, is compelled to hear the trill and echo of the world's gaiety around it. (295)

Elsewhere Hawthorne also writes, in connection with Hepzibah and Clifford and their sufferings:

"It cannot be, Hepzibah! - it is too late," said Clifford with deep sadness. - "We are ghosts! We have no right among human beings - no right anywhere, but in this old house, which has a curse on it, and which therefore we are doomed to haunt. . . ."

They shrank back into the dusky passage-way, and closed the door. But, going up the staircase again, they found the whole interior of the house tenfold more dismal, and the air closer and heavier, for the glimpse and breath of freedom which they had just snatched. They could not flee; their jailor had but left the door ajar, in mockery, and stood behind it, to watch them stealing out. At the threshold, they felt his pitiless gripe upon them. For, what other dungeon is so dark as one's own heart! What jailor so inexorable as one's self! (169)

Hepzibah and Clifford, however, are more the victims of the social domination and psychological possession which the Pyncheons and the Maules represent respectively. Hepzibah is entombed in an outdated tradition of gentility, and "every added day of seclusion . . . [rolls] another stone against the cavern-door of her hermitage . . ." (39). But for Clifford his sufferings at the hands of Jaffrey are in a way an extension of Maule vengeance, for Clifford is victimized by his cousin for the very secret that is in the Maules' keeping.

In so far as The House of the Seven Gables, as a Puritan Gothic romance, delineates the Puritan perspective by looking into the depths of human evil and guilt, it also glances at the evils of Puritanism and its way of life. This is achieved mainly through the Pyncheons, whose grasping materialism and tradition of patriarchal domination clearly reflect the commercial spirit of the secularized nineteenth-century Puritans (Hugo Mcpherson 1969, 138). That the Pyncheons are Puritans is repeatedly confirmed. Colonel Pyncheon is not only a "stalwart Puritan" (9), but is a "Puritan soldier and magistrate" (9). His participation then in the persecution of old Matthew Maule is in keeping with traditional Puritan zeal in the perpetual witch-hunt:

Old Matthew Maule, in a word, was executed for the crime of witchcraft. He was one of the martyrs to that terrible delusion which should teach us, among its other morals, that the influential classes, and those who take upon themselves to be leaders of the people, are fully liable to all the passionate error that has ever characterized the maddest mob.
(7-8)

The witch-hunt, however, also takes on the aspect of feudal tyranny on the one hand, and of nineteenth-century materialistic exploitation on the other. Jaffrey Pyncheon, a solid specimen of Puritan descent, is typical of nineteenth-century commercialism, with his real estate, "his railroad,

bank, and insurance shares, his United States stock" (270). Amidst this secular and commercial way of life, Pyncheon pride is also related to a savage kind of sexuality, and a corresponding repressive malevolence. This is another mocking gibe at the hypocrisy of these iron-hearted Puritans. On the other hand, human sinfulness is not confined to the Pyncheons alone. The pride of the Pyncheons coming into conflict with the pride of the Maules demonstrates the inevitable persistence and prevalence of human evil.

In one sense, the pride and tyranny of the Puritan Pyncheons represent English or European imperialism (Hugo Mcpherson 1969, 143-45). Besides their feudal obsession with power and heritage, the Pyncheons are identified with England and Europe through their connections with the English government, their concern with English titles and honours, and through their inclination towards foreign taste, ideas and attitudes. Colonel Pyncheon's association with England is seen in the many letters he receives from there (13), and in his relationship with the Lieutenant Governor whom he invites to his house-warming, who is the local representative of Protestant King William. The Pyncheons after him are said to have been attached to "the royal side" (22) during the revolution in England. The European character of the Pyncheons is most marked in Gervayse Pyncheon whose very name indicates his foreign leanings. Gervayse has a taste for European fashions and furniture; he is familiar with "many of the castles and ancestral halls of England" (198); he hankers after an English earldom and has no time for "the grim, Puritan superstitions, which no man of New England birth, at that early period, could entirely escape" (203). Contrasted with the Pyncheons, the Maules, with their original "garden-ground" (316) are seen by Hugo Mcpherson to

represent America and its sturdy and "humble colonists" (1969, 144).

In this sense, and up to a point, The House of the Seven Gables becomes the "dark symbol of English (and Puritan) repression of the native imagination" (Mcpherson 1969, 145).

While the equation between the Pyncheons and the colonial powers may be easily accepted, Mcpherson's completion of the equation, by drawing the parallel between the Maules and the early American colonists, cannot be taken without reservations. We recall that the Maules do not remain "humble" for long, and that this "native imagination" which they share with Clifford Pyncheon (in whom it is undeniably repressed), has really become quite potent, has indeed turned malevolent. Mcpherson's reading into the Pyncheon-Maule conflict the relation between England and America is too limiting to be satisfactory. At best it can only be a partial view. It does not take into account the common share of guilt, and the unresolvable problem of human suffering, which constitute Hawthorne's tragic vision.

Hawthorne's criticism of Puritanism and in particular its tradition of patriarchal domination is seen in the figure of the tyrannical father, juxtaposed against the image of suffering youth. The patriarchal code identifies with Puritan autocracy, with some hint of feudalistic hierarchy and colonial domination. Pyncheon pride is essentially represented by patriarchal figures while the Maules, with the exception of old Matthew Maule, are younger men, brought up, ostensibly, in a tradition of subservience and servitude. If they remain uncowed, this is part of the spirit of the time, a time of plebeian self-esteem, and also part of their own mysterious power. The growing importance of plebeianism is perceivable in the portrayal of little Ned Higgins, whose shrewdness and

pertinacity strike the first blow to Hepzibah's aristocratic pride:

"The structure of ancient aristocracy had been demolished by him, even as if his childish gripe had torn down the seven-gabled mansion" (51).

Holgrave's youthful effervescence complements this with his "inward prophecy" (179), his idealism and hopes of a new plebeian era.

More than the Maules, Hepzibah and Clifford are the victims of the patriarchal authority and domination of the Pyncheon elders, especially that of Jaffrey Pyncheon. Sister and brother are, therefore, fittingly depicted as "helpless old children" (216). Their flight from the house on discovering that Jaffrey has died, and their frantic train journey to arrive in the middle of nowhere indicate their forlornness and dispossession.

As in The Scarlet Letter, eye images enact the idea of false possession, that carry with them a suggestion of violation of privacy and individual dignity. Although Hepzibah's agonized sensitivity to the prying eyes of the public when she sets up her shop - she is tortured "with a sense of overwhelming shame, that strange and unloving eyes should have the privilege of gazing" (46) - is mostly the result of her foolish pride, her sense of shame and violation are justified in the case of Jaffrey's persistent observation of and attention towards her and Clifford. The Judge's bland refusal to be put off by Phoebe, when he calls on his cousins, the way he declares to Hepzibah that Clifford "belongs to [them] all" (127), and his invitation to her that they "watch together, and labour together" (128) to make Clifford happy, are mocking indications of his sense of ownership. And the insolent emphasis he gives to the claim that he knows his cousins gives to his interest a hint of the obscene, or at least of the indecent, especially in the face of

Jaffrey's animal sexuality which is so much in evidence in this encounter with Phoebe and Hepzibah:

" . . . I know the house, and know my Cousin Hepzibah, and know her brother Clifford likewise! nor need my little country-cousin put herself to the trouble of announcing me!" - in these latter words, by-the-by, there were symptoms of a change from his sudden harshness into his previous benignity of manner - "I am at home here, Phoebe, you must recollect, and you are the stranger. I will just step in, therefore, and see for myself how Clifford is, and assure him and Hepzibah of my kindly feelings and best wishes. It is right, at this juncture, that they should both hear from my own lips how much I desire to serve them. . . ." (126)

At best this knowledge that Jaffrey so mockingly claims he has is an intrusion on his cousins' privacy and dignity, especially when they are so unwilling to be 'known' by him. As his actions reveal, the eye he keeps on sister and brother "has no love in it" (233). His prying is merely a means to extract the last secret that he believes Clifford possesses, even as his open attention is meant to threaten and so to exert a certain power over the already tormented Clifford. In this way Jaffrey Pyncheon maintains his cruel domination over sister and brother.

The idea of psychological possession that eye images seem to convey is also extended to the mesmeric power that is associated with the Maules. "The witchcraft of Maule's eye" (189) involves a kind of possession of the soul. In this way are the Pyncheons bound to the Maules for generations, as the secret that the Maules keep from them eats into their lives and shapes their destiny. For their greed and ambition, frustrated by their inability to uncover the claim documents, are nurtured and sustained by the ever persistent hope of success. In the case of Alice Pyncheon, young Matthew Maule's possession holds a hint of sexual violation and the girl's death may be the result of heartbreak and shame.

In The House of the Seven Gables, however, eye images also help to enhance the prevailing preoccupation with worldly goods and material possessions such as houses, land (maps), portraits, and clocks, and with external appearances that maintain illusions and reputations. They also point to the cool observatory roles that people assume with each other, with a marked absence of feeling and personal concern, in order merely to execute their plans for advancement or revenge. Jaffrey Pyncheon coolly watches over Hepzibah and Clifford, while Holgrave observes life around him, "in quest of mental food; not heart-sustenance" (178).

The evil of nineteenth-century American Puritanism and colonial domination deepens and extends the significance of The House of the Seven Gables as a Puritan Gothic romance, but the two themes are not the central concern here. They do not take into account the evil and pride of the Maules who are both victims and saboteurs of the Puritan code and of colonial authority. In the larger preoccupation with human evil, the true witchcraft is the sinister human mystery that has kept men, Pyncheon and Maule alike, in "the circle of a spell" (305). The house, with its connotation of antiquity and ghosts and secrets, is, then, symbolic of the dark forces that constitute this human witchcraft.

Hawthorne writes:

The aspect of the venerable mansion has always affected me like a human countenance, 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)

Pride, as the prevalent human trait, brings together the theme of separation, of human sinfulness, and the mood of nineteenth-century American Puritanism and nineteenth-century American plebeianism. The pride of the Maules in part demonstrates the energy and independence of a new

plebeian society, especially in the face of an aristocratic or imperialistic authority. The teeming street scene that Clifford watches from his arched window, bustling with the noise and movement of cabs, omnibuses and street-vendors depicts the vitality of a brisk new way of life that has replaced the days of "old square-top chaises" (162). The noise and power of the train, and the imposing spectacle of the political procession express the same vigour and confidence that are part of the Maules' strength and pride. But there is, in the monkey who accompanies the organ-grinder, a disturbing hint of something else. The monkey's "mean and low, yet strangely man-like expression" (164), "the prying and crafty glance, that [shows] him ready to gripe at every miserable advantage" (164), this veritable "image of the Mammon" (164), is a grim reminder of the covetous Pyncheons, and of the grasping Jaffrey in particular. More than this, however, Hawthorne also implies its correspondence to the New Englander of the day, thus commenting on nineteenth-century American commercialism and materialism, and finally he also sees the parallel with mankind as a whole:

Doubtless, more than one New-Englander - or let him be of what country he might, it is as likely to be the case - passed by, and threw a look at the monkey, and went on, without imagining how nearly his own moral condition was here exemplified. (164)

In the ugly repulsiveness of the monkey, therefore, is represented the baser nature of man that undercuts the spectacle of nineteenth-century America. The political procession that seems to Clifford to symbolize the "mighty river of life, massive in its tide, and black with mystery" (165) may also represent mankind in general even as it signifies the surging plebeian life of nineteenth-century America, with its "vast homogeneous spirit animating it" (165). Here, too, is implied a tone of

mockery that comments on the pretentiousness of the whole spectacle. It seems to be "fool's play" (165), with every man exuding a "weary self-importance" (165). This is enhanced by the recollection of the organ-grinder's dolls that, puppet-like, dance to one identical tune, and are petrified at once at the cessation of the music. The point seems to be that man, whether he be Pyncheon or Maule, aristocrat or plebeian, nineteenth-century American or universal man, in spite of his "ridiculous activity, bring(s) nothing finally to pass" (163). Although Hawthorne claims to reject the moral of the show, this brings to mind his mocking comments on Colonel Pyncheon and Jaffrey Pyncheon, who, despite their cunning efforts, are defeated by time itself. The bright and sunny depiction of American life in the nineteenth century and its democratic ideals, therefore, is balanced by an underlying wariness and gloom.

Pride without feeling is the basic human evil that keeps people apart. It shows itself in Puritan witch-hunts and persecution, and also leads to bitter strife among the Pyncheons and Maules. Pride also characterizes social attitudes and groups. Holgrave's conversation with Hepzibah shows up the sardonic disdain of the plebeian and the foolish snobbishness of the aristocrat:

"Let it go! You are the better without it. I speak frankly, my dear Miss Pyncheon: - for are we not friends? I look upon this as one of the fortunate days of your life. It ends an epoch, and begins one. Hitherto, the life-blood has been gradually chilling in your veins, as you sat aloof, within your circle of gentility, while the rest of the world was fighting out its battle with one kind of necessity or another. Henceforth, you will at least have the sense of healthy and natural effort for a purpose, and of lending your strength - be it great or small - to the united struggle of mankind. This is success - all the success that anybody meets with!"

"It is natural enough, Mr. Holgrave, that you

should have ideas like these," rejoined Hepzibah, drawing up her gaunt figure with slightly offended dignity. - "You are a man - a young man - and brought up, I suppose, as almost everybody is, nowadays, with a view to seeking your fortune. But I was born a lady, and have always lived one - no matter in what narrowness of means, always a lady!" (44-5)

While the Pyncheons are obviously iron-hard and unfeeling in their greed and pride, the Maules are equally lacking in sympathy. Undeviating in their vengeance, they watch unmoved as Pyncheon after Pyncheon searches frantically for the lost papers which builder Maule had hidden. Young Matthew Maule is similarly uncaring about the pathetic state to which he has reduced Alice Pyncheon. Even Holgrave, coolly withholding his knowledge of the secret hiding-place, remains indifferent to the sufferings of Clifford and Hepzibah, until he is made to spend a night with the corpse of Jaffrey, and after he has come under the influence of Phoebe.

Pride of feeling, however, is the other side of the same human problem. Its result is also isolation. Whereas in the Pyncheon patriarchs and the Maules, pride is more a calculating and intellectual quality, in Hepzibah and Clifford it is all emotion that has little to do with thought. Hepzibah's pride is an exaggerated sensitivity to her status and birth, that makes her ludicrously squeamish about contact with the world. Clifford's petulance and apathy are also indications of an inverse kind of pride that presumes on the love and concern of those around him. His sensitivity and frailty, therefore, contain a certain disdain and ruthlessness. Hawthorne may regard this as part of Clifford's ethereal nature that is "made only for happiness" (142), but in his descriptions there is a hint of Clifford's unfitness for life; the special pampering that he feeds on so readily suggests a self-

centredness even as it drives home his total lack of moral and intellectual effort.

An eye, at once tender and acute, might have beheld in the man some shadow of what he was meant to be. Anon, as age came stealing, like a sad twilight, back over his figure, you would have felt tempted to hold an argument with Destiny, and affirm, that either this being should not have been made mortal, or mortal existence should have been tempered to his qualities. There seemed no necessity for his having drawn breath, at all; - the world never wanted him - but, as he had breathed, it ought always to have been the balmiest of summer air. (139-40)

Although The House of the Seven Gables is steeped in feeling, especially exemplified in Hepzibah, Clifford and Alice Pyncheon, the intensity of emotion, far from reflecting the promise and beauty of human passion as in Hester in The Scarlet Letter, marks a condition of retardation, stagnation and separation. The "something high, generous, and noble" (133) in Hepzibah's nature is stifled by years of living alone, and by her proud rejection of the world. Clifford's aesthetic sensibility is incapable of coping with reality and merely declines into a Sybaritic preoccupation with sensuous delight alone. In both, physical deportment and looks denote an unhealthy state of retrogression - Hepzibah with her poor gaunt looks, unbecoming scowl and croaking voice, and Clifford, "pale, emaciated, age-stricken" (169).

As Gothic romance of passion, therefore, The House of the Seven Gables hardly figures at all. The vitality and fecundity of natural human feeling, seen in all its power and magic in The Scarlet Letter, are markedly absent. Feeling there is, and imagination and hints of its creative energy - but instead of contributing towards self-fulfilment and warmer relationships these lead to further isolation and separation, for feeling and imagination tend towards indulging personal ends which

are often depraved and sinister. The heart's capacity for sympathy and understanding, therefore, is never discovered. This remains the one secret that the house, here symbolic of the heart, never divulges.

The Maules, especially, possess an undeniable vitality and imaginative vigour that tend to the mysterious, and which seem to hint of the beauty and magic that Hester represents - the beauty and magic of human passion. This is the quality that separates the Maules from the Pyncheons initially. The Pyncheons belong to the material world of property, status and aristocratic authority. Their grasping nature is abundantly demonstrated in the maps, documents and letters which they peruse so intensely. Their coarseness of mind is identified with a kind of commonness that is "as massive and hard as blocks of granite, fastened together by stern rigidity of purpose, as with iron clamps" (9). The Maules, in contrast, are essentially artistic. They are builders and carpenters. Holgrave is a daguerreotypist, and is able to penetrate Jaffrey's genial mask to catch the sly, ruthless temper underneath. Their creative bent is clearly evoked in the spring of water called Maule's well, and in the ensuing hint of prophetic vision and supernatural power contained in Maule's curse. The wizardry of the Maules, therefore, is seen initially in terms of the imagination at its most potent, because kept in its purest pristine condition, much like the natural softness and deliciousness of the water in Maule's well. Ultimately however, it becomes a deliberate science of mind-control, put into use for destructive ends. The capacity for imaginative vision thus does not remain a means of deepening personal experience and sensibility. In the Maules as in Chillingworth, it has become channelled outward, and distorted to become an effective means of observing others, as in the case

of Holgrave watching Jaffrey Pyncheon, or a means of taking possession of other minds or souls, as in the case of young Matthew with Alice Pyncheon. In both cases the imagination does not contribute to nor derive from deep personal feeling or sensitivity. The Maules, therefore, for all their capacity for imagination and inward vision, have become eventually like the Pyncheons, outward, and lacking in sympathy.

In Phoebe alone does feeling become an ennobling attribute. Measured against the feudalistic pride of the Pyncheons and the sinister self-avenging defiance of the Maules, Phoebe's warmth and tenderness are saving qualities that assert the often-forgotten fact of human relationship and natural sympathy. Indeed, the girl's domestic and maternal role and the homely atmosphere she nurtures at the House of the Seven Gables help to check the disruptive and destructive effects of pride as seen in the Pyncheons and the Maules. Phoebe symbolizes the bond of human kinship that challenges the separative attitude of Pyncheons and Maules alike.

Her capacity for love and tenderness, however, does not really bring out, as in the case of Hester in The Scarlet Letter, the vital and magical beauty and mysterious specialness of human nature. In Phoebe, feeling is too docile to be inspiring, too chaste to be human; it lacks the magneticism to convince us of its power and the hint of evil to be mature. Compared with Hester's passion, imaginative energy and reckless spontaneity, her loving nature is little more than a bland mixture of kindness, cheerfulness and level-headedness. As Hawthorne asserts: ". . . wildness was no trait of hers . . ." (143). Even the love of Holgrave for Phoebe and vice versa is merely a tame and sentimental relationship, for all the talk (and possibly because of it) of the

transforming power of love:

"... Could I keep the feeling that now possesses me, the garden would every day be virgin soil, with the earth's first freshness in the flavour of its beans and squashes; and the house! - it would be like a bower in Eden, blossoming with the earliest roses that God ever made. Moonlight, and the sentiment in man's heart, responsive to it, is the greatest of renovators and reformers. And all other reform and renovation, I suppose, will prove to be no better than moonshine!"

"I have been happier than I am now - at least, much gayer," said Phoebe thoughtfully. "Yet I am sensible of a great charm in this brightening moonlight; and I love to watch how the day, tired as it is, lags away reluctantly, and hates to be called yesterday, so soon. I never cared much about moonlight before. What is there, I wonder, so beautiful in it, tonight?" (214)

That it is certainly a taming influence in the case of Holgrave is soon perceived in his total conversion from an attitude of democratic idealism and independence, where the past is too quickly dismissed, to an excessive concern with permanence and veneration for all things antique.

Perhaps the only significant way in which The House of the Seven Gables may stand as a Gothic romance of passion is in its exploration, not of human passion as such, but of human psychology. The hidden yearnings, memories and terrors that agonize the soul, and made more terrifying by the constant threat of a cruel, relentless authority, constitute the intense psychological life portrayed here. This inner world of silent suffering and torment is the world of Hepzibah and Clifford, made up only of the shadows and ghosts of their feelings. The house also symbolizes this world of dark secrets and barely suppressed sorrows. It marks the psychological seclusion that encloses brother and sister in gloom and misery, where the inability to escape does not altogether quell the longing to be free. The attempt to go to church,

Clifford's wild desire to jump from the arched window, and the train ride all demonstrate the yearning to emerge from the shadows, to be restored to the world and to themselves. Images of ruin and decay that come with the weather-beaten old house, the ancient elm and the shrunken chickens, signal their psychological disintegration. The penetration into the inner life also picks out the dark and sinister motivations and impulses that belie the apparent docility and passivity of the Maules. So, too, the psychological theme describes the inner depths hidden beneath Jaffrey's public pose.

Opposed to this inner ghostly sphere of futile hopes, dark memories and desires is the public world of social concerns and materialistic pursuits, that is associated with the Pyncheon patriarchs. Jaffrey Pyncheon is the present inhabitant of this world. The house again is representative of this worldly life; it is often referred to as "a human countenance" (5) even as it stands for the human heart and points to the "mortal life, and accompanying vicissitudes . . . within" (5). The house, therefore, is ultimately the living symbol of both the outer and inner worlds, of substance and shadow, appearance and reality.

According to Clark Griffith (1954, 187-95), the division is between the sunlit external "substance" world of present everyday life, and the dark inner "shadow" world of the past. For Hepzibah and Clifford the alienation from the present is total, in their painful preoccupation with the past. The mad dash from the house after Jaffrey's death and the frantic train ride, together with Clifford's extravagant extollment of the external world of action, is a symbolic drama indicating the dangerous fever of the mind. As Griffith observes (1954, 193), Clifford, after having been confined "among the foul shadows of human depravity

. . . to behold only their dark ugliness, never their power for ennobling" enters the external world in the "wrongest possible way" - he becomes "wholly externalized, substance untempered by shadow" (1954, 194). Yet after his stagnation in the pit of secluded torment, Clifford's one act of breaking away is redemptive, in that he and Hepzibah are able to pray at long last. Their psychological exile and isolation seems to be over.

Holgrave's conversion from cool resident of the sunlight world of present hopes and ideals to sentimental lover, and sympathizer involved in the plight of Hepzibah and Clifford, also has psychological significance. According to Griffith, this conversion marks a moral improvement and psychological growth. This cool observer of life is forced to spend a night in the old house, alone with the corpse of Jaffrey; he is thus compelled to confront the past and "the terrible substantiality of guilt" (1954, 193). That Holgrave finally comes to terms with this past is, from Griffith's point of view, seen in his new attitude towards heritage and continuity:

His (Holgrave's) later wish . . . that the Judge had constructed his country house of stone rather than of wood is surely to be interpreted as Hawthorne's clumsy way of demonstrating how Holgrave has accepted the unassailable reality of the past. (Griffith 1954, 193).

Clark Griffith sees the shadow as representing human evil, the knowledge of which, when properly understood, leads to charity, love and a deep sense of brotherhood. This means that the inhabitant of the world of shadow may eventually be restored to the sunlight world of everyday life, even as the resident of the world of appearance and external reality may, equipped with the knowledge of the darkness, move towards a certain moral depth and vision. Griffith's interpretation is

interesting and significant, especially in view of Hawthorne's later attitude in The Marble Faun, but he seems to have overlooked the fact that here the depiction of psychological torment and motivations remains more convincing than the happy resolution of this state of disrepair. The exploration into the psychological life, the world of shadow, is still the central concern.

The condition of psychological stress involves a kind of alienation in which one attitude or emotion dominates and overcomes its natural checks and constraints. Self-torture and self-pity are the castrating qualities in Hepzibah and Clifford, while detachment and disdain characterize Holgrave's demeanour, and greed and ruthlessness mark Jaffrey's degeneracy. This condition of estrangement then reveals the irony of the house symbol that signals the possessive interest of the Pyncheons and Maules and their desire for a family seat, for the house becomes a mocking comment on the isolated and homeless state of both families. Cast adrift by their inordinate obsession, Clifford, Hepzibah, Holgrave and Jaffrey are lost souls in dire need of a moral base. Phoebe is the spiritual or moral anchor that finally helps to bring Clifford, Hepzibah and Holgrave to rest in their miserable wanderings. But for Jaffrey his disintegration is irredeemable.

The psychological life that is depicted in The House of the Seven Gables, however, appears fragmentary and diffuse, especially when it is compared to the intense suffering and conflicting pressures that beset Hester and Dimmesdale in The Scarlet Letter. The problem is that there is too much description and analysis on the part of Hawthorne, and too little dramatic acting out of this inner life. The sorrows of Hepzibah and Clifford are lengthily discussed; Holgrave is given to long speeches.

Even Jaffrey's wickedness is more talked about than demonstrated. There is also the fact that the hidden torments and desires, or lack of them as seems to be the case with Holgrave, do not, in themselves, give rise to confrontations, conflicts or betrayals among the characters. Whatever struggles that ensue stem more from the long-existing relationship between the Pyncheons and the Maules, and between Jaffrey and Clifford. The psychological stresses, therefore, are really the consequence and not the cause of the conflict between the two families, and between the cousins. For this reason the psychological life that is described is lacking in dramatic significance and urgency. It is subsumed by the theme of pride and human depravity.

