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THE OPENED LETTER: REREADING HAWTHORNE

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
University of North Texas in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

Grace Elizabeth Smith, B. A., M. A.

Denton, Texas

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The recent publication of the bulk of Hawthorne's letters has precipitated this study, which deals with Hawthorne's creative and subversive narration and his synchronic appeal to a variety of readers possessing different tastes. I initially investigate Hawthorne's religion and demonstrate how he disguised his personal religious convictions, ambiguously using the intellectual categories of Calvinism, Unitarianism, and spiritualism to promote his own humanistic "religion." Hawthorne's appropriation of the jeremiad further illustrates his emphasis on religion and narration. Although his religion remained humanistic, he readily used the old Puritan political sermon to describe and defend his own financial hardships. That jeremiad outlook has significant implications for his art.

Hawthorne's attention to imaginative narration fostered his interest in Delia Bacon's theory that Shakespeare was not the author of the plays generally attributed to the bard. Hawthorne's praise of Bacon hinged not so much on the truth he saw in her theory as in the creativity with which she narrated her attack on Shakespeare. That concern stands related to Hawthorne's imaginative use of Swiftian satire in "Chiefly About War Matters" to forge the footnotes to his 1861 *Atlantic Monthly* article. Here, too, he valued creative and subversive narration. Such posturing emerges, as well, in Hawthorne's letters to his colleagues. Hawthorne controlled the perceptions he hoped to

elicit from his audiences, often through fictive utterances. His true politics frequently were at odds with the political utterances he so masterfully conveyed.

The calculated narration in the prefaces to Hawthorne's major novels and some shorter works echo the narrational techniques he uses in his letters and essays. The narration in those prefaces most completely discloses a preoccupation with an ambivalent language. That narrational masquerade also entails a variety of "voices" to address numerous "readers." Those prefaces are quite clearly preparatory meditations that allow author and reader alike optimally to commune with the body of the text and to perceive the truth of his dissembling in other "truthful" writings.

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INTRODUCTION: *THE OPENED LETTER*

Although critics have ably assessed the place of narration in Hawthorne's works,¹ many of his recently-published letters facilitate a new outlook on "voice" in the entire canon of his tales, essays, novels and correspondences. To begin this study, I address Hawthorne's religion, as expressed in several narrative voices.² Since we are not always able to trust what Hawthorne says, even as that relates to what he says he believes, I argue that Hawthorne consciously as well as inadvertently reveals his religious

¹ *The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne. The Letters*, ed. Thomas Woodson, et al., 23 vols. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1962-), hereafter referred to as *Works*. The letters were recently published as part of the Centenary Edition which included all of Hawthorne's major works, the publication of the letters having been begun in 1984 and completed in 1988. See, on narration, Duban, "The Triumph of Infidelity in Hawthorne's *The Story Teller*," *Studies in American Fiction* 7 (1979): 49-60; Duban, "The Skeptical Context of Hawthorne's "Mr. Higginbotham's Catastrophe," *American Literature*, 48 (1976): 292-301; Duban, "Robins and Robinarchs in 'My Kinsman, Major Molineux,'" *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 38.3 (1983): 271-88. See also William L. Hedges, "Hawthorne's *Blithedale*: The Function of the Narrator," *Nineteenth Century Fiction* 14 (1960): 303- 316; William Van O'Connor, *The Grotesque: An American Genre, and Other Essays*, Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1962, especially pages 78-81, "The Narrator as Distorting Mirror."

²For earlier scholarship on Hawthorne and religion, see Michael J. Colacurcio, "A Better Mode of Evidence—The Transcendental Problem of Faith and Spirit," *Emerson Society Quarterly* 54.1 (1969): 12-22, and *The Province of Piety: Moral History in Hawthorne's Early Tales* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984). See also Duban, "The Triumph"; Leonard J. Fick, *A Study of Hawthorne's Theology: The Life Beyond* (Folcroft, Pennsylvania: Folcroft Press, Inc., 1955); and David Van Leer, "Hester's Labyrinth: Transcendental Rhetoric in Puritan Boston, in "New Essays on "The Scarlet Letter," ed. Michael Colacurcio (New York: Cambridge University Press), pp. 57-100.

inclinations in letters to friends and loved ones. The letters demonstrate that Hawthorne was a humanist, willing to accept the credibility of all religions. His religion was clearly pluralistic, acquiescing to the “new” religions of the nineteenth century, to the “old” Catholicism, and even to some questionable forms of radical spiritualism. The letters likewise reveal how Hawthorne’s humanism stood opposed to dogmatic Calvinism. He was nonetheless capable of interacting rhetorically with the early Puritanism of the colonists, even using their religion as a forum for many of his works, as long as that religion inspired his art. This study also shows how Hawthorne used religious rhetoric to interact with his readers—even when his audience comprised those closest to him—his wife-to-be, his mother, and his sisters. Despite the fact that Hawthorne’s religious “voice” was at times a ruse, he frequently employed the controlled play of theological rhetoric to support the humanistic religion that he had come to embrace.

Despite the fact that Hawthorne toyed with religious rhetoric, his letters reveal that he was more than a little consumed by the Calvinistic concept of the efficacy of the jeremiad to bring beauty out of suffering. Chapter 2 demonstrates how the rhetoric of Hawthorne’s letters implies an awareness of the jeremiad thread that was interwoven with his own life. Thus, even as the prophets called for repentance leading to blessing after affliction, and even as the early Puritans called the nation back to God by chastisement, so Hawthorne seemed to realize that the hand of adversity drove him to artistic excellence.³ Proving Lionel Trilling’s observation that “the poet is a poet by

³See especially Hawthorne’s letter to Zachariah Burchmore (Sept. 17, 1850), *Works*, 16:385. I have gone beyond certain scholars in their handling of the jeremiad

reason of his sickness as well as by reason of his powers,"⁴ Hawthorne reflected this sense of the jeremiad by being decidedly more productive during times of affliction, especially during financial hardships; he was less creative and prolific during good times. He also appropriated this suffering and its rewards to Hester, who, in *The Scarlet Letter*, creatively weaves her life around affliction.

Hawthorne also recognized creativity in others, especially Delia Bacon.⁵ I have shown in Chapter 3 how he supported Bacon in her assumption that Shakespeare was an imposter, not because he believed her, but because he admired a creativity in her that

rhetoric in Hawthorne's work because these scholars were not privy to all of the Hawthorne letters. My study has built on Sacvan Bercovitch's definition of the American jeremiad, "Endicott's Breastplate: Symbolism and Typology in 'Endicott and the Red Cross,'" *Studies in Short Fiction* 4 (1967): 289-99 and *The American Jeremiad* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978). It has also enlarged the scope of Ursula Brumm's study of Hawthorne and typology, "Christ and Adam as 'Figures' in American Literature"; *The American Puritan Imagination*, ed. Sacvan Bercovitch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1974); and Michael J. Colacurcio's "Footsteps of Anne Hutchinson: The Context of *The Scarlet Letter*," *English Literary History* 39 (1972): 459-494; Colacurcio, "Visible Sanctity and Specter Evidence: The Moral World of Hawthorne's 'Young Goodman Brown,'" *Essex Institute Historical Collections* 110 (1974): 259-299; and Colacurcio, "The Woman's Own Choice: Sex Metaphor and the Puritan of Sources of *The Scarlet Letter*," in *New Essays on "The Scarlet Letter"*, pp. 101-135.

⁴"Neurosis and the Health of the Artist," in *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society* (New York: Doubleday, 1953) p. 13.

⁵I use as a point of departure Nina Baym, "Delia Bacon: Hawthorne's Last Heroine," *Nathaniel Hawthorne Review* 20.2 (1994): 1-10, and Baym, "Delia Bacon, History's Odd Woman Out," *New England Quarterly* (1996): 69: 223-49. Baym deals with the Delia Bacon/Hawthorne relationship as one of author and subject. Vivian Constance Hopkins, in *Prodigal Puritan: A Life of Delia Bacon* (Cambridge: Belknap, 1959), considers Bacon merely a Puritan with secular interests. LeRoy Elwood Kimball, in "Miss Bacon Advances Learning," *Colophon* NS 2.3 (1937): 338-54, contends with Bacon that Shakespeare did indeed plagiarize many of the plays.

corresponded with his own. Thus, just as Hawthorne was adept at using a spurious narrative voice when dealing with religion and politics, he was enamored with the antinomianism and literary dissembling of Delia Bacon because it corresponded to his own.

Chapter 4, in turn, demonstrates how artful political guile proliferates in an essay that Hawthorne wrote about Abraham Lincoln. This chapter illustrates Hawthorne's use of Swiftian irony in the footnotes of an article written for the *Atlantic Monthly* in July 1862, "Chiefly About War Matters." In this article, while Hawthorne seems to compliment the Chief Executive, he is actually reproaching and condemning him. These footnotes have deceived many scholars--from the time of the publication of the article in 1863 until recently--into believing they are the actual footnotes of the editor, James Thomas Fields.⁶ However, with the publication of the letters, it has become evident that Hawthorne was indeed using subversive power of the pen to support the Democrats at the expense of Lincoln's party. He did so, I argue, while *seeming* to be at the mercy of a publisher who chastised the article's disrespect for the Chief Executive.

⁶I take issue with Hawthorne's definitive biographer, Randall Stewart, *Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Biography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), and Stewart, "Hawthorne and the Civil War," *Studies in Philology* 34 (1937): 91-106. Stewart considers Hawthorne's attitude toward Lincoln as one of affection and respect. See also, James Bense, "Nathaniel Hawthorne's Intention in 'Chiefly About War Matters,'" *American Literature* 61 (1989): 200-214. Bense calls the footnotes to "Chiefly About War Matters" a "censorship hoax," but this too seems unlikely in view of the revelation of the letters. Deborah Madsen, in "'A for Abolition': Hawthorne's Bondservant and the Shadow of Slavery," *Journal of American Studies* 25 (1991): 255-259; and Thomas R. Moore, "Hawthorne as Essayist: *Our Old Home* and 'Chiefly About War Matters,'" *American Transcendentalist Quarterly* 6 (1992): 263-278, fall short of cogency.

Chapter 5 explores narration as that relates to Hawthorne's career in government. Previous studies on Hawthorne and politics were not favored by access to many letters as background material.⁷ The letters clearly demonstrate how Hawthorne used political narration, just as he had done with other areas of his life, to achieve personal goals, to secure political appointments for himself and his colleagues, and to ingratiate himself with posterity. He likewise succeeded in using political rhetoric to promote the careers of many of his friends. All of his writing was fiction of sorts. When he wrote about himself in the letters, he was surely aware that, because of his literary prominence, these letters would be read throughout history. Although the image he crafts of himself was at times contradictory, it was always ingenuously contrived.

This image is the subject of my final chapter, which covers Hawthorne's artful subterfuge in the prefaces to his better-known works. This chapter evokes Gerald Prince's examination of the various readers to whom an author writes.⁸ I argue that

⁷Nina Baym, *The Shape of Hawthorne's Career* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976); Michael Davitt Bell, *Hawthorne and the Historical Romance of New England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971); Peter J. Bellis, "Representing Dissent: Hawthorne and the Drama of Revolt," *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance* 41.2 (1992): 97-119; Evan Carton, "The Province of Romance," in *The Rhetoric of American Romance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985); Michael J. Colacurcio, "Hawthorne and the Interest of History," *New Essays on Hawthorne's Major Tales*, ed. Millicent Bell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 37-66; Paul C. Cortisoz, *The Political Life of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, Diss. New York: 1955; Susan Laura Mizruchi, *The Power of Historical Knowledge: Narrating the Past in Hawthorne, James, and Dreiser* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988).

⁸"Introduction to the Study of the Narratee," in *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*, ed. Jane P. Tompkins (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), pp. 7-25. I deal with the prefaces from the perspective of "reader response criticism," employing Gerald Prince's study of the "narratee" and other "readers." I have also consulted scholarship on the prefaces from the nineteenth

Hawthorne's prefaces control an array of different unsuspecting readers by again employing an elusive narrative voice—at times through several veils of narrators, pseudo-narrators, and authors.

Through all of this, I have drawn upon Hawthorne's recently published letters to reveal how Hawthorne, through unreliable narration, spoke simultaneously to many different audiences. For this reason, the letters, themselves, along with his declared fictions, must be read with an element of distrust. The letters were written beautifully, aesthetically, but always purposefully—with multi-faceted intentions. These letters are

century until the present. Edgar Allan Poe, Review of *Twice-told Tales*, *Graham's Magazine* 20 (April 1842): 254. Rpt. in *Hawthorne: The Critical Heritage*, ed. J. Donald Crowley (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1970), pp. 87-94; Herman Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses. By a Virginian Spending His Summer in Vermont," *Literary World* 7 (August 17 and 24, 1850): pp. 125-127, 145-147, Rpt. in *Hawthorne: The Critical Heritage*, ed. J. Donald Crowley (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1970), pp. 111-126; Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, Centenary Edition IX, ed. Ralph H. Orth et al. (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 405; Henry James, *Hawthorne* (1879) (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1956).

In the 20th century, beginning in the 40's with a renewed interest in Hawthorne scholarship, other critics have dealt with Hawthorne's prefaces. See, Charles Howell Foster, "Hawthorne's Literary Theory," *PMLA* 57 (1942): 241-254; Jesse Bier, "Hawthorne on the Romance: His Prefaces Related and Examined," *Modern Philology* 53. 1 (August 1955): 17-24; Dan McCall, "Hawthorne's Familiar Kind of Preface," *English Literary History* 35 (1968): 422-439; Paul Jones Eakin, "Hawthorne's Imagination and the Structure of 'The Custom House,'" *American Literature* 43 (1971): 346-358. Of interest, too, is Timothy Dow Adams, "To Prepare Yourself to Meet the Faces You Meet: Biographical Rhetoric in Hawthorne's Prefaces," *Emerson Society Quarterly: A Journal of the American Renaissance* 23 (1977): 89-92. Adams contends that Hawthorne wished to distance himself from his prose and that the prefaces sought to differentiate between a romance, which was not accountable to truth, and a novel which was to be realistic.

sometimes calculated fictions addressed to several audiences. While *The Scarlet Letter* may be Hawthorne's most compelling romance, his larger corpus of "letters" merits equal scrutiny for the flood of sunshine it casts upon his artistry.

CHAPTER 1

NARRATING THE VEIL

"words may be a thick and darksome veil of mystery between the soul and the truth which it seeks"¹

The perspective though which Hawthorne envisioned his world was that of religious humanism. Stated otherwise, Hawthorne used his creative artistry humanistically to encompass the religious sentiment. The term "humanism" has been interpreted in a number of ways. When, therefore, I say that Hawthorne progressed toward a more humanistic philosophy of religion, I mean that he progressed toward a view of human nature in which man was increasingly glorified, in which God was increasing humanized, and in which the need for a savior was no longer important or even necessary.² Still, he used the intellectual categories of Calvinism, Unitarianism, and spiritualism to arrive at humanistic conclusions about each of these "religions." I argue that he interpreted these religions though the perspective of his own humanism--his naturalistic perspective that considered all forms of the supernatural as just that--"super" natural, or mythic.

¹ *The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne. The Letters: 1813-1843*, Thomas Woodson, et al., 20 vols. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1962-) 15:462, hereafter referred to as *Works*.

² See, in this vein, Corliss Lamont, *The Philosophy of Humanism* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Company, 1977).

Hawthorne's immersion in the American Renaissance helps to explain his preoccupation with a humanistic interpretation of religion. He disguised his personal religious conviction with the thick and darksome veil of unreliable and ambiguous narration. The questions addressed in this chapter therefore depend less upon his actual theological beliefs than upon his frequent use of the language of religion to direct his readers' perceptions. This chapter discusses, with various examples from the newly published Hawthorne letters, just how Hawthorne narrates a religious rhetoric steeped in humanism. Moreover, as comfortable as it would be to accept Hawthorne's stated religious beliefs as "truth," readers must be on guard when interpreting his letters; we must constantly be aware that he handles theological language at times more to entertain than to proselytize. Thus, no matter what he *says* he believes, his religious discourse coincides with a narrative strategy; as Gary Richard Thompson concludes, Hawthorne's works are not biographical at all, but an authorial construct.¹ Melville, too, suggested that Hawthorne had "hoodwinked the world."² For, though at times he has seemed to embrace the various "religions," he has only addressed each of the religions--Calvinism, Unitarianism, and spiritualism--from the perspective of his own humanism. Still, a short synopsis of the seeming progression of Hawthorne's use of religious rhetoric is in order, if only to explain how he used each phase of a religious quest as a mechanism for artistic technique.

¹Gary Richard Thompson, *The Art of Authorial Presence* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 20.

²Herman Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses," 1850, Rpt. In *Recognition* (1969), 29-41, and *Hawthorne: Critical Heritage* (1970), 111-26.

