1979

Hawthorne's Conception of History: a Study of the Author's Response to Alienation From God and Man.

Lloyd Moore Daigrepont

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses

Recommended Citation

https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses/3389

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Historical Dissertations and Theses by an authorized administrator of LSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact gradetd@lsu.edu.
INFORMATION TO USERS

This was produced from a copy of a document sent to us for microfilming. While the most advanced technological means to photograph and reproduce this document have been used, the quality is heavily dependent upon the quality of the material submitted.

The following explanation of techniques is provided to help you understand markings or notations which may appear on this reproduction.

1. The sign or “target” for pages apparently lacking from the document photographed is “Missing Page(s)”. If it was possible to obtain the missing page(s) or section, they are spliced into the film along with adjacent pages. This may have necessitated cutting through an image and duplicating adjacent pages to assure you of complete continuity.

2. When an image on the film is obliterated with a round black mark it is an indication that the film inspector noticed either blurred copy because of movement during exposure, or duplicate copy. Unless we meant to delete copyrighted materials that should not have been filmed, you will find a good image of the page in the adjacent frame.

3. When a map, drawing or chart, etc., is part of the material being photographed the photographer has followed a definite method in “sectioning” the material. It is customary to begin filming at the upper left hand corner of a large sheet and to continue from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. If necessary, sectioning is continued again—beginning below the first row and continuing on until complete.

4. For any illustrations that cannot be reproduced satisfactorily by xerography, photographic prints can be purchased at additional cost and tipped into your xerographic copy. Requests can be made to our Dissertations Customer Services Department.

5. Some pages in any document may have indistinct print. In all cases we have filmed the best available copy.
HAWTHORNE'S CONCEPTION OF HISTORY: A STUDY
OF THE AUTHOR'S RESPONSE TO ALIENATION
FROM GOD AND MAN

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of English

by

Lloyd Moore Daigrepont
B.A., Louisiana State University, 1970
M.A., Louisiana State University, 1972
August, 1979
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**INTRODUCTION** ........................................ 1  

Chapter  

I. LOSS OF FAITH AND COMMUNITY ................. 8  

II. THE CONCEPTION OF ALIENATION IN HAWTHORNE'S WRITINGS .......... 91  

III. DISCREDITING MODERNITY AND REOPENING THE SOUL ............. 176  

**CONCLUSION** .......................................... 273  

**BIBLIOGRAPHY** ...................................... 278
ABSTRACT

Hawthorne's response to the modern condition of man's alienation from God and from his fellow man (loss of faith and community) was to discredit modernity at its roots and to reaffirm what Eric Voegelin calls the "openness of the soul" to transcendent reality.

Modern Western man's alienation from God and fellow man may be traced to the loss of medieval integration; in other words, loss of meaning and community is an effect of the Renaissance and Reformation development of rationalism, individualism, and materialism. These developments directly or indirectly caused Hawthorne to experience alienation from God and fellow man. The eighteenth century's emphasis upon reason had disrupted Puritan faith and by Hawthorne's time was causing its fragmentation into Unitarianism and Transcendentalism, both of which Hawthorne regarded as species of non-faith. Hawthorne himself relied on reason rather than revelation in spiritual concerns and was plagued with doubts. The increased emphasis upon rationalism, individualism, and materialism produced a society which was increasingly fragmented, self-interested, and utilitarian (and hence skeptical of the uses of the imagination), a society in which Hawthorne felt isolated and from which (especially
as an artist) he was estranged.

Hawthorne, who admired the medieval world for its integration, understood the historical development of rationalism, individualism, and materialism, and he perceived each of these as a cause of modern man's alienation both from God and from his fellow man. He even saw that related developments such as the idea of progress, reformism, and utopianism were also agents of modern man's alienation. He resisted reason and science, individualism, materialism, and related developments because of his conviction of man's need for spiritual meaning and genuine community.

Ultimately, Hawthorne's perception of the sources of alienation was the foundation of a conception of history which provides modern man with a means of being reunited with God (transcendent truth) and with fellow man. First, Hawthorne's conception of history opposes the general employment of history as a rationale for modernity's movement away from the spiritual and social unity of medieval life—as a justification for its commitment to rationalism, individualism, and materialism. Emphasizing man's tendency toward sin and failure throughout time, Hawthorne's historical writings discredit the increasingly widespread mode of historical thinking which Voegelin calls "gnosticism," the notion that through knowledge the idea of progress toward some standard of human perfection may be realized in secular history.
Second, Hawthorne uses events from the past to affirm man's essential spirituality by revealing him as a creature compelled by the consciousness of his imperfection to seek transcendent truth. Man's imperfectibility—his insuperable tendency toward sin and failure—means that he must seek fulfillment through transcendence. For Hawthorne history affords examples affirming that man, in the consciousness of his essential imperfectibility, becomes a being with a soul, a being open to transcendent truth. Guilt, which man experiences as a natural result of this consciousness, is for Hawthorne the ironic symbol of truth and of man's openness toward truth. Generally through the artistic treatment of events from the past confirming man's inescapable tendency toward sin and failure and his consequent experience of remorse, Hawthorne is concerned to reopen the soul of modern man to God or transcendent meaning and, by thus invoking him to view himself as an innately moral being, to foster sympathy and justice and hence genuine community. Even though his doubts precluded firm religious convictions, Hawthorne, treating history symbolically and allegorically, affirmed transcendent truth by affirming the basic human experience of transcendence itself, and he affirmed the possibility of community by affirming man's potential, in his aspiration to higher truth, for placing sympathy and justice above self-interest.
The Lasting Loneliness of Nathaniel Hawthorne: Sources of Alienation in Modern Man (1965) by H. G. Fairbanks, the first full-length study of Hawthorne's response to alienation, is a provocative and valuable book, which argues that "Hawthorne reflected the major dislocations of the nineteenth century: the breakdown of religion, the new relation of man to Nature, the problems of divisive individualism, the disintegration of traditional concepts of personality." Much of Hawthorne's writing, Fairbanks says, represents a quest for "a vision of encompassing totality which links God, Nature and Man organically." ¹

In spite of its considerable merits Fairbanks' study is limited in the treatment of its subject. The emphasis is far less upon Hawthorne's perception of the sources of modern man's alienation from God, Man, Self, and Nature, than it is upon Hawthorne's response to them. A more significant problem is that Fairbanks describes these sources in general terms, often overlooking their complexity and their historical interrelation as aspects of the general shift from the medieval to the modern world. Consider, for example, his

explanation of the nineteenth century American artist's separation from his public:

... the suspicion of the sensuous which cut Americans off from the power in sex also severed them from the related energy normally released through the fine arts. The Puritan image-breakers who had smashed cathedral statuary were, ironically, remodeling the ancient monuments according to the fragmentary lineaments of modern man. But supplementing the chilling Calvinistic shadow already receding in the nineteenth century was a second factor repressing man's creative faculty within purely utilitarian moulds: the crude materialism of pioneer life where leisure was treason and practicality determined standards of excellence. ²

Fairbanks is correct in stating that American utilitarianism was, as much as the Calvinistic suspicion of the sensuous, a source of the artist's alienation from his public. In suggesting that utilitarianism is a product of frontier conditions of American life, he overlooks its sources in the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century and in the utilitarianism resulting from the Puritan modification of Luther's teaching on the calling. The Puritan view placed the layman's glorification of God in the pious devotion to labor on a par with clerical asceticism and ritualistic, sacramental devotion. The resulting utilitarianism made the Puritans the greatest supporters of Baconianism in the early seventeenth century. ³ Fairbanks also overlooks the degree to which the Puritan utilitarianism meant the erosion of the

²Ibid., p. 145.

spiritual life which had supported the function of the artist. But Fairbanks' most significant failing is that he overlooks the depth and complexity of Hawthorne's insight into these and other sources of modern man's alienation, and the extent to which this insight influenced his response. For Hawthorne, as will be shown, perceives, sometimes with great clarity and incisiveness, both the immediate and ultimate sources of his own and modern man's alienation from God and from his fellow man, and he often reveals an understanding of their interrelation. This insight determined the specific character of his response to alienation.

Influenced by the Reverend Leonard J. Fick's *The Light Beyond: A Study of Hawthorne's Theology*, Fairbanks concludes that Hawthorne's ultimate response to alienation is in effect an endorsement of Catholicism, his conversion to this faith having been thwarted only by the prejudices of his Puritan heritage and his fastidious distaste for the behavior of both lay and religious Catholics whom Hawthorne observed in Rome. The truth is that Hawthorne, despite his strong attraction to Catholicism and a desire for firm faith, doubted all religious teaching. He was never a churchgoer in adult life, and his own yielding of faith to doubt is strongly suggested in "Young Goodman Brown." His notebooks reveal a tendency to look for answers to spiritual questions in Nature and in his own experience rather than in any form of divinely revealed truth, and, as Fick himself admits, Hawthorne never concerned himself about the concrete
details of the afterlife and saw sin or evil as a transgres-
sion against one's fellow man rather than God. Even his
attraction to Catholicism, as the examples cited by Fick and
Fairbanks suggest, generally reflects humanitarian rather
than theological concerns.

The present study attempts to demonstrate that Haw-
thorne's overall response to the modern condition of loss of
faith and community is a conception of history which, based
upon his understanding of the causes of alienation, enables
him to discredit modernity at its roots and to affirm what
Eric Voegelin calls the "openness of the soul" to transcen-
dent reality, thus reuniting man with God and providing the
moral imperative necessary for genuine community.

Chapter One is in part a summary examination of the
sources of modern Western man's alienation from God and fel-
low man in the loss of the medieval sense of integration
that resulted from the Renaissance and Reformation develop-
ment of rationalism, individualism, and materialism. Though
relatively distinguishable movements, the Renaissance and
Reformation often interacted complexly to contribute to the
development of these alienating forces. A concurrent pur-
pose of the first chapter is to explain Hawthorne's expe-
rience of alienation with reference to this complex inter-
action.

Chapter Two attempts to demonstrate that Hawthorne
understood the historical development of each of the above-
named sources of alienation, and though he seldom used terms
such as "alienation," he clearly perceived that rationalism, individualism, and materialism each contributed to both modern man's alienation from God and his alienation from fellow man. Hawthorne also perceived that related developments—such as the idea of progress, reformism, and utopianism—were sources of alienation as well. He always resisted reason and science, individualism, and materialism on the basis of his concern for man's need for God as a source of transcendent meaning and man's need for genuine community.

Chapter Three attempts to demonstrate that Hawthorne's perception of the sources of alienation was the foundation of a conception of history which provides modern man with a means of being reunited with God and fellow man. His conception of history is in effect counterrevolutionary, a reaction to the general employment of history as a rationale for modernity's movement away from the spiritual unity of medieval life—as a justification for its commitment to rationalism, individualism, and materialism. Beginning with Vico, Voltaire, and Herder and reaching a climax in the thought of Hegel, this new mode of historical thinking, called "gnosticism" by Eric Voegelin, gave to profane history an eschatological motive, making secular history the object of man's reverence and replacing the transcendent destiny of man with the goal of his earthly perfection.4

Hawthorne opposed historical secularism and the accompanying idea of progress by emphasizing in his fiction and other writings man's inevitable tendency to do evil as well as good—to sin, to err, to fail, and to cause suffering. More positively, Hawthorne's conception of history affirms what Voegelin calls the "openness of the soul" to transcendent reality. Though possessing no certain religious convictions, Hawthorne espouses a conception of history grounded in a faith in man's potential spirituality. In his writings he finds a means of uniting man with Godhead or transcendent reality and of recovering genuine community.

Since the thesis of this study presupposes a pattern of ideas, beliefs, and attitudes held by Hawthorne, its general method is to trace ideas and themes through a number of different works, fictional as well as nonfictional. A sizable number of Hawthorne's works are discussed, and certain works are dealt with in each of the major chapters.

Hawthorne was not unique in experiencing alienation nor in his consequent opposition to modernity. All great modern fiction writers, poets, and other artists have experienced estrangement and have struggled with the problems of religious uncertainty. Like Hawthorne, most of them have attempted to compensate for man's alienation from God and fellow man. A broad purpose of this study is to provide a

---

5Ibid., p. 67.
focus on the modern artist's struggle against alienation, to reveal the pattern of ideas and intuitions upon which that struggle is predicated, and to suggest the significance of such a struggle for all human beings.

The alienating forces of modern life accelerated in Hawthorne's time, particularly in America, a new nation free of the restraints imposed on Europe by habits and traditions. As an American writer of the first half of the nineteenth century whose great importance in the development of American literature has now been long recognized, Hawthorne provides an interesting and noteworthy focal point of the human and artistic response to these forces. And the consistency of Hawthorne's opposition to these forces, owing to his great insight, is also significant, for he was seldom dissuaded by their more attractive aspects or developments, as many of his age often were. Of greatest importance, perhaps, is Hawthorne's interest in the past, a concern for history which both contributed to his insight into the sources of alienation and enabled him to conceive an antithesis to the secularism, or gnosticism, by which modernity excuses its overwhelming commitment to attitudes and practices which separate men from God and from one another.
CHAPTER ONE

LOSS OF FAITH AND COMMUNITY

Hawthorne shared modern man's alienation from God or, in H. G. Fairbanks' words, a "separation from God" resulting in the loss of transcendent meaning or, in other words, in the modern "consciousness of purposelessness." The earliest uses of the word "alienation" and its related forms refer to just such a separation from Godhead, but the implied cause is always sin--willful transgression of God's law--or heresy. For modern man, as William J. Byron explains in "Response to Alienation from Religion," the problems of sin or heresy may be superseded by those of uncertainty and doubt:

Religion pleads with man to believe that he is reconciled. But man may not believe. He may refuse to believe at all, and thus choose to remain alienated from God. Or, he may find himself saying with the man in Mark's gospel, "I do have faith. Help the little faith I have!" (Mk. 9:25). The varieties of unbelief are too numerous to catalogue here. The point to note would be that even for the believer who accepts reconciliation with the Father through Christ, there will be elements of estrangement as he finds himself wondering, from time to time, not whether God exists or has power

---


to save, but whether God is here with him in a caring capacity at this hour, in this place. Doubt does not disqualify him from the community of believers; it does however leave him in a partially unconnected, partially alienated state.

This explanation of "theological alienation," as Byron calls it, demonstrates that even those desirous of faith and almost completely committed to it are often racked by doubts and dissatisfactions which cause, at least partially, their separation from God, the traditional source of transcendent meaning. Such was Hawthorne's case. (Interestingly, Byron's use of the word "unbelief" recalls Hawthorne's sympathetic description of Melville's alienation from God.) Possessed of an essentially spiritual nature, Hawthorne was never an atheist, although the evidence of his religious uncertainty, as will be shown, is overwhelming. He did not attend church services after college, he did not concern himself with the specifics of an afterlife, and he generally thought of sin as an offense against one's fellow man rather than against God. His attraction to Catholicism was less theological than humanitarian. His notebooks reveal that he looked for evidence of an afterlife in Nature and in personal experience rather than in revelation, and his writing "Young Goodman Brown" suggests strongly that he knew what it meant to have one's faith shaken.

Accompanying modern Western man's alienation from God was the breakdown of the community provided by the broad

---

public faith of medieval Europe. According to Fairbanks, "As man became further removed from the totality of a traditional view once encompassing God, Nature and Man in one harmonious pattern, he tended to become isolated also from his fellow man. For his relationship to others depended vitally upon his conception of his own nature and place in the universe. As these were disturbed by an encroaching secularism and individualism, social-communal bonds shrivelled proportionately."  

Hawthorne's experience of the alienation from fellow man which accompanied the loss of traditional community is evident in his awareness of the loss of a "close and unembarrassed contiguity" (as he once put it). This he felt hindered communication between himself and others. Save in the presence of members of his immediate family and his closest friends, he often exhibited shyness and reserve, despite a strong desire for companionship and understanding.

An especially lonely form of modern man's alienation from fellow man which Hawthorne experienced is what Melvin Seeman calls "cultural estrangement" or "value isolation," involving "the individual's rejection of commonly held

---

4. The Lasting Loneliness of Nathaniel Hawthorne, p. 121.

5. The Complete Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne, ed. G. P. Lathrop, 13 vols. (Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1882), X. 172. Unless otherwise specified, quotations from Hawthorne's writings are taken from this edition, the Riverside Edition of his works. All further quotations from this edition will be accompanied by parenthetically enclosed volume and page numbers.
values in the society (or subsector) vs commitment to the going group standards. Even more to the point, Hawthorne experienced the "passive sociological alienation" described by William J. Byron:

If we leave aside the Christian tradition and assume a non-opposition to God in the dominant norms and values of our society, we would then say that those who reject these norms and values alienate themselves from society. Call them the "actively alienated." If we assume, on the other hand, an admixture of opposition-to-God elements in the dominant norms and values of our society (I am thinking at the moment of racism and materialism), then those who are rejected by the society in function of these opposition-to-God values are also alienated, although not by choice. Call them the "passively alienated."

Hawthorne not only saw his society as fragmented by "opposition-to-God elements" such as materialism, rationalism, and rampant individualism (self-interest) but was also repulsed by--or "passively alienated" from--a society which clung to such values. The general difficulty of finding a basis of communication in a fragmented society was only made worse for Hawthorne by his perception of society's increased commitment to habits and practices which further alienated men from God and from one another. He not only felt isolated within society but from it as well. As an artist Hawthorne experienced intense "cultural estrangement" from a public skeptical of the artist's use of the imagination and unconven-


cerned about art's relation to deep moral questions and to the problem of life's meaning. From its inception the American Republic's commitment to reason and science, materialism, and individualism (particularly as these were made amenable to a prevalent bourgeois morality through the influence of Scottish Common Sense philosophy) had made for a general suspicion of the artist's reliance on the imagination as morally wayward and had fostered a utilitarian temperament which demeaned the artist's pursuits for their inutility.

I. The Ultimate Causes of Modern Man's Loss of Faith and Community

As has been suggested, modern Western man's loss of faith and community (alienation from God and fellow man) may be traced to the loss of the integration of medieval life through the Renaissance and Reformation development of rationalism, individualism, and materialism. While life in the Middle Ages was by no means ideal and while it is also quite likely that individuals have experienced alienation of some sort in every age, the distinct characteristics of modern Western man's alienation from God and fellow man may be more sharply perceived by contrasting certain aspects of medieval and modern life and by examining the forces which resulted in their differences. Thus, in order to understand

---

more completely the problem of alienation from God and fellow man in Hawthorne's age, it will first be necessary to examine the historical development of these ultimate sources of alienation. Such an examination is also essential for understanding Hawthorne's ultimate response to alienation—a conception of history based upon his own understanding of the historical development of reason and science, individualism, and materialism and upon his perception of these as the ultimate sources of modern man's alienation from God and fellow man.

Against the integration of medieval life the Reformation fostered a revolutionary individualism. To begin with, it necessitated a self-reliance which contributed greatly to both the modern isolation of individuals and the atomization of society. The attempts by Reformation leaders such as Martin Luther to rid the Church of hypocrisy and corruption, of mercenary policies in such matters as indulgences, and of what they felt were ritualistic and decorative excesses ultimately resulted in a terrible isolation of the individual soul. Luther's emphasis on faith as the only means of salvation ultimately meant the nullification of the sacraments, the priesthood, and the Church itself. In short, man faced God alone—without the many comforting "external

---

forms," as Hawthorne called them. Luther's ideas led to what Max Weber calls Puritanism's "inner isolation of the individual," an extreme spiritual self-concern most notably evinced in Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress, as Huck Finn describes it, the story of a man who left his family. The atomization of society was another, related effect of the Reformation's dissolution of the widespread authority of the Church. As R. H. Tawney writes, "The medieval conception of the social order, which had regarded it as a highly articulated organism of members contributing in their different degrees to a spiritual purpose, was shattered, and differences which had been distinctions within a larger unity were now set in irreconcilable antagonism to each other." 

In addition to isolating the individual before God, the Reformation, interacting with the Renaissance, actually nurtured individualistic tendencies which ultimately proved to be antithetical to faith itself. The Renaissance revival of learning and its subsequent fostering of individualism had already given some men a certain independence in religious matters, had promoted greater personal liberty, and had even


given rise to notions of human perfection. The Reformation's emphasis upon spiritual self-reliance and upon the individual's personal communion with God gave a greater impetus to the spread of self-trust and free thought, developments which the original reformers neither anticipated nor desired. One such development, the effects of which were seen in Hawthorne's time, was Transcendentalism. The Puritan glorification of the elected individual, once stripped of fundamentalist beliefs by rational Unitarianism, led to Emerson's divinization of the self and a resulting moral relativism, both of which would have been anathematized by Puritans like Jonathan Edwards. Lewis P. Simpson, in a study of the relation of Cartesian doubt to Emerson's early thought, has clearly revealed the implied threat to traditional Christian faith and community of Emerson's faith in consciousness as a form of knowledge: "Implied in the god-like capacity of controlling the universe as a transparent eyeball is not only an aspiration to the dimensionless character of God and the denial of any fixity of time and space, but the desertion of the community of human relationships. Family, friends, servants—all fade as the Self in the flow

---


13 Ibid., pp. 355-58.

of the currents of the Universal Being becomes part and parcel of God. The flow of Being is away from the human community of the world and never toward it."\textsuperscript{15}

Finally, the Reformation facilitated the development of a type of economic individualism or self-interest and resulting materialistic tendencies, none of which had been formally countenanced by medieval society in its insistence upon the moral or spiritual orientation of all earthly pursuits and on the primacy of charity in all economic transactions.\textsuperscript{16} Essentially such developments depended upon a modification of Luther's teaching on the calling, in which the ordinary layman's glorification of God in the pious and dutiful acceptance of his station or calling in life was placed on a par with clerical asceticism and ritualistic, sacramental devotion. Calvin's teachings on predestination caused great anxiety over salvation, especially since his followers no longer enjoyed the self-assurance provided by the priesthood, the sacraments, and other spiritual comforts of the Church implicitly nullified in Luther's emphasis upon faith as the only means of realizing God's mercy. Good works were similarly nullified, but men could and should cultivate self-assurance through the pious and active


\textsuperscript{16}Tawney, Religion and the Rise of Capitalism, p. 31 et passim.
glorification of God in their respective callings. Wealth and riches, which were often natural results of such intense devotion to a calling, could then be interpreted as positive signs of God's favor, as practically (but not quite) ends in themselves. Incidentally, the Calvinists' intense devotion to calling combined ideally with traditional Christian self-denial to produce even greater accumulations of wealth through savings and reinvestment, the charitable use of money as a form of good works having become spiritually meaningless and poverty itself an accepted sign of God's disfavor. In this manner what Max Weber calls "the spirit of capitalism" was born; at least, an overwhelming psychological and spiritual sanction was given to economic activity based upon the asocial, systematic accumulation and reinvestment of capital as virtual ends in themselves. In time they became such, of course, as society became more secularized and as the original spirit and faith of Puritanism and other forms of Calvinism waned.\textsuperscript{17} Moreover, such practice was bound to retain in the minds of its advocates a degree of its former moral sanction and spiritual symbolism, hence the intense, urgent materialism and utilitarianism

\textsuperscript{17}In this paragraph I have relied on Max Weber's \textit{The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism} and the modifications of the so-called "Weber thesis" in Tawney's \textit{Religion and the Rise of Capitalism} and in Robert S. Michaelsen's "Changes in the Puritan Concept of Calling or Vocation," \textit{New England Quarterly}, 26 (1953), 315-36. For information concerning Martin Luther I have relied on Henry S. Lucas' \textit{The Renaissance and the Reformation}, pp. 423-91.
expressed in such documents of the modern ideal of success as Franklin's Poor Richard's Almanac.

Like the Reformation, the Renaissance was also in many respects a movement away from the social unity and pervasive spiritual orientation of medieval life. The early humanists, most of whom were clerics and ecclesiastics, retained many ties with their medieval background, and in many respects humanism was quite compatible with religion. But humanism did alter the focus of life's concerns to emphasize man and the individual and hence played an important role in the secularization of culture. More importantly, the revival of ancient texts in the early Renaissance, the secularization of knowledge and greater trust in reason, and the consequent renewal of interest in scientific inquiry led ultimately to the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century. Bacon's advocacy of experimentation, observation, and inductive reasoning replaced the deductive science of Aristotelianism which, unlike the new science, had proved supportive of medieval philosophy and its metaphysical theory of Nature. Baconianism not only threatened the "optimistic theory" which so closely united man and God but also fostered habits which turned man's attention away from


life's transcendent purpose. The overthrow of the medieval attitude toward Nature meant a completely utilitarian end for science and hence fostered the growth of materialism. As R. F. Jones has aptly demonstrated in *Ancients and Moderns*, it was the influence of Bacon which most directly contributed to the widespread development of "the feeling that man's chief concern was his material welfare, and that to contribute to it was more important than all other activities."  

The Reformation was primarily responsible for the success of Baconianism in the seventeenth century, a not completely surprising occurrence since Calvinism, like the new science, had also fostered a type of materialism and utilitarianism. The Puritans, particularly, also found in the new scientific movement both an ally in their opposition to Aristotelianism and the medieval philosophy which was largely based upon it and a means of pursuing a "pious utilitarianism" of practical virtues and useful service in secular obligations (interests determined by Calvinistic reinterpretation of the calling). The spread and influ-

---


22 *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74, 84, 139.

ence of the new science in England was never totally dependent upon the Puritans, of course, but they were its greatest proponents before the Restoration, and it was not until after the Puritan rise to power that Bacon's ideas began to have an impact on English society. The mutual reliance of Puritanism and the new science was strong enough to prompt R. F. Jones' conclusion that "our modern scientific utilitarianism is the offspring of Bacon begot upon Puritanism." 24

This mutual reliance also had its effect on social and political thinking, further revolutionizing man's ideas about himself and his relation to others. Especially through the work of Hobbes, the influence of the new science produced a materialistic, fragmentary theory of society based on essentially deterministic assumptions about human nature. Hobbes was among the first to explain human actions as motivated primarily by economic and other forms of self-interest, placing each individual in constant competition with all others. In Part I of *Leviathan*, he wrote that "in the nature of man we find three principal causes of quarrel: first, competition; secondly, diffidence; thirdly, glory. The first makes men invade for gain, the second for safety, and the third for reputation." 25 Of perhaps even greater

24 *Ancients and Moderns*, pp. 87-88, 118.

significance is the fact that Hobbes regarded such motives objectively and relativistically: "To this war of every man against every man, this is also consequent: that nothing can be unjust. The notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice, have here no place."\textsuperscript{26} Controls are necessary only for the sake of peace. Thus these underlying conceptions of Hobbes' work imply a shift away from the medieval ideal of a society in which all members were united by universal moral and spiritual concerns to which self-interest was always subject to control.\textsuperscript{27} As Herbert W. Schneider has remarked, \textit{Leviathan} was, among other things, "the first comprehensive exposition of bourgeois ethics."\textsuperscript{28} As has been suggested, the Reformation both anticipated and facilitated this interpretation of man and society. The Protestant emphasis upon spiritual self-reliance fostered not only individualism but also the atomization of society. And Calvinism not only placed a new sanction on economic activity and self-concern but relieved them of any control in the name of charity or good works.\textsuperscript{29}

Many revolutionary ideas formulated in earlier phases of the Renaissance by such thinkers as Copernicus, Montaigne, Tawney, \textit{Religion and the Rise of Capitalism}, pp. 31, 62, et passim.

\textsuperscript{26}Ibid., p. 108.

and Machiavelli\textsuperscript{30} gained renewed impetus in the seventeenth century in ways which intensified man's separation from God. With the telescope, Galileo confirmed the Copernican challenge of the geocentric theory of the universe, thus removing man in his own eyes from a central and therefore meaningful position in the scheme of things in which formerly tradition and right reason had placed him. Moreover, the telescope, having revealed to man's senses what previously had been obscured by great distances, implied the possible inaccuracy of those senses at all times, and thus lent support to the skepticism of Montaigne and led to the conclusion of Descartes that man's knowledge is perforce little and gained only through doubt.\textsuperscript{31} The impact of Cartesian doubt upon the medieval system of faith and reason was, as Hannah Arendt has stated, not so much loss of faith as a lasting loss of certainty for the modern world: "What was lost in the modern age, of course, was not the capacity for truth or reality or faith nor the concomitant inevitable acceptance of the testimony of the senses and of reason, but the certainty that formerly went with it. In religion it was not belief in salvation or a hereafter that was immediately lost, but the certitudo salutis—and this happened in

\textsuperscript{30}For a concise summary of the revolutionary ideas of these three figures, see Theodore Spencer's \textit{Shakespeare and the Nature of Man}, 2nd ed. (1942; rpt. New York: Macmillan, 1966), pp. 28-50.

all Protestant countries where the downfall of the Catholic Church had eliminated the last tradition-bound institution which, wherever its authority remained unchallenged, stood between the impact of modernity and the masses of believers."

To loss of certainty, moreover, were added the atheistic ramifications of new theories of matter and the nature of the universe. Although, as R. F. Jones has pointed out, Descartes attempted to reconcile his mechanistic philosophy with the teachings of religion, the inevitable "logical inferences . . . that matter was not created, that all material things represented a fortuitous concourse of atoms, even though obeying mathematical laws, and that motion was absolute, depending on no mover, left no place for God."

Furthermore, "These implications were fully revealed in Hobbes, who based his explanations of all phenomena, human and physical, upon matter and motion" and whose consequent political cynicism was essentially a reaffirmation of Machiavelli's. Most ironic is the fact that the Puritans did not realize until too late the potential threat of both Baconianism and Cartesianism to religious faith and to the essential natural and social orders such faith implied.

Having blindly accepted Bacon's assumption that science was separable from theology in their eagerness to find an anti-

---

32Ibid., p. 277.  
34Mazzeo, Renaissance and Revolution, p. 96.
Aristotelian ally, they were, as Jones has suggested, unaware of "the germs of the deadening materialism imbedded in his attitude."\textsuperscript{35}

Directly or indirectly the developments just described were responsible for Hawthorne's alienation from God and fellow man. The great emphasis upon reason in the eighteenth century disrupted Puritanism (which, ironically, had embraced reason and science) and by Hawthorne's time was causing its fragmentation into Unitarianism and Transcendentalism, with neither of which Hawthorne was satisfied. Like other artists and thinkers since the sixteenth century, Hawthorne himself became subject to reason's influence; he relied on reason rather than revelation in spiritual concerns and experienced doubt or "loss of certainty." The development of science and reason, individualism, and materialism caused modern man's loss of community by producing a self-interested society which, since the age of Hobbes, took for granted that men were perforce isolated by their passions. Hawthorne not only felt isolated within such a society but was repulsed by it, especially by its suspicion of the imagination (heightened, in America, by the Puritan heritage of practicality, the Early Republic's commitment to reason, and the influence of Scottish Common Sense philosophy) and its preference for art which was sentimental, didactic, and materialistic.

\textsuperscript{35}Ancients and Moderns, p. 115.
II. Hawthorne's Alienation from God

Hawthorne's dissatisfaction with the religions to which he was exposed was prompted by his deeply religious nature. He was, H. G. Fairbanks says, "profoundly a spiritual man." Arlin Turner, discussing Hawthorne's adaptation for fictional purposes of the observations in his own notebooks, has noted that "it was his habit to give a spiritual significance to everything that came within his knowledge." In a similar vein Joseph Schwartz has stated that, though Hawthorne clearly rejected all dogma, "His argument for human responsibility and his use of the classic argument from conscience in his fictions are . . . evidence of his acceptance of a Divine Being to whom man was responsible." No sample of his writings more clearly reveals Hawthorne's religious yearnings than the sketch entitled "Sunday at Home." The author, observing churchgoers from his window, insists that, "though my form be absent, my inner man goes constantly to church, while many, whose bodily presence fills the accustomed seats, have left their souls at home. But I am there, 

36The Lasting Loneliness of Nathaniel Hawthorne, p. 75.


even before my friend, the sexton" (I. 34). As he hears the service begin, he even regrets not having gone, desiring not only to lift himself "heavenward, with a fervor of supplication" but to "bring my heart into unison with those who are praying in yonder church" (I. 37).

Father Leonard J. Fick has gone so far as to declare Hawthorne capable of endorsing practically all of the tenets of the Apostles' Creed, the compendium of Roman Catholic beliefs. Similarly Fairbanks derives from Hawthorne's works a "substratum of beliefs" which leads him to confirm Fick's findings, though admitting that Hawthorne "was not a theologian." While the conclusion reached by Fick and Fairbanks is probably not entirely accurate (as will later be shown), it is true that Hawthorne admired and envied the strong religious beliefs of others. Of his friend Franklin Pierce he wrote, "Whether in sorrow or success, he has learned, in his own behalf, the great lesson, that religious faith is the most valuable and most sacred of human possessions" (XII. 425). In Italy, though skeptical concerning

---

39 Hawthorne's personal feelings are reflected here, for he later wrote in his journal that he loved the Sabbath but had no set way of keeping it. See The American Notebooks, ed. Claude M. Simpson, in The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne, eds. William Charvat, Roy Harvey Pearce, Claude M. Simpson et al. (Columbus: Ohio State Univ. Press, 1963--/in progress/), VIII, 358.


41 The Lasting Loneliness of Nathaniel Hawthorne, pp. 24-25.
the table believed to be that of the Last Supper, he admitted, "It would be very delightful to believe in this table" (X. 74). In *The Marble Faun*, the haunted and desperate Miriam envies the uncomplicated faith of her New England friend Hilda in a way which affirms its solution of all earthly care: "I would give all I have or hope--my life, oh how freely--for one instant of your trust in God!" (VI. 197).

Hawthorne's undeniable attraction to Roman Catholicism provides probably the most salient evidence of his essentially religious nature. He admired Catholicism for its ability, through the use of many external aids, both to inspire faith itself and to facilitate a sense of life's deep significance. Long before his trip to Italy he supposed that, if a "New Adam and Eve" had "strayed into the vastness and sublimity of an old cathedral, they might have recognized the purpose for which the deep-souled founders reared it. Like the dim awfulness of an ancient forest, its very atmosphere would have incited them to prayer. Within the snug walls of a metropolitan church there can be no such influence" (II. 285). In "The Intelligence Office," a character known as "the seeker" has seen truth "standing at the altar of an old cathedral, in the guise of a Catholic priest, performing the high mass" (II. 379).

---

42 In addition to the work of Fick (esp. pp. 156-60) and Fairbanks (esp. pp. 187-93), the interested student should also consult the earlier work of Gilbert Voight, "Hawthorne and the Roman Catholic Church," *New England Quarterly*, 19 (1946), 394-97.
In Europe, Hawthorne initially reacted with skepticism to Anglican and Catholic practices. Perhaps because of his Puritan heritage, he referred to the Anglican service as "mummery" which was "worse than papistry because it was a corruption of it." During his first week on the Continent he remarked facetiously of the frozen holy water in the Cathedral of Amiens, "Could not all that sanctity at least keep it thawed?" But his initial skepticism makes his soon won admiration all the more noteworthy. In Rome, little more than two weeks after the visit to Amiens, the beauty of one church drew his admiration for the "gorgeous religion . . . that reared it". Less than a month after that, he was convinced "that a great deal of devout and reverential feeling is kept alive in people's hearts by the Catholic mode of worship". Later, in The Marble Faun he described the faith-inspiring qualities of St. Peter's, "The World's Cathedral:

The roof! the dome! Rich, gorgeous, filled with sunshine, cheerfully sublime, and fadeless after centuries, those lofty depths seemed to translate the heavens to mortal comprehension, and help the spirit upward to a yet higher and wider sphere. Must not the faith, that built this matchless edifice, and warmed, illuminated, and overflowed from it, include whatever can satisfy human aspirations at the loftiest, or minister to human necessity at the sorest? If Religion had a material home, was it not here? (VI. 399-400)

Hawthorne clearly came to feel that the Catholic Church "marvellously adapts itself to every human need" through "a

---

multitude of external forms" (VI. 392). He thought the confessional a particularly attractive form of spiritual comfort, attractive enough practically to nullify his puritanical skepticism.44 Reflecting upon this sacrament after observing penitent and priest in an unnamed Roman church, he suddenly remarked, "Protestantism needs a new apostle to convert it into something positive" (X. 184). Surprisingly, Hawthorne was even capable of approving the Catholic use of icons in worship; in The Marble Faun he sympathetically portrays a remorseful youth praying emotionally before a shrine and adds, "If this youth had been a Protestant, he would have kept all that torture pent up in his heart, and let it burn there till it seared him into indifference" (VI. 395).45

Hawthorne also saw in Catholic Italy an enviable integration of human and spiritual concerns. Of Italy's numerous roadside shrines he wrote, "Whatever may be the iniquities of the papal system, it was a wise and lovely sentiment that set up the frequent shrine and cross along the roadside. No wayfarer, bent on whatever worldly errand, can fail to be reminded, at every mile or two, that this is not the business which most concerns him. The pleasure-seeker

44 See Fick, The Light Beyond, pp. 158-59.

45 See also Hawthorne's personal reaction to a painting of Christ bearing the cross, Works, ed. Lathrop, X, 287. He concludes, "Once more I deem it a pity that Protestantism should have entirely laid aside this mode of appealing to the religious sentiment."
is silently admonished to look heavenward for a joy infi-
nitely greater than he now possesses" (VI. 343). No aspect
of Italy was more suggestive of the Church's all-encompass-
ing, integrative influence than St. Peter's. As Hilda, the
Protestant girl of The Marble Faun, entered it seeking
spiritual succor on one desperate occasion, "its interior
beamed upon her with all the effect of a new creation. It
seemed an embodiment of whatever the imagination could con-
ceive, or the heart desire, as a magnificent, comprehensive,
majestic symbol of religious faith. All splendor was in-
cluded within its verge, and there was space for all" (VI.
398-99). In succeeding paragraphs, the narrator repeatedly
refers to this all-encompassing aspect of the great cathe-
dral, emphasizing its being open at all hours and especially
its row of multi-lingual confessionals signalling that in
"this vast and hospitable cathedral, worthy to be the reli-
gious heart of the whole world, there was room for all
nations; there was access to the Divine Grace for every
Christian soul" (VI. 405-06).

Despite his great spiritual longings and his attraction
to Catholicism, Hawthorne remained throughout his adult life
unattached to any religious denomination. After childhood
he seldom attended church, and his frequent visits to
churches in Europe were for observation, not worship. He

found reasons for dissatisfaction with every religious affiliation available to him. After receiving Emerson and another clergyman, the Reverend Barzillai Frost, he did "not remember any points of interest" in the conversation, and he wrote reflectively, "I find that my respect for clerical people, as such, and my faith in the utility of their office, decreases daily. We certainly do need a new revelation--a new system--for there seems to be no life in the old one." And though he at first unfavorably compared his literary pursuits to the solemn spiritual dedication of his predecessors in "The Old Manse," he was nonetheless unable to find in their numerous sermons and books the intellectual treasure he had at first imagined. The library was for the most part "dreary trash" (II. 28), a comment which for Joseph Schwartz suggests Hawthorne's "clear rejection of the new Unitarianism and the old Orthodoxy," though with no lessening of "the fundamental religious impulse which he always felt." Along a similar vein, he anticipated that the Reverend Frost would make "a good sort of hum-drum parson enough, . . . well fitted to increase the stock of manuscript sermons, of which there must be a fearful quantity already in the world."  


Hawthorne developed a strong antipathy for the essentially rationalistic Unitarianism and its outgrowth, Transcendentalism.\(^{50}\) As the satiric tone of "The Celestial Railroad" suggests, Hawthorne, though he had no religious affiliations, favored the more traditional Christianity of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and the uncomplicated faith of Christian over the philosophic speculations of Unitarianism and Transcendentalism and the materialism which they fostered. As Randall Stewart has stated, the "body of the satire . . . is concerned with the romantic, liberal theology which denies original sin, asserts the natural goodness of man, and regards the Christian life as pleasant and not too difficult to attain. A bridge is built over the Slough of Despond; the burden of sin is deposited in the baggage car; a tunnel is constructed through the Hill Difficulty; the Valley of the Shadow of Death is illuminated by gas lamps. Hawthorne regards these 'improvements' with Puritan disapproval."\(^{51}\) There can be little doubt that the literary personality and style of Emerson, whom Hawthorne privately regarded as a resident of "cloud-land,"\(^{52}\) are satirized in the amorphous, insubstantial figure of Giant Transcendentalist: "He shouted after us, but in so strange a phraseology

\(^{50}\)See Fick, *The Light Beyond*, pp. 152-55.


\(^{52}\)The American Notebooks, ed. Simpson, p. 336.
that we knew not what he meant, nor whether to be encouraged or affrighted" (II. 224). In "The Christmas Banquet," one of the world's ten most miserable souls is a former clergyman who, "yielding to the speculative tendency of the age, . . . had gone astray from the firm foundation of an ancient faith, and wandered into a cloud region, where everything was misty and deceptive, ever mocking him with a semblance of reality, but still dissolving when he flung himself upon it for support and rest" (II. 341-42). In obvious reference to the Unitarian subjection of Biblical truth to the check of reason, the narrator of "Earth's Holocaust" facetiously comments, "The inhabitants of the earth had grown too enlightened to define their faith within a form of words, or to limit the spiritual by any analogy to our material existence. Truths which the heavens trembled at were now but a fable of the world's infancy." With shock and then dismay, the narrator and other observers watch as the Bible is added to the fire by the "Titan of innovation" (II. 451-52).