In so far as the psychological theme is secondary to the theme of pride, it seems that even as a Gothic romance of passion given to the exploration of human psychology, The House of the Seven Gables does not achieve very much. It is still more successful as a Puritan Gothic romance that delineates human depravity, sinfulness and isolation. And as Puritan Gothic, this second romance of Hawthorne's remains close to the traditional terror Gothic, that concentrates on suspense and fear. It is simpler in its portrayal of human nature, without the sense of sustained internal conflict, and with little evidence of the painful ambivalence and the mysterious mixture of good and evil that characterize the more distinguished Gothic writings, in which characters achieve an awesome and almost heroic aspect. Here indeed, it is the smallness, the insignificance and pitiable vanity of man that ultimately show themselves. The aristocratic arrogance of the Pyncheons, the plebeian independence of the Maules and the withdrawal of Hepzibah and Clifford manifest a kind of pride, inverted or otherwise, and a kind of self-preoccupation.

But it is only a misplaced pride, for these characters are seen eventually as little more than "petty personalities" (165), given to "fool's play" (165) and an absurd sense of self-importance. As Hawthorne comments, while describing the dolls that dance to the organ music:

. . . we mortals . . . all dance to one identical tune, and, in spite of our ridiculous activity, bring nothing finally to pass. (163)

The time theme underlines this fact about the insignificance of man. Individual man is constrained by time and by his own mortality. The individual life is bounded by death. Man's existence then is like a passing procession (165) grandly distinguished by flaunting banners and reverberating music, but is soon gone. Jaffrey's watch is the most telling symbol of this transience and ephemerality. The sense of cyclic time in a way seems to reinforce this idea. The mind's reaching back to the past suggests not only an enslavement to the past, thus signalling a psychological paralysis, a kind of death-in-life existence, but also hints of a desire to stave off the future and death. Clifford, haunted by the horror of his immediate past, does not only yearn to throw himself into the present (as his attempted leap at the arched-window seems to indicate), but also rejoices in being a child again, in returning to the time before his imprisonment:

Indeed, his life seemed to be standing still at a period little in advance of childhood, and to cluster all its reminiscences about that epoch. . . . He sometimes told Phoebe and Hepzibah his dreams, in which he invariably played the part of a child, or a very young man. (170)

There is thus a desire to be safe and happy, and a shrinking from pain, suffering and possibly death. His flight from the house is further evidence of this, for his train ride, apart from reflecting on one level his desire to enter into the world of the present, marks a race against

death, which at the event of Jaffrey's demise, may seem to be catching up on him. As Hawthorne has shown, Clifford's delicate nature cannot bear facing up to adversities of any kind, least of all to the horror of death.

This kind of cyclic time, that reflects the mind's entrapment but more significantly, the threat of mortality - and the need to evade it - is symbolized by the scissor-grinder's wheel that bends Clifford's thoughts back to his happy childhood:

Round went the busily revolving machinery, kept in motion by the scissor-grinder's foot, and wore away the hard steel against the hard stone. . . . The sound, however disagreeable, had very brisk life in it, and, together with the circle of curious children, watching the revolutions of the wheel, 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.
(161-62)

The house, meanwhile, together with the mirror symbol, establishes the Pyncheon ambition to make the present a reflection of the past, to create their own permanence. Similarly engaged like Clifford with a kind of cyclic time, Colonel Pyncheon, Gervayse Pyncheon and Jaffrey attempt to enhance the present with the past and vice versa.

Time and mortality, however, triumph over men. If there is any hope for man at all it lies not with the individual but with the collective and continual press of life, of which the individual is only a part.

Thus, Hawthorne comments on the political procession:

In order to become majestic, it (the procession) should be viewed from some vantage-point, as it rolls its slow and long array through the centre of a wide plain, or the stateliest public square of a city; for then, by its remoteness, it melts all the petty personalities, of which it is made up, into one

broad mass of existence - one great life - one collected body of mankind, with a vast, homogeneous spirit animating it. (165)

The human race, therefore, seen as a river or a street in this scene, proclaims "the great world's movement" (159), with its own kind of cyclical time that identifies with permanence and changelessness through change. It is on this level, seen en masse, that man achieves immortality and greatness; and it is on this level that he comes closest to nature, to the tree, the garden and the fountain. The Pyncheon elm ultimately stands for the tree of life, the collective life-force that ironically mocks Pyncheon presumption of individual distinction.

Against the hostility, pride and self-absorption of the Pyncheons and the Maules, therefore, Hawthorne presses for reconciliation and relationship. Recalling the significance of Phoebe and the bond of natural feeling that she symbolizes, he establishes in the procession scene the fact that people belong together and that it is through their coming together that they will achieve significance and fulfilment. The greatest evil that results from pride is the separation of individuals and groups and the denial of the necessary and natural bond of human relationship and feeling. But in so far as the desire for material advancement and self-glorification continues in Holgrave there is little sign that this truth has been discovered. As Puritan Gothic The House of the Seven Gables ends dismally with this affirmation of human pride and separation.

Chapter 4

The Blithedale Romance: A Lost Eden

Whereas Hawthorne had tried, though with little success, to deviate from his natural melancholic bent in The House of the Seven Gables, in an attempt to offset the darkness and gloom of The Scarlet Letter, he was determined that his third romance should reflect the grim realities of life as he saw them. Bearing in mind that A Wonder Book, written in June/July 1851, less than two months after the publication of The House of the Seven Gables, was a bright and sprightly book dedicated to the re-enactment of "an ideal myth" (Hugo Mcpherson 1969, 14), Hawthorne decided that his next romance should be less 'pleasing.' He declared his intentions regarding his next book in a letter to Horatio Bridge, dated 22 July 1851:

Should it be a romance, I mean to put an extra touch of the devil into it, for I doubt whether the public will stand two quiet books in succession without my losing ground. (Horatio Bridge 1893, 127)

As his words reveal, however, Hawthorne's motive for making this decision had little to do with the needs of his own temperament or vision, for it was based on that same awareness of his public role that had so inhibited his writing of The House of the Seven Gables. Yet, even while his integrity can be called in question on this count, he does seem, for once to confront, without compunction, the dire problems and tragedies that have so haunted him. The Blithedale Romance is, therefore, a very gloomy book, or as Hugo Mcpherson has declared, it is Hawthorne's "most sophisticated and disillusioned book" (29). When Hawthorne decided to put in "an extra touch of the devil," he really did so in full measure. The result is not just a tragedy of failed ideals but a mesmeric descent into guilt and paralysis, and a biting satire, stingingly mocking in its gross contradictions between mode and meaning, between apparent tone and implicit themes.

As Annette Kolodny has commented in her Introduction to the Penguin edition, The Blithedale Romance is "the work of a man of unquestioned literary genius" (1983, ix). Here indeed is Hawthorne's most stringent attack not only on the repressive values and attitudes of the Puritans, but also on the shallowness and futility of a conformist and inhibited art. Perhaps because Hawthorne has distanced himself by the use of Coverdale as the first-person narrator and artist, he is able in this third romance to show, without compromise, his own dissatisfaction with the need to sacrifice art and truth for the sake of convention and society. If, therefore, Hawthorne is mocking the Puritans and their stultifying influence, he is also berating himself as well as Coverdale for an inability to free himself once and for all from the domination of a tyrannically patriarchal system. On this level then, Hawthorne has

made The Blithedale Romance into a self-critical satire that regards distorted vision as the tragic reality and chief malaise of human existence and of art.

If we take this view of The Blithedale Romance, we will see it neither as the literary failure it has often been made out to be, nor merely as an unsatisfactory treatment of the Brook Farm experiment, as some critics have regarded it. Hawthorne has declared in his Preface that his rendering of the Brook Farm episode is "altogether incidental to the main purpose of the Romance" (1). As a literary work, The Blithedale Romance stands "at the head of that tradition, continued by Henry James, of stories about artists and their art" (Daniel Hoffman 1961, 216), even while it constitutes for Hawthorne himself his central myth of America and of mankind, and enacts a first-hand experience of the paralysis of artistic imagination.

Hawthorne's third romance has been said to be the most Gothic of his writing in this genre. Hyatt Waggoner has referred to "the too evident influence of the Gothic romance, with its machinery of mysterious persons, 'marvels' like mesmerism, and very villainous villains" (1963, 208). The mystery and suspense related to the identities of Priscilla, Zenobia, old Moodie and Westervelt, and the relations between them, recall the Gothic plots that had sustained the action in The Scarlet Letter and The House of the Seven Gables. But as in these two earlier works, especially The Scarlet Letter, Hawthorne's Gothic perspective rises above mere sensational plot and melodrama. In The Blithedale Romance the Gothic element is once again intrinsic to the subject and technique.

The Blithedale Romance cannot be regarded as merely providing social

commentary on a phase in nineteenth-century American social evolution - a phase marked by a newly emerging materialistic and commercial culture, the only hope of which seemed to be a transcendental conversion which proved abortive. The romance is more significantly a critical appraisal of the American belief in a mythic rebirth that is ultimately futile because of the very nature of the faith which inspires it in the first place. Hawthorne's subject is nineteenth-century Puritanism in America which, reacting against the corruption and social ills of a fast-expanding industrial and technological economy, seeks to restore its spiritual ideals and piety by means of an Edenic revival - a rediscovery of innocence, love (meaning mutual regard and support) and spirituality, by means of a return to the simple rural existence of the early settlers who subsisted on the land, and were held together by communal support. As Hawthorne sees it, however, this mythic quest, so bound up with a desire for piety and communal closeness, is grotesquely inspired and undercut by a keen moralism that eventually isolates, for it engenders pride on the one hand, and guilt and despair on the other. Thus Hawthorne also shows the other side of Puritan piety - the consciousness of sin and human depravity, and the desire to search out guilt and evil.

If Hawthorne began with the subject of social reform, therefore, his ultimate interest is still Puritanism and its influence on an apparently contemporary social scene. Conscious of his roots as he is, Hawthorne cannot but trace the social experiment at Brook Farm and others like it to the venture of the American Puritans themselves. Once again seeing the present in terms of the past, he sees the theme of ideal community life as basic to the Puritan quest in America. A.N.Kaul (1963, 145-46) remarks of Blithedale:

Here again was the American theme of exodus: a determined band of people separating from a corrupt society to form a regenerate community, and expecting thereby to light the beacon flame of new hope for the rest of the world.

As Kaul also shows (1963, 199), Hawthorne's concern with the archetypal American Puritan experience is clearly stated in Coverdale's comparison of his shift to Blithedale with the Pilgrims' move to the new world across the Atlantic.¹

The harnessing, however, of myth with moralism, of idealism with a repressive sin-consciousness, and of faith with suspicion and pride, are not only bizarre but grotesque and almost obscene. The shocking combination drives home the relentless fanaticism and distorted vision of the Puritans, and accentuates the sense of horror and outrage. The Blithedale Romance is, therefore, a Puritan Gothic romance that traces the conflict between spiritual idealism and human limitations, between righteous piety and the narrow repressiveness of a system that is unable to sympathize with and accommodate humanity itself. Idealism and faith mock human frailty, and are the cause of the severest persecution, even as they are ultimately satirized and condemned as mere fantasies. The richness and promise of the human heart, hinted at but repeatedly suppressed and stifled, its creative potential destroyed, give rise to another dimension of horror. Art, perceived to be the ultimate manifestation of this potential brought to fruition, becomes bleakly feeble and inhibited; it lacks the daring to feel and see beyond the conventional ideal. The Blithedale Romance, therefore, is a failed Gothic romance of passion, where Hawthorne suggests a fecund passionate

¹See also The Blithedale Romance (13).

life, only to have it destroyed by a persecuting Puritan moralism.

Revolving around the theme of distorted or warped vision, Coverdale's romance is more a Puritan Gothic that single-mindedly expresses the need for perpetual spiritual renewal, and describes an obsessive concern with one aspect of human nature and with a lopsided set of values. Thus it idolizes the spiritual and scorns the human, celebrates the ideal and condemns the real, extols masculine authority and relegates femininity to a spiritual insubstantiality, and supports a system of patriarchal domination and filial submissiveness. Human nature, coming under the crushing weight of this tyrannical system, is hardly likely to sustain itself, and even less likely to achieve the ideals imposed on it. The spiritual quest, therefore, is not only defeated, but gives way to a nightmare of newly-awakened anxieties, fears, hostilities and guilt. The mythic atmosphere of hope and faith is replaced by a deep despair which is all the darker after the earlier mood of expectation.

It is not, however, the destructive nature of this Puritan zeal that is immediately felt by the reader. The more obvious fact is the idealistic fervour and ironically, the flimsiness of the whole venture. Blithedale, seen by Coverdale the writer-narrator, as "Paradise" or "Eve's bower" (10) is to be the seat of a better life, the "Oasis" (37) in the barren waste of a fallen society. It evokes enthralling visions of a spiritual transfiguration where, through the ablutionary efforts of toil and conviction, the Blithedaleans hope to "catch glimpses into the far-off soul of truth" (65-66). This aspiration for a spiritualized humanity, for an ethereal and, therefore, elusive state of being is significantly contained in the figure of the Veiled Lady, that weird

shadow of non-corporeal humanity, who is eventually identified with Priscilla.

Coverdale may seem to scoff at the phenomenon of the Veiled Lady. In the opening chapter, for example, he sees that the mysterious power and appeal of this figure are either the results of a new science, and, therefore, unrelated to a divine source, or merely some "old humbug" (5). But even so, he invariably joins the throng of fascinated spectators wherever the Veiled Lady appears, first before his departure for Blithedale, and then when he returns to the city. Coverdale thus, like every one else, seems drawn to the Veiled Lady and what she signifies, no matter how aloof or cynical he may try to be. His attraction to the figure is the influence of "the eye of faith" (100), much like his interest in Priscilla which is also derived from "the fancy-work" with which he admits he has "decked her out" (100). His attachment to Priscilla is indeed an extension of the same idealistic fascination, for the girl is clearly the Veiled Lady whose seclusion and isolation, no more the mere results of stage effects and attire, are seen in broader terms. Coverdale, is similarly enthralled by Priscilla's ethereal and madonna-like other-worldliness. He sees her "diaphanous with spiritual light" (129), "a ghost-child" (187) who is never quite visible, and associates her with the dove he sees perched above a window of the boarding-house where she and Zenobia stay. Priscilla's mildness and her "lack of human substance" (185) mark her spiritual being even as they point to the elusiveness and vulnerability of this state of being in a grossly material world. Priscilla, therefore, is precious to Coverdale, and he acknowledges his efforts to save her from the passions of Zenobia. He writes:

But, in honest truth, I would really have gone far to save Priscilla, at least, from the catastrophe in which such a drama would be apt to terminate.
(72)

Coverdale, then, is not a Theodore, who, being unable to accept the Veiled Lady for what she is, must demand to penetrate her secret before he can believe. Indeed, for Coverdale the veil and the secrecy of Priscilla or the Veiled Lady are the very elements that distinguish her spirituality. The concealing effect of the veil marks her remoteness and other-worldliness, even as the mystery that surrounds her is in keeping with the unknown and unfamiliar state which she evokes.

Coverdale writes:

. . . the Veiled Lady arose. There was a mysterious tremor that shook the magic veil. The spectators, it may be, imagined that she was about to take flight into that invisible sphere, and to the society of those purely spiritual beings, with whom they reckoned her so near akin. (202)

Coverdale's attraction to this vision of a spiritual existence at Blithedale equates with his susceptibility to a sentimental kind of writing which tends to put things in a poetical light. Thus although he harbours doubts regarding the heroic enterprise at Blithedale, seeing it in terms of "splendid castles" (19) that are no more than phantoms that elude the mind, he also establishes a need to "follow out one's day-dream to its natural consummation" (10) and insists that there is no need to be ashamed of such dreams. He writes:

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. (20)

Reality, however, threatens to bring Coverdale and the would-be apostolic group face to face with their earthier prospects. Silas Foster, "lank,

stalwart, uncouth, and grisly-bearded" (18), coming to greet these latter-day pilgrims straight from "foddering the cattle" (18), conveys the exact condition of their pastoral life. His talk about pigs, regular farm work and getting up early in the morning evokes a daunting picture. As Coverdale exclaims: "Pigs! Good heavens, had we come out from among the swinish multitude, for this?" (20)

To live a rustic life, "to toil and moil amidst the accumulations of a barn-yard, to be the chambermaid of two yoke of oxen and a dozen cows" (40) may be too humiliating to bear, and Coverdale's illness, a result of "a furnace in [his] heart, and another in [his]head" (41), may be indicative of his shock. In his moments of perception, therefore, Coverdale acknowledges that not only is spiritual uplift not to be achieved here, but that there is the added danger of the pilgrims losing sight of their spiritual goals that have brought them this far:

The peril of our new way of life was not lest we should fail in becoming practical agriculturalists, but that we should probably cease to be anything else. (65)

That the aspirations are too idealistic and too remote from earthly possibilities is made abundantly clear in the way Coverdale and the others pursue an exalted state of being that contrasts vividly with the rustic simplicity of Silas Foster. Coverdale and Zenobia are derisive about Silas; but neither of them realizes that the farmer, far from being cloddish, though his mind gives the impression that it is made of "a Savoy cabbage" (67), embodies the kind of spontaneous goodness and warmth that are practical, humane and supportive, that have little to do with the ethereal or the spiritual, and are indicative of the purest state man can achieve on earth. It is Silas, therefore, who, amidst the bustling ineptitude of the others, at the sight of poor Priscilla,

feels the girl's cold, hungry and anxious condition sufficiently to realize her immediate needs:

"Give the girl a hot cup of tea, and a thick slice of this first-rate bacon," said Silas, like a sensible man as he was. "That's what she wants. Let her stay with us as long as she likes, and help in the kitchen, and take the cow-breath at milking-time; and, in a week or two, she'll begin to look like a creature of this world!" (31)

Not only does Silas suggest hot tea and bacon, but he assures the girl immediately of a home at Blithedale. Silas's quick response has little to do with being sensible, as Coverdale supposes, but is more a demonstration of his sensitivity to the exact nature of Priscilla's plight, and a readiness to act on it. The others are too wrapped-up in themselves and in their own mystified response to the girl and her sudden appearance, and are too preoccupied with the idea of helping her, to do anything concrete about it. This is made obvious by Zenobia's remark:

"Well, indeed," exclaimed Zenobia, recovering herself, and laughing, "this is an adventure, and well worthy to be the first incident in our life of love and free-heartedness! . . ." (29)

It is not just that the kind of hopes and aspirations envisaged are too ethereal for earthly realization, but also that people, whatever their intentions and motivations, fall far short of the level of exertion and dedication required of them in order to sustain the dream, even for some little time at least. The snow-storm through which Coverdale and his friends have to battle appropriately symbolizes the inner and outer forces that have to be surmounted by the would-be pilgrims. Right from the beginning, Coverdale finds it hard to give up the daily comforts he has got used to in the city. He thus talks about his heroism in abandoning his "cosey pair of bachelor-rooms - with a good

fire burning in the grate, and a closet right at hand, where there [is] still a bottle or two in the champagne-basket . . ." (10). The snow-storm that rages on the April day when he sets off for Blithedale must also symbolize in his mind the bleak condition that awaits him there. Sarcastically, therefore, he remarks on the country air that he may look forward to:

"How pleasant it is! remarked I, while the snow-flakes flew into my mouth, the moment it was opened. "How very mild and balmy is this country-air!" (11)

At Blithedale, Coverdale thinks longingly of "pictured porcelain" and "silver forks" (24). Only the thought that they are still there to go back to gives him the strength and equanimity to persist at Blithedale. Even so, he is later moved to regret his decision to come away from the city, and yearns intensely for its soft ease and enjoyments:

What, in the name of common-sense, had I to do with any better society than I had always lived in! It has satisfied me well enough. My pleasant bachelor-parlour . . .; my dinner at the Albion . . .; my evening at the billiard-club, the concert, the theatre . . . what could be better than all this? (40)

Coverdale's preoccupation with clothes and garments is another sign of his urbanity. Apart from the fact that his very name evokes some form of dressing-up, his descriptions abound in references to clothes that reflect his interest in fashion and appearance. The commencement of his stay at Blithedale, after his illness, is described through the image of being "clothed anew" (61). The simplicity of the new way of life is also seen in terms of clothes:

Arcadians though we were, our costume bore no resemblance to the be-ribboned doublets, silk breeches and stockings, and slippers fastened with artificial roses, that distinguish the pastoral

people of poetry and the stage. In outward show, I humbly conceive, we looked rather like a gang of beggars or banditti, than either a company of honest laboring men or a conclave of philosophers. Whatever might be our points of difference, we all of us seemed to have come to Blithedale with the one thrifty and laudable idea of wearing out our old clothes. (63)

Meetings with old Moody, Zenobia, Priscilla and Westervelt are punctuated with details and observations about dress and grooming. Westervelt, for example, is said to be "rather carelessly, but well and fashionably dressed" (92). Coverdale continues:

There was a gold chain, exquisitely wrought, across his vest. I never saw a smoother or whiter gloss than that upon his shirt-bosom, which had a pin in it, set with a gem that glimmered, in the leafy shadow where he stood, like a living tip of fire. (92)

Priscilla's town attire is obviously viewed with much appreciation and delight:

She was now dressed in pure white, set off with some kind of a gauzy fabric, which . . . seems to be floating about her like a mist. (169)

Amidst such enthusiasm over clothes and looks, it seems unlikely that Coverdale will fit in easily to the yeoman-life, try as he may to content himself with the "honest homespun and linsey-woolsey" (64) that he and the others put on, after the fashion of Silas and his family. But, for all this, his apparent worldliness and attachment to the life of sensuous comfort cannot obliterate an unremitting Puritan desire for the pure and the spiritual, that renders him almost child-like in his need to conform. Nina Baym (1976, 187) may write:

He is the product of a middle-class cosmopolitan way of life that sees no goals beyond comfort and pleasure and has confused the necessary material means of human existence with its ends. He thinks that by leaving behind his bachelor apartment, his sherry, and his urban entertainments, he will become

a strong free man. But of course he is wrong.

Coverdale, however, is no mere Sybarite; underlying his soft and indulgent life is a deep Puritan streak that draws him to the ideals associated with Blithedale. By assenting to join the would-be pilgrims indeed, he shows that he is not free at all. His urbanity is a facade, a cover.

The establishment of a way of life at Blithedale that seems to re-enact the Edenic myth defines the theme of spiritual hope and rebirth. Coverdale's several allusions to Zenobia as Eve, while ironically hinting at her role as representing archetypal womanhood, also convey his fervent attachment to the Edenic ideal. Other biblical images also serve to authenticate this spiritual and religious purpose. Thus Coverdale sees himself in terms of Sisera, Job and Samson. The Blithedaleans are seen as pilgrims and proselytes, and references to apostolic names such as Miles Coverdale (after the man who completed the first English translation of the Bible with Apocrypha in 1535) and John Eliot (a reminder of the Puritan Minister who translated the Bible and a catechism into the Indian tongue) abound. These references, however, also contribute to a pompous tone that marks the ambitious and lofty nature of the quest. They also show up Coverdale's sentimentality and his susceptibility to fantasy that contrast ironically with his earlier reluctance and cynicism.

Compared with Silas's simple goodness and warmth, the ideal that the Blithedaleans are striving for seems pretentious and inappropriate because it is unrelated to natural humanity and life on earth. But even more disturbing is the fact that this obsessive pursuit of the spiritual consists of a terrible intolerance for all that is human and

natural, which has a fecundity and beauty of its own. Beneath the cloak of ethereal idealism, therefore, is contained a darker aspect, more terrifying than the prospect of rustic stagnation, or the idea of an unrealizable ideal, that so disturbs Coverdale. The distrust of human nature is first seen in the pervasive sense of depravity and sin which emanates from Hollingsworth, and which is eventually associated with woman and the passional life which she represents. Hollingsworth's mission to reform criminals betrays a certain pride and gloom. His concern is not with his own spiritual renewal, but with the conversion of others from sin and crime "through an appeal to their higher instincts" (36). His purpose at Blithedale, therefore, recalls the Puritan concern with evil, that has so afflicted Hester in The Scarlet Letter. Here again is the same preoccupation with sin and evil that urges the searching out of crime and criminals, and underlying its relentless drive is the sense of self-righteous piety on the one hand, and suspicion and distrust on the other. Significantly therefore, Coverdale sees Hollingsworth as one of those "who have surrendered themselves to an over-ruling purpose" (70). He is "the grim portrait of a Puritan magistrate" (124). He is a blacksmith, seen in terms of "that steel engine of the Devil's contrivance, a philanthropist" (71). Once again, as in Hawthorne's tales and earlier romances, images of iron serve to evoke the atmosphere of Puritannical severity. Hollingsworth's very name, that suggests 'holy' and 'worth' seems to affirm his attitude of righteous piety and dedication, that proudly condemns and persecutes.

Hollingsworth's brooding ambition to transmute sin into virtue bodes ill for himself and for man and his feeble humanity. Like Ethan Brand, his zealous searching out of evil must revert back on himself, showing up

his own guilt and disorder. For his "godlike benevolence" (71) in attempting to seek out sinners in order to convert them, has not only become an "all-devouring egotism" (71) as Coverdale suggests, but points also to an over-riding arrogance that seems to take for granted his own perfection and guiltlessness, even as it assumes that human sinfulness is the only basis on which to work and relate with other men. His "benevolence" is only a kind of self-approval that alienates even as it seeks to reach out to others. Coverdale writes:

"Mankind, in Hollingsworth's opinion," thought I, "is but another yoke of oxen, as stubborn, stupid, and sluggish, as our old Brown and Bright. He vituperates us aloud, and curses us in his heart, and will begin to prick us with the goad stick, by-and-by. But, are we his oxen? And what right has he to be the driver? . . ." (100)

The Blithedalean attempt to rediscover a mythic innocence and spiritualism thus denigrates into a bizarre obsession with sin. Hollingsworth's stern philanthropy is really the other side of the Puritanical interest in the spiritual and the transcendental aspect of life. The one complements the other.

