

**A STUDY OF THE ARTISTIC USE OF NATIVE MATERIALS  
IN HAWTHORNE'S NOVELS**

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**A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Faculty of the Department of English  
University of Houston**

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**In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts**

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**by  
Ruth Simpson Moore  
August, 1958**

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## ABSTRACT

Hawthorne's love of the past and his study of the history, tradition, and lore of his native New England was engendered by the feeling he had for William Hathorne, that remote ancestor of his who had come so early "with his Bible and his sword and trode the unworn street of Salem" two hundred years before the author's day. This study, combined with a keenness of observation, gave Nathaniel Hawthorne an unexcelled store of material concerning his native land.

This material shows to some extent in Fanshawe, the very first novel he wrote. There he combines his own knowledge of fellow college students and those of Cotton Mather's day with material concerning the surrounding terrain and tradition of piracy in the Brunswick area to produce what some critics of the present time have pronounced a very creditable first effort at novel writing.

His next novel, published twenty-two years later, was The Scarlet Letter. In it Hawthorne used all the skill he had been developing in his short stories for employing the history, legends, and myths of his country to implement the inward development of his characters. His theme in this book is the effect of hidden sin on the human heart. In developing this theme, he tells the story of Hester Prynne, using mainly the setting, characters, and events recorded by John Winthrop, the first governor and the historian of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

Hawthorne chose a setting almost as old as that of the original Bay Colony for his third novel; it is Hawthorne's birthplace, the town of Salem, and the novel is The House of the Seven Gables. He used family history, legend, and tradition to construct the plot, which involves the invoking, progress, and final dissolution of a curse upon a many-gabled old house. The typically Hawthorne theme or moral which the plot amplifies is that "the wrong-doing of one generation lives into successive ones."

And wrong-doing is again the theme of the fourth novel, The Blithedale Romance. This time the wrong-doing is that of an over-zealous, half-mad reformer, who has allowed his plans of philanthropy to crowd out every human consideration for the individual. The vehicle of native material in which the inner story rides is largely the experiences of Hawthorne at Brook Farm, a Transcendentalist community near Boston.

The setting of the last novel, The Marble Faun, is Italy. Even in it appear sharply drawn contrasts made by the use of American material against the background of Italy. One of the characters, Hilda, represents a Puritan maiden of New England. She is one of a trio of artists, who with Count Donatello, the faun, implement the moral theme of suffering--and this time--intellectual as well as spiritual progress through the suffering that sin has caused.

## INTRODUCTION

Although Nathaniel Hawthorne had never been abroad and, in fact, had never been out of New England itself except for three brief excursions, in 1849.<sup>1</sup> he produced a novel that ranks as "one of the imperishable masterpieces of world literature"<sup>2</sup>--The Scarlet Letter. Before he left American soil in 1853, on his first (and only) European sojourn, he had written two of the remaining three books upon which his reputation as a novelist is so securely fixed.

Basing their statement not only on his personal experience but also on his inheritance, Hawthorne's contemporaries might well have said of him, "He is truly a representative American." His first American ancestor, named Hathorne [sic], came with the Puritans to Massachusetts in the day of that colony's founding under the leadership of Governor Winthrop.<sup>3</sup> The two hundred years between that ancestor and Hawthorne, the writer, were

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<sup>1</sup>Edith Lathrop Chandler, A Study of the Sources of the Tales and Romances Written by Nathaniel Hawthorne before 1853, p. 145.

<sup>2</sup>Alfred S. Reid, The Yellow Ruff and The Scarlet Letter, p. 134.

<sup>3</sup>George E. Woodberry, Nathaniel Hawthorne, p. 1.

dramatic and exciting. Six generations of Hathornes were active in pioneering, developing, and establishing a new nation.

That Hawthorne was cognizant and appreciative of his American heritage is shown by a letter he wrote in 1829 to the publisher of one of his earliest tales:

You will see that one of the stories is founded upon the superstitions of this part of the country. I do not know that such an attempt has hitherto been made, but, as I have thrown away much time in listening to such traditions, I could not help trying to put them into some shape.<sup>4</sup>

The fascination which the lore of his country had for him is also revealed in his reading. His biographers are in general agreement with Pearson, who says of him, ". . . in the newspapers and court-records of New England he steeped himself until his intimacy with the past was worthy of a professional historian."<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps the lodestone that drew Hawthorne to this study of history was the part his forebears played in it. In 1849, he wrote:

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<sup>4</sup>Norman Holmes Pearson (ed.), The Complete Novels and Selected Tales of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Modern Library Edition, Introduction, p. ix. All subsequent references to Hawthorne's novels are from this edition.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. x.

The figure of that first ancestor, invested by family tradition with a dim and dusky grandeur, was present to my boyish imagination as far back as I can remember. It still haunts me, and induces a sort of home feeling with the past.<sup>6</sup>

The inspiration this ancestor gave to a study of the past resulted in his often living imaginatively in the colonial era of America, particularly in that of New England. Even though he was to write fiction so broadly universal in its characteristics and appeal that it came to be ranked as world literature, the material of which he wove this cloth of gold must have been found in his native land.

From the facts related above, i. e., (1) that Hawthorne's experience was limited to the American environment throughout the time in which he wrote his greatest works, (2) that this environment was the product of several generations of representative American families, including the writer's own, and (3) that he was greatly interested in all that had gone before him, one would assume that much native American material went into the composition of his literary works. The purpose of this thesis is to ascertain through a study of Hawthorne's novels whether such an assumption is justified, and in many cases to note, where instances of the use of such elements are discovered, how they are artistically employed to lead the reader from the known to the

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<sup>6</sup>Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter, p. 88.



unknown, from the concrete to the abstract; for the real Hawthorne story is always the story of the inner man--of what goes on in the minds and hearts of his characters.

In examining Hawthorne's use of native materials, then, the point should be kept in mind that, fascinating as these native objects, scenes, legends, and incidents may prove to be, they are but the signs, symbols, and guideposts that mark the course of the true narrative. As Davidson has said:

. . . Hawthorne was concerned not with a realistic study of life, such as he found in Dickens or Trollope, but with men's souls; and for an investigation of secret hearts he must have a focus, a visual representation of the abstract moral he was seeking to demonstrate.<sup>7</sup>

While many interesting studies have been made of Hawthorne's employment of indigenous American matter in his shorter pieces, such as in "Roger Malvin's Burial"<sup>8</sup> and in "The Gentle Boy,"<sup>9</sup> no such research has been done on the novels. It is true that "Hawthorne and the Praslin Murder"<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Edward Hutchins Davidson, Hawthorne's Last Phase, p. 144.

<sup>8</sup>David S. Lovejoy, "Lovewell's Fight and Hawthorne's 'The Gentle Boy,'" New England Quarterly, 27:527-531, December, 1954.

<sup>9</sup>G. Harrison Orians, "The Sources and Themes of Hawthorne's 'The Gentle Boy,'" New England Quarterly, 14:664-678, December, 1941.

<sup>10</sup>Nathalia Wright, "Hawthorne and the Praslin Murder," New England Quarterly, 15:5-14, March, 1952.

and The Yellow Ruff and The Scarlet Letter,<sup>11</sup> amplify adroit allusions in The Marble Faun and in The Scarlet Letter, respectively, to sensational European events; but the purpose of this study excludes European sources.

With reference to another of the five novels of Hawthorne, it may be added that critics in general agree with Cowie that Hawthorne used his Brook Farm experience as a basis for The Blithedale Romance,<sup>12</sup> but other material, too, enters into the make-up of that book, material which will be fully discussed as the novels are taken up in the order in which they were published.

Hawthorne's five completed novels with the date of the publication of each are as follows:

<u>Fanshawe</u> . . . . .	1828
<u>The Scarlet Letter</u> . . . . .	1850
<u>The House of the Seven Gables</u> . . . . .	1851
<u>The Blithedale Romance</u> . . . . .	1852
<u>The Marble Faun</u> . . . . .	1860

These will form the basis of the investigation in this thesis.

During the nineteen years immediately following Hawthorne's death in 1864, his wife and his three children each

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<sup>11</sup>Alfred S. Reid, The Yellow Ruff and The Scarlet Letter, pp. 1-2.

<sup>12</sup>Alexander Cowie, The Rise of the American Novel, p. 141.

edited and published an unfinished manuscript inherited in the division of Hawthorne's estate. These were published under the titles, The Ancestral Footstep, Doctor Grimshawe's Secret, Septimius Felton, and The Dolliver Romance. Davidson says of these, "Only by ignoring his most solemn injunctions against publishing any of his literary effects did the heirs reveal these romances which Hawthorne never intended the world to see."<sup>13</sup> These will not be used in this study of his art.

The method used in this inquiry involves, basically, an identification of the sources of the component elements of Hawthorne's books; it attempts to answer the ever recurring questions, "Where did he get this? And this? And this?" It was reasoned that the raw material for what he wrote first came to him in the form of sensory experiences--things seen, or read, or heard--and so an effort was made to relive his life with him through his biographers, through the record he has left in his Journals and letters, and especially, to look over his shoulder at the very books that absorbed and delighted him. Grateful acknowledgement of indebtedness is hereby extended to the authors, editors, and compilers listed in the accompanying bibliography and to the patient librarians who have made such an effort possible.

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<sup>13</sup>Davidson, op. cit., p. vii.

## CHAPTER I

### FANSHAWE

While Hawthorne was yet in college he wrote to his sister Elizabeth that he was writing a novel, but it was not until 1828, three years after his graduation from Bowdoin that, at his own expense, he published Fanshawe.<sup>1</sup> Just one hundred twenty years later, Randall Stewart remarked that this book is "one of the rarest and most expensive titles in American literature."<sup>2</sup>

Its rarity is a tribute to the thoroughness with which Hawthorne succeeded in destroying, not long after publication, all the copies he could find. He even demanded for the holocaust the return of his sister Elizabeth's volume and that of his best friend, Bridge. While some critics have explained this action as Hawthorne's pique at the public's lack of appreciation, more have agreed with Van Doren that the author came to feel that the book was unworthy of his art.<sup>3</sup>

Today there is a disposition to reappraise Fanshawe and to look more kindly at the book instead of dismissing

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<sup>1</sup>Randall Stewart, Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Biography, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>3</sup>Mark Van Doren, Hawthorne, p. 35.

this title with the comment that "Hawthorne was his own best critic"<sup>4</sup> and probably acted wisely in discarding this puerile effort. Many Hawthorne scholars find themselves in agreement with Cantwell, who says:

. . . it would be difficult to find another first novel written by anyone of his age--twenty-two or twenty-three--as well done. . . . under the smooth surface of the story the power of genius shows like the muscles of a race horse held in check. . . . it is perfectly symmetrical, its formal excellence unsurpassed by anything he later wrote. Its plot is worked out with absolute precision. Its humor is engaging and easy.<sup>5</sup>

However, it is not the purpose of this thesis to discuss the literary merits of Fanshawe as a novel, but to call attention to the artistry with which Hawthorne has used the materials he found ready about him--the characters, scenes, and recorded events of his own native New England.

Others have produced studies of Fanshawe, listing evidence in it of the influence of Scott and of Maturin.<sup>6</sup> The validity of this evidence is unquestioned. Shortly before going to college, Hawthorne wrote to his sister Louisa:

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<sup>4</sup>Norman Holmes Pearson (ed.), The Novels and Tales of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Introduction, p. vii.

<sup>5</sup>Robert Cantwell, Nathaniel Hawthorne: The American Years, p. 123.

<sup>6</sup>G. H. Orians, "Scott and Hawthorne's Fanshawe," New England Quarterly, 11:388-394, June, 1938; and J. S. Goldstein, "Literary Source of Hawthorne's Fanshawe C. R. Maturin's Melmoth, the Wanderer," Modern Language Notes, 60:1-8, January, 1945.

I shall read *The Abbott* by the Author of *Waverly* as soon as I can hire it. I have read all Scott's Novels except that. I wish I had not that I might have the pleasure of reading them again.<sup>7</sup>

That he also enjoyed Maturin is evidenced by the use of a quotation from Bertram to introduce Chapter VIII of Fanshawe. Scott and Maturin, then, were influences, but, as Van Doren has stated, "domesticated" ones:

Fanshawe . . . labored to domesticate Scott and Maturin, not to speak of Godwin and some others, in the one portion of America, outside of Salem and Raymond,<sup>8</sup> that Hawthorne can be said at this age to have known.<sup>8</sup>

As the story opens, there appears no necessity for "domesticating" anything unless it be what was already the most thoroughly American feature of the campus of the ninety-year-old college to which the reader is being introduced--the group of Indians who are students there. Evidently the author had in mind an emphasis on what was distinctly American in his setting when he sketched in the Indians thus:

A third class, [of collegians] differing widely from both the former, consisted of a few young descendants of the aborigines, to whom an impracticable philanthropy was endeavoring to impart the benefits of civilization.<sup>9</sup>

Hawthorne went out of his way to borrow that detail from Dartmouth College.

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<sup>7</sup>Stewart, op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>8</sup>Van Doren, op. cit., p. 35.

<sup>9</sup>Nathaniel Hawthorne, Fanshawe, p. 5.

Dartmouth was the only college in America chartered for the purpose of offering a liberal education to the Indians, and it is interesting to note that just before Hawthorne became a student at Bowdoin College, Dartmouth almost lost its charter over the technicality of having ceased to carry out its purpose. There were no Indians enrolled. The venerable institution was saved just in time when Daniel Webster is said to have slipped in and relocated a group of somewhat befuddled Indians on that campus.<sup>10</sup> This event must have been fresh in Hawthorne's mind as he wrote Fanshawe, for as a result of what was really a political row over the control of Dartmouth, the ousted former president of that college, Reverend William Allen, succeeded the late Jesse Appleton as president of Bowdoin College the very year that Hawthorne first matriculated there.

Besides making use of the Indians of Dartmouth in the setting of this story, Hawthorne utilized the age of still another college, placing the time the events transpired as "about eighty years since,"<sup>11</sup> which would be 1745-48. It is difficult to deduce from the accepted founding dates of New England universities the one that would most nearly correspond to the "Harley College" of the story as having "an

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<sup>10</sup>Cantwell, op. cit., p. 119.

<sup>11</sup>Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 4.

existence of nearly a century."<sup>12</sup> A check list of the colleges and universities of that area which are still extant shows: Harvard, 1636; Yale, 1701; Princeton, 1746; Dartmouth, 1770. The present Bowdoin College was not founded until 1794.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps, after all, the author of Fanshawe did not wish to pin-point the identity of Harley College, but did wish by such references to it to give his setting verisimilitude and a realistic American tradition.

Certain it is that the author has used many of the geographical features of his own Bowdoin College campus and the surrounding area to provide a most fitting setting for this tale of fugitive pirates and kidnapping. Bowdoin is located in the town of Brunswick, in the southwest corner of Maine, situated on the Androscoggin River, near where a small tributary from the east flows into it.<sup>14</sup> Brunswick, settled in 1628, is about ten miles west of Bath, its main outlet to the sea. But these bare facts of setting become picturesque in the language of Hawthorne:

In an ancient though not very populous settlement, in a retired corner of one of the New England States arise the walls of a seminary of learning, which, for

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>13</sup>Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, pp. 1264-1267.

<sup>14</sup>William Bridgwater (editor-in-chief), The Columbia Viking Desk Encyclopedia, 1:173.



the convenience of a name, shall be entitled "Harley College."

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The local situation of the college, so far secluded from the sight and sound of the busy world, is peculiarly favorable to the moral, if not to the literary, habits of its students; and this advantage probably caused the founders to overlook the inconveniences that were inseparably connected with it. The humble edifices rear themselves almost at the farthest extremity of a narrow vale, which, winding through a long extent of hill-country, is wellnigh as accessible, except at one point, as the Happy Valley of Abysinnia. A stream, that farther on becomes a considerable river, takes its rise at a short distance above the college, and affords, along its wood-fringed banks, many shady retreats, where even study is pleasant, and idleness delicious. The neighborhood of the institution is not quite a solitude, though the few habitations scarcely constitute a village. These consist principally of farm-houses, of rather an ancient date (for the settlement is much older than the college), and of a little inn, which even in that secluded spot does not fail of a moderate support. Other dwellings are scattered up and down the valley; but the difficulties of the soil will long avert the evils of a too dense population.<sup>15</sup>

The inn mentioned above is usually identified as Ward's Tavern of Hawthorne's day, and is probably the hostelry at which Hawthorne and his uncle Robert Manning spent the night upon their arrival at the college while they were awaiting the Tuesday morning hour at which the youth took the entrance examinations.<sup>16</sup> In a town founded in 1628 the site of this tavern could well have been that of the old Hand and Bottle, a place so ancient that "only the earth

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<sup>15</sup>Hawthorne, op. cit., pp. 3-4.

