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Hawthorne's maze of doubt and evil reveals a unique instance of his rewriting of Spenserian allegory in order to express his moral views. Spenser's influence on Hawthorne has been widely acknowledged during the past sixty years of formal Hawthorne-Spenser studies. Hawthorne scholars confirm the biographical importance of Spenser in Hawthorne's private life. Stewart explains that Hawthorne's familiarity with Spenser began during his childhood: "Hawthorne's acquaintance with The Faerie Queene dated from early boyhood: there was a tradition in the family that it was the first book which he bought with his own money," and Stewart adds: "he re-read it many times during his life" [196]. Hawthorne biographers, Miller and Mellow, agree that Spenser was one of Hawthorne's most important authors; Mellow writes that Spenser's Faerie Queene was one of his favorite books which "he read and reread (and frequently alluded to) throughout his life" [21]. Miller also notes that "Every evening Sophia read two cantos of The Faerie Queene to Julian Hawthorne" [409], and Stewart and Schirmeister confirm that the Hawthornes' read Spenser to their children, and earlier in their marriage, they spent evenings together reading The Faerie Queene. (cf. Stewart, 196 and Schirmeister, 349).

In his letters, Hawthorne himself reveals the extent to which Spenser influenced his life and thought. In a letter written to Sophia Peabody, dated June 11, 1840, he mentions falling asleep "with the Faery Queen in [his] hand" [473]; similarly, in a subsequent letter dated June 22, 1840 Hawthorne writes to Sophia: "I took a nap with a volume of Spenser in my hand" [477]. The version of The Faerie Queene Hawthorne was reading at that time is known to be the first American edition, edited by Hawthorne's friend George

Hillard and entitled The Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser, in five volumes, with Introductory Observations on the Faerie Queene, and Notes by the Editor. Scharnhorst supports the view that Hawthorne wrote an anonymous review of Hillard's edition in 1839, on the basis of Hawthorne's friendship with Hillard and his knowledge of Spenserian allegory. Three years earlier, Hawthorne's future mother-in-law, Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, wrote a prose version of Book one of The Faerie Queene for children, and Woodson explains, in his introduction to Hawthorne's 1813-1843 letters, that: "her passion for Spenser opened a mutual interest with her future son-in-law" [25]. Other instances of Spenser's influence on Hawthorne include the naming of his daughter Una, Spenser's heroine in Book one of The Faerie Queene, which he discusses in a letter to Hillard dated March, 1844. Una's pet dog is named Una's Lion, and Sophia Hawthorne concludes in a letter to her sister: "So Una has her Lion" [34], referring to The Faerie Queene (I iii 5).

As Stewart concludes: "There is a sufficient amount of external evidence...to show that Hawthorne knew The Faerie Queene and that the poem made an uncommonly deep impression upon his mind" [197]. Similarly, Schirmeister argues: "If The Faerie Queene formed part of the fabric of Hawthorne's everyday life, it still more pervasively influenced his literary imagination" [348]. The biographical evidence of Spenser's influence on Hawthorne does indeed reveal Spenser's importance to Hawthorne in the formation of his own literary ideas. As Schirmeister points out: "It was Herman Melville...who first remarked the Spenserian cast of Hawthorne's fiction" [349]. In his 1850 review Hawthorne and His Mosses, Melville refers to "A Select Party" as "the sweetest and sublimest thing that has been written

since Spencer wrote" (226). In his efforts to promote an American literature to rival that of England, Melville asserts: "there is nothing in Spencer that surpasses it, perhaps, nothing that equals it" (226); he challenges any one to read a canto of The Faerie Queene and then compare it to Hawthorne's short story. Hollander supports Melville's interest in a new American literature based on the great authors of the English tradition; his discussion of Hawthorne's tale involves "a Spenserian vision of the American poetic genius" (193). These references reveal Hawthorne's interest in both Spenserian allegory and the creation of a new form of American literature.

Many scholars, most notably Stewart, Leibowitz, and Jones, have shown that Hawthorne's tales and novels often parallel characters and themes in Spenser's poetry. "The Faerie Queene was for him certainly, among other things, a great pageant of allegorical figures" (Stewart, 197-198). I would like to propose that not only does Hawthorne use Spenser as a source and model, but also as a basis for creating a new form of moral allegory. Hawthorne shows an early interest in presenting moral issues in connection with a Spenserian allegory, evident in short stories such as "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," "The Great Carbuncle," "Egotism, or the Bosom Serpent," and "Lady Eleanore's Mantle." But Hawthorne begins to draw different conclusions about morality and human nature.

Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown," and "Endicott and the Red Cross" reveal his interest in rewriting Spenserian allegory in order to create his new form of allegorical romance, culminating in Hawthorne's rewriting of Book one of The Faerie Queene in The Scarlet Letter. Stewart affirms of Spenser and Hawthorne: "as moral allegorists...they are closely allied. Hawthorne's

allegorical representations not infrequently took form and color...from the imagery of The Faerie Queene" [206]. Nevertheless, Hawthorne's formation of a new moral allegory, unique to literary tradition and to his own time, reveals his intention of rewriting Spenser to express a different moral message. In his argument that The House of the Seven Gables best exemplifies Hawthorne's indebtedness to Spenser, Jones confirms Hawthorne's desire to create a new literary form, unlike the popular romances of his time; Hawthorne "was looking for a congenial form that would...satisfy his aesthetic tastes and profound moral sense in a way that the contemporary romances could not" [106]. Hawthorne turned away from writers such as Scott and Cooper to "the moralized landscape and characters in Edmund Spenser's long allegory The Faerie Queene" [107]. Jones later refers to Hawthorne's "new form for the romance" [109]. Finally, Jones agrees that Hawthorne was experimenting with a new moral allegory, first in his tales, then progressing into his novels. In support of these views, Schirmeister concludes: "Hawthorne seems to find in Spenser a particular mode of allegorical romance" [349]. Hawthorne's rewriting of Spenser may be understood through a study of his tales.

In Book one of Spenser's Faerie Queene and in Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown," a moral allegory exists involving the journey or quest of a young man whose faith is tested as he confronts an unfamiliar world of evil and tries to distinguish between good and evil when deceived by the false visions of a hypocritical guide. Hawthorne uses the Red Crosse Knight's quest as the basis for Brown's journey into the forest of Salem, but from the beginning, Hawthorne makes significant changes in Spenser's model in order

to present a different view of man's moral state. Red Crosse begins his quest with Una, his True Faith, just as Brown is with his wife Faith at the beginning of Hawthorne's tale. Both men are overconfident at the beginning of their journeys, and both are deceived when confronted with evil disguised as good, in the characters of Archimago and the devil. Each turns from faith and continues to believe false deceptions; Red Crosse falls prey to Duessa, Lucifera, and Orgoglio, just as Brown readily believes the characters of Goody Cloyse, the minister, Deacon Gookin, and the others he sees in the forest to be the evil figures they are made to appear. But though similarities exist in their journeys, the nature and purpose of their quests are different. Red Crosse is commissioned by the Queene of Faerie land to defeat evil and becomes separated from Faith only through deception; Brown purposely leaves Faith in order to meet evil in the forest. Red Crosse's continual belief in deception eventually leads to his sinful fall, but through Grace (Arthur) and the return of his Faith (Una), he is eventually rescued. A renewed Faith then leads him through despair toward redemption.

Brown stays deceived and never experiences a self-realization of his sins to lead him to redemption; he remains in a state of despair, without hope for mankind's salvation and only believing in its evil. In this way, Hawthorne uses Brown to reveal the Puritan, Calvinistic view of mankind's inherent sinfulness, which emphasizes human evil rather than divine redemption. Spenser uses Red Crosse's journey to reveal the stages of man's redemption of sin as understood through the Anglican Church.

I. A Reading of Book One of the Faerie Queene

As Book one of the Faerie Queene opens, Red Crosse and Una have just set out on their journey to free her parents from the dragon, and they will remain together until Red Crosse is separated from True Faith, Una, by Archimago. Red Crosse is on a quest for spiritual truth and to acquire the Virtue of Holiness. He is eager for adventures, though his strength and faith are untried: "armes till that time did he neuer wield" (i.1.5). His dented armor reveals the struggles that have taken place with Christians before him, now he wears this Christian armor during his trials of faith. He "seemed...As one for knightly giusts and fierce encounters fitt" (i.1.8-9), but though he is confident, he is still inexperienced in fighting evil. Una, True Faith, rides by him dressed all in white and veiled, only to be revealed when Faith is secure and never again to be separated from him. "Her face is heavily veiled, and the knight has never seen beneath this veil, for he does not behold Truth in the fullness off its beauty until he has long committed himself to its service" (Padelford, 433). Seeking shelter from a storm, they enter the wandering wood of Error: "A shadie groue...Faire harbour that them seemes" (i.7.2,9). "A dense thicket of woods suggests a place of peril" (Hamilton, 31n). They lose their way along the winding paths and "wandering too and fro in wayes unknown" (i.10.5).

When they find themselves at the Cave of Error, Una warns the Red Crosse Knight of the hidden evil, but he enters the cave to confront the monster: "full of fire and greedy hardiment,/The youthful knight could not for ought be staide" (i.14.1-2). Red Crosse sees Error for the evil she is, "the vgly monster plaine...Most lothsom, filthie, foule, and full of vile disdaine"

(i.14.6,9). He fights Errour and defeats her by his strength and Una's aid; she tells him: "Add faith vnto your force" (i.19.3). Red Crosse wins his first victory over an obvious evil, but when he faces the hypocrite Archimago, he cannot see the disguised evil as good.

Through false dreams and deceptions, Archimago causes Red Crosse to doubt and then abandon his Faith. Red Crosse and Una first meet the enchanter Archimago, disguised as a hermit: "An aged Sire, in long black weedes yclad/...Sober he seemede and very sagely sad/...Simple in shew, and voyde of malice bad" (i.29.2,5,7). "Although the knight is proof against Falsehood when it practices no deceit...he is unprepared to cope with Falsehood when disguised with the cloak of honesty, and so he straightway falls an easy victim to the crafty Archimago who ingeniously deceives him into believing Una false and fickle" (Padelford, 434). Later it is revealed: "by his mightie science he could take...many formes and shapes in seeming wise" (ii.10.2-3). He leads the knight and Una to his hermitage, "Downe in a dale, hard by a forests side" (i.34.2), but Red Crosse does not associate this location with evil, as that of the wandering wood.

When Red Crosse and Una are asleep, Archimago plans how to deceive them; in "His Magick bookes and artes of sundry kindes,/He seekes out mighty charmes, to trouble sleepy mindes" (i.36.8-9). Summoning evil spirits, he chooses the two "fittest for to forge true-seeming lyes" (i.38.7). Archimago sends Red Crosse false dreams of lustfulness and wantonness, in which a spirit fashioned as Una appears. Red Crosse awakens and still sees the false Una before him; angered, he quickly believes the deception, but then decides "to proue his sense, and tempt her faigned truth" (i.50.6). When he

questions her, "her doubtfull words made that redoubted knight/Suspect her truth" (i.53.5-6), but he does not give up his faith completely until he sees the deception of the false Una and Squire. Archimago hurries to waken Red Crosse "with feigned faithfull hast" (ii.4.1) and prepares the knight for the following vision: "Come see, where your false Lady doth her honour staine" (ii.4.9). When Red Crosse sees "that false couple...In wanton lust and lewd embracement" (ii.5.4-5), he accepts that vision of evil for the truth and leaves his Faith behind. As the allegorical representation of True Faith, Una is now in danger and encounters many perils while pursued by Archimago.