In so far as Hollingsworth represents a stern view of sin, guilt and human depravity, he stands for that Puritan code which seems to have so oppressed and inhibited old Moodie. For the old man, self-conscious and withdrawn, is haunted by a guilt which he has no hope of having absolved. Reduced to a miserable wreck, whose impulse is to "shrink into the nearest obscurity" (184), Priscilla's father seems the typical victim of a too preponderant moralism. Significantly too, old Moodie's sense of guilt seems not only confined to the crime he has committed, but appears to extend to an agonising consciousness of his former life, amidst "the false glitter" (183) of wealth and external splendour. This,

indeed, may be the ultimate reason for his preference now for a life of utter penury and deprivation. He may declare that wealth is useless to him, because the ostentatious life it brings would only draw attention to his shame:

"True; my brother's wealth, he dying intestate, is legally my own. I know it; yet, of my own choice, I live a beggar, and go meanly clad, and hide myself behind a forgotten ignominy. . . . Were I to re-appear, my shame would go with me from darkness into daylight. . . ." (192)

But choosing to live like a beggar, when he has at his disposal the legacy of his brother's wealth, seems too extreme an attitude, for even if he is compelled to live in obscurity to keep his shame to himself, an improvement on his beggarly existence need not mean a life of ostentation. Old Moodie's life of deprivation, therefore, must seem to be an expression of a broader sense of guilt, that stems from his former life of voluptuous pleasure and resplendence. Under the relentless code of Puritan moralism, and in keeping with Hollingsworth's call for reform, old Moodie submits to utter self-degradation:

He had no pride; it was all trodden in the dust.
No ostentation; for how could it survive, when there was nothing left of Fauntleroy, save penury and shame. His very gait demonstrated that he would gladly have faded out of view, and have crept about invisibly, for the sake of sheltering himself from the irksomeness of a human glance. (184-85)

On the one hand, Old Moodie may be seen to symbolize general humanity and its susceptibility to sin and guilt. His early life and crime deride the spirituality of the Puritan ideal, even as his self-torment questions the nature of reform, and challenges the benefits of a philanthropy that stems from an attitude of pride and prejudice. On the other hand, his situation represents one aspect of that childish regression that results from a system that seems to exert a kind of patriarchal domination over

all.

Old Moodie also becomes an instrument of Puritan repressiveness. Acting by the Puritan code of patriarchal authority and filial obedience, he is severe with Zenobia when she goes against his wish that she should look after Priscilla. His wrath demonstrates the vindictiveness of patriarchal retribution. Zenobia is disowned and cut off from her inheritance.

Seen beside old Moodie's dark and guilt-ridden existence, Coverdale's idealism must seem all the more unrealistic and absurd. Yet his faith is in itself another kind of enslavement to the Puritan code. Coverdale and old Moodie, therefore, represent the two aspects of Puritan control - spiritualism on the one hand, and sin-consciousness on the other. Whereas old Moodie is the victim of guilt, Coverdale is tyrannized by an idealistic spiritualism and an oppressive moralism. His illness, seen in this context, marks his surrender to the idealism of Blithedale and the sinister influence of Hollingsworth. Regarded as an antinomian crisis which, according to Cecilia Tichi (1974, 63), is part of the Puritan process towards salvation and spiritual life, his illness is a spiritual rebirth that eventually means a kind of death.² This is not only because the heightened state of spiritual sanctification signals the demise of his humanity, of his passions and needs, but also because this rebirth, that Coverdale describes with so much triumph, marks his initiation into the life of guilt and oppression, in which he becomes

²Cecilia Tichi in "Spiritual Biography and the 'Lords Remembrancers'" writes that the antinomian crisis is "expressed in terms of insidious sickness debilitating the spiritual body, itself moving from back-sliding darkness forward into saving light. . . ." See The American Puritan Imagination ed. Sacvan Bercovitch (1974, 63).

increasingly dependent on, and vulnerable to the authority of Hollingsworth.

Hollingsworth's extraordinary tenderness to Coverdale, especially when the latter is ill, binds the younger man to a position of reverential subservience. Even when he eventually suspects that Hollingsworth's kindness hides an ulterior motive and rejects the other's philanthropic mission, Coverdale cannot really fight free of Hollingsworth's influence. Something of his feeling for the older man remains, and his unhappiness at resisting Hollingsworth's attempt to recruit him surely derives from guilt as much as from a deep disappointment in the other's self-righteous attitude and tyrannical behaviour. This is evident in Coverdale's recounting of that painful incident:

"And you will not join me?"

"No!"

I never said the word - and certainly can never have it to say, hereafter - that cost me a thousandth part so hard an effort as did that one syllable. The heart-pang was not merely figurative, but an absolute torture of the breast. I was gazing steadfastly at Hollingsworth. It seemed to me that it struck him too, like a bullet. (135)

Coverdale's departure from Blithedale may, therefore, indicate his disillusionment, first with the idealistic experiment that for him has collapsed in the face of that repressive moralism which Hollingsworth increasingly accentuates, and secondly, with Hollingsworth himself and his religion of reform and conversion. He exclaims to Hollingsworth:

". . . And will you cast off a friend, for no unworthiness, but merely because he stands upon his right, as an individual being, and looks at matters through his own optics, instead of yours?" (135)

If Coverdale's idealism had demonstrated a youthful naiveté, his relation with Hollingsworth further stresses his regression. Against his

childlike awe and terror with regard to the older man, and in the face of his youthful vulnerability and sensitivity, Hollingsworth's patriarchal stature and authority, augmented by his prematurely aged looks, assume greater force and effect. Coverdale's regard and uneasiness, therefore, are linked to a sense of filial duty, that adds to the burden of guilt and oppression.

A consequence of that sin-consciousness which Hollingsworth represents, and manifesting the intolerance for human feeling and ardour, is a deep prejudice against woman and the passional life which she signifies. In the Puritan attempt to cultivate a more sanctified existence, to strive beyond the boundaries of worldly life, humanity tends to become etherealized, and the archetype of human passions is subsequently the victim of a refining process that seeks to suppress her physical aspect. The Veiled Lady thus is symbolic of this spiritualization of womanhood, the transformation of woman from her role as Eve to that of the madonna. The Veiled Lady, therefore, signals the total negation of the earthly and the physical aspect of human nature.

But the Veiled Lady also conveys the fact that while on the one hand this spirituality that the Puritans and Coverdale (as Puritan youth) aspire to is unattainable, it also results in a frail and repressed humanity that is unreal and unnatural. As Nina Baym (1976, 197) rightly declares:

The veil, along with references to Priscilla's insubstantial frame, and metaphors of shadows and melting snows, and contrasts to Zenobia's rich physicality and assertiveness, suggests that in this spiritual ideal a crude equation has been made between spirit and lack of body. The more body, the less spirit.

In effect, the transparency of form in the case of the Veiled Lady and

Priscilla symbolizes a negation of the body and a denial of the human passions associated with it. Accordingly, Priscilla's snow-maiden figure, her tremulous state and delicate charm are sharply evocative of a human deficiency and deformity. Against the sensuous warmth and soft voluptuousness of Zenobia, she appears particularly childish and immature, so that far from maintaining her role as an inspiring ideal, she becomes increasingly pathetic and tragic.

Coverdale's attachment to Priscilla and all that she stands for ultimately betrays his own immaturity and distorted manhood. Throughout the book, Coverdale laments that he has never had a place in her heart:

Priscilla's heart was deep, but of small compass;
it had room but for a very few dearest ones, among
whom she never reckoned me. (143)

Right to the end he still nurses a secret desire for the girl. He writes: "I - I myself - was in love - with - Priscilla" (247).

While the spiritualization of humanity and the suppression of natural passion result in a stunted and warped humanity, the more shocking and horrifying consequence is its victimization of woman, the archetype of the passionate life. The horror does not just derive from the fact that the primeval life which she embodies and which is being crushed is potent with the promise of fulfilment, but also because her persecution ultimately leads to her complete destruction and violation, as seen in the case of Zenobia and Priscilla.

As a character, Zenobia stands magnificent and queenly between Hollingsworth and Priscilla, the vivid epitome of the archetypal woman. She is the Eve to Priscilla's madonna, the embodiment of all that natural humanity that Hollingsworth searches out for its evil and its sins. Zenobia's beauty is sexual; it also contains a magical power that warms,

enlivens and enriches. Coverdale writes:

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!" Not that I would convey the idea of especial gentleness, grace, modesty, and shyness, but of a certain warm and rich characteristic, which seems, for the most part, to have been refined away out of the feminine system. (17)

Her intensity and sexual frankness, therefore, far from just conveying an erotic promise, more particularly signal a bold assertiveness and independence that defy reproof. The magic and fecundity of her sexuality and vigour are manifested in Coverdale's image of her scattering "fresh flowers from her hand, and . . . [reviving] faded ones by her touch" (21). For Zenobia's womanliness indeed, symbolized by the rose and the flower in her hair, has a "bounteous nature" (21), that enlivens and vivifies the imagination and the spirit. Thus for Coverdale her very presence shows up the 'heroic' enterprise at Blithedale to be "an illusion, a masquerade, a pastoral, a counterfeit Arcadia" (21). For Hollingsworth she offers the prospect of spiritual sustenance and solace from her deep capacity for feeling and her indomitable energy. She says to Coverdale, on the occasion of Hollingsworth's rejection of her for Priscilla:

". . . What can Priscilla do for him? Put passionate warmth into his heart, when it shall be chilled with frozen hopes? Strengthen his hands, when they are weary with much doing and no performance? . . . She cannot even give him such sympathy as is worth the name. For will he never, in many an hour of darkness, need that proud, intellectual sympathy which he might have had from me? - the sympathy that would flash light along his course, and guide as well as cheer him? . . ." (224-25)

Hollingsworth, however, appears indifferent to the power and beauty of Zenobia's womanliness. Her passion seems to affect him very little,

for he is too engrossed in his mission. This is deeply ironic, for not only does Hollingsworth's detachment demonstrate his egotism and inhumanity, but it also conveys his blindness to the fact that here in Zenobia is cloaked a sinner, one whom he may reform, who will otherwise repeat her former sin of betraying her sister. Hollingsworth's manhood, therefore, seems frail and his Puritan zeal appears just as futile.

His arrogance, however, remains intact. With woman, he is especially confident and contemptuous, for he is proud and sure of his masculine authority over her. He says of woman:

". . . Her place is at man's side. Her office, that of Sympathizer; the unreserved, unquestioning Believer. . . . Man is a wretch without woman; but woman is a monster - and, thank Heaven, an almost impossible and hitherto imaginary monster - without man, as her acknowledged principal! . . ."
(122-23)

His seeming indifference to Zenobia's womanliness derives from a masculine superiority and a sense of woman's insignificance as only a complementary figure in the whole existence of man. As Coverdale observes, his is a masculine egotism which centres "everything in itself, and [deprives] woman of her very soul, her inexpressible and unfathomable all, to make it a mere incident in the great sum of man" (123). It is through this attitude that he is able to justify his ruthless exploitation of Zenobia's feelings, his betrayal first of Priscilla (by helping to deliver her into the hands of Westervelt), and then of Zenobia (by choosing Priscilla for his companion). Thus, when Zenobia accuses him of being selfish and unfeeling, her words hardly touch him:

"This is a woman's view," said Hollingsworth, growing deadly pale - "a woman's, whose whole sphere of action is in the heart, and who can conceive of no higher nor wider one!" (218)

However, although Hollingsworth seems unresponsive to Zenobia's voluptuous allure, he cannot be totally blind to her passionate drive. Indeed, Hollingsworth himself clearly possesses a capacity for feeling. As Coverdale points out, there is "something of the woman moulded into the great, stalwart frame of Hollingsworth" (42) that, together with his "great spirit of benevolence" and "divine power of sympathy" (55), makes him "the tenderest man and the truest friend on earth" (p. 55). This may be the very reason for Zenobia's attraction to him. For her attachment may not spring merely from a response to his commanding air and authority or to his seeming virility and masculinity; it may be an answer to his very real passion and desire. As proof of his ardour and tenderness, Hollingsworth is seen in an intimate moment with Zenobia:

Zenobia and Hollingsworth went next, in close contiguity, but not with arm in arm. Now, just when they had passed the impending bough of a birch-tree, I plainly saw Zenobia take the hand of Hollingsworth in both of her own, press it to her bosom, and let it fall again! (124)

But Hollingsworth never really surrenders to Zenobia's temptation. Just as he has channelled his energies and feelings to a stern purpose, so does he harden to Zenobia's appeal. His ultimate dismissal of her, therefore, may be perceived as a deliberate and compulsive rejection of the passional life and the primeval energies that she so richly exemplifies, and with which he is not entirely unfamiliar. Like Coverdale, Hollingsworth eventually chooses Priscilla. His earlier relationship with Zenobia may reflect a spontaneous response, even as it may, on the other hand, amount to no more than a calculated move, and although the shift in his attention from Zenobia to Priscilla may still be suspect for the financial considerations that may have motivated it, it may also mark a nervous withdrawal from feeling and

passion. This is clearly suggested later when, probing with a hooked pole in the inscrutable depth of the river in an attempt to recover Zenobia's body, Hollingsworth is said to make "precisely such thrusts, . . . as if he were stabbing at a deadly enemy" (233). His hostility and sadism even here seem to indicate a compulsive rejection of Zenobia, a rejection, however, which is not unaccompanied by guilt. For when Silas, on examining the body, exclaims that Hollingsworth has "wounded the poor thing's breast," and "close by her heart, too" (235), the latter is clearly agitated: "'Ha!' cried Hollingsworth, with a start" (235). Coverdale's observation at this point - "And so he had indeed, both before and after death" (235) - also establishes the fact that Hollingsworth's rejection of Zenobia and of woman may have far wider implications than mere financial considerations. His brutality with the pole, even after Zenobia's death, recalls her words, that Hollingsworth's choice of Priscilla is the "blackest of [his] sins" for he has done "a deadly wrong to [his] own heart" (218). Thus for all his potential as a virile and sympathetic man, almost godlike in the eyes of Coverdale and Zenobia, Hollingsworth becomes merely a figure of failed manhood. As Zenobia exclaims at the end, just before her death: ". . . Are you a man? No; but a monster! A cold, heartless, self-beginning and self-ending piece of mechanism" (218).

Despite his masculine authority and patriarchal stature, Hollingsworth is ultimately seen as frail and timid, a victim of his Puritan zeal and righteousness. Ironically, therefore, he is eventually a mirror reflection of Coverdale, as much a prey of the patriarchal system of which he is representative. His final condition establishes another case of childish regression, that recalls old Moodie's

passivity and Coverdale's immaturity. Coverdale writes of his last meeting with Hollingsworth:

. . . I observed in Hollingsworth's face a depressed and melancholy look, that seemed habitual; the powerfully built man showed a self-distrustful weakness, and a childlike, or childish, tendency to press close, and closer still, to the side of the slender woman whose arm was within his. (242)

The once-commanding man is now utterly dependent on the frail and helpless Priscilla. The ultimate tragedy lies with the fact that a man like Hollingsworth, who has such a capacity for human feeling and tenderness, whose ardour and virility seem so appropriately to complement Zenobia's sensuous womanhood, should become so estranged from humanity as to become a human shell. Coverdale writes:

He had taught his benevolence to pour its warm tide exclusively through one channel; so that there was nothing to spare for other great manifestations of love for man, nor scarcely for the nutriment of individual attachments, unless they could minister, in some way, to the terrible egotism which he mistook for an angel of God. (55)

The pitiable waste and horror are indicated in the way in which Hollingsworth, in losing his humanity, becomes more and more a shadow and a ghost. Coverdale observes:

Unlike all other ghosts, his spirit haunted an edifice which, instead of being time-worn, and full of storied love, and joy, and sorrow, had never yet come into existence. (56)

Coverdale himself is not so different in terms of aspirations and behaviour in the face of spiritual ideals and human passion. While his idealism has, despite initial moods of skepticism, made him most hopeful about the outcome of the Blithedale venture, the Puritan values embedded in this idealism have continued to bind him, long after he has become disillusioned about the visionary prospect of this would-be Eden.

Coverdale then is similarly unable to accept the fulfilment that Zenobia offers. He is deeply wary although, from the very first, he is man enough to feel and respond instinctively to Zenobia's sexual allure. At Zenobia's first greeting, he is aware that the hand she gives him is "very soft and warm" (14); the glimpses of a white shoulder that her gown affords make him feel that it is "a great piece of good-fortune that there should be just that glimpse" (15). He can also picture easily the appearance of Zenobia's "fine, perfectly developed figure, in Eve's earliest garment" (17), and this is just one of the many images "which, though pure, are hardly felt to be quite decorous, when born of a thought that passes between man and woman" (17). As Coverdale's words reveal, however, this sexual awareness is accompanied by an inner sense of guilt that goes deeper than mere embarrassment or self-consciousness. This is especially obvious on one occasion when Coverdale, thoroughly excited by Zenobia's beauty, guiltily wishes for some way of admiring the perfection of her body, that would also satisfy the rules of decorum:

She should have made it a point of duty, moreover, to sit endlessly to painters and sculptors, and preferably to the latter; because the cold decorum of the marble would consist with the utmost scantiness of drapery, so that the eye might chastely be gladdened with her material perfection, in its entirety. I know not well how to express, that the native glow of coloring in her cheeks, and even the flesh-warmth over her round arms, and what was visible of her full bust - in a word, her womanliness incarnated - compelled me sometimes to close my eyes, as if it were not quite the privilege of modesty to gaze at her. (44)

When Coverdale calls Zenobia "an enchantress" (45), therefore, he is confirming both his deep fascination with, and uneasiness over her unashamed sexuality.

To Coverdale's mind, full of spiritual ideals and ethereal dreams, Zenobia's allure conveys an earthiness that must seem utterly decadent and depraved. Yet, as Nina Baym (1976, 190) indicates, Zenobia is "the reality Coverdale seeks," not because Coverdale comes to Blithedale with the express purpose of discovering the life of passion and feeling, although Baym suggests this, but because his youth and bachelorhood must naturally and involuntarily respond to passion and the promise of sexual fulfilment. Thus, even as Coverdale comes to Blithedale with the Puritan aspiration of rediscovering a spiritual way of life, there is also unconsciously a physical need that underlies the more apparent objective.

Coverdale's response to Zenobia's sensuousness, while signalling the fact of his natural desire, shows an intensity that also betrays the urgency of his sexual needs. For besides his delight in her voluptuous beauty, Coverdale also tends to speculate on Zenobia's sexual life, which speculation gives rise to a host of suggestive and erotic images, which in turn convey the degree of his desire.

Her unconstrained and inevitable manifestation, I said often to myself, was that of a woman to whom wedlock had thrown wide the gates of mystery. Yet, sometimes, I strove to be ashamed of these conjectures. I acknowledged it as a masculine grossness - a sin of wicked interpretation, of which man is often guilty towards the other sex - thus to mistake the sweet, liberal, but womanly frankness of a noble and generous disposition. Still, it was of no avail to reason with myself, nor to upbraid myself. Pertinaciously the thought - 'Zenobia is a wife! Zenobia has lived; and loved! There is no folded petal, no latent dew-drop, in this perfectly developed rose!' - irresistibly that thought drove out all other conclusions, as often as my mind reverted to the subject. (47)

This erotic fantasy continues as Coverdale, on this same occasion, proceeds to see Zenobia in terms of "the richest and spiciest dishes," "banquets" and "draughts of intoxicating wine" (48). But what is even

more revealing is the fact that Coverdale's pious feelings for Priscilla also seem to hint of the same sexual desire, expressed in similar images:

No doubt, it was a kind of sacrilege in me to attempt to come within her maidenly mystery. But as she appeared to be tossed aside by her other friends, or carelessly let fall, like a flower which they had done with, I could not resist the impulse to take just one peep beneath her folded petals. (125)

This suggests that even as Coverdale looks to Priscilla for spiritual inspiration, his natural ardour betrays itself in his physical awareness of her femininity.

Coverdale's role as observer, therefore, merges with this theme of secret desire and sexual curiosity, even as it also relates to his function as writer-narrator. For his yearning and guilty withdrawal reduce him to a helpless state of unfulfilled passion which this role of observer/voyeur enhances. There is a sense of need as well as guilt inherent in his apparent detachment. Coverdale may reprove himself for prying into people to satisfy his role as artist, but his greater sense of guilt must surely derive from his sexual interest in the two women, and the jealousy he feels at their obvious attraction to Hollingsworth. He acknowledges this on one occasion:

Generosity is a very fine thing, at a proper time, and within due limits. But it is an insufferable bore, to see one man engrossing every thought of all the women, and leaving his friend to shiver in outer seclusion, without even the alternative of solacing himself with what the more fortunate individual has rejected. (126)

It is significant that this outburst occurs soon after he sees Zenobia take the hand of Hollingsworth and press it to her bosom.

Appropriately, therefore, the place that marks Coverdale's retreat,

his hermitage, reflects his needs and desires as much as it also signifies the compulsion towards aloofness which is both a defence-mechanism and an inevitable consequence of his spiritual ideals. His description of the "leafy cave" (98) abounds in sexual images:

A wild grape-vine, of unusual size and luxuriance, had twined and twisted itself up into a tree, and after wreathing the entanglement of its tendrils around almost every bough, had caught hold of three or four neighbouring trees, and married the whole clump with a perfectly inextricable knot of polygamy. . . . 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. . . . Had it ever been my fortune to spend a honey-moon, I should have thought seriously of inviting my bride up thither, where our next neighbours would have been two orioles in another part of the clump. . . . So there I used to sit, owl-like, yet not without liberal and hospitable thoughts. I counted the innumerable clusters of my vine, and fore-reckoned the abundance of my vintage. It gladdened me to anticipate the surprise of the Community, when, like an allegorical figure of rich October, I should make my appearance, with shoulders bent beneath the burthen of ripe grapes, and some of the crushed ones crimsoning my brow as with a blood-stain. (98-99)

While the profuse vegetation produces a sense of natural abundance that mocks Coverdale's condition of repressed desire, the prevalent atmosphere of erotic abandonment and fulfilment also accentuates his natural, primitive passions. The hermitage, therefore, does not only indicate his inhibited self, but also symbolizes his inner, secret life. The retreat is both his prison and his private sphere of freedom and feeling. As he says:

This hermitage was my one exclusive possession, while I counted myself a brother of the socialists. It symbolized my individuality, and aided me in keeping it inviolate. (99)

Consonant with Coverdale's plight of being torn between fear and

feeling, between faith and desire, the relation between clothing and eye images corresponds to this division between spiritual ideal and passion. For, while clothing images equate with modesty, chastity and reserve that recall Priscilla and the Veiled Lady, eye images generally relate to Coverdale's covetous inclinations and voyeuristic instincts. Eye images, used in connection with Coverdale and Zenobia, suggest the former's fascination with womanly beauty. Once, Zenobia is moved to remark on Coverdale's constant staring:

"Mr. Coverdale," said she, one day, as she saw me watching her, while she arranged my gruel on the table. "I have been exposed to a great deal of eye-shot in the few years of my mixing in the world, but never I think, to precisely such glances as you are in the habit of favoring me with. I seem to interest you very much; and yet - or else a woman's instinct is for once deceived - I cannot reckon you as an admirer. What are you seeking to discover in me?" (47)

But clothing images, especially the Veil, denote the habit of delicate concealment that links up with the idea of understating the body and beyond that, with the theme of spiritualizing humanity.

In his condition of fear and desire, Coverdale is mocked at by Zenobia through her legend of Theodore and the Veiled Lady. Theodore's situation crystallizes Coverdale's predicament; he possesses a natural, youthful ardour that draws him to the mystery of womanhood, but there is also a pervasive fear and suspicion that demand a knowledge of the full extent of the dangers involved before he will surrender to his desire. Theodore's hiding behind the screen, with the hope of finding out the identity of the Veiled Lady, recalls Coverdale's retreat to his hermitage, which indicates his withdrawal from and opening out to passion. The preoccupation with lifting the veil and discovering the truth behind the mystery surrounding the Veiled Lady is in itself an

ironic comment on Theodore's and Coverdale's attempt to play safe, for the act of penetrating the veil carries erotic connotations that intensify the sexual undercurrents prevailing here.

Zenobia's legend, however not only mocks at the fears and distrust which attend on men like Coverdale and Theodore and their natural desires but it also parodies the ballad that she envisages Coverdale writing, with its "grand subject," and "supernatural machinery" (33). It points, therefore, to the feebleness of Coverdale's art which is a consequence of his inhibitions. On the other hand, the tragic dissolution of the girl behind the veil in Zenobia's story also describes the destruction of womanhood, which is a direct result of man's refusal to accept and trust her mystery. Zenobia's tale, therefore, establishes the full horror of a repressive system that not only attempts to confine, mask and 'dress up' humanity but enfeebles art, emasculates natural manhood and destroys womanliness. One of these dangers is already realized in the childish regression so evident in Coverdale, whose sentimentality and vulnerability occasionally masked by an adult-like cynicism, complement Priscilla's frailty and helplessness. The threat to womanliness, however, while keenly felt throughout the book, is most horribly realized in the death of Zenobia, a result of Hollingsworth's rejection of her natural womanhood.

Both Priscilla and Zenobia are victims of the Puritan creed, that so abhors the physical life and its passions. Priscilla, as much as Zenobia, is persecuted and tyrannized. As the Veiled Lady, she has been "a sad and lonely prisoner, in a bondage which is worse . . . than death" (112-13). Her feebleness is a mark of her oppression. For, in her natural self, Priscilla has a vivacity and vigour that surface amidst

the natural surroundings of Blithedale. As Coverdale and Zenobia testify:

"Yes; she deserves some verses now," said I, "and from a better poet than myself. She is the very picture of the New England spring, subdued in tint, and rather cool, but with a capacity of sunshine, and bringing us a few alpine blossoms, as earnest of something richer, though hardly more beautiful, hereafter. The best type of her is one of those anemones.

"What I find most singular in Priscilla, as her health improves," observed Zenobia, "is her wildness. Such a quiet little body as she seemed, one would not have expected that! . . ." (59)

Later Coverdale again asserts:

So unformed, vague, and without substance, as she had come to us, it seemed as if we could see Nature shaping out a woman before our very eyes (72)

Priscilla's femininity, therefore, has a physical aspect which contrasts with that spirituality that is so insistently identified with her.