<sup>16</sup>Cantwell, op. cit., p. 68.

under and around it [The newer building] remains the same."<sup>17</sup> Situated but three miles from Maquoit Bay and quite near other inlets and harbors along the coast, the old tavern would have been a likely meeting place for comrades other than the Crombie and Butler of the story, whose "trade was unfavorable to length of days."<sup>18</sup>

In fact, no part of the setting of Fanshawe, the time of which, incidentally, covers a period of several months, is merely imaginary. "The path that wound along the banks of the stream,"<sup>19</sup> where the studious Fanshawe was wont to stroll with the unconscious purpose of seeing Ellen Langton, the college president's ward; the president's home and his garden, where the villain, Butler, delivered to Ellen the faked letter from her father--these places have been clearly identified as features of Bowdoin College and its surroundings during Hawthorne's time there.<sup>20</sup>

Several miles down the Androscoggin were the precipice and the cave which form such a majestic back-drop for the struggle that ended in the death of Villain Butler. The long tramps that Hawthorne and his college friend,

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<sup>17</sup>Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>20</sup>George T. Little, "Hawthorne's 'Fanshawe' and Bowdoin's Past," The Bowdoin Quill, 8:179-186, June, 1904.

Bridge, took must have included just such characteristic Maine scenery--wild and broken country, through which ran, in the author's day, the "underground railway" for runaway slaves. There is authority for the statement that the home of Bowdoin's Professor Smythe was a station on this railway.<sup>21</sup>

But it was not the mystery and excitement of getting runaway slaves out of this land and the staid, God-fearing professors promoting that endeavor which concerned Hawthorne in this story. It was something more like the mystery and excitement that occurred when Negroes were smuggled into the United States after the law of 1807, forbidding their importation, nominally became effective,<sup>22</sup> together with the desperate, lawless sort who carried on these ventures, that engaged the author's attention in Fanshawe; for of all the characters in that novel, Hugh Crombie is the most realistically delineated.

Whether the original for Hugh Crombie was one of these smugglers or whether he was an outright pirate when he shared with Villain Butler "the cabin of the Black Andrew, where a pistol-shot was a nightly pastime,"<sup>23</sup> is not

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<sup>21</sup>Cantwell, op. cit., p. 75, citing Hatch's History of Bowdoin.

<sup>22</sup>John Spencer Bassett, A Short History of the United States, p. 352.

<sup>23</sup>Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 42.

clear. Cantwell holds the latter theory. He states:

Pirates were still fairly common at the time Hawthorne wrote his novel, and were much commoner at the time in which the story is laid. They had the same connotations of terror as gangsters a century later. John Forrester's New Endeavor had been boarded by pirates in 1825 and robbed of \$4,500 in gold. The last reported case of piracy in the West Indies took place a few years later, when the Mexican of Salem was boarded. The pirates in this case were captured, tried, and seven of them hanged in Salem. At the time Hawthorne's novel was published, the New Priscilla of Salem was found deserted in the West Indies, her stern-boat tackles hanging in the water. It was believed that pirates had murdered all the crew. The body of a boy was found spiked to the deck.<sup>24</sup>

But Hugh Crombie, at the time of the narrative, had forsaken his evil ways, turned honest, and become the genial keeper of the inn, the proprietorship of which he had gained by his marriage to the owner, Widow Hutchins. In this role he lends considerable humor to the book, especially as he leaps from one quickly concocted version of events to another to explain to the president of the college the presence of his students there, at prohibited hours and in a place clearly "out of bounds" for them. No original for this phase of Crombie has been pointed out, but it is very likely that a person or persons with these characteristics were a part of Hawthorne's college world. The same sort of humorous subterfuge is apparent in Hawthorne's account of his being called before the president for gaming. In a

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<sup>24</sup>Cantwell, op. cit., p. 121.

letter to his mother, he wrote:

When the President asked what we played for, I thought proper to inform him it was 50 cts. although it happened to be a Quart of Wine, but if I had told him of that he would probably have fined me for having a blow. There was no untruth in the case, as the wine cost 50 cts.<sup>25</sup>

But not all the characters in Fanshawe are so lusty and human as Hugh Crombie. Some of them may fairly be called stereotyped. It is doubtless the good, good heroine and the black-, black-hearted villain, Ellen Langton and Butler respectively, that leave many readers indifferent to the finer qualities of the book. Yet even in such a stock character as Ellen, an oblique resemblance to Jane Appleton, daughter of Bowdoin's former president, who later became the wife of Hawthorne's college friend, Franklin Pierce, has been noted.<sup>26</sup> This "first lady" has been described as "frail, beautiful, with a pensive, ethereal charm."<sup>27</sup>

Franklin Pierce himself is said to be reflected in the headstrong, reckless Edward Walcott, who loved and finally won this Ellen of the story.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Stewart, op. cit., p. 21.

<sup>26</sup>Cantwell, op. cit., p. 122.

<sup>27</sup>Cantwell, loc. cit., citing statement of Mrs. Robert E. Lee.

<sup>28</sup>Cantwell, op. cit., p. 123.

Dr. Melmoth, the president of Harley College, a minister who preached the Sabbath sermons, not only to the students but also to the church members of the surrounding area, is typical of the early American college presidents. Such were Mather of Harvard, Ezra Stiles of Yale, and Eleazer Wheelock of Dartmouth. Such was William Allen, president of Bowdoin College when Hawthorne was a student there.

Allen's personal characteristics as set forth in the following brief description would admirably fit Hawthorne's Dr. Melmoth:

Allen was round-faced, short, precise in his dress, industrious and conscientious. His hair started far back on his forehead. He tried to appear dignified, and succeeded in seeming precise and formal. His eyes were rather narrow, and as the administration of his office grew more and more harassed, and the students less tractable, a vague and troubled look of pain settled upon his features.<sup>29</sup>

Certainly the physical appearance of Dr. Melmoth as he came upon a group of his students revelling in Hugh Crombie's inn at midnight is not dissimilar.

There was a silence of a moment's continuance after the discovery of Dr. Melmoth, during which he attempted to clothe his round, good-natured face in a look of awful dignity. But in spite of himself, there was a little twisting of the corners of his mouth, and a smothered gleam in his eye.<sup>30</sup>

These early American college presidents were marked not only by an ability to inculcate in their students a

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>30</sup>Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 37.

"deep and awful sense of religion,"<sup>31</sup> but also by the possession of sound scholarship. This scholarship they utilized in producing the history of their times, such as Increase Mather's Brief History of the War With the Indians; <sup>32</sup> verse, such as Urian Oakes' "Elegy Upon the Death of the Reverend Mr. Thomas Shepard;"<sup>33</sup> or religious tracts, such as those of Samuel Willard collected in Compleat Body of Divinity.<sup>34</sup>

Hawthorne employed this traditional characteristic in the creation of his Dr. Melmoth:

At the head of the institution, at this period, was a learned and orthodox divine, whose fame was in all the churches. He was the author of several works which evinced much erudition and depth of research.<sup>35</sup>

The latter statement was literally true of Bowdoin's President Allen. He compiled several volumes of poems, songs, and accounts of shipwrecks, but most important of all, he published in 1809 his American Biographical and Historical Dictionary, a work which he successively revised and enlarged through two later editions.<sup>36</sup> This was one of the

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>32</sup>Allen Johnson (ed.), Dictionary of American Biography, 12:393.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 16:346.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 20:238.

<sup>35</sup>Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>36</sup>Johnson, op. cit., 1:209-210.

earliest compilations of the sort in America, and Hawthorne himself must have depended a great deal upon it as a reference.

But an even more prominent character than the president of the college was the student Fanshawe, from whose name the book takes its title. Some critics state that Fanshawe is a weakly drawn character;<sup>37</sup> that he is without motivation; that his continued pursuit of knowledge in the face of illness and approaching death is unexplained; and that his relinquishment of Ellen after he had fairly won her does not coincide with normal human behavior.<sup>38</sup> Strange as Fanshawe may appear when compared with the average or even with the exceptionally studious young man of today, he was not an unusual youth for his own time. Hawthorne could have used Gorham Deane, his own college mate, as a model. Deane was a quiet, frail, studious young man, who, despite his critical health, ranked second in scholarship only to Longfellow among the Bowdoin graduates of 1825. But whether from close application to study or from the inevitable progress of his illness, he did not live to receive his diploma.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Cantwell, op. cit., p. 120.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., pp. 100-101.



It has even been said that there is much of Hawthorne himself in the character of Fanshawe.<sup>40</sup> Certainly the premonition of an early death was one of the author's preoccupations. When he was from ten to fifteen years old, he was convinced by some strange inward feeling that he would not live beyond twenty-five.<sup>41</sup> This melancholy outlook might have been caused by the foot ailment that made him lame at intervals during his youth, but the foot trouble, in turn, appears to have been more or less a psychotic condition, since it seems to have come and gone irrespective of prescribed treatment or of no treatment at all. But the total result of this feeling of a limitation on his life, together with a habitual solitude, enabled him to create what is today considered the unusual character of Fanshawe.

It might have been, too, that young men in early New England, brought up under that "deep and awful sense of religion,"<sup>42</sup> lived with the next world considerably in their thoughts. Such a young man was Nathaniel Mather, son of Increase Mather, who was an early Puritan minister and

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<sup>40</sup>Edith Lathrop Chandler, A Study of the Sources of the Tales and Romances Written by Nathaniel Hawthorne before 1853 (Vol. VII, No. 4 of Smith College Studies in Modern Languages), pp. 11-12; and George E. Woodberry, Nathaniel Hawthorne, p. 32.

<sup>41</sup>Cantwell, op. cit., p. 123.

<sup>42</sup>Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 5.

president for a time of Harvard University. Nathaniel's brother, Cotton Mather, says of him:

There were two calamities which he had a foreboding of, dismal pain and early death. As for his pain, he was to undergo exquisite anguishes, for many months before his dissolution; but before ever it came upon him, how strangely did he fortifie himself against it! He said in his diary some years before he left the world, 'I had now apprehensions that I must undergo more tryals and conflicts and great afflictions, wherefore it highly become me to get as great a measure of grace, as the opportunities which I enjoy may afford, and therefore I purpose to be more serious in my meditations not omitting other duties therewithal.'<sup>43</sup>

Fanshawe expressed his own foreboding when he said to Ellen in renouncing her, "Your life will be long and happy. Mine will be short, but not altogether wretched, nor shorter then if we had never met."<sup>44</sup> Earlier, one of his college mates had said of him, "He is a deep scholar and a noble fellow; but I fear we shall follow him to his grave ere long."<sup>45</sup>

In fact, when one compares, line by line, the characteristics of Nathaniel Mather as set forth in his brother's Magnalia Christi Americana (which Hawthorne is known to have read more than once)<sup>46</sup> with those by which the artist depicts Fanshawe, he is strongly impressed with the resemblance of Fanshawe to Mather. For instance, Mather thus described

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<sup>43</sup>Cotton Mather, Magnalia Christi Americana, p. 147.

<sup>44</sup>Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 79.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>46</sup>Marion L. Kesselring, Hawthorne's Reading 1828-1850, p. 56.

the personal appearance and general attitude of Nathaniel

Mather:

Tho' a fine carriage was the least thing that he ever affected, yet a good nature made him dear to those that were familiar with him. He was always very obliging and officious, and more ready to do than others were to ask a good turn at his hands; but he was above all happy by being early in pure religion.<sup>47</sup>

Hawthorne's more detailed but similar description of Fanshawe follows:

The stranger could scarcely have attained his twentieth year, and was possessed of a face and form such as Nature bestows on none but her favorites. There was a nobleness on his high forehead, which time would have deepened into majesty; and all his features were formed with strength and boldness, of which the paleness, produced by study and confinement, could not deprive them. The expression of his countenance was not a melancholy one: on the contrary, it was proud and high, perhaps triumphant, like one who was a ruler in a world of his own, and independent of the beings that surrounded him. But a blight, of which his thin pale cheek, and the brightness of his eye, were alike proofs, seemed to have come over him ere his maturity.<sup>48</sup>

Their industry in study was also comparable. Nathaniel Mather referred in his diary to his nightly preoccupation:

. . . those hours, when the general silence of every house in town, proclaimed it high time for me to put a stop unto my working mind, and urged me to afford some rest unto my eyes which have been almost put out by my intenseness on my studies; after these, I say, and when I am ready to do it.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>Mather, op. cit., p. 133.

<sup>48</sup>Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>49</sup>Mather, op. cit., p. 132.

And of Fanshawe Hawthorne relates that ". . . his lamp burned as constantly from the first shade of evening till the gray morning light began to dim its beams."<sup>50</sup>

Similarly, the candle of life went out for the two young students in much the same manner at approximately the same age:

When he [Nathaniel Mather] was but twelve years old he was admitted into the Colledge, by strict examiners. . . . He commenced batchelour of arts at the age of sixteen. . . . His second degree, after seven years being in the Colledge, he took just before death gave him a third, which last was a promotion infinitely beyond either of the former.<sup>51</sup>

And

There were many who felt an interest in Fanshawe; but the influence of none could prevail upon him to lay aside the habits, mental and physical by which he was bringing himself to the grave. His passage thither was consequently rapid, terminating just as he reached his twentieth year. His fellow-students erected to his memory a monument of rough-hewn granite, with a marble slab for the inscription. This was borrowed from the grave of Nathaniel Mather, whom, in his almost insane eagerness for knowledge, and in his early death, Fanshawe resembled.

#### THE ASHES OF A HARD STUDENT

#### AND A GOOD SCHOLAR<sup>52</sup>

So much for the native materials concerned in the setting and in the characters of this novel. Can such

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<sup>50</sup>Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 79.

<sup>51</sup>Mather, op. cit., p. 138.

<sup>52</sup>Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 80.

elements also be found in the plot? The plot concerns the struggle of Ellen Langton's guardian, who is also the college president, and two of her student admirers to rescue her from a criminal sailor. This sailor kidnaps her and plans to marry her in order to acquire title to the wealth of Ellen's sea-merchant father. So far as can be determined, there is not in early American history, story, or legend an occurrence that would form the germ of this plot. The latter fact makes the book unique among Hawthorne's literary productions.

Another feature which removes this initial novel from the field of what became the Hawthornesque is that the plot or action of the story concerns itself with the outward relation of events. In this respect, the book lays itself open to the charge of being done in the Scott or Maturin manner. By the time Hawthorne published another novel, twenty-two years later, he had marked his field as that concerned with the inner life of his characters--and he had marked it so well that it is easy to agree with Williams that, "in a sense it is Hawthorne without Hawthorne if we omit his exploration of the soul."<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, as this study progresses, it may also be conceded that a Hawthorne

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<sup>53</sup>Stanley T. Williams, review of Hawthorne the Artist by Leland Schubert, Modern Language Notes, 60:71-72, (January, 1945).

novel is without Hawthorne if it fails to make use of his New England heritage.

On the positive side, it may be said for the plot that it does employ native materials in an auxiliary way. There is support for the probability that its action was planned and carried on by a criminal sailor with the tacit consent of his ex-pirate companion in Cantwell's discussion of piracy quoted on page 9.

This same paragraph establishes verisimilitude for the part Ellen's father plays in the story, because the mention of John Forrester introduces a person typical of a host of New England merchant seamen who became in this era among the foremost capitalists of America.<sup>54</sup>

Incidentally, too, the story is pioneering in a characteristically American way by bringing to the reader one among the first stories--if not the very first story--of American college life.<sup>55</sup> It will be interesting to note in the succeeding chapters how Hawthorne continued this pioneering and became "The first artist in American literature to dissent from the established and expand the spiritual frontier."<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Vernon Loggins, The Hawthornes, p. 196.

<sup>55</sup>Cantwell, op. cit., p. 119.

<sup>56</sup>Lucy Lockwood Hazard, The Frontier in American Literature, p. 34.

## CHAPTER II

### THE SCARLET LETTER

When Hawthorne was dismissed as Surveyor of the Port in Salem in 1849, it was necessary for him to prepare something for publication quickly. His mother was critically ill, and the small sum that his wife had managed to save from his government pay of \$1,200.00 per year was rapidly dwindling. Hawthorne had never trusted his art alone to provide for his family, but his wife evidently felt that writing was his real work. Upon hearing of her husband's loss of his office, she exclaimed, "Now you can write your book!"<sup>1</sup> She must have been referring to The Scarlet Letter, for he immediately began writing that book.