Red Crosse continues in his deception, unable to distinguish between good and evil, until sin finally causes his fall. The Knight's loss of faith is confirmed when he meets Sansfoy and Duessa, the opposites of Red Crosse and Una, defeats Sansfoy, and takes the place of Faithlessness alongside Duessa or False Faith, whom he now accepts as his True Faith. "The Red Crosse Knight but repeats the experience of the initial day, overcoming an obvious foe but yielding to a foe in disguise" (Padelford, 435). She tells Red Crosse lies which he readily pities: "In this sad plight, friendlesse, unfortunate,/Now miserable I Fidessa dwell" (ii.26.1-2). "Her words deceive him, not only as to her nature but as to her name...Thus Duessa, the deceitful, represents herself as Fidessa or true Faith. Henceforth for a time he believes himself to be the champion of faith, and his sincerity of purpose is not weakened as long as he does not know that Fidessa is the representative of false faith" (Whitney, 427). He continues to be deceived by her; when they encounter Fradubio, Red Crosse cannot understand his story, though it is an exact parallel to the knight's. "So lacking is the Red Crosse Knight in

Spiritual discernment that he does not pierce the disguise of Falsehood even when he learns of her evil doings from the lips of a former victim" (Padelford, 435). Even Spenser adds a warning to the knight: "Beware of fraud" (iv.1.3), but he still allows himself to be deceived.

Led by Duessa to the House of Pride and afterwards to his fall, the knight is able to recognize the more obvious evils and resists vanity, but still unable to detect hypocrisy, he becomes subject to pride: "the stout Faerie.../Thought all their glorie vaine in knightly vew,/And that great Princesse too exceeding proud,/That to strange knight no better countenance allowed" (iv.15.6-9). Though the Dwarf saves Red Crosse from Pride, Duessa pursues the knight and causes his fall. The canto's sensual language prepares us for the knight's sin. "Deceived as to his own power to resist temptation, and weakened in body, for the first time he yields to sensuality"; Red Crosse hypocritically yields to the very sin he believed Una committed (Padelford, 438). His sin of the flesh is confirmed when at his weakest, he is defeated by Orgoglio, Duessa's earthy lover. Red Crosse's fall leads to his imprisonment "in a Dungeon deepe" (vii.15.9). Now, only the return of his Faith, aided by grace, can free him.

Arthur arrives with Una to rescue Red Crosse, and Una later saves Red Crosse from Despair to lead him toward redemption. Arthur, as intervening grace, frees Red Crosse from the dungeon, kills Orgoglio, and exposes Duessa as a witch: "Such as she was, their eyes might her behold" (viii.46.6), with "all her filthy feature open showe" (viii.49.8). Confronted with True Faith, Red Crosse now becomes aware of his deception by Archimago and Duessa. Separating from Arthur, Red Crosse and Una encounter Despair.

The knight is again eager to confront evil and defeat it, but he is not strong enough, for he is still in his fallen state. His consciousness of sin makes him vulnerable to Despair's beguiling charms. Despair emphasizes the knight's sins and urges him to take his life rather than commit more wrongs: "Thou wretched man, of death hast greatest need...For neuer knight, that dared warlike deede,/More lucklesse disauentures did amate" (ix.45.1,3-4). Despair dwells on man's sin, but never mentions the possibility of repentance and salvation. He leads Red Crosse to belief that nothing awaits his soul but death and damnation; deprived of hope, "nought but death before his eyes he saw,/And euer burning wrath before him laid" (ix.50.2-3). Una, True Faith, saves Red Crosse when he is at the point of giving himself over to evil and despair. She reminds him of justice, repentance, and salvation, and leads him to the House of Holiness where the Virtues heal his body and soul. After experiencing spiritual redemption, he is renewed in his faith and with a new knowledge of himself, ready to fight the dragon. Red Crosse and Una will join together to become one in Holiness and True Faith.

II. Hawthorne's Use of Spenserian Allegory in "Young Goodman Brown"

Spenser's model of Red Crosse's allegorical quest involving a test of faith, ambiguous good and evil, and hypocritical deception provides a source for Brown's journey in Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown." At the story's beginning, Brown tells his wife Faith good-bye as he prepares to leave her for a meeting in the forest: "My love and my Faith...of all nights in the year, this one night must I tarry away from thee" [74]. She tries to detain him but in

vain; she warns him about troubling dreams, but he, like Red Crosse, is overconfident and she, like Una, is left in peril when he leaves her for evil. "The decision to leave Faith and go into the forest...is indisputably his own" [Newman, 344]. In his confidence, he underestimates the power of evil he goes to meet; his faith is not yet strong, for they have only been married three months, and he naively believes it can remain unharmed by a night of evil: "Say thy prayers, dear Faith...and no harm will come to thee" [75]. He does not foresee that it will be damaged, subjecting him to despair: "after this one night I'll cling to her skirts and follow her to heaven" [75].

Separated from his Faith, Brown cannot readily distinguish good from evil, and the hypocritical devil he encounters in the forest easily deceives him. Brown hurries toward the woods as night falls, taking a narrow, solitary path which reveals his ability to discern quickly an obvious way to evil. But Hawthorne writes: "the traveler knows not who may be concealed by the innumerable trunks and the thick boughs overhead...he may yet be passing through an unseen multitude" [75], hinting that Brown can not detect the hidden evil around him. Brown suddenly encounters the devil as "the figure of a man, in grave and decent attire" [75], recalling Red Crosse's meeting with Archimago as the hermit. Like Archimago, the devil is old and experienced: "he had an indescribable air of one who knew the world" [76], and like Red Crosse, Brown is overconfident and inexperienced. As his name reveals, Brown is a "goodman" who is unfamiliar with evil: "We are to think of him having been to the time of the tale a quite ordinary, righteous young man" [Frank, 204]. Brown thinks that the devil resembles his father, but Hawthorne's ambiguous language, "As nearly as it could be discerned,"

apparently allows the reader to experience the difficulty of discerning good from evil just as Spenser often uses "seems" to indicate an appearance different from reality. Similarly, Brown thinks he sees the old man's snake-like staff wriggle in the darkness, but "this, of course, must have been an ocular deception, assisted by the uncertain light" (76). Brown cannot see through the devil's hypocrisy.

Brown struggles with his faith, at first hesitant to believe the devil, but as one deception follows another, he becomes more and more deceived and ready to embrace evil. Brown having kept his meeting with the devil is ready to leave the forest, but instead he allows himself to be led deeper and deeper. The devil first tempts Brown's faith by telling him that he has been acquainted with Brown's father and grandfather: "They were my good friends, both; and many a pleasant walk have we had along this path, and returned merrily after midnight" (77). But Brown doubts this story. Next, the devil explains that he has a large following in New England, but Brown is more concerned about his relationship with the pious people he knows and respects: "how should I meet the eye of that good old man, our minister, at Salem village?" (77-78). Unable to discern the hypocrisy of the devil, Brown cannot see his own hypocrisy in entering the forest.

Knowing Brown's inability to discern good from evil and his reverence for holy people of the community, the devil tempts Brown's faith with the vision of Goody Cloyse, "a very pious and exemplary dame, who had taught him his catechism in youth" (78). At first, Brown marvels at her appearance and hides himself from view. But after witnessing their familiar conversation, he accepts the vision as true, quick to believe evil of the old woman when he

is making the same journey into the woods. She is a false deception like Red Crosse's Duessa. "Brown is deluded into accepting spectral evidence as conclusive proof of his neighbors' depravity" (Newman, 342). Not only does Brown not see his own hypocrisy, but he still believes that he can turn away from evil as easily as he turned away from Faith; he thought "with how a clear conscience he should meet the minister...nor shrink from the eye of good old Deacon Gookin. And what calm sleep would be his that very night...in the arms of Faith!" (80-81) Even when he thinks he hears the voices of the minister and Deacon Gookin, he still resists evil, though he again believes the devil's deception. Just as he fails to heed Faith's warning, Brown fails to understand that he and his Faith are meant to be converted at the witches' sabbath in the same way Red Crosse Knight was unable to understand Fradubio's story. Like Archimago, the devil uses many different disguises in his effort to deceive Brown.

Brown resists evil until he believes the devil's false vision that faith is gone; accepting this deception as true, he becomes subject to despair and believes that evil is the only reality for humankind. Brown hears voices from a dark cloud, urging on a young woman, then he sees a pink ribbon fall through the air, and he believes: "My Faith is gone!...There is no good on earth" (83). "Maddened with despair," Brown rushes toward evil and arrives at the witches' meeting. His confusion of good and evil is revealed by the mixture of saint and sinners present. All of nature seems given over to evil, and Brown, in his own sinful hypocrisy "felt a loathful brotherhood by the sympathy of all that was wicked in his heart" (86). Faith appears veiled, and henceforth there will always be a barrier between them. The devil's vision

reveals to Brown his sacrifice of Faith in order to embrace evil. The devil, like Despair, urges Brown on to evil by emphasizing man's inherent sinfulness without mention of redemption: "Now ye are undeceived. Evil is the nature of mankind" (88). As Brown urges his Faith to remain firm against evil, his dream ends.

Brown finally resists evil, but he remains in a state of despair. "Brown's inability...to believe in any virtue all the rest of his life long is an extension of the confusion of his horrible night. He lives his life under the same sort of delusion he suffered then" (Frank, 209). After his evil vision in the forest, Brown's sense of good and evil is distorted. He can only see the evil in others. He remains deceived, believing evil of good. He believes that no hope of spiritual redemption can exist for humans capable of such sin. "He cannot accept the evil with the good. He chooses instead to believe that whatever is evil must be wholly evil, thereby eliminating the good and elevating evil to a position of dominance and supremacy" (Newman, 346). Unlike Red Crosse, Brown is not rescued from Despair by his faith, but he becomes permanently separated from it and cannot embrace it in a world of evil.

Hawthorne's use of moral allegory to express a Puritanic view of man's spiritual state reveals one of the major differences between Young Goodman Brown's journey and that of Spenser's Red Crosse Knight. Both allegorists present truths about man's moral nature through a character's confrontation with evil, and his struggle to retain faith despite hypocritical deceptions. Spenser's influence on Hawthorne attests to the greatness of his Elizabethan epic but also his desire to rewrite it, which found expression in the nineteenth-century American Renaissance.

III. Hawthorne's Rewriting of the Christian Knight in "Endicott and the Red Cross"

In "Endicott and The Red Cross," Hawthorne reveals an interest in the concept of the Christian knight and the power of the symbol, as they are associated with a legendary American figure which foreshadow main concerns in his rewriting of The Scarlet Letter. The bright armor of Endicott reflects the scene around him, including "characteristics of the times and manners of the Puritans" [434]. Evidences of Puritan severity exist in the methods of punishment in the town, such as the pillory and stocks. Among the many sinners stands "a young woman, with no mean share of beauty, whose doom it was to wear the letter A on the breast of her gown"; this "lost and desperate creature had embroidered the fatal token in scarlet cloth, with golden thread and the nicest art of needlework; so that the capital A might have been thought to mean Admirable, or anything rather than Adulteress" [435]. The woman reveals an obvious prototype for Hester, but another prototype exists for her in the character of Endicott.

The Puritan leader's boldness and rebellion against an established religious and social order foreshadow Hester's bold speculations concerning a new society and improved relations between men and women. Endicott revolts against Anglican authority, manifested by the English banner, and "brandishing his sword, [he] thrust it threw the cloth, and, with his left hand, rent the Red Cross completely out of the banner" [440]. Endicott champions the cause of the New England colonies by removing the symbol off England's rule. Hawthorne characterizes him as a kind of new American knight, similar to the depiction of Hester in The Scarlet Letter. Hawthorne's treatment

of both the red cross of England and the American scarlet letter, as well as his attempt to fashion the legendary figure of a Christian knight, reveal his interest in a new kind of moral allegory.