The purses that she so skilfully sews with such "delicacy and beauty" (35), recalling Hester's resplendant embroidery in The Scarlet Letter, indicate her imaginative and creative fecundity. If the purses are also suggestive of her sexuality as Coverdale seems to hint, this only serves to drive home the point that natural passion and imagination belong together - a point that explains Coverdale's failure. Coverdale writes of Priscilla's purses:

Their peculiar excellence, besides the great delicacy and beauty of the manufacture, lay in the almost impossibility that any uninitiated person should discover the aperture; although, to a practised touch, they would open as wide as charity or prodigality might wish. I wondered if it were not a symbol of Priscilla's own mystery. (35)

The bubbling vivacity of Priscilla's femininity once realized, her initial paleness and forlornness, "betokening habitual seclusion from

the sun and free atmosphere, like a flower-shrub that had done its best to blossom in too scanty light" (27), establish the rampant evil of her oppression. Her role as the Veiled Lady, imposed on her by the Puritan attempt to spiritualize womanhood, effectively suppresses her sexuality behind the Veil with which she is enshrouded. Thus, even as her womanhood blossoms in Blithedale, she is still idealized by Coverdale and a certain childishness and immaturity persist, a deformity that is the lasting mark of her thwarted development. Coverdale remarks:

. . . we were all conscious of a pleasant weakness in the girl, and considered her not quite able to look after her own interests, or fight her battle with the world. (74)

The sexual suppression of Priscilla continues right to the end. Even as Zenobia declares that Priscilla is victorious for she is chosen by Hollingsworth in place of herself, the younger girl's plight is more desolate than ever. She is bound to Hollingsworth for life, compelled to submit to that madonna image which man so needs for support and encouragement. Coverdale's last encounter with Hollingsworth and Priscilla sums up her fate:

As they approached me, I observed in Hollingsworth's face a depressed and melancholy look, that seemed habitual; the powerfully built man showed a self-distrustful weakness, and a childlike, or childish, tendency to press close, and closer still, to the side of the slender woman whose arm was within his. (242)

The oppression that Priscilla suffers amounts to a kind of sexual violation that is much more than just a negation of her womanhood. Her enslavement and enforced submission to life behind the veil significantly suggest an act of possession on the part of Puritan man. Moreover, the zeal and eagerness with which Puritanism looks toward this ideal of spirituality that she has become, are shockingly reduced to a lewd

inspection of the Veiled Lady figure produced on stage. Coverdale writes:

. . . a figure came gliding upon the platform, enveloped in a long veil of silvery whiteness. It fell about her, like the texture of a summer cloud, with a kind of vagueness, so that the outline of the form beneath it, could not be accurately discerned. . . . The hushed breathing of the spectators proved how high-wrought were their anticipations of the wonders to be performed, through the medium of this incomprehensible creature. I, too, was in breathless suspense. . . . (200-01)

The voyeuristic overtones and the heavy breathing imply the sexual desire behind the general sense of intrigue and awe. It may be, as Nina Baym (1976, 197) suggests, that the Veiled Lady figure indulges "prurient and voyeuristic tastes in an audience that pays to see purity violated and modesty exhibited." She continues:

On the one hand, talk of purity "veils" what is actually taking place; on the other, purity itself contributes to the prurient excitement of the display. (197)

This recalls Coverdale's secret desire for Priscilla behind his apparent regard for her spiritual qualities. The suggestion of a twisted and secretive sexuality that has to hide behind a semblance of chaste, spiritual attention is further strengthened by the fact that Priscilla's silk purses also seem to point to her sexual role. The sexual violation of the girl, therefore, culminates in a kind of sexual abuse that may even be seen as a kind of rape. Consequently, Westervelt's diabolical part in the enslavement and violation of Priscilla is secondary to the greater evil of the Puritan suppression and abuse of her natural sexuality. Westervelt merely exploits a situation which is already prevalent; his role as the girl's jailer, who is responsible for keeping her behind the veil, merely complements and crystallizes the

repressive authority of the Puritan creed. Indeed, Westervelt's express contempt for and brutality towards woman, towards Zenobia and Priscilla, are but extensions of Hollingsworth's arrogance and ruthlessness, except that, in the case of Westervelt, there is not even the initial spark of human feeling, save a lewd sensuality, to mark his humanity. Coverdale observes:

No passion, save of the senses; no holy tenderness, nor the delicacy that results from this. Externally, they bear a close resemblance to other men . . .; but when a woman wrecks herself on such a being, she ultimately finds that the real womanhood, within her, has no corresponding part in him.
(103)

The elimination of woman, and through her, human passion and vigour, is finally achieved in the death of Zenobia. Her drowning in the "broad, black, inscrutable depth" (232) of the river manifests the final obliteration of woman behind another veil. The river, mysterious and dark, with "its own secrets" (232), also suggests the immeasurable energy and depth of the life-force with which Zenobia is identified, which will now never be known. Priscilla too dies a certain death, for her womanly exuberance and ardour have no place in her life with Hollingsworth. Coverdale says:

In Priscilla's manner, there was a protective and watchful quality, as if she felt herself the guardian of her companion, but, likewise, a deep, submissive, unquestioning reverence, and also a veiled happiness in her fair and quiet countenance.
(242)

This destruction of womanhood and of her vigour and vivacity, however, is also partly attributable to woman's own weakness and folly. Priscilla is obviously timid and passive, quite incapable of freeing herself from oppression and persecution. Zenobia, however, who is so dynamic and resolute in her challenge of Puritan inhibitions and

suspicious, is ironically conventional in her regard for male authority and domination. She may rail against traditional prejudices and abuses that constrict woman's development, as when she says:

" . . . Did you ever see a happy woman in your life? Of course, I do not mean a girl - like Priscilla, and a thousand others, for they are all alike, while on the sunny side of experience - but a grown woman. How can she be happy, after discovering that fate has assigned her but one single event, which she must contrive to make the substance of her whole life? A man has his choice of innumerable events."
(60)

She may even mock at man's arrogance in reducing woman to a pale image, as when she says of Priscilla:

" . . . She is the type of womanhood, such as man has spent centuries in making it. . . ." (122)

Yet perversely time and again, Zenobia shames herself and all women by submitting readily to masculine egotism. When Hollingsworth contemptuously speaks of woman's role as being subordinate to man, her response is meek and acquiescent:

"Well; be it so," was all she said. "I, at least, have deep cause to think you right. Let man be but manly and godlike, and woman is only too ready to become to him what you say!" (124)

Even when Hollingsworth rejects her at the end, and declares that he loves Priscilla, her bitterness does not stop her from coming to his defence when Coverdale expresses his sense of outrage:

"Hollingsworth has a heart of ice!" said I, bitterly. "He is a wretch!"

"Do him no wrong!" interrupted Zenobia, turning haughtily upon me. "Presume not to estimate a man like Hollingsworth! It was my fault, all along, and none of his. I see it now! . . ." (225)

For all her contempt for Priscilla, whom she sees as "the type of womanhood, such as man has spent centuries in making it" (122), Zenobia

herself is too easily prevailed upon by male authority, and by the patriarchal system which she tries so hard to overturn. Her helplessness is summed up in her emotional outburst, as she lashes at Hollingsworth:

" . . . At least, I am a woman - with every fault, it may be, that a woman ever had, weak, vain, unprincipled, (like most of my sex; for our virtues, when we have any, are merely impulsive and intuitive,) passionate, too, and pursuing my foolish and unattainable ends, by indirect and cunning, though absurdly chosen means, as an hereditary bond-slave must - false, moreover, to the whole circle of good, in my reckless truth to the little good I saw before me - but still a woman! A creature, whom only a little change of earthly fortune, a little kinder smile of Him who sent me hither, and one true heart to encourage and direct me, might have made all that a woman can be! . . ." (217-18)

Zenobia indeed is reduced to self-pity in the end, when she is deprived of masculine patronage and approval. She laments to Coverdale, when Hollingsworth leaves her:

" . . . A moral? Why, this: - that, in the battle-field of life, the downright stroke, that would fall only on a man's steel head-piece, is sure to light on a woman's heart, over which she wears no breast-plate, and whose wisdom it is, therefore, to keep out of the conflict. Or this: - that the whole universe, her own sex and yours, and Providence, or Destiny, to boot, make common cause against the woman who swerves one hair's breadth out of the beaten track. . . ." (224)

Her suicide, therefore, is in part an extension of this self-pitying attitude, that recalls her words to Coverdale: ". . . Tell him he has murdered me! Tell him that I'll haunt him" (226). Her death is also a theatrical gesture, an exaggerated kind of role-playing, that is in keeping with her love of melodrama (seen when she decks Priscilla up as the Veiled Lady and recites the story of Theodore). Thus Coverdale describes her death as a deliberate staging of a scene:

Zenobia, I have often thought, was not quite simple in her death. She had seen pictures, I suppose, of drowned persons, in lithe and graceful attitudes. And she deemed it well and decorous to die as so many village-maidens have, wronged in their first-love, and seeking peace in the bosom of the old familiar stream. . . . But, in Zenobia's case, there was some tint of the Arcadian affectation that had been visible enough in all our lives, for a few months past. (236-37)

Zenobia's suicide, her last attempt to create an impact, may also express a wilful desire to have the last word in the male-female conflict, even as her clenched hands and attitude of "never-ending hostility" (235) even in death suggest her defiance to the last. But all this does not detract from the pitiful waste and sheer horror of her end. For the fact remains that Zenobia succumbs to the masculine ruthlessness of Hollingsworth, which fact testifies to the pervasive and entrenched influence of a tradition that is blatantly patriarchal and unfeeling. Against the hard unyielding power of such a tradition, her self-pity and role-playing are merely childish, showing up her essential futility and lack of sustained faith in herself. Zenobia, therefore, finally appears in the same pathetic light as Priscilla, whom she so despises. Silas's words of regret at her death bring her close to the vulnerability and helplessness of Priscilla's condition:

"Poor child!" said Foster - and his dry old heart, I verily believe, vouchsafed a tear - "I'm sorry for her!" (235)

Zenobia's destruction has already begun long before her death. Since the time that she first became involved in the enslavement of Priscilla by Westervelt, she has been working against herself and her hopes for womanhood. The horror of her ending cannot measure up to the monstrosity of her crime in betraying Priscilla, not once but twice. Thus, if Priscilla has become nothing more than "the type of womanhood,

such as man has spent centuries in making it" (122), it is Zenobia who is partly responsible, although this may, in turn, indicate the degree of her own enslavement by the masculine will. Her second betrayal of Priscilla, however, may also stem from a desperate desire and cunning intent to remove this obvious symbol of chaste femininity, in order to assert her own womanly significance and promise more effectively before Hollingsworth. Her failure points to the blindness and tenacity of the masculine, Puritan attitude, even as it affirms the bleakness and pathos of woman's condition.

Zenobia's failure stresses the fact that her energy and spirit that seem so fecund and enriching do not free her nor other women to the possibility of fulfilling their intense and passionate natures, nor do they leave much impact on men such as Coverdale and Hollingsworth. For her power, far from channelling itself into appropriate action, hardly goes beyond futile mockery and passionate oratory. She laughs at Coverdale's idealism and feeble art, gibes at him and Puritan men like him through the figure of Theodore, speaks movingly for woman's needs and sufferings, and ridicules man's sentimental image of woman. Her energies and imaginative sensibility delight in childish, theatrical games of dressing up Priscilla as the May-Queen and then as the Veiled Lady, and in extravagant flourishes of behaviour meant to deride Puritan spiritualism and inhumanity. Zenobia's achievement, therefore, is limited. Her audacity and vigour only express themselves in contempt and melodramatic gestures, while her conformity dogs her love for Hollingsworth. Zenobia's suicide is, in a way, the typical sentimental ending to a romantic attachment. Ironically then, she becomes the very languishing figure that far surpasses Hollingsworth's wildest dreams of

womanly dependence. Effectively, therefore, Zenobia becomes that very "gentle parasite" (123) that Priscilla is seen as being.

If Zenobia's passionate nature asserts itself in bold significant action, it is in her two betrayals of Priscilla. Her intrigue and deceit may be seen in terms of that "unprincipled" side of woman that Zenobia speaks of, when she declares her inclination to pursue "foolish and unattainable ends, . . . as an hereditary bond-slave must" (217). But her treachery, whether born of the struggle for survival or not, shows up the sinister aspect of her desire and ardour. Zenobia's passion, therefore, while unproductive in its moulding of her life and relationships, and in its influence on masculine attitudes, shows more of its evil impact instead. Indeed the stigma she leaves on Hollingsworth by putting him in the role of her 'murderer,' whether he deserves it or not, may have locked him in a death-in-life existence, a condition of utter guilt and paralysis from which he can never hope to emerge, so that he becomes even more helpless, more unmanned. What Puritanism and its denial of human passion have done for Hollingsworth, Zenobia completes. It could be argued that perhaps by this Zenobia may manage to make him feel, despite himself, so that he may become more human. But it is more likely that Hollingsworth, Puritan that he is, will be more concerned with the moral aspect than with the emotional. The prospect that his guilt will render him more sympathetic to others and less proud, is also remote, as Hollingsworth's egotism would sooner attend to his own pathetic state than to others'. Zenobia's passion, therefore, achieves nothing for herself or for others. Indeed, her meeting with Hollingsworth only serves to defeat her independence, while her behaviour towards Priscilla hints of a certain lack of feeling that

questions her own womanliness.

Death, then, is the keynote at the end of The Blithedale Romance. Hollingsworth's condition of premature old age and child-like frailty, corresponding to Priscilla's girlish fragility, manifests the blighted existence that has no flowering. Coverdale, too, now in his middle-age, is "a poor and dim figure" (245). In these, as in Zenobia, human sensibility and passion have been "untimely baulked" (244), so that if Zenobia perishes, these others are no less dead, entombed in a death-in-life existence. Zenobia's suicide indeed crystallizes the mood of hopelessness. The horror of that midnight search focuses on the river, whose "black, inscrutable depth" (232) seems, in this instance, to symbolize in its sinister countenance the abysmal evil of an all-engulfing system. Silas's words stress the hopelessness of that situation, in which the Blithedaleans are trapped when he says:

". . . Slow work this, however! I should really be glad to find something. Pshaw! What a notion that is, when the only good-luck would be, to paddle, and drift and poke, and grope, hereabouts, till morning, and have our labour for our pains! . . ." (234)

Although his statement points to the fact that it is better not to find the body of Zenobia than to find it, because the discovery would put an end to all hopes that she may be still alive even as it puts an end to their labours, this dilemma it describes also corresponds to the dilemma faced by the Puritans at Blithedale, for whom a faithful adherence to the faith would mean their death as human beings on the one hand, and the possibility of spiritual fulfilment on the other.

Coverdale's romance, that ends with his sentimental declaration of love for Priscilla, represents the confused, shifting and often fantastic recounting of an experience whose meaning he cannot fully

grasp. His account reflects his vacillations between Puritan idealism and urbane cynicism, between romantic illusion and erotic fantasy and between sympathy and suspicion, and his contradictory attitudes prevail right to the end, only to affirm his immaturity and evasiveness. For the intensity of Zenobia's love for Hollingsworth and the horror of her death notwithstanding, Coverdale remains ultimately unmoved, choosing a bland and passive existence that will ensure least effort and discomfort. Just as he will not save Priscilla despite his fears for her, so he will not reach out to take what Zenobia seems to offer, no matter how strong the temptation. Coverdale indeed, in his final choice of Priscilla, repeats Hollingsworth's act, and allows his passion and vitality to be suppressed by faith and guilt. As his attachment to Priscilla indicates, his image of woman is essentially idealistic and religious. He says of woman on one occasion:

". . . The task belongs to woman. God meant it for her. He has endowed her with the religious sentiment in its utmost depth and purity, refined from that gross, intellectual alloy, with which every masculine theologian . . . has been prone to mingle it. I have always envied the Catholics their faith in that sweet, sacred Virgin Mother, who stands between them and the Deity, intercepting somewhat of His awful splendour, but permitting His love to stream upon the worshipper, more intelligibly to human comprehension, through the medium of a woman's tenderness. . . ." (121-22)

Coverdale's art in The Blithedale Romance is feeble, evasive and fragmentary. It lacks the unity of an independent and sustained moral vision, and a balanced judgement. It shrinks from the ultimate realization of what has gone wrong. His bitter attack on Hollingsworth at his abandonment of Zenobia, recalling his previous outburst at the other's insistence that he should join him in his work of converting sinners, constitutes his moment of deepest commitment and feeling. But

this is soon negated by his terror and horror during the midnight search for Zenobia's body. For the sentimental Coverdale, who is used to seeing life in a "poetical . . . light" (33), is reluctant to face such disturbing realities as sin, desire and death, let alone submit to, or accommodate them. Just as he (214) yearns to hide from that crisis that he witnesses between Zenobia and Hollingsworth upon his return to Blithedale ("I was confused - affected even with a species of terror - and wished myself away"), so does he try to evade the horror of Zenobia's death, even as he feels compelled to look for her. His words swerve aside when he tries to express his fears, and each time Silas mentions Zenobia's fate, Coverdale either turns his face away or demands that the other man hold his tongue (232).

Coverdale's artistic failure, however, is matched by Zenobia's ineffectuality. For Zenobia's imaginative fire and natural ardour remain unfulfilled, despite their seeming power. The magic and enchantment of womanhood, the natural witchcraft of human passion, instead of freeing her, and inspiring her to new heights of perception and new levels of action, are eclipsed by the driving need for masculine approval. Unlike Hester in The Scarlet Letter, therefore, Zenobia's womanliness is hardly ever manifested in any creative activity that corresponds to Hester's beautiful needle-work and patient care for the sick. Zenobia is only striking in her resplendent attire; her game of dressing up Priscilla, far from suggesting any creative bent on her part, usually carries the sinister intent of belittling her sister and violating her innocence, or ridiculing the Puritan attitude towards woman. Priscilla's adornment, therefore, is usually spoilt by the mocking inclusion of a bad-smelling

weed, or by Zenobia's generally mocking air.³ When she decks the younger girl up in the boarding-house, her taste and skill, rather than expressing an imaginative creativity for its own sake, hide a cruel motive, namely, to prepare her for Westervelt. Zenobia's passion, therefore, is destructive in the way it is put to use. The fecundity of human vitality is never realized.

The dark and menacing world which The Blithedale Romance presents is appropriate to its function as Puritan Gothic. The absorption of individuals by an all-persecuting and oppressive system suggests a will-less and passive existence that prevails even amongst such seemingly strong-willed characters as Hollingsworth and Zenobia. Indeed, the lack of psychological conflict, even in the defiant Zenobia (except perhaps at her death, when she takes on a pose ambiguously suggesting supplication and petulant hostility) points to the condition of unquestioning submission. Coverdale, the writer-narrator, reveals instances of contradictory attitudes that may reflect his unease and disquiet, but these are never sustained, and ultimately when he coyly declares himself in love with Priscilla, he seems to relinquish all reservations in a clear gesture of conformity.

As a pagan myth, therefore, The Blithedale Romance remains unfulfilled. The seasonal progress of time, that manifests the natural cycle and the rhythm of the primitive and earthy life, suggests a movement towards fulfilment in which death is not a brutal ending but an affirmation of ripeness and fullness. As Coverdale describes the

³This mockery is evident when Zenobia flings the veil over Priscilla (116).

grapes in autumn:

The grapes, which I had watched throughout the summer, now dangled around me in abundant clusters of the deepest purple, deliciously sweet to the taste, and though wild, yet free from that ungentle flavor which distinguishes nearly all our native and uncultivated grapes. Methought a wine might be pressed out of them, possessing a passionate zest, and endowed with a new kind of intoxicating quality, attended with such bacchanalian ecstasies as the tamer grapes of Madeira, France, and the Rhine, are inadequate to produce. (208)

The natural landscape too is evocative of this sense of renewal, of permanence and continuity. Coverdale's description of May-day is a celebration of this atmosphere of rebirth:

The two had been a-maying together. They had found anemones in abundance, houstonias by the handfull, some columbines, a few long-stalked violets, and a quantity of white everlasting-flowers, and had filled up their basket with the delicate spray of shrubs and trees. None were prettier than the maple-twigs, the leaf of which looks like a scarlet-bud, in May, and like a plate of vegetable gold in October. (58)

This vibrant sense of natural fecundity and abundance is never realized in man. Zenobia may appear as an Aphrodite, just as Hollingsworth may figure as Vulcan, or even as Zeus, but, like Moodie who is the Zeus/Hades character, or Priscilla who is identified with Persephone, or Coverdale who is seen as Actaeon, these never fulfil their potential for joy, passion or creativity.⁴ Each of them dies in his or her natural self.

As a Gothic romance of passion, then, The Blithedale Romance does not go very far beyond suggesting the human energies and vitality that

⁴For a closer appraisal of the parallels between characters and classical deities, see Peter B. Murray's article "Mythopoesis in The Blithedale Romance" in Critics on Hawthorne ed. Thomas J. Rountree (1972, 106-14).

bide in man. The pagan myth, that Coverdale seems to reconstruct around familiar mythic figures, is a mere masquerade that mocks the 'ghosts' that finally emerge - the pale wraiths who are either childishly regressive or prematurely aged. The masks that abound in the book heighten, therefore, this sense of mocking contradiction that shows up the sad realities that belie appearances, even as they also expose Coverdale's in-between state and shallow vision. The garden of Blithedale, and the state of bacchanalian revelry that Coverdale finds there on his return from the city are mere illusions, mocking reminders of what can never be, for Puritanism, in its rigorous nineteenth-century attempt at reform and conversion erects its own edifices and castles - a city no less, in which inhabitants are "cut out on one identical pattern" (149), as they already are in the towns from where Coverdale and the others come.⁵ Blithedale is ultimately another city that has no place for that natural, primitive life which belongs with the mythic, garden-state of man.

The climatic disorder that accompanies the seasonal structure accentuates this mood of unfulfilled promise, of confused values, and impropriety. Spring in April is chill with the blast of the "severest January tempest" (10) and "a drifting snow-storm" (11). May-day, blooming with flowers and scents, is spoilt by a weed of "evil odor and ugly aspect" (59), and the exciting ripeness of autumn is undercut by the horror and ugliness of Zenobia's unnatural death.

The opposition between Hollingsworth and Zenobia establishes once

⁵Coverdale describes Hollingsworth's mission in terms of castle-building (56 and 80).

again the separation of mind and heart - a theme that Hawthorne previously presented in The Scarlet Letter and The House of the Seven Gables. As before, this separation is seen to be a denial of the natural balance between spiritual and physical needs that is clearly perceived in all the characters - in Coverdale, old Moodie, Hollingsworth, Zenobia and Priscilla. Even Zenobia's sensuous vigour is linked to a higher creative function beyond the mere gratification of primitive desires, and Priscilla's girlish exuberance does not necessarily cancel out the spiritual aspect, even if it shows up the paralyzing effects of a too-narrow observance of the religious or spiritual ideal. In Silas Foster especially, the harmony between mind and heart is happily established, where spiritual goodness is derived from the heart, and kept close to humanity, for this goodness is directed towards helping and understanding human nature.

The balance between the spiritual and the physical aspects, between mind and heart, between faith and human nature, is clearly propounded by The Blithedale Romance in its function as a Gothic romance of passion. Its failure arises from the fact that, like Dimmesdale in The Scarlet Letter, characters tend to isolate the two aspects of human existence, to follow one and deny the other.

The delicate blending of Christian and pagan elements in the book points to the complementary roles of mind and heart, of spirit and body, even as it also provides an appropriate framework for establishing a balanced outlook. The pastoral setting fittingly evokes and brings together the Christian/Puritan and pagan/human perspectives. But characters and setting soon become increasingly distinct from one another as individuals feel more and more displaced in the pagan or

natural setting. This is highlighted by Coverdale's desire to leave, to return to the city, that world of contrivance and artifice, where Zenobia carries out her betrayal of her sister. Coverdale's return to Blithedale is as much an indication of his subservience to Hollingsworth, as it is a mark of his deeper compulsion towards the natural life. It is here too that Zenobia returns, to make her impassioned plea for Hollingsworth's love. Her act of drowning herself, when she is turned down, is a violent move, a deliberate violation of the river's symbolic significance, on the pagan level, as the source of natural life, and on the Christian level, as the source of spiritual renewal. In one decisive gesture, therefore, Zenobia scorns both the Christian and pagan ways of life, thus denying even her own archetypal role and purpose, and defeating her own natural vigour that, like Hester's in The Scarlet Letter, might have seen her through her solitude and despair. There is some truth in Westervelt's words, though not in the way he means, when he says:

"Her mind was active, and various in its powers . . . her heart had a manifold adaptation; her constitution an infinite bouyancy, which . . . would have borne her upward, triumphantly. . . . Every prize that could be worth a woman's having - and many prizes which other women are too timid to desire - lay within Zenobia's reach." (240)

Zenobia's death by drowning marks the condition of total separation in which she can neither identify with the spiritual aspect nor relate with the natural life of passion and desire. Hollingsworth's situation also signifies a forlornness that seems to suggest that he is lost. He clings to Priscilla, but more out of helplessness than with that purposefulness and zeal that he has shown before. He and Priscilla, mutually dependent on each other, are like two waifs in search of a home,

much like Coverdale himself, who drifts about, without much purpose, because "life . . . has come to rather an idle pass" (247). The travel motif, initially suggestive of hope and purpose, continues to the end, but it has become associated with an aimless wandering that bespeaks of despair.

While The Blithedale Romance repeats the main issues already established in The Scarlet Letter, it is even more gloomy than its predecessor in its vision of human destiny in the face of the conflict between faith and passion. It is a more obviously contrived piece of writing, the Veiled Lady symbol standing out clearly as an example of a technical device that does not belong to the plot. But, for all its affectation, The Blithedale Romance achieves a brilliant syncretism of Christian and pagan elements, that exactly fits in with Hawthorne's view of a balanced and fulfilling existence. It is the culmination of his earlier references to the Christian and pagan perspectives in writings such as The Maypole of Merry Mount and The Scarlet Letter. It also marks a sharpening of Hawthorne's vision which will ultimately lead to deeper insights in The Marble Faun.