Davidson analyzes the method by which Hawthorne created his representative literary productions as involving the use of a moral idea and a romantic image or episode. These he fused, in the course of his story, into a symbol. The order in which these "germs" or elements of literary creation occurred, Davidson says, is not prescribed. He holds that in the composition of The Scarlet Letter the

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Cantwell, Nathaniel Hawthorne: The American Years, p. 420, citing Julian Hawthorne's Hawthorne and His Wife.

moral idea, the old colony law, came first, then the image of the letter.<sup>2</sup>

Be the order of unfoldment in the narrative what it may, it is certain that the "germs" had long lain dormant in Hawthorne's mind. In 1837 when he wrote "Endicott and the Red Cross," he mentioned a young woman in the crowd, viewing the punishment of criminals during the muster of the trainband that autumnal noonday. He described her as follows:

. . . a young woman with no mean share of beauty, whose doom it was to wear the letter A on the breast of her gown, in the eyes of all the world and her own children. And even her own children knew what that initial signified. Sporting with her infamy, the lost and desperate creature had embroidered the fatal token in scarlet cloth, with golden thread and the nicest art of needlework; so that the capital A might have been thought to mean Admirable, or anything rather than Adulteress.<sup>3</sup>

Then in 1844 he thus reminded himself in his journal of the undeveloped story: "The life of a woman, who, by the old colony law, was condemned always to wear the letter A, sewed on her garment, in token of her having committed adultery."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Edward Hutchins Davidson, Hawthorne's Last Phase, p. 144.

<sup>3</sup>Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Complete Novels and Selected Tales of Nathaniel Hawthorne, p. 1015.

<sup>4</sup>Newton Arvin, The Heart of Hawthorne's Journals, p. 127.



Of just how and when the elements of the story first came to Hawthorne, no one has established proof. It might have been through legend. Chandler says that "In Peabody is the grave of an aduress named Eliza Wharton. It has been said that Hester Prynne was suggested by her."<sup>5</sup> It might have been through his reading of the Acts and Laws of the Massachusetts Colony, for therein is recorded an act passed in 1704 providing that the man and woman guilty of adultery should be placed on a gallows one hour and be scourged and should ever afterward "wear a Capital A of two inches long, of a contrary colour to the cloathes, sewed on their upper Garments, on the Back or Arm in open view."<sup>6</sup> Another theory is that John Dunton's account of the woman who, having committed an indiscretion with an Indian, was forced to wear a red Indian on her right arm gave Hawthorne the idea.<sup>7</sup> He is known to have read The Life and Errors of John Dunton (published in London, 1818) in September, 1833,<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Edith Lathrop Chandler, A Study of the Sources of the Tales and Romances Written by Nathaniel Hawthorne before 1853, p. 44.

<sup>6</sup>Alfred S. Reid, The Yellow Ruff and The Scarlet Letter, p. 10, citing Frank P. Stearns, The Life and Genius of Nathaniel Hawthorne, p. 221.

<sup>7</sup>H. Arlin Turner, "Hawthorne's Literary Borrowings," Publication of the Modern Language Association, 51:550, June, 1936.

<sup>8</sup>Marion L. Kesselring, Hawthorne's Reading 1828-1850, p. 10.

just as he had also read The Acts and Laws of Massachusetts Colony in October, 1823;<sup>9</sup> but who knows that the scarlet of the symbol had not already blazed in his imagination when in April of 1828<sup>10</sup> he read in Winthrop's Journal: "Robert Cole, having been oft punished for drunkenness, was now ordered to wear a red D about his neck for a year."<sup>11</sup>

From his youth on, Hawthorne was an avid reader. Loggins tells of a visit paid by Hawthorne and a group of friends to the cottage of an old woman on the outskirts of Salem. She was an odd character, something of a recluse, but she treated the boys kindly, serving them with tea. On the way home young Hawthorne pretended a queer feeling, telling his companions that the woman was a witch and that it must have been witch's brew which she had served them.<sup>12</sup> His relation of witchcraft must have excited and mystified the boys quite enough to please the vanity of the youthful story teller. He afterwards confessed that he was using material he had read in Hutchinson's History.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>11</sup>John Winthrop, Winthrop's Journal, Vol. X of Original Narratives of Early American History, ed., Kendall Hosmer, 1:120.

<sup>12</sup>Vernon Loggins, The Hawthornes, p. 228.

<sup>13</sup>Loc. cit.

Of his later reading, Chandler says, ". . . Hawthorne discovered the charms of early American history and studied much therein till the Salem of the Puritan witchcraft days became more real to him than the Salem of 1828."<sup>14</sup>

So when disaster came to Hawthorne's career in government service, he had ready the essential elements of his story, and he had an auxiliary theme in mind that he was destined to work out in his treatment of Dimmesdale; for in 1842 he had outlined a project in his journal, "To trace out the influence of a frightful and disgraceful crime in debasing and destroying a character naturally high and noble, the guilty person alone being conscious of the crime."<sup>15</sup>

All that Hawthorne then needed to develop his story concerning the effects of the sins of hypocrisy and revenge was a quick and accurate resumé of the historical background. He had doubtless sensed through twenty-four years of rigid self-training in his art what a leading Hawthorne scholar said of him one hundred years later:

. . . the tales that, like "Roger Malvin's Burial" and "Young Goodman Brown," are dense with new England history but move from the historical into the universal through symbolism seem to us today to be Hawthorne's greatest.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Chandler, op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>15</sup>Nathaniel Hawthorne, American Journals, Riverside Edition, p. 273.

<sup>16</sup>Hyatt H. Waggoner (ed.) Nathaniel Hawthorne: Selected Tales and Sketches, p. vii.

There are several reasons for believing that, when he sat down to write The Scarlet Letter, Hawthorne made direct use of Winthrop's Journal for his realistic basis:

1. The work, first published in 1790, is known to have been in his hands in 1828.<sup>17</sup>

2. Winthrop, governor or on the governor's staff continuously from the time he came to America in 1630 until his death in 1649, was the most eminent and reliable authority for events, not only within the Bay Colony itself, but also for events in the other colonies as well.

3. While Winthrop's Journal is but one of the seven recognized early historical accounts by Massachusetts contemporaries,<sup>18</sup> none of the others afford such careful chronology.

The time of The Scarlet Letter is the 1640's. So closely do the incidents related parallel those of Winthrop's Journal that one can fix the opening of the narrative as 1642. One of the definitive elements that so places the beginning of this novel is the fact that little Pearl was then three months old and had become seven years old at the time her mother took measurements for making Governor Winthrop's burial robe. His death occurred in 1649.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Kesselring, op. cit., p. 64.

<sup>18</sup>Winthrop's Journal, Introduction, 1:19-20.

<sup>19</sup>Allen Johnson (ed.), Dictionary of American Biography, 19:983.

The characters included in the dramatic triangle are themselves typical of, although not identifiable with, those that fill the Winthrop accounts. Prynne, or Roger Chillingworth, as he chose to be known in Boston, was a scholarly Englishman of some means, living in Amsterdam at the time of his decision to migrate to America. Whether he was a Separatist or a Puritan is not stated. Hester Prynne, his wife, was of an aristocratic English family whose wealth had declined. She was a Puritan and a member of the church of which the Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale was pastor. Like most of the ministers described in the Journal, Dimmesdale was a man of great learning and an Oxford scholar. Although still a young man, he was looked upon as having great spiritual power and wisdom; hence, as was the Puritan custom, he was called into councils with the magistrates and judges.

The circumstances out of which the plot of the novel grew were also representative of the social conditions prevalent in the colonies. Husbands and wives were often separated for weeks or months as one or the other was left behind or later returned to England to conclude business transactions. One instance of such separation was that of the Winthrops, the Governor having preceded his wife here to prepare a home for her, while she remained to settle their affairs in England.

In the plain, almost Biblical style of Winthrop's Journal, the historian records on page 257 a case so

similar in the manner of its handling by the court to that of the Hawthorne story that one wonders if in it lay the guide for the novelist's plot. This is the entry for March 5, 1645:

A sad business fell out this year in Boston. One of the brethren of the church there, being in England in the parliament service about two years, had committed the care of his family and business to another of the same church, (a young man of good esteem for piety and sincerity, but his wife was in England,) who in time grew over familiar with his master's wife, (a young woman no member of the church,) so as she would be with him oft in his chamber, etc., and one night two of the servants, being up, perceived him to go up into their dame's chamber, which coming to the magistrates' knowledge, they were both sent for and examined, (but it was not discovered till about a quarter of a year after, her husband being then come home,) and confessed not only that he was in the chamber with her in such a suspicious manner, but also that he was in bed with her, but both denied any carnal knowledge; and being tried by a jury upon their lives by our law, which makes adultery death, the jury acquitted them of the adultery, but found them guilty of adulterous behavior. . . . So the court adjudged them to stand upon the ladder at the place of execution with halters about their necks one hour, and then to be whipped, or each of them to pay 20 pounds. The husband (although he condemned his wife's immodest behavior, yet) was so confident of her innocency in point of adultery, as he would have paid 20 pounds rather than she should have been whipped; but their estate being but mean, she chose rather to submit to the rest of her punishment than that her husband should suffer so much for her folly. So he received her again, and they lived lovingly together. All that she had to say for herself upon her trial was the same which she had revealed to her husband as soon as he came home, before the matter had been discovered, viz. that he did indeed come into bed to her, which so soon as she perceived, she used the best arguments she could to dissuade him from so foul a sin, so as he lay still, and did not touch her, but went away again as he came; and the reason why she did not cry out, was because he had

been very faithful and helpful to her in her husband's absence, which made her very unwilling to bring him to punishment or disgrace.<sup>20</sup>

Points of comparison between the story of Hawthorne and that of Winthrop follow:

1. In the former narrative there was real sin; otherwise the effects of sin on the minds and hearts of the sinners could not be burrowed into, and there could be no truly Hawthornesque psychological drama.

2. The punishment in each case involved standing a prescribed time in the public view on the scaffold for criminal punishment.

3. Both accounts state that, according to the law of the colony, adultery was punishable by death.

4. The condemned in the Winthrop case were also whipped. In the novelist's version, the condemned Hester was not whipped; yet Hawthorne comments that the whippings of undutiful children, sluggish bondservants, antinomians, Quakers, and drunken, riotous Indians were on other occasions public spectacles.<sup>21</sup>

5. In the Winthrop triangle, the husband and wife were seemingly of similar age, interests, and physical grace, whereas the novelist chose to have the husband in

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<sup>20</sup>John Winthrop, Winthrop's Journal, 2:257-259.

<sup>21</sup>Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter, p. 113.

The Scarlet Letter a man who could say:

Mine was the first wrong, when I betrayed thy budding youth into a false and unnatural relation with my decay. . . . What had I to do with youth and beauty like thine own! Misshapen from my birth-hour, how could I delude myself with the idea that intellectual gifts might veil physical deformity in a young girl's fantasy.<sup>22</sup>

The latter difference in the tales, however, does not apply in comparing Hawthorne's version with Winthrop's relation in regard to Mary Latham, who with John Britton was executed in 1644 for adultery. Mary is described by Winthrop as "a proper young woman about 18 years of age, whose father was a godly man and had brought her up well."<sup>23</sup> The record continues:

This woman, being rejected by a young man whom she had an affection unto, vowed she would marry the next that came to her, and accordingly, against her friends' minds, she matched with an ancient man who had neither honesty nor ability, and one she had no affection unto.<sup>24</sup>

An angle of this case, as of all other cases that went before the Massachusetts magistrates, is that of a confession by the accused. Here, Mary at first denied her guilt, "but the jury cast her, and then she confessed the fact."<sup>25</sup> The sequel was her execution. Since it is not

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 127-128.

<sup>23</sup>John Winthrop, Winthrop's Journal, II, 161.

<sup>24</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>25</sup>Loc. cit.



recorded that clemency was ever shown by such a court because of a confession, one is, perhaps, at a loss regarding the reason for a confession until he is enlightened by Hawthorne's interpretation through Reverend Wilson's solicitude about obtaining one from Hester.

When on the scaffold in the presence of all the townspeople, the magistrates, and Richard Bellingham (governor of Massachusetts, 1641-1642), Hester was being exhorted by John Wilson, the distinguished divine, to reveal "the name of him who tempted you,"<sup>26</sup> the speaker turned to the young minister and said:

Good Master Dimmesdale, the responsibility of this woman's soul lies greatly with you. It behooves you, therefore, to exhort her to repentance and to confession as a proof and consequence thereof.<sup>27</sup>

Confession, then, was a proof and a consequence of repentance which was to clear the already condemned one's soul. Truly, as Hawthorne observes in the beginning of the novel, amongst this people, "religion and law were almost identical."<sup>28</sup>

In the very beginning of The Scarlet Letter, too, the then current belief in witchcraft is introduced with a historical personage, Mistress Hibbins, as a witch. The

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<sup>26</sup>Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 123.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 113.

<sup>28</sup>Loc. cit.

widow of the late Magistrate Hibbins and the sister of Governor Bellingham, she appears in numerous incidents and speaks, apparently, to anyone who is not afraid to listen to her. Her talk is always about meeting the Black Man in the forest at midnight and about recruiting signers for his black book. Her harangues are voiced at artful junctures, sometimes to Hester, sometimes to Dimmesdale. The general effect is a sort of foreshadowing of evil and the evil consequences of sin, especially to the burdened souls of these two hearers. In separate conversations and on different occasions, one finds the learned Dimmesdale and the august Governor Bellingham referring to witches and witchcraft in a fanciful manner that shows neither acceptance nor disapproval of the general theory. As for that matter, one finds even the author himself, from his omniscient viewpoint, acquiescing in the witchcraft illusion. It is only toward the end of the book that he lets in a refreshing breath of reality by using the term insanity in connection with Mistress Hibbens, but he also states, later in the story, that she was afterwards executed for a witch.

Information on her execution is not given in the Journal, however, because the occurrence postdated the death of Winthrop. Yet one might, perhaps, venture the assertion that had his pen still been active, an account of the great lady's conviction and execution would have been accorded

more than the one sentence given to an anonymous person in the Journal entry for March 1, 1647: "One [blank] of Windsor arraigned and executed for a witch."<sup>29</sup>

In contrast to this brevity, on June 4, 1648, Winthrop devoted a full page to details of the fact that "At this court one Margaret Jones of Charlestown was indicted and found guilty of witchcraft, and hanged for it."<sup>30</sup> After listing the evidence against this woman, Winthrop closed the record thus:

Her behavior at her trial was very intemperate, lying notoriously, and railing upon the jury and witnesses, etc., and in the like distemper she died. The same day and hour she was executed, there was a very great tempest at Connecticut, which blew down many trees, etc.<sup>31</sup>

This implied coordination of witchcraft with the malignant forces of nature is an example of the Puritans' tendency to search the earth, sky, and sea for portents concerning God's will, or for confirmation of God's providences to man. Winthrop gives several accounts of mysterious lights in the sky and of double and triple appearances of the sun. On August 26, 1644, he records quite simply, "About nine in the evening there fell a great flame of fire down into the water towards Pullen Point; it lighted the

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<sup>29</sup>Winthrop, op. cit., 2:323.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 2:344.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 2:345.

air far about; it was no lightning, for the sky was very clear."<sup>32</sup>

In a previous entry, a yet more weird story occurs, as follows:

The 18th of this month two lights were seen near Boston, (as is before mentioned,) and a week after the like was seen again. A light like the moon arose about the N. E. Point in Boston, and met the former at Nottles Island, and there they closed in one, and then parted, and closed and parted divers times, and so went over the hill in the island and vanished. Sometimes they shot out flames and sometimes sparkles. This was about eight in the evening, and was seen by many. About the same time a voice was heard upon the water between Boston and Dorchester, calling out in a most dreadful manner, boy, boy, come away! and it suddenly shifted from one place to another a great distance, about twenty times. It was heard by divers godly persons. About 14 days after, the same voice in the same dreadful manner was heard by others on the other side of the town towards Nottles Island.<sup>33</sup>

Very artistically Hawthorne used a similar meteoric disturbance to reveal to Dimmesdale, and more especially to Hester, what an arch-fiend Roger Chillingworth had become and how helplessly Dimmesdale was in his power. The author pictures Hester, Pearl, and Dimmesdale assembled, quite by accident, at the dark hour of midnight, hand-in-hand upon the town scaffold. Just as Dimmesdale tells Pearl that they can all stand together openly only "before

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 2:193.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 2:155-156.

the judgment-seat," a light gleams in the sky.

. . . So powerful was its radiance, that it thoroughly illuminated the dense medium of cloud betwixt the sky and earth. The great vault brightened, like the dome of an immense lamp. It showed the familiar scene of the street, with the distinctness of mid-day, but also with the awfulness that is always imparted to familiar objects by an unaccustomed light. . . . And there stood the minister, with his hand over his heart; and Hester Prynne, with the embroidered letter glimmering on her bosom; and little Pearl, herself a symbol, and the connecting link between those two. They stood in the noon of that strange and solemn splendor, as if it were the light that shall unite all who belong to one another.<sup>34</sup>

As they stood thus together, Dimmesdale became aware of Roger Chillingworth, standing near the scaffold.