IV. Hawthorne's Transformation of Moral Allegory in The Scarlet Letter

Hawthorne reveals his fullest expression of rewriting Spenser's Faerie Queene in The Scarlet Letter. In The Custom-House, Hawthorne presents his method for creating a Romance and establishes the basis for his new form of moral allegory. In an attempt to confirm the authenticity of his narrative, Hawthorne invents the fictional surveyor Pue and even admits to a re-writing of Pue's factual account of "the life and conversation of one Hester Prynne" [32]. Hawthorne explains: "the main facts of that story are authorized and authenticated by the document of Mr. Surveyor Pue," [32] but he later reveals: "I have allowed myself...nearly or altogether as much license as if the facts had been entirely of my own invention" [33]. While establishing a historical basis for the reader, he makes a clear departure from the world of fact.

Attempting to record the story, Hawthorne likens the process of writing a Romance to viewing familiar objects through an unaccustomed light; he explains: "Moonlight, in a familiar room...is a medium the most suitable for a romance-writer to get acquainted with his illusive guests" [35]. He defines the world of Romance as "a neutral territory, somewhere between the real world and fairy-land, where the Actual and the Imaginary may meet, and each imbue itself with the nature of the other" [36]. The ordinary objects of everyday existence appear "spiritualized by the unusual light, that they seem

to lose their actual substance...invested with a quality of strangeness and remoteness" (35). Similarly, the light of Romance reveals the characters' spiritual natures through their physical appearances. The warm, red glow of coal-fire produces an effect similar to that of the cold, pale moonbeams and viewed through a mirror, the scene appears "one remove farther from the actual, and nearer to the imaginative" (36).

In The Scarlet Letter, Hawthorne's romantic process reveals his moral ambiguity as he rewrites Spenser's legend of Holiness in Book one of the Faerie Queene in order to express a different view of human morality and the nature of sin and redemption. Hawthorne's understanding of objects as sharing Actual and Imaginary qualities, the real and fanciful overlapping yet each distinctly present, relates to his moral view in which human goodness, ex-isting alongside the inherent capacity for sin, blurs the distinction between good and evil, right and wrong. Just as a different light offers a different perspective, Hawthorne's new kind of allegory results in multiple meanings and possibilities of interpretation.

He demonstrates this process of Romantic ambiguity in The Custom-House in his presentations of the scarlet letter and Hester Prynne. When he discovers the letter, Hawthorne carefully emphasizes its ordinary aspects; it is an object of faded red cloth and gold embroidery obviously "intended...as an ornamental article of dress" (31). Hawthorne even somewhat humorously gives us "an accurate measurement" of "precisely three inches and a quarter in length" for the A's limbs. But the meaning or purpose of the letter is not evident. The cloth's shape is not readily perceived, and it is not understood as a specific symbol: "how it was to be worn, or what rank, honor,

and dignity...were signified by it, was a riddle which...I saw little hope of solving" [31]. Nevertheless, Hawthorne establishes the A as a major symbol in his new allegorical Romance capable of many possible interpretations but not one definite explanation: "there was some deep meaning in it, most worthy of interpretation and which...streamed forth from the mystic symbol, subtly communicating itself to my sensibilities but evading the analysis of my mind" [31]. Hawthorne, like Spenser, understands an allegorical symbol or character as representing a range of meanings and ultimately escaping the reader's tendency to define it. Hawthorne also anticipates the reader's response toward the scarlet letter; nevertheless, he makes clear the difficulty of distinguishing and establishing the definitive truth of such a symbol through his deliberately ambiguous language: "It seemed to me,--the reader may smile, but must not doubt my word,-- it seemed to me, then, that I experienced a sensation not altogether physical, yet almost so, as of burning heat; and as if the letter were not of red cloth, but of red-hot iron" [32].

Similarly, Hawthorne demonstrates his Romantic process in his description of Hester, which he uses to establish her as the major figure in his new allegorical romance. An ambiguous mingling of actual and imaginary qualities shades Hester's depiction. Hawthorne first presents the "factual" account of her from historical documentation: "She had flourished during a period between the early days of Massachusetts, and the close of the seventeenth century. Aged persons...remembered her...as a very old, but not decrepit woman, of a stately and solemn aspect" [32]. But Hester's character undergoes a transformation through time; as a nurse and advisor: "she gained from many people the reverence due to an angel" [32]. This kind of

imaginary, enhanced view of Hester is not shared by all, for Hawthorne himself comments that possibly she "was looked upon by others as an intruder and a nuisance" [32]. By referring to Hester as a kind of angel, Hawthorne presents us with one interpretation of her allegorical character, but he also likens her to the Christian soul struggling toward salvation embodied in Spenser's Red Crosse Knight. Hawthorne establishes Hester as an allegorical figure who is creating her own moral legend. Just as Spenser establishes Red Crosse Knight's identity with that of St. George, after he attains the virtue of Holiness, Hawthorne represents Hester as a legendary figure capable of a reverence and awe. He refers to the scarlet letter as "a most curious relic ...[which] shall be freely exhibited to whomsoever, induced by the great interest of the narrative, may desire a sight of [it]" [33]. In this view, Hester's character is elevated to a saint-like status, and the scarlet letter becomes an object of veneration.

V. Hester

Hawthorne presents Hester Prynne as an allegorical figure like Spenser's Red Crosse Knight, who must struggle with sin in order to find a way to redemption, while establishing her own moral legend. Hawthorne's understanding of human nature as a blend of good and evil (inescapably sinful, the capacity for good always associated with the capacity for evil), characterizes his depiction of Hester and her process of redemption, in a different way from Spenser's treatment of Red Crosse. For the Red Crosse Knight, redemption is brought about through stages within the Anglican Church; after his fall, the Red Crosse Knight is saved from sin and Despair by Grace (Arthur) and Faith

[Una], who leads him to the House of Holiness where he is guided toward salvation. Hester is led toward salvation by the very product of her sin as Pearl acts as both punishment and redemption.

Both Red Crosse and Hester transform their symbols as they establish their new identities. The Red Crosse Knight must prove himself worthy of the virtue of holiness in order to become St. George, identified by the cross. Hester's symbol comes from outside the church and though its initial meaning is associated with sin, she establishes the scarlet letter as her own symbol, transforming it to include multiple interpretations which shade the boundary between good and evil. Hester's own character reveals this duality, and Hawthorne associates her with both Una and Duessa. Just as Spenser uses doubles to reveal his characters' natures, Hawthorne contrasts Hester with different female types such as Pearl and Mistress Hibbins. The final redemption for Hester, as for Red Crosse Knight, is not presented by the author, but both characters devote their lives to service, fulfilling their virtues, as their symbols continue to express the different meanings associated with their moral legends.

Hawthorne begins his novel after the sin of adultery has already been committed, unlike Spenser who follows the adventures of the Red Crosse Knight from the time he sets out on his journey until his defeat of the dragon and betrothal to Una. In this way, Hawthorne establishes a more fatalistic view of sin, inescapably overshadowing the novel and its characters; he also reveals an interest in the consequences of sin more than in the circumstances surrounding its action. In the opening chapter, the description of the prison, graveyard, and church suggests a relationship among sin, death/punishment,

and redemption which occur throughout the novel, such as in the three scaffold scenes, that evoke its major themes. Hawthorne also presents an allegorical setting in which nature manifests moral qualities, just as his emblematic characters reveal a physical appearance which corresponds to their spiritual state: "Before this ugly edifice...was a grass-plot, much overgrown with burdock, pigweed, apple-peru, and such unsightly vegetation, which evidently found something congenial in the soil that had so early borne the black flower of civilized society, a prison" [48]. Hawthorne establishes the novel as "a tale of human frailty and sorrow" but includes nothing about redemption in this description, casting a darkness over allegory emphasizing human sin and proposing a more uncertain view of salvation.

Hawthorne carefully establishes a context overcast by the Puritan moral code and involving the public display of sin leading up to Hester's appearance. Hester's punishment in the marketplace links her identity with society and throughout the novel Hawthorne continues to define her in terms of her relationship with the townspeople. This initial scene also presents several female types which serve as contrasts to Hester. Mistress Hibbins, first mentioned here, provides a kind of double for Hester; Hawthorne suggests: "It might be, too, that a witch, like old Mistress Hibbins, the bitter-tempered widow of the magistrate was to die upon the gallows" [49]. Throughout the novel, Mistress Hibbins exemplifies the sinful path Hester could also have chosen. The women in the crowd reflect different attitudes toward Hester, most notably a Puritanic severity expressed in "a boldness and rotundity of speech" [51], though one voice responds sympathetically.

Surrounded by a rigidity of Puritan religious and legal sentiment, a

fallen Hester Prynne emerges from the prison led by the town beadle. Hester begins her journey toward the scaffold, just as she begins her moral journey toward salvation, with a boldness like that of the Red Crosse Knight at the start of his own virtuous quest. As the beadle leads her forward: "she repelled him, by an action marked with natural dignity and force of character, and stepped into the open air, as if by her own free-will" (52). Nevertheless, Hester is not without a feeling of shame in regard to the acknowledgment of her sin and presents a mixture of bold defiance with conscious shame: "wisely judging that one token of her shame would but poorly serve to hide another, she took the baby on her arm, and, with a burning blush, and yet a haughty smile, and a glance that would not be abashed, looked around at her towns-people and neighbours" (52-53). Pearl's first appearance equates her with the scarlet letter. A significant distinction between Hester and the Red Crosse Knight exists in Hester's child; as a visual, human manifestation of her sin, the baby serves as a continual reminder of Hester's sin throughout the remainder of the novel, revealing Hawthorne's notion of the inescapability of sin and its consequences.

Hester's boldness is further revealed by the elaborately embroidered scarlet letter which was "of a splendor in accordance with the taste of the age but greatly beyond what was allowed by the sumptuary regulations of the colony" (53), and her fanciful dress in general, which later links her with both Pearl and Mistress Hibbins, emblematically reveals her spiritual state: "Her attire...seemed to express the attitude of her spirit, the desperate recklessness of her mood, by its wild and picturesque peculiarity" (53). Hester appears transformed in the eyes of the crowd due to the scarlet letter: "both men and

women, who had been familiarly acquainted with Hester Prynne, were now impressed as if they beheld her for the first time" [53]. Hester now has a new identity uniquely associated with her new symbol, culturally administered yet defined as beyond the bounds of Puritan society.

After Hester makes the journey from prison to the market-place and takes her place of punishment before the people, Hawthorne suggests that Hester "with the infant at her bosom" evokes "the image of Divine Maternity" but "only by contrast, of that sacred image of sinless motherhood, whose infant was to redeem the world" [56]. Hester and Pearl appear as a kind of fallen Madonna and Child, but even so, the very possibility of resemblance reveals a subtleness in the nature of good and evil which can blend together indistinctly (like the familiar and the imaginary). Also, just as Spenser attempts to establish the Anglican Church as the true and legitimate/rightful church of England, glorifying the Virgin Queen as its head in place of the Catholic Virgin Mary, and embodies the Anglican Church in Una, Hawthorne establishes Hester as a corresponding figure outside the Church. Standing on the scaffold, Hester recalls her past, and memories of her childhood and maidenhood pass through her mind; this flash-back provides a sense of the inevitability of sin for human nature: "the scaffold of the pillory was a point of view that revealed to Hester Prynne the entire track along which she had been treading" [58].

VI. Hester and Chillingworth

When Hester stands upon the scaffold, she immediately recognizes Chillingworth and the danger his presence could represent, as her husband,

just as the Red Crosse Knight recognizes Error as an obvious evil:

"Although...he had endeavored to conceal or abate the peculiarity, it was sufficiently evident to Hester Prynne, that one of this man's shoulder's rose higher than the other. Again, at the first instant of perceiving that thin visage, and the slight deformity of the figure, she pressed her infant to her bosom..." (60).