Chapter 5

The Marble Faun: "Fragments into a whole"¹

For more than six years after The Blithedale Romance was completed in May 1852, Hawthorne's artistic brilliance seemed to go into eclipse. Except for a sketch on Samuel Johnson and Uttoxeter, his English and Italian Notebooks, and his abortive attempts at a literary work called The Ancestral Footstep, Hawthorne did not produce anything that approached the standard he had earlier achieved in the romances. Even when, on 30 January 1859, The Marble Faun appeared after this long fallow period, it struck many critics as the ultimate testimony of the author's decline in artistic power and insight. The baffling shifts between social commentary and romance that had marred his previous works, and which seemed to occur even more frequently here, the profuse

¹The Marble Faun (423).

description of landscape and monument, seemingly written for their own sake, and the disturbing gaps in the plot were not only perceived as indicative of a lack of artistic control, but also of a dwindling creative capacity. Hyatt Waggoner's comment that "there is too much of Rome, and too much about art" in The Marble Faun, that Hawthorne has "depended chiefly on Rome and its art treasures to give it thematic density" (1963, 223) reflects a deeper concern with the writer's apparent imaginative inertia rather than with technical feebleness.

Hawthorne, however, took an opposite view of his achievement in The Marble Faun. He wrote in a letter to William D. Ticknor, dated 6 April 1860: ". . . if I have written anything well, it should be this Romance; for I have never thought or felt more deeply or taken more pains" (1910, 99-100). The Marble Faun, indeed, is Hawthorne's most ambitious work. In it he not only tried to assemble together "the most persistent preoccupations and the recurrent images of a lifetime of writing" (Waggoner 1963, 221), but also aimed at uniting action and setting in a structure more complete and larger than any he had so far achieved. Henry James may have said that this book is less simple than either of the other three romances (1967, 131), but simplicity is precisely what Hawthorne did not intend here. Striving for density of texture and intensity of atmosphere, he brings to maturation his moral and artistic drive in a book which represents a grand culminative effort.

However, despite its breadth of vision, its richness of detail and its complexity of structure, The Marble Faun is surprisingly simple in its final form. The interrelationship between its diverse and extensive images and symbols, and the convergence of its numerous motifs and theme into a dominant idea give the book a unity that is part of its power and

magic. The use of the Italian background is here Hawthorne's tour de force. Italy embodies successive periods and areas of human experience and endeavour which may, however, be reduced to one common situation. With its atmosphere of history, art, religion and myth, its sense of time and the timeless, and the ambivalent mood of beauty and evil, Italy encapsulates the human myth in all its elemental, biblical, historic and contemporary significance. The history of man and the preoccupations of art and religious faith are all perceived as expressions of the same quest for order and truth. In this sense, the simple idealism of America (the new world) and the more sophisticated culture of Europe (the old world) coalesce, corresponding to one another in the drive towards meaning and uplift - towards understanding and fulfilment, towards transformation. But while in the case of American idealism this is perceived strictly in terms of a quest for the spiritual and the celestial, the European attitude is more earth-bound and almost pagan in its reconciliation of the spiritual and the physical, the divine and the human. This is clearly evident in the fact that while Hilda's Puritan idealism rejoices in the ethereal works of Raphael and Fra Angelico, Italian art on the whole tends to humanize the spiritual subject. The Virgin, for example, is often depicted in the image of a wife, a peasant girl or even a mistress. American idealism and European culture, therefore, eventually diverge in their ultimately different ideals and attitudes. They represent opposite sides of the mythic quest.

As in The Blithedale Romance, The Scarlet Letter and some of the tales, American idealism, stemming from and enhancing the Puritan aspiration for an Edenic revival, affirms such qualities as chastity, purity and innocence which are reminiscent of the prelapsarian state and

the celestial or divine aspect of man. Against this ideal of a virginal simplicity and spirituality, European or Italian culture presents an opulence and sensuality which are almost wanton and decadent. Italy, with its antique atmosphere, "its gaudy superstitions" (351), ornate buildings and colourful history, is evocative of an old corrupt and fallen world. Even its Catholic tradition seems exotic and heathen in its pageantry and ostentation. Rome, seen in this context, is like a sepulchral world, full of ruins and "broken rubbish" (110), reeking of death, pestilence and evil. If, on the other hand, Italian antiquity is evocative of a kind of classic simplicity that venerates earthy passion, primitive candour and naturalness, a simplicity that invests Italian culture with a purity and dignity of its own as represented in classical sculpture, this natural vigour celebrates the human aspect which is opposed to the celestial bent of Puritan idealism. Italy, therefore, is too pompous and flashy in its pageantry and too earthy and pagan in its concern with primitive humanity.

In its intensity of feeling and earnest faith, the Puritan theme in The Marble Faun weaves a Gothic world of deep yearning and dazzling vision. In Italy, where both the earthly and the celestial aspects of human life are celebrated and artistically enshrined, the Puritan vision of the ethereal and the divine finds exquisite expression in the art of the Masters, not least in the magnificent architectural device of pictured windows. As Kenyon rhapsodizes:

". . . 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." (304)

Hilda, therefore, is only one slight symbol, a contemporary type of an

ideal that has been known and perceived in art through the centuries. But in her the vision comes alive and is expressed more immediately and with a more pointedly Puritan emphasis on childlike innocence. While the bright and idealistic aspirations of Puritan belief are all the more keenly felt and all the more lucidly defined against the frankly pagan earthiness of the classical tradition of ancient Rome, and alternately, against the mellowed and more humane attitude of Catholicism, the brilliant contrasts between Puritanism and classicism, and between Puritanism and Catholicism provide a breadth of religious reference and experience that is matched only by the keenness of each faith or attitude. The Marble Faun as Puritan Gothic romance, therefore, is steeped in the deep experience of a faith presented vividly in all its spell-binding power and magical influence against a background of other faiths just as earnest, and older and more open in outlook.

Against this fabric of older religions, however, the Puritan view, in all its intensity of belief, also appears singularly childish and evasive. The optimism and idealism that have given rise to Hilda's dovelike and virginal role amount to a sentimentality that does not seem to admit of such human realities as sin, guilt and suffering.

Puritan zeal and dedication are based on a simplicity and clarity of vision which perceives good only in terms of the saintly and the angelic, without reference to the human aspect. Its spiritualism inculcates an almost childlike faith, which is represented in the delicate and fresh-faced girlishness of Hilda, whose 'child' role is stressed in her devotion to "the faith of her forefathers" (54) and in her frantic yearning for a mother figure. Apart from demonstrating the naiveté of this faith, the virginal piousness of this "daughter of the

Puritans" (54) who symbolizes "the idea of Divine Womanhood" (54), epitomizes the youthful ardour and single-minded fervour of Puritanism that contrast sharply with the accommodativeness and benevolence of Catholicism, the older religion. The relentless religiosity of Puritanism is suggested in the observation that while Hilda, in art, is a genius in copying the Old Masters, she sometimes manages to achieve even more than the original painters, in capturing what they have only been able to depict imperfectly. Hawthorne writes:

In some instances, even, . . . she had been enabled to execute what the great Master had conceived in his imagination, but had not so perfectly succeeded in putting upon canvas. . . . (59)

While this spiritual intensity and perceptiveness are most awesome and fulfilling in art and religion, they tend in human terms to efface Hilda's individuality and selfhood. She becomes an "exquisitely effective piece of mechanism, by the help of which the spirit of some great departed Painter now first [achieves] his ideal, centuries after his own earthly hand . . . [has] turned to dust" (59). As a symbol or a type of the spiritual ideal, and now as a medium for the divine spirit to express itself, Hilda hardly signifies as a human being. In her angelic role, indeed, she is "more an inhabitant of picture-land" (63), a fairy-like creature, as transparent as the air on which she thrives in her tower.

Puritanism, therefore, has a sinister side. In striving towards the celestial and the ethereal, not only has it no place for individual imagination and self expression, but it demands absolute devotion and filialty. As in Hawthorne's other romances, the religion exerts a kind of ancestral or patriarchal authority that is signalled by the immense influence of the Old Masters of art. It is not for nothing that Hilda

keeps referring to "her Puritan forefathers" (351), and her childlike role is eminently apt. Hawthorne's sardonic view of her subservience to the 'patriarchs' of art, to become "the handmaid of these old magicians" (61), is seen in the bizarre paralleling of Hilda's docility to the Virgin's submission to the will of God at the Annunciation. The image further satirizes the Puritans and their reverence for a patriarchal authority which appears almost godly in its power and influence. The sinister reference to the patriarchs whether of art or religion as "old magicians" extends the mockery. The Puritan religion, it would seem, then, works like a kind of black magic - it renders its victims helpless by entrapping them in a condition of total self-effacement and utter dependence.

In aspiring for the spiritual, in ignoring and even denying the human aspect in all its primitive vigour and physical power, Puritanism does not only distort reality, but fixes believers in a state of perpetual paralysis. The discussion on sculpture is, therefore, an angry gibe at the Puritan faith. Like bad sculpture, that is reduced to a "fossilizing process" (16) and a "frozen art" (17), Puritanism is too cold and too constricting. Hilda's feeble girlishness, seen amidst the rich and vibrant antiquity of Rome, reflects her regression. Unlike the cripple who goes to St. Peter to be healed at "the Beautiful Gate of the Temple" (111), Hilda is maimed under the shaping influence of Puritan patriarchism. This reversal of the traditional healing and saving role assigned to religion not only makes the whole Puritan faith suspect, but also creates an atmosphere of distorted values and abused power, that in turn gives rise to horror and fear.

The narrowness of the Puritan attitude is further demonstrated in

Hawthorne's ironic description of Hilda's secluded life. The tower that is her home is effectively a prison that, while it cloisters her in a state of virginal purity, shuts out humanity and human existence as it is lived in the streets below. The fact that this isolation is voluntary, that indeed Hilda revels in her cell-like life, does not alleviate the gravity of her situation. In her satisfaction with her narrow life lies the ultimate proof of her total enslavement and subjugation. Moreover, in her isolation, Hilda not only shows a naiveté about herself and her own human nature, but exudes a certain pride, an arrogance even, that belies her simplicity and virginal reserve. This hint of self-assurance is behind her very claim that she is "a Christian girl . . . a daughter of the Puritans" (54), which is not merely a statement of filialty, announcing her sense of duty and obligation. There is, in fact, a strong righteous attitude about Hilda that not only keeps her aloof from the rest of the world but even from the warm admiration of Kenyon and the desperate appeal of Miriam. Her innocence, therefore, shows a certain selectivity, a certain caution, that, while it preserves her chaste image, suggests a fastidiousness that seems to derive from an intense self-awareness and self-centredness. Hawthorne comments:

There was a certain simplicity that made every one her friend, but it was combined with a subtle attribute of reserve, that insensibly kept those at a distance who were not suited to her sphere.
(63)

Her fierce rejection of Miriam after her involvement in Donatello's crime, especially, shows a frantic desire for self-preservation, which underlies her terror and horror in the face of human passion and sin. The moral aversion that she conveys is ultimately linked to a hard selfishness that Hawthorne mockingly derides as he writes:

"Am I, too, stained with guilt?" thought the poor girl, hiding her face in her hands.

Not so, thank Heaven! . . . (205)

Thus, while Hilda's pious detachment, coldly conveyed by her request to Miriam not to "come nearer" (207), establishes her Puritan stand, it also affirms her arrogance, and hints at a meanness of attitude that ironically conflicts with her air of purity and goodness. In this sense, the whiteness of her robe that she so carefully protects, and which clearly represents her virtue, seems in that dusty and dirty environment of Rome, to be too loud a statement of her spirituality; it betrays her pride and mocks her seeming reserve and timidity. She says to Miriam:

". . . But I am a poor, lonely girl, whom God has has set here in an evil world, and given her only a white robe, and bid her wear it back to Him, as white as when she put it on. Your powerful magneticism would be too much for me. The pure, white atmosphere, in which I try to discern what things are good and true, would be discoloured. And, therefore, Miriam, before it is too late, I mean to put faith in this awful heart-quake, which warns me henceforth to avoid you!" (208)

Hilda's utter terror of getting besmirched and losing her purity increasingly reveals that her aversion to sin stems more from her fear of what it will do to her spotless image than from a horror of evil itself.

The prospect of Hilda destroyed by another's guilt is absurd, but as it is presented in the sentimental portrait of Innocence Dying of a Bloodstain, the idea underlines her fears even as it mocks at her prudishness, and gibes at her unnatural resistance to the fact of her own sexuality. For the bloodstain is a direct symbol of menstrual flow and focuses attention on Hilda's womanhood which she seeks to deny.

Although Hilda later feels a certain remorse for having failed

Miriam as a friend, her swift severing of their relationship conforms to the merciless zeal that typifies her character. As Miriam says:

"I always said, Hilda, that you were merciless; for I had a perception of it, even while you loved me best. You have no sin, nor any conception of what it is; and therefore you are so terribly severe! As an angel, you are not amiss; but, as a human creature, and a woman among earthly men and women, you need a sin to soften you!" (209)

Whatever regrets Hilda may feel about her behaviour towards her friend come only after she is sure that she herself and her image are resurrected in a kind of rebirth by means of a pilgrimage through the churches of Rome, ending in her confession at St. Peter's. She tells Kenyon:

". . . I have survived the death-struggle that it cost me, and need make no further revelations. . . ." (383)

For Hilda, aloof and righteous as she is, the bond of relationship, symbolized by the handclasp that she denies Miriam, has little significance. Instead Hilda regards herself to be "the handmaid of Raphael" (61). Kenyon's sculpture of her hand, therefore, is not only an ironic reminder of her denial of all human ties, which the sculptor himself senses when he says that Hilda "has no need of love" (121), but also signals the power that the girl wields over others. Hilda indeed influences the thoughts and actions of many of those who come within her sphere. It is to her that Miriam repairs after the killing of the model, not only because she fears that Hilda may have witnessed the crime and, therefore, needs to test her reaction, but also because being the virtuous figure that she is, her approval is necessary for Miriam's own peace of mind. As for Kenyon, his role as counsellor and guide to Donatello and Miriam is significantly undermined by his dependence on

Hilda. Fellow artists fall in line behind Hilda, to be guided by her interpretations of the Old Masters. But the girl herself is controlled by her faith. The hand symbol, therefore, ultimately denotes the power of Puritanism and the firm hold it has on the lives of its believers. Hilda's statement of the way her life is shaped by the Masters of art also refers to Puritanism and its grip on her: "The Old Masters will not set me free" (334).

As Puritan Gothic, therefore, The Marble Faun shows the way in which the spiritual ideal of purity and spotless virtue captivates and binds believers. It is directly opposed to human feeling and relationship, so that piety and righteousness equate with self-esteem, relentless zeal and brutal judgement. In this way, and accentuating its Gothic concern with intense feeling and faith undercut by horror, The Marble Faun exudes an increasing sense of dread as the very vigour and zeal of the Puritan creed point to a denial of mutual support, which in itself questions the very ideals which it strives to uphold. Increasingly, the religion shows itself to be a tangled system of ironic contradictions and sinister enslavement. In The Marble Faun, therefore, Hawthorne challenges the Puritan concept of good and evil, and condemns the separation of the spiritual and earthly aspects of human nature. The statue of "a child clasping the dove to its bosom" and being "assaulted by a snake" (5) represents the sentimentality and the kind of lopsided view that the Puritans indulge in, where the desire to nurture one aspect of the human soul (the dove) inculcates a hostility towards, and terror for the other (the snake).

While the statue's emphasis on innocence points to the separation from the primitive life and the affirmation of the ethereal and

visionary ideal, it also manifests a certain symbolic exaggeration which is in keeping with the righteous piety of Puritanism itself. But such an exaggeration also reflects the fantastic make-believe that the whole idealistic creed amounts to. The cherubic forms that Hilda admires and copies and the dazzling Divinity celebrated in the glorious and haunting splendour of stained-glass renditions are ultimately little more than apparitions belonging to the airy region that Hilda inhabits. Against the solid magnitude of marble columns and stone walls, against the dusty accumulations of centuries of human history and civilisation, the spiritual world appears dreamlike, gossamer-thin, its purity and perfection more magic than human actuality. Miriam's wonder at the strangeness of Hilda's world confirms that it is unreal and alien to human experience. She says:

". . . What a sweet, strange life you lead here;
 conversing with the souls of the Old Masters,
 feeding and fondling your sister doves, and
 trimming the Virgin's lamp! . . ." (69)

As much as the dove and serpent symbols, represented in the statue of the human soul, poised between innocence and evil, affirm the Puritan preoccupations with good, the presence of the two symbols also establishes the coexistence of the two aspects - good and evil - and hints that the attachment to one does not, and cannot negate the other. The serpent, in fact, denotes the encroaching earthly life, and the legacy of Original Sin, that obstruct the Puritan quest. In Hilda's painting of Beatrice Cenci, the idea of sin and evil is as much in evidence as the sense of the girl's virtue. The ambiguous suggestion of good and evil is just the thing that contributes to her mystery. Hilda, however, tends to idealize Beatrice's condition as a fallen angel, "fallen, yet sinless" (66), and is inclined to separate the subject from her history. The

tenderness that Hilda feels for the girl, therefore, far from indicating a generous acceptance of Beatrice and her guilt, is more a sentimental response to the idea of the other's suffering and grief. She says:

" . . . She knows that her sorrow is so strange, and immense, that she ought to be solitary forever, both for the world's sake and her own; and this is the reason we feel such a distance between Beatrice and ourselves, even when our eyes meet hers. It is infinitely heart-breaking to meet her glance, and feel that nothing can be done to help or comfort her; neither does she ask help or comfort, knowing the hopelessness of her case better than we do. . . ." (65-66)

Hilda sympathizes with Beatrice in her misery but not in her guilt. Even when she insists that the girl is "sinless," her attitude indicates not so much a belief in Beatrice's innocence as a desire to block out the idea of sin itself. This is a self-imposed blindness on Hilda's part: ". . . I really had quite forgotten Beatrice's history, and was thinking of her only as the picture seems to reveal her character . . ." (66).

When Miriam makes her regard the actual situation of Beatrice Cenci, and put aside her own romantic fantasizing, Hilda is quick to acquiesce with the judgement meted out to her: ". . . Yes, yes; it was terrible guilt, an inexpressible crime, and she feels it to be so. . . . Her doom is just" (66). While this reflects her Puritan disapproval of guilt of any kind (which is the reason for her distress over her part in Donatello's crime), the hasty manner in which she mouths her condemnation of Beatrice may express a mere echoing of established opinion, and betrays a certain embarrassment on her part for having forgotten about the girl's guilt in her warm portrayal and description of her suffering. Hilda's manner, therefore, once again seems to depict a conscious submission to the Puritan code, thus declaring her state of total bondage. Her feeling for Beatrice, however, may well point to a depth of emotional response

which is natural to her womanhood. Her insistence that the girl is sinless though fallen, her reluctance to admit the other's guilt, is then an unconscious attempt to reconcile her spontaneous feelings with Puritan moralism.

The dove and serpent symbols thus describe Hilda's plight, set between the conflicting forces of natural human tenderness and an all-enveloping faith. In this context, the sinister threat that the serpent presents to the child of the statue may relate to the way in which Puritanism, with its distorted outlook and contradictoriness, endangers healthy human development, even as the utter severity of its moral code is directly opposed to the gentleness and love that the dove represents. The serpent thus becomes a symbol of Puritanism itself and its evil influence. The ironic reversal of roles, so that Puritanism, alienated from the dove and identified with the snake, appears as a menacing force, mocks at the pious aspirations of the religion. Far from upholding virtue and chastity, Puritanism is seen serpent-like to oppose the biblical ideal of Christ-like tenderness and love and naturalness which the child and the dove represent. The grotesquerie of Puritan hypocrisy and the full horror of its influence are revealed in this bold detachment of Puritanism from its traditional symbols.

In so far as the dove and snake symbols establish the coexistence of good and evil, spirit and body, the serpent, more particularly and fittingly, connotes the physical or sexual life, and more precisely evokes the idea of male sexuality. As Puritanism, identified with the Old Masters of art and with ancestral and patriarchal figures, has a specifically masculine role, the serpent image, with its sexual suggestion, becomes a further affirmation of the dominant male role that

the religion assumes. The symbol also ironically implies the sexual drive behind the Puritan quest and its patriarchal authority. As in The Scarlet Letter and The Blithedale Romance the persistent and compelling power of the Puritan fathers becomes more like a sexual force, and Hilda's enslavement, suggested in the sculpture of the child with the dove, assaulted by the snake, contains overtones of sexual possession. The portrayal of Hilda in the painting of Innocence, Dying of a Bloodstain, completes the idea of her violation. With the relationship between Hilda and her Puritan ancestors clearly presented in terms of a child-father relationship, this sexual outrage deepens with the suggestion of incest - a suggestion which is intensified with Hilda's identification with that incestuous victim, Beatrice Cenci. The impression of the Old Masters of art as "old magicians" (61), who hold Hilda thoroughly enthralled, enhances the idea of an insidious and unnatural possession. Against the purity of Puritan ideals, and in the face of Hilda's childlike role, this hint of a sexual violation, especially incest, is expressly obscene and shocking, but it only confirms the warped character of the system and further derides the hypocrisy of the whole Puritan creed.

The hint of sexual violation, however, is doubly ironic in Hilda's case, first, because she has quite separated herself and her life from all that is earthy and physical, and secondly, because her terror of human evil also expresses itself in a determined evasion of sexual passion. In her Virgin's shrine far above, Hilda keeps well away from the secret life of desire and sin. Down below, however, the primitive passions abound, suggested in the cavern images of the catacombs and in Miriam's talk of the chasm underlying human life. Peeping into the

depths of Curtius' pit, Miriam sees its symbolic significance and says:

". . . The chasm was merely one of the orifices of that pit of blackness that lies beneath us, everywhere. The firmest substance of human happiness is but a thin crust spread over it, with just reality enough to bear up the illusive stage-scenery amid which we tread. It needs no earthquake to open the chasm. . . . By-and-by we inevitably sink! . . ." (161-62)

Much as the cavern images describe the subterranean life of human guilt, they also express the sexual passions hidden deep in the human psyche. The images, indeed, signal Hilda's own sexuality which she hardly recognizes. Her uneasiness in the catacombs, that descend "into deeper and deeper recesses of the earth" (24), therefore, has more to do with the fear of the earthly life and physical passion than with the idea of death and mortality. This is confirmed in her nervous withdrawal from Kenyon's advances. While her aloofness may seem to point to a certain restraint in her attitude even towards her 'close' friends, her reserve, in the face of Kenyon's warmth also manifests a sexual timidity, as the former's manner is certainly loverlike.

Hilda is not unaware of sexual passion, though she may be reluctant to face it. Just as she is capable of feeling and sympathy, as in her response to Beatrice and also in her distress over Miriam's disappearance in the catacombs, she, like Priscilla in The Blithedale Romance, for all her virginal innocence, has a natural sexual ardour which is kept suppressed. If her ardent response to Donatello's Faun-like animal vigour and gaiety is not exactly indicative of any latent sexuality, Kenyon's teasing remark that Pan, the god of forests and animals, and the whole tribe of mythological creatures live on in Hilda, "in the moonlit seclusion of a young girl's fancy" (103), surely indicates her sexual

fervour.² Thus her enthusiasm over Kenyon's statue of Cleopatra, that epitome of feminine sexuality and voluptuousness, comes as no surprise. Hilda's involuntary response to the statue, however, seems only to come at an unguarded moment, when, after her bout with her stricken Puritan conscience, and after her months of loneliness, her spiritual detachment almost shattered, she is most vulnerable to her womanly feelings and her general human aspect. Her vulnerability is confirmed when, on meeting Kenyon again for the first time in months, she gives him her hand in token of her joy, a gesture which is in marked contrast to her usual restraint: "She held out her hand; and Kenyon was glad to take it in his own, if only to assure himself that she was made of earthly material" (364). Even in her excitement over the Cleopatra figure, however, Hilda cannot help feeling a sense of shame and self-consciousness. She says to Kenyon: "I am ashamed to tell you how much I admire this statue . . ." (378). Consequently, the statue of the child with the dove and snake, the emblem of Innocence's confrontation with Evil, with the serpent cast in the role of ravisher and destroyer, may be more particularly addressed to Hilda's terror of the sexual life, and more graphically, to her horror of male sexuality.

Hilda, however, is not alone in her sexual regression. Ultimately Kenyon too shows a similar sexual feebleness. Indeed, from the very beginning, Kenyon's idolization of Hilda suggests a spiritualism that

²Hilda's delight in Donatello's joyousness is expressed in her remark to Kenyon: "Then," said Hilda, with perfect simplicity, "you have thought him - and do think him - one of that strange, wild, happy race of creatures, that used to laugh and sport in the woods, in the old, old times? So do I, indeed! But I never quite believed, till now, that Fauns existed anywhere but in poetry" (102-03).

identifies with a Puritan outlook. The reverence for Hilda and her delicate instincts signal his idealism and religiosity, which render him naive and boyish. If his regard for Hilda's "shy divinity" (122) which in itself is associated with virginal reserve and sexual repression, seems a kind of perversion which detracts from his humanity and masculinity, this sexual aberration is further emphasised by the frankly sexual fascination and desire which are clearly evident in his passionate sculpturing of Hilda's hand. Miriam comments: ". . . you . . . have wrought it passionately, in spite of its maiden palm and dainty finger-tips" (120). Kenyon's attachment to Hilda, indeed, seems to indicate a channelling of sexual passion towards a spiritual and ethereal ideal. As has been suggested in The Blithedale Romance, Puritan prudery is so repressive that human sexuality must almost disguise itself as religious feeling or else identify itself with a religious ideal.