. . . To his features, as to all other objects, the meteoric light imparted a new expression; or it might well be that the physician was not careful then, as at all other times, to hide the malevolence with which he looked upon his victim. . . . So vivid was the expression, or so intense the minister's perception of it, that it seemed still to remain painted on the darkness, after the meteor had vanished, with an effect as if the street and all things else were at once annihilated.<sup>35</sup>

Dimmesdale drew back in terror and asked Hester, "Who is that man? . . . I shiver at him! . . . I hate him, Hester!"<sup>36</sup>

Remembering her oath, Hester was silent. But later she realized that Chillingworth had driven Dimmesdale to a

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<sup>34</sup>Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 175.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 176.

<sup>36</sup>Loc. cit.

perilous physical and mental condition, and she knew that it was her responsibility to free him from his tormentor's power. To form a plan for doing so, she must see him alone and unobserved--but where? Here again Hawthorne made use of his historical material.

Writing in March, 1647, Winthrop related:

Mention was made before of some beginning to instruct the Indians, etc. Mr. John Eliot, teacher of the church of Roxbury, found such encouragement, as he took great pains to get their language, and in a few months could speak of the things of God to their understanding; and God prospered his endeavors, so as he kept a constant lecture to them in two places, one week at the wigwam of one Wabon, a new sachem near Watertown mill, and the other the next week in the wigwam of Cutshamekin near Dorchester mill.<sup>37</sup>

Conveniently, while in attendance at a sick chamber, Hester learned that the clergyman had gone on a visit to the Apostle Eliot and would return on the morrow; so came the opportunity for an interview in the forest, under the open sky.

Likewise, the election sermon is gracefully utilized to furnish the background and accompanying events that climax the whole story. But what use can an artist make of such a historical observation as Winthrop's of April 13, 1645, "The governor and his assistants had used for ten or eleven years at least to appoint one to preach on the day of

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<sup>37</sup>Winthrop, op. cit., 2:319.

election"? A beautiful answer is the chapter entitled, "The New England Holiday." There is in it, too, a choice bit of the rare humor that Hawthorne seldom permits himself, for he says:

Into this festal season of the year--as it already was, and continued to be during the greater part of two centuries--the Puritans compressed whatever mirth and public joy they deemed allowable to human infirmity; thereby so far dispelling the customary cloud, that, for the space of a single holiday, they appeared scarcely more grave than most other communities at a period of general affliction.<sup>38</sup>

But the writer does go on to remark:

The persons now in the market-place of Boston had not been born to an inheritance of Puritanic gloom. They were native Englishmen, whose fathers had lived in the sunny richness of the Elizabethan epoch; a time when the life of England viewed as one great mass, would appear to have been as stately, magnificent, and joyous, as the world has ever witnessed.<sup>39</sup>

And so in that, and in the succeeding chapter, "The Procession," is a striking presentation of an Elizabethan holiday, Puritan style.

Not only in the important events of the narrative, but also in the minor ones does the author conform to the facts recorded by Winthrop. When the novelist sends Hester to the governor's hall to see Bellingham, in order to forestall the removal of little Pearl from her charge, he justifies such a visit in these words:

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<sup>38</sup>Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 220.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 221.

It may appear singular, and indeed not a little ludicrous, that an affair of this kind, which, in later days would have been referred to no higher jurisdiction than that of the selectmen of the town, should then have been a question publicly discussed, and on which statesmen of eminence took sides. At that epoch of pristine simplicity, however, matters of even slighter public interest, and of far less intrinsic weight, than the welfare of Hester and her child, were strangely mixed up with the deliberations of legislators and acts of state. The period was hardly, if at all, earlier than that of our story, when a dispute concerning the right of property in a pig not only caused a fierce and bitter contest in the legislative body of the colony, but resulted in an important modification of the framework itself of the legislature.<sup>40</sup>

The event to which reference is made in the last sentence is alluded to by Winthrop as "the sow business," and fills several pages under different dates in his journal. It had to do with a stray sow impounded by a Captain Keayne and claimed by a Mistress Sherman only after the Captain had butchered the animal. Mistress Sherman, a poor woman whose husband was then in England, was aided in her claim by a George Story, who resided in her home. The case attracted much public interest. When it came to the general court, seven days were spent in examining witnesses and hearing debates. The freemen and the deputies, upheld by Magistrates Bellingham and Saltonstall, were ever pressing for more power in the government. This case began to appear to the citizenry as one in which justice for the poor and

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<sup>40</sup>Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 143.



helpless was in danger from the negative vote of the rich and powerful, represented by the magistrates. In spite of the fact that, "The governor had published a writing about the case of the sow,"<sup>41</sup> and "One of the elders also wrote a small treatise . . . laying down . . . the unavoidable change into a democracy, if the negative voice were taken away,"<sup>42</sup> the latter's dire prophecy was fulfilled. The final settlement of this case the following year (1643) involved a compromise by which Massachusetts came to have a bicameral legislature with no veto power by the upper house.

Another circumstance of colonial times which Hawthorne adroitly used is the readiness of a ship in Boston harbor on which Dimmesdale and Hester could take passage to escape--a ship not too particular about its passenger list or its destination. As Hawthorne puts it:

. . . it so happened that a ship lay in the harbor; one of those questionable cruisers, frequent at that day, which, without being absolutely outlaws of the deep, yet roamed over its surface with a remarkable irresponsibility of character. This vessel had recently arrived from the Spanish Main, and, within three days' time, would sail for Bristol. Hester Prynne--whose vocation, as a self-enlisted Sister of Charity, had brought her acquainted with the captain and crew--could take upon herself to secure the passage of two individuals and a child, with all the secrecy which circumstances rendered more than desirable.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Winthrop, op. cit., 2:119.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 220.

<sup>43</sup>Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 211.

According to Winthrop, there occurred in May or June of 1644, right in Boston harbor, a contest between a ship of parliament and one of the king. The parliament ship was victorious, but the Massachusetts government was put at some embarrassment in presiding over the distribution of the spoils and in maintaining at the same time a position of at least nominal neutrality in the civil war then raging in England. To bolster a pose of neutrality, a law was enacted the following year "to give protection to all ships in our harbor coming as friends."<sup>44</sup> With this law in effect, with Spain an hereditary enemy, and with commissions being issued by Admiral Warwick for privateering, limited only by the proviso that the holder "should not rob or spoil any of the parliament's friends,"<sup>45</sup> many strange vessels with odd crews could and did find refuge in this Puritan port.

In the beginning of this examination of social conditions in Puritan Massachusetts, it was stated that the principal characters appearing in The Scarlet Letter were, in general, similar to types found in Winthrop's Journal. While Governor Bellingham, Reverend John Wilson, and the Apostle Eliot speak and act quite in harmony with these

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<sup>44</sup>Winthrop, op. cit., 2:255.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 2:184-185.

actual personages as presented by Winthrop, the three people who make up the emotional triangle can be identified only as typical of a class or group of characters described in the Winthrop account. Chillingworth, in the story of the outer man, is the husband separated by circumstances of business and travel from his wife. Again, he is the older man who has ill-matched himself in marriage with a younger woman. Dimmesdale is the learned Puritan minister, trusted and revered, not only as a spiritual guide, but also as a counselor in administering the temporal affairs of God's elect.

But what of Hester? Besides that of the immigrant wife sent ahead to await her husband's coming, of what is she the outward prototype in the Puritan society of her day? One might answer: she typifies the "fallen woman" and be correct; yet there is more to the character of Hester, even as revealed in her outward life, than is described in this epithet. Evidence of this other phase of her being is shown in the instance of her conversation with the ship captain on election day:

After parting from the physician, the commander of the Bristol ship strolled idly through the market-place; until happening to approach the spot where Hester Prynne was standing, he appeared to recognize, and did not hesitate to address her. . . . and so changed was Hester Prynne's repute before the public, that the matron in town most eminent for rigid morality could not have held such intercourse with less result of scandal than herself.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 223.

Hester had become representative of the woman who used her mind. Hawthorne says she "had turned in great measure from passion and feeling to thought."<sup>47</sup> In other words, she had become a type of the thinking woman of her day.

. . . Alone, and hopeless of retrieving her position, even had she not scorned to consider it desirable,--she cast away the fragments of a broken chain. 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. . . . Hester imbibed this spirit. 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.<sup>48</sup>

Yet in Hester's day what outlet was there for the active, feminine mind? How abnormal such a mind was considered is disclosed in Winthrop's story of Mrs. Hopkins, the aunt of Elihu Yale, the founder of Yale University.

Mr. Hopkins, the governor of Hartford upon Connecticut, came to Boston, and brought his wife with him, (a godly young woman and of special parts,) who was fallen into a sad infirmity, the loss of her understanding and reason, which had been growing upon her divers years, by occasion of her giving herself wholly to reading and writing, and had written many books. Her husband, being very loving and tender of her, was loath to grieve her; but he saw his error, when it was too late. For if she had attended her household affairs, and such things as belong to women, and not gone out of her way and

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 181.

<sup>48</sup>Loc. cit.

calling to meddle in such things as are proper for men, whose minds are stronger, etc., she had kept her wits, and might have improved them usefully and honorably in the place God had set her. He brought her to Boston, and left her with her brother, one Mr. Yale, a merchant, to try what means might be had here for her. But no help could be had.<sup>49</sup>

Again, what a nuisance such a mind could be is shown in the comment Winthrop makes concerning Anne Hutchinson. Seven years after she had been banished from his colony and two years before he records that she was murdered by Indians, he wrote of her: "Mrs. Hutchinson and those of Aquiday island broached new heresies every year."<sup>50</sup>

But Hawthorne graciously saves his thinking woman from the fate of Mrs. Hopkins or the alternative one of Mrs. Hutchinson thus:

It is remarkable that persons who speculate the most boldly often conform with the most perfect quietude to the external regulations of society. The thought suffices them, without investing itself in the flesh and blood of action. So it seemed to be with Hester. Yet, had little Pearl never come to her from the spiritual world, it might have been far otherwise. Then she might have come down to us in history, hand in hand with Anne Hutchinson, as the foundress of a religious sect.<sup>51</sup>

As a matter of fact, although Hester has not "come down to us in history, hand in hand with Anne Hutchinson," she has come down to us just as surely as that worthy

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<sup>49</sup>Winthrop, op. cit., 2:225.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 2:39.

<sup>51</sup>Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 181.

lady--and if not in, then through history. The foregoing analysis has shown that the chronicles which implement the story of her outward life are those of a trusted leader in the events of the first nineteen years of the Massachusetts Bay colony--John Winthrop. The elements portrayed in his account are, indeed, the native American materials which Hawthorne used to embody the story of Hester and to form the basis of The Scarlet Letter.

## CHAPTER III

### THE HOUSE OF THE SEVEN GABLES

"You know the house originally had seven gables," Hawthorne's cousin, Susan Ingersoll, would have explained as she showed him over her many-gabled old mansion in Salem in the 1830's.

"House of the Seven Gables--that sounds well,"<sup>1</sup> her guest is said to have murmured musingly. Perhaps he was even then peopling the ancient abode with characters that could re-enact the heritage of dramatic past incidents with which his mind is sure to have been stored.

Edward Mather says that family history was an obsession with Hawthorne,<sup>2</sup> and so there must have been waiting within his memory much traditional lore and many legends of by-gone occurrences. This chapter will discuss the artistic use he made of such lore, legends, and other native materials.

As to the house itself, the Turner Street mansion is the one most generally conceded to be the Pyncheon home

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<sup>1</sup>Edith Lathrop Chandler, A Study of the Sources of the Tales and Romances Written by Nathaniel Hawthorne before 1853 (Smith College Studies in Modern Languages, VII, 4), p. 47, citing Visitor's Guide to Salem, p. 57.

<sup>2</sup>Edward Mather, Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Modest Man, p. 14.

used as the focus of events in the story. Since its restoration in 1909, this old dwelling has been exhibited to Salem visitors with all seven gables and the little cent-shop complete as "The House." Not even such accessories as the elm and Maule's Well are missing.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, it is to be remembered that in his preface to the story, Hawthorne says:

The reader may perhaps choose to assign an actual locality to the imaginary events of this narrative. If permitted by the historical connection,--which, though slight, was essential to his plan,--the author would very willingly have avoided anything of this nature.<sup>4</sup>

His reason for wishing to avoid such an identification becomes clear in his argument for calling the work a romance rather than a novel. He indicates that a romance is bound only by the laws of art and fidelity to "the truth of the human heart,"<sup>5</sup> and, as has been shown in previous chapters, it is really in "the truth of the human heart" that the author, in his mature stage, is interested. Stein says of him:

The literal level of narration in his prose fiction mirrors only the external form of a profounder structure of imaginative truth. . . . The historical

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<sup>3</sup>Chandler, . op. cit., p. 481

<sup>4</sup>Nathaniel Hawthorne, The House of the Seven Gables, p. 244.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 243.



materialization of his plots defines the external world of man whose elements are all concrete, finite, and identifiable. . . . Spiritual life per se is restricted to Hawthorne's other dramatic center: the internal world of man.<sup>6</sup>

For Hawthorne's purpose, it did not much matter whether he used the "external form" of Susan Ingersoll's old family mansion (which was never a Hawthorne estate, although it became the home of Colonel John Hawthorne's sister Sarah when she married Captain Samuel Ingersoll about 1750<sup>7</sup>) or some other of the "fair houses" of Salem. The Ingersoll mansion well represents the great wooden structures built by successful sea captains and merchant venturers of the later seventeenth century as symbols of achievement and proud legacies to their succeeding generations.

A similar mansion must have been the "fair house" built in 1651 by the Puritan immigrant, William Hawthorne (1606-1681) on the lot given him by the town of Salem when he moved there from Dorchester in 1637.<sup>8</sup> This house faced the home of Governor Winthrop's well-to-do brother-in-law, Emanuel Downing.<sup>9</sup> Another of these solid old mansions was

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<sup>6</sup>Vernon Loggins, The Hawthornes, p. 186.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>8</sup>Randall Stewart is authority for the statement that Nathaniel Hawthorne added the "w" in the spelling of his name not long after his graduation from college.

<sup>9</sup>Loggins, op. cit., p. 172.

that built in Salem School Lane by Major William Hathorne's son, Colonel John Hathorne, some quarter of a century later. Neither Hathorne house was destined to stand, however, until the romancer's day. The latter one became the property of the author's great grandfather, Joseph Hathorne, and was last lived in by his daughter Sarah, who married a Cheever. It was destroyed by the great fire which levelled most of Salem in 1774.<sup>10</sup>

And so the house of the seven gables is not to be identified, literally, as an ancestral home of Hawthorne. He was born in the house acquired by his grandfather, Captain Daniel Hathorne, from the latter's father-in-law, Phelps, in 1772. Although the description of this house, built in 1686 by Benjamin Pickman, probably would sound enormous in terms that measure today's homes, it was but "mean compared with the residences the Pickmans were erecting in the eighteenth century."<sup>11</sup>

The story of the acquisition of the site of the house of the seven gables, however, uses material that may have come to the romancer in family legends. A historian of the Quaker persecutions said of the author's great-great-great-grandfather, Major William Hathorne, "Mr. Hathorne pursued

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 164.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 61.

all 'like a bloodhound, and had his will on them in person and estate.'"<sup>12</sup> Of course, the story that this great Quaker persecutor built his house on property he acquired by sentencing a Matthew Maule to death is contrary to known fact, but there is evidence that a Quaker named Thomas Maule "established himself in Salem, and in spite of greivous discrimination, rose to a position of prominence."<sup>13</sup> However, this rise was after 1661, in the later days of William Hathorne, when Charles II had come to the throne and had directed that any court case in Massachusetts Bay involving a Quaker on a capital charge must be transferred to England for trial.<sup>14</sup>

Not only in using an established Quaker name, such as Maule, does the author employ early Massachusetts data, but also in describing the circumstances of Maule's death. Colonel Pyncheon, in the romance, sentenced him to die on Gallows Hill as a wizard. While the witchcraft hysteria of 1692 occurred a generation later, and the Colonel Hathorne who made himself feared and hated as an inexorable judge in the trials of that year was a son of the William Hathorne discussed above, it would not be an anachronism to say that

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

William, as a member of the General Court and later as a member of the Governor's Council had also sent witches and wizards to their death. As has been noted in an earlier chapter, Winthrop first records in the 1640's the execution of a woman for witchcraft.<sup>15</sup>

How artistically Hawthorne has used another feature of the setting, the well or spring on Maule's homesite, to become a symbol of a curse, is attested a century later in Yvor Winters' choice of the title Maule's Curse for his study of American obscurantism (symbolism, allegory, etc., as employed by seven writers).<sup>16</sup> No factor in American pioneer life was more basic in choosing a homesite than the availability of fresh water through digging a well or walling up a natural spring. And even if Hawthorne's excellence in the use of symbolism and allegory should be the result of a paucity of ideas, as Parrington alleges,<sup>17</sup> one can but admire his handling of the change of Maule's Well from "a natural spring of soft and pleasant water"<sup>18</sup> to a "hard and brackish fountain productive of intestinal mischief to those

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<sup>15</sup>John Winthrop, Winthrop's Journal, II, 323.