Hawthorne's aesthetic and humanistic use of theology seemed to progress much in the manner of American Protestantism. He first dealt with Calvinism, which arrived in New England along with the settlers of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The basic tenets of Calvinism that pertain to Hawthorne's use of Puritan rhetoric are that man is totally depraved and that God is sovereign. In Hawthorne's fiction those beliefs subserve humanistic ends. Thus, David Van Leer notes that, in *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne appears faithful to "the intellectual categories of Calvinism" while holding the Puritans in contempt.³ What makes Hawthorne's epistemological concerns so difficult to divine is the artistry with which he uses religious rhetoric. To complicate matters, Hawthorne's "religion" changes from that of the young lad who grew up in Salem and Boston, to the very different theology of the adult who ended up pondering the ritual of Rome. His artistic encounters with Puritanism, Unitarianism, Transcendentalism, Catholicism, and spiritualism relate to Hawthorne's humanistic sense of each of these "religions." In this respect, Hawthorne's narration of the changing character of religion parallels, yet responds to, the evolution of Protestantism in America.

Hawthorne's narrational interest began with Puritanism, which commenced in a fury of enthusiasm, lost its ardor with the next few generations of halfway covenanters, and ended up denying the importance of original sin, the possibility of imputed sin, and the need for a savior. Thereafter, Transcendentalism embraced the grandeur of man

³"Hester's Labyrinth: Transcendental Rhetoric in Puritan Boston" in *New Essays on The Scarlet Letter*, ed. Michael Colacurcio (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 62.

rather than the glory and sovereignty of God. Hawthorne's narration of religious language followed a similar pattern: his narrational emphases emerged from the Puritanism of his ancestors into the more liberal Protestantism of his parents, who were probably Unitarians. For a while, Hawthorne was intrigued with the Transcendental community at Brook Farm, a Fourieristic experiment he ultimately deemed too constricting.⁴ However, he later came under the powerful sway of his wife's less extreme Transcendentalism. With respect to the representation of these religious factors in his fiction, it must be remembered that the artistic device of unreliable narration renders Hawthorne's personal convictions obscure, and at times paradoxical.

Still, the one consistent factor in Hawthorne's religion and his narration of religion was the manner in which he always celebrated humanism. Critics have sought to trace these theological concerns to various sources. While Randall Stewart observes that Hawthorne "got a good education . . . in Christian philosophy" from Bowdoin College, Michael Colacurcio insists upon Hawthorne's lifelong dialectic with the historical 'thesis'

⁴Leonard Fick, *The Light Beyond* (Folcroft, PA: Folcroft Press, Inc., 1955), p. 24, calculates: "The doctrinal paths of most early-nineteenth-century New Englanders led from Puritanism through Arminianism to Unitarianism." Fick includes Hawthorne in this generalization, but with a disclaimer that Hawthorne could not truthfully be said to disbelieve in Trinitarianism. James Duban, in "The Triumph of Infidelity in Hawthorne's *The Story Teller*," *Studies in American Fiction* 7 (1979): 49-60, has argued that Hawthorne indeed allegorized and critiqued the resurrection and other major tenets of Christianity. Hawthorne's intrigue with Brook Farm, the Transcendentalist community, although short-lived, was explored and exploited in *The Blithedale Romance*; see also *Works*, 15:533-551, for Hawthorne's letters to his then-fiancee, Sophia Peabody; his sister, Louisa Hawthorne; and his friend, George Hillard, in which he bemoans the hard work and lack of creative leisure in the "not-so-utopian" community.

of American Puritanism."⁵ In the gloom of Calvinism, Hawthorne is said to have found a lasting legacy that reflected demonism in both "Young Goodman Brown" and "The Bosom Serpent." Hawthorne uses humanistic rhetoric to critique Puritanism in Ethan Brand, who searches the world for the unpardonable sin, finding it not in any grotesque, supernatural, or nefarious sin, but ultimately within his own heart. Although Hawthorne also deals with the doctrine of innate and cultivated sinfulness in "The Minister's Black Veil" and in his longer narratives, he creates a dichotomy of belief between the thorny points of Calvinism and the humanistic view of the perfectibility of man. This theology implies an Arminian interpretation that resists the Puritanic doctrine of election, reprobation, and predestination, assuming instead that a person could forfeit God's grace after receiving it. As Leonard Fick argues, a concern for the sanctity of the human personality, as expressed in Hawthorne's censure of those who violate that sanctity, as well as in a respect for those who reverence it, is ample proof of Hawthorne's belief that man is a free agent--that he has a God-given free moral will.⁶ Thus, Hawthorne refuses to posit redemption from sin through confession and absolution, and he sees no prospect of grace imputed through Christ. Hawthorne's sinners are left growing more despicable, quarrelsome, and disillusioned. If they are redeemed at all, this redemption is achieved naturally through human love, not divine propitiation. For instance, in "Egotism; or, The Bosom Serpent," Roderick Elliston carries a serpent in his bosom and constantly cries

⁵ Randall Stewart, *Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Biography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), p. 25; Michael J. Colacurcio, *The Province of Piety: Moral History in Hawthorne's Early Tales* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 1.

⁶*The Light Beyond*, pp. 67, 68.

out, "It gnaws me! It gnaws me!" Elliston's redemption does not arise through confession, but more humanistically, through love and faith.⁷

Complicating the humanism reflected in Hawthorne's religious pluralism are his unreliable narrators. For instance, in critiquing Puritanism he appears to employ a spurious narrator in his sketch, "Mrs. Hutchinson"; so, too, in the Custom House section of *The Scarlet Letter* and in "Young Goodman Brown."⁸ We may infer the unreliability of the narrator in "Mrs. Hutchinson" from Hawthorne's quite flattering Hutchinsonian representation of Hester Prynne in *The Scarlet Letter*. In contrast, the narrator of "Mrs. Hutchinson" describes Anne Hutchinson in the Hutchinson piece as a "public woman" who threatens the posterity of the fathers--her hair, complexion and eyes as "somewhat dark and heavy," with a "*flash of carnal pride* [how can he know?] half hidden in her eye, as she surveys the many learned and famous men whom her doctrines have put in fear." Hawthorne in this case has used the unreliable narrator to take a position having resonances of Winthrop's position in his *A Short Story of the Rise, reign, and ruine of the Antinomians, Familists, and Libertines*, in which Winthrop crucifies Hutchinson under

⁷Colacurcio sees Hawthorne as portraying the end of the Puritan era and its evolution into a religion of "faith," no longer dependent upon the evidence of "visible sanctity" especially in works such as "Young Goodman Brown," p. 313.

⁸See both Christopher D. Morris, "Deconstructing 'Young Goodman Brown,'" *American Transcendental Quarterly* 2 (1988): 22-33 and John B. Humma, "'Young Goodman Brown' and the Failure of Hawthorne's Ambiguity," *Colby Library Quarterly* 9 (1971): 534-581.

the guise of authenticity.⁹ Thus, he critiques the immorality of Puritan legalism in these works, just as he does in *The Scarlet Letter*.

Further evidence of Hawthorne's humanism when encountering Puritan ideology appears in his obscure dealings with the Puritan concept of sin. This veiled psychological repression runs rampant in such stories as "The Haunted Mind," in which we read that "in the depths of every heart there is a tomb and a dungeon, though the lights, the music, and revelry above may cause us to forget their existence, and the buried ones, or prisoners, whom they hide."¹⁰ Hawthorne could never resist aesthetically utilizing Puritan ideas in his stories because these ideas were the vehicles for plots in his most compelling psychological dramas. Although his stories seem to reveal religious contemplations, his musings are fiction, calculated to incur a psychological response in his readers.

Although Puritanism was never very far removed from Hawthorne's thoughts, its doctrines were too narrow for his progressively developing humanism. Emerson believed that Hawthorne had sought to liberate himself from Puritan origins.¹¹ However, observing in the writer a fascination with Puritanism, Hillard credits Hawthorne with a

⁹For Winthrop's "Short Story" see David D. Hall, ed., *The Antinomian Controversy 1636-38: A Documentary History* (Middletown Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1968), pp. 199-310. I am indebted for this suggestion about the pertinence of the "Short Story" for unreliable narration in "Mrs. Hutchinson" to James Duban, who is currently developing this idea in a study-in-progress.

¹⁰*Works*, 9:306.

¹¹Lloyd Morris, *The Rebellious Puritan: Portrait of Mr. Hawthorne* (New York: Harcourt, 1927), p. 125.

taste for the morbid anatomy of the human heart, and such a knowledge of it, too? I should fancy from your books that you were burdened with a secret sorrow; that you had some blue chamber in your soul, into which you hardly dared to enter yourself . . . I wish you would dwell a little more in the sun . . . [but I am] thankful for the weird and sad strain which breathes from "The Scarlet Letter."¹²

Many of his contemporaries considered Hawthorne's work to be the only true expression in American belle lettres of Puritanism.¹³ Although he was fascinated by the Puritans and Puritanism, Hawthorne used the old religion to propagate his humanistic reaction to it. Growing up in Boston and under the authority of the strongly Puritan Manning family, he could not escape Puritanism's influence. But he seems at an early age, as soon as he was away at Bowdoin College, to have rebelled against a faith that appeared to him too constricted. In a letter to his sister Elizabeth, shortly after he arrived at Bowdoin, he laments having to "go to meeting every Sunday, and to hear a red hot Calvinist Sermon from the President, or some other dealer in fire and brimstone." He further denigrates Puritanical orthodoxy:

there is also a theological Society and Library, into which, owing to a fib of my Chums's [*sic*] who said that I was religious, I should have been elected, had I not

¹² Hillard to Hawthorne (1851), introduction to *Works*, 15:79.

¹³This comment was made by William Story, Hawthorne's good friend in Rome, and it serves to give credence to Hawthorne as a part of "Young America," the political and literary movement that favored a truly American literature, as opposed to mere British reflections. *Works*, 16:396.

rescued myself by taking the name of the Devil in vain, which had a great and marvelous effect. The peculiarly pious expression of my countenance, which was so much noticed in Andover, has caused me many inconveniences in this place insomuch that it is with great difficulty I can keep clear of Conferences, and other meetings of the Righteous.¹⁴

Hawthorne's letters to his sister vaunt his new-found agnosticism; he has begun at Bowdoin to narrate an increasingly humanistic attitude toward spiritual matters and thus be excluded from receiving an invitation to join the theological society. He irreverently writes, "We have had a Minister from the Andover Mill, and he 'dealt damnation round' with an unsparing hand, and finished by consigning us all to the Devil." Hawthorne's frivolous attitude intimates his disbelief in a consignment to the devil. He then expresses aversion to learning scripture: "I must close my letter as I have a Bible Lesson to get to recite after prayers. I believe it is not the custom in any other College to recite lessons from the bible, and I think it a very foolish one."¹⁵ This youthful letter from Hawthorne to his sister suggests his knowledge of a great deal *about* scripture but shows a contempt for the strict Calvinism of Andover and, to a lesser degree, contempt for the more liberal Christianity of his own Bowdoin College. Aware that his mother and Uncle Robert would not approve his attitude, he warns Elizabeth not to show his letter around because

¹⁴Hawthorne to Elizabeth Manning Hawthorne (Oct. 28, 1821) in *Works*, 15:159, 160. Andover, which was proudly Calvinistic, opened in 1808 to oppose the Unitarianism of Harvard Divinity School.

¹⁵Hawthorne to Elizabeth Manning Hawthorne (Oct. 28, 1821) in *Works*, 15:160-161.

of the levity with which he deals with spiritual matters. As a young student at Bowdoin, Hawthorne was already trying to distance himself from old school Calvinism in order to endorse a more liberal outlook.

While still at Bowdoin, Hawthorne remained aloof from the strict Calvinism of his family; indeed, in a November 1824 letter to his Aunt Mary Manning, herself a strict Calvinist, Hawthorne equivocates: "A missionary society has lately been formed in College, under the auspices of a gentleman from Andover . . . I suppose you would be glad to hear that I was a member, but my regard to truth compels me to confess that I am not. There is a considerable revival of religion in this town . . . but unfortunately it has not yet extended to the College."¹⁶ Hawthorne is having a little fun with Mary Manning, but is toning down his criticism of Calvinism, not openly criticizing it as he had done with his sister. In this same vein, many of young Hawthorne's other early letters to his mother and sisters, as well as those to his aunt and uncles, are fraught with Biblical quotations, probably to correspond to their expectations.

Hawthorne's characterizing the Puritans in a negative light, because their intolerance was anti-humanistic, is further revealed in "Endicott and the Red Cross," where the evil-doers at the meetinghouse, who were enduring their punishment, included one who bore on his breast the label A WANTON GOSPELER, for he had "dared to give interpretations of Holy Writ, unsanctioned by the infallible judgment of the civil and religious rulers."¹⁷ Hawthorne's humanistic sympathies lie with the accused, one who

¹⁶Hawthorne to Mary Manning (Nov., 1824) in *Works*, 15:189.

¹⁷*Works*, 9:433

would venture to break the law to interpret the Bible for himself; he sees error in the dogmatic Puritanism that intolerantly censures those who failed to conform to their interpretation. That intolerance relates as well to the Puritan problem of witchcraft. Hawthorne had to distance himself from a too close association with the literal acceptance of the witchcraft phenomenon as an authentic spiritual condition. This manner of narration is evident in his dealings with Allen Putnam. Putnam, a farmer, preacher, and student of mesmerism and spiritualism, attempted to publish a lecture he had read at the city hall in Roxbury on Sept 21, 1853. He asked Hawthorne for sponsorship, and Hawthorne—though he lauded Putnam's book on Salem Witchcraft as the "most lucid and satisfactory that I have seen"—declined to assume editorship, claiming that his reputation had already "too much fog and mist diffused through it; and if the public find me setting myself up as a sponsor for other people's books of dreamcraft and witchery, I shall get a very bad name."¹⁸ Because his earlier works were so consumed by witchcraft and references to the supernatural, Hawthorne was anxious to assume an aesthetic distance from this spiritual phenomenon. He thus refused to endorse Putnam publicly, though he suggested that Putnam was far from error. Hawthorne was understandably averse to aligning himself too closely with witchcraft and Puritanism because of his increasingly humanistic approach to all things religious. He had used the vehicle of theological language to express an obvious humanism in his letters to mother, sisters, and uncles, his publishers and friends, his religious associates, and even his wife.

¹⁸Hawthorne to Allen Putnam (Oct. 19, 1851), *Works*, 16:496.

He used his early knowledge of, and exposure to, conventional protestant Calvinism to critique the Puritans. He further used his affiliation with the Transcendentalists, whose religion he likened to Bunyan's *Giant Despair*, to critique New England's liberal Christians.

Indeed, Hawthorne's humanistic encounter with Puritanism progresses into a similar critique of Transcendentalism in such works as *The Blithedale Romance*, "The Artist of the Beautiful," and "Rappaccini's Daughter." Although Hawthorne's first and most significant target of criticism had been the Puritans, he likewise used narration as a vehicle for advancing humanism by criticizing these other "religions." Soon after the publication of *The Scarlet Letter*, George B. Loring speculated that Hawthorne used the romance to repulse Lockean rationalism at the expense of Transcendental intuition, to signify the aesthetic epistemology of the Unitarian / Transcendental question.¹⁹ In *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne reflected Transcendental intuition in Hester and Dimmesdale's sexually passionate encounter;²⁰ he further privileged intuitive power over the intellectual faculties of cognition.²¹ Longfellow associated this epistemology of Transcendentalism with Hawthorne's rhetoric, noticing that his classmate "dwelt in the universal mind of

¹⁹ In an 1850 review of *The Scarlet Letter*.

²⁰ Perry Miller, ed. *The Transcendentalists* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), p. 476.

²¹ See Theodore Parker, "Theodore Parker's Experience as a Minister," in *The Transcendentalists*, p. 484. Parker's explanation of Transcendentalism—that there are certain primal intuitions of human nature: the intuition that there is a God, the intuition of a just and right moral law, and the intuition of the immortality of man, further coincides with the language of the Transcendentalists that Hawthorne progressively humanistic rhetoric employed.

man, and in the universal forms of things."²² Longfellow saw Hawthorne as the New Englander whose artistic creativity set the spirits of fellow New Englanders free to exercise their imaginations in seeing the supernatural in a dull and prosaic community.²³ But liberal or orthodox, it seems that Hawthorne merely *appears* to embrace Transcendentalism at times when it suits his purpose—at others he appears to be its critic. So, regardless of what Hawthorne says he believes, he appears to have progressively moved from his critique of orthodox Christianity to the more liberal outlooks of humanism.