The extent of Kenyon's sensuous fascination with Hilda is seen not only in his sculpture of her hand, but also in the Cleopatra statue that he shows to Miriam. The voluptuous and passionate figure of womanhood, displayed just after the unveiling of the sculptured hand, and directly after his expression of yearning for the girl whom he fears he will never win, pointedly suggests the erotic and sensuous direction of his thoughts, which he dares not make too obvious in his representation of Hilda's delicate hand. The frank sexuality and ardour of the Cleopatra figure, therefore, is an evocation of Hilda's desirability, which he can only convey obliquely, not only out of respect for her virginal and ethereal image, but also in an attempt to play down the sexual overtones of his own perception of her, as is in keeping with the Puritan outlook which still tends to distinguish between the spiritual and the

physical. Kenyon's sculpture of the hand, and his showing it before the Cleopatra figure may also point to a desire to check his own sexual passion, and to offset the sensuousness portrayed in the Cleopatra statue, by means of the contrasting delicateness and ethereal quality of the hand. Kenyon's natural sexuality, therefore, is warped; it has become a twisted, complicated and furtive impulse that is more disastrous than Hilda's regression. While sexual disability in Hilda's case is a result of a kind of violation, it shows itself in Kenyon as a terrible perversion. That this perversion is ultimately identified with the sinister and malevolent model who haunts Miriam, whose "very acts of depravity" seem to combine strongly with a "severe and self-inflicted penance" (432), points ominously to the evil of sexual repression. The model, indeed, in his phantom-like persecution and pursuit of Miriam, epitomizes the dark furtive power of a suppressed sexuality, that grows all the more violent and malevolent for being denied.

In so far as the Cleopatra statue denotes the potent beauty and sexuality of human nature and womanhood, it is more appropriately a symbol of Miriam, with "her brooding melancholy, her petulance and moody passion" (36), than of Hilda. Indeed, in view of Miriam's womanly mystery and "personal magneticism" (36), Kenyon's attachment to Hilda seems all the more unnatural. That Kenyon, with his ardent and imaginative expressiveness, has a natural rapport with Miriam is evident in the way in which the latter shares his vibrant portrayal of human passion and mystery. Thus Miriam exclaims excitingly over Cleopatra:

"What a woman is this! . . . Tell me, did she never try - even while you were creating her - to overcome you with her fury, or her love? Were you not afraid to touch her, as she grew more and more

towards hot life, beneath your hand? My dear friend,
it is a great work! How have you learned to do it?"
(127)

On one occasion Miriam, as might be expected from her passionate and intense nature, criticizes Guido Reni's portrait of the Archangel Michael and his "dainty air" (184) as he sets "his prettily sandalled foot on the head of his prostrate foe" (184). Kenyon's view, that Miriam's picture of "man's struggle against sin" will be "a masterpiece" (184), reflects not only the loud enthusiasm of a fellow-artist, but also the approval of a human being, who understands and feels the truth of her version of the biblical event. Elsewhere, his passionate exhortations of the miracle of artistic creativity, "of imbuing an inanimate substance with thought, feeling, and all the intangible attributes of the soul" (271), correspond with Miriam's attempt to paint from her "heart-knowledge" (49). Despite the fact that they are naturally close, however, Kenyon is reluctant to be involved with Miriam. When she tries to confide her secrets to him, Kenyon quickly repulses her.

Kenyon's feeling for Miriam and Donatello, as they suffer the agony of guilt, is encapsulated in his bust of the youth that expresses so well his vision of suffering humanity. Art, then, is the saving process that can draw Kenyon back to earth, back to humanity, on a chain of sympathy and love. But progressively, as he spends more and more time with Hilda and is drawn deeper and deeper into her ambience of spirituality, his warmth and assertiveness lose out to a growing idealism, so that even his furtive sexuality is effectively stifled. His statue of Hilda, represented as Maidenhood gathering a Snowdrop, delineates the new ethereality of his art, that contrasts clearly with the bold passion

and frank energy of his earlier sculpture. Kenyon's enfeebled masculinity and dwindling creativity are apparent in the way in which he wants to smash the statue of Cleopatra to pieces at Hilda's expression of embarrassment over her response to the figure. Indeed, his passive reaction at what should have been a thrilling discovery of the statue of the Venus de Medici indicates not only his attachment to Hilda, whose disappearance leaves him totally bereft, but also the fact that, as a man and as an artist, he no longer warms to this image of sensuous and passionate womanhood. As far as he is concerned, natural womanliness has been quite eclipsed by Hilda's dainty maidenliness: "Ah, Miriam, I cannot respond to you," said the sculptor, with irrepressible impatience. "Imagination and the love of art have both died out of me" (427).

Kenyon's ready acquiescence to Hilda's decisive rejection of the idea that sin is "merely an element of human education" (460), therefore, and his pathetic pleas to her to guide him home enunciate the extent of his enslavement. The prospect of the homely existence that Kenyon will lead, with Hilda "enshrined and worshipped as a household Saint" (461), marks the death of his imaginative career, and the curtailment of his masculine drive. The gross symbol of the cauliflower that hits him at the carnival, even as he receives the rosebud that Hilda throws, hints at his artistic atrophy, and nullifies the sweet symbol of the rosebud, that suggests Hilda's delicate and chaste influence. Indeed, the carnival and its riotous parade of fantastic and monstrous figures evoke Kenyon's growing revulsion for the natural passions and the primitive life. His homecoming, therefore, leads, not to a higher and fuller life as man and artist, but to a pale and narrow existence of

perpetual bondage. He is reduced to a childlike, supplicating role of worshipper/husband in a marriage which is a religious, one-sided relationship with a wife who is the "household Saint" (461). The absurd unreality and futility of this existence is suggested in the sentimental tone of the description, and driven home by the mocking emphasis on its so-called "human promise" (461). Hawthorne writes:

And, now that life had so much human promise in it,
they resolved to go back to their own land;
because the years, after all, have a kind of emptiness,
when we spend too many of them on a foreign shore.
(461)

From a deeply feeling and sensuous man and sensitive artist, one who has won from Miriam the comment that he is "a man of refined taste" (286), Kenyon ultimately shows himself to be no more than a Puritan youth, like Coverdale in The Blithedale Romance, who is caught up in the high ideals of Puritanism. If Hilda, by her ethereal presence, helps to define for him his Puritan values and to keep his vision focused on these, so that his artistic imagination withdraws more and more from Miriam and from human themes, she is by no means responsible for the strong Puritan streak in him. As he admonishes Hilda for her participation in the Catholic rite of confession, and as he pointedly objects to "that mass of unspeakable corruption, the Roman Church" (366), Kenyon proves his innate Puritan character and upbringing. He is the first to dismiss Miriam's view that her crime and Donatello's could be a blessing in disguise for the maturity it brings to the Count's character. When he brings the same argument to Hilda, thus betraying his secret sympathy for the other two, he is in fact seeking approval and affirmation from the person to whom he most looks up. The ultimate point of Kenyon's human and artistic crippling is reached here, when,

in seeking to placate an outraged Hilda, he behaves and sounds like a pathetic lost child:

"Forgive me, Hilda!" exclaimed the sculptor, startled by her agitation. "I never did believe it! But the mind wanders wild and wide; and, so lonely as I live and work, I have neither pole-star above, nor light of cottage-windows here below, to bring me home. Were you my guide, my counsellor, my inmost friend, with that white wisdom which clothes you as with a celestial garment, all would go well. Oh, Hilda, guide me home." (460-61)

The popular idea among critics, that Kenyon and Hilda are humanized by their exposure to Donatello's sin and subsequent suffering, does not seem to take into account the fact that Kenyon's stature as man and artist has significantly dwindled, as he is reduced to a childlike idealism. His inability to appreciate the humane aspect of Catholicism, seen in its provisions for prayer and confession to relieve the overburdened soul, is clearly a refusal to compromise the Puritan system of worship even in spite of the reality of human suffering and the need for consolation. Hilda too, despite her expressed "death-struggle" (383), has emerged almost untouched by real understanding of the human lot. Her instinct, in fact, is to put a distance between herself and the horror she has seen. If Kenyon tends to make a goddess of her in order to gratify his Puritan conscience, Hilda is more than ready to play the part:

So, Kenyon won the gentle Hilda's shy affection, and her consent to be his bride. Another hand must henceforth trim the lamp before the Virgin's shrine; for Hilda was coming down from her old tower, to be herself enshrined and worshipped as a household Saint, in the light of her husband's fireside. (461)

Hawthorne's remark, that people lose touch with reality the longer they stay away from their native place, seems to point to the inability of Hilda and Kenyon to return to humanity after too long an immersion in

Puritan ideals and values. At the end of the romance, therefore, Hawthorne writes:

And, now that life had so much human promise in it, they resolved to go back to their own land; because the years, after all, have a kind of emptiness, when we spend too many of them on a foreign shore. We defer the reality of life, in such cases, until a future moment, when we shall again breathe our native air; but, by-and-by, there are no future moments; or, if we do return, we find that the native air has lost its invigorating quality, and that life has shifted its reality to the spot where we have deemed ourselves only temporary residents. Thus, between two countries, we have none at all, or only that little space of either, in which we finally lay down our discontented bones. It is wise, therefore, to come back betimes - or never. (461)

Kenyon's return to America with Hilda marks his rejection of the emotional and imaginative enrichment which Italy offers, and which he and Hilda have come expressly to seek. In Kenyon's case, especially, more than in Hilda's, the move is tragic because it signals his betrayal of his own manhood and fecund humanity. The pilgrimage to Italy, as much as his wandering with Donatello through the countryside of Tuscany, like Hilda's search in Rome, ends only in a childish scramble for refuge and safety. The travel motif, which seems to herald the mythic pilgrimage towards spiritual uplift and rebirth, seen in relation to the epic journey the Israelites and Moses took through the desert to the Promised Land,³ brings with it no hint of maturation or transformation. The theme of pilgrimage, therefore, ironically delineates Kenyon's failure and the ultimate defeat of those artistic and intuitive instincts, that have responded so well to the warm fecundity of Nature -

³These biblical references may be found on pages 106, 127 and 315.

The sky was soft and bright, but not so gorgeous as Kenyon had seen it, a thousand times, in America; for there the western sky is wont to set a-flame with breadths and depths of colour, with which poets seek in vain to dye their verses, and which painters never dare to copy. As beheld from the tower of Monte Beni, the scene was tenderly magnificent, with mild gradations of hue, and a lavish outpouring of gold, but rather such gold as we see on the leaf of a bright flower . . . (266)

- and which, even in spite of his preoccupation with Hilda's disappearance, have enabled him to feel some of the erotic yet sublime appeal of the Venus statue which he painstakingly puts together. Hawthorne comments:

. . . the sculptor lifted it, turned it hither and thither, in his hands, brushed off the clinging soil, and finally placed it on the slender neck of the newly discovered statue. 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 lustre; 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. (423-24)

As his refusal to drink of the Sunshine wine and as his rejection of the Venus statue show, Kenyon himself opts for the life of deprivation that he has urged Donatello to resist.

"What! Turn monk? exclaimed his friend. "A horrible idea!"

"True," said Donatello sighing. "Therefore, if at all, I purpose doing it."

"Then think of it no more, for Heaven's sake!" cried the sculptor. . . .

"They serve neither God nor men, and themselves least of all, though their motives be utterly selfish," replied Kenyon. "Avoid the convent, my dear friend, as you would shun the death of the

soul! But, for my own part, if I had an unsupportable burthen - if, for any cause, I were bent upon sacrificing every earthly hope as a peace-offering towards Heaven - I would make the wide world my cell, and good deeds to mankind my prayer. . . ." (267)

In its suggestion of spiritual renewal and transformation, the pilgrimage motif also extends the theme of an Edenic return and homecoming which, however, is ironically undercut by the suggestion of a separative, isolating and retrogressive movement. Even the historical environment, that evokes the different periods of Roman civilization, Etruscan, Roman and Christian, signals the fact, not of continuity, but of estrangement, alienation and divergence. Hilda's wandering through churches, shrines and artefacts may symbolize the progression towards reconciliation and resurrection, but it ultimately highlights her lost state, alienated from the true spiritual life, and from humanity. Her disappearance is a fitting climax that drives home the fact of her remoteness and ethereality. Her attempt, at long last, to come down from her shrine out of her spiritual cocoon to help Miriam is futile, and her naive disregard for her own safety indicates her utter ignorance of the world and its dangers. Ironically, it is Miriam and Donatello who achieve a kind of rebirth, in their selfless sacrifice, surrendering themselves to the authorities in order to secure Hilda's release. But Hilda cannot appreciate the good that is in Miriam, and even when they meet for the last time at the Pantheon, she maintains her distance. Hilda's disappearance, seen in terms of the extinction of the Virgin's lamp, therefore, also points to her failure as a spiritual ideal. She is incapable of that Christ-like faith, that is, faith in God and faith in man and his capacity for good. Her homecoming, her return to America and its Edenic idealism, while it signals her renewed Puritan convictions

and resolve, by no means indicates her achievement of true uplift and transformation. Indeed, her return seems to be an ironic attempt not only to run away from the realities that Europe insists on forcing upon her, but also to make up for her spiritual failure by means of a substitute Eden provided by the new-world Edenic ethos of America.

Hawthorne's criticism of Puritan idealism ultimately establishes an idea of spiritual renewal based on faith in God and goodwill towards all humanity. The aspiration towards the divine must be matched by a corresponding belief in man and his capacity for good as much as for evil. Puritan idealism rests on a simplicity of outlook that regards the division between innocence and guilt, between good and evil to be clear-cut and final. Hilda says:

". . . there is, I believe, only one right and one wrong; and I do not understand (and may God keep me from ever understanding) how two things so totally unlike can be mistaken for one another, nor how two mortal foes - as Right and Wrong surely are - can work together in the same deed. . . ."
(384)

To see humanity at all is difficult enough for the zealous Puritan, who is quite self-preoccupied, but to regard and accept humanity as a mixture of good and evil is beyond him. Hilda cannot tolerate the evil of Donatello's and Miriam's sin; neither can she perceive the saving grace of love and generosity in their sacrifice for her sake. She cannot even reach out to Miriam when she sees her in the Pantheon, despite her late attempt to make up to her friend for her earlier unkindness. Hilda's last move with regard to the figure of the female penitent is to convince herself that it is not Miriam. Thus, if it is said at the end of the romance, that Hilda has "a hopeful soul," and sees "sunlight on the mountain-tops" (462), this has little to do with

her view of Miriam and Donatello and their fate. The vague phrase refers more to her own cheerful nature, that prefers to see the light instead of the dark, that would not allow the dark fears surrounding the lives of the other two to mar her own future. Such is the selfishness of her kind of optimism and faith.

Puritan simplicity, therefore, is not so simple after all. Apart from the self-centredness and the hard condemning attitude that it adopts, the seeming childlike outlook conveys a deeply suspicious trait, that seems to suggest a certain brooding evil, a corrupt tendency that seeks out the decadent and the profane, where none may even exist. This is amply demonstrated in the way in which Hilda is stricken with guilt at the event of witnessing Donatello's act of pushing the model over the precipice, even though she is by no means involved in the deed. Her conviction that she is tainted by knowing evil is indicated in her need for confession as part of the process of cleansing her soul.

In this way Puritan simplicity is incapable of that chaste spontaneity, that natural purity that is associated with "the sylvan life of Etruria, while Italy was yet guiltless of Rome" (232), that life which seems more ready to see the beauty of man and rejoice in it rather than invest it with suspicion. This chaste simplicity or pastoral innocence that man possessed initially, however, is as delicate as it is precious. Like the Sunshine wine of Monte Beni, its exquisite quality is only too easily adulterated and polluted. That certain lewdness in modern art which, as Miriam points out, is incapable of producing chaste nudes "modest as violets, and sufficiently draped in their own beauty" (123), is a reflection of the loss of this purity, and announces the prevalence of a profane outlook. Miriam comments:

". . . Every young sculptor seems to think that he must give the world some specimen of indecorous womanhood, and call it Eve, Venus, a Nymph, or any name that may apologise for a lack of clothing. I am weary, even more ashamed, of seeing such things. Now-a-days, people are as good as born in their clothes, and there is practically not a nude human being in existence. . . ." (123)

The reference to clothing and eye images confirm the loss of innocence and accentuates the modern uneasiness and self-consciousness towards nudity, which leads to the inevitable desire to veil this otherwise chaste state. Kenyon's comment proves this and indicates his own part in this coy handling of nudity:

". . . We are bound to accept drapery of some kind, and make the best of it. . . ." (124)

Hilda's proud awareness of her white robe is, therefore, doubly ironic. While, for her, it is a proper index of her virginal chastity, the robe and the whiteness of it exactly parody her loss of innocence.

In so far as the Faun and Donatello depict the true purity of which Hilda is incapable they show up the falseness and narrowness of Puritan virtuousness. As Praxiteles's statue suggests, and as Donatello's nature verifies, humanity is capable of and originally characterized by this innocent and wholesome outlook which, indeed, may be the source of its spontaneous gaiety, and the true bond between man and the natural world. Hawthorne remarks:

Trees, grass, flowers, woodland streamlets, cattle, deer, and unsophisticated man! The essence of all these was compressed long ago, and still exists, within that discoloured marble surface of the Faun of Praxiteles.

And, after all, the idea may have been no dream, but rather a poet's reminiscence of a period when man's affinity with Nature was more strict, and his fellowship with every living thing more intimate and dear. (10-11)

The external world, in the form of religious creeds and social preconceptions, makes it impossible for the spontaneous and ardent Donatello to act without fear or guilt. Kenyon points out:

"A simple and joyous character can find no place for itself among the sage and sombre figures that would put his unsophisticated cheerfulness to shame. The entire system of Man's affairs, as at present established, is built up purposely to exclude the careless and happy soul" (239)

Donatello's act of killing the model is an involuntary act of necessity, compelled by his feelings for Miriam, and by the need to save her from that horrible persecution which threatens to break her sanity. As Nina Baym asserts, it is an act belonging to the heroic tradition, "wherein innocent maidens are rescued from monsters, ogres, and demons" (1976, 234). As the model is hardly seen as a human being, his death, surely, is not as horrifying. Besides, the very terrorizing of Miriam by the spectre may be seen to symbolize the world's relentless hounding of a person believed to have been involved in some previous crime. Miriam, therefore, is haunted by the ghosts invoked by a judicious society, too full of preoccupations about human guilt and evil. Her words to Donatello about those traitors who were killed in ancient Rome at the Traitor's Leap, "men whose lives were the bane of their fellow-creatures" (170), point to the fact that the spectre and the world that has called it forth are evil in themselves, so that the destruction of the creature can only be an act of beneficence.

The parallelling of the spectre with the demon in Guido Reni's portrait of the Archangel putting down Satan seems to confirm the sinister and oppressive evil posed by Miriam's model:

It was acknowledged both by Kenyon and Hilda that they had detected, or fancied, the resemblance

which Donatello so strongly affirmed; and it added not a little to the grotesque and wierd character which, half-playfully, half-seriously, they assigned to Miriam's attendant, to think of him as personating the Demon's part in a picture of more than two centuries ago. (140)

The identification of the model with "the old Serpent" (184) testifies to his Satanic role. As suggested by Guido Reni's portrait then, the killing of Miriam's oppressor is not only a necessary act; in so far as Donatello represents innocence, it is an act symbolic of good putting down evil.

As in the case of Miriam's history, however, society is only too ready to condemn a deed which has the least hint of the irregular, and to suspect the worst of all those involved in it. Donatello's feelings of fear and guilt after the killing of the model, therefore, are not so much derived from an innate sense of wrong-doing; indeed, being the natural creature that he is, he is said to have no intimation of good or evil, because such distinctions are made by society, according to religious and moral conceptions. Donatello's terrible self-reproach is merely a response to the traditional social view of the matter. That he should so readily adopt this attitude of horror towards his own action is due mostly to Miriam's reaction to the deed. Miriam, being the one person who most moves him, by her expression of shock, guilt and remorse, convinces Donatello like nothing else, that he has committed a terrible act.

"What have you done!" said Miriam, in a horror-stricken whisper.

The glow of rage was still lurid on Donatello's face, and now flashed out again from his eyes.

"I did what ought to be done to a traitor!" he replied . . .

"You have killed him, Donatello! He is quite dead," said she. "Stone dead! Would I were so, too!"

"Did you not mean that he should die," sternly asked Donatello, still in the glow of that intelligence which passion had enveloped him. . . .

"Oh, never!" cried Miriam, "My one, own friend! Never, never, never!"

She turned to him - the guilty, blood-stained, lonely woman - she turned to her fellow-criminal, the youth, so lately innocent, whom she had drawn into her doom. She pressed him close, close to her bosom, with a clinging embrace that brought their two hearts together, till the horror and agony of each was combined into one emotion, and that, a kind of rapture. (172-74)

That Donatello's guilt stems from Miriam's reaction is especially clear in view of the fact that his immediate attitude after the deed shows nothing of horror, only anger and stern disapproval of Miriam's obvious objection to his action. His subsequent withdrawal from her, and his retreat to Tuscany, where he dwells in terrible solitude in his own tower, point to the persecution to which he falls victim for, as much as his seclusion is self-imposed, it is due to the kind of moral severity he is beginning to embrace. Animal-like in his unthinking jollity, the Faun-like Donatello soon falls to traditional, societal ways, and resorts to prayer and worship (in accordance to Catholic rituals) in an effort to acknowledge his sin and to seek ablution, so terrible is his sense of guilt. Although Miriam's self-recrimination, that she has brought "strange horror and gloom" (320) into Donatello's life, refers to the part she plays in his murder of the model, it also relates to the subsequent guilt and fear she inevitably inflicts upon him by way of her own horror and remorse. She laments:

"Alas! and it was I that brought it on you," said she. "What repentance, what self-sacrifice, can atone for that infinite wrong? There was something so sacred in the innocent and joyous life which you were leading! A happy person is such an unaccustomed and holy creature, in this sad world! And, encountering so rare a being, and gifted with the power of sympathy with his sunny life, it was my doom, mine, to bring him within the limits of sinful, sorrowful mortality! . . ."
(320)

In Donatello's sufferings are seen the deep psychological and superstitious fears and terrors that are inflicted on the human consciousness by too rigorous a religious and moral tradition, represented by Hilda and the Puritans. As much as the model may symbolize its relentless persecution, its removal can only increase the guilt and the terror. This, indeed, is the plight of Miriam herself.

The simplicity of Donatello that has to do with a natural innocence free of self-consciousness or suspicion is the truly divine quality in man that exalts him. It has nothing to do with the spirituality for which the Puritans strive. Indeed, this natural chastity cannot be retrieved by the kind of backtracking that the Puritans seem to resort to, working back from an intense sensitivity to sin and evil. As Hawthorne remarks, when musing whimsically on Donatello's ears:

What an honest strain of wildness would it indicate!
And into what regions of rich mystery would it
extend Donatello's sympathies, to be thus linked
(and by no monstrous chain) with what we call the
inferiour tribes of being, whose simplicity, mingled
with his human intelligence, might partly restore
what man has lost of the divine! (71)

Purity is a state of mind, and not necessarily an ethereal state of celestial aspiration totally divorced from man's natural and primitive roots. The pagan tradition that supports this attitude venerates the

physical and sensuous life because it does not distinguish between the human and the divine. The pagan mythological deities - Apollo, Juno, Bacchus and Venus - represent humanity exalted by the very fact of its honest passion and innate energy. In the Venus de Medici, especially, the delicate grace and voluptuous naturalness of womanhood establish the dignity and beauty of humanity that contribute to its divine essence. Hawthorne writes:

It is one of the few works of antique sculpture in which we recognize Womanhood, and that, moreover, without prejudice to its divinity. (424)

Man's simplicity embodies a whole-hearted celebration of "the warm, sensuous, earthy side of Nature" (13), that is inherent in him. The frank voluptuousness of Praxiteles's Faun and Donatello's vigour convey a sexuality that derives from innocence. Hawthorne notes that certain physical beauty and archetypal primitivism that characterize Donatello's youth and charm:

So full of animal life as he was, so joyous in his deportment, so handsome, so physically well-developed, he made no impression of incompleteness, of maimed or stunted nature. . . . There was an indefinable characteristic about Donatello, that set him outside of rules. (14)

Like the Faun, Donatello's resemblance to Pan, the furry-eared, goat-like figure of pagan mythology, reinforces his lusty animalism and satyr-like eroticism. The frescoes at Monte Beni reiterate this sexual energy:

The designs were of a festive and joyous character, representing Arcadian scenes, where Nymphs, Fauns, and Satyrs, disported themselves among mortal youths and maidens; and Pan, and the god of wine, and he of sunshine and music, disdained not to brighten some sylvan merry-making with the scarcely veiled glory of their presence. A wreath of dancing figures, in admirable variety of shape and motion,

was festooned quite round the cornice of the room.
(225)

As much as Pan is a godly figure in the pagan pantheon, so sexuality is almost divine, consecrated by the sacramental wine of the Monte Beni~~s~~, which is its natural symbol. Hawthorne, therefore, speaks of the Sunshine wine in religious terms, warning against it being "carelessly and irreligiously quaffed" (223) and Kenyon calls it "a sort of consecrated juice" (224).

It is partly because of his simple spontaneity, unhindered by self-concern or sexual inhibition, that Donatello is able to act quickly, helping Miriam in a way in which Kenyon and Hilda, for all their apparent anxiety and sympathy, cannot because they are held back by social mores and fears. If sexual desire plays a part in Donatello's act, it is totally in keeping with his pagan naturalness and vitality. Yet sexuality is the very thing which, in the Puritan view, makes Donatello's killing of the model more damning. In so far as his act is motivated by sexual desire, his guilt is doubled, because sexual passion is regarded as earthy and unspiritual, and also because it has resorted to murder for its own gratification. The hint of incest, derived from Donatello's extreme youthfulness and from Miriam's contrasting sophistication, and which seems to be augmented by her previous crime, makes the killing even more heinous.