<sup>16</sup>Yvor Winters, Maule's Curse.

<sup>17</sup>Vernon L. Parrington, Main Currents in American Thought, II, 438.

<sup>18</sup>Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 246.

who quench their thirst there;<sup>19</sup> and yet again, in the end, to a thing of beauty,

. . . throwing up a succession of kaleidoscopic pictures, in which a gifted eye might have seen foreshadowed the coming fortunes of Hepzibah and Clifford, and the descendant of the legendary wizard, and the village maiden, over whom he had thrown Love's web of sorcery.<sup>20</sup>

Not only in the setting but also in the characters of this novel, one finds Hawthorne making use of native materials.

The original for the chief character in the book, the man whose high position in life gave opportunity for cloaking his avarice and hypocrisy under the guise of a "do-gooder," has been established as Charles W. Upham, a fellow-townsmen of Hawthorne, a churchman, a Whig in politics, and altogether, a man who proved himself to be quite influential in local affairs.<sup>21</sup> Upham it was who, upon the accession of the Whigs to power through the election of General Taylor to the presidency, headed a small group who succeeded in ousting Hawthorne from his appointive office as Surveyor of the Port of Salem. The underhanded way in which this removal was brought about aroused a vindictive mood in Hawthorne.<sup>22</sup> He told Longfellow that he was resolved to "select

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 248.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 435-436.

<sup>21</sup>Chandler, op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>22</sup>Randall Stewart, Nathaniel Hawthorne, p. 89.

a victim, and let fall one little drop of venom on his heart, that shall make him writhe before the grin of the multitude for a considerable time to come."<sup>23</sup> And it is to be noted that, even in spite of the resentment he felt towards Upham, he could appreciate the artistry of the latter's villainy; for he remarked to Mrs. Hawthorne that Upham was "the most satisfactory villain that ever was."<sup>24</sup>

Some of Hawthorne's contemporaries have recorded themselves as concurring in some such opinion of Upham. Sumner referred to him as "that smooth, smiling, oily man of God;"<sup>25</sup> and Longfellow characterized him as "a fat, red, rowdy chap."<sup>26</sup>

Hubert Hoeltje quotes a contemporary of Upham at the time that the latter was mayor of Salem as writing mischievously of Upham:

. . . there was never a mayor more efficient and at the same time delighted with his office and power; everything and every man feels it; even the dust heaps in the street sneak away when he approaches. His style of meeting 'the People' is grand, majestic, condescending, cordial, dignified and popular at once.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>24</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>25</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>26</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>27</sup>Hubert H. Hoeltje, "The Writing of the Scarlet Letter," The New England Quarterly, 27:333, March, 1954.

Compare Hawthorne's description of Judge Pyncheon:

. . . the Judge left the shop, and went smiling along the street. As is customary with the rich, when they aim at the honors of a republic, he apologized, as it were, to the people, for his wealth, prosperity, and elevated station, by a free and hearty manner towards those who knew him; putting off the more of his dignity in due proportion with the humbleness of the man whom he saluted, and thereby proving a haughty consciousness of his advantages as irrefragably as if he had marched forth preceded by a troop of lackeys to clear the way. On this particular forenoon so excessive was the warmth of Judge Pyncheon's kindly aspect, that (such, at least, was the rumor about town) an extra passage of the water-carts was found essential in order to lay the dust occasioned by so much extra sunshine!<sup>28</sup>

More than a year passed before Hawthorne began writing The House of the Seven Gables and in that novel had need for the sort of villain he had found in Upham. The moral idea which he had for this romance is "that the wrong-doing of one generation lives into the successive one, and, divesting itself of every temporary advantage, becomes a pure and uncontrollable mischief;"<sup>29</sup> and so, in Upham, he had the characteristics for his Judge Pyncheon, as well as the earlier Colonel Pyncheon, builder of the house and founder of the American dynasty of that name.

Allowing, then, that the basic make-up of Judge Pyncheon followed the lines of Upham, one cannot refrain

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<sup>28</sup>Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 280.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

from observing that the author has also ingenuously endowed the Pyncheon family as a whole with some of his own Hawthorne family traits. Of the Pyncheons, Uncle Venner of the story remarked, "They never had the name of being an easy and agreeable set of folks. There was no getting close to them."<sup>30</sup> In this connection, one thinks of Judge Hathorne of the witchcraft trials of 1692 as singularizing himself, after the wane of the hysteria, by never making a public confession of error and a plea for forgiveness.<sup>31</sup> One recalls, too, that the father of the romancer was characterized as "moody" and "having a tendency to solitude;" and that his grandfather, "Bold Hathorne," was spoken of as "the sternest man that ever walked a deck."<sup>32</sup> Add to these facts Hawthorne's own description of his earliest American ancestor:

. . . I seem to have a stronger claim to a residence here on account of this grave, bearded, sabled-cloaked and steeple-crowned progenitor,--who came so early, with his Bible and his sword, and trode /sic/ the unworn street with such a stately port, and made so large a figure, as a man of war and peace,--a stronger claim than for myself, whose name is seldom heard and my face hardly known. He was a soldier, legislator, judge; he was a ruler in the Church; he had all the puritanic traits, both good and evil. He was likewise a bitter persecutor, as witness the

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 280.

<sup>31</sup>Stewart, op. cit., p. 2.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 3.



Quakers, who have remembered him in their histories, and relate an incident of his hard severity towards a woman of their sect, which will last longer, it is to be feared, than any record of his better deeds, although they were many.<sup>33</sup>

And one realizes that much, indeed, of the material that nourished the mind of Hawthorne as a boy, he used in his mature years to re-create the people of his story.

There is considerable evidence that sunny, little Phoebe, the most admirable character in the book, is, in many respects, a representation of Hawthorne's wife.

Chandler says that during the sojourn of the Hawthornes at the Old Manse, Phoebe was the author's pet name for Mrs. Hawthorne.<sup>34</sup> Certainly one finds a parallel in his picture of Phoebe's first morning in the ancient Pyncheon mansion as one who, with joy and no consciousness of effort, "adapted herself to the circumstances, and brought the house, moreover, and all its rusty old appliances into a suitableness for her purposes"<sup>35</sup> with the image one constructs of Sophia Hawthorne at her homemaking in the Little Red House in the Berkshires.

In a letter to her mother written in 1850, soon after the Hawthornes were installed in that home, Sophia

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<sup>33</sup>Hawthorne, op. cit., pp. 88-89.

<sup>34</sup>Chandler, op. cit., p. 48.

<sup>35</sup>Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 189.

described her placement of the family heirlooms in the drawing-room:

. . . the beautiful antique ottoman . . . Apollo, whose head I have tied on . . . the ancient carved chair . . . the alabaster vase . . . Correggio's Madonna . . . and the superb India punch-bowl and pitcher, which Mr. Hawthorne's father had made in India for himself--

. . . . .

You cannot think how pretty the room looks, though with such a low stud that I have to get acclimated to it, and still fear to be crushed.<sup>36</sup>

Prototypes of the other characters are not so easily distinguishable. Randall Stewart, who edited Hawthorne's American Notebooks, says an essence peddler whom Hawthorne met while on a stage journey to North Adams in the summer of 1838 contributed to the portrait of Holgrave.<sup>37</sup> Hawthorne also mentioned in his notebooks, in 1837, meeting a little Frenchman who offered to mesmerize him.<sup>38</sup> It is not unlikely that something of the latter's personality entered into the creation of Holgrave. Sherbo has likened Holgrave to Albert Brisbane, whom Hawthorne knew through his Brook Farm experiences.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Julian Hawthorne, Hawthorne and his Wife, I, 368-369.

<sup>37</sup>Stewart, op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>38</sup>Chandler, op. cit., p. 48, citing Hawthorne's American Notebooks, I, 68.

<sup>39</sup>Arthur Sherbo, "Albert Brisbane and Hawthorne's Holgrave and Hollingsworth," The New England Quarterly, XXVII, 533, December, 1954.

But there is also something of Hawthorne himself in this descendant of the Maules. Holgrave's retired way of life in the garret of the Pyncheon house is reminiscent of Hawthorne's twelve years in the upper chamber of his mother's old home. Then, in encouraging Hepzibah in her cent-shop venture, Holgrave says:

Henceforth, you will at least have the sense of healthy and natural effort for a purpose, and of lending your strength--be it great or small--to the united struggle of mankind. This is success,--all the success that anybody meets with!<sup>40</sup>

To realize that Holgrave is here expressing a cardinal point of Hawthorne doctrine, one has only to recall the theme of a few of his stories. This theme of sharing in the common, normal life of mankind is most definitely expressed in "The Village Uncle," where the author states:

In chaste and warm affections, humble wishes, and honest toil for some useful end, there is health for the mind, and quiet for the heart, the prospect of a happy life, and the fairest hope of Heaven.<sup>41</sup>

And what of the events that enter into the plot of this story? Did they also have their counterparts in early New England life, as did the setting and the characters?

In the discussion of the site of the seven-gabled house, mention has been made of Hawthorne's romantic use of

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<sup>40</sup>Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 269.

<sup>41</sup>Hawthorne, Twice Told Tales, p. 131.

the Quaker persecutions and the witchcraft executions. So artfully does the author bestow the mantle of witchcraft on the Maule family as a whole that the reader is not surprised at finding Hepzibah confessing of Holgrave that she

. . . had reason to believe that he practised animal magnetism, and, if such things were in fashion nowadays, should be apt to suspect him of studying the Black Art up there in his lonesome chamber.<sup>42</sup>

This reference to animal magnetism also prepares for Holgrave's story of the mesmeric or hypnotic influence of the second Matthew Maule on young Alice Pyncheon. The story, read by Holgrave, who in the denouement is revealed as a Maule descendant, to Phoebe, youngest surviving member of the Pyncheon family, is a strong link in the chain of the spell that binds the many-gabled old mansion and its inmates.

This spell emanates from the curse which the condemned Maule, as he stood on the scaffold with the halter about his neck, pronounced on Colonel Pyncheon grimly sitting his horse nearby. Pointing a finger at his undismayed enemy, Maule cried, "God will give him blood to drink."<sup>43</sup> And so it follows in the story that when the guests he had invited to celebrate the opening of the house of the seven gables went in to greet their host, the Colonel, they found

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<sup>42</sup>Hawthorne, The House of the Seven Gables, p. 294.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 247.

him sitting in his great chair, stone dead--of apoplexy, one doctor said--but with blood on his ruff, and his white beard soaked with blood. The onlookers were said by some to have heard a voice similar to Matthew Maule's cry out, "God hath given him blood to drink."<sup>44</sup>

Thus did Hawthorne use the deeply-rooted legend of the curse of one condemned for witchcraft some four or five generations before his day. As to who really pronounced the curse on whom, it is difficult to discover. Marion L. Starkey, who has spent a great deal of time studying early Massachusetts court records, attributes the speech to Sarah Good and identifies the recipient as Nicholas Noyes, a judge of the witchcraft trials of 1692. Starkey declares that the words were recalled some years later when Noyes lay dying of a hemorrhage.<sup>45</sup>

But Colonel John Hathorne, the great-great-grandfather of the author was a judge in these trials, too, and Rose Hawthorne Lathrop identifies this curse as being directed at him by the husband of a well-known victim, Rebecca Nurse.<sup>46</sup> It is not unlikely that Hawthorne himself

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 251.

<sup>45</sup>Starkey, The Devil in Massachusetts, pp. 176-177.

<sup>46</sup>Chandler, op. cit., p. 46, citing Rose Hawthorne Lathrop, Memories of Hawthorne, p. 6.

believed this version, for in The Custom House he says:

I know not whether these ancestors of mine bethought themselves to repent, and ask pardon of Heaven for their cruelties; or whether they are now groaning under the consequences of them, in another state of being. At all events, I, the present writer, as their representative, hereby take shame upon myself for their sakes, and pray that any curse incurred by them as I have heard, and as the dreary and unprosperous condition of the race, for many a long year back would argue to exist--may be now and henceforth removed.<sup>47</sup>

Another element of the plot of this novel that finds a parallel in Hawthorne family history is the claim to a vast heritage of "eastern lands" obtained during the colonial era. One almost feels that he is reading from the romance about these lands instead of from a factually based account when he finds in Loggins' The Hawthornes:

On December 10, 1665, he /John Hawthorne, b. 1641/ was in Jamaica, making out bills of sale for a cargo, which included no doubt adventures belonging to his father.

On the return from this voyage the ship on which he was sailing as supercargo called at some settlement on the Maine coast. There, probably for a few baubles brought from Jamaica, John Hathorne purchased from a sagamore known as Robin Hood a tract of land computed to consist of about nine thousand acres. It was situated between Lake Damariscotta and the Sheepscott River, in the section of Maine which was to become Lincoln county, and embraced "islands and islets, meadows, harbors, marshes, creeks, and coves." The deed John procured was recorded in Salem on June 16, 1666, . . . The tract, usually referred to by the Hathornes as "the eastern land," was of little concern to John, but to his descendants it was to be a

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<sup>47</sup>Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter, p. 89.

matter of hopes, dreams of great riches, and then disappointments and regrets.<sup>48</sup>

Loggins also tells of a contract between four Hathorne heirs and James Noble, a Boston Lawyer, and James Ward, a Salem merchant, about a century later (March 12, 1765), whereby Noble would represent the heirs in establishing claim to the nine thousand acres and Ward would pay the court costs. When the land was recovered, the heirs would deed Noble and Ward each one-third of it. The account concludes:

These men must have found it impossible to dig up supporting evidence, for the case was never brought to court. The heirs were left to talk to their children and grandchildren about how they all had been cheated out of a heritage which might have meant vast riches. In time some of them were to say that the land would have been theirs but for a curse pronounced upon Colonel Hathorne by one of the witchcraft victims.<sup>49</sup>

Also emotionally fixed in Hawthorne's memory was a neighborhood shop for small wares, which, perhaps, provided the model for Hepzibah's cent-shop in the novel. Hawthorne had spent the summer of 1833 in Swampscott, a little fishing village near Salem, where he was infatuated by a little maid who worked in such a shop, "selling gingerbread men, fishhooks, pins, needles, sugar plums and brass thimbles."<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>Loggins, op. cit., p. 101.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., pp. 169-170.

<sup>50</sup>Robert Cantwell, Nathaniel Hawthorne: The American Years, p. 168.

There were such stores in every New England village. When a ship was lost at sea, and the widows of the mariners were without resources, relatives came forward with enough money to buy a small stock, a room was made over, and the goods for sale were displayed in the window. . . . There were such stores as Hawthorne described in The House of the Seven Gables, run by an impoverished gentlewoman to keep from starving, and selling flour and apples, molasses candy, soap and tallow candles, . . .<sup>51</sup>

From another moving experience of Hawthorne came the main incident of the plot which ties together the happenings of more than thirty years: "the violent death--for so it was adjudged--of one member of the [Pyncheon] family by the criminal act of another."<sup>52</sup>

When Hawthorne was a young man of twenty-five, there occurred in Salem the murder of a wealthy retired sea-captain named Joseph White. This murder, because of the prominence of those involved and the shock of revelation to the townspeople when the cloaks of respectability fell from members of several first families, caused the crime to be classified some one hundred twenty years later as "a tragedy comparable only to the witchcrafts in sensationalism."<sup>53</sup>

. . . the last scene of the denouement was not witnessed until nine months later. Long before the end many of the most effectual of the town's wealthy wielders of power were bowed down with disgrace and

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<sup>51</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>52</sup>Hawthorne, The House of the Seven Gables, p. 255.

<sup>53</sup>Loggins, op. cit., p. 239.



shame. Their one aim was to get rid of their holdings in Salem as quickly as possible and begin life anew in Boston or New York or elsewhere.<sup>54</sup>

Those adjudged guilty of this crime were George and Richard Crowninshield and Joseph and Francis Knapp. Hawthorne's great-aunt, Sarah Hathorne, had married a Crowninshield, and the latter family was among the rich and powerful of Salem.<sup>55</sup> The White murder must have stirred young Hawthorne deeply and so implanted the details in his memory that he could use them effectively more than twenty years later.