Meeting him inside the prison, Hester fears the intent of his proffered medicines for herself and her child; she takes the cup with "not precisely a look of fear, yet full of doubt and questioning, as to what his purposes might be" (73). Hester admits to a desire for death as a result of her sin, similar to the Red Crosse Knight's sense of despair. Though Hester fears the obvious evil of poison and the expected reaction of a husband wronged by his wife, she cannot distinguish his hypocritical intentions for revenge regarding Dimmesdale. Feeling a shared responsibility for Hester's fall, he plans no evil against her but leaves her to the punishment of the scarlet letter; her refusal to reveal Dimmesdale's identity does not lessen his plan of revenge: "Let him live! Let him hide himself in outward honor, if he may! Not the less he shall be mine!" (76). Though she does not realize the extent of his vengeful purposes nor understand his reasons for remaining anonymous, his threatening speech and her sense of wrong toward him cause him to keep his identity a secret. In swearing an oath to Chillingworth, Hester betrays her faith to Dimmesdale and leaves him vulnerable to Chillingworth, just as the Red Crosse Knight deserts Una after believing Archimago's false visions.

VII. Hester and the Scarlet Letter: Transformation of a Symbol

As she leaves the prison-house, Hester is aware of a future in which she must bear her burden of sin, made plain to all by her new symbol, and though she has already fallen, a different struggle against good and evil is just beginning in which she will need the armor of a Christian knight:

"Tomorrow would bring its own trial with it ; so would the next day, and so would the next" [79]. Her new symbol, the scarlet letter, transforms Hester's identity as she begins to establish her own moral legend; her own individuality is lost as she becomes "the general symbol at which the preacher and moralist might point, and in which they might vivify and embody their images of woman's frailty and sinful passion" [79].

The Puritans know her only as "the figure, the body, the reality of sin" [79], but Hawthorne reveals another identity for Hester associated with the New World, one which emphasizes his own desire to create a new type of allegorical Romance and her status as a character shaping her own moral legend. Rather than leave the Puritan settlement, Hester chooses to remain at the site of her sin, which exercises an inevitable, fatalistic hold on its perpetrator. Hawthorne emphasizes the strength of her sinful bond: "Her sin, her ignominy, were the roots which she had struck into the soil. It was as if a new birth...had converted the forest-land...into Hester Prynne's wild and dreary, but life-long home...The chain that bound her here was of iron links, and galling to her inmost soul, but never could be broken" [80].

Regardless of her sin, Hester shows a concern for redemption; Hawthorne depicts Hester as a martyr whose endurance of the Puritan law transforms her to a saint-like figure: "Here...had been the scene of her guilt, and here

should be the scene of her earthly punishment; and so, perchance, the torture of her daily shame would at length purge her soul, and work out another purity than that which she had lost; more saint-like, because the result of martyrdom" (80).

Hester's skill at needle-work also emphasizes her creative role in establishing a new symbol and moral legend; she uses her skill to provide for the poor, giving up her own pleasures by choice, as the scarlet letter begins to transform her identity from a branded adultress to that of a saintly martyr: "It was probable that there was an idea of penance in this mode of occupation, and that she offered up a real sacrifice of enjoyment, in devoting so many hours to such rude handiwork" (83). But in keeping with Hawthorne's moral view, he is careful not to present a specific interpretation of Hester's character; though she possesses saintlike qualities, "she forebore to pray for her enemies; lest, in spite of her forgiving aspirations, the words of a blessing should stubbornly twist themselves into a curse" (85).

Hawthorne reveals his understanding of human nature as inescapably sinful, the capacity for evil linked with the potential for good, in Hester's sympathetic knowledge of sin in others and the apparent revelations disclosed to her: "Could they be other than the insidious whispers of the bad angel, who would fain have persuaded the struggling woman, as yet only half his victim, that the outward guise of purity was but a lie, and that, if truth were everywhere to be shown, a scarlet letter would blaze forth on many a bosom besides Hester Prynne's?" (86). Hester feels a sinful unity with a venerable minister, a respected matron, and a shy maiden, though they appear outwardly pure and innocent. Hawthorne deliberately leaves an

ambiguity about Hester's knowledge, concluding : "Such loss of faith is ever one of the saddest results of sin" (87). This temptation for Hester to see the sin in others is only one of the trials through which she must pass before her second "fall" in the forest; nevertheless, Hester's status as a Christian knight struggling against evil in order to establish herself as an allegorical figure is confirmed by Hawthorne's remark that Hester's story might be understood as a legend and the scarlet letter as her symbol. (cf.87).

VIII. Hester and Pearl

In her journey toward salvation, Hester is guided by Pearl, who serves as both her punishment and redemption. Hester recognizes Pearl as a product of her sin, her life being the very embodiment of sin, the link between Hester and Dimmesdale, but she also understands Pearl as a divine gift; God had blessed her with a child where man had only punished her. When the Puritan townspeople suggest Pearl be taken from Hester for the betterment of both of their souls, Hester must plead her case before Governor Bellingham. Hawthorne uses the Governor's Elizabethan hall to represent the presence of the Old World in the New. Significantly, Hawthorne focuses on the Governor's suit of armor, emphasizing its modern appearance: "a suit of mail, not, like the pictures, an ancestral relic, but of the most modern date" (105). This description of the modern suit of armor supports Hawthorne's plan to create a new kind of modern allegory. When Hester looks at the polished breastplate, she sees the scarlet letter greatly magnified: "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" (106). For Hester, the scarlet letter becomes her armor, protecting her from greater evils and like Pearl, offering her moral guidance; Hester's new armor and symbol protect the Christian soul struggling against evil toward redemption in the same way as the armor and cross of Spenser's Red Crosse Knight.

When the Governor, walking with John Wilson, Dimmesdale, and Chillingworth, encounters Pearl, he comments on her scarlet and gold appearance and says of Hester: "we might have judged that such a child's mother must needs be a scarlet woman and a worthy type of her of Babylon" (110). These allusions to the whore of Babylon associate Hester with the figure of Duessa and the roles of temptress and seductress, which re-appear in the forest scene. After questioning Pearl, the magistrates conclude she should be removed from Hester's care, but Hester knows the importance of Pearl for her own spiritual welfare; she responds: "God gave me the child...in requital of all things else, which ye had taken from me. She is my happiness! -- she is my torture, none the less! Pearl keeps me here in life! Pearl punishes me too!" (113). Dimmesdale supports Hester and confirms Pearl's role as a moral guide who helps leads Hester away from evil toward redemption by giving Hester the responsibility of instructing a soul in good and evil: "this boon was meant, above all things else, to keep the mother's soul alive, and to preserve her from blacker depths of sin into which Satan might else have sought to plunge her! Therefore it is good for this poor, sinful woman that she hath an infant immortality, a being capable of eternal joy and sorrow, confided to her care,--to be trained up by her to

righteousness,--to remind her, at every moment of her fall,--but yet to teach her...if she bring the child to heaven, the child also will bring its parent thither!" (114-115). The Governor and minister Wilson agree to Dimmesdale's argument.

As Hester and Pearl leave the hall, they are stopped by the Governor's sister, Mistress Hibbins. Again, the older lady provides an evil, Duessa-like double for Hester, and Hawthorne again reminds us of her subsequent execution as a witch. Mistress Hibbins tempts Hester to enter the forest and give herself over to evil, just as Young Goodman Brown journeys into the woods to meet the Black Man: "Wilt thou go with us to-night? There will be a merry company in the forest" (116-117). But unlike Young Goodman Brown, Hester has Pearl to guide her away from evil, and Hester answers Mistress Hibbins triumphantly: "Had they taken her from me, I would willingly have gone with thee into the forest, and signed my name in the Black Man's book too, and that with mine own blood!" (117). Here as throughout the novel, Hawthorne effectively uses Mistress Hibbins as a double for Hester, exemplifying the possible choice of evil which exists, just as Chillingworth does for Dimmesdale.

During the seven years in which Hester wears the scarlet letter, her identity becomes transformed by her symbol until both represent multiple interpretations of good and evil. Her initial boldness toward the public at the start of the novel has changed into an outward humility expressed in her devoted service for the poor and afflicted: "she never battled with the public, but submitted uncomplainingly to its worst usage" (160). Significantly, Hester's actions are associated with a figurative twilight, appropriate to her

as a time of mixed shades of light and darkness representative of her moral state; in words echoing The Custom-House, Hawthorne writes of her (nightly visits): "She came...into the household that was darkened by trouble; as if its gloomy twilight were a medium in which she was entitled to hold intercourse with her fellow creatures" (161). The scarlet letter itself, once viewed as a flaming brand of sin, casting its lurid gleams, becomes a source of her strength in helping others, empowering her to do and act: "She was self-ordained a Sister of Mercy...The letter was a symbol of her calling...many people refused to interpret the scarlet A by its original signification. They said that it meant Able" (161).

The letter becomes a working symbol, representing Hester's moral legend, and capable, like herself, of different meanings, "not of that one sin...but of her many good deeds since" (162). The religious imagery describing Hester further characterizes her as a kind of angel or saintlike martyr, likening her to Spenser's St. George, the knight of holiness; the scarlet letter becomes Hester's armor, not only protecting her from evil, but also giving her a sacred aspect; it "had the effect of the cross on a nun's bosom. It imparted to the wearer a kind of sacredness, which enabled her to walk securely amid all peril. Had she fallen among thieves, it would have kept her safe, It was reported, and believed by many, that an Indian had drawn his arrow against the badge, and that the missile struck it, but fell harmless to the ground" (163). Like the cross of Spenser's Red Crosse Knight, Hester's scarlet letter becomes a sign of redemption corresponding to Hawthorne's view of a process of redemption outside the established church, significantly different from Spenser's understanding of salvation through the Anglican Church.

Similarly, just as the Red Crosse Knight acts out of a desire to attain the virtue of holiness, the narrator concludes that Hester's humble actions could only result from "a genuine regard for virtue that had brought back the poor wanderer to its paths" (160). Stewart discusses Hawthorne's use of the symbol: "The Faerie Queene suggested a favorite device of characterization with Hawthorne [which]... consists in the use of a material adjunct which in association with the character acquires a symbolic significance" (202); he uses Hester's letter and the Red Crosse Knight's cross as two examples from each author.

Though Hester's outward humility and social obedience reveal a lack of boldness, she retains an inner boldness of thought corresponding to the revolutionary spirit of the age: "The world's law was no law for her mind. It was an age in which the human intellect, newly emancipated, had taken a more active and a wider range than for many centuries before" (164). Her freedom of speculation includes changing the present order of society and the relationship between men and women, but Hawthorne suggests such social reforms cannot take place without a loss of womanhood similar to Hester's loss of femininity resulting from the severity of Puritan law. Regardless of her rebellious thoughts, Hester restricts her boldness to the contemplative sphere and focuses her attentions on Pearl; without Pearl to raise and educate, the narrator speculates that Hester "might have come down to us in history, hand in hand with Ann Hutchinson, as the founder of a religious sect" or "not improbably would, have suffered death from the stern tribunals of the period, for attempting to undermine the foundations of the Puritan establishment" (165). Just as Spenser criticizes the Catholic Church

Hawthorne disagrees with the Puritan's rigid division of good and evil, and he distinguishes between the laws of God and their enforcement by human society. "The Puritans attempt to reform human beings with a strict moral legislation had not worked" (Zucker, 64). Hawthorne is careful to distinguish Hester's moral position; though she has broken a law of God and society, the moral implications of her sin remain in her conscience despite her inward rebellion toward the social consequences of Puritan modes of punishment. "Hawthorne showed--such stringent moral legislation does not work. Public regulations can neither entirely root out nor repress human passions" (Zucker, 66). Though Hester becomes "little accustomed, in her long seclusion from society, to measure her ideas of right and wrong by any standard external to herself" (159), she still retains a moral standard in desiring a new social order. Hawthorne raises these issues with the knowledge that one solution does not exist.