Nina Baym asserts that the model "materializes as a consequence of Donatello's growing passion for Miriam" (1976, 236), meaning that the youth, at the outset, is stricken with guilt over his sexual attraction to a woman. But this can hardly be the case, for Donatello, belonging to the sylvan life of the Faun as he does, knows neither guilt nor sin, especially with regard to natural passion and desire. If the model is a

symbol of the kind of guilt that "shadows sexuality" (Nina Baym 1976, 236) it can only be so perceived by a Puritan society, and possibly by the brooding and melancholic Miriam. That sexual passion does exist between Donatello and Miriam, however, is affirmed by the youth's ardour and intense physical awareness:

He caught Miriam's hand, kissed it, and gazed into her eyes without saying a word. She smiled, and bestowed on him a little, careless caress, singularly like what one would give to a pet dog. . . . At all events, it appeared to afford Donatello exquisite pleasure. . . . (14-15)

The killing of the model, motivated by a look between Miriam and Donatello, stems from sexual passion. Once the youth begins to be assailed by a sense of guilt, however, in response to Miriam's horror and remorse, the dreadful realization of what killing means in a world governed by a persecuting moralism is made more terrible by the awareness that the deed is not as selfless as it may appear. In line with the world's disapproval of the sexual drive, Donatello's natural passion also becomes subdued; he even seeks a kind of self-castration by choosing the celibate life of a monk. This may be one of the reasons for his withdrawal from Miriam.

Donatello's subjugation is not altogether surprising; his kinship with the Faun and Pan has already hinted at his destiny. The fact, that in the traditional Miltonic idea of pagan and Christian cultures Pan is seen to be vanquished by Christ not only heralds the sad containment of Donatello's primitive ardour and vitality, but suggests a shift to an oppressive guilt-ridden Christianity, stricken by the Fall of Adam. Yet the Fall is really not so much a lapse into evil as is traditionally believed in the Christian religion as a loss of that passionate and simple life that is embodied in Donatello. In so far as he is an

Adam-like figure, therefore, Donatello symbolizes the oppression of man and the tyrannical alienation of his natural, simple self.

As much as natural vitality and passion are identified with Donatello's youthful ardour, they are also characteristic of natural womanhood. Miriam, therefore, like Hester and Zenobia before her, is the complementary symbol of human fervour and fecundity. Hawthorne refers to the "warmth and richness of a woman's sympathy," (56) which he sees in Miriam, and which are linked to a kind of imaginative creativity expressed in her sewing. He says of her needlework: "A vast deal of human sympathy runs along this electric line . . ." (40).

Miriam's womanhood, unlike Hilda's adolescence, is warm, with a compelling intensity and a fine sensitivity. The deep affection and tender joy depicted in her portraits of domestic and common life as in the drawing of an infant's shoe "half-worn out" (45) are soft hints of a yearning heart, the depth and ardour of which are suggested in her exotic image. Suggestions of her being a Jewish heiress, a German princess or the daughter of a Southern American planter with a drop of African blood in her veins, and the impression of "a certain rich Oriental character in her face" (22), invest her with a mysteriousness that only enhances her vividness of character, her aura of resplendence, that can only be described in terms of jewel fire, in terms of the dark red carbuncle "red as blood" (130) that, as she intimates, signals the secret of her life, and which finally appears in the magnificent gem she wears on her bosom on the night she meets Kenyon in Rome:

The effect, he fancied, was partly owing to a gem which she had on her bosom; not a diamond, but something that glimmered with a clear, red lustre, like the stars in a southern sky. Somehow or other, this coloured light seemed an emanation of herself,

as if all that was passionate and glowing, in her native disposition, had crystallized upon her breast, and were just now scintillating more brilliantly than ever, in sympathy with some emotion of her heart. (396)

There is, indeed, a magical, spell-binding beauty in Miriam's ardour and intensity, suggested by the very room she chooses for herself at Monte Beni:

This beautiful hall was floored with rich marbles, in artistically arranged figures and compartments. The walls, likewise, were almost entirely cased in marble of various kinds, the prevalent variety being giallo antico, intermixed with verd antique, and others equally precious. . . . This rich hall of Monte Beni, moreover, was adorned at its upper end, with two pillars that seemed to consist of Oriental alabaster. . . . (278-79)

That the brilliance, colour and warmth of Miriam's personality are clearly evoked in her art, is seen in the way in which her more fervid paintings directly express her vigour and womanly passions. While the softer pieces depicting domestic subjects may suggest the deep intensity of unspoken feminine hopes and yearnings, her graphic and dramatic portrayals of Jael, Judith, and the daughter of Herodias in their fiercest moments manifest more immediately her fervour and aggressiveness. These paintings, moreover, suggest that such gripping moments of primitive ardour and passion, ancient as they are, are still representative of humanity and its vigour, as here embodied in woman. Miriam's scorn for the daintiness of Guido Reni's Archangel, therefore, is in keeping with her very human nature. Her contempt for the traditional regard for Virtue denotes a rejection of an attitude that ignores human reality and denies human passions. Vibrant as she is, Miriam has little patience for the idealism and sentimentality which Guido Reni's painting seems to advocate. She says of the Archangel:

". . . He should press his foot hard down upon the old Serpent, as if his very soul depended upon it, feeling him squirm mightily, and doubting whether the fight were half-over yet, and how the victory might turn! And, with all this fierceness, this grimness, this unutterable horror, there should still be something high, tender, and holy, in Michael's eyes, and around his mouth. But the battle never was such child's play as Guido's dapper Archangel seems to have found it." (184)

Just as her paintings of Jael, Judith and Herodias's daughter strongly evoke the erotic power implicit in woman, so Miriam's preoccupation with them, like her attraction to the Cleopatra statue, confirms the sexual drive that is very much part of her vibrant nature, which has kindled an answering fire in Donatello. Kenyon tells her:

"You have bewitched the poor lad," said the sculptor laughing. "You have a faculty of bewitching people, and it is providing you with a singular train of followers. . . ." (18-19)

In speaking of her secret guilt, which she longs to divulge, Miriam uses diving images that, apart from referring to her deep past, connote the secret of sex that she has to bring to youths like Donatello and Kenyon: "My secret is not a pearl," said she. - "Yet a man might drown himself in plunging after it" (130). The red carbuncle that she goes on to compare her secret to - ". . . It is no precious pearl . . . but my dark-red carbuncle . . . is too rich a gem to put into a stranger's casket" (130) - further punctuates the voluptuous, sexual ripeness that her nature suggests.

If, like Praxiteles's Faun, Donatello's primitive passions and innate sensuous energy are characterized by a simple joyousness, Miriam's erotic instinct is just as honest and eagerly expressive. The unspoilt, artless voluptuousness and unashamed sexuality of her womanhood are represented in the fountain nymph who is said to have loved

Donatello's ancestor at Monte Beni. That Miriam is indeed identified with the nymph is established by the fact that she is also described as nymph-like on the occasion when, drawn by Donatello's gaiety, she is able temporarily to cast aside the inhibitions she has acquired through years of suffering. In the sylvan garden of the Villa Borghese, Miriam and Donatello frolic in joyous mirth and abandonment, so that "catching glimpses of her, then, you would have fancied that an oak had sundered its rough bark to let her dance freely forth, endowed with the same spirit in her human form as that which rustles in the leaves; or that she had emerged through the pebbly bottom of a fountain, a water-nymph, to play and sparkle in the sunshine . . ." (85-86). But Miriam's gaiety does not last. Just as the fountain nymph of Donatello's tale disappeared as soon as her lover became assailed by guilt so Miriam's carefree naturalness is soon suppressed by a sense of anxiety and guilt. This loss of natural womanliness is especially suggested in the broken and fragmented state of the Venus de Medici, that symbol of womanhood in all its "forgotten beauty" (424) and goddess-like divinity. While Kenyon's lament, that in seeking Hilda he only finds "a marble woman" (423), points ironically to the Puritan girl's coldness, and mockingly suggests the youth's own sexual repression, the words also testify to the loss of womanly vitality and sexuality. The same idea is suggested, though more crudely, in the gigantic female figure that confronts Kenyon at the carnival.

The Venus, however, said to be "the apparition of a lovely woman that lived of old" (427), and seen in its fragmented pieces, more particularly encapsulates Miriam's own divided nature. Miriam, indeed, observing her own sad loss of primitive vigour and innocence, regards

womanhood now to be little more than mere show and role-playing, seemingly complex, but empty of purpose or will. Again, her attitude is represented in her art:

In the obscurest part of the room, Donatello was half-startled at perceiving, duskily, a woman with long dark hair, who threw up her arms in a wild gesture of tragic despair. . . .

"Do not be afraid, Donatello," said Miriam, smiling to see him peering doubtfully into the mysterious dusk. "She means you no mischief, nor could perpetrate any, if she wished it ever so much. It is a lady of exceedingly pliable disposition; now a heroine of romance, and now a rustic maid; yet all for show, being created, indeed, on purpose to wear rich shawls and other garments in a becoming fashion. This is the true end of her being, although she pretends to assume the most varied duties and perform many parts in life, while really the poor puppet has nothing on earth to do. . . ." (41)

Apart from falling prey to the masculine tyranny of a patriarchal faith, Miriam's womanliness, for all its innate energy and robust spirit, is in itself not sufficiently independent and strong to weather blame and condemnation without being subdued. Indeed, Miriam is too vulnerable to the prevailing moralism, and contributes to her own oppression by succumbing to guilt. For her part in a previous crime, she is already stricken with guilt at the beginning of The Marble Faun. Her fascination with the Faun's gaiety and content is related to a deeper sense of her own affliction and fear. She remarks:

". . . Ah, Kenyon, if Hilda, and you, and I - if I, at least - had pointed ears! For I suppose the Faun had no conscience, no remorse, no burthen on the heart, no troublesome recollections of any sort; no dark future neither!" (13-14)

Her paintings too depict her guilty sense of isolation from others, for in all the sketches of common life, there stands a figure apart, the form and face of which have "traits of Miriam's own" (46). The appearance of the

spectre, therefore, merely symbolizes the dark shadow of fear and guilt that prevails in Miriam. By no means does it give rise to a terror that is not already there, a terror denoting, not so much an inability to ward off the threat of impending discovery, as an obsessive and compulsive regression into guilt, that hampers her human and artistic development. Warm and responsive as she is, consciousness of her dark secret keeps her from relating closely to people. Hawthorne observes: "By some subtile quality, she kept people at a distance, without so much as letting them know that they were excluded from her inner circle" (21). Her artistic sensibility is oppressed by a heavy moralism that binds her spirit, so that the imaginative fire that is so much a part of her vivacity does not quite rise to its full potential. Miriam's passionate nature and fervour, indeed, have become overcast by a brooding melancholy and an acute sense of horror. If the very intensity of her suffering itself delineates her native ardour and sensitivity, and this it certainly does in the scene at the Coliseum when she becomes almost insane by the sheer force of her feelings, the depth of Miriam's anguish also indicates that her primitive passion has undergone a change. With her consciousness of sin and self-denigration, Miriam's innate vigour and zeal are no longer as spontaneous or as simple (that is uninformed and, therefore, uninfluenced) as Donatello's at the beginning of the romance. Her native passion and intensity are overtaken by a certain dread and a certain repressiveness that signal her loss of innocence.

The extent to which Miriam's innate vivacity and passion have become somewhat stifled and warped by the blight of a haunted conscience is seen in the way in which she has taken the situations of Jael and Sisera, and of Judith and Holofernes, which situations seem naturally

expressive of womanly valour and fervour, and made them more suggestive of womanly vengeance and mischief. She started painting Jael in the image of "perfect womanhood," with "a lovely form, and a high, heroic face of lofty beauty" (43), but ended by making her look like "a vulgar murderess" (43). Similarly, her depiction of Judith began with "a passionate and fiery conception of the subject, in all earnestness" (43) but the last touches were given in "utter scorn" so that Judith's expression has "the startled aspect that might be conceived of a cook, if a calf's head should sneer at her" (44). Although, on the one hand, these paintings that deliberately distort the biblical situations convey a spirited defiance on Miriam's part, and question and challenge Puritan moralism and its quick condemnation of human actions, they also ironically and pathetically convey her compulsive sense of her own guilt as a murderess, even as they express a kind of wilful wickedness that deliberately distorts and mocks what is beautiful and admirable. The guilt and perversity in Miriam are confirmed in the way in which she refuses to distinguish these heroic feats of womanly daring and enterprise of Jael and Judith from the vicious spite and ruthlessness of Herodias that would have John the Baptist beheaded for the mere gratification of her pride. Such strange facets of Miriam's womanliness, therefore, finally align her with the darker aspect of the mysterious Cleopatra than with the simple Donatello. That Miriam herself is quick to feel the truth of Cleopatra's complex nature as captivated in Kenyon's statue is indicative of her kinship with this figure of brooding passion "full of poisonous and rapturous enchantment"(127): "What I most marvel at," said Miriam, "is the womanhood that you have so thoroughly mixed up with all those seemingly discordant elements" (127)

While, like Donatello's self-torment, Miriam's perversity and vengefulness may be seen to derive from guilt and are, therefore, consequent on a Christian moralism that does not allow for the fact that good and evil are only relative, and that an act may have extenuating circumstances, this does not cancel out the reality of human evil, nor altogether invalidates moral distinctions between right and wrong. Even if the references to the Fall of Man and to Guido Reni's painting in one sense depict a stricken Christian conscience, these and the lingering memory of Rome's savage eras also point to the undeniable existence of evil. The Cleopatra figure thus epitomizes this mixture of good and evil in humanity, but, in the model's malevolence and depravity, the sinister aspect of humanity is fully and darkly realized. While it may be true that, in his wild satyr-like passion and desire for Miriam, the model represents the evil and tragic effects of a repressed sexuality, the "fresh impulses to crime" (432) in which he is said to indulge also hint of an innate corruption and decadence. The trait of savagery in Donatello, and Miriam's mocking justification for sin when she wonders whether it is "a means of education" (434) may also reflect this dark side of human passion.

This evil in human nature, however, does not justify a dangerous predilection of overlooking the good for the evil, which is inherent in the Puritan tradition. Such a suspicious and severe outlook contrasts with the more sympathetic Catholic religion which, with its vast system of prayer and confession, shows itself to be more ready to forgive and absolve, and thus affirms the idea that love, symbolized by the tender maternity of the Madonna, is the ultimate saving grace. Yet, in the priest's insistence that the perpetrators of the crime that Hilda reveals

to him in the confessional must be exposed and brought to justice, the Catholic church betrays a punishing and vengeful aspect that mocks a religion that provides for solace and ablution. The harshness and tyrannical oppressiveness of the Puritan tradition, therefore, seems ultimately to extend to Catholicism where, despite the benevolent and benign nature of the faith, a sinister distortion results. As Kenyon rightly reflects:

There are many things in the religious customs of these people that seem good; many things, at least, that might be both good and beautiful, if the soul of goodness and the sense of beauty were as much alive in the Italians, now, as they must have been, when those customs were first imagined and adopted. But, instead of blossoms on the shrub, or freshly gathered, with the dew-drops on their leaves, their worship, now-a-days, is best symbolized by the artificial flower. (297-98)

Hawthorne's emphasis in The Marble Faun is not so much on human evil and sinfulness as on the evil of a harsh Christian religiosity that denies the very nature of man. The romance, therefore, delineates the loss of innocence and focuses on man dispossessed of his Eden, his garden-state of natural simplicity. Hilda's reference to the loss of the seven-branched Candlestick, therefore, does not only reiterate the theme of loss, but mockingly asserts the need for an enlightened, balanced or complete outlook, the absence of Truth and of a true religion. She remarks of the discovery of the sacred Candlestick:

". . . When it is found again, and seven lights are kindled and burning in it, the whole world will gain the illumination which it needs. Would not this be an admirable idea for a mystic story. . . . As each branch is lighted, it shall have a differently coloured lustre from the other six; and when all the seven are kindled, their radiance shall combine into the intense white light of Truth!"
(371)

The loss, however, may not be so great after all. Like Miriam, Donatello, in his suffering and oppression, shows a certain beauty and dignity, a certain strength and resilience that achieve for him a new nobility. Kenyon, therefore, is full of hope for the newly-awakened youth:

" . . . After his recent profound experience, he will re-create the world by the new eyes with which he will regard it. He will escape, I hope, out of a morbid life, and find his way into a healthy one."
(284)

In learning to live in a world "built up purposely to exclude the careless and happy soul" (239), Donatello, indeed, matures to full humanity, whereby his primitive vigour and energy, far from vanquished, are deepened and refined by thought and suffering:

"Is he not beautiful?" said Miriam. . . .
"So changed, yet still, in a deeper sense, so much the same! He has travelled in a circle, as all things heavenly and earthly do, and now comes back to his original self, with an inestimable treasure of improvement won from an experience of pain. . . ."
(434)

By calling his human power and feelings into full play, the guilt and gloom bring on a realization of the common lot of man, so that his natural warmth develops into a generous and immense love and sympathy. Donatello, thus, becomes more appreciative of the terrible suffering of his ancestor who, stained with guilt, lost the nymph in the very intensity of his affliction. The loss of innocence and simplicity leads then to a rediscovery of the passional life of Pan and the Faun. But the revival to an even more feeling humanity also brings man ultimately to Christ, the man of feeling and suffering, and the God of love and sacrifice, as he is shown, outraged and ravaged, in Sodoma's fresco:

So weary is the Saviour, and utterly worn out with agony, that his lips have fallen apart from mere exhaustion; his eyes seem to be set; he tries to lean his head against the pillar, but is kept from sinking down upon the ground only by the cords that bind him. One of the most striking effects produced, is the sense of loneliness. You behold Christ deserted both in Heaven and earth; that despair is in him, which wrung forth the saddest utterance man ever made - 'Why hast Thou forsaken me?' Even in this extremity, however, he is still divine. The great and reverent painter has not suffered the Son of God to be merely an object of pity, though depicting him in a state so profoundly pitiful. He is rescued from it, we know not how - by nothing less than a miracle - by a celestial majesty and beauty, and some quality of which these are the outward garniture. He is as much, and visibly, our Redeemer, there bound, there fainting, and bleeding from the scourge, with the Cross in view, as if he sat on his throne of glory in the heavens! (339-40)

The mythic life of Pan has finally become reconciled with the Christian myth of love. If Donatello is no longer the artless and unselfconscious youth of before, he is by no means changed from his passionate and vibrant self. The simplicity that has itself manifested a certain innate purity and divinity merely gives way to the actual experience of godliness through suffering. For not only is Donatello more like Christ than he is like Adam in his role as sacrificial victim for the saving of Miriam from the model, he is also Christ-like in his ascendance through suffering and love.

Miriam, too, shows a new depth of feeling and love. Her generosity to Hilda, made obvious in her suggestion that the other girl should confide in Kenyon her terrible knowledge of the killing of the model so as to relieve her of some of her terror and anguish, is already remarkable, especially in the face of Hilda's ruthless condemnation and rejection. But Miriam's brooding sense of responsibility and her tender concern for Donatello after the death of the model further prove her

deep humanity and womanliness. She is resolved to sacrifice herself for Donatello's well-being:

" . . . If Donatello is entitled to aught on earth, it is to my complete self-sacrifice for his sake. It does not weaken his claim, methinks, that my only prospect of happiness . . . lies in the good that may accrue to him from our intercourse. . . ." (283)

The idea of humanity deified and transformed by an even deeper capacity for love is dramatically evoked in the large, luminous and god-like figures of Marcus Aurelius and Pope Julius. Indeed, here, the immensity and generosity of human love constitute a living and fecund force, that restores hope, dignity and beauty to a humanity that is bowed under the burden of horror and guilt. Miriam feels uplifted by the "grand beneficence" (166) of Marcus Aurelius. Donatello is moved to poignant reconciliation with himself and with Miriam under the benevolent eye of Pope Julius:

Perhaps, too, he was magnetically conscious of a presence that formerly sufficed to make him happy. 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. (314-15)

Both are encouraged by the prospect of a sombre and thoughtful happiness based on mutual regard and support.

If the two large and lofty figures are symbolic of the ennobling effects of love, they are also representative of the ascendance of Donatello and Miriam. Their exaltation is seen not only in their conversion from bitter self-isolation and guilt to mutual support, love and hope, but also in their ultimate sacrifice of this newly-acquired content and peace to secure Hilda's freedom. Miriam and Donatello, therefore, in their contadina and peasant roles enact their rebirth to

the simple unspoilt life of natural feeling. If this is not quite the garden state that Donatello had first known, the difference only points to the richer and fuller humanity both have achieved. The last view of Miriam in the simple grandeur of the Pantheon, beneath the Eye that lets in "that broad, golden beam" (457) from Heaven, shows her - and, by implication, Donatello - raised to a stature and significance approaching that of Marcus Aurelius and Pope Julius. Her godliness and warmth reach out in a gesture of benediction so that she becomes almost a Madonna figure in her utter goodwill and love. If Hilda and Kenyon cannot recognise her exalted humanity, it is because, typically, they still see only the horror and the guilt:

They suffered her to glide out of the portal, however, without a greeting; for those extended hands, even while they blessed, seemed to repel, as if Miriam stood on the other side of a fathomless abyss, and warned them from its verge. (461)

The stature achieved by Miriam and Donatello is enhanced by the mythic role they finally play in the romance. They complement Kenyon's mythic function which is suggested when, in his search for Hilda, he appears as a Cadmus-like figure accompanied by a cow and discovers a statue of Venus.⁴ But whereas Kenyon betrays his mythic role, Donatello and Miriam are the new Adam and Eve who have found the way back to Pan and Christ through feeling and love. Their pilgrimage completes the original tale of the Fall of Man depicted in Donatello's legend of the fountain-nymph and her lover. Thus the full seasonal cycle that is depicted corresponds to the mythic cycle. Images referring to the vine

⁴According to Ovid, (Mary Innes 1955, 74-75) Cadmus was a prince of Phoenicia who was directed by Apollo to follow a heifer to the place where he was to build the state of Boeotia.

and grape-treading, and the biblical allusions to the Israelites' journey to the Promised Land in the midst of suggestions of the pastoral, pagan life of old Tuscany and especially of Monte Beni also evoke the new myth of an Edenic, pagan rebirth. Hawthorne, therefore, recalls the Arcadian state when he writes:

Another ordinary sight, as sylvan as the above, and more agreeable, was a girl, bearing on her back a huge bundle of green-twigs and shrubs, or grass, intermixed with scarlet poppies and blue flowers; the verdant burthen being sometimes of such size as to hide the bearer's figure, and seem a self-moving mass of fragrant bloom and verdure. Oftener, however, the bundle reached only half-way down the back of the rustic nymph, leaving in sight her well-developed lower limbs, and the crooked knife, hanging behind her. . . .

Though mixed up with what was rude and earth-like, there was still a remote, dreamlike, Arcadian charm, which is scarcely to be found in the daily toil of other lands. . . . (290-91)

The Pantheon, that finally complements St. Peter's, sanctifies the achievement of Miriam and Donatello. The Eye of the Pantheon, through which the light of Heaven shines, delineates the harmony between Heaven and earth, between God and man, between spirit and body. The theme of separation, evoked by the various motifs of loss, isolation, exile and search, thus gives way to the affirmation of resurrection and return. The perfect number, seven, evoked by the reference to the seven-branched Candlestick and to Miriam's seven-gem bracelet, underlines the state of completeness that is finally achieved by Miriam and Donatello. The gushing fountains, the sense of time and the eternal, and the experience of nature and city-life, of "all seasons" and "every clime" (99) as at the Pincian garden and at Monte Beni, not only accentuate the feeling of vibrant life and fullness, but also suggest the tenacity and indomitability of this life, despite the regrettable feebleness of

Hilda and Kenyon, and despite the repressive tyranny of a distorted Christianity. The circle, then, is the appropriate symbol of the theme of return and resurrection. Represented in the great perfect dome of the Pantheon, and in the bracelet which Miriam gives to Hilda, the circle is also the bond of love that spells hope and fulfilment for Miriam and Donatello. By her gift to Hilda, Miriam thus completes her benevolent gesture, for she extends the hope of this bond of love which has saved her and Donatello. But the American couple, held in bondage by spiritual ideals, are caught in another kind of circle and cannot realize the promise of fulfilment that the bracelet conveys.

Sin, then, is not the end for Miriam and Donatello. Miriam's comments on the Fortunate Fall, which Kenyon and Hilda regard with such horror, may not so much suggest that sin is good, as that there is still hope for man after the Fall, not only in God's love for man, but also in man's love for one another. Even as Miriam's remark may contain a mocking reference to Christian moralism and its tendency to overlook the fact that evil and good are only relative, it may more seriously point to her growing realization that there is good in man despite the evil.

This idea is not new to Hawthorne. Already in his description of the human heart, written in 1842, he had registered the sense of the richness and beauty of man's native self over and above the strain of evil that is often recognized. Presenting the heart in the symbol of a cavern, Hawthorne had referred to it as consisting of an outer region of light, an inner region of gloom and evil, and an even deeper area of brilliant beauty:

The human Heart to be allegorized as a cavern;
at the entrance there is sunshine, and flowers

growing about it. You step within, but a short distance, and begin to find yourself surrounded with a terrible gloom, and monsters of divers kinds; it seems like Hell itself. You are bewildered, and wander long without hope. At last a light strikes upon you. You press towards it yon, and find yourself in a region that seems, in some sort, to reproduce the flowers and sunny beauty of the entrance, but all perfect. These are the depths of the heart, or of human nature, bright and peaceful; the gloom and terror may lie deep; but deeper still is this eternal beauty. (1972c, 237)

While it asserts the reality of human evil the allegory of the heart points to the more significant idea of an enduring beauty in human nature. The cavern symbol suggests the danger of a fragmentary view of human nature and it establishes the need for man to penetrate beyond surface reality, beyond human evil, to reach the deeper level of human beauty and significance. Clark Griffith (1954, 187-95) sees the Pyncheon house in The House of the Seven Gables as a parallel of the cavern symbol and indicates that Holgrave must necessarily go through the darkness of the house in order to emerge into the light of realization. However, it is only in The Marble Faun that Hawthorne successfully enacts this process, for The House of the Seven Gables remains too ambiguous even at the end. In The Marble Faun the allegory of the heart is re-enacted in Miriam's and Donatello's spiritual journey through the catacombs to the tower of Monte Beni and into the sunlight of Tuscany and the Pantheon. This symbolic descent and rebirth ultimately mock Hilda's placid existence in the pure and airy loftiness of the Virgin's shrine.