In both cases the murder was committed by a kinsman of the victim, not for money, but to profit from the inheritance. In both instances the families were people of means and influence. The exception of similarity is that in the romance, although Clifford, a young nephew, was accused and convicted of the murder of his uncle, there was really no murder--only sudden death; for the uncle, upon discovering another nephew, a scapegrace whom he had disinherited, ransacking his desk and drawers, had succumbed to

. . . the crisis of a disorder to which the old bachelor had an hereditary liability; he seemed to choke with blood, and fell upon the floor, striking his temple a heavy blow against the corner of a table.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>55</sup>Cantwell, op. cit., p. 153.

<sup>56</sup>Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 431.

Thus skillfully did Hawthorne, while using native material, vary it to include the blood, the symbol of the curse.

Another example of Hawthorne's ability to use experience skillfully is illustrated in the backdrop he gives for the runaway scrape of Clifford and Hepzibah. On the train there is the same party of girls playing ball with a young man across the aisle, the same coming and going that he had observed on a train trip to Maine and recorded in his notebooks.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, on this trip he had observed of the little town of New Market:

At a little distance stands a black, large old wooden church, with a square tower, and broken windows, and a great rift through the middle of the roof, all in a state of dismal ruin and decay. A farmhouse of the old style, with a long sloping roof, and as black as the church, stands on the opposite side of the road, with its barns; and these are all the buildings in sight of the railroad station.<sup>58</sup>

This scene is used almost identically, as Chandler has pointed out, to create the atmosphere of ruin and desolation that met the eyes of Hepzibah and Clifford when they recovered normalcy enough to alight from their wild train ride.<sup>59</sup> As desolating supplements to the already dismal picture, Hawthorne adroitly added two things: "a rafter

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<sup>57</sup>Nathaniel Hawthorne, The American Notebooks, ed. Randall Stewart, II:159.

<sup>58</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>59</sup>Chandler, op. cit., pp. 49-50.

dangling from the top of the square tower" and the statement that the farm-house "seemed uninhabited."<sup>60</sup>

The final event of the romance, the dissolution of the curse through the union of Phoebe and Holgrave, also had its basic elements in native material. First, there was the marriage of John Hathorne, the son of Major William Hathorne of the Quaker persecutions, to Ruth Gardner, the daughter of a woman whom the major "had hounded into fleeing with her husband and children to Hartford in Connecticut because of her Quaker faith."<sup>61</sup>

And to complete the study of The House of the Seven Gables with reference to its use of native material in its setting, its characters, and its plot, there is the record of Magistrate John Hathorne's indictment and persecution for witchcraft of doughty old Philip English and his wife Mary. Mary died as an immediate result of imprisonment and exile. Her husband lived on several years--long enough to regain some of the property and prestige he had lost, but

. . . he left two daughters, and one of these, deprived of her father's choleric guidance knew no better than to marry a son of Magistrate Hathorne and so founded a dynasty which added a W to its name and presently produced that remote pale flowering of the witchcraft, the haunted Nathaniel Hawthorne. And Nathaniel in his turn would walk

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<sup>60</sup>Hawthorne, The House of the Seven Gables, p. 403.

<sup>61</sup>Loggins, op. cit., p. 64.

the ways of Salem, town and village, and ghosts would keep him company, never quite visible, lurking always just beyond the corner of his eye. But he would pin them down on paper and when he had them there would inspect them with a kind of literary credulity. For it was with him somewhat as it was with Cotton Mather; useless to preach to the artist against the existence of witches; the very breath of the artist is witchery and magic.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>Starkey, op. cit., p. 178.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE BLITHEDALE ROMANCE

Had this thesis on Hawthorne's artistic use of native materials in his novels been limited to a study of colonial material, Chapter IV would not have been written, for in The Blithedale Romance (published in 1852) there is only one item belonging to a period so remote. The setting, the characters, and the events of this novel fall largely within the scope of Hawthorne's preceding ten years; in fact, these elements parallel his experiences at Brook Farm from April to November, 1841.<sup>1</sup>

Lest this fact, coupled with William Dean Howell's appraisal of the book as Hawthorne's best because it is his most realistic, lead from a just consideration of the connotation of the word artistic as used in this study, an over-all consideration of Hawthorne's particular kind of art should be made. As Julian Hawthorne has remarked, "Blithedale was the spiritual offspring of the reality;"<sup>2</sup> and the author himself says that he "ventured to make free with his old and affectionately remembered home at Brook

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<sup>1</sup>Randall Stewart, Nathaniel Hawthorne, p. 123.

<sup>2</sup>Edith Garrigues Hawthorne, Memoirs of Julian Hawthorne, p. 210.

Farm, as . . . offering an available foothold between fiction and reality."<sup>3</sup>

Cowie has stated that "of course the real glory of Hawthorne lay not in verisimilitude of character or action but in his power to provide illuminating, if tentative, comments on the mysteries of existence. . . ."<sup>4</sup> Substantiating the view that it is not the world of the senses in which he is interested is Hawthorne's own statement in the preface of Our Old Home: "The Present, the Immediate, the Actual has proved too potent for me. It takes away not only my scanty faculty, but even my desire for imaginative composition."<sup>5</sup>

An interpretation of this limitation has been made by Waggoner. He states:

Hawthorne's sensibility . . . could respond fully only to moral values. When he could see no moral significance in a fact, he could not ordinarily use the fact creatively. It followed that he could do his best work only when he was far enough from his subject so that the aspects of it to which he could not respond were not distracting.<sup>6</sup>

Then, when time had given facts, scenes, and events their proper perspective, Hawthorne's method of processing

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<sup>3</sup>Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Blithedale Romance, p. 439.

<sup>4</sup>Alexander Cowie, The Rise of the American Novel, p. 335.

<sup>5</sup>Nathaniel Hawthorne, Our Old Home, p. x.

<sup>6</sup>Hyatt H. Waggoner, Hawthorne, p. 33.

them would seem to bear out the adage that "the tale lay in the telling." In the opening paragraphs of "Wakefield" he shows how he developed a story from a bare newspaper fact:

Whenever any subject so forcibly affects the mind, time is well spent in thinking of it. If the reader choose, let him do his own meditation; or if he prefer to ramble with me through the twenty years of Wakefield's vagary, I bid him welcome; trusting that there will be a pervading spirit and a moral, even should we fail to find them, done up neatly, and condensed into the final sentence. Thought has always its efficacy, and every striking incident its moral.<sup>7</sup>

In other words, it is in the course and structure of the tale itself that meaning is discovered. But Waggoner warns:

It is truer to say that Hawthorne's stories are fictional thinking--or processes of insight conceived and structured in narrative terms--than it is to say that the narratives originate in thoughts, ideas, or insights.<sup>8</sup>

Hawthorne's creative mind, then, worked best with facts or experiences that he had absorbed or gradually understood after a seminal period of assimilation. Thus, as Arvin has pointed out, the realism of The Blithedale Romance is not the realism of a Fielding, or a Balzac, or a Trollope<sup>9</sup>--or perhaps even of a W. D. Howells.

By late 1851 his Brook Farm experiences had at last become subject matter for Hawthorne's creative powers.

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<sup>7</sup>Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Blithedale Romance, p. 921.

<sup>8</sup>Waggoner, op. cit., p. 62.

<sup>9</sup>Newton Arvin, Hawthorne, p. 207.

The House of the Seven Gables had been completed early in the year. It had sold well, and his publishers wanted a similar novel.<sup>10</sup> Hawthorne had moved with his family to West Newton, a suburb of Boston, which was invitingly near Brook Farm. Thus, perhaps, Hawthorne again thought of his experiences there. From his landlord in the Berkshires he had borrowed a collected edition of Fourier's works, and Fourier's ideas were said to have influenced some of the Transcendentalists to convert the colony, after Hawthorne left it, into a phalanstrie.<sup>11</sup> Then just at this time Margaret Fuller, who had been a leader in the Brook Farm enterprise, was memorialized in the minds of her New England coterie by her tragic death at sea on a return voyage to America with her husband and little son.<sup>12</sup>

Most important factor of all, a sufficient time had elapsed since Hawthorne's Brook Farm experiences so "that the aspects of it to which he could not respond were not distracting" as they had been in the days when as a Brook Farm boarder he wrote his fiancee, Sophia Peabody:

I have not the sense of perfect seclusion which has always been essential to my power of producing anything. It is true, nobody intrudes into my room,

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<sup>10</sup>Stewart, op. cit., p. 113.

<sup>11</sup>Edward Mather, Nathaniel Hawthorne, p. 209.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. 212-213.



but still I cannot be quiet. Nothing here is settled; everything is but beginning to arrange itself, and though thy husband would seem to have little to do with aught beside his own thoughts, still he cannot but partake of the ferment around him. My mind will not be abstracted. I must observe, and think, and feel, and content myself with catching glimpses of things which may be wrought out hereafter.<sup>13</sup>

So now, ten years later, Miles Coverdale, narrator of The Blithedale Romance, sets out during an April snow-storm, just as in reality Hawthorne had done, for the same site of the Transcendentalist colony eight miles from Boston, on the Charles River. There the founder, George Ripley, was "striving to establish a mode of life which shall combine the enchantments of poetry with the facts of daily experience."<sup>14</sup>

The setting was thus described by Hawthorne in a letter to his sister Louisa the month after his arrival:

This is one of the most beautiful places I ever saw in my life and as secluded as if it were a hundred miles from any city or village. There are woods in which we can ramble all day without meeting anybody or scarcely seeing a house. Our house stands apart from the main road, so that we are not troubled even with passengers looking at us.<sup>15</sup>

Perhaps a less comprehensive over-all view of the farm, yet one that stresses its isolation, is given by Miles

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<sup>13</sup>Arvin, op. cit., p. 103.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 97.

Coverdale. He recounts:

Long since in this part of our circumjacent wood, I had found out for myself a little hermitage. It was a kind of leafy cave, high upward into the air, among the midmost branches of a white pine tree. A wild grape-vine, of unusual size and luxuriance, had twined itself up into the tree, and, after wreathing the entanglement of its tendrils almost around every bough, had caught hold of three or four neighboring trees, and married the whole clump with a perfectly inextricable knot of polygamy.<sup>16</sup>

In the romance, Hawthorne makes use of this leafy bower (which he had described almost identically in his notebooks ten years before)<sup>17</sup> to give the reader at times only such piquant bits of the story as Coverdale, his narrator, might--and does--inadvertently learn from such a perch.

"Eliot's Pulpit" is another bit of the setting which parallels a description in Hawthorne's notebooks.<sup>18</sup> It is the only reference in the whole book to a far-gone historical past. It "rose some twenty or thirty feet high, a shattered granite boulder, or heap of boulders with an irregular outline and many fissures at the base of the pulpit. It was known to us," says Coverdale, "under the name of Eliot's pulpit, from a tradition that the venerable

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<sup>16</sup>Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 497.

<sup>17</sup>Hawthorne, American Notebooks, I:247.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., I:232.

Apostle Eliot had preached there, two centuries gone by, to an Indian auditory."<sup>19</sup>

Hawthorne used this setting as the pulpit Hollingsworth was wont to ascend and from it "preach" or talk to his three proselytes, Priscilla, Zenobia, and Coverdale on their Sunday afternoons in the woods. The effect is to impress one with the over-weening egotism of the man and to give credence to his power over others.

Some of the characters of The Blithedale Romance, as well as parts of the setting, have their origin in people whom Hawthorne knew at Brook Farm. In fact, Hawthorne, himself, suggests a comparison when he has Coverdale say of Priscilla:

It forcibly struck me that her air, though not her figure, and the expression of her face, but not its features, had a resemblance to what I had often seen in a friend of mine, one of the most gifted women of the age. I cannot describe it. The points easiest to convey to the reader were, a certain curve of the shoulders, and a partial closing of the eyes, which seemed to look more penetratingly into my own eyes, through the narrowed apertures, than if they had been open at full width. It was a singular anomaly of likeness coexisting with perfect dissimilitude.<sup>20</sup>

"Priscilla, did you ever see Miss Margaret Fuller?" he then inquires.

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<sup>19</sup>Hawthorne, The Blithedale Romance, pp. 508-509.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 469.

When she says that she has not, Coverdale continues, "You reminded me of her just now and it happens, strangely enough, that this letter is from her."<sup>21</sup>

That this peculiar way with the eyes was truly a Margaret Fuller mannerism is substantiated by Emerson's account of his first meeting with her where he noted "a trick of incessantly opening and shutting her eyelids."<sup>22</sup>

Nowhere else does Hawthorne give to Priscilla any of Margaret Fuller's characteristics. Priscilla appears first at Brook Farm as "a slim and unsubstantial girl."<sup>23</sup> Halfway through the narrative, her father exclaims of her, "so dim, so pallid, so shrinking,--the daughter of my long calamity."<sup>24</sup> And at the end she walks, "a slender woman," an arm in Hollingsworth's, with an air of deep submissive reverence.<sup>25</sup>

From these facts, and from the fact that Chandler, and others, have identified Priscilla with the little Brook Farm seamstress of Hawthorne's journal,<sup>26</sup> one wonders with

<sup>21</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>22</sup>Arvin, op. cit., p. 133.

<sup>23</sup>Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 454.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 553.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 582.

<sup>26</sup>Edith Lathrop Chandler, A Study of the Sources of the Tales and Romances Written by Nathaniel Hawthorne before 1853, p. 51.

Mather whether this suddenly discovered likeness was the author's way of memorializing Margaret Fuller at a timely hour by the mention of her name, or was it the "rag soaked in aniseed" to "divert the hounds from following the line of his fox."<sup>27</sup>

Margaret Fuller was arrogant, magnetic, ambitious, and highly intelligent.<sup>28</sup> All these qualities Zenobia of the romance had in such degree that Mather says, "Without having observed Margaret closely, it is difficult to believe he [Hawthorne] would ever have imagined such a character."<sup>29</sup>

That he had opportunity for observing Margaret closely at Brook Farm is certain. Although she was not a working participant in the enterprise, she was a frequently invited guest of the Ripleys and at one time spent ten days there, holding some of her "conversations" for the group. Hawthorne himself records one of her later visits when he found her in the woods with a gala group of communarians dressed in motley array for a birthday fete--a meeting later used in a chapter of Blithedale called "The Masqueraders".<sup>30</sup>

But one outstanding characteristic of Zenobia which Margaret Fuller significantly lacked was beauty. Although

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<sup>27</sup>Mather, op. cit., p. 220.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., pp. 130-135.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 130.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., pp. 140-141.

Emerson referred to this limitation of hers as "extreme plainness,"<sup>31</sup> others have said that she was ugly. And so when Hawthorne needed a supreme feminist for Zenobia, one who could not only argue with men on equal terms, but one who could charm an audience with her beauty and grace as well, Mather suggests that he borrowed the latter qualities from another feminist whom he had recently observed at Lenox in the Berkshires--Fannie Kemble.<sup>32</sup>

Originals for the other main characters are less well marked. Among the minor characters, Chandler suggests that an elderly frequenter of Parker's grog-shop whom Hawthorne observed there on May 7, 1850, might have suggested Old Moodie of the novel.<sup>33</sup> Points of similarity are the pale, thin face, the red nose, the patch over one eye, and withal, the shadow of respectability.

But the character who holds the key position in the story is possibly one of the most original ones in all of Hawthorne's novels. Mather has said, "It would have been impossible to have used the community of Brook Farm as material for a novel without thinking of Ripley and Margaret."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., pp. 133-134.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 217.

<sup>33</sup>Chandler, op. cit., p. 52.

<sup>34</sup>Mather, op. cit., p. 210.

But he goes on to show that "with the strongest possible views on equality and broad-minded opinions in matters of religion he [Ripley] found all ideas of leadership, dictatorship, and censorship foreign to his mind."<sup>35</sup> He could not, therefore, have suggested the ego-centered Hollingsworth, whom Coverdale describes as one who cannot

. . . conceive that a man may wish well to the world and struggle for its good, on some other plan than precisely that which you have laid down and . . . cast off a friend for no unworthiness, but merely because he stands upon his right as an individual being, and looks at matters through his own optics instead of yours.<sup>36</sup>

Yet Ripley as a reformer and a social innovator was, perhaps, a type upon which Hawthorne built his Hollingsworth. To Ripley, the leader and business manager of the colony, Hawthorne's fancy could well have added purely imaginative qualities with no idea of criticizing the Brook Farm organizer. There is no record of a quarrel between the two men, although, as Mather suggests, Ripley would scarcely have given up Hawthorne as a communitarian without a struggle.<sup>37</sup> Certainly they did not quarrel over Ripley's yielding Brook Farm to the Fourerists, of whom Hawthorne did not approve; for this event occurred four years after

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 211.