As an example, Hawthorne humanistically critiqued Transcendentalism in a quite revealing preface to "Rappaccini's Daughter." Hawthorne's narrative voice in this preface is that of a critic of M. de l'Aubépine, supposedly the author of the story. He avows: "As a writer . . . [the author, ostensibly M. de l'Aubépine] seems to occupy an unfortunate position between the Transcendentalists (who under one name or another, have their share in all the current literature of the world) and the great body of pen-and-ink men who address the intellect and sympathies of the multitude [The author] is too popular to satisfy the spiritual or metaphysical requisitions of the former."²⁴ This criticism of Transcendentalism involves Hawthorne's denial that he is one—or that the author of the piece is—because he claims for himself (or again, Aubépine [the French word for Hawthorne]) mere "popularity" at the expense of a superficial "spirituality" or

²²Parker, p. 59.

²³*Works*, 15:45.

²⁴*Works*, 10:91.

“meta-physicality.” Further censure of Transcendentalism, though without a similar self-commentary, occurs in Hawthorne’s parody of Bunyan’s “Giant Despair” as “Giant Transcendentalist” who is a “German by birth . . . but as to his form, his features, his substance, and his nature generally, it is the chief peculiarity of this huge miscreant that neither he for himself, nor anybody for him, has ever been able to describe them.”²⁵

Although akin to humanism in its rejection of an absolute “truth,” Hawthorne sees Transcendentalism as somewhat more inclined to embrace mere “experience,” and to fall apart in its elusiveness. He disparagingly describes the “Christian” as one who is beset by a “Transcendentalist,” whom the narrator describes allegorically as a degenerate with an indescribable nature. In “The Celestial Railroad,” therefore, Hawthorne rejects Transcendentalism, just as he had disparaged Calvinism as an inadequate religion because it did not measure up to his humanistic notion of man as ruler of his destiny.

Hawthorne respected the humanistic goals he saw in the Transcendentalists, because they were close to his humanism. Transcendentalism is akin to humanism in its almost reverential worship of the dignity of man’s spirit, its conception that man is autonomous and totally independent. Still, as suggested in *The Blithedale Romance*, Hawthorne ultimately rejected Transcendentalism because of its capacity to have exploitation masquerade as social reform, thereby belying the ethics of humanism. For example, Hawthorne reflects his censure of Transcendentalism in Priscilla’s exploitation by Hollingsworth, the rugged Transcendental reformer who ultimately admits that he has

²⁵*Works*, 10:197.

never reformed anyone; he has simply capitalized on the young woman in lieu of an assumed guardianship of her.

In a like manner Hawthorne humanistically encounters the more liberal beliefs of Unitarianism. Addressing in June, 1855, the provincial assembly of Lancashire and Cheshire, Liverpool, he uses the religious language of a humanist to convince the assembly of the compatibility of his and their religious views.

Few things have been more delightful to me during my residence in England, than to find here the descendants (spiritually at least, and in many instances, I believe, the descendants by lineage and name,) of the revered brotherhood, a part of whose mission it was to plant the seeds of Liberal Christianity in America . . . [I]t seems to me a noble and beautiful testimony to the truth of our religious convictions, that after so long a period coming down from the past, with an ocean between them, the liberal churches of England and America should, nevertheless, have arrived at the same results--that an American, an offspring of Puritan sires, still finds himself in brotherly relations with the posterity of those free-minded men who exchanged a parting pressure of the hand with his forefathers more than two centuries ago; and that we can all unite in one tone of religious sentiment, whether uttered by the lips of the friend whom you have summoned from my native land (Rev. W. H. Channing), or by

the lips of your honored guests whose faith has ripened in the mother country.²⁶

This was written for a certain audience, the liberal Christian churches of Lancashire and Cheshire, both Presbyterian and Unitarian, and borders on an ambassadorial speech, though Henry Bright called it an “indication of the bent of Hawthorne’s religious sympathies.”²⁷ However, Hawthorne’s son, Julian, remarked that his father was not a frequenter of Rev. Channing’s church, although the letter expressed genuine sentiments.²⁸ That the Hawthornes had allowed William Henry Channing to baptize their children²⁹ may suggest that Hawthorne tolerantly accepted a conventional religion for his family because he felt no great conviction for doing otherwise. Channing also wrote a review of *Mosses* in 1846 that suggests his awareness that Hawthorne did not labor under the constraints of any specific religion—tolerance of all religions being pervasive in Hawthorne’s works. At Brook Farm, moreover, Hawthorne participated in a “Unitarian” intellectual experiment, but “he was always scenting the serpent’s trail.”³⁰ The intellectual experiment at Brook Farm seemed more Transcendental than Unitarian and

²⁶Hawthorne to the Provincial Assembly of Lancashire and Cheshire in Liverpool, *Works*, 17: 355-56.

²⁷Henry Bright, who spoke at this conference, published the letter in the *Athenaeum*, Jan. 11, 1873, with the quoted assessment (see *Works*, 17:356, n. 1).

²⁸Julian Hawthorne, *Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Wife* (Cambridge: James R. Osgood and Company, 1884), p. 62.

²⁹*Works*, 17:54.

³⁰*Works*, 17:59.

did not work out for Hawthorne. Hawthorne was unconvinced of the validity of the Brook Farm experiment because he could never quite escape an awareness of human depravity. Still, however much Hawthorne claimed to know about the sinful condition of the human heart, continually espousing it in “Young Goodman Brown” and “Ethan Brand,” he seems to have channeled the devotion of orthodoxy towards a heart-felt commitment to a more humanistic sense of devotion that spawned the arenas of Unitarianism and Transcendentalism.

Humanism pervades Hawthorne’s letters, stories, and journals, although the reader can never be sure of the relationship between the real Hawthorne and the fictive one. What becomes increasingly clear is that he is self-creative in all these genres, using a humanistic outlook in response to many aspects of creativity. For instance, he responds to Sophia’s artistry as a humanist would. His response to her bas-relief medallion created to commemorate Charles Chauncy Emerson—the brother of Ralph Waldo—who died of tuberculosis, vividly reflected his humanism. Although he clearly disbelieved the rhetoric he employed, his response was not one of hypocrisy, but one in which he humanistically responded in a way that would bring her satisfaction: “Thou couldst not have done it, unless God had helped thee. This surely was inspiration, and of the holiest kind, and for one of the holiest purposes.”³¹ Likewise, Hawthorne’s humanistic rhetoric, calculated to win the woman he loved in her own religious language, inspires the dimension of a subsequent correspondence:

³¹Hawthorne to Sophia (April 15, 1840), *Works*, 15:442.

By that name [Dove] I think, I shall greet you, when we meet in Heaven. . . . at your entrance into Heaven, or after you have been a little while there, you hear a voice say 'Dove!' then you will know that your kindred spirit has been admitted (perhaps for your sake) to the mansions of rest. That word will express his yearning for you--then to be forever satisfied; for we will melt into one another, and be close, close together then. The name was inspired; it came without our being aware that you were thenceforth to be my Dove, now and through eternity.³²

These utterances to Sophia, in a language consistent with her expectations, as well as further rhetoric, "God gave you to me to be the salvation of my soul,"³³ evokes religious language for the purpose of courtship. Surely it would hardly seem compatible with his humanism or with orthodoxy that the earthly love of a woman would provide salvation. Of greater value, with respect to Hawthorne's artistry and humanism, is the way these letters channel the religious sentiment toward secular ends. Consider, for instance, "my soul yearns for the friend whom God has given it--whose soul He has married to my soul . . . yes--we are married; and as God Himself has joined us; we may trust never to be separated, neither in Heaven nor on Earth."³⁴ Using the orthodox Christian dialogue humanistically, he further says, "I never felt sure of going to Heaven, till I knew that you

³²Hawthorne to Sophia (July 3, 1839), *Works*, 15:320.

³³Hawthorne to Sophia (July 24, 1839), *Works*, 15:330.

³⁴Hawthorne to Sophia (July 24, 1839), *Works*, 15:329.

loved me; but now I am conscious of God's love in your own."³⁵ Although this is a genuine Christian view of human love, Hawthorne has used the Christian rhetoric that he knows will inspire Sophia's mutual affection. Still another letter to Sophia additionally refers to expressions of their love and compares it to the consummation of the soul in heaven: "Bye and bye, our spirits will demand some more adequate expression even than these . . . until we shall be divested of these earthly forms, which are at once our medium of expression, and the impediments to full communion."³⁶ To show his respect for the woman he loves, Hawthorne aesthetically uses commonplace religious utterance with a craft equal to that of his best narrative prose.³⁷

As a humanist he similarly evokes spiritual rhetoric to console Sophia after the death of her brother, saying that "God and the angels" are supporting her—that she herself is a ministering angel, because she is able to "triumph over earthly weakness to perform those offices of affection." Hawthorne rejoices that God has "caused the light from 'the other side' to shine over and across the chasm of the grave."³⁸ Hawthorne also surmised that Sophia's brother was now "at home in that celestial city," and that "it will be good

³⁵Hawthorne to Sophia (Sept. 23, 1839), *Works*, 15:347.

³⁶Hawthorne to Sophia (Jan. 20, 1842), *Works*, 15:606.

³⁷Nina Baym in *The Shape of Hawthorne's Career* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), pp. 85, 86, claims that Hawthorne's love letters to Sophia were "affectation and pose" and "certainly no substitute for imaginative writing." However, Leland S. Person, Jr. concludes, "In spite of obvious anxiety, and temptation for 'heavenly language,'" Hawthorne "allows his deepest thoughts and feelings . . . to emerge into his writing." See "Hawthorne's Love Letters," *American Literature* 59 (May 1987): 211-227.

³⁸*Works*, 15:368.

and profitable to commune with our brother's spirit; but so soon after his release from mortal infirmity, it seems even ungenerous towards himself to call him back by yearnings of the heart and too vivid picturings of what he was."³⁹ Hawthorne, from an increasingly humanistic perspective, uses the voice of scriptural Christianity, as well as the voice of spiritualism, to console and compliment Sophia, notwithstanding that it may be far from his beliefs.

Likewise, Hawthorne's uses the voice of the humanist in his consolation to Horatio Bridge at the death of Bridge's child: "It is good to have a dear child on earth, it is likewise good to have one safe in Heaven. She will await you there; and it will seem like home to you now."⁴⁰ Here, as well as in an earlier correspondence to Hilliard, whose only child died in infancy, we observe the religious rhetoric of consolation: "It is a pity that any mortal should go out of life, without experiencing what gives life its reality; and next to a child on earth, it is good to have a child in Heaven."⁴¹ In each instance Hawthorne renders language humanistically in the context of consolation even as he continues the progression of his religious critique.⁴²

³⁹Hawthorne to Sophia (Nov. 29, 1839), *Works*, 15:374.

⁴⁰Hawthorne to Horatio Bridge (April 26, 1855), *Works*, 17:333.

⁴¹Hawthorne to George S. Hillard (March 24, 1844), *Works*, 16:22.

⁴²Of course, Hawthorne is simply using the rhetoric of consolation to friends who have lost a child. We cannot confuse what Hawthorne *says* with his actual religious beliefs. His *words* are polite and humane, although technically unreliable because of the dissonance between his religious utterance and personal belief.

Hawthorne's humanistic contemplation of religion further progressed from Calvinism through Transcendentalism and Unitarianism into Catholicism. *The Marble Faun* depicts a Catholic interpretation of theology; likewise Hawthorne's support of his daughter Rose's acceptance of the Catholic faith portends his acceptance of this religion as a viable one also--all religions are equally viable to the humanist. Just as Hawthorne used the religious rhetoric of Puritanism and the Transcendentalists and Unitarians, he next looked at a more catholic interpretation of faith, one emphasizing a syncretism of faith and works to flame his rhetoric. Still, there is humanism in Catholicism--for its syncretism alleviates the dogmatism of either "faith" or "works" as means of salvation and leaves religion to a person's discretion instead of God's mandate. That is, the infallibility of God's word in Catholicism is transcended by Papal infallibility and is subject to change with the changing papacy. This ever-changing view of inerrancy in the church thus implies humanism and helps to explain Hawthorne's acknowledgment of the validity of Catholicism, despite its emphasis on depravity. He may have recognized, too, the value of the ritualism he saw in Catholicism as compatible with humanism. In his notebooks he mentions the renewal taking place in the Catholic Church when he visited their old churches in Rome; he even claimed to envy the Catholics' ability to pray in "a cool, quiet, silent, beautiful place of worship . . . where they can touch their fevered spirits with holy water, hold communion with a saint or confess . . . all their sins to a priest, laying the whole dark burthen at the foot of the cross." He had long criticized the Protestant version of man's responsibility for his sins, so he welcomed a new rhetoric--one that dealt with priestly confession and oblation. He even mused that, since America

was at that time experiencing a Revival, it might be a good time to transplant some of these Catholic "blessings" to Protestant Christianity.⁴³ Quite aside from any similarity between Hawthorne's humanism and its resemblance to Catholicism is his utilization of yet another "religious" rhetoric.

Although Protestant Christianity would certainly not have condoned Catholicism, Hawthorne characterized the villa where he lived near Rome, Villa Montauto, with a reference to an early Catholic Christian martyr. "At one end of the house there is a moss-grown tower, haunted by owls and by the ghost of a monk, who was confined there in the thirteenth century, previous to being burnt at the stake in the principal square of Florence."⁴⁴ He refers here to Girolamo Savonarola (1452-98), a religious reformer and a preacher, who rebuked the immorality of Pope Alexander VI and was ordered by the Pope to leave Florence. When Savonarola refused, Florence was placed under interdict. He was ultimately arrested, hanged, and his body burned in May of 1498.⁴⁵ This pluralistic acceptance of all that is religious, including a religion somewhat opposed to staunch Protestantism, further revealed Hawthorne's humanism. Just as Hawthorne has used the Puritan, Unitarian, Transcendental, and cultic religions as a background for his romances, he seems here to find a certain glamour and gothic fantasy in the old Catholic martyrs as a new avenue of creativity. The Catholicism of *The Marble Faun*, in turn,

⁴³ *Works, The French and Italian Notebooks (FIN)*, 14:195.

⁴⁴ Hawthorne to William C. Bennett (Dec. 8, 1853), *Works* 17:150.

⁴⁵ See *Works, FIN*, 14:381, 399 and *Works, The Marble Faun*, 4:253, 254.

further reveals Hawthorne's emerging humanism because of his pluralistic acceptance of the viability of that religion.

Hawthorne was open-minded about Anglicanism: in 1855, he wrote to Sophia about the religious tone of Una's letters--how the spirituality in the letters of a girl of fifteen startles him, and he wonders if it would be well "for religion to be intimately connected, in her mind, with forms and ceremonials, and sanctified places of worship? Shall the whole sky be the dome of her cathedral? or must she compress the Deity into a narrow space, for the purpose of getting at him more readily?" Hawthorne reflects a tolerance for all religions, including "that musty old Church of England" into which Una might be drawn; he adds that he would be happy were she to remain within the limits of the Anglican church, if "she [would] be happiest there."⁴⁶ He humanistically accepted Una's possible union with the Church of England.

One of the last religious designs that Hawthorne humanistically encountered was spiritualism. While he lived in Florence with his family, near Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, who were quite interested in seances, he recalls in his *French and Italian Notebooks* an intriguing incident. It was just after he retired from the consulate in England and was spending the summer, with his family, in Italy. The story concerns necromancy and seances, mediums and ancestral curses. Those involved in the intrigue were the Hawthornes, the Brownings, and others. In 1858 the Hawthornes were living outside Florence in the Villa Montauto, which would appear later as Monte Beni, the

⁴⁶Hawthorne to Sophia (Dec. 13, 1855), *Works*, 17:419.

villa in *The Marble Faun*.⁴⁷ Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning were their near neighbors--and at a time when Mrs. Browning was intrigued with spiritualism. A young American woman, Ada Shepard, the governess of the Hawthorne children, had been "exercising her facilities as a spiritual-writing medium."⁴⁸ During a seance, she would hold a pencil loosely between her fingers and allow free-play to the "spirit" that supposedly wrote through her fingers. On the occasion related by Hawthorne, Miss Shepard was in "an unconsciously mesmeric state"⁴⁹ when, as the group was engaged in a spiritualistic encounter, her hand began to write: through no professed power of her own, the pencil spelled out the name *Mary Runnel*. Julian Hawthorne, who attended some of the seances, has called "the spirit" *Mary Rondel* and said that she--the spirit--claimed to be able to find no peace unless Hawthorne would show her sympathy. Hawthorne promised that she could welcome as much of his sympathy as possible, although he had never heard of her before.⁵⁰ Hawthorne's acceptance of this quite astounding departure from orthodox Christianity, reinforces the humanism that pervaded his thinking and the tolerance for the paranormal that it included.

This spiritual inclusiveness reveals Hawthorne's emerging humanism--his willingness to validate what William James would come to call "the varieties of religious experience." Hawthorne later said that he could not quite believe in the veracity of the

⁴⁷*Works*, 18:1025, note.