Hester's speculations lead her to despair. She questions Pearl's existence, wondering "whether it were good or ill that the poor little creature had been born at all" (165), and raises the same question about the race of womanhood, having decided in the negative about her own existence. Despair causes her to wander "without a clew in the dark labyrinth of the mind" (166), in a mental dungeon similar to Spenser's Cave of Error: "now turned aside from an insurmountable precipice; now starting back from a deep chasm. There was wild and ghastly scenery all around her, and a home and comfort nowhere" (166). Like the Red Crosse Knight in Despair's cave, Hester becomes overwhelmed by doubt and her wild speculations, and "At times a fearful doubt strove to possess her soul, whether it were not better to

send Pearl at once to heaven, and go herself to such futurity as Eternal Justice should provide" (166). Despite these thoughts, Hester arrives at a new resolution and chooses a new course of action.

IX. Hester and Dimmesdale

Hester decides that she must reveal Chillingworth's true identity to Dimmesdale and thereby renew her bond of faith with him. She has noticed Dimmesdale's spiritually demoralized state and its physical manifestations evident in his decayed condition: "His nerve seemed absolutely destroyed. His moral force was abased into more than childish weakness. It groveled helpless on the ground..." (159). In his weakness, Dimmesdale must depend on Hester's strength, and in her decision to rescue him from the evils of Chillingworth, Hester fulfills her role as a Christian knight: "Knowing what this poor, fallen man had once been, her whole soul was moved by the shuddering terror with which he had appealed to her,--the outcast woman,--for support against his instinctively discovered enemy" (159). In promising to keep Chillingworth's secret, Hester believed herself to be protecting Dimmesdale and acting out of a sense of obligation for the wrong she had committed toward Chillingworth, but Hester now realizes she has broken her strongest bond with another: "Hester could not but ask herself, whether there had not originally been a defect of truth, courage, and loyalty, on her own part, in allowing the minister to be thrown into a position where so much evil was to be foreboded, and nothing auspicious to be hoped...she had been able to discern no method of rescuing him from a blacker ruin than had

overwhelmed herself, except by acquiescing in Roger Chillingworth's scheme of disguise" (166-167).

Hester now understands that the sinful union she shares with Dimmesdale outweighs all other bonds; Hawthorne emphasizes the inescapability of sin and its consequences for both Hester and Dimmesdale: "Here was the iron link of mutual crime, which neither he nor she could break. Like all other ties, it brought along with it its obligations" (160). During her seven years of struggling against sin, Hester's own understanding of both good and evil has deepened, allowing her to recognize evils which were once hidden to her; with a new sense of the relationship between Chillingworth and Dimmesdale, she "resolves to meet her former husband, and do what might be in her power for the rescue of the victim on whom he had so evidently set his gripe" (167).

In Hester's meeting with Chillingworth, Hawthorne re-emphasizes central concerns of the novel. Chillingworth repeatedly addresses Hester as "Mistress Hester," recalling Mistress Hibbins, the other Mistress in the novel and indeed the only other female character, besides Pearl, who is given a name (subtly associating Hester with a figure known for her evil, witch-like practices). In response to the proposal that the scarlet letter be removed, Hester explains that it is not within human power to remove the letter; it has become part of her, a symbol which has undergone many changes, transforming its meaning as well as Hester's own identity. She tells him: "Were I worthy to be quit of it, it would fall away of its own nature, or be transformed into something that should speak a different purport" (169). As she speaks with Chillingworth, Hester notices the man's evil transformation and feels responsible for his

demise: "The scarlet letter burned on Hester Prynne's bosom. Here was another ruin, the responsibility of which came partly home to her" (170).

Hawthorne reveals the complexity of sin and its many associations of blame and betrayal. Hester feels that she has wronged both Chillingworth and Dimmesdale, yet her bond with Dimmesdale remains strongest, and she tells Chillingworth regarding this duty: "something whispered me that I was betraying it, in pledging myself to keep your counsel" (170). Hester's sense of betraying Dimmesdale and leaving him vulnerable to Chillingworth recalls the Red Crosse Knight's betrayal of Una to Archimago, but Hawthorne's moral view reveals a more complex understanding of faith and sin than Spenser depicts in The Faerie Queene. Hester's actions reveal a falseness like the Red Crosse Knight's treatment of Una, and she explains: "I have surely acted a false part by the only man to whom the power was left me to be true" (171); though Hester was deceived as to Chillingworth's intentions, she believed that she was protecting Dimmesdale from worse evils, whereas the Red Crosse Knight simply believed the false visions of Archimago and deserted Una. Dimmesdale is not the purely good and faithful figure which Una represents, for he too has sinned. Chillingworth feels a responsibility for Hester's fate because of his marriage to her; he remarks: "Peradventure, hadst thou met earlier with a better love than mine, this evil had not been" (173); he also blames Dimmesdale for his evil transformation and attempts to justify his revenge.

Nevertheless, Hester determines to reveal Chillingworth's identity to Dimmesdale and re-establish her bond of truth with him; her words emphasize the inescapable consequences binding them all together: "There is

no good for him,--no good for me,--no good for thee! There is no good for little Pearl! There is no path to guide up out of this dismal maze!" (174). In her despair, Hester describes their sin as a moral maze like that of Spenser's wandering wood of Error, in which she, Dimmesdale, and Chillingworth "are here wandering together in this gloomy maze of evil, and stumbling, at every step, over the guilt wherewith [they] have strewn [their] path" (174). In the same way Spenser writes of the Red Crosse Knight and Una: "They cannot finde their path, which first was shown,/But wander too and fro in wayes vnknowne...So many pathes, so many turnings seene,/That which of them to take, in diuerse doubt they been" (l.i.10.4-5,8-9). Hester's description prepares us for the forest scene, as in Young Goodman Brown, and Chillingworth's explanation of their sinful fate reveals the darker view of Brown in which evil appears man's only choice without the possibility of redemption; he tells Hester: "By thy first step awry, thou didst plant the germ of evil; but, since that moment, it has all been a dark necessity" (174).

As Chillingworth walks away, Hester feels a new hatred toward him; regardless of her own sense of responsibility for his ruined state resulting from her adulterous betrayal of faith (toward him), she believes he is chiefly to blame for the evils that have transpired: "it seemed a fouler offence committed by Roger Chillingworth, than any which had since been done him, that, in the time when her heart knew no better, he had persuaded her to fancy herself happy by his side" (176). Hester believes that this marriage was a betrayal of faith on his part, which overshadows his subsequent wrong of leaving her alone in the colony open to temptation, and greater than the sin

committed by her and Dimmesdale: "He betrayed me! He has done me worse wrong than I did him!" (176). Hawthorne again reveals the multiple betrayals of faith which (sinfully) unite Hester, Dimmesdale, and Chillingworth.

In Hester's antipathy for Chillingworth, Hawthorne shows the dual capacity of human nature for good and evil, and he hints of the failure of the Puritan method of punishment to work toward repentance and redemption: "Had seven long years, under the torture of the scarlet letter, inflicted so much of misery, and wrought no repentance? The emotions of that brief space...threw a dark light on Hester's state of mind, revealing much that she might not otherwise have acknowledged to herself" (177). Hester plans to meet Dimmesdale when he returns to the colony through the forest.

X. Hester and Dimmesdale in Hawthorne's "Wandering Wood"

The forest scene between Hester and Dimmesdale reveals Hawthorne's rewriting of the Red Crosse Knight's fall in Spenser's Faerie Queene (as Hawthorne expresses his own views about the nature of sin and redemption). By entering the forest, both Hester and Dimmesdale resemble their evil doubles, Mistress Hibbins and Chillingworth, as well as Young Goodman Brown.

Pearl's story about the Black Man and her reference to Mistress Hibbins hint at the sinful fall which will take place in the woods: "this ugly Black Man offers his book and an iron pen to everybody that meets him here among the trees...a thousand and a thousand people had met him here, and had written in his book, and have his mark on them...old Mistress Hibbins, was one" (185). Hester admits that she, too, has once met the Black Man, and the scarlet letter is his mark. Dimmesdale returns from meeting with a group of Indian converts just as Chillingworth exits the forest at the beginning of the novel after having spent time with the Indians; Pearl's associations of Dimmesdale with the Black Man also link him with Chillingworth. Neither Hester nor Dimmesdale enters the forest with sinful intentions, yet their meeting in the woods results in a second "fall."

The forest is known as a place of evil, the haunt of witches and the Black Man, as well as a wild, lawless territory, home to the Indians, beyond the boundaries of civilized society. Hawthorne emphasizes the moral danger present in the forest which corresponds to Spenser's "shadie groue," the wandering wood of "Errours endlesse traine": "A shadie groue...Whose loftie trees yclad with sommers pride,/Did spred so broad, that heauens light did hide...And all within were pathes and alleies wide" (I.i.7. 4-5,7). As Hester enters the forest with Pearl, it "stood so black and dense on either side, and disclosed such imperfect glimpses of the sky above, that to Hester's mind it imaged not amiss the moral wanderness in which she had so long been wandering" (183).

This scene also corresponds to that of the Red Crosse Knight's fall. Duessa finds the Red Crosse Knight in the shade near a fountain "whose bubbling waue did ever freshly well" (I.vii.4.6). Hawthorne's "primeval forest" includes a brook which "kept up a babble, kind, quiet, soothing, but melancholy" (186). Though the Red Crosse Knight has been warned of Duessa by Fradubio, he repeats his earlier mistake, allowing himself to be deceived by Duessa (hypocritically committing the very sin for which he had abandoned Una). Similarly, Hawthorne imparts to the brook a vocal quality which reminds one of past sorrows: "with its never-ceasing loquacity, it should whisper tales out of the heart of the old forest whence it flowed, or mirror its revelations on the smooth surface of a pool" (186). Though their meeting does remind them of their past sin, perhaps even committed near that very spot, Hester and Dimmesdale, like the Red Crosse Knight, disregard this warning and yield themselves to sin; the brook warns of the past and hints about their future fall: "the little stream...kept telling its unintelligible secret of some very mournful mystery that had happened--or making a prophetic lamentation about something that was yet to happen--within the verge of the dismal forest" (187).

When Hester encounters Dimmesdale, he does not recognize her immediately, and both are uncertain about each other's presence, as if they were two ghosts or spirits, mere visions of human forms: "they thus questioned one another's actual and bodily existence, and even doubted of their own. So strangely did they meet, in the dim wood, that it was like the first encounter, in the world beyond the grave, of two spirits who had been intimately connected in their former life..." (189-190). Their difficulty

in recognizing each other foreshadows their inability to realize the delusion under which they act.

Hester, deceived by a vision of false hope, wrongly believes that she and Dimmesdale can leave their past behind. Dimmesdale despairs about his sinful state and any good that he may have possibly achieved as a minister: "As concerns the good which I may appear to do, I have no faith in it. It must needs be a delusion. What can a ruined soul, like mine, effect towards the redemption of other souls?--or a polluted soul, towards their purification?" (191). Hester assures Dimmesdale that he has truly repented and that his sin is now behind him; his ministerial works must outweigh his past sin.

She reveals to Dimmesdale the true identity of Roger Chillingworth, admitting that she has falsely betrayed her bond of faith with Dimmesdale: "Truth was the one virtue which I might have held fast...save when thy good,--thy life,--thy fame,--were put in question! Then I consented to a deception" (193). In his weakened condition, he forgives Hester and depends on her strength to guide him. Hester boldly suggests they leave the colonies and begin a new life together, deceived by her own vision of this new life full of hope and goodness. She acts unwittingly the role of Duessa, the temptress and seductress, by persuading Dimmesdale he can escape his sin and its consequences; Hester describes the deepness of the wilderness which lies open before them: "There thou art free! So brief a journey would bring thee from a world where thou hast been most wretched, to one where thou mayest still be happy! Is there not shade enough in all this boundless forest to hide thy heart from the gaze of Roger Chillingworth?" (197). Hester does not realize that she is leading Dimmesdale toward another fall; social

confinements may be escapable but the moral consequences of sin are not.