<sup>36</sup>Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 519.

<sup>37</sup>Mather, op. cit., p. 143.

Hawthorne had left the community.<sup>38</sup>

But in 1845 came Hawthorne's suit against Ripley to collect the five hundred and thirty dollars still due him from the one thousand he had invested in Brook Farm in 1841.<sup>39</sup> Stewart says that Ripley thought the plaintiff a hard man. No records, however, show any bitterness on Hawthorne's part; so it seems unlikely that Hawthorne was seeking to pillory Ripley in The Blithedale Romance as he had Upham in The House of the Seven Gables.

Since 1835, as his journals show, Hawthorne had been critical of reformers. In his journal for that year he wrote:

A sketch to be given of a modern reformer--a type of the extreme doctrines on the subject of slaves, cold water, and other such topics. He goes about the streets haranguing most eloquently, and is on the point of making many converts, when his labors are suddenly interrupted by the appearance of the keeper of a mad-house, whence he has escaped. Much may be made of this idea.<sup>40</sup>

The above entry, then, is perhaps the germ for the imaginary character of whom Hawthorne did, indeed, "make much" as Hollingsworth, for there is even an element of madness in his narrow-minded zeal. Coverdale says of him:

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 210.

<sup>39</sup>Stewart, op. cit., p. 77.

<sup>40</sup>Newton Arvin, The Heart of Hawthorne's Journals, p. 3.



He was not altogether human. There was something else in Hollingsworth besides flesh and blood, and sympathies and affections and celestial spirit.

This is always true of those men who have surrendered themselves to an overruling purpose. It does not so much impel them from without, nor even operate as a motive power within, but grows incorporate with all that they think and feel, and finally converts them into little else save that one principle. When such begins to be the predicament, it is not cowardice, but wisdom to avoid these victims. They have no heart, no sympathy, no reason, no conscience. They will keep no friend, unless he make himself the mirror of their purpose; they will smite and slay you, and trample your dead corpse under foot, all the more readily, if you take the first step with them, and cannot take the second and the third, and every other step of their terribly strait path.<sup>41</sup>

Thus, Hollingsworth is the focus, the visual representation of the abstract moral which Hawthorne demonstrated when he wrote that:

. . . admitting what is called philanthropy, when adopted as a profession, to be often useful by its energetic impulse to society at large, it is perilous to the individual whose ruling passion, in one exclusive channel, it thus becomes. It ruins, or is fearfully apt to ruin, the heart, the rich juices of which God never meant should be pressed violently out, and distilled into alcoholic liquor, by an unnatural process, but should render life sweet, bland, and gently beneficent, and insensibly influence other hearts and other lives to the same blessed end.<sup>42</sup>

In working out the demonstration of this moral, Hawthorne had, perhaps, gone to what Farrington might have

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<sup>41</sup>Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 480.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 583.

called a Hawthorne Mother Hubbard closet of ideas<sup>43</sup> and had found the cupboard--not bare--but laden with jars preserving all the incidents and episodes he needed--even the supreme one for the great climax. Parrington's magic jars are, of course, the "Notebooks", and several smaller volumes, "Dates," filled with notes from 1835 to 1862. From these sources of his own recorded experience, Hawthorne drew much of his material for The Blithedale Romance.

Hawthorne's arrival at Brook Farm in an April snow-storm, his consequent illness with a cold, his labor in the hayfield, the tableaux and masquerade in the woods, Priscilla's slide with the hay from a cart, Hawthorne's visit home in August and the consequent feeling that his summer's experience had been but a far-off dream, his view of the back gardens and the interior of other apartments from his own room in the back of another hotel--all can be found in the jar labelled "Volume I" of the Notebooks and packaged under the dates of April 13 to October 27, 1841.

But when Hawthorne used from these jars, it was with an artist's discrimination for the detail employed in producing the effect he desired. A study of one such episode as it came from the jar and as it appeared in the story will illustrate this artistic skill.

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<sup>43</sup>Vernon L. Parrington, Main Currents in American Thought, II, The Romantic Revolution, p. 438.

Many have agreed that the most powerfully related incident of the whole romance is that of the recovery of Zenobia's body from the river. An introduction to the notebook account of such a search and recovery, written nine years before The Blithedale Romance, is given below with the parts which the author selected for the romance underlined. However, the underlined words represent often only the fact, thought, or idea; sometimes these are paraphrased in the story.

On the night of July 9, 1843, a search for the dead body of a drowned girl. She was about nineteen years old; a girl of education and refinement, but depressed and miserable for want of sympathy,--her family being an affectionate one, but uncultivated, and incapable of responding to her demands. She was of a melancholic temperament, accustomed to solitary walks in the woods. At this time she had the superintendence of one of the district schools, comprising sixty scholars, particularly difficult of management. Well, Ellery Channing knocked at the door, between nine and ten in the evening, in order to get my boat to go in search of the girl's drowned body. He took the oars, and I the paddle, and we went rapidly down the river, until a good distance below the bridge, we saw lights on the bank, and the dim figures of a number of people waiting for us. Her bonnet and shoes had already been found on this spot, and her handkerchief, I believe, on the edge of the water; so that the body was probably at no great distance, unless the current (which is gentle and almost imperceptible) had swept her down.

We took in general Buttrick, and a young man in a blue frock, and commenced the search; the General and the other man having long poles, with hooks at the end, and Ellery a hay-rake, while I steered the boat. It was a very eligible place to drown one's self. On the verge of the river there were water-weeds; but after a few steps the bank goes off very abruptly, and the

water speedily becomes fifteen or twenty feet deep. It must be one of the deepest spots in the whole river; and holding a lantern over it, it was black as midnight, smooth, impenetrable, and keeping its secrets from the eye as perfectly as mid-ocean would. We caused the boat to float once or twice past the spot where the bonnet, etc., had been found, carefully searching the bottom at different distances from the shore, but for a considerable time without success.<sup>44</sup>

The full account in the Notebook is quite as long as the incident in The Blithedale Romance, where it fills an entire chapter. The preceding quotation, however, will suffice to show the nature of the crude material with which Hawthorne worked. The following quotation from The Blithedale Romance will suggest how he used that crude material artistically:

I showed Hollingsworth a delicate handkerchief, marked with a well-known cipher, and told where I had found it, and other circumstances, which had filled me with a suspicion so terrible that I left him, if he dared, to shape it out for himself. By the time, my brief explanation was finished, we were joined by Silas Foster, in his blue woollen frock.

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'And so you think she's drowned herself?' he cried. I turned away my face.

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'Well, well,' answered Silas Foster; 'just as you say. We'll take the long pole, with the hook at the end, that serves to get the bucket out of the draw well, when the rope is broken. With that, and a couple of long-handled hay-rakes, I'll answer for finding her, if she's anywhere to be found. Strange

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<sup>44</sup>Julian Hawthorne, Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Wife, pp. 296-303.

enough! Zenobia drown herself! No, no; I don't believe it. She had too much sense, and too much means, and enjoyed life a great deal too well.'

I showed my companions where I had found the handkerchief, and pointed to two or three footsteps, impressed into the clayey margin, and tending towards the water. Beneath its shallow verge, among the water-weeds there were further traces, as yet unobliterated by the sluggish current, which was there almost at a stand-still. Silas Foster thrust his face down close to these footsteps, and picked up a shoe that had escaped my observation, being half imbedded in the mud.

'I know the bottom, having sounded it in fishing. The shore, on this side, after the first step or two, goes off very abruptly; and there is a pool, just by the stump, twelve or fifteen feet deep. The current could not have force enough to sweep any sunken object, even if partially bouyant, out of that hollow.'<sup>45</sup>

Since the hypnotic trance, thought transference, and especially the mesmeric qualities of Hollingsworth are rather prominent parts of this story, some explanation must be made for omitting a discussion of these elements. Two reasons for their omission are offered. First, that phase of the occult currently popular in Hawthorne's time had originated with Friedrich Anton Mesmer (1733?-1815), a German physician;<sup>46</sup> hence it is not distinctively American material. Secondly, witchcraft, mesmerism, and the other occult arts appear so frequently in Hawthorne's works that

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<sup>45</sup>Hawthorne, op. cit., pp. 575-576.

<sup>46</sup>William Brigwater, Editor-in-Chief, The Columbia-Viking Desk Encyclopedia, 2:803.

an adequate treatment of them would go far beyond the limits of this thesis.

In conclusion, it may be said that while Hawthorne's use of native material in this novel is not as impressive as his use of such material in his earlier works, he does use American scenes and characters. In contrast to his earlier novels, The Blithedale Romance is a story of contemporary life, and thus offers no opportunity for the artistic use of historical events. It does, however, show that Hawthorne could use even contemporary native material with some realism and much artistry.

## CHAPTER V

### THE MARBLE FAUN

At first it might appear that The Marble Faun has little to contribute to a study of Hawthorne's artistic use of native American materials in his novels. Its very title is suggestive of Mediterranean lands--Greece or Rome--certainly not of America. In Hawthorne's time there was still a dearth of pictures and sculpture in this country; hence a marble faun could be in no way native. Mather says:

In our days the wealth of the United States in works of art of European origin is so great that it needs an effort of the imagination to understand that a cultured man such as Nathaniel Hawthorne had never seen a great masterpiece in paint or marble or bronze before he left America to take up his consulship in Liverpool.<sup>1</sup>

Another warning that The Marble Faun has little to promise in a search for American materials is the author's own statement in his preface:

Italy, as the site of his Romance, was chiefly valuable to him as affording a sort of poetic or fairy precinct, where actualities would not be so terribly insisted upon as they are, and must needs be, in America. No author, without a trial, can conceive of the difficulty of writing a romance about a country where there is no shadow, no antiquity, no mystery, no picturesque and gloomy wrong, nor anything but a common place prosperity, in

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<sup>1</sup>Edward Mather, Nathaniel Hawthorne, p. 289.

broad and simple daylight, as is happily the case with my dear native land. It will be very long, I trust, before romance-writers may find congenial and easily handled themes, either in the annals of our stalwart republic, or in any characteristic and probable events of our individual lives. Romance and poetry, ivy, lichens and wall-flowers, need ruin to make them grow.<sup>2</sup>

Encouragement to continue the quest for American material in spite of these two warnings was Davidson's comment:

By his admission in the preface that Italy offered so many more exciting elements of romance than could a new country like the United States, he was trying to break the pattern of Essex County, Boston in the seventeenth century, and Lenox and open new horizons for his craftsmanship. But, because he was attempting things hitherto foreign to his mind and art, he nearly failed . . . Yet despite his near failure, Hawthorne did succeed. He had a moral idea in whose artistic and human importance he deeply believed.<sup>3</sup>

If he did not succeed, after an interval of six years residence abroad, in breaking the pattern of his former works, there should be something indigenous to America in this novel also.

Many Hawthorne scholars have found this something natively American in the moral theme of the story. In it is involved the old American Puritan wrestling with problems of the soul, the results of sin. Donatello, the faun, is made into a living soul of a higher capacity by his

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<sup>2</sup>Hawthorne, The Marble Faun, p. 590.

<sup>3</sup>Edward Hutchins Davidson, Hawthorne's Last Phase, (Yale Studies in English, CXII), 152.



experience in crime. But Woodberry says this theory is "exotic in the Italian air." Yet of The Marble Faun, as a whole, his opinion is similar:

It is throughout a Puritan romance, which has wandered abroad and clothed itself in strange masquerade in the Italian air . . . It is a meditation on sin, but so made gracious with beauty as to lose the deformity of its theme; and it suffers a metamorphosis into a thing of loveliness.<sup>4</sup>

Not only in the theme of this story, but also, surprisingly enough, in the setting, by way of contrast, are found brief glimpses of comparable places and situations in the American background. For instance, in a conversation between Kenyon and Hilda about "who and what is Miriam?" Kenyon says:

My heart trusts her at least, whatever my head may do, and Rome is not like one of our New England villages, where we need the permission of each individual neighbor for every act that we do, every word that we utter, and every friend that we make or keep. In these particulars the papal despotism allows us freer breath than our native air; and if we like to take generous views of our associates, we can do so, to a reasonable extent, without ruining ourselves.<sup>5</sup>

This custom of New England villagers had been retained from the days when Puritan church and state were one, for Marion Starkey remarks of the people of Salem in 1692 that they were busy looking for sin in their own hearts and in the

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<sup>4</sup>George C. Woodberry, Nathaniel Hawthorne, p. 277.

<sup>5</sup>Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 652.

hearts of their neighbors.<sup>6</sup>

Instead of reflecting a characteristic handed down from by-gone times, the next vignette portrays a contemporary America that is rather enthusiastically materialistic. Viewing the fountain of Trevi, an artist asked:

"What would be done with this water-power if we had it in one of our American cities? Would they employ it to turn the machinery of a cotton-mill, I wonder?"

Kenyon answered:

The good people would pull down those rampant marble deities, and, possibly, they would give me a commission to carve the one-and-thirty (is that the number?) sister States, each pouring a silver stream from a separate can into one vast basin, which should represent the grand reservoir of national prosperity.<sup>7</sup>

Then a street filled with people going about their noonday routine in an ancient Roman town elicits this comment from the omniscient author:

From all these people there comes a babblement that seems quite disproportioned to the number of tongues that make it. So many words are not uttered in a New England village throughout the year--except it be at a political canvass or town-meeting--as are spoken here, with no especial purpose, in a single day.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Marion L. Starkey, The Devil in Massachusetts, p. 152.

<sup>7</sup>Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 673.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 760.

There is an apt reference to the New England reticence that became legendary in the late President Calvin Coolidge.

Hawthorne's next use of American material to form an interesting contrast concerns the homes of the people:

The Italians appear to possess none of that emulative pride which we see in our New England villages, where every householder, according to his taste and means, endeavors to make his homestead an ornament to the grassy and elm-shadowed wayside. In Italy there are no neat doorsteps and thresholds; no pleasant, vine-sheltered porches; none of those grass-plots or smoothly shorn lawns, which hospitably invite the imagination into the sweet domestic interiors of English life. Everything, however sunny and luxuriant may be the scene around, is especially disheartening in the immediate neighborhood of an Italian home.<sup>9</sup>

American matter next forms an effective foil for an observation regarding Italian weather:

The weather had very much to do, no doubt, with these genial and delightful sensations, that made the sculptor so happy with mere life, in spite of a head and heart full of doleful thoughts, anxieties, and fears, which ought in all reason to have depressed him. It was like no weather that exists anywhere, save in Paradise and in Italy; certainly not in America, where it is always too strenuous on the side either of heat or cold. Young as the season was, and wintry as it would have been under a more rigid sky, it resembled summer rather than what we New-Englanders recognize in our idea of spring.<sup>10</sup>

Lastly, a disparity between American and Roman behavior at carnival time is the subject of Hawthorne's comment:

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 761.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 832.

But to do the Roman people justice, they were restrained by a better safeguard than the sabre or the bayonet; it was their own gentle courtesy, which imparted a sort of sacredness to the hereditary festival. . . . If any reveller overstepped the mark, it was sure to be no Roman, but an Englishman or an American; and even the rougher play of this Gothic race was still softened by the insensible influence of a moral atmosphere more delicate, in some respects, than we breathe at home. Not that, after all, we like the fine Italian spirit better than our own; popular rudeness is sometimes the symptom of rude moral health. But where a Carnival is in question, it would probably pass off more decorously, as well as more airily and delightfully, in Rome, than in any Anglo-Saxon city.<sup>11</sup>

But behavior relates more to character than to setting and leads to an examination of the four who figure prominently in this story: Donatello, Miriam, Hilda, and Kenyon. In general, Hawthorne critics are agreed that these characters are inadequately drawn. Waggoner says:

He [Hawthorne] fails, on the one hand, to give even the necessary minimum of specification to some of his characters and events; and, on the other, to suit to his purpose all the specification he did give. . . . And these twin weaknesses are most evident in the characters. . . .<sup>12</sup>

And Arvin suggests, "Detach them [these four characters] for a moment from their majestic background, and see how insubstantially they are put together."<sup>13</sup>

It may be that Hawthorne intended his characters to be thus ethereal, as personalities proper to inhabit

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 844.

<sup>12</sup>Hyatt H. Waggoner, Hawthorne, p. 201.