⁴⁸*Works*, *FIN*, 14:397.

⁴⁹ *Works*, *FIN*, 14:399

⁵⁰ Julian Hawthorne, p.32.

occurrences but that he "should be glad to believe in them if [he] could." He also could not "sufficiently wonder at the pig-headedness both of metaphysicians and physiologists, in not accepting the phenomena so far as to make them the subject of investigation." Hawthorne defended Miss Shepard's character by avowing her integrity to be "absolutely indubitable," especially since she herself claimed "totally" to "disbelieve in the spiritual authenticity of what is communicated through her mediums."⁵¹ This story's quite surprising conclusion reflects Hawthorne's spiritual odyssey and the humanism that ultimately pervaded his thinking. The year after the seances took place with Ada Shepard and the Brownings in attendance, Hawthorne moved his family to Rome, then to England, where they left behind Mary Rondel and other spirits with whom they had communicated while summering in Italy. The next year the family returned to America; after Hawthorne died in 1864, no mention was made of Mary Rondel. Subsequently, though, relatives from Salem sent Julian some family papers, among which was an old folio bound in brown leather, a half dozen generations old. In this folio, which consisted mainly of love sonnets and the like, there appeared the name of *Mary Rondel* and, opposite it, *Daniel Hathorne*. Obviously a book of poetry had been given to a Mary Rondel by "Bold Daniel." Upon acquiring this information, Julian determined to get to the bottom of the incident and found that, "in 1755 or thereabouts, when Daniel was over twenty-one years old, he fell in love with a young woman named Mary Rondel, who lived in Boston. She returned his love; but, somehow or other, the affair ended unhappily, and

⁵¹ *Works, FIN*, 14:400, 401.

Mary soon after died."⁵² Of all the strange and wonderful plots that Nathaniel Hawthorne created from his own imagination, as well as those he took from actual historical events or fables, none could have been stranger than the story of Mary Rondel. It seems, therefore, that Hawthorne's narration of religious rhetoric finally came full circle from the use of Puritanism, to muted Catholicism, and finally to a capacity to dabble in occult spiritualism.

Although Hawthorne was humanistically willing to accept the credibility of all "religions," he was unwilling to accept the spiritual happenings in America in 1858, possibly because they contradicted his burgeoning humanism with a lack of tolerance. After a six-year absence from the states, Hawthorne wrote to his friend Fields rather despairingly of what he termed "The Great Awakenings," referring most certainly to the revivals initiated by Charles G. Finney: "Ticknor and you, I suppose, were both upset in the late religious earthquake, and when I enquire for you, the clerks will direct me to the 'Business Men's Conference.' It won't do. I shall be forced to come back again and take refuge in a London lodging."⁵³ Hawthorne is unable to deal with revivalism because its emphasis on the lostness of man and the supremacy of God is quite unacceptable to his humanistic position. Although a pluralist when acquiescing to the "new" religions of the nineteenth century, the "old" Catholicism, and even spiritualism, his aversion to revivalism because of its dogmatism further supports Hawthorne's increasingly humanistic approach to religion. His allusions to early Christian martyrs, his cognizance

⁵²Julian Hawthorne, p. 76.

⁵³Hawthorne to Fields (Sept. 3, 1858), *Works*, 18:151.

of the spirituality in the Catholic religion, his notice of elements of value in the Church of England; all these lend credence to his constant awareness of—and capacity to interact rhetorically with—some dimension of the Christian life, as long as it did not impinge upon his humanism as certain elements of American revivalism clearly did.

Just what was Mr. Hawthorne? According to Ada Shepard, the governess, soothsayer (?), necromancer (?), witch (?), he "consistently referred to himself as purely and simply a Protestant,"⁵⁴ with a genius for ambiguity that could mean everything or nothing. As one critic has so cogently surmised, Hawthorne "himself seems perfectly to have realized that literary value resides always in the controlled play and never in the achieved status of meaning."⁵⁵ So must it have been with the way he perceived and narrated his religion.

Although Hawthorne's use of religion was often only rhetorical—the sound and fury and babel of the language of a religion which he no longer believed—still, he masterfully used this language to support the religion that he had come to embrace—the religion, not of Puritanism, Unitarianism, Transcendentalism, Catholicism, or spiritualism, but the religion of Humanism.

⁵⁴Fick, p. 165.

⁵⁵Colacurcio, *Province*, p. 522.

CHAPTER 2

THE "ARTISTIC" JEREMIAD¹: SHARPENED

ON THE ANVIL OF ADVERSITY

Inherent in the study of Hawthorne's narration of his "religious self" is the Puritan concept of the jeremiad. Literary artists, whose heightened sensitivities sometimes lend themselves to more profound experiences of suffering, have often achieved artistic excellence during their times of suffering. Van Gogh and Beethoven come to mind, as does Hawthorne, whose suffering was in part financial, but whose response resonated the theological concepts and narrative posturing that pervaded his literature and letters. Economic hardships plagued him throughout his early life and career, intensifying his artistic productivity.² Since, as Edward Mather notes, the "fortunes of the Hawthorne family declined gradually during the eighty-seven years that separated the death of Judge John and the birth of him who was to change his name to

¹The American Puritan jeremiad, in many ways a political sermon, is cogently described by Sacvon Bercovitch, in *The American Jeremiad* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press 1978), p. xi.

²See Randall Stewart, *Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Biography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), pp. 75-100. His chapter on *The Scarlet Letter* especially shows Hawthorne in a financial struggle during the years in which this romance was written.

Hawthorne and become America's first great novelist,"³ this lack of funds was constantly a besetting problem to the writer, especially during the early part of his life and career. Through his attempt to attain literary prominence and to earn enough money to live comfortably, his art thrived. Immediately following his release from the custom house, he wrote his greatest narrative, *The Scarlet Letter*, in which, by using pain as a stimulus to produce great art, he worked through his distress and embarrassment. I propose that Hawthorne thereby wrote his own version of the American jeremiad. That thesis finds support in many correspondences of Hawthorne that have seen publication only in the last two decades and which have yet to be mined for what they illustrate about the relation between economics, suffering, and creativity in Hawthorne's imagination. The current chapter illustrates Hawthorne's narrational rendering of himself within the jeremiad tradition as one who, through the chastening of financial circumstances, reaches the epitome of his artistic endeavor. Out of his cycle of defeat and creativity emerges the story of Hester, the woman who enterprisingly overcomes her shame by artistically fabricating her life, much as she fashioned the scarlet A, making a thing of beauty out of derision.

³Edward Mather, *Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Modest Man* (West Port, Connecticut: Greenwood Press), p. 22.

I

Sacvan Bercovitch defines the scope of the American jeremiad as God's chastisement designed to bring the elect back into covenant relation in a "ritual designed to join social criticism to spiritual renewal." Early American clergy and politicians adopted the "jeremiad" to chastise citizens into submission to the law--the jeremiad became a national ritual, a part of the strategy to privilege the errand.⁴ The jeremiad tradition entailed the idea of a chosen people whose election precipitated special trials determined by God to scourge them back into obedience. In Hawthorne's life, this jeremiad of affliction, this scourge of God, manifested itself in financial hardships, producing works of literature.

Although the jeremiad of affliction can be seen in the creativity of men and women in other cultures and ages, it is more noticeable in American writers, with their heritage of Puritanism and a biblical exegesis related to suffering and endurance. They were inspired by the Apostle Paul, who might never have penned over half the New Testament had he not been imprisoned in Rome; Bunyan, too, wrote *The Pilgrim's Progress* while an inmate of the Bedford Prison. Thus, because of their devotion to Scripture and early Puritan beginnings, American writers had the legacy of seeing things in relation to Biblical truths and a covenant with God. In that covenant relationship, the jeremiad was spelled out in suffering that anticipated the blessings of prosperity.

⁴*American Jeremiad*, pp. xi; xiv.

Though he may not have been a Puritan, Puritan theology was Nathaniel Hawthorne's legacy, one that partly defines his narration of selfhood and his artistic works.

Crucial here is the way the American jeremiad posits persecution as a vehicle for directing "an imperiled people of God toward the fulfillment of their destiny, to guide them individually toward salvation."⁵ Biblically, Jeremiah was God's weeping prophet, crying out to Israel to repent of their sins, yet continually consoling them because of the affliction God had allowed as punishment for their failure to live up to their covenanted status and potential. God's chastening had come about only because they were God's chosen people, thus worthy to suffer for apostasy--but as a prelude to rapture: "Whom the Lord loves he chastens and scourges every son whom he receives" (Hebrews 12:6); "If you are without chastisement, then you are bastards and not sons" (Hebrews 12:18). From these and related passages, the Puritans inferred that the chastening hand of God was proof of their election. Although with a significant secularization of the concept, Hawthorne participated--through his creative excellence in times of financial stress--in this jeremiad consciousness.

Helpful for its pertinence to Hawthorne's creative growth through financial hardship is Lionel Trilling's observation that "the poet is a poet by reason of his sickness as well as by reason of his powers." Indeed, men and women generally seek the favor of God more actively during times of adversity than during hours of prosperity. Hawthorne was decidedly more productive during times of affliction, especially during financial

⁵Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad*, p. 9.

hardships; he was less creative and prolific during “good times.” Randall Stewart finds it meaningful that, during Hawthorne’s almost four-year courtship of Sophia Peabody, Hawthorne’s “productivity fell off sharply . . . [and] the full play of personal emotion seems to have been incompatible with artistic creation.”⁶

This tie between creativity and financial need stands related to what existing scholarship remarks about economic references in Hawthorne's works;⁷ still, Hawthorne's handling of his own poverty with increased literary production has failed to receive the notice it merits. Equally significant and related to Hawthorne’s narration of himself is the way he relates his own financial plight to the rhetoric and outlook of a jeremiad. He maintains that his financial affliction is the chastening hand of providence that will ultimately bring about good—in this case, the good of increased literary productivity. Just as the chastening hand of God brought suffering that produced ultimate good for the people of Jeremiah’s day—and just as the Puritans saw God’s affliction bringing about their holiness, thus their happiness—so Hawthorne narrates his own suffering of financial hardships as the jeremiad that produced literary artistry.

When he lost his job at the custom house in 1848, Hawthorne was distressed, especially since he had counted on the money from this position to support his family. However, Hawthorne's firing from his job at the custom house allowed him to “settle down to the business of writing his book, something he had not been able to do while he

⁶Stewart, p. 49.

⁷John Franzosa, “The Language of Inflation in ‘Rappaccini’s Daughter,’” *Texas Studies in Language and Literature* 24.1 (1982): 1-22.

was gainfully employed."⁸ Hawthorne narrates himself in "The Custom House" as one who, while working there, was unable to reflect on the story because his work was such a stress to his "fancy and sensibility."⁹ Therefore, he places himself under the guidance of the jeremiad and contends that, through financial hardships and affliction, he would emerge artistically successful. Because his work at the custom house occurred during a time of relative affluence, the necessity of creativity as a means of support had been negligible; thus, he renders his dismissal as serving the purpose of sharpening and refining his character for excellence.

The process dates to Hawthorne's childhood: the death of Hawthorne's father left Elizabeth Manning Hathorne and her three children at the mercy of the Manning family's charity. When Nathaniel was nine, the Mannings' considerable properties fell to Richard Manning's four sons after Richard's death. Robert Manning, the third of the Manning brothers, became the paternal figure for young Nathaniel,¹⁰ although all the Manning brothers contributed to his support. A document from his Bowdoin days credits Robert Manning, along with Samuel Manning and John Dike, as having paid his \$100 expense money for 1823,¹¹ and many of Hawthorne's letters while he was a student at Bowdoin reflect his asking for or receiving money from "Uncle Robert." For instance: "I rec'd

⁸David Kesterson, ed. *Critical Essays on Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1988), p. 1.

⁹*Works*, 1:15.

¹⁰James, R. Mellow, *Nathaniel Hawthorne in His Times* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1980), p. 15.

¹¹*Works*, 15:13.

your Letter inclosing 10 Doll. Also one from Uncle William on the same day inclosing 5."¹² Similarly, he wrote his uncle, "I am very comfortably situated, except that I am without money, and in debt to my Chum for wood."¹³ Not only do the letters reflect a close financial relationship to Robert Manning, who "pressed and paid for [his] education,"¹⁴ but they also reflect Hawthorne's dependence on his uncle to provide the means for Hawthorne's attendance at Bowdoin. From his earliest days, therefore, Hawthorne devised a "voice" for dealing with financial hardships,¹⁵ that narrative strategy would eventually result in a jeremiad outlook emphasizing the redemptive aspects of indebtedness.

Hawthorne, narrating his impoverished self, magnified his constant state of financial distress in his letters to his sister Louisa. "I suppose you have heard that a Letter containing money which Uncle Robert sent me sometime ago, was lost."¹⁶ Also, a letter to Robert Manning states, "The money was very acceptable to me and will last me till the end of the term."¹⁷ When Hawthorne attended his Bowdoin commencement

¹²Hawthorne to Robert Manning (December 4, 1821), *Works*, 15:165.

¹³Hawthorne to Robert Manning (February 20, 1822), *Works* 15:167.

¹⁴Michael J. Colacurcio, *The Province of Piety*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 25.

¹⁵Although Hawthorne's youthful request for money hardly comprises an instance of spurious narrative voice, his plea still anticipates his epistolary dealing with monetary needs and anticipates his later use of the jeremiad to deal with financial adversity.

¹⁶Hawthorne to Louisa Hawthorne (April 4, 1822), *Works* 15: 169.

¹⁷(August 12, 1823), *Works* 15:179.

ceremony,¹⁸ Uncle Robert's financial obligations to his young nephew were concluded. However, Robert still resembled a father-figure for Hawthorne, who continued to characterize himself as one who is in need of money:

For the Devil's sake, if you have any money, send me a little. It is now a month since I left Salem, and not a damned cent have I had, except five dollars that I borrowed of Uncle Robert--and out of that I paid my stage fare and other expenses. I came here trusting to Goodrich's positive promise to pay me 46 dollars as soon as I arrived and he has kept promising from one day to another; still I do not see that he means to pay me at all. . . . [Goodrich] is a good-natured sort of man enough; but rather an unscrupulous one in money matters, and not particularly trustworthy in anything.¹⁹

Hawthorne's chronic state of poverty would be the impetus to his creativity, and his artistic narration of himself to family members serves as the means to that end. Consequently Hawthorne's financial condition did not improve greatly following his graduation, for he also wrote Louisa of his preoccupation with monetary worry: "You must pay for the letter, as my pockets may be entirely empty when it comes."²⁰ During this interim period Hawthorne published many stories in periodicals, though he did not

¹⁸Hawthorne was graduated on September 7, 1825, Edward Haviland Miller, *Salem is My Dwelling Place: A Life of Nathaniel Hawthorne* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1991), p. 75.

¹⁹Hawthorne to Louisa Hawthorne (February 15, 1836), *Works*, 15:236.

²⁰Hawthorne to Louisa Hawthorne, *Works*, 15:237.

this interim period Hawthorne published many stories in periodicals, though he did not find their publication very remunerative. He kept writing, despite the poor compensation, having been paid only \$35 for his immensely popular "The Gentle Boy" in 1830; his pay for other work during these years was also paltry.²¹ Finally, in 1837 at the prodding of Bridge, Hawthorne "identified himself for the first time on the title page of *Twice Told Tales* and formally 'opened intercourse with the world.'"²² Still plagued by lack of funds, Hawthorne relentlessly forged his art, producing for the world superb short works-- including "Roger Malvin's Burial," "The Haunted Mind," "Young Goodman Brown," "The Minister's Black Veil," "Mr. Higginbotham's Catastrophe," "My Kinsman, Major Molineux"--during the years 1825 to 1837.²³

²¹Stewart, pp. 31, 34.

²²Miller, p. 104.

²³Stewart, p. 44; for the quality of these works, see (on "Roger Malvin's Burial") Gerald Levin, *The Short Story: An Inductive Approach* (New York: Harcourt, 1967), pp. 82-83; (on "The Haunted Mind") see Norman H. Hostetler, "Imagination and Point of View in 'The Haunted Mind,'" *ATQ*, 39 (1978): 263-67; (on "Young Goodman Brown") Robert C. Grayson, "Young Goodman Hawthorne," *American Notes and Queries* 21.7,8 (1983): 103-106; Michael J. Colacurcio "Visible Sanctity and Specter Evidence: The Moral World of Hawthorne's 'Young Goodman Brown,'" *Essex Institute Historical Collections* 110 (1974): 259-99; Colacurcio, "Parson Hooper's Power of Blackness: Sin and Self in "The Minister's Black Veil," *Prospects*, 5 (1980): 331-411; (on "Mr. Higginbotham's Catastrophe") James Duban, "The Skeptical Context of Hawthorne's "Mr. Higginbotham's Catastrophe," *American Literature*, 48 (1976): 292-301; (on "My Kinsman, Major Molineux") Robert C. Grayson, "The New England Sources for 'My Kinsman Major Molineux,'" *American Literature*, 54 (1982): 545-59 and James Duban, "Robins and Robinarchs in 'My Kinsman, Major Molineux,'" *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 38.3 (1983): 271-88.