As Hester tempts Dimmesdale to leave the colony, her words ironically recall the character of Chillingworth, Dimmesdale's evil double: "Exchange this false life of thine for a true one. Be...the teacher and apostle of the red men...be a scholar and a sage among the wisest and most renowned of the cultivated world...Give up this name of Arthur Dimmesdale, and make thyself another" (198). Hester's inner boldness results from years of isolation and estrangement from society; critical of civilized institutions, Hester feels an affinity with the wild, open forest: "Hester Prynne...for so long a period not merely estranged, but outlawed, from society, had habituated herself to such a latitude of speculation as were altogether foreign to the clergyman. She had wandered without rule or guidance, in a moral wilderness; as vast, as intricate, and as shadowy, as the untamed forest" (199). Yet Hawthorne makes clear that Hester is deceived as to the real nature of her and Dimmesdale's sin and the process of repentance and redemption: "Shame, Despair, Solitude! These had been her teachers,--stern and wild ones,--and they had made her strong, but taught her much amiss" (199-200). Hester still believes that the past with its sin and sorrow can be left behind.

In this scene of temptation and sin, Hester reveals the weakness of Spenser's Red Crosse Knight and the seductive charm of Duessa. When Duessa finds the Red Crosse Knight, resting by a fountain in the shade, he has removed his armor, making himself physically and morally defenseless; Spenser describes him as "Disarmed all of yron-coted Plate" (i.vii.2.8). Significantly, Hester takes the scarlet letter from her breast, removing her own armor and making herself vulnerable to sin. Both Hester and the Red

Crosse Knight are morally disarmed and defenseless before their falls. Hester is suddenly transformed in a way which causes the reader to wonder about the scene of Hester and Dimmesdale's first adulterous fall; the narrator describes Hester's rich beauty and impulsive nature: "The stigma gone, Hester heaved a long, deep sigh, in which the burden of shame and anguish departed from her spirit...She had not known the weight, until she felt the freedom! By another impulse, she took off the formal cap that confined her hair...Her sex, her youth, and the whole richness of her beauty, came back from what men call the irrevocable past, and clustered themselves, with her maiden hope, and a happiness before unknown, within the magic circle of this hour" (202).

Dimmesdale's mentioning of the old witch Mistress Hibbins suggests the path of evil which exists for Hester. But Pearl again acts as her mother's moral guide and saves her from a darker fate by serving as a reminder of Hester's and Dimmesdale's past sin and forcing her to put the scarlet letter back on. In this way Pearl acts as a figure of Grace just as Arthur intervenes to save the fallen Red Crosse Knight from a worse fate. Significantly, Hawthorne's moral allegory does not allow for a perfectly virtuous character like Arthur; the name Arthur only carries meaning in relation to Dimmesdale. Hester acknowledges the necessity to wear the letter while she remains in the colony: "[Pearl] is right as regards this hateful token. I must bear its torture yet a little longer..." (211). But still deceived by her vision of a new life, Hester does not yet realize the full extent of her sin's consequences; Hawthorne emphasizes the inescapable moral implications of sin: "there was a sense of inevitable doom upon her, as she thus received back this deadly

symbol from the hand of fate" (211). In a manner which seems to sanction this act, Pearl kisses the scarlet letter. Afterwards Hester and Dimmesdale agree to leave the colony on a vessel bound for the Old World, and they separate.

XI. Hester's Legend

At the Election Day ceremony, Hester and Dimmesdale must confront the final obstacle of evil which Chillingworth places before them. Hester awaits the procession "clad in a garment of coarse gray cloth," its "twilight indistinctness" revealing the moral ambiguity of her nature. When the vessel's commander informs Hester that Chillingworth will be a passenger on the same voyage, "she beheld old Roger Chillingworth himself...smiling on her; a smile which--across the wide and bustling square, and through all the talk and laughter, and various thoughts, moods, and interests of the crowd--conveyed secret and fearful meaning" (235). His presence serves as a reminder that the consequences of her and Dimmesdale's sin cannot be escaped, but will follow them throughout their lives.

In the following chapter describing the Procession, Hawthorne emphasizes two concerns expressed in his short stories "Endicott and the Red Cross" and "Young Goodman Brown." He describes the armed soldiers marching by, mentioning "the shimmer of the sunshine on the weapons and bright armour of the military company" (236-237), and later he directly refers to Endicott as one of the early statesmen revered by the people. This story's treatment of rebellion against an established religious and civil order anticipates the depiction of Hester as a Christian knight struggling to create a moral legend

outside the Church. When Mistress Hibbins speaks to Hester, she reveals a view of human nature expressed in "Young Goodman Brown," in addition to her role as evil double. Mistress Hibbins comments on Dimmesdale's holy appearance as he passes by in the Procession and the difficulty in believing that he, like many of the townspeople, have journeyed into the forest; she tells Hester: "Many a church-member saw I, walking behind the music, that has danced in the same measure with me, when Somebody was fiddler, and, it might be, and Indian powwow or a Lapland wizard changing Lands with us!" (241). Similarly Young Goodman Brown discovers many of the holiest and most respected Puritans participating in a witches' sabbath; both instances express Hawthorne's view that human nature cannot be divided into rigid categories of good and evil, but rather the capacity for both exists alongside each other. When Mistress Hibbins advances toward Hester in order to speak with her, "the crowd gave way before her, and seemed to fear the touch of her garment, as if it carried the plague among its gorgeous folds" (241); both are isolated from the townspeople, one out of a sense of instinct and reverence, the other out of dread.

When Pearl returns to Hester with a message from the ship's commander that Chillingworth will take Dimmesdale on board, Hester finally realizes her plan of escape and her vision of a new life are only delusions; the moral consequences of their sin, embodied in the person of Chillingworth, will always remain with them: "Hester's strong, calm, steadfastly enduring spirit almost sank, at last, on beholding this dark and grim countenance of an inevitable doom, which--at the moment when a passage seemed to open for the minister and herself out of their labyrinth of misery--showed itself, with

an unrelenting smile, right in the midst of their path" (245). As Hester and Dimmesdale confront Chillingworth in the final scaffold scene, Hester's strength guides Dimmesdale and helps him toward salvation just as Una leads the Red Crosse Knight to the House of Holiness; the minister calls to Hester: "come hither now, and twine thy strength about me!...Come, Hester, come! Support me up yonder scaffold!" (253). After Spenser's Red Crosse Knight defeats the dragon, he and Una are betrothed. Similarly, Hester believes that she and Dimmesdale will be united now that their greatest evil has been overcome; she asks Dimmesdale: "Shall we not meet again?...Shall we not spend our immortal life together?" (256). Nevertheless, Hawthorne presents a much more uncertain view about their state, as Dimmesdale responds: "It may be, that, when we forgot our God,--when we violated our reverence each for the other's soul,--it was henceforth vain to hope that we could meet hereafter, in an everlasting and pure reunion. God knows; and He is merciful!" (256). Just as the marriage between the Red Crosse Knight and Una is never fully presented, so the union between Hester and Dimmesdale must take place in the future.

Hester remains in the Puritan colony until Chillingworth's death, before she leaves with Pearl. The years pass and during Hester's absence, "the story of the scarlet letter grew into a legend" (261). Nevertheless, Hester's strongest bonds remain in the New World, and she returns to the site of her sin, and resumes her symbol: "Here had been her sin; here, her sorrow; and here was yet to be her penitence" (263). The scene of her sin and suffering will also witness her service and salvation. Hester's associations with the New World reveal Hawthorne's intention to establish her as a legendary

American figure similar to England's St. George. In creating a new romantic allegory and a new American literature, Hawthorne also reveals a conscious break with traditional English literature, just as Endicott breaks with the Church of England to establish a new American government.

Hester devotes her life to serving the Puritan community, acting as comforter and counsellor; similarly, the Red Crosse Knight must continue to serve the Faerie Queene as St. George in an active struggle against existing evils. Hester has the choice to remain with Pearl, just as the Red Crosse Knight could choose to stay with Una, but both have obligations to fulfill and must go back into the world and complete their service. Hester's actions establish her as a saint-like figure; her symbol becomes transformed into "a type of something to be sorrowed over, and looked upon with awe, yet with reverence, too" [263]. Hester heralds a new social order in which the relation between men and women resides in a surer mutual happiness; she believes that "the destined prophetess" is still to come who will be entrusted with this "mission of divine and mysterious truth," but in her own way Hester has fulfilled her mission as an "angel and apostle" who has prepared others for "the coming revelation" [263].

During her remaining years, Hester often receives letters with certain armorial seals "though of bearings unknown to English heraldry" [262]; the fact reveals Hawthorne's intentions to create a new kind of moral allegory with a new legendary figure. Similarly, in his argument that Hawthorne is "fashioning a new heraldry unknown in the Old World" [209], J. Jeffrey Mayhook suggests: "Surely they are similar to, if not identical with, the peculiarly American symbol Hawthorne has been developing in his own

peculiarly American heraldic terms" (208). Douglas Greenwood also notes that Hester and Dimmesdale's heraldic device reveals their connections with the New World, contrasting it with Hester's father's coat of arms in the Old World: "their new coat of arms has come to signify something very different from the genteel, heroic past of its English counterpart" (210). After Hester's death, she is buried beside Dimmesdale in the churchyard; monuments with armorial bearings surround their one tombstone. Hawthorne uses heraldic language and images to establish further Hester's position as a new Christian Knight with her own legendary armor and symbol. An "engraved escutcheon...bore a device, a herald's wording of which might serve for a motto and brief description of our now concluded legend...ON A FIELD SABLE, THE LETTER A,GULES" (264). This black shield with the red letter A identifies Hester, just as knights during the Middle Ages were identified in battle by the symbols on their shields. Hester's personal heraldic symbol is part of her moral armor as a new Christian knight who has established her own legend and exemplifies Hawthorne's creation of a new moral allegory.

XII. Pearl

Hawthorne uses Pearl's character uniquely in his new form of moral allegory, establishing her as an almost entirely symbolic identity; she not only serves as a living embodiment of the scarlet letter and a link between Hester and Dimmesdale, but she also becomes Hester's moral guide, intervening at crucial times in order to lead Hester away from evil toward redemption. Pearl's first appearance equates her with the scarlet letter; Hester stands as if presenting two tokens of shame, the A on her breast and Pearl on her arm. In the opening scene and throughout the novel, Pearl emblematically reveals Hester's emotional state; when Hester returns to the prison, Pearl writhes in pain, nourished on her mother's anguish, and representing "a forcible type...of the moral agony which Hester Prynne had borne throughout the day" (70). Similarly, Hester expresses her true tastes in Pearl's apparel, revealing "a rich, voluptuous, Oriental characteristic,--a taste for the gorgeously beautiful" (83), though she limits her own dress to the plainest styles.

Hawthorne establishes Pearl's identity as the embodiment of Hester's sin, an impulsive imp of evil whose perverseness results from her being the product of a lawless passion. The narrator explains Hester's reason for naming her daughter Pearl from the biblical parable, "as being of great price,--purchased with all she had,--her mother's only treasure!" (89). The first object Pearl notices is the scarlet letter and throughout her infancy, she continues to use it as a means of identifying herself and her mother. Like the scarlet letter, Pearl's character is capable of numerous interpretations, "imbued with a spell of infinite variety; in this one child there were many

children" (90). Pearl's wild and impulsive behavior reveals her sin and guilt-stained origins.

Pearl exists as the incarnation of a passion, exhibiting "the warfare of Hester's spirit" including "her wild, desperate, defiant mood, the flightiness of temper, and even some of the very cloud-shapes of gloom and despondency that had brooded in her heart" (91). Pearl is also characterized as an inhuman sprite or impish elf whose perverseness results in an incapacity to experience true human emotions. Her associations with evil link her to Hester's other double, Mistress Hibbins, and reveal one of her roles as a punishment for Hester. Like Mistress Hibbins, Pearl dresses in magnificent gowns, and Pearl's speech and capricious nature associate her with witches and evil spirits. Her angry shouts at the other children "had the sound of a witch's anathemas in some unknown tongue" (94), and her creative ability is likened to a kind of witchcraft. Pearl develops a peculiar smile and knowing look, in which Hester thinks she sees "a face, fiend-like, full of smiling malice...as if an evil spirit possesses the child" (97). The townspeople finally conclude that Pearl must be "a demon offspring" (99).