The fact that Hawthorne, in his dissatisfaction with Unitarianism and Transcendentalism, did not convert to Catholicism suggests the extent to which reason was embedded in his own personality and caused him to question and to experience doubt. His great attraction to Catholicism never superseded the influence of reason, evident in his suspicion of "the iniquities of the papal system." Judging Catholi-

cism as an observer of its practitioners rather than as a student of its dogma, he ultimately rejected it because his familiarity with Rome convinced him that the Church did not make people as devout worshippers as he had earlier supposed. If he came to admire the Church's universality and capacity for inspiration, he was disappointed that its priests and other religious leaders were more worldly than spiritual. In *The Marble Faun* he described the priesthood as "pampered, sensual, with red and bloated cheeks, and carnal eyes." By their celibacy, "they were placed in an unnatural relation with woman, and thereby lost the healthy, human conscience that pertains to other human beings, who own the sweet household ties connecting them with wife and daughter" (VI. 467). Hawthorne was also disturbed by Italian churchmen's practice of draping sacred art in order to charge a fee for its exhibition, "sacrificing the very purpose for which a work of sacred art has been created" and, "for aught they know, the welfare of many souls along with it, to the hope of a paltry fee" (VI. 215). And he was no less rankled by the sight of the rich, ornamental beauty of Catholic edifices juxtaposed against a hungry and poverty-stricken populace.

Hawthorne wondered why Catholicism, with all it had to offer, did not inspire the lay Italians to be better than

---


55 See *Works*, X, 121.
they were.⁵⁶ He wondered at their lack of reverence in often mixing the trite and gaudy with the divine in their religious practices or in their spitting on the floors of churches. As even Father Fick suggests, such inconsistent and irreverent practices must have led Hawthorne to the "conviction that the morals of Catholics belied their dogmas . . . ."⁵⁷ Most shocking to him were two outrageous examples of religious hypocrisy. On one occasion, a man, after failing to snatch Mrs. Hawthorne's purse at the doors of a church, "passed in, dipped his thieving fingers in the holy water, and paid his devotions at a shrine. Missing the purse, he said his prayers, in the hope, perhaps, that the saint would send him better luck another time" (X. 152). In another instance, the American sculptor Hiram Powers told the Hawthornes of a servant who had a shrine to the Virgin in her room and kept a lamp burning perpetually before it by stealing oil from her employer.⁵⁸

If Hawthorne had once desired a new revelation to which to commit himself, he certainly never found one to overcome his capacity for doubt. The work of Father Fick, who has discovered in Hawthorne a fundamental pattern of Christian faith, is carefully planned, relying upon personal statements of Hawthorne, authorial asides and recurrent themes of his fiction, and only those fictional statements which

compare with Hawthorne's personal writings. But to form these into a personal theology unswervingly endorsed by Hawthorne is exaggeration. For each statement is after all an isolated one, not part of a tract. Many may reflect traditional or customary habits of speech and thought, and in some Hawthorne may be condescending to conventional views, even perhaps unselfconsciously. For example, to refer to an earthquake as an "act of God" does not really imply religious faith of any sort. And Hawthorne's frequent references to God in the complimentary closes of his letters or in his notebooks are no indication of an unquestioning belief. Beliefs and doubts may be entertained simultaneously, both without ultimate commitment.

Fick himself is forced to admit Hawthorne's untraditional attitude on two points, an admission which suggests that Hawthorne entertained strong doubts. First, Fick is nowhere able to find evidence that Hawthorne was prone "to consider sin as primarily an offense against an all-good God. Hence, such penitence as he demands seems to arise from purely natural motives, not from the love of God or the fear of hell; instead of being reconciled to His /sic/ God, the sinner is reconciled to his fellowmen." Likewise, while endeavoring to place Hawthorne's statements about the

59 See The Light Beyond, pp. xviii-xxii.
60 See The Light Beyond, p. 7 et passim.
61 Ibid., p. 132.
nature of man within the Scholastic and Aristotelian-Thomistic traditions of Catholic faith, Fick attributes Hawthorne's "failure to take formal cognizance of man's final destiny" to his "humanitarian" impulses. What Fick, who uses the word "failure" to describe both of Hawthorne's departures from traditional Christian belief, is unwilling to admit (and what both of Hawthorne's "failures" themselves suggest) is Hawthorne's tendency to doubt and therefore to translate traditional beliefs and morals into personal albeit humanistic terms. Hence, sin is thought of as an offense against fellow human beings, relationships among mortals become virtually concerns in themselves, and heavenly goals per se are generally not emphasized.

Even in his admiration of the confessional, Hawthorne thought of it more in terms of a disburdening emotional release and source of comfort for the penitent sinner on earth than of a sacramental means of attaining grace for the afterlife, a fact which suggests that his interest in Catholicism was not theological. In his journal, emphasis was most often given to the expressions of relief and peacefulness of penitents or to their warm relationships with their confessors. As for Hawthorne's attraction to Catholicism in general, it is this same concern for the

62 Ibid., p. 68.

63 This is apparent even in Fick's discussion of Hawthorne's fascination with confession in The Light Beyond, pp. 158-59.
spiritual (or psychological) comfort of man on earth which dominates his admiration of its universality and its capacity for inspiration. He tellingly described it, as was earlier noted, as a faith which "marvellously adapts itself to every human need." Hawthorne's tendency to emphasize man's felicity more than God's justice in his religious concerns was probably a corollary of his tendency to doubt and to question. For if he was finally unable to commit himself wholly to any religion, he was aware of the potential solace of devout religious faith, the sense of significance, order, and community provided by Bunyan's Christianity or by that of the Roman Catholic Church.

The narrator of "Sunday at Home" is able to overcome doubt only through a sublimation of the definition of faith itself. "Doubts may flit around me, or seem to close their evil wings, and settle down," he says, "but, so long as I imagine that the earth is hallowed, and the light of heaven retains its sanctity, on the Sabbath--while that blessed sunshine lives within me--never can my soul have lost the instinct of its faith." The narrator is a man of repose, as Poe would later say of Hawthorne; he is aware of the possibility of illusion but prone to feel that "Some illusions . . . are the shadows of great truths" (I. 34). The sketch reveals that Hawthorne was open to transcendent reality, but, doubting too strongly to commit himself fully to an established religion, he remained in the "partially alienated state" described by William J. Byron.
Hawthorne also exhibited a tendency toward doubt in frequently reasoning about moral and spiritual truths from observations of Nature or from experience, as if the uncom- plicated faith he admired in others were an impossibility with him. On the matter of the soul's immortality, for instance, Hawthorne was inclined to be affirmative, but he was prompted by the conditions of life on earth, not revelation, as his journal entry for Sunday, September 24, 1843, suggests:

This is a glorious day, bright, very warm, yet with an unspeakable gentleness both in its warmth and brightness. On such days, it is impossible not to love Nature; for she evidently loves us... There is a pervading blessing diffused all over the world. I look out of the window, and think--"Oh perfect day! Oh beautiful world! Oh good God!" And such a day is the promise of a blissful Eternity; our Creator would never have made such weather, and have given us the deep hearts to enjoy it above and beyond all thought, if He had not meant us to be immortal. It opens the gates of Heaven, and gives us glimpses far inward.64

In even having considered the possibility that God "had not meant us to be immortal," Hawthorne reveals that same tendency toward "unbelief" which he later observed in Melville. Hawthorne could also consider the "argument from the imperfect character of our existence, and its delusory promises, and its injustice... in reference to our immortality."65

The most poignant example occurred at the deathbed of his mother, where, looking from his daughter Una to his "poor

64 The American Notebooks, ed. Simpson, p. 393. This passage was later incorporated into "The Old Manse" with nearly identical wording; cf. Works, II, 38.

65 The American Notebooks, ed. Simpson, p. 300.
dying mother" he "seemed to see the whole of human existence at once, standing in the dusty midst of it." It would be "a mockery" if this were the only life, he felt, even if "the interval between extreme youth and dying be filled up with what happiness it might." His doubts were ultimately relieved by his conviction that no Creator could ever be so severe. "It would be something beyond wrong—it would be insult—to be thrust out of life into annihilation in this miserable way," he concluded. "So, out of the very bitterness of death, I gather the sweet assurance of a better state of being." The sentiment was not momentary, for, at the height of success five years later, he wrote, "God himself cannot compensate us for being born, in any period short of eternity." And to this vein of reasoning he added a new dimension as he continued: "All the misery we endure here constitutes a claim for another life;—and, still more, all the happiness, because all true happiness involves something more than the earth owns, and something more than a mortal capacity for the enjoyment of it."67

If Hawthorne found ways to restore hope in the face of doubt, there were also times when his doubts got the better of him. Of this there is no clearer indication than his writing "Young Goodman Brown," a tale which, as Leo B. Levy has stated, suggests "that there is no necessary connection

66Ibid., p. 429.

between our critical need for faith and the responsiveness of faith." Before the opening scene, Goodman Brown has made a brash and naive commitment to evil, never realizing or even suspecting that its impact on him will never be totally reversible. He simply believes that he will be able to return to Faith (faith) afterwards and follow her to heaven. Since his naiveté and self-righteousness prevent his frank acknowledgment of the evil self which emerges in the forest, Brown's "ego forbids him to accept his evil impulses as his own; hence he projects them upon his wife, whose virtue he now distrusts, and upon the other villagers, in whose goodness he can no longer believe." Since Brown's religious faith is quite literally dependent upon his faith in his wife (whom he deems "a blessed angel on earth" II. 90) and in the townspeople seen by him in the forest (among them his catechism teacher, his deacon, and his parents), this projection leaves him a man without faith. The special significance of Brown's wife in this regard is, of course, her almost completely abstract character. Named Faith, she has barely a womanly quality except the pink ribbons in her hair. Thus Brown's finding such a ribbon in the forest, Levy points out, suggests not only the literal nearness of his wife (and hence her corruption) but

---


69Ibid., p. 379.
also, symbolically, the departure of the abstract quality which she represents. It is also symbolically appropriate, when Brown calls upon Faith to help him resist the devil, that "Whether Faith obeyed he knew not" (II. 105). Faith does appear the same in the final paragraph as in the story's beginning, though, because faith itself "is a self-consistent principle, however unreliable and unpredictable." The real difference is that, having once doubted her, "it is impossible for Brown to see her as she was."\textsuperscript{70} The experience of uncertainty as regards faith is never wholly reversible. Hawthorne never suffered the lifelong despair which plagued Goodman Brown, but the tale itself, indisputably one of his greatest works, shows, as Levy suggests, how powerfully "the image of a man pleading for faith and deprived of it" through uncertainty engaged his imagination.\textsuperscript{71}

III. Hawthorne's Alienation from Fellow Man

Hawthorne not only experienced alienation from God but from fellow man as well. To begin with he experienced isolation, largely as an inability to find a means of communicating with others in an increasingly fragmented world. Ultimately, as has been suggested, such feelings are effects of the fragmentation of medieval community through the advancement of rationalism, individualism, and materialism and their erosion of a broadly unifying faith which also provided the imperative of charitable interaction. In a

\textsuperscript{70}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 382. \textsuperscript{71}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 380.
fragmented world, Hawthorne often felt he lacked a basis of communication with others.

From the time of his boyhood injury and enforced seclusion, Hawthorne was never comfortable in the greater world. In college, shyness caused him to neglect declamation exercises to such an extent that he was not only fined but also lowered in his class. Ironically, he was also deprived of a speaking part in commencement ceremonies, a penalty of which he was secretly glad.\textsuperscript{72} Hawthorne's pensiveness and tendency toward seclusion were such that even the closest of his classmates at Bowdoin regarded him as mysterious.\textsuperscript{73} And during the twelve so-called "solitary" years after graduation, Hawthorne, his literary habits having only increased his seclusion, doubted that he was known by as many as twenty people in Salem.\textsuperscript{74} Even during the years at Lenox he was known among neighbors as the man who would jump over a fence to avoid speaking.\textsuperscript{75} His uneasiness with visitors caused Sophia to discourage even her own relatives from making prolonged visits, and, since Hawthorne was reluctant to accompany Sophia on her own family visits, he was often himself the cause of the intense loneliness he felt in her


\textsuperscript{74}Ibid., p. 126. \textsuperscript{75}Ibid., p. 312.
absence.\textsuperscript{76} As Hubert H. Hoeltje has pointed out, even Bronson Alcott, a friend and neighbor during Hawthorne's last years, often felt that Hawthorne acted "as if he feared that his neighbor's eyes would catch him as he walked," though Alcott also felt that, if Hawthorne consciously avoided him, he did so only in obedience to an uncontrollable impulse toward solitude.\textsuperscript{77}

To a certain extent, of course, Hawthorne's isolation was self-imposed through this love of solitude, an important aspect of his artistic temperament but, significantly, a source of guilt as well. In "Sights from a Steeple," one of Hawthorne's earliest sketches, the solitary, meditative narrator, observing his world from a lofty height, expresses a desire to "soar up into the very zenith, where man never breathed, nor eagle ever flew" but shivers at his own "cold and solitary thought" (I. 219). Much later in his career, Hawthorne expressed this same tension in his portrayal of Miles Coverdale, the poet-narrator of The Blithedale Romance who was in some ways based upon himself. Coverdale's solitary ways are indispensable to his "individuality," of which his woodland "hermitage" is a symbol and a means of "keeping it inviolate" (V. 432). But Coverdale's self-imposed isolation ultimately leads to loss of love and desertion of friends. Even worse, as Coverdale admits, is the development of his "owl-like humors" into a "cold tendency, between

\textsuperscript{76}Ibid., pp. 308-09. \textsuperscript{77}Ibid., p. 532.
instinct and intellect, which made me pry with a speculative interest into people's passions and impulses, and which appeared to have gone far toward unhumanizing my heart" (V. 495).

Hawthorne's alienation from fellow man was not ultimately a matter of personal preference. If Hawthorne was often himself responsible for his own isolation, he also desired, somewhat paradoxically, to be close to others in society. Even in his youthful "The Spectator" he wrote, "Man is naturally a sociable being; not formed for himself alone, but destined to bear a part in the great scheme of nature. All his pleasures are heightened, and all his griefs are lessened, by participation. It is only in Society that the full energy of his mind is aroused, and all its powers drawn forth." In an early sketch, "Footprints on the Sea-Shore," the narrator, after a day of voluntary isolation and meditative wandering, is hailed and invited to join a party of young men and women cooking fish and chowder on a beach. "Can I decline?" he asks. "No; and be it owned, after all my solitary joys, that this is the sweetest moment of a Day by the Sea-Shore" (I. 516).

One of the outstanding features of both Randall Stewart's and Hubert H. Hoeltje's biographies of Hawthorne is the revelation of the intense love and happiness Hawthorne experienced in married life. Stewart, describing the first

78The passage is quoted in Edward Wagenknecht's Nathaniel Hawthorne, p. 80.
years of Hawthorne's marriage to Sophia Peabody and their residence at the Old Manse in Concord, writes that the "happiness of husband and wife was as nearly perfect as human limitations permit."\textsuperscript{79} As his family grew, Hawthorne remained a "devoted husband and father."\textsuperscript{80} He was not only willing to play with his children but did so with enthusiasm and a great degree of gaiety.\textsuperscript{81} The daily life of the Hawthorne family at Lenox, Massachusetts, after Hawthorne's removal from his position at the Salem Custom House certainly illustrates his capacity for personal warmth. Typically, he delayed work in the mornings until he had built a fire to heat water for his children's baths. Although he wrote a great deal during this period, he worked only until noon, devoting the rest of the day to his family, accompanying them on leisurely walks or leading nutting expeditions. His descent from the study was greeted with "great rejoicing" by the children, who according to Sophia "clung to their father with unvarying affection." Left alone with Julian for several weeks when Sophia and the girls were visiting, Hawthorne was quite capable of providing the boy with constant amusement and companionship.\textsuperscript{82} Even in England where the demands of the consulate left Hawthorne with less freedom than ever, he continued the practice of reading

\textsuperscript{79}Stewart, \textit{Nathaniel Hawthorne}, p. 63.
\textsuperscript{80}Ibid., p. 81.
\textsuperscript{81}Hoeltje, \textit{Inward Sky}, p. 436.  \textsuperscript{82}Ibid., pp. 304-07.
aloud to his family and amused the children by playing with them and telling improvised stories. Hawthorne's deep affection for Sophia is nowhere more clearly shown than in the great loneliness he suffered whenever separated from her. On the worst such occasion when Sophia was forced to leave England for the winter due to a persistent cough, he even considered resigning the consulate. Later, having remained, he reported himself as having "suffered woefully from low spirits," as unable to eat or to sleep, and morbidly depressed, all due to his "desolate, bachelor condition." "Life seems so purposeless," he wrote, "as not to be worth the trouble of carrying it on any further."

Despite his capacity for warmth and his uneasiness in seclusion, Hawthorne generally found genuine communication outside the small circle of his family and close friends an arduous and, for the most part, insurmountable task. As the case of Hawthorne's acquaintance with Miss Fredrika Bremer clearly illustrates, he painfully felt that his world was so fragmented as to make communication nearly impossible. Miss Bremer, a Swedish novelist, had visited Hawthorne during his residence at Lenox. Seven years later, after again seeing her in Italy, he not only recalled her first, rather

83 Stewart, Nathaniel Hawthorne, p. 158.
85 Ibid., p. 437.
86 The English Notebooks, ed. Stewart, pp. 271-72.
uncomplimentary impression of him, "so laudatory of my brow and eyes, while so severely criticising my poor mouth and chin," but he also remembered that she had gone away "so dissatisfied with my conversational performances." Part of the problem had been her accent. "I could not guess," he wrote in his journal, "half the time, what she was saying, and, of course, had to take an uncertain aim with my responses." But he also admits that "A more intrepid talker than myself would have shouted his ideas across the gulf." Sadly he adds that "for me, there must first be a close and unembarrassed contiguity with my companion, or I cannot say one real word. I doubt," he continues, "whether I have ever really talked with half a dozen persons in my life, either men or women" (X. 171-72). Hawthorne's intense desire to communicate sincerely was, in most instances, overcome by his sense that a "gulf" separated him from others and made a "close and unembarrassed contiguity" impossible. In a way Hawthorne's comments help explain the disparity between the great warmth and felicity of his family life and the mysterious solitude which hindered him socially—the disparity between the elder Henry James' impression of Hawthorne as a criminal in the company of detectives and the Hawthorne children's firm conviction that there was no smile like their father's. For Hawthorne, communication was

---

evidently such a serious and vital matter that, unless he experienced some close bond with others, an increasingly difficult achievement in modern society, he was likely to feel that the possibility for communication did not really exist. In such instances he was just as likely to exhibit his characteristic shyness or reserve, which, as he was painfully but hopelessly aware, only further diminished the possibilities of communication. He regretfully remarked in his journal that, though he desired Miss Bremer's friendship, she probably did not like him half as well as he liked her because she had found him "unamiable" (X. 216).

As a serious artist Hawthorne experienced a similar problem in finding a basis of communication, despite a strong desire for a friendly relationship with his audience. The prefaces of his novels and major collections of tales and sketches strongly suggest that he desired, throughout his career, "a close and unembarrassed contiguity" with his audience. He was captivated with the idea of writing from the standpoint of a man addressing a close circle of friends or even a single friend. His greatest satisfaction in publishing *Twice-Told Tales* was that it "opened the way to most agreeable associations, and to the formation of imperishable friendships" (I. 18). In "The Old Manse" he expressed a desire to regard his small readership as "a circle of friends." Such a desire is also evident in "The Custom House," where Hawthorne, in addition to revealing the need to feel the presence of a "genial consciousness," expresses
his admiration and envy of those authors who "indulge themselves in such confidential depths of revelation as could fittingly be addressed, only and exclusively, to the one heart and mind of perfect sympathy; as if the printed book, thrown at large on the wide world, were certain to find out the divided segment of the writer's own nature, and complete his circle of existence by bringing him into communion with it" (V. 17-18). In the Preface to The Snow-Image, the idea of an audience of friends still has a strong attraction. Nor has he forgotten, in the present "transitory gleam of public favor" their support during the "weary delay" he endured in "obtaining the slightest recognition from the public." At present he excuses himself from charges of egotism in his earlier prefaces saying that he then addressed "a very limited circle of friendly readers, without much danger of being overheard by the public at large" (III. 385-88). Hawthorne's continued concern for the deepest affinity between himself and his readers is no less apparent in his dedication of the collection to Horatio Bridge. A lifelong, personal friend of Hawthorne's since their days at Bowdoin, Bridge had always provided faith and encouragement, had persuaded Hawthorne to stop publishing anonymously, and had helped him publish his first collection of tales. "If anybody is responsible for my being at this day an author," Hawthorne wrote, "it is yourself" (III. 386).

89Stewart, Nathaniel Hawthorne, p. 39.
Yet, as Hawthorne's reference to the difficulty of gaining public recognition suggests, he actually had little hope of establishing a close bond with the general public. He was keenly aware that the number of "friends" he had made was small and often portrayed himself in his prefaces as fearful that he might alienate even these. Looking back on his earliest period of tale-writing in his Preface to the second edition of *Twice-Told Tales*, Hawthorne described himself as then "the obscurest man of letters in America." His tales had been "attempts, and very imperfectly successful ones, to open an intercourse with the world." The endeavor, he continues, was a failure. He had spent his young manhood without public success, "nor was it until long after this period, if it even yet be the case, that the author could regard himself as addressing the American public, or, indeed, any public at all" (I. 13-17). "The Old Manse," which served as a Preface to Hawthorne's second collection of tales and sketches, bears a suggestive subtitle: "The Author Makes the Reader Acquainted with His Abode." The reader, it is clear, is Hawthorne's "guest in the Old Manse and entitled to all courtesy in the way of sight-showing" (II. 14), and the author later boasts of his hospitality toward acquaintances such as Emerson and Franklin Pierce. Though Hawthorne's pose is obviously within the tradition of the relaxed and personal manner of the familiar essay, he is apparently sincere in trying to establish a degree of intimacy between himself and his readers. He
hopes his collection will be kindly received by the public, "if my limited number of readers, whom I venture to regard rather as a circle of friends, may be termed a public." But he remains skeptical of success, fearful that his "fitful sketches," which provide "no solid basis for a literary reputation" will not be welcomed by even this small audience, and he apologizes for the "personal inhospitality" of requesting readership (II. 45-46).

The author's anxious uncertainty is no less acute in "The Custom House," where Hawthorne imagines himself as having seized "the public by the button" in his "autobiographical impulse" (V. 17). The feeling is mitigated only by Hawthorne's conviction that he will receive little if any public attention. Discouraged in finding even his fellow workers in the custom house virtually ignorant of his authorship and Salem itself uncongenial to literary pursuits, he is resigned to address "not the many who will fling aside his volume, or never take it up, but the few who will understand him, better than most of his schoolmates or lifemates." Such resignation, he feels, is his only alternative "as thoughts are frozen and utterance benumbed, unless the speaker stand in some true relation with his audience," and he hopes it "pardonable to imagine that a friend, a kind and apprehensive, though not the closest friend, is listening to his talk." Only by thus imagining ________________

90Works, V, 44, 65.
himself in the presence of a "genial consciousness" will he overcome his "native reserve" (V. 17-18). Obviously, Hawthorne was as determined as a writer as he was in his personal life to insist upon "close and unembarrassed contiguity" as the only basis of communication, the alternative possibility of isolation notwithstanding. The Scarlet Letter itself might never have been published had not James T. Fields guessed that Hawthorne, despondent over his lack of public recognition, was hiding something from him and demanded the manuscript.  

In the Prefaces to The House of the Seven Gables and The Blithedale Romance, Hawthorne is somewhat more optimistic. Apparently depending on the influence of his growing success, he is more concerned with explaining his theory of the romance than finding an audience. But even his defense of the romancer's right to a "certain latitude" is an expression of his concern for close contiguity, for being genuinely understood. The need to explain is itself suggestive that, despite his success, Hawthorne is still aware of his potential loneliness. In the Preface to The House of the Seven Gables he is both doubtful of the success of his expressed moral and fearful that the story's vital "historical connection" will lead through misunderstanding to an "exceedingly dangerous species of criticism, by bringing his

fancy-pictures almost into positive contact with the reali-
ties of the moment" (III. 15). In the Preface to The
Blithedale Romance, he expresses a similar concern over his
audience's likely skepticism regarding romance, fearing the
problem of having his work "put exactly side by side with
nature," a problem "the sense of which has always pressed
very heavily upon him" (V. 322).

By the time Hawthorne wrote the Preface to The Marble
Faun, more than seven years later, his earlier pessimism had
completely returned, tempered by his long absence from the
field of letters and by his awareness of the continued trend
toward realism. Sadly, he alludes to the "familiar kind of
preface" of his earlier years, "addressed nominally to the
Public at large, but really to a character with whom he felt
entitled to use far greater freedom. . . . that one con-
genial friend,—more comprehensive of his purposes, more
appreciative of his success, more indulgent of his short-
comings, and, in all respects, closer and kinder than a
brother,—that all sympathizing critic, in short, whom an
author never actually meets, but to whom he implicitly makes
his appeal whenever he is conscious of having done his
best." His faith in the "friend's" existence had formerly
sustained him even though "the great eye of the Public . . .
almost utterly overlooked my small productions" (VI. 13-14).
Convinced that the friend has gone the way of the literary
trend which alluded to him as the "Gentle Reader," Hawthorne
despairs of ever finding "that unseen brother of the soul,
whose apprehensive sympathy has so often encouraged me to be egotistical in my prefaces, careless though unkindly eyes should skim over what was never meant for them." Having sensed, in the preparation of his last major work of fiction, a dissolution of the possibility for sympathetic communication, he must "stand upon ceremony now" as he formally offers his "most reverential bow" to "the Public" (VI. 14-15). It is certainly plausible to suppose that Hawthorne's renewed sense of an irrevocably alien relation to his audience was a chief cause of his inability to complete any of the four romances he attempted in his final years.

If Hawthorne was finally unable "to open an intercourse with the world," to place himself in close contiguity with his audience, the causes were not wholly within himself. Naturally shy and introspective, Hawthorne experienced the fragmentation of modern society with great intensity. Undoubtedly his shyness and introspection made him particularly sensitive to the isolation of modern existence, and this sense of alienation in turn only intensified his natural tendency toward seclusion. The fact that Hawthorne was capable of warm and intense relationships within the small circle of his family and a few close friends suggests that his shyness and introspection were not in themselves insurmountable problems for him. Ultimately he was separated from others because he found society fragmented—generally devoid of a basis for genuine communication. He sensed a "gulf" between himself and even a fellow artist such as Miss
Bremer, he felt that he had truly talked with no more than a half dozen persons in his life, and as a writer he was increasingly hopeless of finding the audience of friendly readers he desired.

As has been suggested, Hawthorne's sense of isolation as an artist was owing, in the broader outlook, to a rather complex interaction of forces set in motion during the era of Renaissance and Reformation, essentially the same forces which caused modern man's general isolation from his fellow man through the fragmentation of medieval community. And Hawthorne, as will be shown, experienced the long-range effects of these developments intensely enough to cause his "cultural estrangement." That is, he was not only isolated from others within society but was repulsed by his society's general disregard for the function and concerns of the artist.

While the era of Renaissance and Reformation broadened the scope of the artist and gave him more freedom, it was also the beginning of his peculiar form of alienation from others. And the ultimate sources of Hawthorne's alienation from his public (as well as that of other artists) can be detected in this era. The Protestant, particularly Puritan emphasis on human depravity, the consequent emphasis upon faith alone as a means of salvation (necessitating direct communion between God and the individual man), and the
resultant movement for the purification of the Church\textsuperscript{92} led to the secularization of art, obliterating its almost casual relation to the mainstream of moral and spiritual significance.\textsuperscript{93} John Crowe Ransom has delineated this secularization concisely:

The religious impulse used to join to itself and hold together nearly all the fields of human experience; politics, science, art, and even industry, and by all means moral conduct. But Puritanism came in the form of the Protestant Reformation and separated religion from all its partners. Perhaps the most important of these separations was that which lopped off from religion the aesthetic properties which simple-hearted devotees and loving artists had given it. The aesthetic properties constituted the myth, which to the temperamental Protestants became superstition, and the ceremonial, which became idolatry.\textsuperscript{94}

This secularization, together with the later epistemological challenge to faith (which was also bound to have a profound effect on the sensitive and intelligent artist), left the artist deprived of a ready-made basis of communication with his public, essentially unaided in his need to find meaning and to communicate it through art. Sidney's famous "Apology" is one of the first important documents to exhibit the artist's growing sense of isolation. Writing in indirect


\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{93}Lucas, The Renaissance and the Reformation, pp. 696-97, 701-02.}

response to puritanical attacks on poets and players, Sidney exhibits an urgent desire to explain the potential relation of poetry to truth, not through an integrative faith but through the poet's personal perception of truth in Nature as vates. The fact that Sidney not only takes for granted the poet's distinct difference from the philosopher and the historian but is also concerned to establish the poet's superiority (rather than seeing the functions of all three as complementary) itself bespeaks a growing sense of isolation, as does the very need to justify poetry. Of course Sidney's stance bears a direct relation to Hawthorne's sense of alienation from his public (as well as to similar feelings of other modern artists) in that both were attempting to cope with problems caused by the loss or absence of a broad public faith which had previously informed the artist's work and which, in so doing, had endowed it with public significance.

Naturally, Hawthorne's sense of estrangement was much more dire than Sidney's since Hawthorne also experienced the impact of the seventeenth century scientific revolution on Western thought. Beyond its challenge to religious faith, the Baconian revolution promoted, in J. A. Mazzeo's words, "a conflict between science and poetry, or science and what we may call the 'humanities.'" It also fostered a utilitarian indifference to artistic concerns. R. F. Jones,

\[95\text{Renaissance and Revolution, p. 308; see also pp. 307-29. On Bacon's suspicion of poetry see pp. 209-11.}\]
describing the new point of view of the Baconians and their Puritan supporters, writes, "The learning to be discarded is the inutile study of the classics and the empty disputatious philosophy drawn from them. The proper objects of study are things, not words, nature, not books, and the subjects which deal with nature directly and which possess 'useful' value are alone recommended." Such attitudes were almost bound to flourish in a traditionless America ever more committed to reason, especially in influential New England where the calling-oriented Puritans grew even more materialistic and utilitarian as their faith declined. And, though Puritanism was nearly dead in Hawthorne's day, its influence on public attitudes as a heritage was still great, especially since the popularity of the Scottish Common Sense philosophy, essentially a development of rationalism, both reinforced the Puritanical suspicion of the imagination and helped maintain the harmony between the moral conservatism of Americans and their growing materialism, self-interest, and practicality, none of which were amenable to the concerns of the artist.

---


97 Robert S. Michaelsen, "Changes in the Puritan Concept of the Calling or Vocation," pp. 334-36.

As a result of these developments, American writers were often subject to great prejudice through the third decade of the nineteenth century and, because of the lingering effects of this prejudice, to relative anonymity in subsequent decades. Fiction, as well as the other arts, was considered useless or distracting by the nation builders of the Republic's first years. Heirs of the Enlightenment, such men were bound to commit themselves intensely to reason and to the practical needs of the Republic. John Adams devoted himself to the "science of government," reserving the arts for the enjoyment of his grandchildren. And even "Jefferson, gentle lover of the fine arts, was keenly aware that America differed from Europe in being not yet ready for the highest and most cultivated art-forms." Madison, admitting to a former "too great . . . hankering after those amusing studies," wrote that he "began to discover that they deserve but a small portion of a mortal's time, and that something more substantial, more durable, and more profitable befits a riper age." Complemented by the Puritan heritage of practicality and the frontier's reliance upon common sense, the feeling expressed by Madison became


widespread in the early nineteenth century. "From 1815 to 1835," writes Fred Lewis Pattee, "America was not thinking in terms of literature." The era of national expansion and optimism, Pattee explains, simply precluded, for the most part, the profession of letters:

No age was it for mere literature as a profession. Literature concerned only the few. In Boston it was a by-product of the clergy, an echo of Harvard scholarship; in Philadelphia it was a social refinement, a plaything for lawyers and women; in New York it was an accidental exotic exceedingly rare. To speak of a "Knickerbocker school" of writers is nonsense. There was not in the city the slightest literary cohesion. In Baltimore and Charleston a cultivated few, but rarely publication.102

Of this period Carl Van Doren has written, "Whatever man of genius might appear, there was still the problem of reaching a public taught that fiction belonged to the Old World, fact to the New."103

The American tendency to emphasize practicality and fact and to be skeptical of the uses of the imagination was only compounded by the widespread influence of reason in the Scottish Common Sense philosophy, which, in the view of Samuel Miller, substituted for "the delusive principles of the idealism of Berkeley and the scepticism of Hume" a confirmation "that the mind perceives not merely the ideas or images of external objects but the external objects

102Ibid., pp. 264-66.

themselves.  Educated Americans, Terence Martin writes, generally "believed the Scots to have a monopoly on 'facts,' on 'distinct meaning,' on 'precision in the language.' Part of the heritage of the eighteenth-century American Enlightenment, Scottish Common Sense philosophy was pervasive in the curricula and textbooks of American colleges during the first fifty years of the Republic, was as likely to be embraced by clergy and theologians as by professors of philosophy and rhetoric, and had a profound impact on American critical thought since many of its teachers were also critics. As Martin observes, "the philosophy of Common Sense could lend new force to the American suspicion of the imagination," for "it offered an enlightened and extremely effective means of controlling the imagination to a society which believed in the need for such control." Thinkers of the Scottish persuasion limited reality to the actual as opposed to the possible, "that is, to actually existing being" as detected through observation and memory. Fiction, "wedded to imagination," introduced the (merely) possible, or unreal, and therefore was a potentially dangerous


105 The Instructed Vision, p. 31.

106 Ibid., pp. 3-39; see also Charvat, The Origins of American Critical Thought, pp. 27-58.

107 The Instructed Vision, pp. vii-viii.
influence on the mind. Hawthorne, who was exposed to Common Sense philosophy at Bowdoin, was seemingly conscious of its rhetoric in his defense of the romance when he remarked that the novel "is presumed to aim at a very minute fidelity, not merely to the possible, but to the probable and ordinary course of man's experience" (III. 13, italics added).

The reputation of fiction also suffered as a result of the puritanical suspicion of the sensuous. Numerous were attacks on fiction by ministers and others who, as G. Harrison Orians reports, felt that novels "were subversive of the highest moral principles or, in short, were the primer of the Devil." One magazine article of 1792 claimed that "Novels not only pollute the imaginations of young women, but also give them false ideas of life. . . . Good sentiments scattered in loose novels render them the more dangerous." In 1809 a writer for the Portfolio declared, "The

---

108 Ibid., pp. 70, 102, et passim.

109 See Stewart, Nathaniel Hawthorne, pp. 16-17. Describing the four-year curriculum at Bowdoin, Stewart lists at least three works (William Paley's Natural Theology, Dugald Stewart's Philosophy of the Mind, and Levi Hedge's Elements of Logick) which are identified by Martin and Charvat as related to Scottish Common Sense philosophy.

110 This observation is made by Martin, The Instructed Vision, p. 142.

111 "Censure of Fiction in American Romances and Magazines 1789-1810," PMLA, 52 (1937), 211.

number of novels entitled to encomium of any kind is comparatively so small that it would be infinitely better for the young lady never to open one, than to seize them with that total neglect of discrimination which, it is to be feared, too often obtains." Later, Yale president Timothy Dwight was to claim that "Between the Bible and novels there is a gulf fixed which few novel readers are willing to pass," for the rewards and hopes of a virtuous life "are never found in novels." In New England, even less tolerant of fiction than most regions, accusations of corrupting influence were directly to reach Hawthorne himself as late as 1851. Arthur Cleveland Coxe, writing for Church Review, records his dismay at overhearing The Scarlet Letter discussed by several schoolgirls. "These school girls," he continues, "had, in fact, done injury to their young sense of delicacy, by devouring such a dirty story; and after talking about it before folk, inadvertently, they had enough of Mother Eve in them to know that they were ridiculous and that shame was their best retreat." 

---


115 Spiller et al., Literary History of the United States, I, 233-34.

The combined effect of the moral and rational opposition to fiction before 1830 was devastating. Reading or writing novels was put on an equal basis with card-playing and betting on cock-fights. Novelists and their defenders were generally reduced to desperate and pathetic explanations. One defender, conceding the Common Sense denial of the novel's relation to reality, took the stance that the novel was therefore harmless because it possessed no lasting significance. A great many novelists resorted to the practice of implying or even claiming outright a factual basis for their stories. Some attempted to establish the righteousness of their own works by accusing other novelists of immorality. And, most ironically, still others attempted to exonerate themselves by introducing into their works the theme of the evils of novel reading. It has even been suggested that the relative success of the historical novel in the years of the early Republic was owing to a lessening of prejudice against "mere fiction" by the historical association. In 1831, three years after Hawthorne had begun publishing, Alexis de Tocqueville observed that the American

---


118 Martin, The Instructed Vision, p. 79.

119 Ibid., pp. 76-84; Orians, "Censure of Fiction in American Romances and Magazines," p. 204.

prejudice against literary pursuits was such that many minor towns of Europe published more material annually than all of the United States.\textsuperscript{121}

Although American audiences became gradually more receptive after the third decade of the nineteenth century, prejudice against fiction did linger as Coxe’s criticism of The Scarlet Letter suggests. Utilitarianism and practicality were still American trademarks.\textsuperscript{122} And puritanical objections were often lessened only through the subjugation of art to the promotion of standard morality as in the temperance novels and other types of didactic fiction.\textsuperscript{123}

In brief, when a popular taste for fiction did arise, it was generally characterized by a fusion of utilitarian, materialistic, and puritanical interests reflected most typically in the numerous sentimental rags-to-riches stories of the 1850s.

Writers of the first caliber were still not likely to find their profession a remunerative one. Longfellow, for example, was paid only fifteen dollars for "The Village Pattee, The First Century of American Literature, p. 267.


Between 1831 and 1838, Hawthorne himself contributed no less than twenty-seven pieces to The Token, one of the popular gift-books of the period, but received no more than 345 dollars for all contributions. The gift-books and annuals, though they offered many writers the opportunity to publish their writings, were themselves an important aspect of the problem. Gaudily decorated, they were designed to appeal to the public's materialism. Their popularity, Fred Lewis Pattee writes, "was the beginning of the best-seller debauch. Everybody was buying, therefore everybody bought." So little interest had the public in their literary merit that many annuals were profitably republished under different titles year after year, some as many as twelve times, with no changes and no evidence of complaint. For Pattee their popularity is evidence of "an atmosphere of literary ignorance and contempt for literary 'high-browism' involving ninety-nine per cent of the whole population." No one, he concludes, "is fitted to criticize Poe or Hawthorne or Longfellow or Herman Melville or Walt Whitman until one has felt the atmosphere of this amazing jungle in which they were compelled to work, this jungle of the annuals, the gift-books, and the anthologies."

124 Nye, Society and Culture in America, p. 77.


126 The First Century of American Literature, pp. 380-95.
No less a reflection of the problem was the ever-increasing popularity of sentimental and didactic writers, mainly women, many of whom contributed to the gift-books and annuals. So great was their popularity and influence over public taste in one decade that Pattee has designated it "The Feminine Fifties." The 1850s, of course, included an unusually high number of books now generally regarded as classics of American literary genius, books such as Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables*, Emerson's *Representative Men*, Thoreau's *Walden*, Melville's *Moby-Dick*, and Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. "But the great mass of the American people were not reading classics," Pattee writes. "Nine out of ten had never read a word of Emerson, had never even heard of the man." Instead, "The feminine writers created and nourished by Godey's *Lady's Book* and [its editor] Sarah Josepha Hale during two decades were, in fiction at least, becoming the best-sellers in all the literary markets."^127 Most often such best-sellers evinced what Frank Luther Mott has called the "Home-and-Jesus formula," fusing materialistic and didactic concerns to produce sentimental rags-to-riches stories.^128 James D. Hart's *The Popular Book* provides perhaps the best general summary of their content and their appeal to the American public:

^127Ibid., pp. 565-69.

Though the scene might be fanciful, the language speciously unnatural, the emotion heightened, still the novel that was liked was the one that was 'improving,' or at least moral. If it taught a lesson, for example that an honest man or woman will rise in station; if it brought one a greater appreciation of God's handiwork--nature; or if it somehow imbued one with the desire to live a purer, more purposeful life, it was particularly suitable to reading aloud in the family circle.129

The extent to which such books outsold and overshadowed those of writers such as Emerson, Melville, Thoreau, and Hawthorne is shocking. While it usually required several decades for novels such as The House of the Seven Gables and Moby-Dick to reach best-seller status, "Home-and-Jesus" productions such as Maria S. Cummins' The Lamplighter, described by Hart as concerning "women who overcome all sorts of dilemmas through Christian fortitude and faith,"130 often became best-sellers immediately after publication.131 By 1853, four years after publication, Thoreau's Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers had sold just 219 copies. Hawthorne's royalties from Mosses from an Old Manse for the past eighteen months were less than 145 dollars. In the same year Fern Leaves from Fanny's Portfolio by Fanny Fern sold 70,000 copies, and Hawthorne's publisher informed him that Susan Warner's The Wide, Wide World had netted its author 4500 dollars in six months.132 Most popular of these

129 The Popular Book, pp. 89-90. 130 Ibid., p. 93.


feminine writers was Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth, who wrote more than fifty novels, most of which phenomenally sold in the hundreds of thousands with two of them selling over two million copies each.  

Hawthorne was definitely affected by the prejudices of his age. He obviously sensed its puritanical suspicion of the artist as one unduly concerned with the sensuous or the superficial, as the scandalous reputation of his restrained and tasteful The Scarlet Letter affirms. In his Biographical Sketches, he portrays the consternation of the Quakers over young Benjamin West's love of painting. Aware that young West's "future eminence" had been prophesied, "they could not understand how he was ever to become a very great and useful man merely by making pictures" (XII. 149). They finally decided to leave his fate in the hands of God but not before determining "that the sight of a beautiful picture might convey instruction to the mind, and might benefit the heart as much as a good book or a wise discourse." Later, their determination is confirmed by "the great paintings in which he represented the miracles and sufferings of the Redeemer of mankind," but "they shook their heads at his pictures of battle and bloodshed, such as the Death of Wolfe, thinking that these terrible scenes should not be held up to the admiration of the world" (XII.  