<sup>13</sup>Newton Arvin, Hawthorne, p. 258.

that "poetic or fairy precinct where actualities would not be insisted upon . . ."<sup>14</sup> In the conclusion he states:

He [the author] designed the story and the characters to bear, of course, a certain relation to human nature and human life, but still to be so artfully and airily removed from our mundane sphere, that some laws and proprieties of their own should be implicitly and insensibly acknowledged.<sup>15</sup>

Hence it appears that Hilda's theory of art is really Hawthorne's theory of belles-lettres, especially as applied to romance:

. . . there is a class of spectators whose sympathy will help them to see the perfect through a mist of imperfection. Nobody, I think, ought to read poetry, or look at pictures or statues, who cannot find a great deal more in them than the poet or artist has actually expressed. Their highest merit is suggestiveness.<sup>16</sup>

Perhaps there will always be enough readers (exclusive of those Hawthorne termed "beer-sodden-beefeaters")<sup>17</sup> who enjoy this romance imaginatively as did his friend, John Lothrop Motley, who remarked, "I like those shadowy, weird, fantastic, Hawthornesque shapes flitting through the golden gloom which is the atmosphere of the book."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 590.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 856.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 808.

<sup>17</sup>Randall Stewart, Nathaniel Hawthorne, p. 211.

<sup>18</sup>Mather, op. cit., p. 307.

But the final result of such characterization, for the purpose of this investigation, is to make difficult the problem of bringing these figures into the "broad and simple daylight" for an analysis that will show what natively American qualities are reflected in each.

Donatello, of course, can be readily dismissed as unlike any American, except that (as has been discussed earlier) his development implements a Puritan theme.

Hilda and Kenyon are New England artists working in Rome--she with paint and he with marble. Yet Kenyon displays no discernible national or sectional traits. Waggoner says that he "is at times a mouthpiece for one side of Hawthorne, at times the type of reason, but at no time an interesting or wholly believable human being."<sup>19</sup>

However, Hawthorne did know and enjoy the companionship of several American artists living and working in Rome in 1858-59. Among them was James Wetmore Story, whose statue of Cleopatra, Hawthorne says in his preface, he "committed robbery upon" for use in The Marble Faun.<sup>20</sup> Then there were C. G. Thompson, who had painted Hawthorne's picture in Boston in 1850; Maria Louise Lander of Salem, who made a bust of Hawthorne in Italy;<sup>21</sup> and Harriet Hosmer

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<sup>19</sup>Waggoner, op. cit., p. 202.

<sup>20</sup>Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 590.

<sup>21</sup>Stewart, op. cit., p. 192.

of Watertown, Massachusetts, who had made one of Zenobia.<sup>22</sup> Stewart says Hawthorne soon found himself on a cordial footing with these artists and many others.<sup>23</sup> "To visit the studio of one or another of the many American artists living in Rome soon became an almost daily habit," says Mather. "From them he learned the attitudes which were essential to the peace of mind of a foreigner living in Italy."<sup>24</sup>

One member of this American art colony was Hilda. Hawthorne has taken pains to label Hilda as the Puritan New England maiden.<sup>25</sup> In her habits of life and in her attitudes she does fulfill the conventional definition of a puritan--"one who practices or preaches a more rigorous or professedly moral code than that which prevails."<sup>26</sup> As for the New England part of her epithet, it appears that there is a physical type of New England womanhood; Hawthorne says:

She was pretty at all times, in our native New England style, with her light-brown ringlets, her delicately tinged, but healthful cheek, her sensitive, intelligent, yet most feminine and kindly face.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 591.

<sup>23</sup>Stewart, op. cit., p. 192.

<sup>24</sup>Mather, op. cit., p. 288.

<sup>25</sup>Hawthorne, op. cit., pp. 594, 620, 788, 798, etc.

<sup>26</sup>Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Second Edition, p. 806.

<sup>27</sup>Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 625.

But taking the phrase "Puritan New England maiden" as a whole, there is a historical connotation of self-righteousness and intolerance of sin which Hilda does display in her restricted social relations and in the banishment of Miriam from her presence when she witnesses Miriam's assent to the crime of murder. And this witnessing of a sin which loyalty to friendship prevents her from disclosing furnishes the basis for one phase of the general theme--the effects of sin. This particular phase stresses the result of undisclosed sin on the human heart. It is a theme which Hawthorne had already made typical of Puritan America in such stories as "Roger Malvin's Burial."

Another way in which Hawthorne patented Hilda as American was in her way of life in Rome. There is quite a parallel between this description of the habits of Maria Lander, the sculptress, as recorded in the author's journal, and those of Hilda as given in the romance:<sup>28</sup>

. . . a young woman, living in almost perfect independence, thousands of miles from her New England home, going fearlessly about these mysterious streets, by night as well as by day, with no household ties, no rule or law but that within her; yet acting with quietness and simplicity and keeping, after all, within a homely line of right. Miss Lander has become strongly attached to Rome, and says that, when she dreams of home, it is merely of paying a short visit, and coming back before her trunk is unpacked.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 621.

<sup>29</sup>Stewart, op. cit., p. 193.



Stewart mentions these points of similarity between Hilda's life and Maria Lander's but he does not suggest that the latter is the character upon whom Hilda is modeled--a conclusion which Hawthorne takes pains in his preface to forestall: "It is, perhaps unnecessary to say, that, while stealing their designs, the Author has not taken a similar liberty with the personal characters of either of these gifted sculptors . . . ."30

One significance of Hawthorne's passage in The Marble Faun revealing the freedom and independence of an American girl's life in Rome lies in the fact that a number of girls took up their abode in that city after reading the novel.<sup>31</sup> Also significant of this phase of Hilda's story is the influence it had on succeeding American authors, particularly Henry James, in portraying the life of the American girl abroad.<sup>32</sup>

Sharing this ideal existence of girls foreign to Rome was one who could have been a native--Miriam, the enigma--she of whom Kenyon. said:

. . . she is such a mystery! We do not even know whether she is a countrywoman of ours, or an English-woman or German. There is Anglo-Saxon blood in her

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<sup>30</sup>Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 591.

<sup>31</sup>Stewart, op. cit., p. 193.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 192.

veins, one would say, and a right English accent on her tongue, but much that is not English breeding, nor American. Nowhere else but in Rome, and as an artist could she hold a place in society without giving some clew to her past life.<sup>33</sup>

Her creator in introducing her had explained:

. . . Miriam, fair as she looked, was plucked up out of a mystery, and had its roots still clinging to her. She was a beautiful and attractive woman, but based, as it were, upon a cloud, and all surrounded with misty substance; so that the result was to render her sprite-like in her most ordinary manifestations. This was the case even in respect to Kenyon and Hilda, her especial friends. But such was the effect of Miriam's natural language, her generosity, kindness, and native truth of character, that these two received her as a dear friend into their hearts, taking her good qualities as evident and genuine, and never imagining that what was hidden must be therefore evil.<sup>34</sup>

Beautiful, talented, intelligent, resourceful--yet sinful--she stands with Hawthorne's other strong, dark, and imperishable women, Hester and Zenobia. Waggoner says, ". . . because she is by far the strongest character, she runs away with the book, imposes her will on it, and actually determines the achieved content to a far greater degree than the supposedly more sympathetic characters."<sup>35</sup>

Exclude her fatalism, and with her remaining characteristics, she might just as well have been American as the two sister characters just mentioned. However, since (1) the

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<sup>33</sup>Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 652.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 603.

<sup>35</sup>Waggoner, op. cit., p. 203.

packet (which might be interpreted as her "last will and testament") was directed to Signore Luca Barboni at the palace of the Cencis;<sup>36</sup> and since (2) she had ". . . family connections in Rome, one of whom, there is reason to believe, occupied a position in the papal government";<sup>37</sup> and since (3) ". . . under such a government as that of Rome, it is obvious that Miriam's privacy and isolated life could only be maintained through the connivance and support of some influential person connected with the administration of affairs,"<sup>38</sup> it can be definitely concluded that she was not intended to be interpreted as an American. Any further analysis of her character, therefore, is outside the province of this study.

Nevertheless, it is worthy of note that in America Hawthorne might have observed a woman with Miriam's aura of a guilty past. Nathalia Wright, in the New England Quarterly, makes an interesting case for the fact that during his residence in the Berkshires, Hawthorne had met just such an attractive woman as Miriam--a woman who was under suspicion for so dark a crime as murder for love. She was the former Mlle. de Luzzy, for six years governess in

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<sup>36</sup>Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 857.

<sup>37</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>38</sup>Loc. cit.

the household of the Duke de Praslin. At the time Hawthorne met her, she was visiting in the home of her father-in-law, Reverend David Dudley Field, pastor of the Congregational church at Lenox. In 1851, she had married Reverend Henry Field, pastor of a church in West Springfield. Wright supports her deduction that Miriam resembles Mlle. de Luzzy with Hawthorne's chuckling, equivocal answer to a question from his friend Bright concerning the identity of Miriam as Mlle. de Luzzy. Bright's question and the response are recorded in Julian Hawthorne's Hawthorne and His Wife.

Wright concludes:

It cannot be said that the character of Mrs. Field made either a profound or an immediate impression on Hawthorne . . . The Marble Faun is a novel not about the Duke and Duchess de Praslin and their governess but about the effect of sin upon the soul. Yet to its dark background, it is justifiable to state, the celebrated French tragedy contributed.<sup>39</sup>

Paradoxically, Woodberry says, ". . . he [Hawthorne] was as ignorant as others of Miriam's actual past, one may be sure."<sup>40</sup>

But Hawthorne was neither ignorant nor unmindful of the fact that his theme in The Marble Faun treats of sin in a deeper way than had the old Puritan theology. It

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<sup>39</sup>Nathalia Wright, "Hawthorne and the Praslin Murder," The New England Quarterly, 15:5-14, March, 1942.

<sup>40</sup>Woodberry, op. cit., p. 276.

includes an allegory of the origin of sin and sets forth the new view that evil is permitted in the world because it is through sin and consequent suffering that man's soul, his spiritual qualities, and intelligence are developed, as were Donatello's. This theory is called by Waggoner the doctrine of the "Fortunate Fall."<sup>41</sup> Yet Waggoner thinks that Hawthorne finally rejected this doctrine, just as Kenyon did in the story.

In the romance, when Kenyon presents the auxiliary doctrine to Hilda, i. e., that mankind was originally good, as was Donatello in his native state, but through civilization and its ways of sin became so universally evil that there was no room, no happiness, left on earth for such a primitively innocent being, Hilda emphatically rejects it. To her, its acceptance would destroy the meaning of both religious sentiment and moral law. A corollary of this doctrine is that man grows steadily worse the more he progresses in civilization. Waggoner says that this fall of man, whether it is regarded as a fortunate fall upward or a destructive fall downward, does not embody the usual Hawthorne idea.<sup>42</sup>

Minor themes implied in the work contrast the virtues and defects of the innocent and the civilized; of

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<sup>41</sup>Waggoner, op. cit., p. 198.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 199.

European culture and American morality; of progress and primitivism. The inclusion of such topics as these, in addition to the usual Hawthorne themes, ". . . , brings the author in relation with the leading ideas of his century. Thematically it [The book] demands comparison with the work of Melville, James, Dostoevski, and others who raised the century's special concerns to dimensions of universal significance."<sup>43</sup>

Hawthorne, then, in The Marble Faun did, perhaps, broaden the scope of his ideas, especially in his emphasis on the primitive innocence of Donatello as contrasted with the sophisticated knowledge of Miriam,--an idea that bears a faint resemblance to Melville's contrast of Billy Budd and Claggart. He draws parallels between American morality and European culture, a theme later developed by James; and in his portrayal of Hilda he sets a pattern for such Jamesian heroines as Daisy Miller, Isabel Archer, and Milly Theale. But more significant for this study is his consistent, artistic use of native materials in theme, character, description, and incident.

A short summary of the results of this study of the use of such native materials in The Marble Faun is appropriate in closing this chapter. Many elements of the story

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<sup>43</sup>Waggoner, op. cit., p. 197.

have been sharpened by using American material as a contrast. In this way the American versus the Italian was forcefully presented as regards to: (1) critical standards for social acceptance into a group; (2) national ideals with reference to evaluation of utility over beauty; (3) taciturnity and loquacity; (4) emulative pride and indifference with reference to home exteriors; (5) weather; and (6) carnival behavior.

Not only by contrast but also by association American material is evident in The Marble Faun. Hawthorne's presentation of the artist and his interpretation of great works are given a basis in his close association with American artists in Rome.

With reference to the characters, this phase of the study has distinguished the Puritan and the New England characteristics of Hilda. Although Miriam was rejected as European rather than American, her place in implementing an American theme is apparent, as is also the character of Donatello. Kenyon's aptness in crystallizing thought into stated theory is important.

Lastly, this phase of the study has shown that Hawthorne, in broadening his ever-applicable, typically Puritan, American moral theme of sin and its retribution has introduced new phases of it more in keeping with the newer American age. Also, and rather incidentally, he has

presented contemporary American life abroad so attractively that the field was soon tenanted by other skillful laborers, who--God rest the soul of Hawthorne--went about the matter realistically.



## CONCLUSION

This study has attempted an examination of Hawthorne's novels to ascertain how extensively the author has made use in them of native American materials. The inquiry was limited to the five completed novels; a summary of the particularly American elements of each, as concluded from the study, follows.

Fanshawe, Hawthorne's first effort at novel writing, uses the setting of Bowdoin College at Brunswick, Maine. Many of the characters concerned in the events of the story have their originals in persons with whom the young author had recently been associated as a student there. A novel employing college life as its background was an innovation in American fiction; thus in producing it, Hawthorne himself carries forward in the field of literature the traditional spirit of the American pioneer. His novel also utilizes legends of pirates and piracy common to the Brunswick area.

The Scarlet Letter, written twenty-two years later, has for its setting Boston during the 1640's. The characters are either historical personages or types of historical persons that appear in Winthrop's Journal (1630-1649). The episodes and events contributing to the plot are counterparts of those recorded in the Journal. Again Hawthorne is a pioneer in American fiction, for this is the first of the

psychological novels. The writer is concerned, here and henceforth, not so much with the historical significance or the suspense value of the events that implement his narrative, as with the effect of those events on the minds and hearts of his characters. The results of undisclosed sin and the sin of secret revenge on the three characters that make up the emotional triangle constitute the theme of this novel, a theme which is, in itself, distinctively of Puritan American origin.

The House of the Seven Gables has a plot constructed out of the history, tradition, and lore created and accumulated by the five generations of American Hathornes who preceded Nathaniel Hawthorne, the writer. In many respects, the Hathornes are the originals for the Pyncheons of the story. In the narrative, successive generations of Pyncheons have lived in the many-gabled old house ever since it had been built, some two hundred years before, by their early American witch-hunting ancestor. The wrong-doing of this ancestor invoked a curse that affected the lives of succeeding generations, and how it affected their lives makes the book another study of the application of Puritan theology and philosophy.

The Blithedale Romance uses American material contemporary with Hawthorne's day. Its setting is Brook Farm, a Transcendentalist Community where the author spent six

months in 1841 as a participant in the enterprise. The events and episodes of the story are traceable in their origins to entries in Hawthorne's Journal, although a detailed comparison reveals much artistry in their adaptation. Most of the characters are, likewise, identifiable with persons whom Hawthorne knew through his Brook Farm associations. Altogether, the book is an example of Hawthorne's supreme artistry in using realistic, local, and even contemporary material as a vehicle for his theme of sin and its retribution--this time, the sin of a zealot at reform.

The Marble Faun, although it has an Italian setting, uses American materials in making effective contrasts. Two of the four main characters are Americans, and one, Hilda, is an extremely provincial American in her display of New England Puritan traits. Although the events are interesting as contributory to a surface plot with an effective climax, their chief significance lies in their implementation of an inward story of the effects of sin--this time upon a hitherto innocent being and upon a witness who, for ethical reasons, cannot disclose her knowledge. Since these events occur in a background that portrays artist life in Rome very attractively, the presentation influenced other skillful writers to utilize a similar background for stories of American life abroad, especially for the life of the American girl in other countries. Thus in paving the way for such followers,

Hawthorne again shows the initiative and self-dependence that characterized the American pioneer.

Since these qualities of the American trail-blazer have been noted in three of Hawthorne's five novels, a final comment upon the author may be relevant. It is with Hawthorne's literary manner as it is with the style of William Bradford, the Pilgrim annalist: "Its quality is dependent primarily upon his greatness of character."<sup>1</sup> Only a person with the initiative, courage, perseverance, and self-dependence of an American pioneer could have resisted the personal charm and the magnetic mental qualities of the great contemporary American thinker, Emerson, enough to become a literary planet of the first magnitude instead of a mere satellite.

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<sup>1</sup>Bartholow V. Crawford, Alexander C. Kern, and Morriss H. Needleman, American Literature, p. 4.

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