His meeting with Sophia Peabody in 1838 and their falling in love by the end of that year may have induced a lag in creative productivity. Yet his happiness during that period relates, as well, to the fact that in January of 1839 he got a position as measurer of salt and coal at the Boston Custom House, a position that he held for two years at an annual salary of \$1500.²⁴ This relative affluence afforded him some degree of relaxation, causing a lull in his writing. Still, financial bliss was not to continue. Hawthorne resigned his position at the custom house in 1841 and joined the Brook Farm Community, investing the considerable sum of \$1000 in its stock. Now dependent upon his literary creativity to sustain himself, he contracted with O'Sullivan, editor of the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, for the publication of some future work.²⁵ Because of the magazine's unwillingness to pay for his work in a timely manner, the beginning of the Hawthorne's married life saw him again beset with financial woes. As Stewart notes, their first home in the Old Manse at Concord would have been that perfect paradise for Hawthorne and his new bride had such unpleasant realities as house rent and groceries not marred their love nest, causing Hawthorne great embarrassment because of his inability to meet financial obligations.²⁶

Still, had Hawthorne found all his needs satisfied, he might not have been compelled to create some of his greatest works by means of a jeremiad of affliction manifesting itself in his artistry. Narrating himself as impoverished to Horatio Bridge,

²⁴Stewart, p. 53.

²⁵See Hawthorne's letter to Robert Carter (August 20, 1842), *Works* 15:644.

²⁶Stewart, p. 66.

he bemoans the fact that he is short of cash, having been disappointed in not receiving money that he expected from three or four sources; that makes Hawthorne “sigh for the regular monthly payments at the Custom House.” Hawthorne adds, “We are very happy, and have nothing to wish for, except a better-filled purse; and not improbably gold would bring trouble with it—at least my wife says so and therefore exhorts me to be content with little.”²⁷ This somewhat clerical utterance anticipates the jeremiad outlook featured in Hawthorne’s rhetoric. “Much eaten up with writing for a living,”²⁸ Hawthorne again experienced financial affliction that spurred his creativity.

In a related vein, Hawthorne's appeals for money encouraged his friends to try to secure political appointments for him. Because those attempts were often unsuccessful, Hawthorne never seemed to have quite enough to pay the bills—that is until Polk became president in 1844. But during less lucrative times, Hawthorne worked diligently on three volumes : *Grandfather's Chair* (1841), a second edition of the *Twice-Told Tales* (1842), and the *Journal of an African Cruiser* (1845), all the while petitioning his friends for financial help through political appointments. When Polk occupied the White House, Hawthorne's prospects improved, although not immediately, for Hawthorne continued to discuss his financial hardships with friends such as Horatio Bridge: “I have been greatly bothered with pecuniary difficulties, and am so still, but hope unweariedly for better

²⁷Hawthorne to Horatio Bridge (March 1843), in *Works*, 15:681.

²⁸Hawthorne to Horatio Bridge (May 1843), in *Works*, 15:686.

things."²⁹ While visiting Salem, Hawthorne decried financial woes, worrying about "the vile burthen which had irked and chafed me so long--that consciousness of debt, and pecuniary botheration, and the difficulty of providing even for the day's wants Polk's election has certainly brightened our prospects; and we have a right to expect that our difficulties will vanish, in the course of a few months."³⁰ And again narrating his financial woes: "I trust Heaven will not permit us to be greatly pinched by poverty, during the remainder of our stay there [at Concord]."³¹ These letters to his wife and friends are fraught with financial distress, but all the while Hawthorne's creativity and production grew in direct proportion to his financial obligations.

These financial obligations were met in part by his creative narration, especially to those of his friends like Horatio Bridge, from whom Hawthorne borrowed \$100 on May 9, 1845.³² Reinforcing a rather general knowledge of Hawthorne's hardships was a letter from Emerson to Carolyn Sturgis in which Emerson writes that Hawthorne was "having trouble in keeping up his rent, not having paid a cent to Samuel Ripley for the use of the Old Manse through more than half the year 1845."³³ Having purchased stock in Brook Farm for \$1000 in October 1842, Hawthorne tried to capitalize on his

²⁹Hawthorne to Horatio Bridge (November 1844), *Works*, 16:65.

³⁰Hawthorne to Sophia (November 1844), *Works*, 16:68.

³¹Hawthorne to Sophia (December 20, 1844), *Works*, 16:73.

³²Julian Hawthorne, *Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Wife* (Boston: James R. Osgood, 1884), p. 281.

³³Ralph L. Rusk, *The Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939), p. 307.

investment from the Brook Farm Institute. Since Dana and Ripley were able to pay him only \$475.95 at that time, they signed a promissory note on November 7.³⁴ Hawthorne, rather desperate for his money, suggested suing George Ripley, or possibly the transcendentalist community, since he claims to have "dunned him [Ripley] sufficiently" for the balance. Dana and Ripley had only made token payments in the years that followed, and in 1845 were unable to pay anything because of the cost of completing their phalanstery, the central building of their Fourierist organization.³⁵ According to Julian Hawthorne, the money Dana and Ripley owed Hawthorne would have been more than enough to pay all their debts.³⁶

Since this money was not forthcoming, Hawthorne remonstrated with Bridge for not answering his requests for \$150:

Very probably you may not be able to lend it—in which case it cannot be helped; but I shall find myself in a devilish ugly predicament, as we are to be ejected from this house on Thursday of this week. The letter stated the disappointments which compelled me to have recourse to you, and likewise the circumstances which gave me confidence of being able to repay you at the close of the year.³⁷

³⁴Lindsay Swift, *Brook Farm* (New York: Corinth Books, 1961), p. 22.

³⁵Hawthorne to Hillard (September 5, 1845), *Works*, 16:119.

³⁶See *Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Wife*, pp. 286-87, for a letter written from Sophia to her mother stating that to be the case.

³⁷ Hawthorne to Horatio Bridge (September 28, 1845), *Works*, 16:120.

In response, Bridge replied that he would send the money but feared that Hawthorne might even have begun to distrust one who could never fail to serve him to the utmost of his power.³⁸ Although during this period Hawthorne had edited the *African Cruiser*, Horatio's Bridge's journal, to help supply money to pay his bills, he was also producing some stories that many critics believe to be among his best, including "The Birthmark" (March 1843); "The Celestial Railroad" (May 1843); "Egotism; or the Bosom Serpent" (March 1843); and "Rappaccini's Daughter" (December 1844), each written when Hawthorne was financially impoverished. His formulating of these excellent stories at this time further supports the idea that, although he was much pained by his continued financial stress and continued to cry out to those of his friends who were able to help, he nevertheless produced superior art during times of poverty.³⁹

Polk's inauguration in 1845 clearly opened the door to a political appointment for Hawthorne; the appointment as "Surveyor for the District of Salem and Beverly and Inspector of the Revenue for the Port of Salem," for which Hawthorne was to receive

³⁸*Works*, 16:121.

³⁹On the excellency of these stories, see Edward S. Van Winkle, "Aminadab, the Unwilling 'Bad Anima,'" *American Notes and Queries* 8 (1970): 131-133, and Steven Youra, "'The Fatal Hand': A Sign of Confusion in Hawthorne's 'The Birthmark,'" *American Transcendentalist Quarterly* 60 (1986): 43-51; Joseph C. Pattison, "'The Celestial Railroad' as Dream Tale," *American Quarterly* 20 (1968): 224-236, and Sacvan Bercovitch, "Diablos in Salem," *English Language Notes* 6 (1969): 280-285; David Van Leer and Robert D. Arner respectively address "Egotism; or, the Bosom Serpent" in "Roderick's Other Serpent: Hawthorne's Use of Spencer," *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance* 27.2 (1981): 73-84, and "Hawthorne and Jones Very: Two Dimensions of Satire in 'Egotism: or, the Bosom Serpent,'" *New England Quarterly* 42 (1969): 267-275; also see Eerhard Alsen, "The Ambitious Experiment of Dr. Rappaccini," *American Literature* 43 (1971): 304-331.

\$1,200 a year, occurred almost a year after Polk's inauguration, ameliorated Hawthorne's financial impoverishment, and alleviated his need to write quite so frantically for a living.⁴⁰ During his time at the custom house, however, his artistic endeavors suffered, since he was no longer under compulsion to create his stories for pay.

Although Hawthorne was constrained aesthetically when employed at the custom house, his financial conditions became grim when he resigned from that job in June of 1849. Of course, the removal, as painful as it was to Hawthorne's financial well-being, resulted in creative excellence. His friend George Hillard, aware of the financial stress brought about by Hawthorne's "untimely" and unexpected removal, collected a considerable sum from Hawthorne's admirers, who inscribed the gift to you who "have done so much for American literature." Hawthorne eloquently expressed thanks, and at the same time urged a jeremiad outlook upon his tribulations in saying that their generosity made an "incitement to his utmost exertions":

It is sweet to be remembered and cared for by one's friends . . . sweet to think that they deem me worth upholding in my poor walk through life. And it is bitter, nevertheless, to need their support. It is something else besides pride that teaches me that ill-success in life is really and justly a matter of shame. I am ashamed of it, and I ought to be. The fault of failure is attributive. . . to the man who fails . . . The money, dear Hillard, will smooth my path for a long time to come. The only way in which a

⁴⁰Miller, p. 242.

man can retain his self-respect, while availing himself of the generosity of his friends, is, *by making it an incitement to his utmost exertions*, so that he may not need their help again. I shall look upon it so--nor will shun any drudgery that my hand shall find to do, if thereby I may win bread.⁴¹

While expressing bitterness over his financial plight, Hawthorne reiterates his belief in the efficacy of the jeremiad as he narrates himself as a participant in the hope that this hardship will incite him to succeed. Although Hawthorne here manipulates jeremiad rhetoric to accept charity with grace, he would, in fact, prove faithful to his words by publishing *The Scarlet Letter*, forged in flames of financial adversity.

Hawthorne clearly produced his best fiction during times of poverty--recent scholarship has borne this out. Thus, it should not surprise that his contemporaries regarded these earlier works as most masterful. Although a few of today's scholars considers *The Blithedale Romance* and *The Marble Faun* excellent achievements, Poe and Melville both found something artificial about these and other "later" works.⁴² Indeed, the financial instability that clouded Hawthorne's early years was an impetus for artistic achievement. From his return to Salem in 1825, and then following his graduation from Bowdoin, and until 1837, when *Twice Told Tales* was first published anonymously, Hawthorne experienced his period of apprenticeship, when he read much in the mornings and wrote in the afternoons.⁴³ During those years of struggle, his literary

⁴¹Hawthorne to Hillard (January 20, 1850), *Works* 16:309; emphasis added.

⁴²Stewart, p. 70.

⁴³Stewart, p. 28.

brilliance reached its pinnacle. Following *The Scarlet Letter* and Hawthorne's relative prosperity, his creative genius waned. Although he still produced some stories and novels, the later writing never approached the brilliance of the work done during his time of hardship and affliction, again implying a relationship between painful experiences and artistic creation; as Hawthorne himself remarked, artistic prosperity followed the "heaven"-ordained event of his "ejection from the Custom House." And again mining consolation and exultation from disappointment, Hawthorne observed, "[My family is] all well; and I thank God (whenever I happen to think of it) for so ordering matters that I was turned out of the Custom-House."⁴⁴ He similarly reiterates this jeremiad in a letter where he asks David Roberts to pay a note plus interest that Ben Coleman holds due to Colonel Hall: "My family and myself are well and prosperous; and we thank heaven with one voice for my ejection from the Custom House."⁴⁵ James R. Mellow says that from the emotional experience of public recriminations and private grief, Hawthorne fashioned a powerful story of public shame and private guilt, an American classic that was one of the finest in national literature, one that could have been written only by a person who had experienced the pain of defeat.⁴⁶ We see by Hawthorne's rhetoric in his letters that he was aware of the jeremiad thread that was at work in his life. Because even as the prophets called for blessing at repentance after affliction; even as the early Puritans called the nation back to God by chastisement; even more Hawthorne seemed to

⁴⁴Hawthorne to Zachariah Burchmore (Sept. 17, 1850), *Works*, 16:385.

⁴⁵*Works*, 16:397.

⁴⁶Mellow, p. 302.

realize that the hand of adversity drove him to artistic excellence much as it had done for many others whose aesthetic creativity was sharpened by pain.

Because Hawthorne's affliction engendered the struggle that produced *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne may, I suggest, identify with Hester when, as she endures her own shame and suffers for her sin, her artistic talents grow in proportion to her affliction. Just as Hawthorne wrote more creatively and imaginatively under financial stress, so Hester innovatively fashions her art, her needlework, and her service to others, magnificently, creatively, in part because she, too, has been through the furnace of adversity.

II

Nowhere is Hawthorne's narration of the jeremiad tradition more clearly defined than in his depiction of Hester Prynne, who ultimately overcomes transgression and adversity in her battle with the power of the New England theocracy. Having clearly intimated his passionate advocacy of the jeremiad in his notes, letters, and journals, Hawthorne now uses a fictional character, his possible alter-ego, Hester Prynne, as a metaphor for the American jeremiad sermon—in this case the creation of the finest art by virtue of pain. Hawthorne's bout with financial affliction inspired superior literature; Hester's affliction results in her own artistic excellence, one related to her spiritual evolution. Not surprisingly, scholarship about *The Scarlet Letter* has long emphasized theology: whether Dimmesdale's struggle to reconcile grace and works, or Pearl's stature as a divine infant who would redeem the world, or the routes to salvation set forth by

Catholic dogma, confession, and contrition.⁴⁷ As for Hester's conflict with an imposing religious hierarchy, Michael Colacurcio sees Hester as a type of Anne Hutchinson.⁴⁸ Since the publication of *The Scarlet Letter* in 1850, the responses from readers, even on theological issues, have been profuse. I, in turn, assert Hester's Christological status as she vicariously accords salvation to Dimmesdale, to Pearl, and typologically to the whole community in her struggle with the religious hierarchy of the day. Her suffering, I propose, finds an analogue in Hawthorne's jeremiad of affliction—the refining and perfecting of artistry in the face of extreme distress.

Indeed, Hawthorne places Hester, Dimmesdale, Pearl, and Chillingworth in their Eden, waiting for the serpent's sting—the sting that would bring the opportunity for redemption. Through her own affliction, Hester provides vicarious redemption for a depraved community—much as Christ had redemptively done for depraved humanity on Calvary. She, again typifying Christ, becomes the fulfillment of the prophecy in Genesis 3:15, the bruising of the serpent's head through the seed of the woman. She does this by epitomizing personal and collective sin and paying the penalty—in her case ostracism from the community and the bearing of the scarlet letter—her cross of redemption.

⁴⁷ See Reiner Smolinski, "Covenant Theology and Arthur Dimmesdale's Pelagianism," *ATQ* ns 1 (1987): 211; Leland S. Person, Jr, "*The Scarlet Letter* and the Myth of the Divine Child," *ATQ* 44 (1979): 308; Eileen Dreyer, "'Confession' in *The Scarlet Letter*," *Journal of American Studies* 25.1 (1991): 80.

⁴⁸Michael J. Colacurcio, "Footsteps of Anne Hutchinson: The Context of *The Scarlet Letter*," *English Literary History* 39 (1972): 459-94.

Hawthorne's redemptive treatise therefore illuminates the Calvinistic concept of the efficacy of the jeremiad consciousness to bring beauty out of suffering. Pertinent here is the gospel of John, which relates the story of a woman taken in adultery (John 8:4-11). When this woman's accusers present her to Christ, he begins to write in the sand, and her accusers disperse. We are not told what he writes, but he presumably points out their own sins of adultery. In the scriptural account, the woman's accusers presumably depart because of their guilt. Thus, even though the woman is a sinner, the greater sin, that of the religious leaders, is hypocrisy.

This hypocrisy was "spiritual adultery" characterized biblically by Israel's "whoring" after false gods. Similarly, in Deuteronomy, the Lord says to Moses, "Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them" (Deuteronomy 31:16). Moses is likewise warned against infidelity: "Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go a whoring after their gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and one call thee and thou eat of his sacrifice . . . and their daughters go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods" (Exodus 34:15, 16). Moreover, the prophet Hosea's harlot wife, lusting after her lovers, is compared throughout the book of Hosea to Israel's lusting after false Gods, while Hosea is said to resemble the God of Israel, who continually seeks to restore her. Throughout the Old Testament the prophets applied "adultery" allegorically to Israel's apostasy. Likewise, the church has considered this union between Yahweh as the bridegroom and Israel as the bride to be

analogous to the marriage relationship.⁴⁹ In *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne likewise compares physical adultery with apostasy.