Regardless of Pearl's associations with evil, Hawthorne also affirms her capacity for good, revealing the moral ambiguity of human nature. Though Pearl tells Hester she has no Heavenly Father, Pearl nevertheless exists as a providential blessing from God and serves as a moral guide for Hester. As Hester and Pearl make their way to the Governor's house, the narrator comments on the child's likeness to the scarlet letter, evident in her "crimson velvet tunic...embroidered with fantasies of gold thread," concluding Pearl must be "the scarlet letter endowed with life!" (102). Reverend Wilson's

description of Pearl as a wild bird and a Red Rose suggest her affinity with nature, a theme emphasized in the forest scene. Pearl's creative energy subtly reveals Hawthorne's new allegorical process in that her imaginative ability associates and interprets nature in the scarlet letter. Pearl arranges a handful of burrs on Hester's breast, and later Pearl creates a green A of her own out of sea-weed. Pearl's repeated questions about the meaning of the scarlet letter reveal her role as both a reminder of sin, in Providence's "design of justice and retribution," and also her ability to comfort Hester according to "a purpose of mercy and beneficence" (180).

Pearl finds pleasure in exploring the dark forest; for her, it is a natural world in which she feels a closeness and a comfort. The woods and its inhabitants welcome Pearl's presence, for "the mother-forest, and these wild things which it nourished, all recognized a kindred wildness in the human child" (204); a bond exists between this natural world and Pearl, a wild offspring born outside the laws of society. Arraying herself with wild flowers, Pearl appears a creature of nature herself "a nymph-child, or an infant dryad" (205). Pearl's identity is even revealed through nature when the brook reflects her flowery image. But during this forest scene, Hester's removal of the scarlet letter causes an estrangement between herself and Pearl, for Pearl as the living representation of the letter, no longer has a means of identifying herself or her mother.

As they await the Election procession, Pearl appears the outward manifestation of Hester's anxious state: "Pearl, who was the gem on her mother's unquiet bosom, betrayed, by the very dance of her spirits, the emotions which none could detect in the marble passiveness of Hester's

brow" [228]. Pearl is continually characterized by her identification with all things wild and her natural boldness. She is compared to a vivacious bird flitting through the crowd, who with "native audacity" confronts the Indians and mariners: "She ran and looked the wild Indian in the face; and he grew conscious of a nature wilder than his own" [244].

Throughout the novel, the narrator attributes much of Pearl's behavior to her lacking "a grief that should deeply touch her, and thus humanize and make her capable of sympathy" [184], and her relations with Dimmesdale and Hester reveal this lack of a deep, constant affection. Pearl's ability to feel emotion suddenly manifests itself in her love for Dimmesdale; after she kisses him, "A spell was broken" [256]. Her sympathy for deep human emotion is exercised for the first time and at once becomes part of her nature: "as her tears fell upon her father's cheek, they were a pledge that she would grow up amid human joy and sorrow, nor forever do battle with the world, but be a woman in it" [256].

Unlike Hester, Pearl's existence is not inherently tied to the Puritan colony. The narrator believes Pearl to be married and happy in her new home. Throughout the novel, Pearl's identification with flowers and roses, especially the prison-house rose, associates her with the "sweet moral blossom" offered to the reader in the opening chapter.

XIII. Dimmesdale

Just as Hester reveals her associations with Spenser's Red Crosse Knight, Dimmesdale shows his closest alignment to the character of Una, in Hawthorne's new moral allegory. Dimmesdale's identity as a minister is defined by the Puritan Church, in a manner similar to Una's representation of the Anglican Church. When the Red Crosse Knight is deceived by Archimago, he abandons Una to the magician's evil powers. Similarly, when Hester promises to conceal Chillingworth's identity, Dimmesdale is exposed to the physician's revenge. Chillingworth provides an evil double for Dimmesdale, as Mistress Hibbins does for Hester, revealing the path he may choose by yielding to sin. Like Chillingworth, Dimmesdale must conceal his true identity, and the minister's hypocrisy confuses his ability to distinguish between true and false. Dimmesdale's associations with shadows and dreams reveal his dimmed moral vision which blurs the distinction between good and evil. He is driven toward salvation by Chillingworth and ultimately confesses his sin to achieve a moral and spiritual victory over his enemy.

Dimmesdale first appears in the novel as one of the Puritan magistrates passing judgment on Hester's crime. Hawthorne uses Dimmesdale's role as minister as a way of commenting on the Puritan Church; the narrator notes the dignified and just aspect of the officials, yet remarks that their authority does not allow them to judge the soul of another as good or evil: "it would not have been easy to select the same number of wise and virtuous persons, who should be less capable of sitting in judgment on an erring woman's heart, and disentangling its mesh of good and evil" (64).

Dimmesdale's identity is always defined in relation to the Puritan Church.

In his talks with Chillingworth, he discovers "a range and freedom of ideas, that he would have vainly looked for among the members of his own profession" (123). Though Dimmesdale enjoys this wider range of speculation, allowing him a broader intellectual viewpoint, he nevertheless feels the necessity of adhering to a creed in order to "feel the pressure of a faith about him, supporting, while it confined him within its iron framework" (123). Ultimately Dimmesdale withdraws into the realm of Puritan orthodoxy.

Dimmesdale's inner struggle with sin develops into a disease of the soul which manifests itself through his physical appearance, the minister's physical, intellectual, and spiritual natures being intimately connected. Schirmeister writes of Hawthorne's interest in emblematic technique: "One of Hawthorne's chief devices of characterization...whereby spiritual qualities are externalized in objects that attach to a person, may be called emblematic. The gesture in both Spenser and Hawthorne would seem to be based on the belief that a character's physical appearance corresponds to the state of his soul" (349). At the same time Dimmesdale's moral sickness becomes evident in his physical condition, Chillingworth's appearance reveals his evil transformation.

Chillingworth acts as an ever present reminder of Dimmesdale's sin, and when the two men decide to share the same lodging, the physician subtly arranges that the minister take a room decorated by a tapestry depicting the Biblical story of David and Bathsheba and the prophet Nathan. Though Dimmesdale is unable to see through Chillingworth's hypocrisy, he nevertheless becomes aware of an obvious evil; unsure of its source, he

senses something evil in Chillingworth's presence, "vaguely aware that something inimical to his peace had thrust itself into relation with him" (130).

The minister reveals his inner state in his conversation with Chillingworth. The physician insists on the necessity of revealing one's sin on earth, but Dimmesdale believes not every guilty person may do so, though a great relief is felt from such a confession. Dimmesdale attempts to justify his own hypocrisy by explaining that those who are sinful still desire to do good in the world and would otherwise be denied this service: "So, to their own unutterable torment, they go about among their fellow creatures, looking as pure as new-fallen snow; while their hearts are all speckled and spotted with iniquity of which they cannot rid themselves" (132). Chillingworth, hoping to learn Dimmesdale's secret, assures him these men deceive themselves by their false show. While the two men continue to talk, Hester and Pearl pass beneath their window, and looking up Pearl identifies the physician with the Black Man of the forest, further associating Chillingworth with a figure of evil.

Urging Dimmesdale to reveal himself completely, Chillingworth explains that the minister's true ailment has its origins in his soul: "a sickness...in your spirit, hath immediately its appropriate manifestation in your bodily frame" (136). Dimmesdale continues to suffer beneath the false kindness of the physician, unable to discover the hidden evil Chillingworth represents: "though he had the dim perception of some evil influence watching over him, [Dimmesdale] could never gain a knowledge of its actual nature" (140).

Regardless of his sin, the Puritan community regards the hypocritical Dimmesdale as a true and faithful minister. Earlier, he is praised by the

community to such a degree that he is equated with the saints of the early Christian Church, destined in their eyes "to do as great deeds for the now feeble New England Church, as the early Fathers had achieved for the infancy of the Christian faith" (120). During his struggle against sin and the unknown evil of Chillingworth, Dimmesdale continues to find support within the Puritan Church. Similarly, Una, as the Anglican Church, always finds protection when confronted by dangers in her search for the Red Crosse Knight. Dimmesdale feels a new bond with his congregation, a sympathy for sin, uniting with common humanity similar to Hester's sympathetic knowledge of sin in others. His preaching becomes more powerful, and the people revere Dimmesdale as an almost celestial being: "They deemed the young man a miracle of holiness...In their eyes, the very ground on which he trod was sanctified" (142). In a similar manner, when Una teaches the satyrs, they worship her like an idol.

As Dimmesdale's name implies, his character is associated with a dim moral vision, confusing the distinction between good and evil. His problem in distinguishing the truth stems from his hypocrisy. His falseness causes him to question his own identity: "What was he?--a substance?--or the dimmest of all shadows?" (143). Dimmesdale attempts to reveal his sin through his sermons, but in such a context, the people do not understand his message, and therefore he turns the truth into a lie. To punish himself and exact a penance, Dimmesdale perverts the practices of the Puritan Church, resorting to self-flagellation, fasts, and vigils. Weakened mentally and physically, he imagines visions of diabolical shapes and others of angels; he is confronted by ghosts and spectres. Nevertheless, Dimmesdale is never completely deceived

by these false visions. The minister's confusion results from his hypocrisy, and he becomes bewildered not only of his true identity but of everything around him: "To the untrue man, the whole universe is false...And he himself, in so far as he shows himself in a false light, becomes a shadow, or, ceases to exist" (145-146).

Dimmesdale, "walking in the shadow of a dream" (147), makes his way to the town scaffold in another effort to relieve himself of his sinful burden. Hawthorne emphasizes Dimmesdale's vagueness of thought; his mind is full of "shadows," "ghosts," and "phantoms". The next morning Dimmesdale almost believes the past night a dream, in a manner similar to Young Goodman Brown's response to his night in the forest.

During the forest scene, Hester relates Chillingworth's true identity. Hawthorne reveals by Dimmesdale's response that his character is a mixture of good and evil, unlike the purely good figure of Una; "violence of passion" intermixes with "his higher, purer, softer qualities" (194). When Hester proposes to flee the colony, Dimmesdale reminds her of his position within the Puritan community and only hopes to fulfill his remaining duties as minister. Dimmesdale's identity is always defined within the bounds of the Puritan Church, notwithstanding his sin of passion; and his modes of thought are contrasted with the boldness of Hester's speculations: "At the head of the social system, as the clergyman of that day stood, he was only the more trammelled by its regulations, its principles, and even its prejudices. As a priest, the framework of his order inevitably hemmed him in" (200). "Unlike Hester, the minister has not freed himself from Puritan dogma" (Zucker, 71). With their decision to leave the colonies, Dimmesdale feels freed from despair

like "a prisoner just escaped from the dungeon of his own heart" (201); but, whereas Una leads the Red Crosse Knight to the House of Holiness after Arthur frees him from Orgoglio's dungeon, Dimmesdale now enters "an unredeemed, unchristianized, lawless region" (201), still acting under the delusion of escaping sin's moral consequences.

When he leaves the forest, Dimmesdale must again question himself about the reality of what has transpired, recalling the plan made by himself and Hester "to free his mind from this indistinctness and duplicity of impression" (214). The Old World offers the most suitable destination, adapted to the minister's culture, talents, and health. For unlike Hester, whose identity as a new knight is closely associated with the New World, Dimmesdale's character remains tied to the Old World through his refinement and intellectual achievement.