In the story of Miriam and Donatello, the history of man is enacted in its entirety, not so much in its biblical sense, but more in its pagan and humanistic significance. Recalling the states of pastoral

simplicity, guilt, and resurrection, Hawthorne's concern is with human nature and its power to save.⁵ He, therefore, not only prophesies the ultimate good of human feeling, but also suggests that the very pagan aspect of man contains his holy essence. His delineation of Christ the man who is also God as perceived in Sodoma's fresco, and of Miriam who is Madonna and also woman, are central to his vision of the divinity of human love.

With its profuse sense of the past and its accumulated history, Italy provides an appropriate setting for the enactment of this new myth of Adam and Eve. In line with the theme of pilgrimage, Italy, indeed, symbolizes the world in terms of space and time, through which man must travel in search of fulfilment. While it encompasses the pastoral and Edenic state in its pagan classicism, Italy, nonetheless, is more evocative of the fallen world, corrupted and profaned by a distorted Christianity and a repressive moralism. It is thick with filth and grime, disease and death. The dust and rubbish of centuries of barbaric rule and superstition have destroyed the garden state, and driven man's natural impulses deeper into the secret subterranean regions of the heart. Thus while the festive geniality and abandonment of the carnival may symbolize the fresh exuberance and frolic of the pastoral life, it is, ultimately, more evocative of the sordid and distorted world of repression. The parade of festal figures and the riotous celebration enact a nightmare of vengeful hauntings, a tortuous dream in which the

⁵It is interesting to note that these stages of human experience - pastoral simplicity, guilt and resurrection - in their precise order and circumstance also correspond to the 3 regions described in Hawthorne's allegory of the heart.

joy and the splendour are as false as the mock sugar plums.

Despite the desecration of its past by time, human negligence and abuse, Italy still offers a vision of beauty, joy and hope. In its superb classical monuments and sculpture, in its architectural and artistic achievements and in its rich Catholic rituals of prayer and forgiveness, the culture conveys a lingering sense of human dignity and drive, of love and redemption.

Italy itself thus constitutes a lesson in balanced judgement and perception. Recalling the Christian predilection for extreme opinion and prejudice, for overlooking good for evil, Italian culture, with all its varied aspects, shows up the dangers of a fragmentary outlook, and encourages a broader and more inclusive view. The kind of patience and consideration which must be brought to the full appreciation of Italy is similar to the faith and goodwill required in the understanding of humanity. Italy, after all, is humanity; its history is a record of human existence over the centuries. The beauty of the Venus statue, when its pieces are finally put together, depicts the rewards that Italy has in store for those who will see, even as the broken relic is also a comment on the destructiveness of an unbelieving, and distorting modernism.

Hawthorne's vision of human love and sympathy that challenges the harsh and righteous religiosity of Christianity is, perhaps, best represented in the creative process of art. As much as art is a labour of love, a miracle "of imbuing an inanimate substance with thought, feeling, and all the intangible attributes of the soul" (271), it demands of both creator and spectator a self-surrender, and a depth of sympathy and tenderness, first to enable the former to be honest with himself and

to sense his subject, and then to enable the latter to help out "the painter's art with [his] own resources of sensibility and imagination" (335). Art, therefore, especially the antique classical and Renaissance works for which Italy is famous, is not only an expression of primitive and passionate humanity, so that even Christ and the Madonna appear as human as they are godly; it is also the experience of love itself. Thus the reasons for Hilda's inability to be anything other than a copyist are not only her subservience and conformity; they also include her lack of feeling and inability to be honest with herself and to be true to her own nature.

In The Marble Faun Hawthorne makes ostensible progress in the Gothic romance of passion that he had first tried to create in The Scarlet Letter. Although it has been said that the earlier book constitutes his greatest achievement in delineating human passion in the sense that he is most evocative and effective in his portrayal of human desire and vitality, his last romance shows a marked development of his earlier ideas. Whereas even in The Blithedale Romance he perceived human vitality more in terms of an earthy energy that is linked to an imaginative vigour Hawthorne goes further in The Marble Faun, relating the spiritual and the divine with the human and the primitive. He perceives human ardour extending to a love that is sympathetic, compassionate and uplifting. Passion is seen to have a holy Christ-like quality. Although, in Hester in The Scarlet Letter and in Silas Foster in The Blithedale Romance, Hawthorne has already hinted at the human capacity for caring and giving, he has not come so far as to identify human love with godliness.

The Marble Faun, therefore, not only delves deeper into human

feeling and love but ties them in with the religious theme as well. As a Gothic romance of passion, therefore, the book is not only prophetic and profoundly imaginative; it poses a daring challenge to the Puritan and Christian view. The image of humanity deified, exalted by feeling, threatens to nullify the Puritan ideal of an ethereal purity. As Puritan Gothic, The Marble Faun merely establishes the horrible fact of a warped and repressed faith, totally confounded by impossible dreams and fantasies. The Puritan couple, Kenyon and Hilda, therefore, travel in a direction opposite to that of Miriam and Donatello. While the passionate pair grow in stature and discover an inner freedom, the other two become increasingly feeble and pathetic.

In The Marble Faun, more than in The Scarlet Letter, Hawthorne broke sufficiently free of the Puritan influence to rediscover the truth about man outside the Puritan context. His brilliant syncreticism of Christian and pagan symbols and beliefs establishes the fundamental fact of the harmony between soul and body, between God and man. In delineating Christian faith and human passion, in describing moralism and antique primitivism, Hawthorne achieves a balance that has nothing to do with compromise, which rather affirms a breadth of vision and a new insight. Hilda and Kenyon, therefore, are not supplanted by Miriam and Donatello; the two couples present complementary aspects of human existence - the religious and the passionate.

The Marble Faun represents the crystallization of Hawthorne's vision of the potential of man's passionate nature. The delving into the mysterious regions of man's primitive and imaginative self brings forth at last a recognition of the true significance and power of humanity. To evoke fully the depths of human feeling and experience, the romance

moves by implication and suggestion, so that nothing is told literally. Any insistence on a clearer elucidation of events and incidents, therefore, merely indicates an inability to recognise the human mystery that is enacted. The postscript, in which Hawthorne attempts some additional factual detail, ultimately mocks literal readers for it contributes little to the drama that has been presented.

Chapter 6

Hawthorne's Gothic: The Human Mystery

Moral ambiguity in the Gothic romance centres on the idea that man is a combination of spiritual and primitive qualities, that such values as good and evil are in themselves relative from the point of view of circumstance, perspective and other considerations, and that the primitive aspect of man is not necessarily sinister but possesses a richness and beauty of its own. While Hawthorne's romances depict moral ambiguity in all these aspects they are especially concerned with the concept that moral absolutes cannot apply because man is essentially spirit and passion interfused, and that human passion is not always destructive as is held by the Puritans. Hawthorne shows that while Puritan aspirations are in themselves grossly narrow and, therefore, distorted, human passion and vigour often equate with imaginative fecundity and creativity, and can even suggest a certain mystical

promise. Human feeling has intuitive powers that enrich and elevate.

What is most significant about Hawthorne's Gothic romance, however, is that while he may start off with this idea of moral ambiguity as a basis for his study of human nature in its dual aspects, he progresses to an enunciation of a moral view that is startlingly definitive. While this moral perspective that he achieves at the end of The Marble Faun is broad and inclusive, it nevertheless draws a sharp line between what is fitting and what is not. Thus, unlike most Gothic writers who merely explore the mysterious depths of human needs and feelings without any attempt at a resolution (indeed such a resolution is often impossible), Hawthorne boldly asserts a moral ideal that not only resolves the theme of separation and conflict but establishes his own understanding of human existence and fulfilment.

Hawthorne's moral stand at the close of The Marble Faun points to the fact that his exploration into the unhappy, divided world of Puritan repression and human passion is at an end, and that his own ambivalent attitude has finally crystallized into a new vision and understanding. The mystery of human nature and its seemingly opposing aspects is revealed at last.

Until he wrote The Marble Faun, Hawthorne's view of man and the portrayal of Puritan persecution of the passionate self were dismal and bleak indeed. From The Scarlet Letter to The Blithedale Romance Hawthorne's Gothic romance had progressively broadened and deepened in its depiction of the divided world of man. Whereas The Scarlet Letter is set in seventeenth-century Boston where Puritan suppression of natural passion is confined to a definition of the basic relationship between man and woman, The House of The Seven Gables shows the conflict in terms

of nineteenth-century America's cultural, social, political and economic struggle. The novel at the end affirms that man's spiritual and physical self, caught up in the tide of material progress, loses all aspirations other than that of social, political and economic self-advancement - a situation that bodes ill for America's growth and development. The Blithedale Romance extends the scope still further as it considers the theme of separation in relation to the Edenic myth. The closing images of death and betrayal dispel all hopes of restoration and rebirth. The Marble Faun which gives a still larger view that covers human history from ancient times, is the only one of his romances that strikes a positive note of hope and promise. But even here the first half of the book is steeped in Gothic gloom.

The theme of irresolvable conflict that isolates and counterpoints the two aspects of man, the spiritual and the physical, the divine and the human, is central to Hawthorne's Gothic. The conflict and inability to recognize the mysterious blend of 'opposing' qualities in human nature are at the root of human suffering, persecution and guilt. These are the true evils in human life. Intolerance and persecution are more heinous and destructive in the light of the self-betrayal which they ultimately suggest. Hawthorne treats such evils with Gothic intensity and vigour, calling into use such Gothic machinery as an atmosphere of darkness and light, superstition, guilt-psychology and religious motifs and symbols.

The theme of separation also leads to Hawthorne's affirmation of the beauty and fecundity of human passion and vitality which are manifested variously in imaginative creativity, sensuous delight, faith in the self, and love. As with evil, Hawthorne treats this vivid and

rich life of man with typical Gothic evocativeness, employing brilliant and resplendent symbols to devise the fecund world of passion and feeling.

In line with the Gothic tradition, therefore, Hawthorne's romances are full of a sense of mystery and of the strange and unfamiliar. But his mystery does not derive from plot or situation, that is, from melodrama, but rather from a vision of humanity as a whole. In his romances he realizes and enacts the complexity of human nature, the rich multiplicity of human needs and motivations and the bewildering ambiguity of human action and relationships. But the ultimate mystery that unfolds has to do with the almost magical deification of man through his most natural human quality of feeling and love.

Robert Heilman has declared that the function of Gothic is "to open horizons beyond social patterns, rational decisions, and institutionally approved emotions; in a word, to enlarge the sense of reality and its impact on the human being" (1958, 131). Hawthorne's Gothic certainly breaks with traditional Puritan thought and aspirations and achieves a larger sense of human significance. He promulgates a new reality in which that aspect of man which is so often despised and rejected is perceived to be not only natural to man and complements his spiritual qualities but possesses a beauty of its own and is uplifting and even divine.

In his final understanding of human significance Hawthorne perceives that a basic simplicity, an underlying congruence and harmony, exists beneath the seeming complexity and ambiguity of human nature and behaviour. His ultimate vision contrasts with the characteristic ending of a typical Gothic novel, which tends towards non-resolution, towards defeat and tragedy in fact. Hawthorne's conclusion is not only hopeful

but particularly joyful in its regard for humanity and its potential for good. What he is less optimistic about is a possible Puritan conversion and man's ability to realize the full potential of human creativity and love.

Hawthorne's resolution of the theme of separation is based on a balanced perspective and intuition. Working from the assumption that man is a combination of spiritual and physical qualities, he perceives that an attitude of accommodation and reconciliation whereby the two aspects of man are seen to belong together rather than oppose each other is necessary. But this attitude of reconciliation and acceptance derives not only from logical deduction but also from an intuitive and poetic sense of the Christ-like significance of man's human aspect. Christ, who is God and man, affirms man's dual natures. By becoming man, Christ not only restores to man his human dignity but also demonstrates the unity between earthly and heavenly attributes, between body and soul. Through the figure of Christ, therefore, Hawthorne perceives the divinity of human feeling and love.

The terrible conflict depicted in Hawthorne's Gothic romances seen in all its dark fears and sufferings, arises from the inability to attain the state of balance or reconciliation. The enforced isolation of the physical and spiritual aspects of man, advocated by religion and society, the rejection of the passionate life and the insistence on higher spiritual aspirations give rise to a sense of incompleteness and need. The struggle that ensues is thus a search for fulfilment, for that condition of completeness which can only be achieved by the full realization of one's humanity, one's spiritual and physical qualities. The struggle reflects ironically on society's lopsided values and

one-sided view. There is a desire, a need, to restore that which has been lost, that is, the passionate life of feeling and love which has been systematically suppressed by a misguided religion.

Against a backdrop of symbols signalling fullness and renewal, Hawthorne portrays the theme of loss through a search for that which is missing. Such symbols as the stream in The Scarlet Letter, the tree and Maule's well, not to mention the number seven in The House of the Seven Gables, the river and the seasonal cycle in The Blithedale Romance, the fountain, the Pantheon and Italy itself in The Marble Faun suggest completeness and renewal. Against these, the motif of the missing husband - Chillingworth - and of the unknown lover and father - Dimmesdale - in The Scarlet Letter reflect the theme of loss and search. Similarly, in The House of the Seven Gables, the search prevails in terms of the quest for the missing title deeds, the restoration of the unclaimed land, the discovery of the last Maule descendant - Holgrave - and the rehabilitation of Clifford, Hephzibah and Holgrave. The Blithedale Romance tells the story of the missing father - Fauntleroy - the missing daughter and sister - Zenobia and Priscilla in turn - Coverdale's search for Priscilla and Theodore's loss of the girl he loves. The Marble Faun in turn is full of statues with missing parts, and describes the times when Miriam is missing in the catacombs and when Hilda disappears.

Images of deformity and mutilation extend the theme of loss and incompleteness. In The Scarlet Letter Chillingworth is deformed, Dimmesdale is crippled by fear and guilt, and Pearl is in danger of becoming wild and unruly. In The House of the Seven Gables the idea of regression prevails, as seen in connection with Clifford, Hephzibah,

Jaffrey Pyncheon and even with the whole sinister Maule clan; the old, shrunken and withered Pyncheon chickens are persistent reminders of this debilitation. The Blithedale Romance describes Priscilla's broken life, Coverdale's paralysis and Moodie's disintegration. In The Marble Faun broken relics and rotting buildings represent the fragmented life of man. In all these romances death persists as a gruesome symbol of loss.

The theme of loss and the search for completeness and the full life is clearly distinguished from the quest for knowledge or for perfection which also prevails in Hawthorne's works, especially in the tales. While this quest for knowledge may be identified with Puritan aspirations for the ideal, it is also concerned with the desire for scientific knowledge, the working towards the improvement of nature by way of books and experiments. Aylmer in "The Birthmark," Rappaccini in "Rappaccini's Daughter" and Ethan Brand in the story of the same name are representative of this ambitious quest. In the romances this kind of pursuit is featured in Chillingworth, while Jaffrey Pyncheon and Hollingsworth bear some of the traits of the obsessed scientist. Elsewhere, the artist's attempt to capture art and beauty in their purest essence is also another aspect of the quest for the ideal. Owen Warland in "The Artist of the Beautiful" is so preoccupied with this idea of perfect beauty that he removes himself utterly from human relationships and commitments.

Whereas the religious and scientific quests are guided and ruled by intellect, the artistic pursuit of beauty must surely rest on imaginative perception and response. But the poetic sensibility as in the case of Owen Warland is so withdrawn into itself that it is totally removed from human feeling and warmth. Like the Puritans and scientists,

therefore, this artist strives after an ideal that has little to do with nature or reality. There is little understanding of man or his natural life.

Ultimately, the evil of the zealous pursuit of scientific knowledge and spiritual ideals is manifested in the ruthless violation of human privacy. As the Puritans and Chillingworth demonstrate in The Scarlet Letter, the sanctity of the human heart is easily forgotten and denied and the relentless search for truth can be reduced to terrible persecution and a merciless witch-hunt. Elsewhere, in The House of the Seven Gables, the effects of false knowledge are seen in terms of fraudulent claims and false possession of property and persons. The last is repeated in The Blithedale Romance and The Marble Faun where Westervelt's power over Priscilla, the model's hold on Miriam, and Hilda's absolute submission to the Puritan faith are clear examples of false possession.

Hawthorne sees the need for an intuitive kind of knowledge that derives from a sympathetic and imaginative perception of man and his humanity. This intuitive knowledge involves an almost pagan sensibility that can appreciate the magic and splendour of man's passionate nature. Ultimately this pagan response and perceptiveness can achieve a stirring spirituality in the way in which the celebration of man's human aspect is enhanced by a realization of a Christ-like beauty and significance in man's capacity for feeling and love.

For Hawthorne this intuitive knowledge is finely manifested in women. Whereas men are identified with Puritan idealism, the proud scientific quest and the artistic pursuit, women are moved by an intuitive wisdom. Hester and Miriam, therefore, are archetypal figures

who represent awareness and insight. Zenobia is also endowed with this intuitive perceptiveness but she betrays it and herself when she turns to Hollingsworth and dies for her very failure to win his approval. Phoebe, for all her loving kindness and tenderness, is different from these other women. Her warmth and generosity are accompanied by a certain naiveté. While these qualities are appropriate for her domestic and angelic role, they have little to do with passion, pagan spontaneity or insight.

The theme of separation and conflict, with its related ideas of true and false knowledge which are very much part of the Gothic tradition, is linked to a strong sense of nature and of natural order. In a tale called "The New Adam and Eve" Hawthorne identifies nature with "purity and simplicity" (1974b, 253), with modesty and a simple faith based on trust and love. This is the same view of nature presented in The Marble Faun especially through the figure of Donatello. For Hawthorne nature is man's inherent state that has been corrupted by "intellectual cultivation" (1974b, 247), by a perverse system of building, ordering and ornamentation. Miriam comments scornfully on man's concern with clothes, and his self-conscious attitude towards nudity:

". . . Nowadays, people are as good as born in their clothes, and there is practically not a nude human being in existence. . . the nude statues of antiquity are as modest as violets, and sufficiently draped in their own beauty. . . ." (The Marble Faun 123)

The condition of separation and conflict signals the collapse of the natural order, the state of purity and simplicity. Thus, like the House of the Seven Gables and Coverdale's city, the prison and the scaffold of The Scarlet Letter are not only suggestive of man's

artificial world where buildings and systems reflect the desire to improve on nature; they are also symbols of man's perverted state, emblems of his unnatural life of distorted values and suppressed feeling. As Hawthorne's new Adam and Eve observe, human existence has only accumulated "heaps of rubbish" (1974b, 261) and this is seen especially in Rome as it is depicted in The Marble Faun:

Rome, as it now exists, has grown up under the Popes, and seems like nothing but a heap of broken rubbish, thrown into the great chasm between our own days and the Empire, merely to fill it up; and, for the better part of two thousand years, its annals of obscure policies, and wars, and continually recurring misfortune, seem also but broken rubbish, as compared with its classic history. (110)

This abhorrence for man's cultivated life is the reason for Hawthorne's scorn for Jaffrey Pyncheon in The House of the Seven Gables. Jaffrey's death ironically marks the end of his immense ambitions and devious social and political schemes and intrigues. Hawthorne taunts the Judge as he sits helplessly in his chair:

Pray, pray, Judge Pyncheon, look at your watch, now! What, not a glance? . . . It surely cannot have slipt your memory, that the dinner of today is to be the most important, in its consequences of all the dinners that you ever ate. . . . No public dinner this. . . . It is merely a gathering of some dozen or so of friends from several districts of the State; men of distinguished character and influence, assembling, almost casually, at the house of a common friend. . . . They meet to decide upon their candidate. . . . And what worthier candidate . . . what man can be presented for the suffrage of the people, so eminently combining all these claims to the chief-rulership, as Judge Pyncheon here before us? (273-74)

Hawthorne's teasing mockery of Hepzibah's ineptness at shop-keeping may also be a gibe at another of man's vain contrivances - trade and commerce. Similarly in The Blithedale Romance he mocks Coverdale for

his obvious attachment to the trappings of social life. Coverdale remarks:

What, in the name of common-sense, had I to do with any better society than I had always lived in! It had satisfied me well enough. My pleasant bachelor-parlour . . . my dinner at the Albion . . . my evening at the billiard-club, the concert, the theatre . . . what could be better than all this?
(40)

While in "The Maypole of Merry Mount" and The Scarlet Letter Hawthorne may have shown some reservation with regard to human passion as he perceives its fecund promise balanced against a destructive power that has to be contained, he has moved to a whole-hearted acclamation of man's natural vigour in The Marble Faun. Thus, whereas in The Scarlet Letter he has seen the need to argue for some adherence to social order (as implied in Hester's continued efforts to live amidst her society), such adherence being as much for Hester's good as it is for society's because she learns more of tolerance and love in the process, in The Marble Faun the social order as represented by the Papal government is seen to be oppressive and full of intrigue. When Miriam and Donatello return to Rome, therefore, they do so not for their own good, but for the sake of obtaining Hilda's release from imprisonment and harassment. After Donatello has been arrested as a consequence of his crime against the model, Miriam left alone, retires to the Pantheon, away from the artificiality of man's pretentious life, away from the art galleries and St. Peter's, and comes to the heart of an earlier pagan culture. The bareness, the stark simplicity and elemental aspect of the Pantheon with its Eye opening to the sky and letting in the sunshine, contrast with the gaudy and ornate excessiveness of St. Peter's; Miriam's return to this scene of

simplicity marks Hawthorne's advocacy of the natural order. In The Scarlet Letter he has seen the need to retain some kind of external order but in The Marble Faun this is abandoned for an inner order that is innate in man.

At the end of The Marble Faun Hawthorne's attitude of guilt and distrust with regard to the past goes beyond a critical perception of Puritanism and all its aspirations and ideals. The disapproval of the past as seen in such tales as "Earth's Holocaust" and "The New Adam and Eve" and in the romances embraces all of human history and its record of man's unceasing drive towards knowledge and artificial improvement of nature. Holgrave's abhorrence for the past in The House of the Seven Gables, therefore, may be related to this awareness of man's existence gone awry. He says:

"Shall we never, never get rid of this Past!"
 . . . "It lies upon the Present like a giant's dead
 body! . . ." (182)

Like the rest of mankind, however, Holgrave is ultimately carried away by the system, for he too desires to build. The Maules after all are not carpenters for nothing. Thus at the end Holgrave extols the virtues of building a house that is solid and permanent:

"The country-house is certainly a very fine one, so far as the plan goes," observed Holgrave
 "But I wonder that the late Judge . . . should not have felt the propriety of embodying so excellent a piece of domestic architecture in stone, rather than in wood. Then, every generation of the family might have altered the interior, to suit its own taste and convenience; while the exterior, through the lapse of years, might have been adding venerableness to its original beauty, and thus giving that impression of permanence, which I consider essential to the happiness of any one moment." (314-15)

Hawthorne's condemnation of the past continues after his fourth

and last completed romance and becomes the subject of The American Claimant Manuscripts and The Elixir of Life Manuscripts.¹ In Grimshawe which is a reworking of earlier fragments called The Ancestral Footstep and Etherage Hawthorne interweaves the themes of inheritance and an ancestral past, both of which are symbolized by the bloody footstep. The idea of guilt and evil associated with the past is clearly perceived through the description of a long-lost heir, of ancestors dying without proper issue and of some past wrong persistently felt but never quite defined. In Septimus Felton and Septimus Norton Hawthorne repeats the idea of ancestral guilt through the tale of the bloody footstep which is interpolated in the work. The treatment of the past is also contained in the theme of "intellectual cultivation" (1974b, 247). Septimus's desperate attempt to achieve immortality is another attempt to acquire false knowledge, another bid to improve nature, which attempt is inherited from the past in the form of old manuscripts and traditional dabbling in magic potions. Hawthorne still maintains, however, that nature knows best. Thus in one of the "Studies" or "Notes" attached to the Septimus manuscripts he observes that old age possesses a beauty and happiness of its own:

The sweetness of old age, how it softens hard and weary manhood, making it our nature and happiness to be affectionately helped, taking down our pride;

¹ These titles are those used in the Centenary Edition. The American Claimant Manuscripts include The Ancestral Footstep, Etherage and Grimshawe. The Elixir of Life Manuscripts include Septimus Felton, Septimus Norton and The Dolliver Romance. Although The Ancestral Footstep was started as early as 1853 Hawthorne put this sketch aside in 1858 in order to write The Marble Faun. He only returned to it in 1861 and wrote the subsequent versions known as Etherage and Grimshawe. He finally abandoned them in the middle of 1861 to work on Septimus Felton.

the sweet prospect of rest before us; the doing away of all that is hard and bad; the putting all action on a higher plane. So a sweeter, lovelier flower springs out of our descent and decay, than we can anywise produce from our richness and vigour. (1977b, 513)

In The Dolliver Romance Hawthorne continues in this strain for he presents through the old Apothecary and the Colonel "two different modes of growing old" (1977b, 549). The Doctor is mild, gentle and happy with his world despite faint anxieties regarding his little orphan grand-daughter and despite his terrible loss of his loved ones. He is uncomplaining and, in his old age, is fearless of death and tolerant of his aches and pains. The Colonel, however, is hard, selfish and mean. He is fiercely and ruthlessly intent on finding some way of attaining immortality, and dies in the attempt. Through these two figures Hawthorne clearly argues for the natural life, the acceptance of old age and decay, and a new freedom from traditional human attitudes, fears and contrivances.

The epitaph that appears on Hester's tombstone at the end of The Scarlet Letter is, therefore, emblematic of Hawthorne's vision. The Puritans' intention in putting up the epitaph is to proclaim their recognition of Hester's courage and spirit that stand out amidst the darkness of suffering and even of death (the A being short for Able or Admirable). But Hawthorne's meaning contained in the epitaph may more significantly relate to the idea that man (A for Adam) is essentially beautiful despite the suspicion and distrust with which his nature is regarded, even despite the depravity that the Puritans perceive in him. But more than this he is making the point that, indeed, it is in the gloom of suffering and affliction that this natural beauty in the form

of love and endurance is most marked. So it is with Hester, and with Miriam and Donatello. The Marble Faun rounds off what is already hinted in The Scarlet Letter.

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