Hawthorne metaphorically implies spiritual adultery in *The Scarlet Letter* as he fashions the preacher into the arch-sinner. In relating the sin to the clergy, he confronts the hypocrisy of the early Puritan ministers who are all too eager to overlook their own apostasy in comparing Hester to "her of Babylon."⁵⁰ Hester's greater sin, more than the physical act of adultery, was adulterating the Puritan theology that Dimmesdale sought to keep in place.⁵¹ According to the Puritan hierarchy, Hester was guilty, not only of physical adultery, but also of prostituting the law of the community. The Puritans, coming to the new land to find their "city upon a hill," in their love affair with God, nevertheless departed from Him; the continual biblical mandate was that they return to God. The Puritans had adulterated their love into extreme religious legalism that reached consummate heights in the witchcraft trials. Dimmesdale reflects such legalism and hypocrisy. As guilty a sinner as Hester, he hides behind his cloak, allowing her alone to suffer public shame to preserve his standing in the community as the "man of God." In

⁴⁹ J. J. Davis, *New Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 1. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), 431.

⁵⁰ Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne. The Scarlet Letter*, ed. William Charvat et al., 20 vol. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1962-) 1:110, hereafter referred to as *Works*.

⁵¹See Colacurcio, "Footsteps," 459-94, for a comparison of Hester and Anne Hutchinson as well as a comparison of Dimmesdale and John Cotton, and "The Woman's Own Choice: Sex Metaphor and the Puritan Sources of *The Scarlet Letter*," in Colacurcio, ed., *New Essays on The Scarlet Letter* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 101-135, for Hester's transgression of covenant psychology.

the first scaffold scene he, with seeming sincerity, asks her to reveal the partner in her crime, surmising that she will not. He further adulterates his own office, the holy office of the ministry, as he urges her to reveal her partner in the crime if she "felt it to be of her soul's peace, . . . [that her] earthly punishment will thereby be made more effectual to salvation." And he as much as admits his part in the spiritual as well as physical adultery when he admonishes Hester, "What can thy silence do for him, except it tempt him . . . to add hypocrisy to sin?"⁵² She refuses to name him, but he refuses to name himself, allowing her to suffer alone for seven years, the biblical fullness of time, until he finally admits his part in the sin and confesses it to the community. This act of oblation, painful though it is for Dimmesdale, will ultimately bring about his psychological release from the suffering--thus his salvation--in a further affirmation of the jeremiad.

Consistent with Hester's Christological identity is the way she emerges from a tomb of imprisonment, by way of the door "heavily timbered with oak, and studded with iron spikes," emblematic of the cross and the pains of crucifixion. Outside the prison door grows the rose bush covered with blossoms, but also featuring thorns like those out of which the crown of thorns was woven. Familiar with typology,⁵³ Hawthorne may well

⁵² *Works*, 1:67.

⁵³ *Works*, 1:47, 48; Ursula Brumm, "Christ and Adam as 'Figures' in American Literature," *The American Puritan Imagination*, ed. Sacvan Bercovitch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1974) notes that, in the writings of Hawthorne, this kind of symbolism abounds in various typological references; see also Sacvan Bercovitch, "Endicott's Breastplate: Symbolism and Typology in 'Endicott and the Red Cross,'" *Studies in Short Fiction* 4 (1967): 289-99.

have implemented the old story of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, in which the crown of thorns worn by Christ is prefigured in the ram that was to be a sacrifice of propitiation for Isaac.⁵⁴ The metaphorical significance of the rose bush again comes to light when Hester arrives at Governor Bellingham's home to deliver his gloves. At this meeting she must also answer the charge that she should not be allowed to keep her child, since hints have been made that Pearl was of demon origin. The religious elders argue that a demon child should not be allowed to remain a further stumbling block for her mother's soul. However, they also argue that if the child is capable of moral and religious growth--and hence one of the elect--the law should remove her from her mother, the sinful woman, and allow her to be raised in a "wiser and better guardianship."⁵⁵ As Hester waits for an audience with the governor, little Pearl, seeing the rose bush, begins to cry for a rose. Hester refuses her. Similarly, when the old minister asks, "my child, who made thee?" Pearl replies perversely that she wasn't made at all but had been plucked off the rose bush that grew beside the prison door--the rose bush, perhaps prefigured in the Rose of Sharon, a type of God's mercy and an Old Testament designation of the coming Messiah (Song of Solomon 2:1). We also learn that the roses in the governor's garden are red, reminding Pearl of the ones she had seen since her infancy. "This fantasy was suggested by the near proximity of the Governor's red roses . . . together with her recollection of the prison rose-bush, which she had passed in coming hither."⁵⁶ The rose bush with its

⁵⁴ See Genesis 22:13 ff.

⁵⁵ *Works*, 1:100.

⁵⁶ *Works*, 1:107-112.

thorns thus becomes an emblem of appropriated redemption as well as a jeremiad--a symbol of the affliction that precipitates beauty.

Likewise, when Hester is released from prison to stand upon the scaffold, she is led by the beadle to the "place appointed for her punishment." Just as Christ carried his cross to Calvary down the *Via Dolorosa*, so Hester Prynne carries the child and the burning letter on her breast to the scaffold, "as if her heart had been flung into the street for all to trample on." On the scaffold she endures the shame; as Christ hung naked on the cross, Hester stands fully clothed upon the scaffold, but "under the heavy weight of a thousand unrelenting eyes, all fastened upon her and concentrated at her bosom." Here she is subliminally undressed before the crowd; in much the same way that the onlookers gawked at Christ, the Puritan spectators gazed at Hester on the scaffold as though they were looking "at her death."⁵⁷

Christ-like, she refuses to utter a word in her own defense. "Madam Hester absolutely refuseth to speak,"⁵⁸ the townsman announces. She refuses to name Arthur Dimmesdale as the father of her child. Even at a plea by Dimmesdale himself, she merely shakes her head. "Speak out that name!"⁵⁹ he entreats her. If she were but to name the man, the scarlet letter would be removed from her breast. It was likewise said of Christ, "He saved others; himself he could not save" (Matthew 27:42); he could have come down from the cross, claimed his identity, and saved himself from death; but if he

⁵⁷ *Works*, 1:54-57.

⁵⁸ *Works*, 1:62.

⁵⁹ *Works* 1:67.

had, he could not have been the propitiation for humanity. Likewise Hester Prynne refuses to reveal the man, and in this refusal takes on his sin, saving him from the ridicule and persecution of the townspeople, becoming his sin-bearer, but condemning herself to death, the death of ostracism and separation from the community. By having suffered many times over the punishment for her sin, she becomes the “Christ-ian” who gives her life for another and in the sacrifice reaps the rewards of redemption--again the “beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness . . . that he might be glorified” (Isaiah 61:3)--the jeremiad of affliction worked out to produce good. Dimmesdale's redemption takes place on the scaffold when he finally confesses his part in the sin. For seven years, God's complete time, he has failed to admit his guilt and has been slowly dying. So, not surprisingly, Chillingworth tells Dimmesdale, “Hadst thou sought the whole earth over . . . there was no one place so secret,—no high place nor lowly place, where thou couldst have escaped me,—save on this very scaffold.”⁶⁰ Only by bringing his sin to the scaffold, again symbolic of the cross, could Dimmesdale escape the eternal punishment of hell. Hester's appropriation of the jeremiad has provided the means by which he could go to the cross and confess his wrongdoing. She has been the Christ figure, refusing to name Dimmesdale's part in the sin, bearing the shame alone, and finally providing him access to the cross by way of her

⁶⁰ *Works*, 1:253.

death to self. Dimmesdale acknowledges this in his dying moment as Hester has said, "Surely, surely, we have ransomed one another . . ." ⁶¹

And his final words, "By bringing me hither, to die this death of triumphant ignominy before the people! Had either of these *agonies*⁶² been wanting, I had been lost for ever! Praised be his name! His will be done! Farewell!"⁶³ Though he credits God with allowing the persecution that led to his confession and repentance, without Hester's seven years of sacrificial suffering, the fullness of suffering, Dimmesdale would not have received his final absolution via a *felix culpa*, the fortunate fall, or should we say the jeremiad of affliction, that allows man to sin and thus experience the inestimable joys of redemption--again, the jeremiad that brings greater beauty out of suffering.

Hawthorne's construct of narrating the jeremiad in his own life by way of financial reversals relates to Hester's affliction and suffering. The scarlet letter typifies her cross, one initially thrust on her by society but ultimately taken up willingly. The promise of redemption through the seed of the woman who will bruise the serpent's head is fulfilled at some level through the conversion of Hester. To some degree she saves Dimmesdale, and the community, for she identifies with those who brought her their "sorrows and perplexities, . . . besought her counsel, as one who had herself gone through a mighty trouble."⁶⁴ Hawthorne relates Hester's own suffering as a scapegoat for the

⁶¹ *Works*, 1:256.

⁶² Emphasis mine.

⁶³ *Works*, 1:257.

⁶⁴ *Works*, 1:263.

community to his; when dismissed from in the Custom House, he produces his greatest work through affliction; when dismissed from the community, she becomes her own greater work of art as she manifests herself to the community of women whom she comforts. In this respect Hawthorne narrates himself through Hester as he creates the jeremiad of affliction issuing in “novel” forms of creativity and reconciliation.

CHAPTER 3

THE AUTHORITY OF SHAKESPEARE: HAWTHORNE, DELIA BACON, AND THE ANTINOMIANISM OF “ARTISTRY”

Much Madness is divinest Sense--

Much Sense--the starkest Madness--

(Emily Dickinson, 1862)

Scholars of nineteenth-century intellectual life have recently focused on the importance of Delia Bacon, the woman who, in *The Philosophy of the Plays of Shakespeare Unfolded*,¹ denied that Shakespeare wrote the plays generally attributed to him. Nina Baym, apprising us of Bacon's relation to Harriet Beecher Stowe, Lydia Maria Child, and Margaret Fuller, relates how Bacon echoed their protests against authority; by extension, Bacon reacted against the New England Calvinism that had dominated her father and then besmirched her character. While Baym discusses Bacon as Hawthorne's last “heroine,” focusing on Bacon's historicist reading of Shakespeare,² the current study makes use of previously unmined material from Hawthorne's correspondences to envision that heroine status as intimately linked to Hawthorne's

¹Delia Bacon, *The Philosophy of the Plays of Shakespeare Unfolded*, with a preface by Nathaniel Hawthorne (London: Groombridge and Sons, 1857).

² See Nina Baym, “Delia Bacon, History's Odd Woman Out,” *New England Quarterly* 69 (1996): 223-49; and “Delia Bacon: Hawthorne's Last Heroine,” *Nathaniel Hawthorne Review* 20.2 (1994): 1-10.

preoccupation with Bacon's "antinomianism." Beyond casting light on the relationship between Hawthorne and Bacon, this emphasis brings into focus the most crucial aesthetic significance of Hawthorne's attraction to the woman who denied the "authority" of Shakespeare. Hawthorne embraced Delia Bacon's philosophy, not because he believed what she said about Shakespeare, but because he saw in her work a resonance of his own literary genius. What he declines to accept as truth, he admires for its creativity.

Ever intrigued, even frightened, by women Hawthorne ventured to aid this one woman in nineteenth-century New England, in part because of his admiration for her creative ability, in part because of her antinomianism. Antinomianism and creativity seemed to merge in Delia Bacon because creativity is sparked by an antinomian resistance to convention. Their pious self-image notwithstanding, the early Puritans--about whom Hawthorne wrote so frequently--were antinomian at heart because they had left their homeland and religious establishments, rebelling against the established principles of their societies. Later this antinomian rebellion--embracing direct revelation of truth or right in opposition to the law--brought about the war of independence.³ An antinomianism strain ultimately emerged in the American renaissance, where the heart of the romantic movement was the personification of antinomianism.⁴

³Although antinomianism alone hardly forged these colonies into a union, the early patriots considered that, in rebelling against the English law, they were breaking the covenant of Romans 14, against God's anointed rule over them--only to be exculpated when placed alongside the greater sin of transgression of conscience.

⁴For a discussion of antinomianism see David D. Hall, *The Antinomian Controversy: A Documentary History* (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press., 1968). See also Wesley T. Mott, "Emerson and Antinomianism: The Legacy of the Sermons," *American Literature* 50 (1978): 369-397. Emerson intimated in "The

Of Hawthorne's circle of women, none was more acrimonious, abrasive, unconventional, and gifted as a literary commentator than Delia Bacon. Delia's brother Leonard, while a young theological student at Andover Seminary, encouraged her to read Shakespeare; from there sprang her interest in the great bard. A lifelong study of the plays fostered an increasing intuition that Shakespeare was not responsible for the great productions that most of the literary world accepted as having issued from such an uneducated and unlearned actor. Unpredictable and unusual, Delia Bacon was not afraid to confront either the literary or the social establishment. Her tempestuous and daring affair with a young minister, Alexander MacWhorter, ended in a suit for alienation of affections. This indelicate liaison, coupled with a rebellious spirit, was only preliminary to the antinomian inclination of the young Calvinist woman, sister of the fiery minister of the First Church of New Haven. The real representation of her antinomianism would surface as she sought to prove her speculation about Shakespeare.

Hawthorne, along with others, was called upon to judge the credibility of *The Philosophy of the Plays of Shakespere Unfolded*; in January 1857 he claimed to be an "utter disbeliever in Miss Bacon's theory, but much impressed with the depth and acuteness of her criticism of Shakespeare."⁵ A few weeks later, although Hawthorne had

Transcendentalist," his lecture read at the Masonic Temple in Boston, in December 1841, that to be a transcendentalist was to be a spiritual antinomian; see Robert E. Spiller, ed, *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 201-216..

⁵ Hawthorne to Ticknor (Jan. 2, 1857) in *The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne. The Letters: 1854-57*, ed. William Charvat et al., 20 vols. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1962-) 18:3, 4.

still not completed his reading of the book, he wrote Ticknor again, "There is a great deal of talent and originality in the book, but I confess, I find it hard reading, and get almost asleep over it, in the evening."⁶ How Hawthorne could be a reliable judge, having not yet finished her book, is hard to determine; however, he seems to have read an earlier précis from *Putnam's Monthly Magazine*.⁷

Hawthorne's preoccupation with antinomianism in "Mrs. Hutchinson," in *The Scarlet Letter*, and in "The Gentle Boy" helps to define the "womanhood" of Catherine and Hester.⁸ Their plights, in turn, seem related to the possible resonances of Bacon's personality in characters in both *The Scarlet Letter* and in *The Blithedale Romance*. As a young woman persecuted by the religious establishment, Bacon rejected authority because she considered authority to be "provincial and lowly."⁹ Moreover, the "lawlessness" in both readings might corroborate the sentiment that Hawthorne's rejection of "convention"--of "the custom house"--is prerequisite for true artistic creativity.¹⁰ I propose that this relationship between figurative antinomianism and

⁶ Hawthorne to Ticknor (Jan. 16, 1857), in *Works*, 18:10.

⁷ Only one of a planned series of articles preliminary to the book was published by *Putnam's* (See *The Letters 1853-56*, introduction by Thomas Woodson, p. 78). That was "William Shakespeare and His Plays; An Inquiry Concerning Them," *Putnam's* 7 (January, 1856) 1-19.

⁸ Michael J. Colacurcio, "Footsteps of Anne Hutchinson: The Context of *The Scarlet Letter*," *English Literary History* 39 (1972): 459-94.

⁹ Baym, "History," 225.

¹⁰ See, for this emphasis, Joseph J. Moldenhauer, "Bartleby and The Custom House," *Delta* 7 (1978): 38.

artistic creativity illuminates the relationship between Hawthorne and Delia Bacon, Hawthorne's virtual artistic alter-ego.

That outlook might at first seem inconsistent with what we know about Hawthorne and women. Hawthorne was misogynous in his encounter with Margaret Fuller, was almost incestuous in his dealings with his mother and sisters, was idolatrous in his relationship with Sophia, and was jealous of his era's "scribbling women" writers.¹¹ As for the women he created--women such as Hester Prynne, Beatrice, Faith, Phoebe, Zenobia--he ascribed to them a "gender exclusive" potency. Hester, a feminine Christ figure, overcomes sin by confession and oblation, providing salvation for herself as well as for Dimmesdale, Pearl, and the whole Puritan community; Beatrice, despite her innate poison, is more sincere than her lover, Giovanni, or her creator, Rappaccini (she at least is true to her nature); Faith, specter evidence to the contrary, greets her husband in the village--pink ribbons intact--the morning after the witches' sabbath; Phoebe is the strong and wise savior of the Pyncheon family; and Zenobia is characterized by strange powers and sensuality, representing Hawthorne's idea of woman in the nineteenth century. By contrast, Hawthorne's men are overwhelmingly weak: Dimmesdale is a hypocrite;

¹¹See Edwin Haviland Miller, *Salem is My Dwelling Place: A Life of Nathaniel Hawthorne* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1991), especially pp. 230-55. Miller finds Hawthorne jealous of the women who were his contemporaries; see also Philip Young, *Hawthorne's Secret: An Untold Tale* (Boston: Godine, 1984), pp. 151-60, for Hawthorne's aberrant relationship with his mother and sisters; Hawthorne's letters to Sophia, though themselves narration of sorts, clearly imply idolatry; see especially Hawthorne's letters to Sophia in *Works*, 15:320, 330, 347. In these letters he gives her Christ's attributes by saying that he will be admitted to heaven for her sake (320) that he attributes her with "the salvation of my soul" (330), and that he finds assurance of heaven in her love (347).