Dimmesdale is glad to end his career in the Church by preaching the Election Sermon, the highest honor for a clergyman, believing his professional duties will then be completed; but he remains deceived by his own hypocrisy: "No man, for any considerable period, can wear one face to himself, and another to the multitude, without finally getting bewildered as to which may be the true" (216). "Hypocrisy finally destroys all self-knowledge, because...human beings cannot maintain a permanent division between their public professions and their private beliefs" (Zucker, 68). In deliberately yielding to sin, the minister enters a maze of evil and doubt; he feels a perverted inclination to do what is wicked; when he meets a respected deacon, a devout old dame, a pure young girl, Puritan children, and a drunken seaman: "scorn, bitterness, unprovoked malignity, gratuitous desire

of ill, ridicule of whatever was good and holy, all awoke to tempt, even while they frightened him" (222). Mistress Hibbins recognizes this evil within Dimmesdale, and he wonders if he has bargained with the Black Man of the forest.

Regardless of Dimmesdale's association with the Puritan Church, his redemption is brought about outside the church, like that of Hester. Dimmesdale's confession on the scaffold results in his victory over sin and the final obstacle of evil presented by Chillingworth, who would have tempted him toward damnation. Ironically, Chillingworth's presence as a constant reminder of Dimmesdale's sin, serves as a conscience driving him toward confession and redemption; as Dimmesdale explains: "[God] 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 here to die this death of triumphant ignominy before the people!" (256-257).

XIV. Chillingworth

Hawthorne aligns Chillingworth with an allegorical figure like Spenser's Archimago. In Hawthorne's creation of a villain, Stewart suggests: "what was more natural than that he should remember Spenser's arch-villain Archimago?" (200). Throughout the novel, Chillingworth functions as the hypocritical villain, and in Hawthorne's rewriting of Book one of the Faerie Queene, he assumes all of the evils which the Red Crosse Knight must face, including the obvious evil of Error, the hidden evils of deceitful Archimago and temptress Duessa, the subtle evil of Despair, and the final obstacle of the dragon. But unlike Archimago, Chillingworth is not depicted as a totally evil figure; rather, he exhibits a blend of good and bad qualities, affirming Hawthorne's moral view of human nature. Significantly, Chillingworth, like Pearl, serves as a tool of Providence by continually reminding Dimmesdale of his sin and functioning as an outward conscience driving him toward confession and so ultimately redemption.

Chillingworth first appears among the crowd in the market-place; he, like Archimago, seems to emerge from nowhere, becoming one of the many spectators witnessing Hester's shame. Chillingworth appears "clad in a strange disarray of civilized and savage costume" (60), revealing an ambiguity which his identity retains throughout the novel. His emergence from the forest immediately associates him with evil; similarly, Archimago's "hermitage" lies "Down in a dale, hard by a forests side" (I.i.34.2). His relations with the Indians establish him as an outsider, a stranger to the Puritan community. Other associations with evil include his deformity, which his attempt to conceal reveals his hypocritical nature and use of

disguise, and the snake imagery describing his reaction to Hester's position: "A writhing horror twisted itself across his features, like a snake gliding swiftly over them, and making one long pause, with all its wreathed intervolutions in open sight" (61). The emphasis on his intelligence and prematurely aged appearance further align him with Archimago, as do his experience and worldly wisdom gained from wandering by sea and land. Chillingworth's keen glance, accustomed to look inward, reveals his powers to penetrate the human soul and foreshadows his revenge on Dimmesdale.

Hester's husband seeks to conceal his true identity and chooses a new name and occupation, presenting himself as the physician Roger Chillingworth; he orders Hester to keep his secret, explaining: "it is my purpose to live and die unknown. Let, therefore, thy husband be to the world as one already dead, and of whom no tidings shall ever come" (76). Chillingworth's knowledge of alchemy and herbs recalls Archimago's use of magic; Spenser describes Archimago in his study: "there amiddes/His Magick bookes and artes of sundry kindes,/He seekes out mighty charmes, to trouble sleepy mindes" (I.i.36.7-9).

Like Dimmesdale, Chillingworth's spiritual state manifests itself through his physical nature. When Hester sees the physician after he has begun his relationship with Dimmesdale, she notices the change that has taken place in his appearance: "his dark complexion seemed to have grown duskier, and his figure more misshapen" (112).

Hawthorne describes the true nature of "the leech" as his plan of revenge unfolds; professing an intention to heal the minister's physical state, he also reveals a parasitic attachment to his soul, tenaciously sucking at

Dimmesdale's lifeblood. The narrator reminds us that the physician's true identity remains unknown: "Under the appellation of Roger Chillingworth...was hidden another name, which its former wearer had resolved should never more be spoken" [118]. This "elderly, travel-worn" man "just emerging from the perilous wilderness" had been confronted with his wife's public disgrace and decides not to share in the dishonor and humiliation by divulging his relationship to her. Chillingworth adopts a dark, new purpose in keeping with his new identity. The narrator comments on the tendency of those skilled in medicine to focus exclusively on the human frame, losing a spiritual view of existence; Chillingworth, in turn develops such a fascination for Dimmesdale's soul that his own slowly falls to ruin.

The decayed physical condition of the minister and the doctor's timely arrival to the community lead many to associate Chillingworth with a divine providence. His arrival, like his identity, remains mysterious and inexplicable: "His first entry on the scene, few people could tell whence, dropping down, as it were, out of the sky, or starting from the nether earth, had an aspect of mystery, which was easily heightened to the miraculous" [121]. Rumors arise that Chillingworth has been transported bodily through the air from a European university, and many in the colony conclude: "Providence had done all this, for the purpose...of restoring the young minister to health" [126]. Nevertheless, an ambiguity remains about the physician's true identity, and others take a different view as to Chillingworth's character; an old man associates the doctor with the Overbury murder and the conjurer Dr. Forman; another believes him practiced in the black art of enchanters and Indian priests.

Regardless of these assumptions, many confirm a change in Chillingworth's appearance and expression since his arrival and relationship with Dimmesdale, revealing "something ugly and evil in his face" (127). Hawthorne continues to align Chillingworth with an allegorical figure in descriptions such as the following: "the fire in his laboratory had been brought from the lower regions, and was fed with infernal fuel; and so...his visage was getting sooty with the smoke" (128). The people conclude that Dimmesdale's soul is left prey to evil forces, much like the evil the Red Crosse Knight and Una are exposed to by Archimago; they believe "a diabolical agent " has been given Divine permission to "plot against his soul" (88) in a moral battle testing the minister's faith. In fact, Hawthorne reveals that despite Chillingworth's evil intentions, God uses the physician in such a way that he quickens Dimmesdale's path to redemption. Hawthorne also attempts to show that Chillingworth has not been completely evil. Earlier in life, Chillingworth was "calm in temperament, kindly" and was always considered "a pure and upright man" (89). Although his obsession with sin slowly works his transformation, he too has the capacity for good.

Chillingworth's association with dreams and sleep relates him to Spenser's Archimago. The physician's concealed attempts to penetrate Dimmesdale's soul recall Archimago's plan to deceive the Red Crosse Knight with false visions. Chillingworth "groped along as steadily, 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). Later, when Dimmesdale falls into a deep slumber, Chillingworth enters the minister's

study "without any extraordinary precaution" (135), and removes the vestments concealing Dimmesdale's bosom. Similarly, Archimago summons two evil spirits, "fittest for to forge true-seeming lyes" (I.i.38.7), to request from Morpheus "A fit false dreame, that can delude the sleepers sent" (I.i.43.9). When a spirit returns with the dream, Archimago sends him to the Red Crosse Knight "Where he slept soundly void of euill thought" (I.i.46.3). With the vision of a wanton Una, Archimago deceives the Red Crosse Knight into believing her unfaithful.

With his discovery of Dimmesdale's secret, Chillingworth's plan changes from a desire to search a soul and seek out its sin to a motivation based solely on hateful revenge. With Dimmesdale's soul completely exposed to Chillingworth, "he could play upon him as he chose...The victim was for ever on the rack" (140). Chillingworth's power is comparable to that of Archimago: "As at the waving of a magician's wand, uprose a grisly phantom,--uprose a thousand phantoms,--in many shapes, of death, or more awful shame, all flocking round about the clergyman, and pointing with their fingers at his breast" (140).

During the second scaffold scene, Chillingworth's hypocritical nature seems to be revealed by the strange light: "To his features...the meteoric light imparted a new expression; or it might well be that the physician was not careful then, as at all other times, to hide the malevolence with which he looked upon his victim" (156). Chillingworth tries to confuse Dimmesdale's perception of the moment: "We men of study...dream in our waking moments and walk in our sleep," and when Dimmesdale agrees to be led home by the physician, he yields "like one awaking... from an ugly dream" (157),

unable to distinguish between true and false visions.

Hester realizes that she must alert Dimmesdale of Chillingworth's evil hypocrisy: "A secret enemy had been continually by his side, under the semblance of a friend and helper..."(114). When she spots Chillingworth gathering herbs, his appearance recalls the devil Young Goodman Brown meets in the forest, and the snake-like imagery characterizes his evil nature: "she beheld the old physician, with a basket on one arm, and a staff in the other hand" stooping along the ground, in quest of roots and herbs to concoct his medicines withal" (114). In Chillingworth's description, Stewart notes Hawthorne's indebtedness to Spenser's account of Archimago (cf. I.i.29).

Hester notices the hideous change in his features, resulting from seven years of probing the sinful depths of Dimmesdale's soul. The narrator concludes: "old Roger Chillingworth was a striking evidence of man's faculty of transforming himself into a devil," and in keeping with his allegorical character "there came a glare of red light out of his eyes; as if the old man's soul were on fire" (116). His yielding to sin completes this evil transformation and seems to allow no possibility for reclaiming the goodness of his former life; Chillingworth describes his fate, as well as that of Hester and Dimmesdale, only in terms of an inevitable and inescapable sinfulness: "It is our fate. Let the black flower blossom as it may!" (119). In contrast to Chillingworth's black flower of sin, Pearl offers a rose of redemption associated with the possibilities of a future happiness. After Dimmesdale's death, Chillingworth's vital energy slowly disappears when the object of his revenge, his own purpose for life, has gone.

XV. Reader Response and The Scarlet Letter

The concluding chapter of The Scarlet Letter reveals many similarities to the Custom-House, most notably an emphasis on the reader's response. In the novel's final chapter, the narrator offers us three different explanations for Dimmesdale's scarlet letter, concluding: "The reader may choose among these theories" (259). Hawthorne suggests here, as he does throughout the novel, that there are many different interpretations for symbols, not just one answer; he also suggests that it is possible to misinterpret a sign, just as some of the townspeople continue to believe in Dimmesdale's innocence "when proofs, clear as the mid-day sunshine on the scarlet letter, establish him a false and sin-stained creature of the dust" (259).

Hawthorne desires an active reading of The Scarlet Letter much as Spenser expects from his readers. Spenser offers hints for interpreting his "continued Allegory, or darke conceit" in his letter to Raleigh; the purpose of his work remains "to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline" (737). Quilligan explains that "the reader is engaged in a difficult and risky process," for Spenser "does expect a change [for the better] to occur" (585). The reader becomes aware of the problems faced by the knights of each book, and learns how to distinguish between good and evil, while working toward a certain virtue.

Hawthorne's Custom-House, like Spenser's letter, offers a contract with the reader involving Romantic allegory and its interpretations. Reading a Romance involves seeing familiar objects in unaccustomed light; different perspectives offer different meanings. During the minister's vigil, the narrator remarks that in the strange light, "all were visible, but with a

singularity of aspect that seemed to give another moral interpretation to the things of this world than they had ever borne before" (154). Similarly, Hawthorne's conclusion to the novel suggests that there are many interpretations of the scarlet letter as a symbol, and the legend its wearer leaves behind. Hawthorne establishes an ambiguity about the meaning of a legend, including the life of a saint, a traditional historical tale, or an inauthentic story popularly regarded as true. Despite these shades of meaning, Hawthorne clearly establishes Hester as a type for his new form of moral allegory based on a rewriting of Spenser's Faerie Queene.

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