133 Mott, Golden Multitudes, p. 136.  
134 Hart, The Popular Book, p. 92; Faust, Hawthorne's Contemporaneous Reputation, pp. 72-86.
152-53). In "The Prophetic Pictures" Hawthorne emphatically attacks the prejudice of the earlier Puritans against art as an aspect of their priggishness and superstition: "Some deemed it an offence against the Mosaic law, and even a presumptuous mockery of the Creator, to bring into existence such lively images of his creatures. Others, frightened at the art which could raise phantoms at will, and keep the form of the dead among the living, were inclined to consider the painter as a magician, or perhaps the famous Black Man, of old witch times, plotting mischief in a new guise" (I. 195).

As a descendent of the Puritans himself, Hawthorne experienced their distrust of the artist internally as well as externally. In "The Custom House" he imagines his ancestors' contempt for "an idler like myself" with a vividness that suggests self-doubt:

No aim, that I have ever cherished, would they recognize as laudable; no success of mine—if my life, beyond its domestic scope, had ever been brightened by success—would they deem otherwise than worthless, if not positively disgraceful. "What is he?" murmurs one gray shadow of my forefathers to the other. "A writer of story-books! What kind of a business in life,—what mode of glorifying God, or being serviceable to mankind in his day and generation,—may that be? Why, the degenerate fellow might as well have been a fiddler!" (V. 25)

In "The Old Manse," after contemplating the great number of sermons left behind by his "priestly" predecessors there, he feels ashamed "for having so long been a writer of idle stories" (II. 12). As these examples suggest, Hawthorne's uneasiness was the result of the problem of reconciling art
to a tradition of pious utilitarianism. Oberon's early death is attributed to an inability to reconcile his literary pursuits with the service of "the real necessities of . . . fellow-creatures" (XII. 28). In "Night Sketches" Hawthorne describes himself as merely "a looker-on in life" (I. 482), incapable of even the mock-heroic rescue of two lovers caught in a puddle of rainwater.

As may be expected, Hawthorne was aware that much contemporary skepticism or indifference toward art of Americans in general was caused by their heritage of utilitarianism and practicality. His artist-narrators, such as the youth of "The Seven Vagabonds," often complain of "that foolish wisdom which reproves every occupation that is not useful in this world of vanities" (I. 394). The same character reappears in "Passages from a Relinquished Work," where he reveals that he has run away from his step-father, a stern Puritan parson, who insisted upon his taking up a respectable profession. Meeting a similar insistence by others at nearly every turn in his wanderings, he complains of "a grossness in the conceptions of my countrymen; they will not be convinced that any good thing may consist with what they call idleness; they can anticipate nothing but evil of a young man who neither studies physic, law, nor gospel, nor

135 This idea is treated at some length by Robert Shulman in "Hawthorne's Quiet Conflict," Philological Quarterly, 47 (1968), 216-36. Strangely, however, Shulman interprets Aylmer of "The Birthmark" and Dr. Rappaccini as prototypes of the Romantic artist and gives them the bulk of his attention.
opens a store, nor takes to farming..." (II. 459). The Man of Fancy, narrator of "A Select Party," inveighs against those inhabitants of the "lower world" who lack "the imaginative faith" to see that "the dominions which the spirit conquers... become a thousand times more real than the earth whereon they stamp their feet, saying, 'This is solid and substantial; this may be called a fact'" (II. 70-71).

Hawthorne's frustration in confronting a world of such practicality and materialism is clearly suggested in "Main Street," the framework of which features the showman of a pictorial exhibition under constant attack by a critic of the sternest Common Sense principles. An "acidulous-looking gentleman in blue glasses, with bows of Berlin steel," the critic ridicules the pasteboard exhibition, ignores the showman's pleas for some imaginative assistance, and refuses to overlook minor irregularities. "I make it a point to see things precisely as they are," (III. 442), he insists. When the exhibition is concluded, he dismisses it as a humbug and demands the return of his money.

Hawthorne obviously found the American public quite nearly as frustrating. Where he is most concerned with advancing the theory of the romance, he is also most apprehensive of having his work misunderstood by a fact-minded public. In the Preface to The House of the Seven Gables he fears that the "historical connection," intended to provide his romance with substance, will result in gossip and the disregarding of his themes. Hawthorne's fears were justi-
fied since the novel's publication very nearly resulted in his being sued. In the Preface to The Blithedale Romance, as if wary of being again misunderstood, he is virtually redundant in his insistence that his novel bears no direct comment on the real people or events of Brook Farm. His "present concern with the socialist community is merely to establish a theatre." The characters "are entirely fictitious." They "might have been looked for at Brook Farm, but, by some accident, never made their appearance there" (V. 321-23).

There can be no doubt of Hawthorne's resentment of the success of Mrs. Southworth, Maria S. Cummins, and others, nor of his recognition of their lack of literary merit. In 1855 he wrote from England to his American publisher and banker, William D. Ticknor, that "America is now wholly given over to a d---d mob of scribbling women, and I shall have no chance of success while the public taste is occupied with their trash--and should be ashamed of myself if I did succeed. What is the mystery," he continued, "of these innumerable editions of the Lamplighter, and other books neither better nor worse?--worse they could not be, and


better they need not be, when they sell by the 100,000.\footnote{The Portable Hawthorne, ed. Malcom Cowley, rev. ed. (1948; rpt. New York: Viking Press, 1969), p. 685.}

Hawthorne's attitude in this letter was not the result of a passing mood. A survey of his writings shows that from the earliest he was concerned that the man of literary genius was, as Poe said of Hawthorne himself, though sometimes privately admired, almost never publicly appreciated.\footnote{Stewart, Nathaniel Hawthorne, p. 70.}

In "The Seven Vagabonds," one of Hawthorne's earliest tales, the narrator is an eighteen-year-old aspiring "itinerant novelist" who quite happily finds himself among a group of wanderers, each of whom is an "artist" in his own right.\footnote{The suggestion is made by James G. Janssen in "Hawthorne's Seventh Vagabond: 'The Outsetting Bard,'" Emerson Society Quarterly, No. 62 (IV Quarter, 1971), pp. 22-28. I disagree, however, with Janssen's conclusion that the other six artists assist the youth by showing him that imagination "is not a substitute for living" (p. 27).} But, though the narrator is himself too naive to tell the difference, the others share neither his sincerity nor his naiveté, for their artistic interests are subject to popular taste and to profit. The puppeteer, in whose covered wagon the wanderers take refuge from the rain, complains that it is "a dull day for business" (I. 393). The book pedlar extols his ware "with an amazing volubility of well-sounding words, and an ingenuity of praise" (I. 395) as he flatters bluestocking schoolmistresses, elderly clergymen, and even the young aspiring novelist into making pur-
chases. Worst of all is the confidence man posing as a beggar, who unscrupulously accepts the charity of even the poor and who dupes the narrator into a donation. Least mercenary is the handsomely decorated Penobscot Indian, who has learned to exhibit his archery skills for profit. These are rounded out by a fiddler and an attractive dancer, who join the others in hopes of a profitable venture at a camp-meeting in distant Stamford. When the young novelist asks to join the group, they object, doubtful of his ability to support himself as a story-teller. Expert judges of public taste, these experienced performers finally accept the youth, but with condescension. "Let us indulge the poor youth" (I. 410), says the dancer, with whom he is naively infatuated. When news of the camp-meeting's early dispersal reaches the wanderers, however, all but the Indian, the least superficial in his natural garb, desert the youth, who (continuing toward Stamford) is one of Hawthorne's first representations of the devoted but isolated artist, practically doomed to failure because too sincere to be shrewd.

"The Devil in Manuscript" is another early tale which portrays the isolation and frustration of the sincere artist. The narrator's friend Oberon (Hawthorne's nickname in college) is so despondent over his failure to publish his tales that he begins to doubt the validity of his literary pursuits. "I am surrounding myself with shadows, which bewilder me, by aping the realities of life" (III. 576), he laments. After discussing his numerous rejections, he
consigns his stories to the fire as a similarly frustrated young Hawthorne himself had done with the early "Seven Tales of My Native Land." When it later proves that sparks from his burning manuscript have ignited neighboring roofs, he madly exults over this ironic contact with the public: "Here I stand,—a triumphant author! Huzza! Huzza! My brain has set the town on fire!" (III. 583). Significantly, in the later "Fragments from the Journal of a Solitary Man," the same narrator reports that Oberon, though reconciled to his failure and restored to a melancholy contentment, has died, by his own prediction, "Unwept, unhonored, and unsung" (XII. 27).

Later, Hawthorne even parodied his own obscurity in the brief prefatory comment of "Rappaccini's Daughter."Ironically and perhaps facetiously, he poses as an editor whose task it is to introduce to the American public the work of a rather unpopular but "voluminous" French writer, M. de l'Aubépine (the French word for "hawthorne"). Aubépine's works may be classified somewhere between those of the Transcendentalists and those of "the great body of pen-and-ink men who address the intellect and sympathies of the multitude," but they enjoy neither the current vogue of the former nor the steady popularity of the latter. The editor himself, after a "somewhat wearisome perusal" of the author's works, admits to "a certain personal affection and

141 Stewart, Nathaniel Hawthorne, pp. 29-30.
sympathy, though by no means admiration, for M. de l'Aubépine." Considering the implied failure of Hawthorne's own "introduction" to a voguish and low-browed American public, there is reason enough to conceive a veiled irony in his reference to The Democratic Review (which first published "Rappaccini's Daughter") as "La Revue Anti-Aristocratique," a journal which "has for some years past led the defence of liberal principles and popular rights with a faithfulness and ability worthy of all praise" (II. 107-09).

Hawthorne was always contemptuous of that boorish public taste which overlooked genius and praised mediocrity, self-assured all the while of its own sophistication. In Italy, Hawthorne was greatly delighted by American sculptor William Story's facetious accounts concerning American visitors to his studio:

. . . one of them, after long inspecting Cleopatra, into which he has put all possible characteristics of her time and nation, and of her own individuality, asked, "Have you baptized your statue yet?" as if the sculptor were waiting till his statue were finished before he chose the subject of it . . . . Another remarked of a statue of Hero, who is seeking Leander by torchlight, and in momentary expectation of finding his drowned body, "Is not the face a little sad?" Another time a whole party of Americans filed into his studio, and ranged themselves round his father's statue, and, after much silent examination, the spokesman of the party inquired, "Well, sir, what is this intended to represent?" William Story, in telling these little anecdotes, gave the Yankee twang to perfection. . . . (X. 71-72)

Hawthorne's criticism was not always veiled or private. In one of the "Sketches from Memory," published in 1835 but
probably written in the fall of 1832, his resentment of the popularity of Indian stories and biographies is bluntly expressed. In what is probably a reference to Benjamin Bussey Thatcher's *Indian Biography*, a popular success of 1832, Hawthorne regrets his own "inability to see any romance, or poetry, or grandeur, or beauty in the Indian character, at least till such traits were pointed out by others." For "no writer can be more secure of a permanent place in our literature than the biographer of the Indian chiefs. His subject . . . gives him a right to be placed on a classic shelf, apart from the merits which will sustain him there" (II. 483). The narrator of "Earth's Holocaust," witnessing a great bonfire of reform on the American prairies, notices that "An American author, whose works were neglected by the public, threw his pen and paper into the bonfire, and betook himself to some less discouraging occupation" (II. 438). The image recalls, of course, the stories of Oberon and of the youthful Hawthorne. Later, as the works of all authors are placed in the fire by the maniacal reformers, the narrator takes a particular interest in those of American writers, observing "the precise number of moments that changed most of them from shabbily-printed books

---

142 Elizabeth L. Chandler, "A Study of the Sources of the Tales and Romances Written by Nathaniel Hawthorne before 1853," *Smith College Studies in Modern Languages*, 7, No. 4 (1926), 57.


to indistinguishable ashes" and noting "that it was not invariably the writer most frequent in the public mouth that made the most splendid appearance in the bonfire" (II. 448). In "A Select Party," the gathering of "distinguished personages" fails to notice the appearance of "the Master Genius for whom our country is looking anxiously into the mist of Time, as destined to fulfil the great mission of creating an American literature." When informed of his identity they exhibit the very prejudices which have denied genius an audience. "Pish!" one guest exclaims. "We have already as good poets as any in the world. For my part I desire to see no better." The oldest guest, representative of those who are unable to conceive of literature in any but jingoistic terms, refuses even to meet the Master Genius, insisting "that a man who had been honored with the acquaintance of Dwight, and Freneau, and Joel Barlow, might be allowed a little austerity of taste" (II. 79-80). Hawthorne's tone is obviously satiric since he once commented with wonder on Dwight "who sang the Conquest of Canaan" (XII. 106) in his epic of the Revolution. The mad narrator of "P.'s Correspondence," imagining that Barlow (now dead) is preparing an epic on the war with Mexico, exclaims, "How can he expect ever to rise again, if . . . he persists in burdening himself with such a ponderosity of leaden verses?" (II. 429). Most ironically, Hawthorne's portrayal of the Master Genius walking unknown through the land proved somewhat prophetic in his own case. For almost at the end of his life Haw-
thorne, upon meeting Lincoln, was both surprised and hurt to learn that the President had never even heard of him.\textsuperscript{145}

At times Hawthorne revealed his distaste for the materialism and practicality of his public by suggesting that the so-called real or substantial was actually insubstantial. After several years as a Salem customs officer, he began to wonder, he remarked, "how much longer \textit{he} could stay in the Custom House, and yet go forth a man" (V. 60). In the Prefaces to \textit{The Marble Faun} and \textit{The Blithedale Romance} "a commonplace prosperity" is said to represent an aspect of the American romancer's problem in finding materials to write about. Such an inversion of public opinion is a central theme of "The Hall of Fantasy," as ironic comparisons between "reality" and fancy are made throughout. The hall itself "occupies in the world of fancy the same position which the Bourse, the Rialto, and the Exchange do in the commercial world" (II. 197). When the naive narrator, a guest in the Hall of Fantasy, supposes that "we honest citizens" are as little fit for such a world as authors "for any of our pursuits," his host points to a group of men who do not even realize that they are in the world of fantasy:

Their eyes had the shrewd, calculating glance which detects so quickly and so surely all that it concerns a man of business to know about the characters and purposes of his fellow-men. Judging them as they stood, they might be honored and trusted members of the Chamber of Commerce, who had found the genuine secret of

\textsuperscript{145}Wagenknecht, \textit{Nathaniel Hawthorne}, p. 55.
wealth, and whose sagacity gave them the command of fortune. There was a character of detail and matter of fact in their talk which concealed the extravagance of its purport, insomuch that the wildest schemes had the aspect of every-day realities. Thus the listener was not startled at the idea of cities to be built, as if by magic, in the heart of pathless forests; and of streets to be laid out where now the sea was tossing; and of mighty rivers to be stayed in their courses in order to turn the machinery of a cotton mill. It was only by an effort, and scarcely then, that the mind convinced itself that such speculations were as much matter of fantasy as the old dream of Eldorado, or as Mammon's Cave, or any other vision of gold ever conjured up by the imagination of needy poet or romantic adventurer. (II. 200-01)

Unlike these dangerous dreamers, the host affirms, "the poet knows his whereabout, and therefore is less likely to make a fool of himself in real life." The guest himself eventually concludes "that there is but half a life--the meaner and earthlier half--for those who never find their way into the hall" (II. 203).

This suggested inversion of the public's skepticism toward the imagination and of its faith in concreteness is indicative of Hawthorne's apparent belief that the artist (or the man of imagination) bears a truer relation to life since he is not limited to the merely tangible but remains open to transcendent truth. As the Puritans of "The Prophetic Pictures" had priggishly and superstitiously suspected, the artist attempts to stand in close approximation of God's creation of the world of living beings. As suggested in "The Hall of Fantasy," it is he who participates easily in "real life," whereas those who remain wholly absorbed in dense materiality enjoy but "half a life." The
artist-heroes of Hawthorne's fiction are thus invariably endowed with life-giving properties or with an imaginative sympathy which places them in close relation to God's creation of life and, hence, to beauty, love, and truth as opposed to the superficial and mundane. Clearly, such is the case of the children of "The Snow-Image," two "imaginative little beings" who "wrought together with one happy consent" to produce a living "snow-sister" (III. 396-400). Deacon Drowne of "Drowne's Wooden Image" is a commercial sculptor of mediocre talents until he accepts a commission for a statue with only verbal details of its model; before, all his statues resembled people of the town. His forced imaginative awakening is such that the famous Boston painter John Singleton Copley is said to have remarked of Drowne's statue, "Here is the divine, the life-giving touch" (II. 353). And, when the model incidentally appears in the vicinity of his shop one day, she causes amazement among Drowne's neighbors, one of whom exclaims, "Drowne's wooden image has come to life!" (II. 358). In "The Artist of the Beautiful" Owen Warland's endurance and devotion in a materialistic, Time-oriented world produce a butterfly so close to "Nature's ideal" that the literal-minded blacksmith Robert Danforth assumes that its case is the true work of art, and his wife Annie is sufficiently confounded to forget that "real" butterflies do not appear in the dead of winter: "Is it alive? Is it alive?" (II. 529-30).
Yet true to Hawthorne's personal experience, his artists are eventually subordinated or overshadowed by forces which either obstruct the artistic discovery of "real life" just as Hawthorne himself was frustrated by priggishness, self-interest, practicality, materialism, and, especially, the popular taste for a combination of these in the sentimental, didactic, rags-to-riches stories of the feminine fifties.\textsuperscript{146} The children of "The Snow-Image" lose their miraculously created "snow-sister" when their reform-minded, utilitarian father insists on warming her before his Heidenberg stove. Drowne's sudden genius is met with the same puritanical scrutiny endured by the artist of "The Prophetic Pictures,"\textsuperscript{147} and, after the shock and uproar caused by his model's unexpected appearance, he lapses into his former mediocrity. And although Owen Warland is finally content momentarily to have achieved and communicated truth and beauty, his butterfly "lives" but a few moments, weakened by the skeptical glare of Owen's former employer and finally crushed by the material vitality of the man's infant grandson.

Significantly, this pattern of the artist's briefly enjoyed success preceded and succeeded by long frustration was used by Hawthorne in his first fictional publication, \textit{Fanshawe}. The central character, a scholarly and ethereal

\textsuperscript{146}Brown, \textit{The Sentimental Novel in America}, p. 361.

\textsuperscript{147}See \textit{Works}, II, 357, 359.
student named Fanshawe, becomes involved in a struggle to save the beautiful Ellen Langton (with whom he is hopelessly in love) from a ruthless materialist who abducts the girl with the plan of marrying her for her father's wealth. In Rudolph Von Abele's words, "the central moment ... comes near the end, where the innocent pale solitary ... stands in the open air at the top of a lofty cliff in wild New England scenery, resembling 'a being from another sphere,' and with only his eyes for weapons, sends the sinister and corrupt villain ... steeply to his death." In thus preventing Ellen's corruption, Fanshawe becomes, in a sense, a life-giver in the manner of Hawthorne's other artist-heroes. He becomes the exponent of the truth which Ellen symbolizes. The development of the scene, as Von Abele's description implies, is itself suggestive, "the villain in the depths; the 'slight form' of Fanshawe 'so far above him' (morally as well as spatially)." But the artist-hero's victory is merely the prelude to the renewal of the frustration of his earlier life of lonely study. Fanshawe wins Ellen's devotion through his heroism, but, tubercular, he is (literally and symbolically) not long to be of this world. In addition, Ellen's recent attraction to a fellow student of Fanshawe's means that he can only prove that he is worthy of

her by refusing to stand upon advantage. He returns to his solitary studies and soon dies.

In 1854, more than twenty-five years after Fanshawe, Hawthorne, beyond the peak of his literary career described with some wonder and perturbation a recurring dream: "It is, that I am still at college--or, sometimes, even at School--and there is a sense that I have been there unconscionably long, and have quite failed to make such progress in life as my contemporaries have; and I seem to meet some of them with a feeling of shame and depression that broods over me, when I think of it, even at this moment." He supposes that the dream's recurrence "over these twenty or thirty years" is a result of his twelve-year seclusion after college, a period in which he was chiefly devoted to developing his skills as a writer. Still he is puzzled at its long persistence and especially "that it should come now, when I may call myself famous, and prosperous!--when I am happy, too!--still that same dream of life hopelessly a failure!"149 Perhaps the most peculiar and significant aspect of the dream is the resemblance it bears to the story of Fanshawe. Like Fanshawe, the Hawthorne of the dream remains solitary, somewhat estranged, and ultimately unfulfilled in a world of practical, material goals. He is still in college, left behind, not yet having entered the world--despite, ironically, a period of noteworthy success. The

149The English Notebooks, ed. Stewart, p. 98.
immature novel and the recurring dream, both peculiarly open to the expression of hopes and fears not consciously considered (at the time of expression, at least), reveal not only the intensity with which Hawthorne experienced alienation throughout his career as an artist and despite the financial security of his later years (the result of political reward, not literary fame), but also Hawthorne's sense of being hopelessly at odds with a predominant view too much of the material world or too indifferent to understand the relation of imagination and art to "real life." The sincere artist's realization of the need for transcendence allows him to achieve victories of great significance. But the prejudice and indifference of the society he lives in will cause him to struggle long and hard and without recognition.

Hawthorne desired a close communion with others as an artist as well as in private life. Within the limited bounds of family and the closest friends he was capable of remarkably warm and happy relationships. Otherwise he remained essentially alienated from his fellow man. Ever desirous of sincere communication, he was nevertheless unable to reach acquaintances such as Fredrika Bremer. As a writer of fiction, he struggled long and hard and without great encouragement against the skepticism or indifference regarding fiction and other uses of the imagination, a skepticism and indifference shown most clearly not only in the difficulty of earning a living as a writer but also in the public preference, when interest was shown, for a sentimen-
talized fusion of didactic and mundane themes. The Preface to The Marble Faun, in which Hawthorne has given up the idea of the intimate reader and stands insecure and formal before "the Public," portrays the true artist's alienation from a continuously developing attitude which in 1868, only four years after Hawthorne's death, produced the following comment:

It may be affirmed that newspapers are the true literature of the United States. They constitute, in fact, the most important branch of literature with democratic societies. . . . To deprive an American of his newspaper would be equivalent to shutting him from the light of day.\textsuperscript{150}

In an atmosphere of such attitudes there is little wonder at the estrangement and isolation of the man of genius, at his haunting dream of "life hopelessly a failure."

To summarize: Hawthorne experienced a loss of faith and community (alienation from God and fellow man) which ultimately may be traced to the loss of medieval integration through the Renaissance and Reformation development of rationalism, individualism, and materialism. In New England, the continued emphasis upon reason and science, actually promoted by the calling-oriented Puritans, had by Hawthorne's time disrupted Puritan faith and begun its fragmentation into Unitarianism and Transcendentalism, both of which Hawthorne quite clearly perceived as species of non-

\textsuperscript{150}Quoted in Pattee, The First Century of American Literature, p. 597. The quotation is taken from an anonymous work entitled Asmodeus in New York.
faith. But Hawthorne was himself a victim of reason, plagued with doubts which prevented his commitment to any religious denomination despite his essentially spiritual nature and his strong attraction to Catholicism. In traditionless America the development of individualism and materialism as well as of reason and science produced a modern society which was increasingly fragmented, especially by self-interest and utilitarianism. Within such a society Hawthorne, in his great concern for integration, experienced isolation intensely. He was repulsed by his society's self-interested, materialistic indifference to deeper spiritual concerns and by its skepticism regarding the artist's use of the imagination.

But Hawthorne's attitude toward his isolation was not always as bleak as his recurring nightmare or Fanshawe may suggest, nor was his loss of firm faith always as despairing as "Young Goodman Brown" may indicate. For Hawthorne's struggle against alienation was not without noteworthy gains. Largely because he was a student of history, Hawthorne perceived the ultimate sources of his alienation; he understood well enough the development of reason and science, individualism, and materialism in the Renaissance and Reformation, and he saw, often with great clarity how each of these (as well as related developments) contributed to modern man's loss of faith and isolation from fellow man. Hawthorne's experience of alienation was balanced by an understanding which directed his struggle against alienation.
His conception of alienation ultimately led him to attempt a counteraction of modernity through which something like the conditions which produced medieval integration might be restored. This involved a conception of history which, charged with the heuristic and emotive power of art, discredited modernity and affirmed, in Eric Voegelin's words, "the experiences of transcendence which belong to the nature of man."\(^{151}\)

---

CHAPTER TWO

THE CONCEPTION OF ALIENATION IN HAWTHORNE'S WRITINGS

Eric and Mary Josephson state, "Implicit in most approaches to alienation is the ideal of an 'integrated' man and of a cohesive society in which he will find meaning and satisfaction in his own productivity and in his relations with others." 1 Hawthorne recognized in the medieval era, as Henry Adams was later to do, a closer approximation of this ideal than his own age could provide. His attraction to Catholicism was largely determined by his observation of the vestiges of medieval unity in Catholic Italy. But in England too Hawthorne was attracted by the surviving medieval life. On an excursion near Leamington he was impressed by the seemingly timeless unity and intimacy of one rural village: "The little, rustic square of the hamlet lay in front and around the church, with all the cottage-doors opening into it—all visible and familiar to one another; and I never had such an impression of smugness, homeliness, neighborliness . . . as in this small village nook. . . . And, long ago, mass had been said in the church; and the holy water had stood at the door." And though he admits that

---

1 Introduction, ed. Eric and Mary Josephson, Man Alone, p. 16.
such places soon become wearisome "to an American," he also insists that "it is rather pleasant to know that such things are." Though again voicing the typically American fear of stagnation, he found the homeliness and religious aura surrounding Salisbury Cathedral similarly attractive:

Emerging from the great, old edifice, we walked around the Cathedral Close, which is surrounded by some of the quaintest and comfortablist ecclesiastical residences, that can be imagined. These are the dwelling-houses of the dean, and the canons, and whatever other high officers compose the bishop's staff; and there was one large brick mansion, old, but not so ancient as the rest, which we took to be the bishop's palace. I never beheld anything--I must say again--so cozy, so indicative of domestic comfort for whole centuries together--houses so fit to live in, or to die in, and where it would be so pleasant to lead a young maiden wife beneath the antique portal, and dwell with her, till husband and wife were patriarchal--as those delectable old houses. They belong naturally to the Cathedral, and have a necessary relation to it; and its sanctity is somehow thrown over them all, so that they do not quite belong to this world, though they look full to overflowing of whatever earthly things are good for man.

When Hawthorne first reached England in 1853, he regarded his journey as also in a sense a "return," mindful of his Puritan ancestor's departure two hundred and eighteen years earlier from an England just beginning to emerge from feudalism. He enjoyed viewing the matter in this way, for it seemed to eradicate the passage of time and the changes made since the days of his first American ancestor. It is as if Hawthorne desired that his journey to "Our Old Home," as he

---

3 Ibid., p. 359. 4 Ibid., p. 92.
would later refer to England, would somehow mean his integration in a past homeland of medieval dimensions.

The purpose of the present chapter is to show that Hawthorne's conception of alienation, as his attraction to the integration of medieval life suggests, involved more than his dissatisfaction with nineteenth-century America. It involved an understanding of modernity. Hawthorne, largely because of his interest in his Puritan heritage, understood, often cogently, the historical acceleration of rationalism, individualism, and materialism; moreover, he perceived that each of these was a source of both loss of faith and loss of community. He often opposed related developments such as the idea of progress, reformism, and utopianism because they promoted mundane concerns rather than transcendent ones and because they fostered self-interest rather than community. Hawthorne's conception of alienation is fundamental in that it resulted in his attempt to restore or "return" to conditions which would unite man with God and fellow man.

I. Individualism

Hawthorne was well aware of the threat to religious faith posed by individualism. He clearly recognized the potentially devastating effects of the Reformation on religious sensibility, perceiving that the Protestant, particularly the Puritan emphasis upon the direct, unaided communion between God and the individual soul led to the separation of art and ritual from religion, thus depriving
man of a much-needed source of religious feeling and actually fostering loss of faith. Although often defensive of his Puritan heritage when he was in Europe, Hawthorne became increasingly impressed by the deep religious inspiration of art and ritual in the Catholic and Anglican churches. He praised the inspirational quality of churches with stained glass windows and, as the following passage from his English notebooks suggests, thought it well to have such ornamental aid to spirituality:

York is full of old churches, some of them very antique in appearance, the stones weather-worn, their edges rounded by time, blackened, and with all the tokens of sturdy and age-long decay; and in some of them I noticed windows quite full of old painted glass, a dreary kind of minute patchwork, all of one dark and dusty hue, or nearly so, when seen from the outside. Yet, had I seen them from the interior of the church, there would doubtless have been rich and varied apparitions of saints, with their glories round their heads, and bright-winged angels, and perhaps even the Almighty Father Himself, so far as conceivable and representable by human powers. It is a good symbol of religion; the irreligious man sees only the pitiful outside of the painted window, and judges it entirely from that view; but he who stands within the holy precincts, the religious man, is sure of the glories which he beholds. And to push the simile a little farther, it requires light from Heaven to make them visible. If the church were merely illuminated from the inside—that is, by what light a man can get from his own understanding—the pictures would be invisible, or wear at best but a miserable aspect.\(^5\)

In Italy the many religious paintings and frescoes caused him to feel "what an influence pictures might have upon the

\(^5\)Ibid., p. 349; see also p. 201 and Works, X, 278-79, 340.
devotional part of our nature" (X. 87).  

Hawthorne frequently contrasted the scantiness of Protestantism unfavorably with the rich devotional atmosphere of the Continent. Observing a funeral service in France, he wrote, "The ceremonies of the Catholic Church were a superb work of art, or perhaps a true growth of man's religious nature; and so long as men felt their original meaning, they must have been full of awe and glory. Being of another parish, I looked on coldly, but not irreverently, and was glad to see the funeral service so well performed, and very glad when it was over" (X. 25). On his way back to England in 1859, he found the Cathedral of Lausanne, Switzerland, disappointing by comparison with those of Italy and France. He thought "the excellent repair that it was in, and the puritanic neatness with which it is kept, does much toward effacing the majesty and mystery that belong to an old church," and the newness and neatness of the seats reminded him of the American "meeting-houses" (X. 546-47). Later, in The Marble Faun, Hawthorne briefly described an Italian youth praying penitently before the shrine of his patron saint and added, "If this youth had been a Protestant, he would have kept all that torture pent up in his heart, and let it burn there till it seared him into indifference" (VI. 395).

Long before visiting Europe, Hawthorne portrayed a

---

6 For similar statements see Works, X, 108, and VI, 348, 388.
youth with a similar fate in "Young Goodman Brown." The tale reveals Hawthorne's clear recognition of the way the Puritan isolation of man could actually turn him away from the community of faith upon which his belief and solace depend. It suggests that such isolation can actually be incompatible with faith since faith must be learned and sustained in community.

More exactly, "Young Goodman Brown" accurately depicts the Puritan uncertainty and anxiety over election which reached a crisis in the debate over the Half-Way Covenant. Unaided by ritual or sacrament and spared the religious struggles of their forebears, second and third generation American Puritans simply failed to have the dramatic conversion experiences which would prove their election. The Half-Way Covenant compensated for this failure by granting church-membership to the children of the elect.\(^7\) The Half-Way Covenant is not the subject *per se* of Hawthorne's tale, but Brown, a third generation Puritan, quite typically suffers uncertainty caused by the shortcomings of Puritanism itself.\(^8\) As David Levin has written, Hawthorne shows "an


\(^8\)Michael J. Colacurcio, "Visible Sanctity and Specter Evidence: The Moral World of Hawthorne's 'Young Goodman Brown,'" *Essex Institute Historical Collections*, 110 (1974), 259-99, points out that Brown is a third generation Puritan and draws a connection between the tale's theme and the Half-Way Covenant. David Levin suggests that the tale was written with a sensitive perception of the Puritan uncertainty over election; see Levin's "Hawthorne's Romances The Value of Puritan History," in his *In Defense of*
insight into genuine historical issues, an understanding of Puritan life and the tragic failure of Puritan history."\(^9\)

Brown's fate suggests (as does the Half-Way Covenant) the inability of Puritanism to sustain faith. Brown has no way of dealing frankly with his natural attraction to evil (an attraction evident in his having agreed to meet the devil) nor of being reconciled to his growing awareness of a similar attraction in others. The inadequacies of the Puritan system lead to his desperate attempt to maintain his own sainthood through the condemnation of others through a psychological projection of his own evil tendencies.\(^10\) Even though Brown may wonder whether his experience in the forest were only a dream, its import to him is a reality: "it was a dream of evil omen for young Goodman Brown" (II. 106). Dream or not it is real as specter evidence (also used as evidence of election), the Puritan use of which Hawthorne

---


\(^9\)"Hawthorne's Romances," in In Defense of Historical Literature, p. 103.

possessed a thorough familiarity through reading Cotton Mather.  

But Brown's final despair is caused not merely by his isolation but also by a subsequent loss of faith as well. In attempting to uphold his own sinlessness, he classifies among the unregenerate all upon whom his faith and hence his own salvation are dependent: his catechism teacher, his minister, his deacon, his parents, and the wife (Faith) whom he had hoped to follow to heaven. There is actually little wonder that Brown afterwards heard only "an anthem of sin" when his congregation sang, turned pale listening to his minister's sermons, shrank from the bosom of his wife, and did not join his family in prayer but "scowled and muttered to himself, . . . and turned away" (II. 106). In "Young Goodman Brown," Hawthorne is critical of Puritanism as a system which places man alone before God without the aid of sacrament or ritual. It forces him out of the community upon which his faith naturally depends. In a final sense Brown's despair is a result of his inability to recognize

his own sinfulness in a way productive of salvation, a fact which partially explains Hawthorne's particular fascination with the Catholic sacrament of Penance.

Hawthorne was also aware that the Calvinistic sanctification of the regenerated self was potentially a form of unbridled individualism, which in turn posed a threat to traditional Christianity and the community it inspired. No work of Hawthorne's better exhibits this insight than *The Scarlet Letter*. Although Hester Prynne becomes separated from the Puritan community by her evident sinfulness, she retains its spirit of self-reliance and, consequently, its pride. These are evident in the novel's beginning when Hester repels the beadle's assistance to step forth boldly before her judges, exhibiting a richly decorated emblem of her sinfulness. Eventually this individualism becomes subversive of the faith and moral order represented by Puritan society.

For, though Hawthorne realized the Puritans were religious radicals, he also realized that they were "a people amongst whom religion and law were almost identical, and in whose character both were so thoroughly interfused, that the mildest and the severest acts of public discipline were alike made venerable and awful" (V. 70). In the scene in which Hester is sentenced, Hawthorne suggests that the presence of the Massachusetts Colony's highest officials, including the governor, denotes a world permeated with moral significance: "When such personages could constitute a part
of the spectacle, without risking the majesty or reverence of rank and office, it was safely to be inferred that the infliction of a legal sentence would have an earnest and effectual meaning. Accordingly, the crowd was sombre and grave" (V. 78). The judges themselves are "distinguished by a dignity of mien, belonging to a period when the forms of authority were felt to possess the sacredness of Divine institutions" (V. 86).

It is against a community of faith that Hester's individualism is opposed. Hawthorne correctly sees this individualism as an aspect of a general intellectual rebellion, including the Puritans themselves, against a medieval world view:

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. Men of the sword had overthrown nobles and kings. Men bolder than these had overthrown and rearranged—not actually, but within the sphere of theory, which was their most real abode—the whole system of ancient prejudice, wherewith was linked much of ancient principle. Hester Prynne imbibed this spirit.

---

12 Darrel Abel in "Hawthorne's Hester," College English, 13 (1952), 303-09, maintains that Hester's romantic individualism in effect "repudiates the doctrine of a supernatural ethical absolute" (p. 303). Larzer Ziff, "The Artist and Puritanism," in Hawthorne Centenary Essays, ed. Roy Harvey Pearce (Columbus: Ohio State Univ. Press, 1964), pp. 245-69, similarly maintains that Hester is wrong to put personal impulse above the law of society and Hawthorne would have sided with the Puritans "in his characterization of happiness or the integrity of the personality in moral and spiritual terms" (p. 259). Randall Stewart, "Guilt and Innocence," in his American Literature and Christian Doctrine (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1958), pp. 73-106, sees a tension between romantic individualism as represented by Hester and "the claims of law and conscience" (p. 86) as represented by Dimmesdale.
She assumed a freedom of speculation, then common enough on the other side of the Atlantic, but which our forefathers, had they known it, would have held to be a deadlier crime than that stigmatized by the scarlet letter. (V. 199)

Hester is "Little accustomed, in her long seclusion from society, to measure her ideas of right and wrong by any standard external to herself" (V. 193). Though she chooses to remain where she is viewed as a sinner, one reason she does so is to be near Dimmesdale, and she has hopes that their union will be vindicated in another world. Her seclusion also fosters feministic notions for which she forgets the guidance of her heart and wanders "without a clew in the dark labyrinth of mind" (V. 201). The narrator's estimate of Hester before the story's climax clearly reveals the threat which "such latitude of speculation" as hers poses to the moral order of her community: "Her intellect and heart had their home, as it were, in desert places, where she roamed as freely as the wild Indian in his woods. For years past she looked from this estranged point of view at human institutions, and whatever priests or legislators had established; criticising all with hardly more reverence than the Indian would feel for the clerical band, the judicial robe, the pillory, the gallows, the fireside, or the church" (V. 239). Hester nearly succeeds in persuading Dimmesdale to abandon the Puritan community of faith.

It is Dimmesdale who demonstrates that fulfillment comes only through faith and commitment to life's transcendent purpose. Though hiding sin, he "had never gone through
an experience calculated to lead him beyond the scope of
generally received laws . . . . As a man who had once
sinned, but who kept his conscience all alive and painfully
sensitive by the fretting of an unhealed wound, he might
have been supposed safer within the line of virtue than if
he had never sinned at all" (V. 240). Although guilt makes
him a more sympathetic minister, he is never given to the
intellectual freedom which characterizes Hester:

Mr. Dimmesdale was a true priest, a true religionist,
with the reverential sentiment largely developed, and
an order of mind that impelled itself powerfully along
the track of a creed, and wore its passage continually
deeper with the lapse of time. In no state of society
would he have been what is called a man of liberal
views; it would always be essential to his peace to
feel the pressure of a faith about him, supporting,
while it confined him within its iron framework. (V.
151)

Fittingly Dimmesdale draws Hester back into the community of
faith, as is suggested by her submission to him in his dying
moments and by her eventual return to the place of her
shame. At first a figure in whom might be seen the initial
step in the transformation of the regenerated Puritan indi-
vidual into Emerson's "transparent eyeball,"¹³ Hester, by
the novel's end has at least partially relinquished her
early expectations for the belief that only "sacred love
should make us happy" (V. 311, italics added).

¹³I am relying upon the connection suggested by Perry
Miller in his well-known essay, "From Edwards to Emerson";
see Errand Into the Wilderness (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap
Press, 1956), pp. 184-203. Charles Feidelson, Jr., "The
Scarlet Letter," in Hawthorne Centenary Essays, pp. 31-77,
also suggests that the Puritans themselves are "involved in
the dialectic of modern freedom" (p. 51).
A similar conflict between individualism and traditional moral order is portrayed in *The Marble Faun*. Miriam proudly claims that Donatello, by murdering for her sake, "might have had a kind of bliss in the consequences of this deed, had he been impelled to it by a love vital enough to survive the frenzy of that terrible moment,—mighty enough to make its own law, and justify itself against the natural remorse" (VI. 232). But when guilt forces Donatello's retreat from life, Miriam, who once envied a faith as strong as Hilda's, finally admits to a loss of the sense of life's transcendent meaning, to "too much life and strength, without a purpose for one or the other" (VI. 323). In *The Marble Faun* as in *The Scarlet Letter* Hawthorne shows a clear recognition of the antithesis of faith and rampant individualism.

Hawthorne was also keenly aware that uncontrolled individualism could cause man's alienation from fellow man as well as from God, that, whether of Calvinistic or humanistic origin, it could promote the isolation of individuals, frustrating man's basic need for community. 14 The instances in which he revealed this awareness are manifold. There are, for example, his reflections concerning the young woman

14 Stewart, *Nathaniel Hawthorne*, p. 252; see also H. B. Parkes, "Poe, Hawthorne, Melville: An Essay in Sociological Criticism," *Partisan Review*, 16 (1949), 157-65. Parkes contends that in Hawthorne's fiction a character's isolation generally "is attributed to some sinful desire or some form of spiritual pride which prevents him from loving other human beings" (p. 160).
whose suicide by drowning he drew upon in the story of Zeno-bia. "I suppose one friend would have saved her," he re-marked in his journal, "but she died for want of sympathy—a severe penalty for having cultivated and refined herself out of the sphere of her natural connections."15

Hawthorne saw that the Calvinistic isolation of the individual before God could lead, especially when combined with belief in the "visibility" of the elected, to the separation of individuals and the loss of compassion through self-righteousness. He often provided actual as well as fictional examples of this tendency in his works. In Biographica] Stories, the conflict between Cromwell and Charles I suggests the latter fell "because . . . he dis-dained to feel that every human creature was his brother." But Cromwell shows a similar lack of sympathy, ignoring even the pleas of his own children to spare Charles and sternly defending the execution as a "righteous deed"; the narrator's youthful auditor responds that he himself "would not have put the poor old king to death. . . . It was too severe to cut off his head" (XII. 186-87). In "Endicott and the Red Cross," Hawthorne strongly suggests that cutting the Red Cross from the English flag is indicative of the Puritans' stubborn and oppressive self-righteousness since the act is witnessed from the stocks by an Episcopalian and a royalist (symbols of the Puritan violation of the ties of

homeland, especially since the incident predated the deposition of Charles and both prisoners are illegally confined). Their innocuous objections are met with violent threats. Endicott himself was later characterized by Hawthorne as one "who would stand with his drawn sword at the gate of heaven, and resist to the death all pilgrims thither, except they travelled his own path" (XII. 223). And, in Grandfather's Chair, Endicott's followers are said to have had "as much iron in their hearts as there was upon their heads and breasts. They were all devoted Puritans, and of the same temper as those with whom Oliver Cromwell afterwards overthrew the throne of England" (IV. 447).