Giovanni is a student unable to escape the fatal attraction of evil desire; Goodman Brown is the bridegroom whose experiment with the demonic leaves him powerless to return to innocence.

Hawthorne's creative vision of women as powerful and vigorous is not too surprising, for he knew many powerful women. His mother and sisters dominated the young Hawthorne after his father's death. He was, moreover, related by marriage to such notable women of achievement as Elizabeth Palmer Peabody and Mary Peabody Mann, and he knew and respected Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Whether he encountered them personally or imaginatively, the women he sometimes admired were the antinomians, the psychological frontier women of the nineteenth century and beyond. Delia Bacon could thus not fail to beguile Hawthorne since she is in some measure the woman he most admired: she was his virtual Hester Prynne in her battle with the literary hierarchy; his Beatrice, consumed by a poison not of her own choosing; his Faith, waiting patiently for her lover to return. She also typified the characteristics of the dynamic woman-antinomian in Elizabeth Palmer Peabody and Margaret Fuller. Delia Bacon was thus a latter-day antinomian. His respect for her and anxiety about her grew in proportion to the restless yet discomfortingly absolutist spirit that she increasingly exhibited.

Many passages from Hawthorne's recently published correspondences illuminate the Bacon issue, including the way Hawthorne encountered Bacon as a woman, as an intellectual antinomian, and--most importantly--as a fellow artist. Especially significant are Hawthorne's consideration of Delia Bacon and his evaluation of her aesthetic contribution to nineteenth-century literary arts. So taken was Hawthorne with Bacon

that, unbeknownst to her, he provided funds to publish her book. Hawthorne knew that Bacon was monomaniacal in regard to the Shakespearean question: she was convinced that a deep political philosophy--one bordering on conspiracy--was concealed beneath the surface of the plays. Several years after her death, Hawthorne wrote about her in *The Atlantic Monthly* and later shaped that sketch into an entry for *Our Old Home*.

To Hawthorne's mind, the merit of *The Philosophy of the Plays of Shakespere Unfolded* was independent of the truth of Bacon's theory. I therefore maintain that Hawthorne's admiration was more for her creative artistry than for the factual truth of her claim. He thus agreed to write the preface for her book, but not without some hesitation and distaste. Bacon had already written a ninety-five page preface to her own work, and Hawthorne's letters reveal that he actually hoped his introduction would clash with her preface, thus requiring the removal of his essay.¹² In that preface, Hawthorne writes as follows, virtually subverting Bacon's claims to legitimacy:

This Volume contains the argument, drawn from the Plays usually attributed to Shakspere, in support of a theory which the author of it has demonstrated by historical evidences in another work. Having never read this historical demonstration (which remains still in manuscript, with the exception of a preliminary chapter, published long ago in an American periodical), I deem it necessary to cite the author's own account of it.¹³

¹² Hawthorne to Bennoch (Feb. 11, 1857), in *Works*, 18: 17.

¹³ Hawthorne, preface, *The Philosophy*, p. vii.

Hawthorne damns with praise: without addressing the merits of her views, the preface includes Hawthorne's commentary that the reader would "see in it [the book] the noble earnestness of the author's character and may imagine the sacrifices which the research has cost her."¹⁴

Whether compelled by pity, or by the urging of Henry Bright and Francis Bennoch,¹⁵ Hawthorne honored the request of Parker & Son of London to publish Bacon's book at his own expense under Bennoch's supervision.¹⁶ From Liverpool, on February 11, 1857, Hawthorne told Bacon of his plans to quote in his preface excerpts from her own introduction repeating her contentions about Shakespeare.¹⁷ This proposal incurred her wrath, since she had envisioned an unreserved endorsement by Hawthorne. On submitting his preface to Bennoch, Hawthorne wrote, "Here is the wretched Preface . . . It *must* do; for I make a solemn vow to write nothing else. Thank Heaven, I have done with Miss Bacon and her book--."¹⁸ For all that, Hawthorne was far from done with this antinomian authoress.

Delia Bacon seemed to some Unitarian and Transcendental Bostonians a second Margaret Fuller--or at least a worthy successor. According to her biographer,

¹⁴ Hawthorne, preface, *The Philosophy*, p. x.

¹⁵ Bennoch and Henry Arthur Bright were two men in England who befriended Hawthorne while he was serving as consul. Bennoch was also instrumental in publication of Bacon's book.

¹⁶ Hawthorne to Ticknor (Nov. 6, 1856), in *Works*, 17:574.

¹⁷ Hawthorne to Bacon, in *Works*, 18:15.

¹⁸ Hawthorne to Bennoch (Feb. 11, 1857), in *Works*, 18:17.

Transcendentalism was initiated by Anne Hutchinson, was lost in the Atlantic with Margaret Fuller, but emerged in the outlook of Delia Bacon.¹⁹ Another critic remarks that Bacon “took the bit in her teeth and started off on an exciting canter which, as often happens, ended in a sorry fall.”²⁰ She nonetheless attracted the attention of eminent literary figures. Although Thomas Carlyle found her intriguing, his overall reaction was one of incredulity and mild scorn. In a letter to Dr. John Carlyle he wrote:

For the present, we have (occasionally) a Yankee lady, sent by Emerson, who has discovered that the “Man Shakespear” is a Myth, and did not write those plays which bear his name, which were on the contrary written by a “Secret Association” (names unknown); she has actually come to England for the purpose of examining that, and if possible, proving it, from the British Museum and other sources of evidence. Ach Gott!²¹

While *The Philosophy of The Plays of Shakspere Unfolded* was a success in neither England nor America, some admirers thought Delia Bacon the greatest American ever born.²² Partly because of her obsession with the project and its ultimate failure, she died in 1859 in an insane asylum. Hawthorne, through his association with the book’s

¹⁹ Vivian Constance Hopkins, *Prodigal Puritan: A Life of Delia Bacon* (Cambridge: Belknap, 1959), p. 139.

²⁰ Elizabeth Bancroft Schlesinger, review of *Prodigal Puritan: A Life of Delia Bacon*, by Vivian Constance Hopkins, *New England Quarterly* 33 (1960): 278.

²¹ Thomas Carlyle to Dr. John Carlyle, *New Letters of Thomas Carlyle*, ed. Alexander Carlyle, 2 vols. (New York: Publishers Printing Company, 1904), 2:150.

²² Hopkins, *Prodigal Puritan*, p. vii.

publication, lost approximately \$1000, then a considerable sum. Several years after her death, he summed up his feelings for Bacon in a eulogy titled “Recollections of a Gifted Woman.”

Hawthorne was especially intrigued with Delia Bacon’s rebelliousness. As a child and as a young woman, Bacon had bowed to the male-dominated authority of nineteenth-century society--submitting first to her father and then to her brother, Leonard. She appeared a paradigm of the virtuous New England spinster, putting all her energy into her studies and teaching the young girls who attended her classes. But Delia Bacon’s spinster existence changed when, at age thirty-four, she met Alexander MacWhorter, ten years her junior and a graduate of the Yale Divinity School. During their friendship and courtship, she confided to him her intuition that the Shakespearean plays had been written by Francis Bacon or Sir Walter Scott.²³ Over time, the relationship between Delia and MacWhorter that had seemed so idyllic to Delia--though not to her brother and protector, Leonard--began to deteriorate. Shamed by MacWhorter, who had presumably lost interest in her, she was unable, because MacWhorter had defamed her character in an improper relationship, to secure a job teaching young girls; she thus accepted her brother’s encouragement to bring MacWhorter to trial.

The “fighting parson” of the First Church of New Haven delivered his charges against Alexander MacWhorter in a fiery tone: MacWhorter had exhibited, “Calumny, Falsehood, and Disgraceful Conduct, as a man, a Christian, and especially as a Candidate

²³ Hopkins, *Prodigal Puritan*, p. 74.

for the Christian Ministry.”²⁴ Seeking to defrock MacWhorter and lining up in support of Bacon was the democratic element of the clergy. The trial became a power struggle between Andover and Yale: aligned with Leonard Bacon were the conservatives at Andover and Bacon’s constituency, chiefly from the country parishes around New Haven; championing Alexander MacWhorter were Dr. Nathaniel W. Taylor, Leonard’s predecessor at the First Church, and the faculty and students of the Yale Divinity School. Many members of Leonard’s congregation did not believe in Delia’s innocence, for her behavior had not conformed to expectations since MacWhorter had failed to make public his attentions toward Delia in the form of a marriage proposal. Delia, moreover, had refused to break off the relationship. Still, they supported their pastor. After a long and gruesome battle, the Yale Divinity School and MacWhorter received the favorable verdict: MacWhorter, although culpable, was excused because the court decided that Delia Bacon’s behavior had encouraged his own. Leonard Bacon’s grandson and biographer, Theodore Bacon, compared the verdict in favor of MacWhorter to that of a famous court-martial verdict: “Not guilty, but don’t do it again.”²⁵ Whether MacWhorter was guilty of a crime punishable by the courts, he had certainly led Bacon to believe that he would marry her at some future time. He was also a deceitful and hypocritical person, revealing the contents of Delia’s letters to many of his friends, promising her more than he cared to deliver, dangling marriage before her, but never fulfilling his promises. This unfortunate making of the character of Delia Bacon—forged

²⁴ Hopkins, *Prodigal Puritan*, p. 100.

²⁵ Hopkins, *Prodigal Puritan*, p. 115.

in the fires of persecution, humiliation, and aesthetic sensitivity--would serve her in good stead as an antinomian model for Hawthorne.

Might Hawthorne have seen something of Hester Prynne's dilemma in the fact that "the grand difficulty in the case is that the interests of Yale College are so involved . . . that it is better for one or two women to be sacrificed, than that so important and beloved an institution should suffer." In the wake of the trial, Catherine Beecher also labeled as "Protestant Jesuiticism" the silencing of questions in deference to the church's reputation.²⁶ Indeed, the creator of Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale may have seen in the sexual scandal and its perpetuation of hypocrisy something "dating" to the careers of Anne Hutchinson and John Cotton. The religious establishment's treatment of Delia Bacon was reminiscent of the squelching of Anne Hutchinson's antinomianism by the Puritan theocracy.

Following the trial, Delia Bacon went on the lyceum circuit and was considered a worthy successor to Margaret Fuller. While speaking in Boston, she impressed Channing, Peabody, Emerson and others. She supposedly met Elizabeth Palmer Peabody in a bookstore on West Street in Boston and was introduced by Peabody to *The Scarlet Letter*. Later, an overwhelming obsession to delve more deeply into the authorship of Shakespeare's plays led Delia Bacon to England. Through Emerson, she secured her introduction to Carlyle, who promised to aid in her book's publication in England. Both men, though, remained unconvinced of her claims. As Delia Bacon became increasingly

²⁶ Catherine E. Beecher, "Truth Stranger Than Fiction," *The Literary World* 7 (1850): 133, 134.

despondent over the lack of interest in her work, she contacted the one person who could guide her efforts to fruition.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, while consulate to Liverpool under the presidency of Franklin Pierce, his friend and classmate from Bowdoin College, fell under Delia Bacon's spell as easily as had his trans-Atlantic colleagues. Above all others who were affected by this young individualistic, antinomian artist, Hawthorne was most likely to be moved since she embodied qualities shared by the antinomian women of his fiction, and by those individualistic women--scribbling or otherwise--whom he knew in real life. Still, Hawthorne's fiction calls to mind how idealistic quests become the means of destruction when the quest becomes all-consuming--witness Aylmer, Westervelt, Goodman Brown, or Dr. Rappaccini. Perhaps Hawthorne saw in Delia Bacon a dark lady whom sin had touched--the woman of intellectual power and personal magnetism, self-created by having tasted the forbidden fruit of sex and intellect. She was his Beatrice, his Miriam, and his Zenobia. She was, as he half confessed, his alter-ego: "Her conversation was remarkably suggestive, alluring forth one's own ideas and fantasies from the shy places where they usually haunt."²⁷

Because Hawthorne was so drawn to the creative antinomianism in Delia Bacon, the rebelliousness that produced her artistry, he fittingly became the one to rescue her. In her correspondence with Hawthorne, she seemed to know just how to use him to her best advantage, saying that her impression was that the President, by placing him in the

²⁷ *Our Old Home*, in *Works*, 5:109.

consulate, had intended that he should be Pierce's "literary representative" for the country. She further declared that if the current administration should lose the honor of the discovery that she has propounded because of Hawthorne's negligence, the President would hold Hawthorne responsible. "For what is the use of having a man of wit and genius for a consul if there is nobody to consult in a case like this."²⁸ She thereby sought, with success, to make Hawthorne responsible for her.

Hawthorne was intrigued. He certainly knew of Delia Bacon because his sister-in-law Elizabeth Palmer Peabody was enamored of Miss Bacon's talks on history to the lyceum circuit in Boston and had been urging Hawthorne to meet Delia. He may also have known of Delia's project from Emerson, or from Carlyle. In any event, on May 12, 1856, he responded to her letter: "I have long entertained a high respect for your character and an interest in your object, so far as I understood it."²⁹ Hawthorne goes on to relate his interest in her manuscript, but he intimates doubt concerning the accuracy of its thesis. Bacon wrote back, defending her *Putnam's* article, in which she criticizes Shakespeare by referring to him as "the old Player," "the Stratford Poacher," and "the poor peasant" and by comparing him to his own Trinculo and to P. T. Barnum. Although Hawthorne did not agree with her assumption, her galling challenge to then-current literary canonicity would certainly have intimated a fervent antinomianism compounded by her audacity: "The person that you love and reverence," she wrote Hawthorne, "is not

²⁸ Theodore Bacon, *Delia Bacon, A Biographical Sketch* (Boston: Houghton, 1888), p. 168.

²⁹ *Works*, 17:488.

touched by my proceedings. I have not hurt a hair of his head. He is the one I am at work for. If anybody boasts of love and reverence, to him I might . . . say with St. Paul, 'I more.'"³⁰ Her quarrel is less with Shakespeare than with the iconicity attributed by the English to one of their own. Still, Bacon's ridicule of the historical "person" of Shakespeare went well beyond the implied criticism of Shakespearean genius common among Young American, mainly democratic, critics of the Great Bard.³¹

As remarked, *Putnam's Monthly* published only one article of a series of articles that Bacon had submitted because the magazine's editors deplored her attack on Shakespeare. That notwithstanding, Bacon sent Hawthorne a copy of the much-discussed and now-revised manuscript that had emerged from the abortive series of articles. Because of the book's now-sizable nature, he was to write his excuses for still not having read the whole of it, although complimenting her profound analysis of Francis Bacon and Montaigne, and urging her to proceed in its publication since he was "convinced" that it should be read by the world. Still hesitant, though, about the validity of her proposition, but intrigued by the force of her personality and intellect, Hawthorne adds, "We find thoughts in all great writers (and even in small ones) that strike their roots far beneath the surface, and intertwine themselves with the roots of other writers' thoughts; so that when we pull up one, we stir the whole, and yet those writers have had

³⁰ Hopkins, *Prodigal Puritan*, p. 203. Bacon, in claiming admiration for Shakespeare, is citing Paul's defense of his own pharisaism to the pharisees.

³¹ See John Stafford, "Henry Norman Hudson and the Whig Use of Shakespeare," *PMLA* 66 (1951), 649-61.

no conscious society with one another.”³² Here, Hawthorne seems gently to remind Bacon that the reason for the plays’ appearing to have been written by someone other than Shakespeare could have been that all genius builds upon what has gone before. Shakespeare’s work could *seem* like Francis Bacon’s simply because Shakespeare had read Bacon, or because they had been exposed to the same philosophies.³³ Still, Delia Bacon made her case so creatively and artistically that Hawthorne supported the manuscript’s publication. Because of his admiration for Bacon’s art--rather than the veracity of her claim--Hawthorne sent her ten pounds in June 1856, with the wish that she not suffer financially.³⁴ A few days later, at her invitation, he promised to call on her to discuss her “most remarkable book. He also disclosed she had carried him away with her “farther than I imagined possible It is a wonderful book.”³⁵ Her letter of reply described her failure to find publication for her manuscript and urged Hawthorne to visit her at her flat in London.