Hawthorne also thought that Anne Hutchinson's antinomianism surpassed the self-righteous separatism of the Puritan philosophy from which it was derived, hiding from her own view a cold and exclusive pride. In his sketch of her, Hawthorne envisions her standing "loftily before her judges with a determined brow; and, unknown to herself, there is a flash of carnal pride half hidden in her eye, as she surveys the many learned and famous men whom her doctrines have put in fear. . . . She claims for herself the peculiar power of distinguishing between the chosen of man and the sealed of Heaven, and affirms that her gifted eye can see the glory round the foreheads of saints, sojourning in their mortal

state. She declares herself commissioned to separate the true shepherds from the false, and denounces present and future judgments on the land, if she be disturbed in her celestial errand" (XII. 224).  

Hawthorne was as averse to the standoffish and dangerous egotism of the arch-Puritan Cotton Mather as to that of Anne Hutchinson. He regarded Mather as "the chief agent" of "the witchcraft delusion," and he ironically referred to Mather's placing the words "Be Short" over his door as "a warning to visitors that they must not do the world so much harm as needlessly to interrupt this great man's wonderful labors" (IV. 512-13).

A number of Hawthorne's fictional works suggest the opposition between Protestant individualism and community, including "Young Goodman Brown," The Scarlet Letter, and The Marble Faun. Because of his belief in "visible sanctity," Brown, after seeing the "righteous" among the wicked, is certain of no one's righteousness but his own, and his subsequent self-isolation, as has been suggested, is the cause of his despair.  

Hester, of course, is also isolated through the Puritan belief that Massachusetts is, in the

---

17 A similar description of Anne Hutchinson may be found in Grandfather's Chair; see Works, IV, 450-52.

18 Mather is also characterized as a persecutor in "Alice Doane's Appeal," "Main Street," and The House of the Seven Gables.

19 Neal F. Doubleday's "Hawthorne's Inferno," College English, 1 (1940), 658-70, includes Brown among several of Hawthorne's creations whose pride leads to a rejection of the common "heritage of mortality and sin" (p. 663) and hence is a source of estrangement from others.
beadle's words, a place "where iniquity is dragged out into
the sunshine" (V. 75), and she is the victim of self-
righteous ridicule and scorn for years after her sentencing.
Though suffering makes a sympathetic and charitable woman of
her, Hester, who is compared to Anne Hutchinson several
times, also exhibits self-righteousness in rationalizing her
adultery as a sanctified act and so furthers her estrange-
ment from others. Hilda, a nineteenth-century "daughter
of the Puritans," displays her forefathers' priggish charac-
ter in refusing to grant guilt-stricken Miriam the sympathy
of their friendship: "But I am a poor, lonely girl, whom
God has set here in an evil world, and given her only a
white robe, and bid her wear it back to Him, as white as
when she put it on. . . . The pure, white atmosphere, in
which I try to discern what things are good and true, would
be discolored. And, therefore, Miriam, before it is too
late, I mean . . . to avoid you" (VI. 243).

The theme of "The Gentle Boy" involves the opposition
between "rational piety," as represented by the Pearsons
(Puritans who adopt Ilbrahim) and the "unbridled fanaticism"
(I. 104) of the rest of the Puritan community as well as of
the boy's Quaker mother, who abandons the child in her quest
for martyrdom. It is the self-righteousness inherent in the

20Gloria C. Erlich, "Deadly Innocence: Hawthorne's
Dark Women," New England Quarterly, 41 (1968), 163-79,
states that Hester mirrors her society in that, like the
Puritans, she in effect denies the concept of depravity.
fanaticism of both the Puritans and the Quakers which destroys human love, symbolized by Ilbrahim whose every act is an attempt to establish or maintain bonds of affection. But these attempts are successful only with Tobias Pearson, who possesses "a compassionate heart, which not even religious prejudice could harden into stone" (I. 90) and his wife, whose compassion supersedes her husband's. The rest of the Puritan community never relents in its self-righteous opposition to an unconverted child of the Quakers, and the boy dies of rejection after his malicious treatment by Puritan children among whom is a boy Ilbrahim thought he had befriended. Of course, Ilbrahim's overwhelming sense of rejection is first caused by his mother, whose self-righteousness conceals "hatred and revenge . . . in the garb of piety" (I. 100) and whose spiritual self-concern leads to the abandonment and ultimately the death of her child. She "violated the duties of the present life and the future, by fixing her attention wholly on the latter" (I. 104).

"The Man of Adamant," more directly than any other work, expresses Hawthorne's belief that the Calvinistic emphasis on direct communion between God and the individual soul often produced a type of individualism which defied bonds of human love. Richard Digby's religious beliefs are

21Seymour L. Gross, in "Hawthorne's Revision of 'The Gentle Boy,'" American Literature, 26 (1954), 196-208, points out that Hawthorne manipulated his material in revising the story "to point up the mutuality of guilt" (p. 208) between the Puritans and Quakers, deleting passages which might have caused the tale to weigh in favor of the former.
in effect a rationalization of egotistical misanthropy:

His plan of salvation was so narrow, that, like a plank in a tempestuous sea, it could avail no sinner but himself, who bestrode it triumphantly, and hurled anathemas against the wretches whom he saw struggling with the billows of eternal death. In his view of the matter, it was a most abominable crime—as, indeed, it is a great folly—for men to trust to their own strength, or even to grapple to any other fragment of the wreck, save this narrow plank, which, moreover, he took special care to keep out of their reach. In other words, as his creed was like no man's else, and being well pleased that Providence had intrusted him alone, of mortals, with the treasure of a true faith, Richard Digby determined to seclude himself to the sole and constant enjoyment of his happy fortune. (III. 564)

Having resigned the rest of mankind to imminent destruction, Digby turns to stone as a result of his sepulchral self-isolation in a wilderness cave. Before his physical transformation, he is invited to return to society by Mary Goffe, who has followed Digby from England to America out of "love almost as holy" (III. 568) as faith itself. Hawthorne strongly suggests that Digby's refusal is a type of self-damnation. Just as Digby affirms that even Mary may have no part in his faith nor in his heaven, his heart stops beating. And the fact that Mary is revealed to have been a spirit suggests that hers was a mission to save Digby's soul, "typifying pure Religion" (III. 571). Clearly Hawthorne would have endorsed R. H. Tawney's conclusion that the "moral self-sufficiency of the Puritan . . . corroded his sense of social solidarity. For, if each individual's destiny hangs on a private transaction between himself and
his Maker, what room is left for human intervention?"\textsuperscript{22}

Hawthorne recognized another origin of individualism in the intense self-concern of the increasingly liberated individual which could result in uncontrolled, even morbid egotism. The sketch, "Monsieur du Miroir," is a witty and clever \textit{tour de force} in which Hawthorne's persona naively mistakes his own mirrored image for a living entity. The constant interposition of the reflected self (made possible only by the narrator's extreme attraction to it) becomes symbolically suggestive of the isolating potential of self-concern. The narrator reports that pain is magnified by the imitative "sympathy" of his counterpart and that "solitude seemed lonelier for his presence" (II. 187). The persona suggests that he has twice failed to secure love, having instead "sought Monsieur du Miroir's society for the bewitching dreams of woman's love" (II. 193). Addressing his own image in the final paragraph, he deplores the arrested development which results from an overriding self-concern: "Of you, perhaps, as of many men, it may be doubted whether you are the wiser, though your whole business is \underline{REFLECTION}" (II. 195).

"Egotism; or, the Bosom-Serpent" is a fictive portrayal of the redoubling malignancy of morbid reflection. Roderick Elliston separates himself from his wife for four years out of unfounded jealousy. As he draws "his misery around him

\textsuperscript{22}\textit{Religion and the Rise of Capitalism}, p. 229.
like a regal mantle" (II. 310), he magnifies his anguish and hence his self-concern, thus increasing his estrangement. The serpent which tortures him from within, whether real or imagined, is thus, as the story's title suggests, "the symbol of a monstrous egotism to which everything was referred, and which he pampered, night and day, with a continual and exclusive sacrifice of devil worship" (II. 309). Though Roderick is finally saved from himself by his wife's admonition to "forget yourself in the idea of another" (II. 320), his condition is irreversible without her help since the consciousness of self is in isolation the prisoner of self. Earlier Roderick proclaims, "Could I for one instant forget myself, the serpent might not abide within me. It is my diseased self-contemplation that has engendered and nourished him" (II. 319). These remarks, which may be taken as a statement of the story's theme, suggest Hawthorne's perception of the threat to human love posed by self-concern.

Like Roderick Elliston, the central character of "Wakefield" is a man of "quiet selfishness" and "petty secrets" (I. 155) who one day submits to a selfish impulse to leave his wife for the egotistical delight of secretly observing her reaction to his unexplainable absence. The danger inherent in this wildly individualistic impulse is expressed in the narrator's response to Wakefield's paranoic delusion that he may at any moment be detected: "Poor Wakefield! Little knowest thou thine own insignificance in this great world!" (I. 156). The actual danger is not detection but
the loss of Wakefield's identity:

He had contrived, or rather he had happened, to dis-sever himself from the world—to vanish—to give up his place and privileges with living men, without being ad-mitted among the dead. The life of a hermit is nowise parallel to his. He was in the bustle of the city, as of old; but the crowd swept by and saw him not; he was, we may figuratively say, always beside his wife and at his hearth, yet must never feel the warmth of the one nor the affection of the other. It was Wakefield's unprecedented fate to retain his original share of human sympathies, and to be still involved in human interests, while he had lost his reciprocal influence on them. It would be a most curious speculation to trace out the effect of such circumstances on his heart and intellect, separately, and in unison. Yet, changed as he was, he would seldom be conscious of it, but deem himself the same man as ever . . . . (I. 162)

Hawthorne suggests that paradoxically it is only through relationships with others that man's identity is established and preserved and that individualistic impulses, to the extent that they impel men from the spheres of human love and community, actually threaten identity and individualism themselves. Over the twenty-year period that Wakefield remains hidden from his wife, she naturally begins to live as if he no longer existed, and he ceases to have the slightest "reciprocal influence" on the world he observes. An individualism which opposes love and community is a threat to the self as well: "Amid the seeming confusion of our mysterious world, individuals are so nicely adjusted to a system, and systems to one another and to a whole, that, by stepping aside for a moment, a man exposes himself to a fearful risk of losing his place forever. Like Wakefield, he may become, as it were, the Outcast of the Universe" (I. 164).
Hawthorne knew that the tension between individualism and community was an especially keen problem in democratic America. In *Doctor Grimshawe's Secret*, one of Hawthorne's last attempts to write a romance, the young American Redclyffe, drawn to the unity of traditionalistic England, admits to a "horror of being a creature floating in the air, attached to nothing; ever this feeling that there is no reality in the life and fortunes, good or bad, of a being so unconnected" (XIII. 276). The potential destruction of community through uncontrolled individuality is a major theme of *The Blithedale Romance*, a novel representative of the American search for ideal community. For the individualistic freedom each of the major characters has experienced as a member of American democracy has prompted a restive or directionless search for self-fulfillment which actually threatens the community he is supposedly helping to build. As Miles Coverdale affirms, speaking of the Blithedale reformers as a whole, they possess only the "negative" bond of their "marked individuality." All are "pretty well agreed as to the inexpediency of lumbering along with the old system any further," but they differ individually concerning "what should be substituted" (V. 390-91).

In depicting the interaction of the four major characters of *The Blithedale Romance*, Hawthorne demonstrates the harm individuality can cause, despite the most philanthropic ideals or the warmest affections on the part of the individualist. Zenobia's pride, vanity, and passionate boldness
belie her feminist leadership at Blithedale; they cause her betrayal of her own sister for the love of Hollingsworth, a man who, ironically, believes that "woman is a monster . . . without man as her acknowledged principal!" (V. 459). Hollingsworth's monomaniac desire to rid the world of its selfish and criminal tendencies leads to an undermining of the Blithedale system, the estrangement of his friend Coverdale, and the return of Priscilla to the control of the mesmerist Westervelt for the sake of obtaining Zenobia's wealth. Although guileless and naive, Priscilla is ignorant and irresponsible, having had no opportunity for personal development before coming to Blithedale. The careless individuality she finds there becomes a threat to others as well as herself. She unwittingly causes harm to both Zenobia and herself by becoming Zenobia's rival for Hollingsworth's love and by remaining slavishly devoted to him even though he betrays her into Westervelt's hands for her sister's wealth and then similarly betrays Zenobia when her fortune is claimed by Old Moodie.

Coverdale's introspection, love of solitude, and fastidious scrutiny of his friends recall the egotistical self-concern which characterizes Wakefield, Roderick Elliston, and even Hester Prynne. Like them he is in constant danger of impelling himself beyond the sphere of brotherhood and love. In the novel's last chapter, many years after the events of his narrative, he reveals himself as a foppish dilettante who had loved Priscilla but could not forget
himself long enough to make his love known. Nor is the harm merely to himself. Conscious of "duties unperformed," he at one point admits, "With the power, perhaps, to act in the place of destiny and avert misfortune from my friends, I had resigned them to their fate" (V. 495). At the time of this candid remark, Coverdale has recently walked away from his friendship with Hollingsworth and abandoned the Blithedale community though apprised of Hollingsworth's subversive plans. Soon he is to wash his hands of the responsibility he shares for Priscilla. After Hollingsworth's harsh and self-righteous judgment of Zenobia at Eliot's Pulpit, Coverdale irresponsibly allows Zenobia to wander off alone and Uncomforted; and he falls asleep as she drowns herself in despair. Coverdale's lack of purpose is, as he himself realizes, linked to his inability to make the least sacrifice of himself. Gladly would he participate in any noble endeavor, he proclaims, "provided, however, the effort did not involve an unreasonable amount of trouble" (V. 599).

Hawthorne did not oppose per se the individualism of his age. But he regarded it as one potential source of man's alienation from God and fellow man; he realized that without control individualism poses a threat to faith and community, both of which are actually necessary for fulfillment and for the preservation of identity itself. Without direction and restraint the individual may fall into the despair of Young Goodman Brown, the speculative self-deification of Hester Prynne, the purposelessness of Coverdale,
or the radical estrangement from others illustrated by Richard Digby, Wakefield, and Roderick Elliston.

II. Reason and Science

Hawthorne also recognized reason and science as potential agents of man's alienation. Ethan Brand is guilty, by his own admission, of the unpardonable "sin of an intellect that triumphed over the sense of brotherhood with man and reverence for God, and sacrificed everything to its own mighty claims!" (III. 485). The influence of the scientist Westervelt upon the meditative Coverdale causes the latter to suffer loss of meaning and to assume a cynical disregard for his friends:

... I suddenly found myself possessed by a mood of disbelief in moral beauty or heroism, and a conviction of the folly of attempting to benefit the world. ... While thus musing, I heard, with perfect distinctness, somewhere in the wood beneath, the peculiar laugh which I have described as one of the disagreeable characteristics of Professor Westervelt. It brought my thoughts back to our recent interview. I recognized as chiefly due to this man's influence the sceptical and sneering view which, just now had filled my mental vision, in regard to all life's better purposes. And it was through his eyes, more than my own, that I was looking at Hollingsworth, with his glorious, if impracticable dream, and at the noble earthliness of Zenobia's character, and even at Priscilla, whose impalpable grace lay so singularly between disease and beauty. The essential charm of each had vanished. There are some spheres the contact with which inevitably degrades the high, debases the pure, deforms the beautiful. It must be a mind of uncommon strength, and little impressibility, that can permit itself the habit of such intercourse, and not be permanently deteriorated; and

---

yet the Professor's tone represented that of worldly society at large, where a cold scepticism smothers what it can of our spiritual aspirations, and makes the rest ridiculous. I detested this kind of man; and all the more because a part of my own nature showed itself responsive to him. (V. 434-35)

Hawthorne showed a suspicion of reason and the scientific mind in a number of other characters from Aylmer and Rappaccini to Chillingworth and Westervelt and Septimius Felton, all of whom, whether intentionally or unintentionally, pose a threat to human love or to man's spiritual aspirations.

Such characters threaten transcendent meaning in that they approach the problems of life experimentally, placing themselves in the role of creator, hybristically deifying mankind (somewhat as Hester deifies the self) and hence obliterating the relation of natural life to spiritual life. Ethan Brand indicates the extent of his estrangement from God when, accused of association with the devil, he replies, "Man! . . . what need have I of the Devil? I have left him behind me, on my track" (III. 484). Brand's "vast intellectual development" has resulted ultimately in the conviction only of life's absurdity, and he compares himself to a dog foolishly chasing its own tail. Brand is incapable of the emotional response to his condition shown by the boy Joe, whose "tender spirit had an intuition of the bleak and terrible loneliness in which this man had enveloped himself" (III. 493-94). He is left in a state of cold, irreversible despair. Brand's sense of purposelessness is such that he
can think only to end his meaningless existence: "What more have I to seek? what more to achieve? . . . O stars of heaven, that shone on me of old, as if to light me onward and upward!—farewell all, and forever" (III. 495-96).

In "Rappaccini's Daughter" Rappaccini's Faustian self-deification is suggested when Beatrice tells Giovanni that her father is "fearfully acquainted with the secrets of Nature" and has "created" (II. 142) the world she inhabits. Giovanni, himself a student of science, respects life's sanctity no more than Rappaccini. He too experiments with Beatrice because of his inability to see in her and in her love for him a truth higher than that revealed to the senses. When he finally confronts her with the dreadful reality of her physical nature, he also becomes conscious "of the delicate and benign power of her feminine nature, which had so often enveloped him in a religious calm . . . of many a holy and passionate outgush of her heart, when the pure fountain had been unsealed from its depths and made visible in its transparency to his mental eye" (II. 141). But, "Incapable as he was of such high faith" (II. 142), he hopes merely for "an earthly union and earthly happiness" once, ironically, Beatrice is "redeemed" (II. 145). The fate of Beatrice, whose earthly happiness has been made the object of scientific experiment, suggests that true happiness, unlike the physical security provided by her father or the future envisioned by Giovanni, must transcend physical existence: "She must pass heavily, with that broken heart,
across the borders of Time—she must bathe her hurts in some fount of paradise, and forget her grief in the light of immortality, and there be well" (II. 145).

Hawthorne's recognition of the atheistic implications of the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century is nowhere more clearly suggested than in his portrait of Roger Chillingworth in The Scarlet Letter. Though Chillingworth follows the Puritan faith outwardly, he is clearly placed among that group of "Skilful men, of the medical and chirurgical profession" who "seldom . . . partook of the religious zeal that brought other emigrants across the Atlantic. In their researches into the human frame, it may be that the higher and more subtile faculties of such men were materialized, and that they lost the spiritual view of existence amid the intricacies of that wondrous mechanism, which seemed to involve art enough to comprise all of life within itself" (V. 146). The ease and rapidity with which Chillingworth, under false identity, is welcomed into the Puritan community also suggests Hawthorne's awareness of the questionable affinity between Puritanism and science in the seventeenth century, as does Governor Bellingham's acquaintance with Bacon. The Puritan community's general belief that Chillingworth is helping Dimmesdale, a minister searching for his own salvation, ironically suggests the inability of the Puritans to grasp the threat to faith posed by the scientific mind. The horror of Chillingworth's revenge is its potential for alienating Dimmesdale from God. As R. H.
Fogle has suggested, the Puritans' blindness as regards Chillingworth is such that "Even when he closes the way to escape by proposing to take passage on the same ship with the fleeing lovers, it is possible to consider the action merely friendly. His endeavor at the end to hold Dimmesdale back from the saving scaffold is from one point of view rea­sonable and friendlike, although he is a devil struggling to snatch back an escaping soul."24

Chillingworth's effort to get revenge on his wife's lover is undertaken, like the experiments of Rappaccini and Giovanni, without reverence for the sacred and the spiritual in defiance of life's transcendent meaning. Early in the novel he proposes detecting the identity of Pearl's father through the scientific examination of her physical characteristics, a suggestion which the Reverend John Wilson dismisses as sinful. Later Chillingworth defies higher law not only in ignoring Hester's plea to leave Dimmesdale's "fur­ther retribution to the Power that claims it" (V. 209) but also in applying tortures which are designed to alienate Dimmesdale from God: "By means of them, the sufferer's con­science had been kept in an irritated state, the tendency of which was, not to cure by wholesome pain, but to disorganize and corrupt his spiritual being. Its result, on earth, could hardly fail to be insanity, and hereafter, that

eternal alienation from the Good and True, of which madness is perhaps the earthly type" (V. 231-32). It is only when Dimmesdale turns directly and openly to God that Chillingworth is rendered powerless. Aside from the fiendishness of his appearance, Chillingworth's own alienation from God is most evident in that, as with Ethan Brand, his life becomes purposeless once the object of his inquiry is removed. After Dimmesdale's death, he simply "withered up, shrivelled away, and almost vanished from mortal sight, like an up-rooted weed that lies wilting in the sun" (V. 307).

Westervelt, described by Coverdale as a "moral and physical humbug" (V. 428), represents the attempt before and during Hawthorne's time to wed the highest moral truth to the findings of science. In the speech which Coverdale hears at the last exhibition of the Veiled Lady, Westervelt speaks "of a new era that was dawning upon the world; an era that would link soul to soul, and the present life to what we call futurity, with a closeness that should finally convert both worlds into one great, mutually conscious brotherhood." But, as Coverdale skeptically observes, "He described (in a strange, philosophical guise, with terms of art, as if it were a matter of chemical discovery) the agency by which this mighty result was to be effected; nor would it have surprised me, had he pretended to hold up a

portion of his universally pervasive fluid, as he affirmed it to be, in a glass phial." In the final analysis Westervelt's discourse is "eloquent, ingenious, plausible, with a delusive show of spirituality, yet really imbued throughout with a cold and dead materialism" (V. 547).

The essential fault with men such as Westervelt is, as Coverdale correctly perceives, that the knowledge and power they possess, being of a physical nature, can, if passed off as spiritual, actually estrange men from God. To Westervelt, guilt and virtue are meaningless, and "The religious sentiment was a flame which he could blow up with his breath, or a spark that he could utterly extinguish" (V. 545). The exhibition even prompts Coverdale to condemn the present vogue of spiritualism as a threat to man's soul:

The epoch of rapping spirits, and all the wonders that have followed in their train,—such as tables upset by invisible agencies, bells self-tolled at funerals, and ghostly music performed on jewsharps,—had not yet arrived. Alas, my countrymen, methinks we have fallen on an evil age! If these phenomena have not humbug at the bottom, so much the worse for us. What can they indicate, in a spiritual way, except that the soul of man is descending to a lower point than it has ever before reached while incarnate? We are pursuing a downward course in the eternal march, and thus bring ourselves into the same range with beings whom death, in requital of their gross and evil lives, has degraded below humanity! (V. 545)

Westervelt's lack of respect for truly moral and spiritual concerns is further revealed when, after Zenobia's death, his only regrets are for the power and influence she might have wielded. "How forcibly she might have wrought upon the world," he exclaims, "either directly in her own person, or
by her influence upon some man, or a series of men, of con­
trolling genius!" (V. 591).

**Septimius Felton**, the most complete of the four unfinished romances which Hawthorne attempted toward the end of his life, shares with the others several recurrent images and motifs, among them the image of the vengeful doctor and the theme of the search for an elixir of eternal life. Septimius is no doctor (though he is a student and at one point consults a sinister doctor), but he becomes involved in a quasi-scientific quest for the *elixir vitae*, a quest essentially inimical to the idea of life's transcendent purpose. Even before he obtains the nearly-indecipherable document promising eternal life, Felton exhibits a disillusionment concerning life's brevity which bespeaks rationalism and materialism nearly as cold and spiritless as those of Westervelt. Though training for the ministry, he has come to believe that "it is the snake-like doubt that thrusts out its head, which gives us a glimpse of reality. Surely such moments are a hundred times as real as the dull, quiet moments of faith." He even confesses to having "too pro­found a sense of the marvellous contrivance and adaptation of this material world to require or believe in anything spiritual" (XI. 237-38). So disposed, he finds life purposeless or "ridiculous" because of its brevity. And he foolishly interprets an intimation of immortality as evi­dence of the possibility of eternal life on earth "instead
of interpreting it justly as the promise of spiritual immortality" (XI. 240).

Constantly perusing the ancient document, Septimius makes changes in his life which only magnify his expectations and further his indifference to transcendent reality. He continues to read poetry and the Bible, to pray, and to practice charity but only when these may have a preserving effect on his youth. Conducting experiments to find the elixir vitæ he gives his own aunt, his only relative other than a sister, a fatal concoction but from a God-like stance coldly dismisses the effect, reasoning that "Something must be risked in the cause of science" (XI. 362). Eventually, there is even reason for his minister "to suspect that Septimius had unfortunately allowed infidel ideas to assail, at least, if not to overcome, that fortress of firm faith, which he had striven to found and strengthen in his mind" (XI. 415).

Septimius' quest for eternal life on earth proves to have been hopeless from the start, propounded by a vengeful girl whose fiancé Septimius had slain in war. Her eventual revelation of the truth, spoken as she dies of the potion which had been intended for Septimius himself, provides a concise suggestion of the delusiveness and purposelessness of a life devoted solely to objective intellectual ends: "Oh, how I surrounded thee with dreams, and instead of giving thee immortal life, so kneaded up the little life allotted thee with dreams and vaporing stuff, that thou didst
not really live even that" (XI. 427).

Hawthorne was also aware that the scientific cultivation of the intellect could separate man from his fellow human beings. In The House of the Seven Gables, for instance, Holgrave's scientific and other intellectual interests have caused an objectivity which renders him, in Phoebe's eyes, "scarcely . . . affectionate in his nature. He was too calm and cool an observer" (III. 213). Holgrave himself affirms Phoebe's impression when, concerning the trials of Hepzibah and Clifford, he coldly states, "It is not my impulse, as regards these two individuals, either to help or hinder; but to look on, to analyze, to explain matters to myself, and to comprehend the drama which, for almost two hundred years, has been dragging its slow length over the ground where you and I now tread. If permitted to witness the close, I doubt not to derive a moral satisfaction from it, go matters how they may" (III. 258). And Ethan Brand's intellectual development has estranged him from his fellow man as well as God. For though Brand had begun life with "love and sympathy for mankind" and "pity for human guilt and woe" his intellectual development has caused his heart to cease "to partake of the universal throb. He . . . was now a cold observer, looking on mankind as the subject of his experiment" (III. 494-95).

Septimius Felton finds that the best means of preserving his body from decay as he searches for the elixir vitae is a passive moderation which involves his separation from
the cares and trials of his fellow human beings. From his ancient manuscript he extracts a set of Epicurean principles by which he constantly admonishes himself to shun beautiful women and to avoid both hatred and friendship, all for their disturbing emotional effects, and to perform acts of kindness or relieve suffering when these may produce "a pleasant self-laudation" (XI. 341). The indiscretion of Septimius' self-isolation is suggested when he finally resolves to forgo the more intimate ties, "the sweet sister; the friend of his childhood; the grave instructor of his youth; the homely, life-known faces" (XI. 383), and chooses for his sole partner in eternity a girl devoted to his disillusionment and destruction.

Set in an age of new discoveries when "it was not unusual for the love of science to rival the love of woman," "The Birthmark" also suggests the threat to human love posed by science. For Aylmer, "devoted . . . too unreservedly to scientific studies ever to be weaned from them by any second passion" (II. 47), foolishly risks the life of his wife Georgiana, overlooking her perfect love in his determination to perfect her physical beauty by scientifically removing a small hand-shaped birthmark from her cheek. Unlike Ethan Brand and Septimius Felton, Aylmer has not precluded spiritual aspirations from his practice, but, like theirs, his quest for perfection is actually a denial of love. Hawthorne clearly suggests that wherever science leads man to expect any form of human perfection, whether in himself or
in others, it also fosters isolation. Aylmer's inability to accept a minor imperfection in his wife's features reveals an incapacity for genuine love. He simply cannot love her—mortal woman that she is. This is strongly implied by the narrator's statement that the "crimson hand expressed the ineludible gripe in which mortality clutches the highest and purest of earthly mould, degrading them into kindred with the lowest, and even with the very brutes, like whom their visible frames return to dust" (II. 50). Georgiana herself states in her dying moments that Aylmer has "rejected the best the earth could offer" (II. 69). His attempt to change her was thus from the beginning a rejection essentially of herself and hence a denial rather than an expression of love.

Set in Renaissance Padua, "Rappaccini's Daughter" concerns, more than is generally noted, the man of science as he emerges from a medieval background. In fact, the tale portrays the conflict between Aristotelian scholastics and their more empirical descendants. Rappaccini, first of all, is an empiricist whom Bacon would have admired and compared to the industrious bee, though Hawthorne certainly suggests no such approval. When Giovanni first sees him, Rappaccini exhibits a typically Baconian tendency toward inductive observation and a bee-like intensity as he moves from

26I have relied on Joseph A. Mazzeo, Renaissance and Revolution, pp. 188, 197, et passim, concerning Bacon's attitude toward the three types of scientists in The Advancement of Learning.
shrub to shrub in his voluptuous garden. "Nothing could exceed the intentness with which this scientific gardener examined every shrub which grew in his path: it seemed as if he was looking into their inmost nature, making observations in regard to their creative essence, and discovering why one leaf grew in this shape and another in that, and wherefore such and such flowers differed among themselves in hue and perfume" (II. 112).

The nature of the contention between Rappaccini and Baglioni, who professes the "arcana of medical science" (II. 125), concerns, at bottom, method, the inductive method as opposed to the Aristotelian reliance upon deductive reasoning. Though Baglioni admits to a certain admiration for Rappaccini, he describes him ironically as "as true a man of science as ever distilled his own heart in an alembic" and later calls him "a vile empiric" (II. 137-38). The reader is informed that he may learn the details of the "professional warfare" between the two by referring to "certain black-letter tracts on both sides, preserved in the medical department of the University of Padua" (II. 117). It is not without cause, then, that Baglioni fears that Rappaccini desires to have him removed from the university, although it is doubtful that Beatrice (as he suspects) is to be his replacement since she admits to Giovanni her ignorance of her father's science. When Baglioni learns of Giovanni's meetings with Beatrice, he is not merely concerned about the son of his old friend but selfishly thinks, "...
too insufferable an impertinence in Rappaccini, thus to snatch the lad out of my own hands . . . and make use of him for his infernal experiments" (II. 125). Here and in the lethal scheme he devises for foiling Rappaccini he recalls Bacon's reference to the scholastics as spiders, spinning elaborate webs from within their vile beings.  

To Giovanni falls the role of the ant, Bacon's metaphor for such intellectually blind, unsystematic experimenters as the alchemists. He is pathetically slow in realizing that Rappaccini has made him the object of a sinister experiment, despite Baglioni's warnings and, more significantly, despite the repeated evidence of his senses concerning the poisonous atmosphere of the garden. He is never suspicious of old Lisabetta for offering to show him a secret passageway to the garden as he one day returns to his room, though she "smirked and smiled, and was evidently desirous to attract his attention" (II. 125). Yet Giovanni relies upon his senses too exclusively to see, when finally aware of Beatrice's poisonous physical nature, her unsullied character and the purity of the love she has offered him: "Forget whatever you may have fancied in regard to me. If true to the outward senses, still it may be false in its essence; but the words of Beatrice Rappaccini's lips are true from

---

27 Both Dr. Grimshawe and Dr. Portsoaken of Septimius Felton are vengeful scientists who keep spiders as companions.
the depths of the heart outward" (II. 130). Subsequently Giovanni helps cause Beatrice's death by foolishly allowing himself to become an object in Baglioni's own sinister "experiment," which Giovanni naively fancies as his own.

Each of these scientists, despite their differences, victimizes Beatrice, suggesting that science in whatever form or method always poses a threat to human love. Rappaccini's science has endowed his daughter with power which opposes her need for human bonds. Beatrice tells Giovanni, "There was an awful doom, . . . the effect of my father's fatal love of science, which estranged me from all society of my kind" (II. 143). And, dying, she insists, "I would fain have been loved, not feared" (II. 147). Baglioni, though ostensibly acting in Giovanni's interest, obviously has chiefly his own in mind when he gives Giovanni the potent antidote which is the direct cause of Beatrice's death; this is strongly suggested by his mere presence in the final scene as well as by his taunting remarks to

28 Roy R. Male, in Hawthorne's Tragic Vision, pp. 54-70, suggests that Giovanni is incapable of perceiving a higher truth which is represented by Beatrice.

29 I am indebted to Edward H. Rosenberry, "Hawthorne's Allegory of Science: 'Rappaccini's Daughter,'" American Literature, 32 (1960), 39-46; Rosenberry says that Rappaccini represents experimental science and Baglioni conservative science. I obviously disagree with his interpretation of Giovanni as representative of traditional education and of Beatrice as the new scientific generation. And I find Hawthorne less sympathetic to scientists in general than Rosenberry suggests. On Hawthorne's suspicion of the scientific mind see Oliver Evans' " Allegory and Incest in 'Rappaccini's Daughter,'" Nineteenth Century Fiction, 19 (1964), 185-95.
Rappaccini, whom he suspects of having intended Beatrice for his chair at the university. Giovanni, true to the role of the ant, blindly experiments with Beatrice by giving her Baglioni's antidote untested. But even had the antidote not proved lethal, his selfishness and his inability to separate her physical corruption from the purity of her affection have destroyed the potential for love between them. Blind to the role his own rashness has played in his contagion, he at first hates Beatrice and even desires her death before the idea of "redeeming" her enters his mind. "O, weak, and selfish, and unworthy spirit," the narrator comments, "that could dream of an earthly union and earthly happiness as possible, after such deep love had been so bitterly wronged" (II. 145).

Her death the result of the actions and dispositions of all three scientists, Beatrice is truly "the poor victim of man's ingenuity and of thwarted nature, and of the fatality that attends all such efforts of perverted wisdom" (II. 147). Perhaps no tale reveals as thoroughly as "Rappaccini's Daughter" Hawthorne's firm conviction that science in whatever form can produce a selfish and materialistic desire for power which may destroy human love.

Hawthorne feared the possible domination of one human being by another through the power of science. He was highly suspicious of the vogue for mesmerism or "animal
magnetism," as it was sometimes called. When Sophia considered hypnotism as a means of curing her chronic headaches, he was strongly opposed and even experienced nightmares. As the following entry in his American journal suggests, Hawthorne felt that the scientific observation of the workings of the mind and spirit was, because of the assumed objectivity of any scientific observer, an antithesis of human love:

The Unpardonable Sin might consist in a want of love and reverence for the Human Soul; in consequence of which, the investigator pried into its dark depths, not with a hope or purpose of making it better, but from a cold philosophical curiosity,—content that it should be wicked in whatever kind or degree, and only desiring to study it out. Would not this, in other words, be the separation of the intellect from the heart?

The violation of personal autonomy through such "cold philosophical curiosity" is one aspect of Ethan Brand's terrible estrangement from mankind. The tale briefly mentions a girl named Esther, "whom, with such cold and remorseless purpose, Ethan Brand had made the subject of a psychological experiment, and wasted, absorbed, and perhaps annihilated her soul, in the process" (III. 489). Chillingworth begins his vengeful search coldly, "as if the question involved no more than the air-drawn lines and figures of a geometrical problem, instead of human passions, and wrongs inflicted on himself (V. 158). The result when he discovers Dimmesdale's

---

30 Nye, Society and Culture in America, pp. 333-34.
31 Hubert H. Hoeltje, Inward Sky, pp. 191, 388.
guilt is a horrific violation of the sanctity of the individual human soul which nearly reduces a man to the level of a machine. For Chillingworth "could play upon him as he chose. . . . The victim was forever on the rack; it needed only to know the spring that controlled the engine; and the physician knew it well!" (V. 171).

A similar lack of reverence for the sanctity of the individual consciousness is shown by the younger Matthew Maule, grandson of his namesake in The House of the Seven Gables. Maule, like his descendent Holgrave, possesses mesmeric powers but lacks Holgrave's reverence for individuality. Jealously mindful of his grandfather's claim to the Pyncheon property and offended by Gervayse Pyncheon's haughtiness toward him (as well as by an imagined slight upon the part of Gervayse's daughter Alice), Maule takes revenge by keeping the girl in a semi-trance for the sake of humiliating the Pyncheon family. But Alice endures more than humiliation as Maule's mastery extends, without his fully realizing it, to her very spirit:

. . . Maule had but to wave his hand; and, wherever the proud lady chanced to be,—whether in her chamber, or entertaining her father's stately guests, or worshiping at church,—whatever her place or occupation, her spirit passed from beneath her own control, and bowed itself to Maule. "Alice, laugh!"—the carpenter, beside his hearth, would say; or perhaps intensely will it, without a spoken word. And, even were it prayer-time, or at a funeral, Alice must break into wild laughter. "Alice, be sad!"—and, at the instant, down would come her tears, quenching all the mirth of those

\[33^\text{Works, III, 253.}\]
around her like sudden rain upon a bonfire. "Alice, dance!"—and dance she would . . . (III. 249)

So completely deprived of her individuality that she "longed to change natures with some worm," Alice dies, leaving the guilt-ridden Maule the "wofullest man that ever walked behind a corpse" for having "taken a woman's delicate soul into his rude gripe, to play with" (III. 250-51).

The evil of Westervelt's power over Priscilla is suggested, first of all, by the fact that she must twice be betrayed into his hands, first by her father and then by Zenobia and Hollingsworth. Under the mesmerist's control she becomes, by Coverdale's description, a "disembodied spirit" (V. 326), for Westervelt's power is such that "Human character was but soft wax in his hands" (V. 545). The opposition between love and science is further suggested by the fact that Priscilla's betrayal by Zenobia and Hollingsworth is a denial of the affection she has for them. She is finally able to free herself through love. At Hollingsworth's sorrowful request she defies Westervelt's claim that even "moral inducement" could not weaken his hold upon her, proving that "the true heart-throb of a woman's affection was too powerful for the jugglery that had hitherto environed her" (V. 549-50).

In the final analysis, Hawthorne's lifelong suspicion of science reflects the belief that man's quest for certain types of knowledge and for the physical power which accompanies science alters the conditions which make love and
faith possible. In The Blithedale Romance, Zenobia recounts the legend of "The Veiled Lady" in which a skeptical youth named Theodore resolves to discover the identity of the Veiled Lady. Secretly approaching her, he is unexpectedly offered love, which he may accept by kissing her before the veil is lifted. If he violates the offering by seeking to know the lady's identity first, he will see her once but never again. Skeptical and contemptuous of the warning, he decides to lift the veil before stealing a kiss, but the lady vanishes leaving him with only a momentary "glimpse of a pale, lovely face ... . His retribution was, to pine forever and ever for another sight of that dim, mournful face,--which might have been his life-long household fireside joy" (V. 449).

The modern quest for knowledge is thus inimical to the faith and understanding which bind individuals together, but it is also inimical to another type of faith, that which leads man beyond the practical and observable restrictions of his earthly existence. In "Old Ticonderoga," an early sketch recounting Hawthorne's visits to the old fortress, the author recalls being "favored" on his first visit "with the scientific guidance of a young lieutenant of engineers, recently from West Point." Finding the young officer's observations "as accurate as a geometrical theorem, and as barren of the poetry that has clustered round the fort's decay," he wishes instead for the accompaniment of a "hoary veteran." Such a companion would provide a truth to surpass
the cold observations of the officer, who is only concerned with the tangible and practical aspects of the fortress. The veteran "might have mustered his dead chiefs and comrades . . . and bid them march through the ruined gateway, turning their old historic faces on me, as they passed. Next to such a companion," he adds, "the best is one's own fancy" (III. 591-93). In the remainder of the sketch, which concerns the author's return alone to the historic site, he uses fancy to re-create the most intense moments of Old Ticonderoga's history. The total effect of the sketch is thus to suggest Hawthorne's abiding sense that man is naturally drawn to a truth beyond the merely factual, a truth which transcends the momentary, the visible, and the practical.

III. Materialism

Throughout his life Hawthorne was concerned with the loss of spirituality caused by the materialism of his age. Early in his career he felt that "The ideas of people in general are not raised higher than the roofs of the houses. All their interests extend over the earth's surface in a layer of that thickness. The meeting-house steeple reaches out of their sphere." He sensed an irony in the fact that men might devote years of labor to distant earthly goals "but none for an end that may be close at hand,--as the joys of heaven." Mankind might be likened to trees; "they are unconscious of a spiritual world so near them. So are
A theme of the English notebooks is Hawthorne's increasing sense of an unexpected materiality in English city life, and he never ceases to remark, though often humorously, upon its effect on the appearance of English ladies:

No caricature could do justice to some of their figures and features; so puffed out, so huge, so without limit, with such hanging dewlaps, and all manner of fleshly abomination--dressed, too, in a way to show all these points to the worst advantage, and walking about with entire self-satisfaction, unconscious of the wrong they are doing to one's idea of womanhood. They are gross, gross, gross. Who would not shrink from such a mother! Who would not abhor such a wife? I really pitied the respectable elderly gentlemen whom I saw walking about with such atrocities hanging on their arms—the grim, red-faced monsters! Surely, a man would be justified in murdering them—in taking a sharp knife and cutting away their mountainous flesh, until he had brought them into reasonable shape, as a sculptor seeks for the beautiful form of woman in a shapeless block of marble. The husband must feel that something alien has grown over and incrusted the slender creature whom he married, and that he is horribly wronged by having all this flabby flesh imposed upon him as his wife. "Flesh of his flesh," indeed! And this ugliness surely need not be, at least to such a dreadful extent; it must be, in great part, the penalty of a life of gross feeding—of much ale-guzzling and beef-eating. Nor is it possible to conceive of any delicacy and grace of soul existing within; or if there be such, the creature ought to be killed, in order to release the spirit so vilely imprisoned.35

On the Continent, as previously shown, Hawthorne was revolted by the crude and vulgar materiality which he felt disparaged its pervasive religiosity.

34 The American Notebooks, ed. Simpson, pp. 24, 166, 251.

35 The English Notebooks, ed. Stewart, pp. 88-89. See also pp. 18, 28, 376.
Hawthorne saw the natural connection between science and materialism. Most of the scientists depicted by Hawthorne sin or err because they attempt, through knowledge, to convert Nature or life itself to purely material or utilitarian ends. The connection between scientific discovery and selfish materialism is a theme of "Dr. Heidegger's Experiment," a satire in which four aging friends of the doctor (a woman and her three former suitors) are given a concoction distilled from water supposedly taken from Ponce De Leon's Fountain of Youth. As their youth returns, they become silly and obnoxious, and the three suitors are soon grappling at one another's throats. Though the effect is momentary and the participants are somewhat shameful of their antics (which have caused the remainder of the fluid to be spilled), they resolve to leave for Florida immediately. In The Dolliver Romance the same theme is implied in the contrast between Dr. Dolliver, who uses a similar elixir only to preserve himself for the sake of his orphaned granddaughter, and Colonel Dabney, in whom rumor of the elixir has produced an insane jealousy. Demanding the elixir with threats of violence, the Colonel greedily drinks it all at once and perishes from the overdose.

Hawthorne also recognized that Puritanism fostered materialism and utilitarianism. In Biographical Sketches, Hawthorne described the New Englanders' enthusiasm in aiding the British assault on Louisburg in 1745 as owing, in part, to "the hope of private advantage" (XII. 237). In one of
the more humorous sketches in Grandfather's Chair, John Hull, the first Puritan mint-master in America, is described as a man who seized upon advantage, worked hard and diligently, and grew rich. At his daughter's wedding he wears coins for buttons and grants the groom (a richly dressed Samuel Sewel) his daughter's weight in silver pine-tree shillings, actually placing her, "round and plump as a pudding" (IV. 461), in the scales with the following remarks: "Use her kindly, and thank Heaven for her. It is not every wife that's worth her weight in silver!" (IV. 463). The Puritans of The Scarlet Letter, though they have estranged Hester and even Pearl, nevertheless welcome the monied buccaneers, exhibiting blindness to forces which may undermine their faith: "Thus, the Puritan elders, in their black cloaks, starched bands, and steeple-crowned hats, smiled not unbeneignantly at the clamor and rude deportment of these jolly seafaring men; and it excited neither surprise nor animadversion when so reputable a citizen as old Roger Chillingworth, the physician, was seen to enter the marketplace, in close and familiar talk with the commander of the questionable vessel" (V. 278). It is finally revealed that Pearl's inheritance from Roger Chillingworth "wrought a very material change in the public estimation; and, had the mother and child remained here, little Pearl, at a marriageable period of life, might have mingled her wild blood with the lineage of the devoutest Puritan among them all" (V. 308). As suggested in Chapter One, Hawthorne knew that
Puritanism influenced the materialism of his age, the contemporary story-teller of "Passages from a Relinquished Work" having run away from a Puritan stepfather who decried the youth's literary yearnings as immoral while advocating a practical, more remunerative profession.

In nineteenth-century America, where Puritanism had a strong influence and innovations met less resistance, materialism and utilitarianism had a unique hold, and Hawthorne was often skeptical of this aspect of the American character. An encounter with a group of good-natured Swiss caused him to characterize his own people as "a dull race of money-getting drudges" (II. 486). He described a Detroit merchant even more harshly: "In this sharp-eyed man, this lean man, of wrinkled brow, we see daring enterprise and close-fisted avarice combined. Here is the worshipper of Mammon at noonday; here is the three times bankrupt, richer after every ruin; here, in one word, . . . is the American" (II. 490). Much later in his career, Hawthorne satirized American utilitarianism by having an American artist in The Marble Faun remark that in his own country a monument such as the Fountain of Trevi would be used "to turn the machinery of a cotton-mill" (VI. 174).

"Lady Eleanore's Mantle" suggests Hawthorne's conviction that American democracy often produced a vain and base

---

imitation of the aristocratic pride which it supposedly eradicated. Lady Eleanore's haughtiness is matched by Jervase Helwyse's abject admiration of her beauty as well as by the obvious pleasure of the common people in seeing the lady use Jervase as a footstool. The progress of the disease (which emanates from the lady herself, encircles the colonial aristocracy, and then descends to the lower elements of society) suggests that pride may take the same course. In the final scenes, Jervase's mad exultation over the stricken lady and the jeering scorn with which the mob parades and then burns her effigy reveal Lady Eleanor as not merely an emblem of vanity and pride but, as she herself suggests, "the medium of a dreadful sympathy" (I. 325) between the highest and the lowest.  

No fictional work of Hawthorne's suggests the alienating potential of materialism more thoroughly and directly than The House of the Seven Gables. The story of the Pyncheon family from the old Colonel down to Jaffrey is one which confirms that material concerns beget avarice rather than security and peace and may serve to estrange man from God and from fellow man. Out of the desire for material security, Colonel Pyncheon and his descendants sin against their fellow men and endanger their own souls. This is

implicitly the theme stated by the author in the Preface, "the truth, namely, that the wrong-doing of one generation lives into the successive ones, and, divesting itself of every temporary advantage, becomes a pure and uncontrollable mischief" (III. 14). This statement is sometimes read as if it implied a supernatural passing of guilt and doom to innocent offspring or as the initial statement of a theory of genetics suggested in the novel, especially in Jaffrey's resemblance to the Colonel. But the novel quite undeterministically appeals to the reader's reason and will; it poses, in the author's words, a warning against the "folly of tumbling down an avalanche of ill-gotten gold, or real estate, on the heads of an unfortunate posterity, thereby to maim and crush them, until the accumulated mass shall be scattered abroad in its original atoms" (III. 14).

The moral import of this warning is made clear in the first chapter when the narrator, mentioning successive

---

Pyncheons' knowledge of the Colonel's treatment of Matthew Maule, wonders "whether each inheritor of the property--conscious of wrong, and failing to rectify it--did not commit anew the great guilt of his ancestor, and incur all its original responsibilities. And supposing such to be the case, would it not be a far truer mode of expression to say of the Pyncheon family, that they inherited a great misfortune, than the reverse?" (III. 34). One Pyncheon, convinced of Maule's right to the property and willing to relinquish it for conscience's sake, was prevented from so doing by "the unspeakable tumult which a suspicion of the old gentleman's project awakened among his Pyncheon relatives" (III. 38). Of no less significance, the rumor of a hidden deed to a rich tract of land in Maine has caused "an absurd delusion of family importance" (III. 33) among the Pyncheons and is the direct cause of Gervayse's indiscreet submission of his daughter to the mesmeric powers of Matthew Maule.

Jaffrey's desire to acquire this deed is central to the novel's plot. For information concerning it he has freed Clifford and threatens to have him committed to an insane asylum. No character of Hawthorne's is as thoroughly an emblem of corrupt materialistic values than Judge Pyncheon. Even his practiced "look of exceeding good-humor and benevolence" is "unctuous, rather than spiritual" owing "to a somewhat massive accumulation of animal substance about the lower region of his face . . . . A susceptible observer, at any rate, might have regarded it as affording very little
evidence of the general benignity of soul whereof it pur­ported to be the outward reflection" (III. 143-44). Virtu­ally every act of the Judge is characterized by an "unscru­pulous pursuit of selfish ends through evil means" (III. 287). Even on the day of his death, Jaffrey was to attend a meeting of "practised politicians" for the sake of schem­ing to have himself nominated for governor at his party's next convention and hence to "steal from the people, without its knowledge, the power of choosing its own rulers" (III. 324).

Hawthorne was aware of the special force of materialism in the guise of respectability, and he knew that the combi­nation of the two had had a special hold on the Puritan mind. The old Colonel, despite his crime against the Maules, is gloriously eulogized by the Reverend Francis Hig­ginson, who praises "the many felicities of his distin­guished parishioner's earthly career . . . . His duties all performed,—the highest prosperity attained,—his race and future generations fixed on a stable basis, and with a stately roof to shelter them, for centuries to come,—what other upward step remained for this good man to take, save the final step from earth to the golden gate of heaven!" (III. 31). Ironically, Jaffrey's own "eminent respectabil­ity" not only suggests a similar materialism but also reveals, upon close examination, a selfish disregard for others. He has "righteously" cast off a dissipated son, even though he is known to have been such a youth himself.
And every righteous act he has performed through the power of his wealth and station is belied not only by his selfish motives but also by the fact that the Judge inherited wealth and station by allowing Clifford to go to prison unjustly.  

More importantly, the Judge's materialism has precluded the sense of life's transcendent purpose. In Chapter Eighteen, Hawthorne describes Judge Pyncheon's corpse as it sits in the parlor of the ancestral home. The reader is held in suspense at first: the Judge, said to have shown no movement, seems to be alive--his eyes open, a watch ticking audibly in his hand. This horrific death-in-life aspect--the fact that the Judge, having died suddenly, yet appears to be all that he was--is a chilling suggestion of the spiritual paralysis and emptiness of a life such as his. The Judge's lifeless hand, clasping the watch as it ticks away moments which were to have been filled with material acquisition, suggests the inability of mundane accomplishments to transcend Time and hence their essential purposelessness. Having planned on twenty-five remaining years to enjoy the gains which would be nearly completed on this day, Judge Pyncheon has precluded the hope of a higher, eternal destiny: "It is good! It is excellent! It is enough!" (III. 319). Fittingly, as darkness falls upon the House of the Seven Gables, this life-like but invisible corpse symbolizes loss rather than hope:

39See Works, III, 272-76.
To-morrow! To-morrow! To-morrow! We, that are alive, may rise betimes to-morrow. As for him that has died to-day, his morrow will be the resurrection morn. . . . Fainter and fainter grows the light. It is as if another double-handful of darkness had been scattered through the air. Now it is no longer gray, but sable. There is still a faint appearance at the window; neither a glow, nor a gleam, nor a glimmer,—any phrase of light would express something far brighter than this doubtful perception, or sense, rather, that there is a window there. Has it yet vanished? No!—yes!—not quite! And there is still the swarthy whiteness,—we shall venture to marry these ill-agreeing words,—the swarthy whiteness of Judge Pyncheon's face. The features are all gone: there is only the paleness of them left. And how looks it now? There is no window! There is no face! An infinite, inscrutable blackness has annihilated sight! Where is our universe? All crumbled away from us; and we, adrift in chaos, may hearken to the gusts of homeless wind, that go sighing and murmuring about, in quest of what was once a world! (III. 326-27, italics added)

It is clearly suggestive that Clifford, upon seeing the corpse, likens it to "Giant Despair in pursuit of Christian and Hopeful" (III. 299). Holgrave, who has been left alone with the corpse tells the newly arrived Phoebe, "The presence of yonder dead man threw a great black shadow over everything . . . . The world looked strange, wild, evil, hostile" (III. 362). Significantly, Holgrave's sense of the despair and isolation represented by the Judge's corpse prompts him to profess his love for Phoebe. Through this love the enmity between the Pyncheons and Maules (Holgrave's ancestors) is ended, and the couple experience a "bliss which makes all things true, beautiful, and holy" (III. 363).

Hawthorne questions the effects of materialism in a great many other works, too numerous for detailed discussion
here. A few representative examples will serve to illustrate the degree and persistence of his concern. In "The New Adam and Eve," for example, he suggests that the materialism of his age is evidence of the spiritual degeneration of the race. The entire world swept clear of all human beings, a second Adam and Eve walk through Boston, shocked by the artificiality of its streets and the contrast between poor and wealthy neighborhoods. They are confused by the evidence of vanity in stores and homes. They examine the family portraits of a house on Beacon Street but do not "recognize them as men and women, beneath the disguise of a preposterous garb, and with features and expression debased, because inherited through ages of moral and physical decay" (II. 289). In "The Custom House" Hawthorne remarked upon a similar spiritual degeneration in the character of the Old Inspector. Enjoying from youth the security of an office created for him by his father, he has accomplished merely a "rare perfection of his animal nature" so that "he had no soul, no heart, no mind; nothing . . . but instincts." Though he has outlived three wives and most of his twenty children, the memory produces merely a passing sigh. Yet he reminisces at length about individual meals "which had perhaps adorned his board in the days of the elder Adams" and is more saddened by the memory of a goose which proved too tough for carving. Of all men, Hawthorne concludes, such a one is "fittest to be a Custom House officer," for he may do so without risk of "moral detriment" (V. 33-36).
The opposition between materialism and love is notably suggested in several of the tales with marriage themes. In the humorous "Mrs. Bullfrog," the narrator discovers on his wedding day that his bride's beauty is a sham produced by cosmetic ingenuity and that her reputation is marred by a scandalous divorce. Ironically, he forgives all, tenderly embracing the bald, hollow-cheeked woman when she tells him of the five thousand dollars the divorce suit brought her and of her plans for investing the sum in his dry-goods store. "Edward Fane's Rosebud" illustrates a more serious frustration of love as the romance between the young nurse Rose Grafton and Edward Fane is squelched by the latter's proud aristocratic mother, each sadly carrying the memory of the other until death. In "The Wedding Knell," the bride herself is guilty of spoiling love, having married twice for wealth and vanity before calling her first and only love to the altar. When the elderly groom arrives dressed as a corpse and reproves the woman for vainly seeking what has been vainly wasted, she sincerely repents, reminding him that fortunately true love is not dependent, as her vain searchings have been, upon Time: "Let us wed for Eternity!" (I. 50). Most poignant is "The Shaker Bridal," in which Adam Colburn, in love with Martha Carrier, postpones their wedding because he is "loath to relinquish the advantages which a single man possesses for raising himself in the world" (I. 471). After years of frustration he goes to a Shaker community "seeking only a security against evil
fortune" (I. 473) and agreeing to a celibate marriage with Martha for the sake of succeeding to the position of Father of the village. As the rites are solemnized, Adam finally realizes "a sense of satisfied ambition," but Martha faints away pathetically in "desolate agony" (I. 476).

Quite a few tales contrast the frustration of materialistic expectations with the fulfillment which accompanies more spiritual if homelier goals. Peter Goldthwaite, whose wild fancy proves "a demon of mischief in mercantile pursuits" (I. 431), literally tears his home apart, using the lumber to fire his stove as he searches for a nonexistent treasure. In "The Threefold Destiny" Ralph Cranfield wanders ten years in hopes of fulfilling a prophecy which promised him romance, riches, and power. Returning home, he finds it fulfilled there, in a homelier but more meaningful sense than he had imagined. "Would all who cherish such wild wishes but look around them," the narrator concludes, "they would oftenest find their sphere of duty, of prosperity, of happiness, within those precincts and in that station where Providence itself has cast their lot" (I. 538). An entire town awaits the fulfillment of a prophecy that a great and noble man will some day dwell among them in "The Great Stone Face." Years pass as they expect men of wealth, valor, or political power to take the honored role, and then the townspeople suddenly realize that it belongs to a humble, benevolent preacher whose words were "words of life, because a life of good deeds and holy love was melted
150

into them" (III. 437). "The Great Carbuncle" concerns a

A1/2 group of searchers, each of whom, "save one youthful pair,

is impelled by his own selfish and solitary longing for

this wondrous gem" (I. 173). One has joined the party out

of skepticism, another out of scientific curiosity, still

others for fame, fortune, or the purpose of hoarding. The

exceptions are Matthew and Hannah, two young lovers who want

the gem to light their home. They are the only ones ever to

find the stone, but its overwhelming brightness does not

suit their wants. Instead, Matthew insists, "The blessed

sunshine and the quiet moonlight shall come through our win-
dow. We will kindle the cheerful glow of our hearth, at'
eventide, and be happy in its light. But never again will

we desire more light than all the world may share with us"
(I. 189).

It has been pointed out in Chapter One that Hawthorne

sensed that much of the modern artist's estrangement from

his public was owing to the growth of materialism and util-

itarianism. But he also feared the corrupting influence of

materialism on the artist himself who, though ideally com-
mitted to the higher purposes of art and life, is partic-

ularly susceptible to a superficial appreciation of beauty.

The alternative to the estrangement endured by writers such

as Hawthorne, Melville, and Poe was to accept the role

expected by a practical-minded, success-oriented public--

that of a dilettante whose works were intended, according to
Longfellow, merely for the "interludes of life." In Tanglewood Tales, Hawthorne satirized such artists in characterizing Phoebus as "a gay, light, frivolous young fellow" given to strumming a lyre and inventing songs. Asked to assist Ceres in reclaiming Proserpine from the underworld, he declines, foppishly remarking, "I should be compelled to take a sheaf of sunbeams along with me, and those, you know, are forbidden things in Pluto's kingdom." As Ceres departs he composes an ode on her grief. "But," the narrator interposes, "when a poet gets into the habit of using his heart-strings to make chords for his lyre, he may thrum upon them as much as he will, without any great pain to himself. Accordingly, though Phoebus sang a very sad song, he was as merry all the while as were the sunbeams amid which he dwelt" (IV. 360-63).

Hawthorne's portrait of Clifford is more serious. A once ethereal youth who became estranged from mankind through Jaffrey's selfish scheming, Clifford, in his love of the exquisite, has degenerated into mere sensuality. As F. O. Matthiessen describes him, Clifford "no longer possesses any intellectual or moral fibre to control his sensibility. His tastes express themselves only in a selfish demand for luxuries and in an animal delight in food, an exaggeration of the defects that Hawthorne always felt to

lie as a danger for the artistic temperament, whose too exclusive fondness for beauty might end by wearing away all human affections. M. Coverdale evinces a similar, though not so pathetic degeneracy of artistic temperament. Joining the Blithedale community, he intends "to produce something that shall really deserve to be called poetry,—true, strong, natural, and sweet" (V. 336). But, estranged from others by his subjectivity and given to idleness and luxury, Coverdale, as he several times confesses, actually leads a purposeless life. Though he professes to have come to Blithedale to escape "the greedy, struggling, self-seeking world" (V. 343), he soon misses the life of the city and becomes the first to abandon the project. With the passing years he becomes a complete dilettante, as he reveals in the last chapter. Having given up poetry, he now leads a rather meaningless existence chiefly characterized by travel, ease, and sumptuous meals. Coverdale, no doubt, is Hawthorne's warning to himself against the corruption of materialism.

IV. The Idea of Progress, Reformism, and Utopianism

Hawthorne's understanding of the sources of modern man's alienation is also reflected in his conservative reaction to cultural developments fostered by the advancement of rationalism, materialism, and individualism. Most central was the idea of progress, a result of the Renaissance

interest in man's earthly existence and, eventually, the utilitarian end for knowledge prescribed by Bacon. In the new American Republic, where the Age of Enlightenment and the success of the new government seemed to confirm man's ability to build a better world through reason, the idea of progress was endorsed with religious fervor, somewhat as it had been by the Puritans, whose optimism over regeneration and subsequent devotion to public good in a calling were particularly amenable to Baconian progressivism. Progress ceased being a theory, as in Europe, and became a reality. Many nineteenth-century Americans saw themselves as harbingers of the tenth and greatest epoch of civilization foretold by Condorcet's History of the Progress of the Human Spirit.

Faith in progress encouraged increased scientific discovery and technological advancement which, because they gave man increased control over the vast American landscape, 

---


44 Nye, The Cultural Life of the New Nation, pp. 29-32, and Society and Culture in America, pp. 25-30, 278. A full-length study which concludes that the idea of progress was the "most popular American philosophy" before the Civil War is Arthur A. Ekirch's The Idea of Progress in America, 1815-1860 (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1944); see p. 267.
in turn redoubled the American commitment to progress.\textsuperscript{45} The commitment to progress was also significantly reflected in the new nation's enthusiasm for reform.\textsuperscript{46} One aspect of reform which engaged the participation of over one hundred thousand Americans was utopianism; mainly during Hawthorne's lifetime, more than one hundred communities similar to Brook Farm were developed.\textsuperscript{47} Faith in progress even inspired an extreme form of utopianism in America known as millennialism, "the belief that history, under divine guidance, will bring about the triumph of Christian principles, and that a holy utopia will come into being."\textsuperscript{48} Hawthorne, it will be shown, not only reacted conservatively to many of these developments but detected in them the potential for increasing man's alienation from God and from his fellow man.

Hawthorne did not share his countrymen's enthusiasm for progress. Viewing representations of the splendid courts of ancient times in the Crystal Palace in London, Hawthorne found reason to question whether "our age is the very flower-season of time . . . . There is nothing gorgeous


\textsuperscript{46}Nye, Society and Culture in America, pp. 28-29, 32-53, 61-70.

\textsuperscript{47}Ibid., pp. 53-61.

now. We live a very naked life." Eventually, Hawthorne came to feel that modern man's commitment to progress actually impoverished rather than enriched his life. "It is the iron rule in our day to require an object and a purpose in life," he wrote. "It makes us all parts of a complicated scheme of progress, which can only result in our arrival at a colder and drearier region than we were born in. It insists upon everybody's adding somewhat—a mite, perhaps, but earned by incessant effort—to an accumulated pile of usefulness, of which the only use will be, to burden our posterity with even heavier thoughts and more inordinate labor than our own" (VI. 276).

Though sometimes vaguely affirmative about man's gradual betterment, he never felt, as many Americans did, that progress could be hastened by direct effort. Always concerned about man's deeper needs, Hawthorne never thought of improvement in a wholly materialistic sense. A democratic idealist, the narrator of "The Hall of Fantasy" approves "the struggle of the race after a better and purer life than had yet been realized on earth." But, recognizing the "apostles and leaders" of "the progress of mankind" among the Hall's most wildly impractical theorists, he knows that the "white sunshine of actual life" (II. 204-05) belies

49 The English Notebooks, ed. Stewart, p. 239.

50 Ekrich, The Idea of Progress in America, p. 11; Ekrich briefly discusses Hawthorne's skepticism concerning progress on pp. 184-86.
optimistic notions formed while gazing at the world through the stained glass windows of the Hall of Fantasy. Hol­
grave's certainty that his era is destined to be a golden age and his subsequent contempt for the past are excused as youthful enthusiasm, the narrator affirming that though "the tattered garments of Antiquity . . . may be gradually renewing themselves by patchwork . . . man's best directed effort accomplishes a kind of dream, while God is the sole worker of realities" (III. 216).

Throughout his career Hawthorne treated with irony or contempt the ubiquitous rhetoric by which his age attempted to convince itself of its onward movement. Journals, political speeches, and even messages to Congress exhorted Americans to assume leadership in the world's "upward" and "onward" progress. Even conservative Edward Everett told Americans, "True progress is thoughtful, hopeful, serene, religious, onward, and upward." James Russell Lowell wrote in "The Present Crisis" that "New occasions teach new duties; Time makes ancient good uncouth; / They must upward still, and onward, who would keep abreast of Truth . . . ."


In at least a dozen works spanning the length of his career, Hawthorne either discounted such rhetoric or treated it ironically. "The Sister Years," an early sketch on the transience of life, portrays the Old Year telling her newly arrived sister that "the wisest people and the best keep a steadfast faith that the progress of Mankind is onward and upward." But when the latter expresses hope that perfection will be reached in her time, the experienced sister warns, "I doubt whether it be so close at hand . . . . You will soon grow weary of looking for that blessed consummation" (I. 378-79). "The Procession of Life" ironically portrays mankind marching, with Death as its chief marshall, "Onward, onward, into that dimness where the lights of Time, which have blazed along the procession, are flickering in their sockets!" (II. 251-52). Ethan Brand recalls shortly before his suicide that the earliest inspiration for the cultivation of his intellect had come from the stars, which seemed "to light [him] onward and upward!" (III. 496). Converted to conservatism, Holgrave remarks, "The world owes all its onward impulses to men ill at ease. The happy man inevitably confines himself within ancient limits" (III. 363). Even in his recurring nightmare of "life hopelessly a failure," Hawthorne saw himself as having made no "progress in life" in contrast to his former classmates who had "moved onward."53

53The English Notebooks, ed. Stewart, p. 98.
The following passage from the fragmentary Ancestral Footstep, in which the narrator exhorts Middleton to forget his claims to an English estate, has been cited as evidence that Hawthorne supported American progressivism:\footnote{This is the argument made by Lawrence Sargent Hall, \textit{Hawthorne, Critic of Society} (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press & London: H. Milford, Oxford Univ. Press, 1944), p. 98.}

The moral, if any moral were to be gathered from these petty and wretched circumstances, was, "Let the past alone: do not seek to renew it; press on to higher and better things,—at all events, to other things; and be assured that the right way can never be that which leads you back to the identical shapes that you long ago left behind. Onward, onward, onward!" (XI. 488-89)

A succeeding passage makes it quite obvious that Hawthorne was in the first phase of portraying a tension, from Middleton's point of view, between attraction to an onward-moving America and an equally strong desire to partake in the "downward" movement of a rich and meaningful past:

\ldots it gave Middleton a strange thrill of pleasure, that had something fearful in it, to think that all through these ages he had been waited for, sought for, anxiously expected, as it were; it seemed as if the very ghosts of his kindred, a long shadowy line, held forth their dim arms to welcome him; a line stretching back to the ghosts of those who had flourished in the old, old times; the doubletted and beruffled knightly shades of Queen Elizabeth's time; a long line, stretching from the mediaeval ages, and their duskiness, downward, downward, with only one vacant space, that of him who had left the Bloody Footstep. (XI. 494-95)

Reworking this story in Doctor Grimshawe's Secret, Hawthorne portrays the young American (Redclyffe) as expressing a "horror of being a creature floating in the air, attached to nothing" and then claiming that it is the desire to
discover his English ancestry which "leads him onward" (XIII. 276).55

Hawthorne was skeptical of industrialism and the advanced technology upon which it depended, just as he was suspicious of the scientific mind. He showed a Ruskinian preference for the "rudeness" and "individuality" of Indian artifacts over "the productions of civilized machinery, which shapes everything on one pattern" (II. 19). He contrasted Newton, one of the few scientists he admired, with modern inventors, seeing him instead as a great thinker "whose mind was lifted far above the things of this world. . . . for where the thoughts and the heart are, there is our true existence."56 For Hawthorne, urban industrialism and technology were not agents of improvement; joining the march with Death in "The Procession of Life" are "whole tribes of people whose physical lives are but a deteriorated variety of life," an effect "wrought by the tainted breath of cities, scanty and unwholesome food, destructive modes of

55Christoph Lohmann, "The Agony of the English Romance," Nathaniel Hawthorne Journal, 2 (1972), 219-29, argues convincingly that Hawthorne's failure to finish an English Romance was a result of his inability to resolve the tension described here.

Other works making contemptuous or ironic use of "onward" include "Sketches from Memory" (II. 487), "Night Sketches" (I. 483), "Main Street" (III. 466), The Blithedale Romance (V. 453), and Septimius Felton (XI. 243). The term's use in "The Celestial Railroad" and "Earth's Holocaust" is discussed later in this chapter. Its use in "Old Esther Dudley" and The Scarlet Letter is shown in Chapter Three.

56See Works, XII, 162-64.
labor, and the lack of those moral supports that might partially have counteracted such bad influences." Among this group are "house painters, all afflicted with a peculiar sort of colic" and "workmen in cutlery, who have breathed a fatal disorder into their lungs with the impalpable dust of steel" (II. 237).

Frequently, Hawthorne characterized machines as demonic in their terrible energy and power. One steam engine, he imagined, puffed and panted and even groaned under a doom of incessant labor. He planned a sketch in which another became possessed of a "malignant spirit; it catches one man's arm, and pulls it off; seizes another by the coat-tails, and almost grapples him bodily;--catches a girl by the hair, and scalps her;--and finally draws a man, and crushes him to death." Locomotives seemed similarly testy, impetuous, and dangerous; at Newcastle depot, Hawthorne observed two, one "puffing and blowing off its steam, and making a great bluster" and the other coming "down upon you like fate, swift and inevitably," stopping but "hissing and fuming, in its eagerness to go on."57 In "Chiefly About War Matters," he preferred to call the Monitor a machine rather than a vessel and described it as burrowing, snorting, and "devilish; for this was the new war-fiend, destined, along with others of the same breed, to annihilate whole navies and batter down old supremaecies" (XII. 336). In so characterizing this

---

forerunner of mechanical warfare, Hawthorne displayed, in Daniel Aaron's words, "a premonition of the new mechanic power that haunted Melville and Mark Twain."\(^{58}\)

The hellish imagery of "The Celestial Railroad" suggests not only skepticism about progress through technology but also the machine's potential for diverting man from transcendent meaning. The narrator reveals that "Rattling onward" through the gas-lit Valley of the Shadow of Death, passengers saw "grim faces, that bore the aspect and expression of individual sins, or evil passions . . . glaring upon us, and stretching forth a great, dusky hand, as if to impede our progress" (II. 223). Ironically, many passengers settle for the pleasures of Vanity Fair "instead of going onward to the Celestial City" (II. 225). But the onward movement of the railroad is merely a delusion to begin with since the entire system is in the hands of fiends, Beelzebub's subjects employed in the station houses and Apollyon serving as engineer. Tophet provides forges for the manufacture of railroad iron; it is Hawthorne's metaphor of the modern factory, flames darting everywhere, a blast emitting "awful murmurs, and shrieks, and deep, shuddering whispers," and inhabitants with "horribly grotesque" expressions, "unlovely personages, dark, smoke-begrimed, generally deformed" (II. 221-22). Even the steamboat, supposed to carry its passengers across the River of Death, puffs and snorts

ominously. But it is the final whistle of the locomotive which most symbolizes the hellish doom of modern technological existence—Godless and subject to fierce alien powers—"one last and horrible scream, in which there seemed to be distinguishable every kind of wailing and woe, and bitter fierceness of wrath, all mixed up with the wild laughter of a devil or a madman" (II. 232).

Hawthorne also regarded machines as agents of man's separation from man. As Roy R. Male suggests, Aylmer, of the era when Galvani's experiments produced a controversy over mechanism and vitalism, becomes, with "an electrical machine as part of his equipment for conversion," the symbol of an age whose blind faith in scientific improvement threatens not merely human life but love as well. Even before the machine destroys Georgiana, there is an ironic suggestion of the coldness of Aylmer's fascination with it. Responding to his confession that the birthmark "shocks" him, Georgiana says, "You cannot love what shocks you!" (II. 48). 59

Even the stove, which Hawthorne found cheerless and detestable in every regard but comfort, 60 posed a threat to human intercourse. In "Fire Worship" it is said to violate the hearth, the "sacred trust of the household fire." Future generations "will never behold one another through

59 Hawthorne's Tragic Vision, pp. 80-82.
60 The American Notebooks, ed. Simpson, p. 364.
that peculiar medium of vision—the ruddy gleam of blazing wood or bituminous coal—which gives the human spirit so deep an insight into its fellows and melts all humanity into one cordial heart of hearts. Domestic life, if it may still be termed domestic, will seek its separate corners, and never gather itself into groups" (II. 166-68). Citing the ancient warrior's exhortation to fight for the altar and the hearth, he humorously but provocatively wonders if modern men may be asked to die for their stoves. Significantly, it is a Heidenberg stove which, glaring "like a red-eyed demon" (III. 411), melts the children's miraculously created playmate in "The Snow-Image."

Transcendentalism, which promoted self-reliance as the source of a new faith, embraced technological advancement in a way which made a virtual religion of material progress. In his journal of 1843 Emerson wrote, "Machinery and Transcendentalism agree well . . . ." Perceiving this connection as a potential source of modern man's further separation from God and fellow man, Hawthorne parodies the affinity between Emersonian optimism and the machine age in the demented Clifford's effusive praise of technology.

---

From within the speeding railroad cars, the familiar world becomes unsettled for Hepzibah and Clifford as they flee Salem after Judge Pyncheon's sudden death; a village suddenly appears but just as suddenly vanishes, "as if swallowed by an earthquake. The spires of meeting-houses seemed set adrift from their foundations; the broad-based hills glided away. Everything was unfixed from its age-long rest, and moving at whirlwind speed in a direction opposite to their own." Though Hepzibah feels separated from humanity by this movement, Clifford, after years of confinement, perceives it as "the common and inevitable movement onward! It was life itself!" (III. 304-05). To a gentleman who defends the sanctity of the hearth, he eulogizes not only the railroad but mesmerism, spiritualism, electricity, and the telegraph as if they were aspects of a new revelation, and he blames crime on the traditional love of house and home. But, his rapture passing, Clifford leads Hepzibah from the train at a desolate way station, his certainty of a new meaning of life through technology as ephemeral as the elation which produced it. Besides the station, the only buildings in sight are a decaying wooden church and a deserted farmhouse, a suggestion that the train has merely further separated these two lonely creatures from the

spiritual and emotional comforts of traditional community. Significantly, Hepzibah's first action is to pray.

Hawthorne was aware that his era's enthusiasm for reform was an aspect of its faith in progress. In "Earth's Holocaust" one young reformer, destroying a gallows, cries, "Onward! onward! . . . as for progress, let mankind always do the highest, kindest, noblest thing that, at any given period, it has attained the perception of; and surely that thing cannot be wrong nor wrongly timed" (II. 443-44). Hawthorne was neither indifferent nor opposed to reform efforts, but he was skeptical that the world's problems could be solved by schemes or social panaceas. He thought of Margaret Fuller as a "humbug" and the theorists who visited Emerson as "bores of a very intense water" (II. 43).

An early plan for a sketch portrays "a modern reformer,—a type of the extreme doctrines on the subjects of slaves, cold water, and other such topics"—who proves to have escaped from a madhouse.

Hawthorne's skepticism concerning reformism is evident

64 This interpretation is suggested by Christoph Lohmann, "The Burden of the Past in Hawthorne's American Romances," South Atlantic Quarterly, 66 (1967), 92-104.


66 See Stewart, Nathaniel Hawthorne, p. 194.

in his conservative reaction to the abolitionist, temperance, and feminist movements of his day. He thought John Brown a fanatic, as justly hanged for "his preposterous miscalculation of possibilities" (XII. 328) as for his crimes.\(^68\) He was sympathetic with the slaves and the fugitives from slavery, but he also feared that sudden emancipation would force them to "fight a hard battle with the world, on very unequal terms" (XII. 319). And it was foolish, he thought, to risk lives in such a cause.\(^69\)

Hawthorne was similarly wary of the temperance and feminist movements, the first for its extremism and the second for its superficiality. In "A Rill from the Town Pump" a water pump cautions its advocates to curb their "fiery pugnacity." They themselves are known to have become "tipsy with zeal for temperance" and to have fought "in the style of a toper fighting for his brandy bottle" (I. 172). As the world's liquor supply is destroyed in "Earth's Holocaust," one toper, with the narrator's sympathy, laments the cheer and solace which have also been destroyed. Friends, it is suggested, may find it difficult "to sit together by the fireside without a cheerful glass between them" (II. 436).

The feminists of "Earth's Holocaust" are chiefly concerned to burn gowns and petticoats and to assume the

\(^{68}\)On Hawthorne's disagreement with Emerson concerning John Brown, see Wagenknecht, Nathaniel Hawthorne, pp. 124, 213.

\(^{69}\)Aaron, The Unwritten War, pp. 53-54.
clothing and manners of men, revealing Hawthorne's suspicion that feminists were often distracted from worthwhile goals by the trite symbols and guises of liberation. Even Zenobia is given to triteness and vanity—in her grandiose pseudonym, her constant flower, her inventions of words like "auditress." "In the gorgeousness with which she had surrounded herself," Coverdale remarks, "... I malevolently beheld the true character of the woman, passionate, luxurious, lacking simplicity, not deeply refined, incapable of pure and perfect taste" (V. 507). She even dresses as her namesake at Blithedale's costume party and indulges in role-playing in her final hour, dramatically entrusting Coverdale with her bejewelled flower (for Priscilla) and composing the moral of a ballad he is to write about her. Her superficiality is most clearly revealed earlier when Coverdale confesses his admiration of womanhood and his willingness to be governed by its generosity and wisdom. Ironically, she ignores this overture in her infatuation with Hollingsworth, who answers Coverdale by demeaning womanhood and who eventually leads Zenobia to betray her cause.

Hawthorne saw that, as an aspect of the modern world's commitment to earthly progress, reformism neglected man's transcendent purpose. The reformers of "Earth's Holocaust" cast even the Bible into the fire, destroying "the main pillars which supported the whole edifice of our moral and spiritual state" (II. 451). Coverdale obviously speaks for Hawthorne when he faults Fourier for making "no claim to
inspiration. He has not persuaded himself . . . that he speaks with authority from above. He promulgates his system . . . entirely on his own responsibility. He has searched out and discovered the whole counsel of the Almighty, in respect to mankind, past, present, and for exactly seventy thousand years to come, by the mere force and cunning of his individual intellect!" (V. 380-81). Hawthorne also realized that the excesses of reformism were often desperate attempts to compensate for the loss of high moral purpose provided by traditional faith. The reformers in "The Hall of Fantasy" are "representatives of an unquiet period, when mankind is seeking to cast off the whole tissue of ancient custom like a tattered garment" (II. 205). Many of Emerson's visitors he saw as "wanderers through the midnight of the moral world," as "visionaries" making "pilgrimages" and seeking "deliverance" (II. 41-42). Hollingsworth offers his cause to Coverdale not only as a means of correcting the latter's purposelessness but as a cause "worthy of martyrdom" (V. 471).

Besides its inadequacy as a source of spiritual meaning, reformism, Hawthorne felt, failed to promote community and often even opposed it. Reformers tended to seize upon "some crystal fragment of truth, the brightness of which so dazzled them that they could see nothing else in the wide universe" (II. 205). Without the overall guidance of a traditional moral order, they forgot their fallibility and became egotistical and monomaniacal, separating themselves
from the larger community who were the exceptions to their schemes. The father in "The Snow-Image" is a philanthropist whose assumptions overlook the special character and needs of the snow-child; assuming her need of physical warmth, he destroys her, negating the emotional warmth she represents. Obsessed with eradicating crime and selfishness, Hollingsworth ironically plots against his fellow workers, forces Coverdale to end their friendship, becomes nothing less than a confidence man with Zenobia, and criminally betrays Priscilla.

In other words, Hawthorne thought that reformers and philanthropists failed to recognize, in their concern with schemes and institutions, that the world's evils originate in the heart of man. After all of the symbols and instruments of corruption and oppression are destroyed in "Earth's Holocaust," a dark, insidious stranger mockingly insists that, unless the heart itself be reformed, "forth from it will reissue all the shapes of wrong and misery" (II. 455). The fact of mankind's common sinfulness, Hawthorne suggests, demands personal sympathy and love as correctives, not schemes and institutions. In "The New Adam and Eve" Hawthorne wrote, "In the course of the world's lifetime, every remedy was tried for its cure and extirpation except the single one, the flower that grew in heaven and was sovereign

for all the miseries of earth. Man never had attempted to
cure sin by Love!" (II. 287-88). Hawthorne's belief that
men must act personally and directly against social evils,
accepting burdens of mankind's sinfulness which fall their
way, is clearly shown in his response to the scurvy-ridden
child who approached him in an English workhouse. Secretly
fearful of the child's touch, he nevertheless granted its
desire "to be taken up and made much of," mindful that the
child regarded him as in some sense "its father" and that
"God had promised the child this favor on my behalf."71
Like Dickens, Hawthorne deplored the "telescopic philan-
thropy" which ignored the simple but more effective acts of
kindness which people might perform in their daily lives.
Surely, he felt, the old clergyman who planted the apple
orchard at the Old Manse "in the pure and unselfish hope of
benefiting his successors" had succeeded in bettering the
world for posterity where "more ambitious efforts" (II. 20)
had failed.72

Hawthorne's attitude toward the utopianism of many of
his fellow Americans, who in the 1840s were founding a com-
munity every three months, was negative. His own interest
in Brook Farm was practical, determined chiefly by his need
to find a homesite for himself and his future bride. He
left disillusioned, convinced that founder George Ripley

71The English Notebooks, ed. Stewart, p. 275.

72On Hawthorne's skepticism regarding efforts to bene-
fit posterity, see Works, II, 80-82.
cheated him financially. Invited to join another community, he declined, stating that he could attain "higher ends" by "retaining the ordinary relation to society." For Hawthorne, earthly existence was in essence imperfect and attempts to perfect it, like Aylmer's, would cause ruin. Human nature and human history make impossible the search of Adam and Lilias in "The Lily's Quest," for a homestead where "all pure delights were to cluster like roses among the pillars of the edifice, and blossom ever new and spontaneously" (I. 495). They find no place which is free of sorrow or guilt. The utopian notions of the Puritans, Hawthorne reminded readers in The Scarlet Letter, met similar obstacles, as they found "it among their earliest practical necessities to allot a portion of the virgin soil as a cemetery, and another portion as the site of a prison" (V. 67).

The Blithedale Romance portrays the failure of just such a community as Brook Farm to create "regenerated men" and to begin "the reformation of the world" (V. 333). Even the structure of the novel suggests the failure to make a clean break with a corrupt world as there is constant movement between Blithedale and Boston, the hold of Westervelt and Old Moodie on the reformers increasingly evident. And

---


74 The American Notebooks, ed. Simpson, p. 165.

75 Ibid., p. 25.
while the reformers imagine themselves carrying the mission of the Pilgrims "onward and aloft" (V. 453), they evince a more sombre link with their ancestors as the judgment scene at Eliot's Pulpit suggests, Hollingsworth resembling a harsh Puritan magistrate. By the novel's end, Hollingsworth, who had planned to build his "grand edifice for the reformation of criminals" on a hill-side (suggestive of the Puritan hope to erect the Biblical City on a Hill) admits, in reference to his own cottage, "A very small one answers all my purposes" (V. 594). As in the case of the Puritan Isaac Johnson, a place of hope becomes the site of a community's first grave, Zenobia being buried on the hill-side "very much as other people have been for hundreds of years gone by" (V. 589).

Hawthorne's concern for man's transcendent purpose was the basis of his rejection of utopianism. He realized, as few of his age did, that only acceptance of the imperfect transitory conditions of human life could make man aspire to transcendent meaning. His story of Pandora in A Wonder-Book, significantly entitled "The Paradise of Children," somewhat paradoxically suggests that without "Troubles," hope would not exist, and it is hope which "spiritualizes the earth; Hope makes it always new; and, even in the earth's best and brightest aspect, Hope shows it to be only

the shadow of an infinite bliss hereafter!" (IV. 101). This is the same meaning Hawthorne implies in the failure of Adam and Lily in "The Lily's Quest" to found a Temple of Happiness; their search ended by Lily's death, Adam suddenly cries out in his grief, "Joy! joy! . . . on a grave be the site of our Temple; and now our happiness is for Eternity!" (I. 503).77

Hawthorne's belief that the sources of man's greatest hopes lay in the imperfection of his earthly existence also explains his aversion to millennialism. "A Virtuoso's Collection" suggests Hawthorne's opinion that an anti-Christian materialism pervaded millennialistic expectations. The Virtuoso is the legendary Wandering Jew, the being doomed for his mockery of the crucifixion to wander the earth until Christ's return. Possessed of the world's richest, most fascinating, and most accommodating articles, he is incapable of any but a cold, intellectual appreciation of them. His earthly immortality has made all things commonplace and has destroyed even the hope of hope. "You are welcome to your visions and shadows of a future state," he tells the narrator, "but give me what I can see, and touch, and understand, and I ask no more" (II. 559). Of the millennialist William Miller, who several times fixed exact dates for the

77A study which demonstrates the tale's reflection of the traditional Christian attitude toward death is Leo B. Levy's "The Temple and the Tomb: Hawthorne's 'The Lily's Quest,'" Studies in Short Fiction, 3 (1966), 334-42.
world's end and Christ's arrival in America, he was especially scornful. He portrayed Miller as a fanatic orator in "The Hall of Fantasy," and based the pessimistic observations of "The New Adam and Eve" upon the supposition that Miller's prophecy of doom was correct. In "The Christmas Banquet" Miller joins the world's most miserable persons, having "given himself up to despair at the tedious delay of the final conflagration" (II. 342). Despite his religiosity, Miller, Hawthorne felt, shared the temperament of an age which looked for fulfillment in visible material change instead of in love and hope.

Hawthorne's frame of mind was counterrevolutionary. Throughout his career he repeatedly questioned the outstanding features of modernity: its heightened development of reason and science; the increased emphasis on individualism and materialism; its advanced technology and industrialism; the idea of progress; reformism; and utopianism. Hawthorne not only opposed all of these but also perceived that the advancement of reason, individualism, and materialism during the Renaissance and Reformation destroyed the integration of medieval life, leaving man separated from God and fellow man; and he saw that the idea of progress, the faith in the world's upward and onward movement, essentially a develop-

78 Nye, Society and Culture in America, pp. 314-15. I use the term "millennialist" as defined by Tuveson in Redeemer Nation to refer to those who expect the physical return of Christ before the beginning of the millennium; see pp. 34-35.
ment of the new emphasis upon rationalism, individualism, and materialism, redoubled their influence on modern life and fostered movements which potentially intensified modern man's alienation. Hawthorne's works as a whole thus represent an intellectually penetrating and coherent response to the problem of modern man's loss of meaning and community.

But Hawthorne did more than merely to urge community and respect for life's higher purpose. His greatest works, as the next chapter attempts to demonstrate, seek to recover for man the certainty of life's transcendent meaning and a basis for community derived from this certainty. It has been a major purpose of this chapter to suggest that the basis of this recovery was Hawthorne's understanding of the sources of alienation. Ultimately he responded to the modern loss of faith and community by formulating a conception of history antithetical to that by which modernity attempted to justify its commitment to increased rationalism, individualism, materialism, and other agents of man's separation from God and fellow man.
CHAPTER III

DISCREDITING MODERNITY AND REOPENING THE SOUL

In essence Hawthorne's greatest art attempts to convince or remind man that he is a being with a soul, a being potentially open to transcendent reality. Understanding the ultimate sources of alienation as changes associated with the Renaissance and Reformation, Hawthorne knew that to find genuine happiness man must somehow recover a commitment to spiritual fulfillment which had lent meaning and integration to medieval life. His insight, which determined his opposition to the chief characteristics of modernity, was the basis of a conception of history antithetical to the widespread notion of history which, since the Middle Ages, has become the rationale of modernity. Through a conception of history that is affirmative of man's spiritual potential and charged with the emotive and heuristic power of art, Hawthorne recovers for modern man not only a fundamental source of transcendent meaning but a basis of community as well.

I. The Attack on Gnosticism

Hawthorne opposed the most fundamental assumptions of his age about the nature of history, the idea of history increasingly prevalent since the waning of the Middle Ages
and which both accompanies and is used to justify the modern emphasis upon reason and science, individualism, materialism, and related developments. In *The New Science of Politics* and *Science, Politics and Gnosticism*, Eric Voegelin places new emphasis on the term "gnosticism" to clarify the origin and essential nature of the mode of historical thought shared by many modern ideologies. The heretical gnosticism of the early Christian centuries was only one species of an ideological tendency that has persisted throughout time with varying degrees of popularity. For modern Western civilization, Voegelin explains, the spread of gnosticism received its initial impetus in the late twelfth century through Joachim of Flora's eradication of the distinction between secular and divine history which characterized the Middle Ages from the time of Augustine. Augustine had "distinguished between a profane sphere of history in which empires rise and fall and a sacred history which culminates in the appearance of Christ and the establishment of the church. He, furthermore, imbedded sacred history in a transcendental history of the *civitas Dei* which includes the events in the angelic sphere as well as the transcendental eternal sabbath. Only transcendental history, including the earthly pilgrimage of the church, has direction toward . . . eschatological fulfillment. Profane history, on the other hand, has no such direction; it is a
waiting for the end . . . ."¹ Joachim, in contrast, envi­sioned an approaching era of human perfection in a community of monks, "a spiritualized mankind existing in community without the mediation and support of institutions . . . without the sacramental supports of the Church."² Joachitic speculation was in effect a reinterpretation of the essentially gnostic eschatological assumption of Jewish prophets such as Isaiah that God's will would be fulfilled in history through the work of his people.³ It made the "Christian idea of perfection" conceivable in temporal and mundane terms. The Christian idea of the pilgrimage or "progress" of the soul toward perfection might include progress in the profane sphere of history. Time is no longer distinct from Eternity but leads into it; the distinction between the City of Man and the City of God may be erased.⁴ The underlying assumption of such speculation is that the course of history is "accessible to human knowledge." Hence "Knowledge--


²Science, Politics and Gnosticism, p. 98.


gnosis--of the method of altering being is the central concern of the gnostic."⁵

Gnosticism may thus be defined as the assumption that through knowledge the idea of progress toward some standard of human perfection may be realized in Time, in secular history. Because it involves a reinterpretation of "the Jewish-Christian idea of an end of history in the sense of an intelligible state of perfection," modern gnosticism also generally includes some form of millennialism, in Voegelin's words a "fallacious immanentization of the Christian eschaton."⁶ The Joachitic tendencies described here did not effect an immediate widespread modification of the Augustinian dualization of history. Voegelin explains, "The idea of a radically immanent fulfilment grew rather slowly, in a long process that roughly may be called 'from humanism to enlightenment'; only in the eighteenth century, with the idea of progress, had the increase of meaning in history become a completely intramundane phenomenon, without transcendental irruptions."⁷ Perhaps the most well-known early example was Voltaire's Essay on the Manners and Spirit of the Nations (1756), which attacked the Augustinian view as revived in the seventeenth century by Bossuet. Emphasizing the centuries since Charlemagne, Voltaire interpreted

⁵The New Science of Politics, p. 112; Science, Politics and Gnosticism, p. 87.

⁶The New Science of Politics, pp. 118, 166.

⁷Ibid., p. 119.
"l'histoire de l'esprit humain" as an advance through reason and science from barbarous ignorance toward enlightenment. Voltaire's Essay had been preceded by Vico's New Science, which likened the gradual upward and onward progress of mankind to an ascending spiral. In Herder's Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Humanity (completed in 1791) the idea of history was articulated as an unfolding of humanity through different stages of civilization toward a state of self-realization or freedom. Gnostic speculation on the meaning of history culminates, for Voegelin, with Hegel in the nineteenth century. Confining knowledge and philosophical enquiry to tangible reality, Hegel postulates a "spiritualization" of man's consciousness so that man replaces God as shaper of reality; history is thus seen as "the spirit of man attaining its self-consciousness in time" through a dialectical unfolding.

Though he would never have used the term "gnosticism" as just explained, Hawthorne was exposed to a particularly representative aspect of the gnostic revolution through his interest in his Puritan heritage. Seeking confirmation of election through proficiency in a calling, the Puritan set

---


9 Barnes, A History of Historical Writing, pp. 192-93.

10 Ibid., pp. 169, 193.

out to reform a corrupted world through knowledge, relying for guidance upon the curious combination of Baconianism and the Bible (reduced to a coherent body of precepts, most typically in Calvin's Institutes). The Puritan thus became devoted to an eradication of the distinction between divine and profane history, in Voegelin's words, to "the drawing of God into man. The Saint is a Gnostic who will not leave the transfiguration of the world to the grace of God beyond history but will do the work of God himself, right here and now, in history." He sees himself as a member of God's new chosen people—a people committed by covenant, as were the Jews of the Old Testament, to establishing the Kingdom of God on earth. For the Puritan the New Jerusalem lay not across the River of Death as in the medieval poem "The Pearl" but would exist in-Time. Hawthorne was significantly aware that the Biblical Jerusalem had once been called Salem. And Hawthorne's skepticism concerning such beliefs is shown in his ironic treatment of Puritan utopianism in the first chapter of The Scarlet Letter. In The House of the Seven Gables Colonel Pyncheon's secure implantation of his family ironically is praised by the Reverend Francis

---


13 Hawkthorne As Editor: Selections from His Writings in The American Magazine of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge, ed. Arlin Turner (University, La.: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1941), p. 55.
Higginson (who actually existed) as an appropriate prelude to death.

Hawthorne's struggle to recover meaning and community begins with his attack upon gnosticism, his attempt to discredit modernity by discrediting the conception of history by which modernity justifies itself. For, rooted in the uncertainty of faithlessness, modern gnosticism both accompanies and serves as a rationale or complementary belief for reason and science, individualism, materialism, and other related agents of man's alienation from God and fellow man. Of primary importance is gnosticism's dissuasion of man from transcendent reality, evident from the Joachitic and Puritan "drawing of God into man" to Hegel's "spiritualization" of secular history and Nietzsche's announcement of the death of God to be followed by the rise of the superman:

Specifically, the Gnostic fallacy destroys the oldest wisdom of mankind concerning the rhythm of growth and decay which is the fate of all things under the sun. . . . What comes into being will have an end, and the mystery of this stream of being is impenetrable. These are the two great principles governing existence. The Gnostic speculation on the eidos of history, however, not only ignores these principles but perverts them into their opposite. The idea of the final realm assumes a society that will come into being but have no end, and the mystery of the stream is solved through the speculative knowledge of its goal. Gnosticism, thus, has produced something like the counterprinciples to the principles of existence . . . .

"All gnostic movements," Voegelin writes at another point "are involved in the project of abolishing the constitution of being, with its origin in divine, transcendent being, and

replacing it with a world-immanent order of being, the perfection of which lies in the realm of human action. "

"Scientism" (the renewed emphasis since the seventeenth century upon the systematic accumulation of knowledge of the natural realm of being exclusively) was, of course, a commitment to gnosis and hence became, "inevitably, the symbolic vehicle of Gnostic truth." Most representatively in Hobbes' *Leviathan*, gnostic speculation lent additional support to the individualism and materialism fostered by science; it did so by postulating a demeaning naturalistic view of human nature which Hawthorne could never have accepted. Dispensing with the Aristotelian and Christian teaching that any rational construct of human society must have reference to a *summum bonum*, Hobbes envisioned "no orientation of human action through love of God, but only motivation through the world-immanent power drive." Thus Hobbes, in a work of great political influence, neither requires charitable interaction nor expects love of God and truth but is concerned merely to allow essentially isolated individuals to pursue selfish and materialistic goals, their peaceful cooperation to be assured only through mutual fear.

Through secularization of the Christian idea of perfection

---

17 *Science, Politics and Gnosticism*, p. 103.
and a "fallacious immanentization" of Christian eschatology, gnosticism provides symbolic modes of conceiving the idea of progress and the various forms of utopianism and millennialism with which Hawthorne was familiar. Exemplary of gnostic influence are reformists' assumptions that evil originates in institutions rather than man's failures, that "From a wretched world a good one must evolve historically," and that "this salvational act is possible through man's own effort." As shown in Chapter Two, Hawthorne displayed a lifelong skepticism regarding the modern world's emphasis upon rationalism, individualism, and materialism. He did not share the modern commitment to progress. He was in fact consistent in his opposition to all manifestations of the widespread revolution being effected by the gnostic mentality.

Hawthorne's rejection of gnosticism or the progressive interpretation of secular history (especially as applied to America) placed him in direct opposition to the most prominent American historians of his day and formed the negative basis of his own conception of history. American historical thinking of the early national period was essentially gnostic. Assimilating gnostic influences, the young nation found its identity as, somewhat ironically, the vanguard of an historical process leading toward perfection. Heavily


20 Ibid., p. 87.
influenced by Puritan historiography, nineteenth-century historians traced many of their own ideals and practices back through the Revolution to their New England forebears. The Puritans' view of themselves as an historically chosen people was easily expanded to include the entire nation. American historiography was also heir to both the Enlightenment's faith that God had a purpose to reveal in man's history and the Romantic emphasis upon nationalism and progress. Thus, as Russel B. Nye has written, "Early-nineteenth-century American historical theory . . . was marked by . . . a belief in progress, buttressed by transcendental idealism and reinforced by the rationalist faith in an upward social tendency; the recognition of a master plan or controlling scheme behind the shifting facts of history; an interest in the evolution of national institutions, leading to an emphasis upon 'national genius' as the creative force underlying historical development." The American then wishes to discard such traditional images of history as the chain or the cycle:

He had, so he believed, already changed the course of history to found a new kind of nation; there must be some way to break the chain or stop the cycle, to exempt the United States from the inexorable fate of other nations in the past. The answer came in a new view of history, best summarized in Condorcet's Tableau historique du progrès de l'esprit humain which appeared


22 Society and Culture in America: 1830-1860, p. 103.
in France in 1793. Condorcet saw history as a series of stages, each an improvement over the last, moving ever upward by the law of progress. The theory of historical progress (not new, but redefined and reinvigorated by the Enlightenment philosophers) took man off the cyclical treadmill of history and freed him from the chain of historical causation.

This was precisely the view of the past that Americans needed to write their own history, for it showed that past and present ages were preludes to better ones, and suggested that the creation of the United States was a step forward toward that better world. America was not, therefore, the crest of a movement bound to decline; it was instead a new stage in an ever-upward succession of stages. The concept of history as the record of human progress, and of American history as the most recent and convincing chapter of that record, provided the basic theory for American historical writing for the next generation.23

Typically, the American historian, like many other historians of the age, assumed the role of the gnostic intellectual. He would study the past to discover laws by which God's design was being revealed, thus enabling his people to facilitate the process.24 The most representative American historian of the era was George Bancroft, who studied in Germany and was strongly influenced by the same theoretical trends which culminated in the work of Hegel.25 In his History of the United States from the Discovery of the Continent, Bancroft "chose as his theme 'the necessity, the reality, and the promise of the progress of the human race' as it was exemplified in the history of the United

23Ibid., p. 104.

24Ibid., p. 106. See also Voegelin, Science, Politics and Gnosticism, pp. 87-88, 97-98.

The Revolution, the most significant turning point in American history, became an eschatological inevitability in Bancroft's eyes:

The hour of the American revolution was come. The people of the continent obeyed one general impulse, as the earth in spring listens to the command of nature and without the appearance of effort bursts into life. The movement was quickened, even when it was most resisted; and its fiercest adversaries worked with the most effect for its fulfillment. . . . A revolution, unexpected in the moment of its coming, but prepared by glorious forerunners, grew naturally and necessarily out of the series of past events by the formative principle of a living belief. And why should man organize resistance to the grand design of Providence?  

Hawthorne, who knew Bancroft personally and read his History, detected no such "grand design" in the history of his country, nor did he conceive of history as a process which would culminate in some earthly perfection of mankind. In his campaign biography of Franklin Pierce, written at the height of the author's career, Hawthorne wrote, "There is no instance, in all history, of the human will and intellect having perfected any great moral reform by methods which it adapted to that end; but the progress of the world, at every

---

26 Society and Culture in America, p. 111.


28 Marion L. Kesselring, Hawthorne's Reading, 1828-1850: A Transcription and Identification of Titles Recorded in the Charge-Books of the Salem Athenaeum (New York: New York Public Library, 1949), pp. 8-10; Arlin Turner, Nathaniel Hawthorne: An Introduction and Interpretation, pp. 17-18. Hawthorne was familiar with the works of many other historians from Cotton Mather to Jared Sparks, and, as Kesselring's study reveals, read as much history as imaginative literature.
step, leaves some evil or wrong on the path behind it, which
the wisest of mankind, of their own set purpose, could never
have found the way to rectify" (XII. 417). Several years
later, he admonished his sister-in-law Elizabeth Peabody for
her abolitionism, insisting that God's "instruments have no
consciousness of His purpose; if they imagine they have, it
is a pretty sure token they are not His instruments. The
good of others, like our own happiness, is not to be at­
tained by direct effort, but incidentally. All history and
observation confirm this." 29

Hawthorne similarly discredited the Northern belief
that its cause in the Civil War was the fulfillment of Prov­
idential will. Only two years before his death, he parodied
the Northern position in "Chiefly About War Matters" by
including in footnotes the objections of a self-righteous,
narrow-minded "Editor" who steadfastly maintains, "The
counsels of wise and good men are often coincident with the
purposes of Providence; and the present war promises to
illustrate our remark" (XII. 332). The caustic author, on
the other hand, finds the atmosphere of a war camp "invig­
orating" because of "the exhilarating sense of danger" but
not suggestive of any grand historical purpose. Rather, it
"makes not only the whole world, but all time, akin. Set
men face to face, with weapons in their hands, and they are
as ready to slaughter one another now . . . as in the rudest

29 From a letter quoted in Daniel Aaron's The Unwritten
War: American Writers and the Civil War, p. 46.
ages." It is odd, he concludes, "when we measure our ad-
vances from barbarism, and find ourselves just here!" (XII. 320-21). Later, contemplating the ideals of the Northern side, he expresses an historical attitude more nearly medi-
eval than otherwise, affirming the inevitable disparity between man's imperfect knowledge and God's omniscience. 30 "No human effort, on a grand scale," he asserts, "has ever yet resulted according to the purpose of its projectors. The advantages are always incidental. Man's accidents are God's purposes. We miss the good we sought, and do the good we little cared for" (XII. 332).

Hawthorne's counterrevolutionary frame of mind and his understanding of the causes of modern man's loss of meaning and community, prompted him not merely to resist gnosti-
cism--the progressive view of history--but to attack it. Much of Hawthorne's historical fiction and other historical writings (which are almost exclusively concerned with Amer-
ican history) represents an attempt to discredit modernity at its roots by discrediting the conception of history by which it justified its increased emphasis upon reason and science and its increased commitment to advanced technology, rampant individualism, and rampant materialism. Hawthorne's purpose in these works was to emphasize man's failures and sins in the past--man's tendency to err and to cause

suffering, a tendency which linked him inextricably with all other men in the past and which thus disproved any notion of historical progress. Hawthorne emphasized historical sins and failures, refuting explanations of the present as the culmination of a progressive process. Hawthorne's conception of history was nearly medieval in its counterrevolutionary emphasis upon the "inability to achieve ends clearly conceived in advance . . . as a permanent element in human nature, arising out of the condition of man as man."\(^{31}\)

"The May-Pole of Merry Mount" is an example of Hawthorne's emphasis upon man's sins and failures when he portrays events in which men are concerned to perfect earthly existence. It is a particularly suitable example because it depicts European man's attempt to leave the past behind and begin life anew in the virgin American landscape. The Merry Mount revelers seek another "Golden Age," choosing an evergreen as a maypole because its freshness is not altered by changing seasons. Many "imagined a wild philosophy of pleasure, and came hither to act out their latest day-dream. . . . Sworn triflers of a lifetime, they would not venture among the sober truths of life" (I. 75-76). Hawthorne opposes the revelers' "Erring Thought and perverted Wisdom" (I. 75) to the sober truth of Puritan faith which, as yet unshaken, mitigated the gnosticism of early Puritanism. But, much more significant than the Puritan attack on Merry

\(^{31}\)Ibid., p. 46.
Mount, is the young lovers' sober realization as they exchange wedding vows and face their future "of something vague and unsubstantial in their former pleasures . . . . From the moment that they truly loved, they had subjected themselves to earth's doom of care and sorrow, and troubled joy, and had no more a home at Merry Mount" (I. 75).

Aware of the inevitability of sin and failure, they become members of the Puritan community of faith, advancing, not toward another goal of earthly perfection, but "heavenward" (I. 84). Hawthorne always opposed attempts to escape the past and to perfect earthly existence. He affirmed man's limitations, limitations which demand that fulfillment only be realized in the transcending of earthly existence.

"Roger Malvin's Burial" provides a good example of how Hawthorne's emphasis upon man's sins and failures discredits progressive, self-righteous interpretations of historical events. The historical setting of the tale is of greater significance than is often realized: the aftermath of Lovell's Fight, an incident in the Penobscot War of 1725 which was romanticized in ballads and other accounts and commemorated in Hawthorne's time. Scholarship has shown that Hawthorne's tale was based not only upon such records but also upon more objective accounts by Thomas Hutchinson, Jeremy

---

32Larzer Ziff similarly maintains that the tale's meaning hinges upon the couple's recognition of the human heritage of sin but regards the Puritans as extremists; see "The Artist and Puritanism," Hawthorne Centenary Essays, ed. Roy Harvey Pearce, pp. 260-61.
Belknap, and, perhaps, Benjamin Trumbull, all of whom characterize the fight as a scalp-hunting incident and a relatively unimportant episode of the war. Hawthorne realized that an incident involving "thirty-four men shooting one Indian, his return firing of a gun charged with beaver shot, a rushing attack from forty hidden red men and a night of bush-fighting" had been unjustifiably glorified and credited with bringing peace to the settlements. His seeming approval of Lovell's Fight in the tale's first paragraph is as ironic as the contrast between this approval and the story of guilt and wasted life which follows. Based in part on the legend of a deserter who attempted to justify his actions by exaggerating details of the battle, the story of Reuben Bourne's guilt in deserting his comrade and lying about his fate is "an ironic allegory for a nation's repression of guilt."34

"The May-Pole of Merry Mount" and "Roger Malvin's Burial" aside, most of the historical writings in which


Hawthorne questions the progressive view of his nation's history fall into three categories: panoramic depictions of New England scenes, stories about the Puritans, and writings concerning the American Revolution and events leading toward it. The panoramic depictions, whether concerning a town such as Salem or New England as a whole, blend evidence of sin and failure with descriptions of growth and movement so that sin and failure appear as constants in man's past and the course of history itself does not appear to have a regular pattern accessible to human knowledge. In his stories about the Puritans Hawthorne challenged the American tendency to trace the highest principles of the new nation to the ideological influence of the Puritans, and he ironically detected the persistence of the human tendency to err and to fail in the history of the Puritans despite their self-appointed task of erecting the New Jerusalem foretold in Revelation. Hawthorne always upheld the American Revolution for its noblest ideals, liberty and justice, but he did not regard it as a turning point in the unfolding of a progressive Providential design. He was aware of the baser motives of many of those responsible for its success. Nor could he ever forget that, far from representing a clean break with a corrupt past, it was tainted with fratricidal violence.

In four works, Hawthorne provides panoramic views of

---

episodes from the American past, always constructing a series of scenes around some enduring emblem of human sinfulness and failure. Even the briefest of these, requiring barely two paragraphs in "A Rill from the Town Pump," subtly questions the moral and spiritual values of the civilization which has altered the American wilderness. The personified Salem pump is said to possess "historical reminiscences" of a "time immemorial" when only the Indian sagamores drank from its bubbling spring. The first white settlers, devout Puritans, also made reverent use of the spring to quench their thirst, "to purify their visages," and to purify their souls as well in baptism: "Thus, one generation after another was consecrated to Heaven by its waters, and cast their waxing and waning shadows into its glassy bosom, and vanished from the earth, as if mortal life were but a flitting image in a fountain." But the spiritual orientation of the early Puritans was lost. White men corrupted Indians with fire water, and civilization caused the spring to vanish: "Cellars were dug on all sides, and cartloads of gravel flung upon its source, whence oozed a turbid stream, forming a mud puddle, at the corner of two streets. In the hot months, when its refreshment was most needed, the dust flew in clouds over the forgotten birthplace of the waters, now their grave" (I. 168-69). Though eventually the pump was installed and the spring revived, the tension between nature and civilizational evils persists, as the pump
concludes its history by praising the virtues of water and temperance.

Thoroughly historical, "A Bell's Biography" has been interpreted as evidence of Hawthorne's faith in progress. Using chiefly this work and making unsupported assumptions about the influence of Bancroft upon Hawthorne, Gretchen Graf Jordan concludes that Hawthorne "saw the history of American culture as a continuous growth out of Anglo-Saxon Protestantism" and shared the philosophy of history of the "new 'Higher Critics' of the bible--particularly those revolutionary German scholars like Herder and Strauss, who had found not a static doctrine, but an evolution of faith and ethics in the literature of the Hebrews." This interpretation is based almost solely on one sentence in which the narrator declares that the bell hanging in some New England meeting-house heralded the struggle for Independence. Although admitting that virtually all the events portrayed emphasize human evils and failure, Jordan insists that Hawthorne means this one event to mark "the beginning of the secular fulfillment in the divinely ironic evolution of Christianity. . . . The religious principle of equality before God will become translated into the political principle of equality among men as well." 36

Jordan's thesis is unfounded. As the sketch's first paragraph suggests, Hawthorne had in mind no such vision of

American society. He refers to those who "clamor for the public good" as the bell's "noisy brethren, in our tongue-governed democracy" and gives them his "free consent to hang themselves as high as he" (III. 499). The sketch as a whole, moreover, emphasizes the sins and failures of America's Protestant forebears to the extent of overwhelming any suggestion of progress. And the bell itself is so often associated with dying and symbols of death that its history can hardly be said to evoke, in Jordan's words, a feeling that "Eternity would no longer be divorced from time . . . ."  

Embossed with a crucifix, the bell was originally christened by a French bishop and devoted to peaceful and spiritual ends. Made of melted cannon and the golden crucifix of a Bourbon princess, it first served Our Lady's Chapel of the Forest, a Jesuit mission for converting Indians. Among other functions, it often tolled "for the burial of an Indian chief" (III. 501). The "hostile" Puritans, fearing a coalition of French and Indians, attacked the mission, heedlessly slaying the priests upon their own altar, burning the chapel, and taking the bell as "spoil." Retreating, the Puritans were themselves attacked by Indians and the bell lost, sinking into a morass of a deep swamp still in the grasp of one of the victims. When the bell was recovered years later, a skeleton was seen still clinging to it, a suggestion of the lingering effects of the past upon

37Ibid., p. 129.
the present. Significantly, the bell's first function in its new (and present) location was to toll the death of the wealthy patron who bought it at auction and donated it to the meeting-house. Even on the day when it rang for Independence, it "uttered a peal which many deemed ominous and fearful, rather than triumphant" (III. 505). In view of such a history, the narrator, in the last two paragraphs, interprets the bell, not as a symbol of Time leading into Eternity, but of their inevitable separation and of the inevitable imperfection of human life. "O funeral bell!" he exclaims, "wilt thou never be shattered with thine own melancholy strokes? . . . Alas for the departing traveller, if thy voice—the voice of fleeting time—have taught him no lessons for Eternity!" (III. 506-07).

The scenes of "Main Street" surround the development of a forest path into the major Salem thoroughfare. As in "A Bell's Biography," Hawthorne treats the ages of the Indians' dominion and of the first white settlers more sympathetically than succeeding ones, again challenging the notion that civilization's advancement into the American wilderness was progressive. First generation Puritans are admired for "the zeal of a recovered faith which burned like a lamp within their hearts" (III. 449) and for the simplicity of their meeting-houses which suggested that, for all their concern to build a New Jerusalem, they yet demeaned earthly glory for the sake of eternal truth. But even among the first generation, Hawthorne finds evidence of the inevitable
sins and failures attending the human condition. Civilization encroaches upon the age-old habitats of forest animals, and it is already obvious that the "pavements of the Main Street must be laid over the red man's grave" (III. 445). As in the beginning of The Scarlet Letter, Hawthorne reminds readers that even the homeliest ambitions were often spoiled by hardship and death. Witness the cases of Anna Gower Endicott and Isaac Johnson's wife, the Lady Arabella.

Eventually the light of the Puritans' zeal "began to burn more dimly, or with a less genuine lustre; and then it might be seen how hard, cold, and confined was their system" (III. 449); moreover, "its rigidity could not fail to cause miserable distortions of the moral nature" (III. 459). The sternness of Puritanism, evident in the severity of its punishment of criminals, erupted into the ruthless persecution of Quakers. Hawthorne portrays his own ancestor whipping Ann Coleman through three towns before driving her into the wilderness, a sadistic "smile upon his lips" (III. 463). As ruthless were the economic exploitation of the Indian and his corruption through liquor, so that "the children of the stranger might be observed making game of the great Squaw Sachem's grandson" (III. 465). With descriptions of the "Universal Madness" (III. 471) of the Salem witch hunt and of the Great Snow of 1717, the author suddenly breaks off his narrative, as if wary of pursuing such a sombre and deprecatory history into the realm of living memory. (The
machinery controlling the pictorial exhibit around which the narrative is constructed has suddenly broken down.)

Interestingly, the showman insists that the remainder of the exhibit would have told of the present as well as the future, "showing you who shall walk the Main Street tomorrow, and, perchance, whose funeral shall pass through it" (III. 475-76). This closing reminder of life's transience is suggestive of the author's purpose throughout the sketch. Earlier, in fact, the narrator imagines Time itself marching down Main Street: "Pass onward, onward, Time! Build up new houses here, and tear down thy works of yesterday, that have already the rusty moss upon them! ... Do all thy daily and accustomed business, Father Time, in this thoroughfare, which thy footsteps, for so many years, have now made dusty!" (III. 466). Hawthorne's choice of a "thoroughfare" as the symbolic center of an historical narrative emphasizing sin and failure and his suggestion that Time, not man, moves "onward" indicate clearly a belief that fulfillment can never be found on earth but only in Eternity. This attitude is curiously similar to that expressed by Chaucer in "The Knight's Tale":

This world nys but a thurghfare ful of wo,
And we been pilgrymes, passynge to and fro. 38

"Main Street" reveals that for Hawthorne, as for Chaucer,

man's life and history on earth are severely limited both by man's imperfections and by Time. Life is but the passageway of the soul's movement toward the Eternal.\footnote{Hawthorne refers to Main Street as a thoroughfare two other times (III. 439, 473). Interestingly, in The House of the Seven Gables, the narrator uses the phrase "thoroughfare of life" (III. 216).}

In 1841, eight years prior to the publication of "Main Street," Hawthorne published Grandfather's Chair, a history for children. His purpose was avowedly educational. Grandfather, the fictional narrator, tells one of his youthful auditors at the outset that the stories to be told may "teach him something about the history and distinguished people of his country which he has never read in any of his schoolbooks" (IV. 433). For the major emphasis of the work is upon the very sins and failures which are described in the other panoramic views or in portrayals of single events in Puritan and Revolutionary history. For the most part, it may therefore be briefly described. Grandfather first tells of the failing health and eventual death of the Lady Arabella followed by that of her husband Isaac Johnson, whose homesite thus became the first New England cemetery. Succeeding scenes portray the acquisitiveness of Puritans such as John Hull, the self-righteous obstinacy of Endicott, and the pride of Anne Hutchinson. Next are scenes concerning persecutions of Quakers, mistreatment of Indians culminating in King Philip's War, and the Salem witch hunt. These are followed by depictions of the increased and often
stubborn dissatisfaction of the Puritans and their descendants with the royal governors and of the eventual Revolution, described as a movement "of a great and noble sentiment" though "there may be much fault to find with the mode of expressing this sentiment" (IV. 595). Inter­spersed among these are other grim accounts such as those of the Acadians' exile and the tragic losses sustained in attempts to capture Ticonderoga in the French and Indian War.

Hawthorne's use of an English-made chair brought to America by the Lady Arabella and passed down to various historical figures around whom scenes are developed is an additional suggestion that the sins and failures of the past cannot be left behind. Of perhaps even greater interest is that, of the hundreds of figures mentioned, praise or sympathy is shown for only a few, and these are generally shown to contrast with the rest of society. Among the most admired is John Eliot, "the apostle to the Indians" (IV. 467) whose sincere concern for their souls is contrasted with the Puritans' mistreatment of the Indians and whose Indian Bible is upheld by Grandfather as a thousand times more glorious than any deed of King Philip's War. Royal Governor William Burnet and Lieutenant-Governor Thomas Hutchinson are sympathetically portrayed as well-meaning victims caught between a tyrannical king and an often obstinate and violent populace, Burnet dying after a year of endless disputes with the legislature and Hutchinson attacked by a mob despite his
opposition to the Stamp Act. The stern but religious and
democratic Samuel Adams is praised as one of the new
nation's founders in direct contrast with the pompous, aris­
tocratic, and self-interested merchant John Hancock.
Finally, even some Tories, such as Chief Justice Peter
Oliver, are sympathetically portrayed for the scorn with
which they are treated despite their love of New England.

In writings based on events in Puritan history, Haw­
thorne was generally conscious of an ironic tension between
their determination to build a New Jerusalem and the inevi­
table human tendency toward sin and failure which necessar­
ily prevented them from doing so. For example, Endicott
welcomes the Merry Mount newlyweds to "our Israel" (I. 83),
but Hawthorne strongly implies that the Puritan community,
despite its firm faith, is the opposite extreme of Merry
Mount in its severity:

Unfortunately, there were men in the new world of
a sternier faith than these Maypole worshippers. Not
far from Merry Mount was a settlement of Puritans, most
dismal wretches, who said their prayers before day­
light, and then wrought in the forest or the cornfield
till evening made it prayer time again. Their weapons
were always at hand to shoot down the straggling sav­
age. When they met in conclave, it was never to keep
up the old English mirth, but to hear sermons three
hours long, or to proclaim bounties on the heads of
wolves and the scalps of Indians. Their festivals were
fast days, and their chief pastime the singing of
psalms. Woe to the youth or maiden who did but dream
of a dance! The selectman nodded to the constable; and
there sat the light-heeled reprobate in the stocks; or
if he danced, it was round the whipping-post, which
might be termed the Puritan Maypole. (I. 77)

In the disparity between the Puritans' view of themselves
and their inevitable sins and failures Hawthorne often discovered a self-righteousness which ironically exaggerated the Puritan shortcomings. He saw Endicott and Anne Hutchinson blinded by self-righteousness to the pride which led them to place themselves in God's seat of judgment. In condemning the rest of mankind, Richard Digby, "The Man of Adamant," has so hidden his own sinful pride from himself as to lose his soul. In the preface to "The Gentle Boy," Hawthorne affirms that the "indelible stain of blood is upon the hands of all" who persecuted the Quakers, and, indirectly referring to William Seward's History of the Quakers, avers that "judgments . . . overtook them, in old age or at the parting hour" (I. 86-87). Even in the case of the Pilgrims, Hawthorne was revolted by the presumptuous and uncharitable self-righteousness that allowed them to believe that Providence had ordained "a very grievous plague among the red men . . . to make room for the settlement of the English." The narrator objects, "But I know not why we should suppose that an Indian's life is less precious, in the eye of Heaven, than that of a white man" (IV. 467).

In The Scarlet Letter, Hawthorne is concerned throughout to show that the Puritans' "Utopia of human virtue and happiness" (V. 67) was undermined by inevitable human shortcomings, remarking in the first chapter upon their almost immediate need for a prison and a cemetery. The description of Governor Bellingham's mansion suggests the Puritans' failure to leave corrupted England completely behind, for
the governor vainly "had planned his new habitation after
the residences of gentlemen of fair estate in his native
land" (V. 130). The rare kindness of Reverend Wilson is not
a Puritan trait but owing to his having been "nurtured at
the rich bosom of the English Church" (V. 135). And, on
election day, the Puritans exhibit a pomp "in accordance
with antique style" (V. 275) and a merriment distinctly
Elizabethan. The ironic blindness of the Puritan community
to its own weaknesses is suggested throughout. The second
chapter alludes to the self-righteous persecution of Quak­
ers, Indians, dissenters, and those suspected of witchcraft
and then depicts a merciless group of women who, in the name
of righteousness, would repudiate Hester's judges and have
her hanged or branded. The same flash of lightning which
Dimmesdale interprets as a sign of his sinfulness, the Puri­
tans see as a sign of God's favor upon a passing leader of
the colony. No less an example of moral blindness is the
sexton's unquestioning assumption that Satan, not Dimmes­
dale, dropped the minister's glove upon the scaffold "in­
tending a scurrilous jest" (V. 191). Even after Dimmesdale
confesses his adultery openly, there are many who interpret
it as merely a symbolic gesture.

In *The House of the Seven Gables*, Colonel Pyncheon
exemplifies the Puritan failure to establish a permanent
order. His "inordinate desire to plant and endow a family"
(III. 222), though praised by Reverend Higginson as a moral
accomplishment, is an evident failure not only in the
delusion and suffering it has caused his descendants but also in that the house itself must inevitably become subject to change and decay. The street on which the house sits "has long ceased to be a fashionable quarter of the town" (III. 42), and the once spacious garden is now small and enclosed by houses built when financial necessity forced the Pyncheons to sell some of their property. The house is moss-covered and decaying, and posies grow on its roof in the accumulated dust of two centuries, symbolic of the inevitable return to nature of all things proceeding out of it and perhaps even suggestive of a grave. A final irony is that a portion of the house must be turned into a shop for the support of the Colonel's descendants.

The self-righteousness which made the sins and failures of the Puritans all the more ironic and dramatic is a theme of "Young Goodman Brown." Failure in Puritan history is suggested by the satanic figure's revelation of the evil deeds of Brown's forefathers and by his boast of a "general acquaintance" (II. 92) among present ministers, selectmen, and judges. Brown, of course, tragically represents the Puritans' blindness to their own shortcomings not only in his inability to accept frankly the evil of his forefathers and rulers but also in his self-righteous refusal to acknowledge the pervasive human tendency toward evil suggested to him by the scenes he later witnesses in the forest, even though he became himself "the chief horror" (II. 99). "The Minister's Black Veil," which has been considered a
companion piece of "Young Goodman Brown," portrays this same moral blindness in the Puritan community's failure to understand the meaning of Father Hooper's veil. They are puzzled because, as Puritans, they must assume the nearly perfect righteousness of such a man as well as of themselves. They cannot allow themselves to believe the truth suggested by the veil and which Hooper utters on his deathbed: "I look around me, and, lo! on every visage a Black Veil!" (I. 69).

Hawthorne challenged Americans' complacency concerning the righteousness of the New England forebears, somewhat as the satanic figure challenges Goodman Brown. And, somewhat like Reverend Hooper, he was concerned to assert the pervasiveness of sin and failure in the past and their persistence in the present. At the foot of Salem's Gallow's Hill, the narrator of "Alice Doane's Appeal," mindful of the witchcraft persecutions, urges that "here, in dark, funereal stone, should rise a monument, sadly commemorative of the errors of an earlier race, and not to be cast down, while

the human heart has one infirmity that may result in crime" (XII. 295).

More specifically, Hawthorne challenged his fellow Americans' tendency to idealize Puritan history, particularly when it meant tracing to the Puritans the noblest ideals of the New Nation. In "Main Street," he remarked, "... how like an iron cage was that which they called Liberty" (III. 449). A pervasive motif of "The Gentle Boy" is the revelation that the religious liberty and freedom of expression the Puritans sought for themselves they did not endorse in principle nor permit in others. Even though the "king's mandate to stay the New England persecutors was effectual in preventing further martyrdoms ... the colonial authorities ... shortly renewed their severities in all other respects" (I. 125). Particularly in two historical sketches, Hawthorne not only questioned the tracing of American ideals to the Puritans but also suggested that the Puritan character actually contributed to the imperfections of American democracy.

The final paragraph of "Endicott and the Red Cross" undeniably interprets the sketch's central event as "the first omen" of the American Revolution. But if Hawthorne wished to suggest that Endicott's famous attack upon the British flag prefigured America's "deliverance" (I. 494) he also portrayed the event with provocative irony. Endicott hears that King Charles and Bishop Laud "are taking counsel ... to send over a governor-general, in whose breast shall
be deposited all the law and equity of the land" (I. 492). His response is to cut the cross from the colony's banner, but not before delivering a speech upholding New England's commitment to "the enjoyment of our civil rights" and to "liberty to worship God according to our conscience" (I. 491). The ironic falsehood of this speech is apparent from the description of the Salem town square. Near the meeting-house a suspected Catholic is at the pillory, and a man who toasted the king is in the stocks. "A Wanton Gospeller" and a gossip with a forked stick on her tongue stand on the steps. Among the townfolk are people who, for defiance of Puritan law, have had ears cropped, cheeks branded, and nostrils slit and seared. One is made to wear a halter for the remainder of his life, another an emblem of adultery. The wolf's head nailed to the meeting-house wall suggests the coerciveness of Puritan society, as does Endicott's obvious love of martial strength. With the scene thus set, the reader must certainly sympathize with the Wanton Gospeller for answering Endicott's speech by crying out, "Call you this liberty of conscience?" (I. 491). Endicott's only response is a threat of violence.

"Endicott and the Red Cross" represents a fusion of two distinct historical events, Endicott's attack on the flag in November of 1634 and an incident two months earlier involving Massachusetts officials' unrest concerning a "commission granted to two archbishops and ten others of the council, to regulate all plantations . . . ." The fusion makes
Endicott's act one of political as well as religious rebellion when, in fact, it was simply, in Edward J. Gallagher's words, a reaction to "the anomaly of barring crosses from the church but bowing to them in the flag." Although both Cotton Mather and Thomas Hutchinson (two of Hawthorne's sources) blame the separatist Roger Williams for encouraging Endicott's act, Hawthorne portrays him as "an elderly gentleman" (I. 488), who attempts to prevent Endicott's speech under Governor Winthrop's advice and who smiles with tacit approval at the Gospeller's retort. In thus manipulating historical fact, Hawthorne is "highlighting the irony of intolerance begetting democracy." Endicott exhibits the characteristics of a demagogue. He does not read the letter from Winthrop to the people but extemporizes; he ignores Winthrop's request for silence to avoid an untimely show of disapproval. His speech employs vicious epithets, and plays upon the emotions and narrow-mindedness of his listeners by portraying Charles and Laud as papists. And he does not cut the cross from the flag until they are "full of his own spirit" to sanction the act with "a cry of triumph" (I. 493).

41 Edward J. Gallagher, "History in 'Endicott and the Red Cross,'" Emerson Society Quarterly, No. 50 (Supplement, 1968), pp. 63-64. I have quoted a phrase from Winthrop's journal as cited in Gallagher's article.

"The Gray Champion" also concerns the tension between royal authority and the Massachusetts colony's unyielding determination to rule itself. The historical background of the sketch is a period of intense dissatisfaction among the Puritans. "James II., the bigoted successor of Charles the Voluptuous, had annulled the charters of all the colonies, and sent a harsh and unprincipled soldier to take away our liberties and endanger our religion" (I. 21). But in 1689, with rumors of the imminent accession of the Protestant William of Orange, the Puritans began to exhibit defiance of the royal governor, Sir Edmund Andros. The subject of Hawthorne's sketch is Andros' subsequent marshalling of British troops in Boston for a show of strength. When the troops march there suddenly appears "from among the people" (I. 26) a ghostly figure of dignified and ancient bearing who causes the procession to halt while he prophesies the end of James's reign. Andros, somewhat overawed and sensing his own peril before an aroused people, orders a retreat.

Like "Endicott and the Red Cross," the story of the Gray Champion prefigures the American Revolution:

I have heard, that whenever the descendants of the Puritans are to show the spirit of their sires, the old man appears again. When eighty years had passed, he walked once more in King Street. Five years later, in the twilight of an April morning, he stood on the green, beside the meeting-house, at Lexington, where now the obelisk of granite, with a slab of slate inlaid, commemorates the first fallen of the Revolution. And when our fathers were toiling at the breastwork on Bunker's Hill, all through that night the old warrior walked his rounds. . . . for he is the type of New England's hereditary spirit . . . . (I. 30-31)
But a close reading reveals that Hawthorne did not regard Puritan defiance of royal authority without irony, nor did he regard New England's "hereditary spirit" with unequivocal approval. The Puritans, Hawthorne felt, were genuinely oppressed under Andros' rule: "New England groaned under the actual pressure of heavier wrongs than those threatened ones which brought on the Revolution" (I. 21). But this does not mean that they were free of fault themselves. Among those watching the procession are "Old soldiers of the Parliament . . . smiling grimly at the thought that their aged arms might strike another blow against the house of Stuart. Here, also, were the veterans of King Philip's war, who had burned villages and slaughtered young and old, with pious fierceness, while the godly souls throughout the land were helping them with prayer." Demagogic cries reveal narrow-mindedness and exaggerated fears as first one Puritan claims the ministers are to be imprisoned and then another that "The Pope of Rome has given orders for a new St. Bartholomew!" (I. 23-24). With the emergence of the Champion, the crowd is soon "burning with . . . lurid wrath" (I. 29), and though it is Andros who avoids violent conflict, it is he, not the ministers, who is soon imprisoned (an unauthorized, even unnecessary act, though Hawthorne merely mentions the imprisonment).

One critic has suggested that Hawthorne obviously does not mean by "hereditary spirit" the reverence for the principle of Liberty normally associated with the American
Revolution but instead a persistent and fierce, sometimes even obstinate and violent independence. This view is substantiated by Hawthorne's manipulation of sources. The appearance of the Gray Champion has no basis in fact as far as events of 1689 are concerned. It is based upon the sudden emergence of Major General William Goffe, one of the regicide judges hiding in America, to rally settlers under attack during King Philip's War. Hawthorne's use of a regicide judge (an identity strongly suggested by the narrator and by the Champion's own words) promotes the sketch's ambivalent meaning. Associating the Glorious Revolution with the American Revolution was a common typology in Hawthorne's time. By mentioning the presence of some "Old soldiers of the Parliament" no less than by his use of a regicide judge, Hawthorne links the American Revolution to a far less glorious revolution, in which the self-righteousness, obstinacy, and irascibility of the Puritan character led to civil strife, an unprecedented act of violence, and, eventually, failure.

Hawthorne admired the American Revolutionary movement for its noblest ideals, Liberty and Egalitarian Justice.


But he did not regard the Revolution as the turning point in a progressive, Providential design of history. Recounting Ethan Allen's demand that the British surrender Ticonderoga "in the name of the great Jehovah and of the Continental Congress," he is conscious that to the British captain these must have seemed "Strange allies!" (III. 596). In "Graves and Goblins" he imagines the ghost of an old patriot whose "strong love of country" and great expectations of its destiny have the effect of sin in keeping him "unfit for heaven . . . till America be again a wilderness" (XII. 73). In "Howe's Masquerade" a procession foretells Howe's defeat. The procession is neither joyful nor hopeful but, accompanied by a funeral march, maintains a grimness appropriate for the violence of war. The figures in the procession, who move down the staircase of the Province House and go outside, represent not only royal governors but the Puritan ones and the regicide judges as well.

The stories cited suggest that Hawthorne saw the Revolutionary movement as yet another instance in history in which man's attempt to break with the past in the name of progress is foiled by his being subject to sins and failures linking him inextricably with the ages. Hawthorne could not forget that the Revolution was tainted with violence and the sorrow of thwarted hopes and lives. The "New Adam and Eve" must be forgiven their innocent admiration of the Bunker Hill memorial. "Could they guess that the green sward on which they stand so peacefully was once strewn with human
corpses and purple with their blood, it would equally amaze them that one generation of men should perpetrate such carnage, and that a subsequent generation should triumphantly commemorate it" (II. 298).

In four stories Hawthorne symbolized the sins and failures of the Revolutionary movement by portraying youths involved in its struggles and incurring guilt, suffering, or sorrow as results of their participation. "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," the most important of these, will be more thoroughly discussed at the end of this chapter because of its more complex overall theme. It need simply be observed here that Robin incurs the guilt of the crowd's violent treatment of his royalist kinsman by joining in its irreverent peal of laughter. Such an interpretation is substantiated by the narrator's sympathy for the royal governors in his prefatory remarks as well as for Major Molineux himself, "an elderly man, of large and majestic person, and strong, square features, betokening a steady soul" (III. 638). In repudiating his kinsman Robin violates the familial bonds that have brought him to Boston. His act symbolizes the fratricidal violence of the American Revolution, and, since Robin may expect to rise in Boston only through shrewdness, it is also suggestive of the new nation's forfeiture of traditional community.

"The Battle-Omen," one of the first tales published by Hawthorne, concerns two young colonials returning from a military meeting in the winter before the first military
contests. They speak enthusiastically "of the approaching contest, almost forgetting the threatened ruin of their country, in the stirring prospects which were opened to youthful ambition." One then recounts the legend of a fisherman who fifty years before on the very spot witnessed an omen of a forthcoming military struggle, hearing first martial music and then the tread of those destined to be slain. As the youths continue homeward, they too suddenly hear martial music, an omen of the coming struggle of which they are so hopeful; "but the notes . . . were sad and solemn, like the evening wind that sighs over a field of victory, or like the stately and mournful march with which a hero is borne to his grave." 46 When the music fades, they hear the sounds of a skirmish in which they detect their own voices. Hawthorne could never overlook the violence that, despite the Revolution's ideals, meant thwarted hopes and loss of life for many. In Grandfather's Chair, he wrote that "every warlike achievement involves an amount of physical and moral evil, for which all the gold in the Spanish mines would not be the slightest recompense" (IV. 540).

Hawthorne was constantly mindful of the guilt incurred by the new nation through the violence of its Revolution. In "Mosses" he recounts a legend told to him by Lowell of a

youth who, employed at chopping wood at the Old Manse on the
day of the battles of Lexington and Concord, was drawn away
from his task by the sounds of battle. Coming upon a
wounded British soldier, the youth, probably upon "nervous
impulse" slew him with the axe he had used in chopping. For
Hawthorne the legend is chiefly interesting for its sugges-
tion of the human tendency toward violence that may emerge
unexpectedly and uncontrollably in wartime and of the inevi-
table guilt which must follow. He notes that the killing
took place after the British retreat and imagines the sol-
dier painfully raising himself and giving the youth a
"ghastly stare." And he admits to wondering often "how his
soul was tortured by the blood stain, contracted as it had
been before the long custom of war had robbed human life of
its sanctity, and while it still seemed murderous to slay a
brother man. This one circumstance has borne more fruit for
me," he continues, "than all that history tells us of the
fight" (II. 18-19).

Understandably, Hawthorne was engrossed, if not some-
what surprised, when years later he met Philip Richardson,
who shot a British officer in the War of 1812, watched the
man die in his own arms, and afterwards admitted to being
often haunted by the memory of the dying man's expression.47
Apparently Hawthorne had the accounts of Lowell and Richard-
son in mind when he began writing Septimius Felton, an

unfinished romance clearly intended to suggest that the American Revolution represented no progressive break with the past. **Septimius Felton** is the story of a youth who begins a search for the elixir of eternal life during the early phase of the American Revolution. Hours before the skirmishes at Lexington and Concord, Septimius, morbidly obsessed with the brevity of life, is indifferent to the coming Revolution. Enraged by a young British officer's liberties with Rose Garfield (later changed to Septimius' sister), he goes into the woods with his rifle when he hears sounds of battle. Watching the retreating British fired upon by hiding minutemen, he considers firing himself. In this state he suddenly meets the brash young British officer, who forces Septimius into a duel and is killed. Dying, the officer befriends Septimius and gives him a mysterious manuscript full of clues for the elixir of life.

Hawthorne clearly intends Septimius' quest for eternal life to parallel the emergence of the new nation. They begin on the same day, with the same events and essentially the same deeds. Though Septimius again grows indifferent to the war in his obsession with immortality, initially his "perception of the great public event of a broken-out war was intermixed with that of what he had done personally in the great struggle that was beginning" (XI. 266). Far from liberating Septimius from the age-old conditions of earthly existence, his brief involvement in the war shows him his deep-seated relationship with the past, of which Septimius
has been unaware. In searching for clues to divine the sym-
bols of the mysterious manuscript, he discovers the young
officer to have been his kinsman. He learns that his ances-
tors, apprised of the formula for which he now searches,
were generally reluctant to use it because of the ascetism
required for its proper effect and invariably failed to use
the formula until it was too late to halt the natural aging
process.\footnote{\textit{Works}, XI, 309-10.} Septimius seems no more likely to succeed than
his ancestors, since he finds himself wasting his youth in
discontent in the mere search for the formula. He learns
that many of his ancestors were given to violent passions
and discontent "so that the age-long life of this ancient
family had not been after all a happy or very prosperous
one" (XI. 395). He does not see that he is himself repeating
the pattern set by his ancestors. He does not see that
killing the young officer was, though involuntary, also an
effect of his own murderous passions and that guilt and sor-
row must be the result. He fails to suspect that the mys-
terious young woman offering to help him discover the
formula is his victim's fiancée, whose purpose is to mislead
Septimius until his life has been wasted. Finally apprised
of her deception, Septimius in guilt and sorrow takes up
residence in his ancestral home in England—"content to
settle down . . . and die in his due time, and be buried
like any other man" (XI. 430).
Hawthorne often reminded Americans of the baser passions and motives of many involved in the Revolutionary movement. Reading old newspaper accounts of the lapses in law and order which occurred in the first troubled days, he remarks that "it was for us to prove how disloyalty goes hand in hand with irreligion, and all other vices come trooping in the train" (III. 560); and he sympathizes with an imagined old Tory for believing that "the state of the country . . . was of dismal augury for the tendencies of democratic rule" (III. 562). Hawthorne often portrays royalists sympathetically in contrast with the mobs which attacked them. The townspeople who tar and feather Major Molineux are depicted as "fiends . . . trampling all on an old man's heart" (III. 640). In Grandfather's Chair, Hawthorne sympathetically portrays several royalists who faced mob violence, informing his young readers that many (most notably Hutchinson and Chief Justice Oliver) loved New England well. Simply because he is English, the aged Doctor Grimshawe is attacked as a "tyrant" and a tory, in the first years of the New Republic, by a "bloodthirsty multitude" (XIII. 54-55) composed of drunkards, madmen, and ne'er-do-wells who desist once violence is done, though ironically not to the doctor.

Two of the Legends of the Province House portray Americans whose contributions to the emergence of democracy are undercut by baser passions, most notably pride. Jervase Helwyse, perhaps the central character of "Lady Eleanor's
Mantle," is one of Hawthorne's best representations of the pride which may be unleashed by democracy. Jervase actually mirrors the aristocratic pride of Lady Eleanore in so debasing himself in admiration of her, an admiration which characterizes the rest of the common people as well. Later he exhibits pride in his maddened and vengeful exultation over Lady Eleanore's disfigured face and in parading her effigy in scorn about the town, an exhibition which suggests, as one critic remarks, that "America's rebellion against the past was not untainted by pride." Essentially the same meaning is suggested by "Old Esther Dudley," the ending of which concerns the period immediately following the Revolution. Ostensibly told by an ancient loyalist, the tale portrays Old Esther sympathetically for the most part, though she deludedly lives only in the past, always expectant of the royal governor's return. Hancock's treatment of her in the final scene is nearly parallel to Lady Eleanore's treatment of Jervase. Hawthorne (as earlier shown) regarded Hancock as an example of pride and of wealth's perversion of democratic principles, and there is a fine irony in his suggestion that Hancock's rich dress and aristocratic manner


50See also Works, XII, 97.
cause Esther to think he is the king's representative. Hancock callously overlooks her fallen and wasted form to deliver a pompous lecture full of the rhetoric of progress:

"Your life has been prolonged until the world has changed around you. You have treasured up all that time has rendered worthless—the principles, feelings, manners, modes of being and acting, which another generation has flung aside—and you are a symbol of the past. And I, and these around me—we represent a new race of men—living no longer in the past, scarcely in the present—but projecting our lives forward into the future. Ceasing to model ourselves on ancestral superstitions, it is our faith and principle to press onward, onward!" (I. 340-41)

Hancock is as seriously lacking in reverence for the past in his pride in the present and in his concern to push "onward" as Old Esther has been blind to the present and future.  

In his historical writings Hawthorne generally discredits the conception of history by which modernity, postulating the inevitable and continuous progress of mankind, attempts to justify its emphasis upon reason and science and its increased commitment to advanced technology, rampant individualism, and rampant materialism. In other words, Hawthorne discredits the conception of history that sustains modern man's alienation from God and fellow man and attempts to replace faith and community with the appeal of gnosis and progress. Emphasizing the sins and failures of the American past, Hawthorne undermined the general tendency of his fellow Americans to view their country as the vanguard of an

---

51A similar argument is made by Thomas F. Walsh, Jr., "Hawthorne's Satire in 'Old Esther Dudley'," Emerson Society Quarterly, No. 22 (I Quarter, 1961), pp. 31-33.
historical process destined to culminate in the earthly perfection of man and society.  

52 Lewis P. Simpson, in "John Adams and Hawthorne: The Fiction of the Real American Revolution," Studies in the Literary Imagination, 9, No. 2 (1976), 1-17, argues that "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" challenges the modern notion "that regenerative rationality had revealed itself as the shaping force of history" (p. 6). Johannes Kjorven, "Hawthorne, and the Significance of History," in Americana Norvegica: Norwegian Contributions to American Studies, ed. Sigmund Skard and Henry W. Wasser (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1966), I, 110-60, affirms that "Hawthorne points out the elemental conditions of evil and guilt through history" (p. 138), that he is suspicious of the nineteenth century faith in progress, and that he "does not attempt to make history 'meaningful' in terms of a pattern or valid laws of continuity . . ." (p. 118).

Interesting is Roy Harvey Pearce's assertion in "Hawthorne and the Sense of the Past; or, The Immortality of Major Molineux," Historicism Once More: Problems and Occasions for the American Scholar (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1969), pp. 137-74, that Hawthorne's "historical consciousness" in "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" differed radically from that of progressive historians such as Bancroft. Pearce interprets the tale's theme as "the imputation simultaneously of guilt and righteousness through history" (p. 146). The inference that Hawthorne believed "righteousness" was imputed through history leads Pearce to reject other works (such as The House of the Seven Gables) as failures, perhaps an indication of Pearce's lack of objectivity in understanding Hawthorne's general concern with history. I see the tale as having little if any concern for the righteousness of the American past and am somewhat puzzled by Pearce's attributing to Hawthorne the essentially gnostic belief that "Man has no nature, except in his history" (p. 168).

continuity of sin and failure in the past suggests that man's nature is forever imperfectible and that the past in a sense has an irrevocable hold on the present.\textsuperscript{53} Hawthorne's opposition to the progressive conception of history is implied in his skepticism concerning the idea of progress (demonstrated in Chapter Two), his indifference to theories of evolution, and his tendency to retell in modern terms the story of Adam's fall.\textsuperscript{54}

Hawthorne's discrediting of modernity is a significant aspect of his conception of history. His attack on gnosticism is the negative basis of this conception. Hawthorne would have endorsed Voegelin's conviction of "the mystery of a history that wends its way into the future without our knowing its end. History as a whole is essentially not an object of cognition; the meaning of the whole is not discernible."\textsuperscript{55} Hawthorne expressed essentially the same belief when, as earlier noted, he wrote his sister-in-law

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item So many have commented upon the theme of the influence of the past on the present in Hawthorne's works that it would be virtually impossible to list them all. Two fairly representative studies are Christoph Lohmann's "The Burden of the Past in Hawthorne's American Romances," \textit{South Atlantic Quarterly}, 66 (1967), 92-104, and Viola Sachs' "The Myth of America in Hawthorne's 'House of the Seven Gables' and 'Blithedale Romance,'" \textit{Kwartalnik Neofilologiczny}, 15 (1968), 267-83.


\item \textit{Science, Politics and Gnosticism,} p. 105.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
that all of history confirms that "the good of others, like our own happiness is not to be attained by direct effort, but incidentally." In "Chiefly About War Matters" he observes, "No human effort, on a grand scale, has ever yet resulted according to the purpose of its projectors. . . . Man's accidents are God's purposes." This challenge to belief in historical progress prompts the fictitious "Editor" to remark, "We disagree with him. The counsels of wise and good men are often coincident with the purposes of Providence . . ." (XII. 332). The statement that "Man's accidents are God's purposes" is not to be taken lightly despite the facetious tone of the article. Hawthorne had first heard it from Sophia many years earlier and had inscribed it, with her diamond, on a window of his study in the Old Manse during the first year of their marriage. Throughout his life Hawthorne revered the statement as practically a religious conviction.56

Hawthorne's belief that the course of history is unknowable and subject to no grand design of eternal significance may be further clarified by briefly examining his conception of Time. From observation he concluded that the essence of Time is transience. Reflecting upon his children's growth, he remarked, "This present life has hardly substance and tangibility enough to be the image of eternity;--the future too soon becomes the present, which,

56Hoeltje, Inward Sky, p. 221.
before we can grasp it, looks back upon us as the past;—it must, I think, be only the image of an image. Our next state of existence, we may hope, will be more real—that is to say, it may be only one remove from a reality. But, as yet, we dwell in the shadow cast by Time, which is itself the shadow cast by Eternity. In "Time's Portraiture," he discounts the traditional personification of Time as fatherly and worn, a figure of staid antiquity, and instead portrays Time as deceptively youthful, sporting the most recent fashions, fickle in literary tastes, and eager to forget his own deeds and to talk of novelties. Thus, Hawthorne believed that, though Time is in some sense the "shadow" of Eternity, they are ultimately distinguishable and even antithetical: "For Time is not immortal. Time must die, and be buried in the deep grave of eternity" (XII. 129).

In Hawthorne's view, human life does not provide an "image of eternity" but is impalpable and intangible. It is continuous only in being the antithesis of the Eternal, in its transience and imperfection. Hawthorne naturally looked upon historical events, in Leo B. Levy's words, "statically or spatially, in depth, rather than sequentially." Hawthorne's refutation of gnosticism is virtually synonymous


58 Another work in which Hawthorne expresses essentially the same ideas about Time is "The Sister Years"; see Works, I, 380-81.
with a conviction that history is characterized by "discontinuity" except in the sense that "Different epochs exhibit common dilemmas" caused by man's invariable propensity to sin and failure.\(^59\)

II. The Past as an Affirmation of the Openness of the Soul to Transcendent Reality

The positive aspect of Hawthorne's conception of history is based upon his conviction of the persistence of man's tendency toward sin and failure throughout Time. Hawthorne perceived—or, meditating upon historical events, imagined—human beings in the past becoming conscious of their limitations and so feeling compelled toward the higher truth of God or transcendent reality. As a result they were compelled to deal justly and sympathetically with their fellow men, thus fostering genuine community. History for Hawthorne became a record of human experience which confirms that, in Eric Voegelin's formulation, "the movement toward truth starts from a man's awareness of his existence in

\(^59\)"'Time's Portraiture': Hawthorne's Theory of History," Nathaniel Hawthorne Journal, 1 (1971), 193, 198. Levy makes no reference to gnosticism but does interpret several of Hawthorne's historical pieces as warnings against a complacent attitude toward the past and concludes that "those critics who number him among the philosophers of historical evolution or find him the spokesman of a readily identifiable theory of cyclic or organic change are surely wrong" (p. 199).

Levy's assertion that for Hawthorne "Time is also the agent of the Christian drama whose final significance is apocalyptic" (p. 193) is unsupported as well as misleading since Hawthorne did not concern himself with the "Christian drama" literally as did medieval historians or the writers of the mystery plays. Time for Hawthorne was more fundamentally the agent or "shadow" of "Eternity."
In other words, when man "discovers the divinity in its radically nonhuman transcendence," he also discovers his soul; he becomes aware of his own openness toward that transcendent reality in the psyche. He perceives himself as "fully man by virtue of his participation in a whole which transcends his particular existence." Voegelin explains, "one might almost say that before the discovery of the psyche man had no soul. Hence, it is a discovery which produces its experiential material along with its explication; the openness of the soul is experienced through the opening of the soul itself." 61 

In his greatest writings Hawthorne is concerned to demonstrate that man is a being with a soul, a being potentially open to the higher truth of God or transcendent reality. He portrays human beings who, becoming aware of their failures and sins, experience a guilt or sorrow that implies consciousness of a transcendent realm of perfection. He portrays human beings compelled toward truth by the consciousness of their existence in untruth. Positively speaking Hawthorne's conception of history bears the spirit of the epigraph of each volume of Voegelin's Order and History, a quotation from St. Augustine's De Vera Religione:

In the study of creature one should not exercise a vain and perishing curiosity, but ascend toward what is immortal and everlasting.

60 Israel and Revelation, p. xiv.
For Hawthorne the alternative to the vanity of the gnostic search for ultimate fulfillment in Time is to view history as a record that confirms transcendent reality and man's potential openness toward it—a record that urges present and future generations to "ascend toward what is immortal and everlasting." Hawthorne's ultimate answer to the problem of modern man's alienation from God and fellow man through reason and science, individualism, and materialism is to promote by example the basic experience of transcendence available to man in his own heart. Essentially this is his method of reuniting man with God. Since the experience of transcendence compels man to act in accord with higher truth, it is also a means of promoting genuine community.

Hawthorne felt the need for a new revelation. To a certain extent his conception of history provided this, though it would perhaps be more accurate to say his conception of history is based upon a reformulation of traditional revelation. His works reflect the influence of the classic and Christian tradition, which for Voegelin represents the Western resistance against gnosticism. But, as the first chapter of this study observes, Hawthorne could not firmly endorse any credal interpretation of Christian revelation. He recurred to the more intrinsic "experiences of transcendence which belong to the nature of man."
Despite his doubts, Hawthorne was able to confirm for himself the existence of God or of some transcendent perfection of being. He experienced loss of faith chiefly in that he remained indecisive and uncommitted to any specific creed or religion. His personal experiences and observation of nature taught him to believe in an afterlife. He believed, as he wrote in "A Virtuoso's Collection," that "There is a celestial something within us" (II. 551). Hawthorne often felt that Eternity was nearer at hand than any goal to be achieved in Time and was amazed at people's indifference or obliquity to its nearness. Of sculptor Hiram Powers he remarked, "He sees too clearly what is within his range to be aware of any region of mystery beyond" (X. 335). He discounted theories of evolution because of his certainty that man, unlike the animals, possesses a soul and "is capable of adding wisdom to wisdom, throughout Eternity." Man need place no hope in evolution, for he "may full surely trust, that an Eternity will be allotted for the infinite expansion of his capacities." 

Hawthorne was often somewhat Platonic in expressing his belief in the Eternal. In "The Hall of Fantasy,"

65 Hawthorne as Editor, ed. Turner, pp. 209-10.
Hawthorne says that men should make an "occasional visit" to the realm of thought for the sake of "prefiguring to ourselves a state in which the Idea shall be all in all" (II. 211). Hawthorne admired Newton because "His mind was lifted far above the things of this world . . . for where the thoughts and the heart are, there is our true existence" (XII. 162). As shown in Chapter One, Hawthorne often challenged his era's great emphasis upon physical reality, contending that "the dominions which the spirit conquers for itself . . . become a thousand times more real than the earth" (II. 71). "The grosser life is a dream," he once told Sophia, "and the spiritual life a reality." In "The Old Apple Dealer" he wrote, "God be praised . . . that the present shapes of human existence are not cast in iron nor hewn in everlasting adamant, but moulded of the vapors that vanish away while the essence flits upward to the Infinite" (II. 503). The story of Owen Warland, "The Artist of the Beautiful," portrays the artist as one who must struggle to find and represent Eternal Truth within the "grosser life" bound by Time, a predicament symbolized by Owen's unhappy employment as a watchmaker. Having finally achieved representation ("Nature's ideal butterfly" II. 529), Owen finds his ultimate reward in neither the praise of a grateful audience nor the work itself but in his own greater perception of Eternal Truth: "When the artist rose high enough to

achieve the beautiful, the symbol by which he made it perceptible to mortal senses became of little value in his own eyes while his spirit possessed itself in the enjoyment of the reality" (II. 535-36).

Hawthorne's belief in Eternal truth was based upon his conviction of life's imperfection. The consciousness of man's existence in untruth was the source of his own openness toward transcendent reality. Observing even in animals "a continual hope of bettering themselves," he concluded that "no argument from the imperfect character of our existence . . . can be drawn in reference to our immortality, without, in a degree, being applicable to our brute brethren." He once assured readers "that another state of being will surely rectify the wrong of this" (II. 251). While in England, he wrote, "All the misery we endure here constitutes a claim for another life." In A Wonder-Book, as observed in the previous chapter, the narrator somewhat paradoxically is gladdened by Pandora's release of earth's "Troubles" because they bring Hope with them and she "spiritualizes the earth," showing "it to be only the shadow of an infinite bliss hereafter!" (IV. 101). This same idea is the theme of "The Lily's Quest," in the ending of which Adam Forrester rejoices in having found the promise of Eternal happiness at the grave of Lilias and in the consciousness of

68 The American Notebooks, ed. Simpson, p. 300.
dashed ambitions. As this example suggests, death itself became a source of hope for Hawthorne, who, watching at his mother's deathbed, reasoned that no just Creator would compensate man for the "bitterness of death" in any degree less than through Eternal happiness. In "Chippings with a Chisel" Hawthorne describes a woman whose "lifelong sorrow" over the death of her first lover "had given an ideality to her mind; it had kept her purer and less earthly than she would otherwise have been, by drawing a portion of her sympathies apart from earth" (I. 458-59). At the end of this sketch, a meditation upon tombstones, the narrator wonders "whether the dark shadowing of this life, the sorrows and regrets, have not as much real comfort in them—leaving religious influences out of the question—as what we term life's joys" (I. 468). As a final example, Holgrave, sitting alone with Judge Pyncheon's corpse, loses all earthly ambition in the consciousness of death. When Phoebe suddenly arrives, he is unexpectedly moved to express a love which participates in the Eternal:

And it was in this hour, so full of doubt and awe, that the one miracle was wrought, without which every human existence is a blank. The bliss which makes all things true, beautiful, and holy shone around this youth and maiden. They were conscious of nothing sad nor old. They transfigured the earth, and made it Eden again, and themselves the two first dwellers in it. The dead man, so close beside them, was forgotten. At such a crisis, there is no death; for immortality is revealed anew, and embraces everything in its hallowed atmosphere. (III. 363)

Surely Hawthorne referred to man's compulsion toward transcendent truth out of the consciousness of existence in
untruth when he claimed as the general subject of his fiction "the truth of the human heart." He once planned an allegory of the human heart in which it was to be represented as a cavern, bright at its entrance where any wanderer is yet subject to the present life's illusoriness. Within the wanderer is soon "surrounded with a terrible gloom, and monsters of divers kinds; it seems like Hell itself." The gloom and monsters are of man's making. The wanderer does not retreat but moves beyond these into "the depths of the heart, or of human nature." Here he finds a region which "seems, in some sort, to reproduce the flowers and sunny beauty of the entrance, but all perfect." Here is "eternal beauty." For Hawthorne the heart is the symbol of man's capacity for transcendence. This is why the separation of head and heart is for him unpardonable sin. If man refuses to acknowledge even the potential openness of his soul in his quest for truth, he loses both truth and his soul irretrievably, as in the case of Ethan Brand.

Randall Stewart has suggested that the truth of the heart became for Hawthorne a substitute for theology. Voegelin, curiously enough, employs a remarkably similar phrase, "the truth of the soul," as synonymous with the

70 The American Notebooks, ed. Simpson, p. 237, italics added.

71 Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Biography, p. 244.
experience of transcendence. Insisting upon the close relationship between the heart's truth and his own art in the Preface to *The House of the Seven Gables*, Hawthorne rejects the term "novel," for to him it suggests "a very minute fidelity, not merely to the possible, but to the probable and ordinary course of man's experience." The romancer requires "a certain latitude" because he desires to transcend mundane concerns for the sake of a truth requiring a "subtile process" of communication and having "a great deal more to do with the clouds overhead" than with the probable and ordinary events of earthly life.

The past for Hawthorne is a record affirming the truth of the heart. It reveals man as a being with a soul. It reveals too that man, in perceiving himself as a creature with a soul, is moved to conform to truth in a way which sponsors genuine community. The evidence of the consciousness of the soul's existence is the individual experience of guilt. Guilt, caused by a man's recognition of his own sinfulness or failure (of his existence in untruth), implies his conviction of a transcendent realm of perfection toward which he feels he ought always to aspire. Guilt, or conscience, confirms the heart's longing after truth, the necessity of man's union with God and, to the

---

72 The *New Science of Politics*, pp. 160-64, 178, et passim.
same end, with his fellow man. 73

An excellent example of Hawthorne's attention to guilt in studying the past is provided by his brief portrait of Samuel Johnson in Biographical Sketches. Of all the events of Johnson's life Hawthorne might have used to represent his character, he chose a childhood incident in which his subject stubbornly refused to go to Uttoxeter in his ailing father's stead to tend the family bookstall. Since the father was to die of his ailments within several years, Johnson, the reader is told, was for the rest of his life haunted with the vision of his father "standing in the dust and confusion of the market-place, and pressing his withered hand to his forehead as if it ached" (XII. 171). The climax of the story is Johnson's trip to Uttoxeter fifty years later to stand in the heat of the noonday sun and through an afternoon shower in penitence for having obstinately refused his ailing father's request. Tellingly, in Our Old Home Hawthorne describes Johnson at Uttoxeter as "a central image of Memory and Remorse, contrasting with and overpowering the petty materialism around him" (VII. 164). Hawthorne was so fascinated with this story that he made his own pilgrimage to Uttoxeter when serving as Consul. The extent to

73Hawthorne's attitude may be compared with Plato's reliance, as explained by Voegelin, upon "the border experience of the examination of conscience" which causes life to be conducted in anticipation of an everlasting judgment, a "final transparency . . . rather than under the compulsions of the will to power and social status." See Science, Politics and Gnosticism, pp. 111-13.
which it extraordinarily impressed him is suggested by his consternation in finding no monument commemorating the event nor any apparent recollection of it among the town's inhabitants. And he recorded disappointment the next day when a literary friend also proved to have no memory of the event.  

Hawthorne attempted, essentially through example, to reopen the soul of modern man to transcendent meaning and, by thus invoking man once again to view himself as an innately moral being, to foster the possibility of genuine community. He attempted to counteract alienation by revealing the persistence of the individual human being's capacity for frank recognition of his own imperfection, evident generally in the experience of guilt. Suggestive of man's belief in himself as a being open toward transcendent reality, guilt becomes the basis of man's union with God and with his fellow man as well since, in the aspiration toward Eternal truth, man is compelled to treat his fellow human beings with justice and sympathy. For Hawthorne, it should be remembered, man's union with God is nearly synonymous with the just and sympathetic treatment of his fellow man; aspiration toward higher truth promotes community.

Two of Hawthorne's earliest tales, "The Hollow of the Three Hills" and "The Wives of the Dead," reveal that from 

---

74 The English Notebooks, ed. Stewart, pp. 151-53. Hawthorne's trip and the story of Johnson's penance are retold in Our Old Home; see Works, VII, 163-68.
the beginning of his career he is concerned with the basic human potential for transcendence through guilt. The setting of "The Hollow of the Three Hills" is clearly evocative of seventeenth-century America. In "those strange old times" (I. 228), the reader is told, an attractive young woman, a newcomer to the land, has made an appointment with a witch. They meet in a wilderness clearing defined by three hills, suggestive of the famed three hills of Boston. The young woman is instructed to kneel and to place her head upon the witch's lap. Completely covering the young woman with a cloak, the hag invokes images which reveal that the lady has sinned grievously in a quest for mundane happiness. An elderly couple is heard mournfully speaking of a daughter's dishonor. In a madhouse a man talks endlessly of a wife's infidelity. Sounds of a funeral service reveal that she has even "sinned against natural affection" (I. 233) in abandoning her child to die. In the final paragraph the witch exults over the evil thus revealed, but the young woman is motionless, having seemingly fainted in the intense experience of remorse.

Her remorse is not merely a momentary effect of the pathetic images invoked by the hag. From the beginning of this brief tale the young woman's burden of guilt is apparent, suggesting that the heart of its own accord does not permit a peaceful disregard for higher truth. Though fair and lovely, the young woman's face has been "smitten with an untimely blight" (I. 228). The prior experience of remorse
is also evident in her having made the appointment for the sake of enquiring into the "welfare" of those whom she has abandoned, and she admits, "There is a weight in my bosom that I cannot away with" (I. 229, italics added). It is suggestive that she is made to kneel and that, as she does so, the border of her dress dips into a pool of stagnant water.

Man's heart is so constituted that fulfillment lies only through transcendence. And the young woman of this tale, in the consciousness of her shame, in the remorse by which she holds herself responsible for her actions, has at least shown herself incapable of denying higher truth. In her quest for mundane happiness, she cannot deny that she is a being with a soul. No less significant is the tale's central image of a young woman kneeling and with her head on the lap of an elderly woman, a witch but, by appearance only, an image of maternal comfort. The image is somewhat paradoxical but fittingly so. For the consciousness of earthly imperfection is the revelation of transcendent perfection. Guilt is the mother of hope.

Set in a New England seaport in the early eighteenth century, "The Wives of the Dead" is a beautifully simple tale based, the author alleges, upon an actual event which "awakened some degree of interest" (III. 598) at the time. The young wives of two brothers have recently been told that both husbands are dead, one killed in a Canadian border skirmish against French and Indians, the other drowned when
his ship sank. As the narrator describes the girls mourning together, he emphasizes their different personalities. Margaret, whose husband was the soldier, is more passionate and sometimes even irritable. Mary, the sailor's wife, is gentler and calmer. Their differences only serve to emphasize by contrast their mutual compassion in the common experience of grief and, more importantly, their similarity in the central events of the tale. After a day of mourning together, the sisters-in-law go to bed in the same house but in separate rooms. During the night each is called from her bed at a time when the other is asleep, and she is informed that the initial report of her own husband's death is false. In sudden joy each rushes to tell the other of her good fortune yet pauses suddenly, her joy mixed with remorse owing to her strong, sympathetic consciousness of the other's lingering grief.

The parallelism and delicate irony of the plot, fully evident when the second brother is reported alive, serve to emphasize the guilt and sympathy in joy which both wives experience, neither conscious of the other's good news. As she hastens to waken Mary, Margaret is restrained by the "thought of pain" which causes her to feel "as if her own better fortune had rendered her involuntarily unfaithful" (III. 602-03). Later, Mary, despite her great joy, suddenly remembers "that Margaret would awake to thoughts of death and woe, rendered not the less bitter by their contrast with her own felicity" (III. 605). Each sympathetically decides
not to rouse the other from the respite of sleep to news which might only make worse the other's personal grief.

The tale, the author says, is an uncomplicated one, "the simple and domestic incidents of which may be deemed scarcely worth relating" (III. 598). Yet its simplicity and domesticity belie the paramount significance of its meaning, which as the reversals of the first reports of the brothers serve to emphasize, concerns inner experience, the consciousness by which human beings experience themselves as open to transcendent reality. Needless to say, the recent experience of grief has tellingly impressed upon the mind of each of the young wives the fact of this life's imperfection or, in Voegelin's words, the fact of man's existence in untruth. Suddenly each wife's reversal of fortune produces a joy in which this knowledge is forgotten—but only momentarily. She cannot escape recollection. As far as she knows, the sister-in-law's grief will continue, and especially under the recent circumstances it must remind her of her own vulnerability to sorrow so that she literally feels for the other. The result is a complex state of consciousness in which guilt acts as a catalyst, moving each girl toward transcendent truth, toward an ideal of universal good. This implication is more clearly evident in the case of Margaret, who establishes the pattern which Mary follows, who feels "unfaithful" when she remembers Mary's grief, and whose passionate nature makes her restraint here especially noteworthy. The restraint by which each refrains from
increasing the supposed pain of the other is, of course, evidence of sympathy. Despite her personal relief, Mary sheds tears when she remembers Margaret's grief. The beauty of this simple tale is its gentle revelation of the potential compassion of human beings for one another based upon their common susceptibility to pain and sorrow. The consciousness of life's imperfection causes an aspiration toward truth which in turn fosters community.

As the examples given so far suggest, the experience of transcendence for Hawthorne is unlike the rarefied piety often sponsored by formal religious teaching in that the former always necessitates community or, in other words, charity. As in the teachings of the medieval churchmen, union with God also means union with one's fellow man. But, contrary to the teachings of virtually all religious denominations, sin, the experience of guilt or the consciousness of imperfection, is in Hawthorne's fiction invariably a result, as Father Fick reluctantly admits, of the unjust or unsympathetic treatment of one's fellow man.

The superiority of charity to piety in the aspiration toward higher truth is a major theme of "The Gentle Boy," in which Hawthorne portrays the piety of both the Puritans and the Quakers as an evil. This evil is more obvious in the case of the Puritans, as suggested by their mistreatment of Ilbrahim as well as by the narrator's repeated reference to actual instances of their relentless persecution of the Quakers. Before Charles II ordered an end to such
persecution, the "dungeons were never empty; the streets of almost every village echoed daily with the lash; the life of a woman, whose mild and Christian spirit no cruelty could embitter, had been sacrificed; and more innocent blood was yet to pollute the hands that were so often raised in prayer" (I. 114-15). And the Puritan children are said to be influenced by "the devil of their fathers" (I. 112) when they attack Ilbrahim. But the Quakers are themselves guilty of seeking salvation so individually as to preclude human love. The tale's central example is Ilbrahim's mother, Catharine, "a woman of mighty passions" about whom "hatred and revenge now wrapped themselves in the garb of piety" (I. 100). In her fanaticism she has "violated the duties of the present life and the future, by fixing her attention wholly on the latter" (I. 104, italics added). Somewhat as in the case of the young woman of "The Hollow of the Three Hills," she abandons her child to die.

The conclusion of the tale is carefully designed to suggest that Catharine experiences a remorse and grief which lead to a more genuine spirituality. Since the immediate cause of Ilbrahim's death is the physical and emotional harm caused by his childish attackers, the scene preceding Catharine's return serves to remind the reader of the mother's irresponsibility. As Ilbrahim lies on his deathbed tended by Dorothy Pearson, Tobias sits listening in another room to an elderly Quaker who self-righteously boasts that when he was first "moved to go forth a wanderer" (I. 118) he did not
allow himself to be held back by his dying child's pleas. Though once guilt-stricken by his actions, he eventually overcame self-doubt by concluding that it was a temptation to sin. This "fanaticism," as the narrator calls it, elicits no approval from Tobias. The old man's story, moreover, is analogous to Catharine's, whose sudden return follows. Nor has her fanaticism diminished at this point. Her chief purpose for returning is to announce Charles' order to halt persecution of her sect. The lingering repression of her affections is suggested by the figure she presents, "so white from head to foot with the drifted snow that it seemed like Winter's self, come in human shape, to seek refuge from its own desolation" (I. 121).

The first sign that Catharine is unable to disaffect herself completely from her child for the sake of piety is her reaction to the old Quaker's incredible rationalization of Ilbrahim's imminent death:

"Hitherto, Catharine, thou hast been as one journeying in a darksome and difficult path, and leading an infant by the hand; fain wouldst thou have looked heavenward continually, but still the cares of that little child have drawn thine eyes and thy affections to the earth. Sister! go on rejoicing, for his tottering footsteps shall impede thine own no more."

But the unhappy mother was not thus to be consoled . . . . "I am a woman, I am but a woman; will He try me above my strength?" said Catharine very quickly, and almost in a whisper. (I. 122)

After Ilbrahim dies, her fanaticism is at first made "wilder by the sundering of all human ties" (I. 125), and, as if in remorse, she throws herself in the way of any persecutors willing to deny the king's mandate. As time passes,
however, she is transformed by her sorrow. Her attention is still directed heavenward, but through love rather than self-righteousness; "as if Ilbrahim's gentle spirit came down from heaven to teach his parent a true religion, her fierce and vindictive nature was softened by the same griefs which had once irritated it" (I. 125). Indirectly Ilbrahim's gentleness effects a transformation in the Puritans as well; many of them begin to take pity on the changed woman. With Ilbrahim as the central symbol of man's need for love, "The Gentle Boy" illustrates Hawthorne's belief that the aspiration to higher truth must also foster community since all men share an existence in untruth and salvation is a general human concern.

The Puritans' impairment of the human capacity for transcendence by their self-righteous refusal to acknowledge in themselves the imperfections common to all men is a subject of both "Young Goodman Brown" and "The Minister's Black Veil." As "Young Goodman Brown" suggests, this refusal is a result of the Puritans' belief in themselves as the elect, visibly separable from the world's sinners. The pathos of such a delusion is evident in the fate of Goodman Brown, who naively expects to learn about evil as if it possessed an objective existence. In the forest, he is shocked to see the supposed elect mingling amiably with known sinners. He refuses to acknowledge the "loathful brotherhood" (II. 102) he feels with all attending the devil's mass, forgetting that he has recently given himself to Satan in despair after
finding one of Faith's pink ribbons in the forest. Puritan teaching is so strong in Brown that he may not admit guilt or imperfection as a step toward salvation but must reassert his own righteousness even if it means separation from all of his townsmen, including his minister and Faith. But it is Brown's radical self-isolation which, as in "The Man of Adamant," endangers the soul. As the tale's final paragraph reveals, Brown's inability to accept the universality of sin estranges him from family and community. His inability to join them even in prayer suggests that the denial of personal sin is in effect a denial of the need for transcendence. Transcendence comes through acknowledgment of one's share in mankind's universal sinfulness, and Brown, who gave himself to the devil in the forest, remains in his clutches by refusing to admit this sin. Because Brown's piety precludes the experience of guilt he remains alienated from God as well as from his fellow human beings; his neighbors "carved no hopeful verse upon his tombstone, for his dying hour was gloom" (II. 106).

In "The Minister's Black Veil," the Reverend Hooper's realization that one is truly united with God and his fellow man only through acknowledgment of man's universal imperfection sets him apart from his self-righteous parishioners. As his first sermon after donning the veil suggests, Hooper intends it to represent "secret sin, and those sad mysteries which we hide from our nearest and dearest, and would fain conceal from our own consciousness, even forgetting that the
Omniscient can detect them" (I. 55). To be sure, the most immediate effect of the veil is the minister's isolation, but this is quite obviously caused by his parishioners' unwillingness to accept the truth symbolized by the veil. Though all are secretly moved by the veil and by the minister's sermon, they shun him after the service. Later those who attempt to persuade the minister to cease wearing the veil uncomfortably sense that it is "the symbol of a fearful secret between him and them. Were the veil but cast aside, they might speak freely of it, but not till then. Thus they sat a considerable time, speechless, confused, and shrinking uneasily from Mr. Hooper's eye, which they felt to be fixed upon them with an invisible glance" (I. 60-61). Even Hooper's betrothed reflects her community's self-righteousness in her fear that the veil will be understood as an admission of personal guilt.

This in part is what the veil is meant to suggest. As Hawthorne reveals in a note, the tale is based upon the story of an actual Puritan minister who, after accidentally killing a friend, wore such a veil for the rest of his life. In the tale itself Hawthorne suggests that the veil symbolizes a liaison between Hooper and the young woman whose funeral service he preaches on the day he dons the veil. Whatever the specific sin, the effect of Hooper's frankness is unmistakably a deeper union with God and fellow man, despite his social isolation:
Among all its bad influences, the black veil had the one desirable effect, of making its wearer a very efficient clergyman. By the aid of his mysterious emblem—for there was no other apparent cause—he became a man of awful power over souls that were in agony for sin. His converts always regarded him with a dread peculiar to themselves, affirming, though but figuratively, that, before he brought them to celestial light, they had been with him behind the black veil. Its gloom, indeed, enabled him to sympathize with all dark affections. Dying sinners cried aloud for Mr. Hooper, and would not yield their breath till he appeared . . . . (I. 65)

Hooper does not allow the veil to be lifted even on his deathbed. Asked to do so several times by his attendants, who feel he must die without the mark of sin upon him to meet God, he replies, "On earth, never!" (I. 68). In Hawthorne's view, man may face God only through the acknowledgment of his own sinfulness.

Hawthorne's historical fiction often resembles the pre-philosophical exposition of the openness of the soul in Greek tragedy. It reveals that the consciousness of higher truth may demand an act of will on man's part, a decision between action in accord with truth or action in accord with the expediencies of mundane existence. As Voegelin notes in The World of the Polis the essential concern of Greek tragedy is not the catharsis of fear and pity. It is "the search for truth." Aristotle, comparing the historian and the poet, distinguishes the work of the latter as "more philosophical and serious" and more "general." Elaborating upon Aristotle's suggestions, Voegelin remarks, "The truth of the tragedy is action itself, that is, action on the new, differentiated level of a movement in the soul that
culminates in the decision . . . of a mature, responsible man. The newly discovered humanity of the soul expands into the realm of action. Tragedy as a form is the study of the human soul in the process of making decisions, while the single tragedies construct conditions and experimental situations, in which a fully developed, self-conscious soul is forced into action."  

Referring primarily to works of Aeschylus, Voegelin illustrates the centrality in tragedy of the mature man's decision in favor of dike, higher justice or higher truth. But Aeschylus did not generally consider portraying a decision in favor of mundane expediency or nomos, the law of one's country, because he regarded such decisions as non-action. Voegelin's concerns do not lead to a consideration of this possibility in the action of tragedy. What happens if the mature man, under pressure, makes a decision against dike? The result, as in the case of Oedipus, must be guilt which, because it reflects the mature man's inability to escape the demands of conscience, is itself a compelling affirmation of higher truth. Eager to end the plague as well as to prove his prowess as a solver of mysteries, Oedipus ignores the admonition of the prophet Teiresias to bear fate patiently, and he hybristically


76Ibid., p. 251. See pp. 243-50 for Voegelin's explanation of dike and nomos. There is a similar discussion of Greek tragedy in The New Science of Politics, pp. 70-75.
proceeds toward a self-knowledge which produces horror and guilt. Yet this fate is itself an affirmation of truth, as is suggested by Oedipus himself when he presents himself to Theseus in *Oedipus at Colonus*:

> I come to give you something, and the gift
> Is my own beaten self: no feast for the eyes;
> Yet in me is a more lasting grace than beauty.77

Concerned like the Greek tragedians with higher truth, Hawthorne often portrays characters forced to make decisions between truth and expediency, between *dike* and *nomos*. Most often his examples are negative, as is Sophocles' Oedipus. Hawthorne's characters generally make the decision in favor of expediency and must suffer guilt, perhaps an indication of the author's sensitivity to his age's growing commitment to mundane concerns.

The decision between *dike* and *nomos* is the central theme of "Edward Randolph's Portrait." The second tale of *Legends of the Province House*, it is preceded by "Howe's Masquerade," in the final scene of which Howe abjectly retreats from the Province House before the victorious forces of Liberty. Though "Edward Randolph's Portrait" is set during an earlier period of history, Hawthorne's ordering of the tales places the dilemma of Thomas Hutchinson more firmly within the context of the American struggle for

Liberty. Hawthorne, as has already been suggested, recognized that the struggle itself often belied its ideal. Still the decision Hutchinson must make in the period of unrest following the Stamp Act crisis is between Liberty, the higher justice he owes the people, and nomos, the law of his country which it is his duty to uphold and to which end he is presently considering the use of British troops.

The dilemma is carefully suggested. It is Hutchinson himself who, hesitating to sign the order to bring the troops ashore, reveals that the subject of the curious old smoke-darkened painting is Edward Randolph who, in obtaining repeal of the original provincial charter, suffered "the bitterness of popular odium" (I. 297). Hutchinson, historian of New England, is not eager to bring a similar fate upon himself. Yet the unruliness of the people, which has caused Hutchinson himself to be attacked despite his personal opposition to the Stamp Act, is a strong inducement to invoke the power of the law. As Hutchinson at last takes up a pen to sign the order, he is warned, somewhat as Oedipus is, against an act which may result in "hideous guilt." A mysterious moan is heard, and the old portrait suddenly reveals Randolph "as he appeared when a people's curse had wrought its influence upon his nature." Defiant of the "omen," Hutchinson signs the order but shudders afterward, "as if that signature had granted away his salvation" (I. 303-04). The guilt by which he holds himself responsible for the results of his action is evident years later, even
in his dying moments. As "his dying hour drew on, he gasped for breath, and complained that he was choking with the blood of the Boston Massacre; and Francis Lincoln, the former Captain of Castle William, who was standing at his bedside, perceived a likeness in his frenzied look to that of Edward Randolph" (I. 305). Somewhat as in the case of Oedipus, the decision in favor of nomos ironically affirms, through guilt, the higher truth it had denied.

Reuben Bourne, the central character of "Roger Malvin's Burial" must choose between higher truth and expediency two times. On both occasions he decides in favor of the latter, and the result is a lasting guilt. Yet in both instances Reuben's choice is so completely warranted by circumstances that the tale's purpose is seemingly to reveal how strongly man may be moved toward truth by conscience.

Reuben's conscientiousness is of primary importance. It is strongly suggested in the tale's opening scene. Though still a "youth," he has supported the severely wounded Roger Malvin for three days in their retreat after Lovell's Fight and, still far from the white settlement, has not yet even thought of abandoning his comrade to save himself. Indeed Reuben's desire for self-preservation is aroused only after Malvin himself repeatedly urges Reuben to proceed alone before his strength is expended, reminding the young man also of the protection he owes his betrothed (Malvin's own daughter). Reuben's is a "generous nature" (II. 389).
More than in "Edward Randolph's Portrait," Hawthorne is concerned to portray the intensity and complexity of his character's inward struggle. Because both men realize that Malvin is dying, there is no practical reason for Reuben to support him further or to remain with him, especially since his own life is at stake. Yet Reuben immediately experiences guilt by merely contrasting his own revitalized hope with Malvin's resignation, somewhat as in the case of the young women of "The Wives of the Dead." "He felt as if it were both sin and folly to think of happiness at such a moment" (II. 386). Eventually Reuben succumbs to Malvin's entreaties, rationalizing about the possibility of finding aid for the wounded man. Still he is "but half convinced that he /is/ acting rightly" (II. 388). To alleviate his doubts and guilt Reuben does all he can to secure Malvin's comfort and makes a private vow to return and provide decent burial for his comrade if unable to save him.

This vow is of paramount significance, as the story's title suggests. For the conscientious Reuben, having decided in favor of expediency, has attempted to alleviate his guilt by making a firm commitment to do some just act on his friend's behalf. Yet this commitment, if unfulfilled will transform the incidental guilt which Reuben now feels into the guilt of unjust action requiring firmer expiation. The seriousness of the vow is further suggested by the superstition Reuben shares with the settlers and Indians regarding the unrest of the souls of unburied men as well as
by Malvin's injunction, as the youth makes his departure, to return and give him decent burial. "Reuben, therefore, felt the full importance of the promise which he most solemnly made to return and perform Roger Malvin's obsequies" (II. 389).

Reuben breaks the vow when he neglects to tell Dorcas of her father's true fate. For the second time he sacrifices justice for expediency. Initially circumstances make the decision to do so virtually beyond reproach. In fact, it can hardly be termed a decision at all. Reuben collapses and nearly dies in his journey homeward, is found by a party of settlers, and is brought to Dorcas in a state of delirium. Dorcas is clearly representative of the idealism which only those who view crises from afar may comfortably embrace. It is an idealism which, as was earlier suggested, Hawthorne subtly disparages by prefacing this story of guilt with a seemingly jingoistic interpretation of Lovell's Fight. In fact, it is possible to read most of the statements of the preface as ironical statements if the chief events of the tale are kept in mind. Dorcas herself illustrates that "Imagination, by casting certain circumstances judicially into the shade, may see much to admire in the heroism of a little band who gave battle to twice their number in the heart of the enemy's country" (II. 381, italics added). She is so presumptuous of Reuben's chivalry that she makes it virtually impossible for him, in his weakened condition, to explain what actually occurred. "You dug a
grave for my poor father in the wilderness, Reuben?" (II. 393) she interjects before he finishes the story, and he dejectedly assents to the lie.

His health recovered, Reuben still does not tell the truth although he still holds himself responsible for Roger Malvin's burial. For Dorcas, boasting of Reuben's courage and fidelity, has made him a part of the chivalric lie so that "pride, the fear of losing her affection, the dread of universal scorn, forbade him to rectify this falsehood." It is at this point that Reuben actually decides in favor of expediency rather than justice or dike, for his inaction means he has left "a deep vow unredeemed." A conscientious man, he has also doomed himself to years of remorse; "concealment had imparted to a justifiable act much of the secret effect of guilt" (II. 394). Often haunted by the memory of Malvin's dying request, Reuben reaches maturity an unhappy, unsuccessful, and friendless man.

Frederick Crews' study of the logic of compulsion in this tale sheds light upon the final scene in which Reuben accidentally kills his only son at the very spot where he left Malvin to die and then is suddenly able to pray for the first time in many years. Crews' somewhat detailed psycho-analysis of Reuben (and Hawthorne) aside, his more general suggestion that Reuben is subconsciously moved to punish himself and thus alleviate a guilt he has been unable to live down is perhaps the best explanation of the tale's
otherwise unsettling conclusion. Reuben, a conscientious man living a lie, has forced his subconscious to exact an ironic and awful justice from himself. Though the sacrifice is in all ways regrettable, it illustrates the strength toward which man may be compelled toward truth in the consciousness of his imperfection. Such is the suggestion of the narrator's description of Reuben's meditations shortly before the fatal incident: "Unable to penetrate to the secret place of his soul where his motives lay hidden, he believed that a supernatural voice had called him onward" (II. 402). Reuben is able to pray in the last scene, not because he has willfully sacrificed his son but because he feels his son's death is a retribution against himself which cancels the guilt of his unredeemed vow. Ironically and tragically, Reuben Bourne's fate testifies to an overwhelming sense of the transcendence of life; moreover, it is a fate which, determined by the experience of guilt, belies the essentially gnostic complacency of Americans concerning historical events such as Lovell's Fight.

Two examples of Hawthorne's historical fiction, The Scarlet Letter and "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," deserve special consideration in that they combine the affirmation of the openness of the soul with an attack upon the modern idea of history. In other words they reveal Hawthorne's

---


79 Ibid., p. 88.
conception of history in its wholeness. As in the works
most recently discussed, Hawthorne portrays in historical
settings characters whose souls are opened to transcendent
reality, who therefore must choose between expediency and
truth at some crucial point in their lives, and who are
bound to experience guilt if they fail to decide in favor
of truth. As in "The Wives of the Dead" and "The Minister's
Black Veil," both also demonstrate that the aspiration
toward truth fostered by guilt or the consciousness of
imperfection in turn is a source of community. In addition,
the central characters of both works struggle to find truth
and community within gnostic societies which promote alien­
ation from God and from fellow man. Much more than "Roger
Malvin's Burial" these two works challenge America's com­
placency about its past and its role in history.

The Scarlet Letter is most essentially the story of
Dimmesdale's movement toward transcendence through the expe­
rience and frank acknowledgment of guilt. Because Dimmes­
dale illustrates that to attain salvation guilt must be
acknowledged, he stands apart from both his community and
the novel's other central character, Hester Prynne. The
Puritan community, though one of religious faith, shares
with Goodman Brown and the parishioners of "The Minister's
Black Veil" the self-righteous conviction that the spiritu­
ally perfect saints may be visibly separated from the sin­
ners, that the Massachusetts colony is a place "where
iniquity is dragged out into the sunshine!" (V. 75).

Extremely conscientious, Dimmesdale simply cannot overlook his own sinfulness as, for instance, do the women who wish to have Hester branded or hanged. Moreover, his adultery has resulted in a public scandal, and the visible reminders of his guilt are always before him. Though Hester is initially conscious of sin and accepts her shame openly, she eventually rationalizes her adultery as a consecrated act which will be vindicated in eternity and urges Dimmesdale to leave Massachusetts with her. Whatever moral standard may be used to judge Hester, it is evident that by the time she encounters Dimmesdale in the forest she holds herself as blameless as the Puritans hold themselves. The climax of the novel portrays Dimmesdale standing in "triumphant ignominy" (V. 304) before a surprised and perplexed populace and supported on the scaffold by a submissive Hester.

Dimmesdale's struggle to affirm the fact of man's existence in untruth is undertaken against a community whose view of itself is basically gnostic. Hawthorne recognized that the Puritans of the seventeenth century were in the process of transforming the Christian idea of the soul's progress into an idea of material progress. Aside from his ironic reference to the Puritans' utopian notions in the first chapter, Hawthorne is quite perceptive of the millennialistic expectations permeating the Election Day
ceremonies. Explaining the excitement of the populace to Pearl, Hester remarks, "For, to-day, a new man is beginning to rule over them; and so--as has been the custom of mankind ever since a nation was first gathered--they make merry and rejoice; as if a good and golden year were at length to pass over the poor old world!" (V. 274). Although the "sad undertone of pathos" in Dimmesdale's sermon bespeaks a conviction of man's "transitory stay on earth," the actual words of the sermon are typical of Election Day sermons in the optimism with which they seem "to foretell a high and glorious destiny for the newly gathered people of the Lord" (V. 295). In having Dimmesdale confess his sinfulness on such a day and after such a sermon, Hawthorne is definitely concerned to undermine faith in progress.

Though Hester is a rebel against Puritan society, she also entertains ideas of a distinctly progressive character. Having turned, in her seclusion, "from passion and feeling, to thought" (V. 198-99), she begins to question "with reference to the whole race of womanhood" whether existence were "worth accepting, even to the happiest among them" (V. 200). Her answer is a plan for liberating woman which is not only progressive in outlook but resembles Hegel's prophecy

---


concerning the "spiritualization" of humanity:

As a first step, the whole system of society is to be torn down, and built up anew. Then, the very nature of the opposite sex, or its long hereditary habit, which has become like nature, is to be essentially modified, before woman can be allowed to assume what seems a fair and suitable position. Finally, all other difficulties being obviated, woman cannot take advantage of these preliminary reforms, until she herself shall have undergone a still mightier change; in which, perhaps, the ethereal essence, wherein she has her truest life, will be found to have evaporated. (V. 200-01)

Facing the self-righteous, complacent attitudes of his society, Dimmesdale remains alienated from God. Conscious of sin and desiring expiation, he is nevertheless incapable of an admission of guilt which would allow his reconciliation with God. He is prevented from making such an admission by fear and by the honest desire to prevent his parishioners' disillusionment. And Hester momentarily persuades Dimmesdale to abandon his faith and to forget remorse and the duties of his office, their departure for a new life together set coincidentally for Election Day. Dimmesdale is also alienated from his fellow man. Conscious of his sinfulness, Dimmesdale is isolated from even his own parishioners, who (as he himself knows) are only the more convinced of his sanctity by his confessions and by his physical and nervous deterioration. He simply cannot expect from his people the sympathy which accompanies the frank recognition of universal guilt.

Dimmesdale's "genuine impulse" is "to adore the truth, and to reckon all things shadow-like, and utterly devoid of weight or value, that had not its divine essence as the life
within their life" (V. 174). When Dimmesdale tells Hester in the forest that his life has been one of much penance but no penitence, he begins the process of deciding in favor of truth rather than expediency, of turning openly to God in frank admission of guilt. And it is a decision which must finally be made in opposition to the strongest claims made upon him by both Hester and his society. This is strongly suggested by the narrator's use, in the chapters which portray Dimmesdale's transformation, of the term "onward," an irony which both undermines the progressive assumptions of Hester and the Puritan community and suggests that Dimmesdale's final actions are a reassertion of the Christian idea of the progress of the soul toward God over and against mundane expectations.

Informed of Chillingworth's true identity, Dimmesdale, in confusion and weakness, turns to Hester for advice. Her answer bespeaks the assumption that sin may be left behind and that earthly happiness is an ultimate goal:

"... Whither leads yonder forest-track? Backward to the settlement, thou sayest! Yes; but onward, too. ... Then there is the broad pathway of the sea! ... Begin all anew! ... There is happiness to be enjoyed! ..." (V. 236-37)

Having convinced Dimmesdale, Hester exclaims, "The past is gone!" She then tears the scarlet letter from her breast and casts it from her. It nearly fell into a nearby stream, where it would "have given the little brook another woe to carry onward, besides the unintelligible tale which it still kept murmuring about." The couple's bliss in the ensuing
moments partakes of "that wild, heathen Nature of the forest, never subjugated by human law, nor illumined by higher truth" (V. 242-43).

Fittingly, further use of the term "onward" merely suggests that Hester's and Dimmesdale's judgment of their own actions is questionable. As Pearl, called to greet her father for the first time, "came onward," the parents hope that finally "their earthly lives and future destinies were conjoined" (V. 248). Yet such optimism is challenged when Pearl, the living symbol of their guilt, insists that Hester take up again her badge of shame. Still, the mood of the forest lingers, and it is in such a mood that Dimmesdale returns home to rewrite the Election Day sermon. Robert Penn Warren suggests that the literal message of the sermon is severely undermined by the fact that it is written with the same demonic energy which, in Dimmesdale's walk home, "had been bursting out in the anarchic obscenities." Suggestively, as Dimmesdale "drove his task onward," he experienced "such an impulsive flow of thought and emotion, that he fancied himself inspired" (V. 268, italics added).

Exactly when Dimmesdale overcomes temptation and reverses the decision made in the forest is unclear. Perhaps the reversal is gradual. It is clear at any rate that he has at least begun this reversal by the time Hester again

sees him "moving onward" in the Election Day procession. Expecting his "glance of recognition," she is surprised to see Dimmesdale so preoccupied with solemn reflection that he seems "remote from her own sphere, and utterly beyond her reach" (V. 284-85). The meaning of this change is suggested when Hester, listening to the sermon outside the meetinghouse and near the scaffold where she can only hear its undertone of sadness, suddenly senses "that her whole orb of life . . . was connected with this spot, as with the one point that gave it unity" (V. 290).

That Dimmesdale has not chosen to resume his former life without penitence becomes evident immediately after the sermon when, as "the ranks of military men and civil fathers moved onward," he turns out of the procession, which symbolizes his society's progressive expectations, and mounts the scaffold:

One of his clerical brethren,—it was the venerable John Wilson,—observing the state in which Mr. Dimmesdale was left by the retiring wave of intellect and sensibility, stepped forward hastily to offer his support. The minister tremulously, but decidedly, repelled the old man's arm. He still walked onward, if that movement could be so described, which rather resembled the wavering effort of an infant with its mother's arms in view, outstretched to tempt him forward. And now, almost imperceptible as were the latter steps of his progress, he had come opposite the well-remembered and weather-darkened scaffold, where, long since, with all that dreary lapse of time between, Hester Prynne had encountered the world's ignominious stare. There stood Hester, holding little Pearl by the hand! And there was the scarlet letter on her breast! The minister here made a pause, although the music still played the stately and rejoicing march to which the procession moved. It summoned him onward,—onward to the festival!—but here he made a pause. . . . He
turned towards the scaffold, and stretched forth his arms. (V. 297-98, italics added).

In the frank and humble admission of his sin upon the scaffold, Dimmesdale finally finds hope for "Eternal Justice" (V. 301). Chillingworth, whose chosen task is to alienate Dimmesdale from God, is defeated. Hester is subordinate. The Puritan community, its complacency undermined, is in "tumult."

Consciousness of guilt also fosters genuine community. Long before the novel's final scene, Dimmesdale, like the Reverend Hooper, achieves great popularity for the sympathy he is able to show troubled sinners, with whom he shares a kindred remorse. Even Hester, to the extent that she embraces the true meaning of the scarlet letter, becomes a self-ordained sister of mercy, so diligent in her service to others that the letter upon her bosom is thought by many to mean "Able." Dimmesdale's confession also suggests the necessity of human love. He does not stand alone upon the scaffold but requires Hester's willing support. And his penitence breaks the spell which has separated Pearl from the rest of mankind.83 Finally, his admission of guilt elicits sympathy no less than surprise from his many Puritan observers. In addition to affirming man's need for transcendence, The Scarlet Letter reveals, in Randall Stewart's formulation of one of Hawthorne's most constant themes, "the

need of man's sympathy with man based upon the honest recognition of the good and evil in our common nature.\textsuperscript{84}

In a sense, The Scarlet Letter is not the story of gloom which it purports to be in the first chapter. It is fundamentally an uplifting work. For despite the sadness of its story, it affirms the truth of the heart, the basic experience of transcendence which belongs to the nature of man and which fosters his just and sympathetic treatment of his fellow human beings.

Set during the period of New England's growing hostility toward its royal governors, "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" is a symbolic comment upon the American Revolution.\textsuperscript{85} The central character Robin is, like Septimius Felton and the youth of "Mosses," a metaphor of the new emergent nation. Clearly one of Hawthorne's chief concerns is to challenge his country's complacency about its revolutionary past and hence about its role in history. The first paragraph, intended "as a preface to the following adventures," portrays the royal governors sympathetically, as well-meaning rulers misunderstood by a populace never willing to be reconciled to the repeal of the original charters. The

\textsuperscript{84}Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Biography, p. 265.

colonists "usually rewarded their rulers with slender gratitude for the compliances by which, in softening their instructions from beyond the sea, they had incurred the reprehension of those who gave them" (III. 616). In the tale's climax, the narrator shows a similar sympathy for the tarred and feathered loyalist, Major Molineux, "an elderly man, of large and majestic person, and strong, square features, betokening a steady soul" (III. 638). The Major's tormentors, on the other hand, are unruly, disrespectful, and violent. Their activities are more suggestive of the end of civilization than of its upward and onward movement:

On they went, like fiends that throng in mockery around some dead potentate, mighty no more, but majestic still in his agony. On they went, in counterfeited pomp, in senseless uproar, in frenzied merriment, trampling all on an old man's heart. On swept the tumult, and left a silent street behind. (III. 640)

Hawthorne felt that the violence of America's separation from England precluded the innocence which would make it distinct from the old world in a progressive sense. The Man in the Moon, hearing the riotous peal of laughter in which Robin has joined, exclaims, "Oho, ... the old earth is frolicsome to-night!" (III. 640, italics added).

Robin's journey to Boston symbolizes modern civilization's loss of integration. To begin with, Robin's "dear remembrances" of his old family life after a night of lonely and unsuccessful wandering in the city reveal that he has left behind a world of faith and community. He imagines a scene of pastoral serenity, his family gathered outside a
farmhouse near a great old tree, suggestive of stability and tradition. In the golden light of the setting sun, the father, a minister, conducts the familiar "domestic worship" in which may be heard "the old thanksgivings for daily mercies, the old supplications for their continuance." Each member of the family has his place, and the neighbors, "like brothers of the family," are accustomed to join. Even "the wayfaring man might pause to drink at that fountain, and keep his heart pure by freshening the memory of home" (III. 632). At least one critic has suggested that even the mansion, which Robin sits facing as he dreams, is suggestive, with its great pillars and elaborate Gothic window, of a rich but receding cultural heritage. 86

Furthermore, Robin's expectations upon entering Boston reflect the materialism and self-interest of the progressive modern society from which Hawthorne was estranged. Robin's entry into Boston bears a striking similarity to the shrewd and optimistic young Benjamin Franklin's journey to Philadelphia as recorded in The Autobiography. 87 Robin openly expects to "profit by his kinsman's generous intentions"


The vanity with which Robin regards his attachment to Major Molineux is evident in his persistent expectation that the townspeople will hearken at the mention of his kinsman's name or immediately notice a family resemblance. Robin's pride in his shrewdness and his evident disposition to rely upon his cudgel reveal the essentially aggressive attitude he has taken toward the world in which he hopes to rise.

The town itself is a place where hedonism and power-seeking are practiced in the guise of civilization. The hypocrisy and duplicity of the townfolk form a recurring motif of the tale. Robin's search for his kinsman is at one point compared to Diogenes' search for an honest man, and by the end of the story he learns that a man of the town may have "several voices . . . as well as two complexions" (III. 636). The innkeeper at first gives Robin a friendly welcome but then threatens to have the youth arrested as a runaway bond-servant when he reveals that he does not have the price of a meal. In one section of town, the sight of "gay and gallant figures" humming fashionable tunes provides a marked contrast with Robin's own "quiet and natural gait" (III. 624). On another street, a prostitute attempts to lure the naive youth by pretending to be his uncle's housekeeper. The elderly gentleman and the watchman, symbols of

authority and order, abuse their power by threatening Robin and by participating in his kinsman's humiliation. To the extent that the procession and the mob following it are representative of the American Revolution, they belie its ideals. They suggest that the Revolutionary movement was at times used to mask self-interest and the desire for power. At the head of the procession is a demonic "double-faced fellow" (III. 638), representative not only of duplicity but also, in the black and red coloring of his face, of the violence of the American struggle for independence. Following him are "wild figures in the Indian dress, and many fantastic shapes without a model" (III. 637-38). The disguises themselves reveal the townspeople's real character. Acting under the cover of night and asserting themselves through violence, they are more representative of pandemonium than civilization. Parading the humiliated symbol of traditional authority through the streets of Boston, they seem to carry onward the destruction rather than the progress of civilization.

Within such a world man is alienated from God and from his fellow man. Robin's ambitions have led him to leave behind the old firm faith of his ancestors. In the town he is to find no replacement for his faith. Peering into the window of the church with its empty pews and the cold moonlight shining upon the great Bible in the pulpit, Robin shivers "with a sensation of loneliness stronger than he had ever felt in the remotest depths of his native woods"
(III. 631). Religion has become a mere institution devoid of genuine human participation. The town, as Robin's aggressive attitude anticipates, is also a place where each man is set against his fellows. Significantly, Robin is only at peace with the townspeople when he repudiates his only remaining tie of kinship. The gentleman who waits with Robin addresses him as a "friend" and eventually offers to take him in. Yet he is the emblem of the town's duplicity. He is actually one of the instigators of a facetious jest to be made of Robin's dependence upon the Major, as is evident in his assurance that Robin will soon meet his uncle and his profession of a "singular curiosity" (III. 635) to witness the meeting. Even in the final scene, as one critic notes, he is less a friend than a sort of Mr. Worldly Wiseman welcoming Robin to a world in which he may expect to rise only by his shrewdness.89

The tale ends with Robin's decision to accept or refuse the gentleman's offer still in the balance. Because Robin does desire to rise in the world and is confident of his shrewdness, it is not likely that he will refuse the offer. Yet it is also evident that Robin experiences guilt for his behavior toward his kinsman. He shook with "pity and terror" when he first saw the Major. The "mental inebriety" which prompted his irreverent laughter gone, he now grasps a lamppost, his cheek "somewhat pale, and his eye not quite as

89Dennis, "How to Live in Hell," p. 254.
lively as in the earlier part of the evening" (III. 639-41). He considers going home. Robin has not quite lost his soul by the tale's ending. That will depend on the decision he must now make.

Like *The Scarlet Letter*, "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" fully exemplifies Hawthorne's conception of history. A youth representative of the emerging American nation relinquishes, almost without realization, his ties with the community of faith and kinship (the sources of transcendent meaning and brotherhood) in the hopes of advancement. In the final scene, he is invited by an insidiously patronizing stranger to join the materialistic, self-interested society which has all but completed his total alienation by inducing his repudiation of his kinsman. The tale ends with Robin's decision still in the balance, for, despite his desire to rise in the world, his remorse or doubts about what he has done are unmistakable. The choice is essentially between gnosticism and spiritual fulfillment, between alienation from or unity with God and fellow men, a unity for which the heart, as Robin's final hesitation suggests, naturally longs. Hawthorne's purpose in ending the tale as he does is to confront his reader with the same problem faced by Robin and to influence his decision in favor of the truth of the heart. Only by repudiating gnosticism and rediscovering the eternal truth of his heart can modern man recover transcendent meaning and community and thus end his alienation from God and fellow man.
In his stories for children, Hawthorne is often most direct about the beliefs which underlie his works. In the final chapter of Grandfather's Chair, Hawthorne is direct about his conception of history. Having pursued his narrative through more than two centuries, Grandfather concludes by telling a fable in which he dreams his old chair is speaking to him. In the course of the narrative the chair has become the symbol of history itself or of man's attempts to derive meaning or order from the past, since the narrative is unified and dramatized by the chair's passing from one famous personage to another and by its survival through various epochs.

Grandfather is addressing a personification of history. When he asks the chair to reveal what it has learned in its two hundred years concerning "the riddle of life," he is essentially asking it to reveal the meaning of history. The chair replies, "As long as I have stood in the midst of human affairs, . . . I have constantly observed that Justice, Truth, and Love are the chief ingredients of every happy life." Grandfather is dissatisfied with the chair's revelation, insisting that all human beings are born with the "instinctive knowledge" that "these qualities are essential to our happiness." The chair's experience, however, provides a counterpoise: "From what I have observed of the dealings of man with man, and nation with nation, I never should have suspected that they knew this all-important secret" (IV. 636-37).
The fable reveals both aspects of Hawthorne's conception of history. Positively speaking, history affirms that human fulfillment lies in the aspiration to higher Truth which will also foster community—Justice and Love. As Grandfather's comment suggests, man's nature is such that he is instinctively compelled by his own heart to seek fulfillment through Truth, Justice, and Love. Man is a being with a soul. But the chair's demurrer reveals another aspect of man's nature which must be taken into consideration simultaneously. Negatively speaking history also affirms that man is an imperfect being, prone to sins and failures which should cause him to look beyond the temporal sphere of existence for happiness. Man's imperfection is the catalyst of his movement toward Truth, Love, and Justice.
CONCLUSION

Hawthorne's sense of modern man's alienation from God and from his fellow man led him into a reactionary search for transcendent meaning and community. He understood that medieval Christianity provided for an integral community. He also understood that integration had been lost through the cumulative effect of expanded rationalism, individualism, and materialism. Because he was himself given to reason and doubt and because by his time reason had even begun to invade the realm of faith itself with devastating effectiveness, Hawthorne could not simply reclaim religious convictions in the same manner suggested by Father Fick, H. G. Fairbanks, and others. Instead, his solution to the problem of alienation was a conception of history which bears a certain resemblance not only to the medieval attitude toward profane history but also to the more intrinsic experience of transcendence which belonged to the nature of man before the age of Christianity.

Like the medieval historian, Hawthorne does not regard man's history as progressive. Its course is essentially directionless, unknowable, and beyond man's control. Man's accidents are God's purposes. Man's stay on earth is a waiting for the end; Time does not reach into Eternity,
hence the necessity of transcending earthly existence to acquire meaning or purpose. Like the Judaic, early Christian, and medieval historians, Hawthorne, concerned to affirm the openness of the soul, regards history as "philosophy teaching by example,"
\(^1\) and, accordingly his method is openly symbolic and allegorical rather than candid and objective, as is that ostensibly practiced by many modern historians.

But, unlike the Judaic, early Christian, and medieval historians, Hawthorne possessed neither firm faith nor a strong cultural matrix of spiritual concern. For a source of meaning he reverted to the universal, intrinsic experience of the openness of the soul to transcendent reality (first coherently represented in Greek tragedy) of which to him the soundest evidence was recorded history. Many of Hawthorne's works approximate Greek tragedy in the limited sense that they portray man as compelled from within toward higher truth (toward, in Voegelin's words, "the great decision for Dike"),\(^2\) suffering guilt and doom when he fails. Hawthorne, treating history symbolically and allegorically, affirms transcendent truth by affirming the basic human experience of transcendence itself, and he affirms the possibility of community by affirming man's innate potential


\(^2\)The *New Science of Politics*, p. 73.
for placing justice above self-interest.

In summary, the conception of history in Hawthorne's writings opposes the idea of history which serves as a rationale for the forces which cause modern man's alienation from God and from his fellow man. Hawthorne discredits gnosticism by pointing out man's tendency toward sin and failure throughout Time.

He also reveals that man's consciousness of this tendency—the consciousness of imperfection—impels him upward toward a transcendent realm of perfection. Man, in the consciousness of his own existence in untruth becomes a being with a soul, a being united with God and with the other human beings, who share his existence in untruth. The natural result of this consciousness is guilt. It is what the mature man, the man conscious of higher truth, experiences when he has decided in favor of expediency or selfishness instead of that truth. Guilt is thus the ironic affirmation and symbol of truth and of man's openness to truth. Therefore, in addition to providing evidence of man's tendency toward sin and failure, the past is chiefly valuable to Hawthorne in that it provides (with a degree of authenticity which may be supplemented by imaginative sympathy) stories or examples of human beings experiencing guilt. In many of his greatest works Hawthorne uses the past in this manner.

Hawthorne's struggle against alienation may be taken as paradigmatic of the modern artist's struggle against
alienation. He was not unique in experiencing alienation nor in his consequent opposition to modernity. Modern artists in general have experienced isolation and estrangement from the public, have struggled with the problems of religious uncertainty and purposelessness, and have attempted to compensate through art for man's separation from God and from his fellow man. Hence a broader purpose of this study has been to provide a focus on the modern artist's struggle against the purposelessness and loneliness of modern life.

Hawthorne's concern with history is significant in this regard. It provided him with an understanding of the sources of alienation which by his time were undergoing a momentous acceleration, particularly in America. And among American writers of historical fiction of his time, Hawthorne is more consistent in his opposition to modern civilization and the historical mission it has given itself. Cooper, for example, also employs historical settings to show, in Natty Bumpo's increased alienation from white man's society and lonely death on the American prairies, the horrible effects of "progress" upon the human condition. But Cooper, as Henry Nash Smith has stated, is also attracted to the idea of "the endless progress of civilized European man toward perfect enlightenment," an attraction repeatedly expressed in Cooper's creation of hopeful marriages between youthful representatives of an advancing civilization. And

---

the work of Irving, as Terence Martin has observed, exhibits a tension between imaginative endeavor and commitment to the progressive idealism of the new nation which is never really resolved:

The typical locus of creation in Irving's work is that in which a protagonist confronts the mysterious and unknown: if the protagonist lacks vision and reason he becomes a comic figure and goes down to some kind of defeat—for example, Ichabod Crane; if he possesses vision and reason he triumphs over the unknown and qualifies as an authentic hero—for example, Christopher Columbus. But Ichabod, of course, is a product of Irving's imagination, while Columbus is a historical figure. Irving's imaginatively created protagonists are childish, primitive images of what America could not assimilate into the national self-image; his historical protagonists, on the other hand, are images of exactly what made America what it wanted to be.4

For Hawthorne, who held throughout his lifetime that man's accidents are God's purposes, such a tension did not exist. He consistently opposed his country's view of itself as a chosen nation destined to lead the world in upward and onward historical movement. As even his attack upon the stove in "Fire Worship" suggests, he was seldom dissuaded from his opposition to modernity. He remained at all times and in all ways committed to man's need for transcendence and community. He remained steadfastly committed to the truth of the human heart.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. Works by Nathaniel Hawthorne


II. Secondary Material


________. "Hawthorne's Skepticism About Social Reform With Especial Reference to The Blithedale Romance." University of Kansas City Review, 19 (1953), 181-93.

________. "A Masque of Love and Death." University of Toronto Quarterly, 23 (October, 1953), 9-25.


Chandler, Elizabeth L. "A Study of the Sources of the Tales and Romances Written by Nathaniel Hawthorne before 1853." Smith College Studies in Modern Languages, 7, No. 4 (1926), 1-64.


Cochran, Robert W. "Hawthorne's Choice: The Veil or the Jaundiced Eye." College English, 23 (1962), 342-46.


Daly, Robert J. "History and Chivalric Myth in 'Roger Malvin's Burial.'" Essex Institute Historical Collections, 109 (1973), 99-115.


Doubleday, Neal F. "Hawthorne's Inferno." College English, 1 (1940), 658-70.

Eisinger, Chester E. "Pearl and the Puritan Heritage." College English, 12 (1951), 323-29.


---


---


---


______. "The Source of Hawthorne's 'Roger Malvin's Burial.'" American Literature, 10 (1938), 313-18.


________. "Hawthorne's Satire in 'Old Esther Dudley.'" Emerson Society Quarterly, No. 22 (I Quarter, 1961), pp. 31-33.


VITA

Lloyd Moore Daigrepont
5055 Nicholson Drive, Apt. H-302
Baton Rouge, Louisiana  70808
(504) 766-2815

Personal Information

Date of birth:  March 5, 1948
Marital status:  Married on May 22, 1976

Education


Grade Point Averages

Undergraduate grade point average:  3.547 (128 hours)
Graduate grade point average:  3.958 (72 hours credit 18 hours audit)

Academic Honors

President's Scholarship
T. H. Harris Scholarship
Phi Kappa Phi Scholastic Fraternity, Member since 1970

Foreign Language Proficiency

French:  19 college hours

Area of Specialization and Minor for the Ph.D.

Area of specialization:  American Literature to 1900
Minor:  American History

Teaching Experience

1977-79:  Instructor, English Dept., Louisiana State Univ., Baton Rouge, Louisiana
1972-77:  Graduate Teaching Assistant, English Dept., Louisiana State Univ., Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Professional Memberships

Modern Language Association
American Association of University Professors
Candidate: Lloyd Moore Daigrepont

Major Field: English

Title of Thesis: Hawthorne's Conception of History: a Study of the Author's Response to Alienation from God and Man

Approved:

[Signatures of Major Professor and Chairman and Dean of the Graduate School]

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signatures of the examining committee members]

Date of Examination: July 17, 1979