Attempting to help Bacon in her book’s publication, Hawthorne wrote on July 21, 1856, describing his search for a publisher and advising her not to be too particular in that regard.³⁶ He consoled Bacon concerning the reluctance of both Emerson and

³² Hawthorne to Bacon (June 21, 1856), in *Works*, 17:510.

³³ Baym notes that Joseph C. Hart, another American, had earlier argued that the only thing the “stage-manager” Shakespeare contributed to the plays was an occasional vulgarity (“History,” 224 note).

³⁴ Hawthorne to Bacon (June 25, 1856), in *Works*, 17:512.

³⁵ Hawthorne to Bacon (July 10, 1856), in *Works*, 17:517.

³⁶ Hawthorne to Bacon, in *Works*, 17:524.

Carlyle to assist her; Hawthorne perhaps understood that they had become increasingly aware of Bacon's mental instability. Hawthorne learned from Bacon's physician that she was "afflicted with insanity."³⁷ She continued, despite advice from Emerson and Carlyle that she pursue historical proofs, to insist that internal evidence proved a thesis which lacked historical corroboration. Perhaps, for once, Emerson felt that the spirit was not quite its own evidence.

Although Emerson and Carlyle could not be convinced that any merit lay in the treatise on Shakespeare, Sophia Hawthorne joined her husband in becoming entranced by Bacon's manuscript: "I had never read so profound and wonderful a criticism."³⁸ Still, Bacon's brother, Leonard, the family patriarch and protector, was convinced that his sister needed to return to the states because he doubted the worth of her project and feared her psychological deterioration. Hawthorne, however, feared "the effect, on her mind, of any compulsory measures on the part of her friends, towards a removal," and that "however mistaken your sister may be, she has produced a most remarkable work, written with wonderful earnestness and ability, and full of profound criticism. Its merits are entirely independent of the truth of her theory about the authorship of the plays."³⁹ The reassurance that Delia's ideas possessed *some* validity, and that Hawthorne had taken her case to heart to secure the book's publication, reassured Leonard, who agreed that Delia should be allowed to stay in England and finish the project.

³⁷ *Our Old Home*, in *Works*, 5:115.

³⁸ Sophia Hawthorne to Bacon (Aug. 3, 1856), in *Works*, 17:527, note 2.

³⁹ Hawthorne to Leonard Bacon (Aug. 14, 1856), in *Works*, 17:528, 529.

When Delia Bacon became aware of a controversy developing in *The Athenaeum* pertinent to her *Putnam's* piece, her mental condition deteriorated further. Henry Chorley--in reviewing William Henry Smith's article "Was Lord Bacon the Author of Shakespeare's Plays? A Letter to Lord Ellesmere"--claimed that Smith had "used almost the words [of Bacon] with the same fullness of speculation and the same absence of proof."⁴⁰ Hawthorne wrote to Bennoch that Bacon was now "in a horrible state of alarm and despair." Hawthorne, therefore, urged Bennoch to hurry the publication of her work, promising to pay for the edition. "Only let it be done quickly; for this poor woman will kill herself--and worry me to death in the meanwhile."⁴¹ Shortly thereafter Hawthorne obtained a copy of the pamphlet written by Smith, as well as Chorley's review; he sent those to Bacon, remarking on their insignificance and reassuring her that she must "be patient and hopeful; and all shall go well."⁴²

Throughout the first part of 1857 Hawthorne's relationship with Delia Bacon underwent a transformation. Attracted as he was by her intellectual antinomianism, he became the brunt of her displeasure and wrath for never having accepted her premise about the inauthenticity of Shakespeare. Hawthorne continued, therefore, to affirm that she had a point--not that her point was valid. As he became ever more disinclined to offer an outright endorsement of the book, she became more distressed over his reticence. He even tried to back out of his agreement to write the preface: "I have vainly

⁴⁰ *Works*, 17:547, note 1.

⁴¹ Hawthorne to Bennoch (Sept. 24, 1856), in *Works*, 17:548.

⁴² Hawthorne to Bacon (Oct. 6, 1856), in *Works*, 17:556.

endeavored to prevail on Parker [the publisher] to let me off from the Preface, but he insists on having it."⁴³ Still, by January 31 the book was ready for publication, and by February 11 he had finished the preface and sent it to Bennoch, who instructed Bacon to correct the preface and send it back to Hawthorne for his approval. Hawthorne, though, had solemnly vowed not to amend the preface: "Thank heaven, I have done with Miss Bacon and her book--that is except paying the printer's bill."⁴⁴ Miss Bacon found the preface infuriating and demanded that Hawthorne change it into an outright endorsement:

Are you willing to try again? I have taken a pair of scissors, and cut out of your preface, every word of mine, and then I put the rest together to see what I could make of it. Of the two whole pages that it leaves, one I like very much, and feel supported with it, and the other I do not like at all and feel very much dragged down with it, below my proper position. I feel in reading it, that you do not appreciate my work as I thought you did, and that you give a very unfavorable impression of it to one who has not read it. It is a great thing to be cleared from the suspicion of knavery, and to steer clear of the charge of insanity at the same time, no doubt, but honesty of intention will not constitute in the public mind any apology for a book of this size. You give the idea that there are some pages in it, that might be worth reading, but hardly worth hunting for, in so large a volume, as you do not indicate them, and show there are some parts of the

⁴³ Hawthorne to Ticknor (Jan. 16, 1857), in *Works*, 18:10.

⁴⁴ Hawthorne to Bennoch (Feb. 11, 1857), in *Works*, 18:17.

work that compare favorably with other things that have been written on this subject. I do not think anyone would be induced to read the book who read that page of your preface. The curiosity which the title excited would be entirely destroyed by such a criticism as that beforehand, from one anxious to make the best of it.⁴⁵

Hawthorne, clearly fed up with Miss Bacon at this point, wrote her a harsh letter to the effect that he was willing to “burn the Preface at once” and to have his name completely withdrawn from the book.⁴⁶ In a different letter he told Bennoch that he could not subscribe to her theory and affirm her book in his preface, as she wished: “I shall not alter it; neither shall I write another.”⁴⁷ It was at the time of his refusal to conform to her demands for a preface that Hawthorne confessed that he “fell under Miss Bacon’s most severe and passionate displeasure, and was cast off by her in the twinkling of an eye. It was a misfortune to which her friends were always particularly liable; but I think that none of them ever loved, or even respected, her most ingenuous and noble, but likewise most sensitive and tumultuous character, the less for it.” He said about her book that it “fell with a dead thump at the feet of the public and has never been picked up.” After his meeting with her, the next word he received was from her physician, according to whom she was “afflicted with insanity.”⁴⁸ Hawthorne surmised that “the anathema of

⁴⁵ Bacon to Hawthorne (Feb. 14, 1857), in *Works*, 18:25, note 2.

⁴⁶ Hawthorne to Bacon (Feb. 19, 1857), in *Works*, 18:24.

⁴⁷ Hawthorne to Bennoch (Feb. 19, 1857), in *Works*, 18:27.

⁴⁸ *Our Old Home*, in *Works*, 5:114, 115.

Shakespear's tombstone had fallen heavily on her head in requital of . . . disturbing the dust beneath, and that the 'Old Player' had kept so quietly in his grave, on the night of her vigil, because he foresaw how soon and terribly he would be avenged."⁴⁹ Hawthorne seemed unable or unwilling to stand up to Bacon personally because of the force of her character and her rapidly progressing madness. It was only when he was away from her that his better sense gained ascendancy. For all that, Hawthorne still managed to secure the publication of Bacon's book, although that fruition brought no solace to its author. Delia Bacon fell quite ill at the fulfillment of her dream, at which time her life and sanity seemed to slip from her grasp.

Her brother, Leonard, had for some time suspected that the ultimate publication of her book would initiate her demise rather than her rehabilitation. That presentiment seemed confirmed when Hawthorne wrote Leonard about the deterioration of her condition: she had taken to bed and not changed clothes or linens for three weeks. Subsequently she was placed in a private sanitarium near Stratford; in March 1858 Leonard's son transferred her across the ocean to New York.⁵⁰ She was thereafter moved to the Hartford Retreat, then one of the more humane establishments in the country for treating the mentally ill. Even in her last days, she was said to have tested the rules of the sanitarium, as she had questioned the rules of society throughout her life. Her book had "drained the lifeblood of its author;" she died on September 2, 1859.⁵¹

⁴⁹ *Our Old Home*, in *Works*, 5:116.

⁵⁰ Hawthorne to Leonard Bacon (Sept. 17, 1857), in *Works*, 18:99.

⁵¹ Hopkins, *Prodigal Pilgrim*, p. 267.

The article about Bacon that Hawthorne published after her death fails to disclose that he was so taken with Miss Bacon that he supplied the funds for the publication of her work; nor did he ever reveal that fact to her. Although her book was not a success, and Hawthorne lost the money, he accepted his loss graciously. In the article, he described his only meeting with Delia Bacon. He was quite surprised at her looks, expecting to see an exceedingly homely person; on the contrary, he found her striking and expressive, with dark hair, dark shining eyes, and a youthful appearance. He admitted that he could “suppose her to have been handsome and exceedingly attractive once . . . , with little or no restraint or embarrassment in her manner.”⁵² He considered her “pleasant and sunny and shadowy, often piquant” with a deep and powerful undercurrent of earnestness, which rendered her able to make one believe in her cause, simply because of the fervency of her own belief.⁵³

Hawthorne admired her, as well, for a more important reason: “to have based such a system on fancy, and unconsciously elaborated it for herself, was almost as wonderful as really to have found it in the plays.”⁵⁴ The remark is the most crucial of Hawthorne’s utterances about Bacon. Creative artist that he was, he most respected the imaginative act: in Hawthorne’s mind, Bacon’s book was something akin to a self-contained short story or romance. Discontent with a “custom-house” consensus about

⁵² *Our Old Home*, in *Works*, 5:105-106.

⁵³ *Our Old Home*, in *Works*, 5:109.

⁵⁴ *Our Old Home*, in *Works*, 5:106.

Shakespeare, she had created a most “novel” repudiation of his capabilities.⁵⁵ To the extent, therefore, that the imaginative impulse is antinomian, by virtue of its subversion of the status quo,⁵⁶ Hawthorne appears to have felt from Delia Bacon the corresponding breeze of artistic fellow-feeling. He perceived, as Trilling says, that “genius and disease, like strength and mutilation, may be inextricably bound up together,” even in the mythos of the sick artist.⁵⁷ That antinomian impulse, perhaps linked in Hawthorne’s mind to careers ranging from those of Anne Hutchinson to Margaret Fuller, had questioned the authority of Shakespeare.

⁵⁵See Jorge Luis Borges, *Ficciones* (New York: Grove Press, 1962).

⁵⁶ See Wesley Morris, *Toward a New Historicism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972) pp. 13, 30.

⁵⁷ Lionel Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination* (New York: Harcourt, 1979) 158.

CHAPTER 4

“CHIEFLY ABOUT WAR MATTERS”: HAWTHORNE’S SWIFT JUDGMENT OF LINCOLN

As remarked in the preceding chapter, Hawthorne admired Delia Bacon for the artistry with which she asserted that Shakespeare was not the author of the plays attributed to him. Hawthorne’s admiration included his respect for her antinomianism, but his enthusiasm also sprang from his feeling that she was an artist of kindred spirit whose imagination spoke louder than the representation of mere “fact.” In these respects Delia Bacon evokes the more general issue of unreliable narration and the function of that technique in Hawthorne’s works. Because intrusiveness, self-consciousness, reliability, and a narrator’s distance from events naturally affect a reader’s response, scholarship has noted the importance in Hawthorne’s fiction of unreliable narrators.¹ The same issue, I suggest, holds true for Hawthorne’s essay, “Chiefly About War Matters”: narrational concerns invite questions about the “politics” of Hawthorne’s encounter with Lincoln. “Chiefly About War Matters” artfully damns Lincoln where it

¹ Michael Colacurcio, “‘The Woman’s Own Choice’: Sex Metaphor, and the Puritan ‘Sources’ of *The Scarlet Letter*,” in *New Essays on the Scarlet Letter*, ed. Michael Colacurcio (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985) 101-35; Evan Carton, *The Rhetoric of American Romance*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1985); David Van Leer, “Hester’s Labyrinth: Transcendental Rhetoric in Puritan Boston,” in *New Essays* pp. 57-61; Peter Shaw, “Fathers, Sons, and the Ambiguities of Revolution in ‘My Kinsman, Major Molineaux,’” *New England Quarterly* 49 (1976): 559-76.

appears at first to praise him. Although many nineteenth-century readers thought the article flattering, Hawthorne's description of the "Chief" is laced with contempt,² and nowhere more artfully than in the ostensibly editorial notes to the piece. In perpetrating this literary trickery Hawthorne adopts an ironic technique suggestive of *Gulliver's Travels*. Hawthorne's narrative artistry in "Chiefly About War Matters" specifically calls to mind Gulliver's "publisher"--Gulliver himself posing as publisher, or else a fictive publisher contrived by Swift--who feigns authorship and censorship of his ancient and intimate friend and cousin, Gulliver, to evoke a sympathetic reaction to the narrative. Indeed, Swift added Gulliver's letter to his "Cousin Sympson" to the 1735 Dublin edition, yet predated it April 2, 1727, to give the appearance that it had graced the book's first edition.³ The prospect of Hawthorne's use of Swiftian technique in "Chiefly About

² I take issue, as do some recent scholars, with Randall Stewart's interpretation of Hawthorne's attitude toward Lincoln as one of affection and respect. "Hawthorne and the Civil War," *Studies in Philology* 34 (1937): 91-106. More recently, James Bense in "Nathaniel Hawthorne's Intention in 'Chiefly About War Matters,'" *American Literature* 61 (1989): 200-214, calls Hawthorne's essay a "censorship hoax," claiming that the footnotes I shall analyze were not editorially required by Fields but were intended by Hawthorne from the start. However, the subsequent publication of the Hawthorne letters fail to reveal that the footnotes were part of Hawthorne's plan but reinforce my position that they were used by Hawthorne, after Fields censored his article, to further a Democratic agenda. In "'A for Abolition': Hawthorne's Bondservant and the Shadow of Slavery," *Journal of American Studies* 25 (1991):255-259, Deborah L. Madsen sees the narrator of "CAWM" as comparable to Dimmesdale in his quest for liberation: the narrator is participating in an ironic search for freedom for the slaves and Dimmesdale is in search of liberation from the constraints of his position. Thomas R. Moore, in an article oblivious to the politics and artistry of "CAWM," observes Hawthorne as an insufficiently appreciated essayist under the authority of the "readership" of the *Atlantic Monthly*. "Hawthorne as Essayist: *Our Old Home* and 'Chiefly About War Matters,'" *American Transcendentalist Quarterly* 6 (1992): 263-278.

³All quotations to *Gulliver's Travels* are from *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Herbert Davis, et al. 14 vols, vol. 11 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1939-68); see Liz Bellamy,

War Matters” hardly surprises, since Hawthorne was indebted to Swift more generally, drawing on him for allusions in many short stories.⁴ He read Swift and adapted Swiftian rhetoric to his own ends.⁵

For our purposes, the point of compatibility between Hawthorne and Swift resides in Hawthorne’s adopting Swiftian satire in “Chiefly About War Matters” that has as precedent the “Letter from Captain Gulliver to his Cousin Sympson” and “The Publisher to The Reader” epistle that precedes Book Four of *Gulliver’s Travels*. Sympson, the supposed publisher of Gulliver’s narrative, has taken it upon himself to revise the manuscript by deleting most of the nautical jargon; he claims, moreover, to have cut the entire text by one half and fears that Gulliver will be furious. Gulliver is “indeed” irate, claiming that his work has been rendered unrecognizable by Sympson’s editing. In the midst of this argument between created author and created editor, Gulliver dissembles, much as Hawthorne does in the so-called editorial footnotes to “Chiefly About War Matters.”

Jonathan Swift’s “Gulliver’s Travels” (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992) pp. 10 ff. for Swift’s anonymous publication of *Gulliver’s Travels*. See also Frederik N. Smith, “Swift’s View of Composition,” in *Critical Approaches to Teaching Swift*, ed. Peter Schakel (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1992), pp. 110-111.

⁴See Alice Lovelace Cooke, “Some Evidences of Hawthorne’s Indebtedness to Swift,” *University of Texas Studies in English* 18 (1938): 140-162. Hawthorne’s disapproval of the Swiftian satire does not preclude his imaginative appropriation of some features of that literary technique.

⁵See George Parsons Lathrop, *A Study of Hawthorne* (Boston: J. R. Osgood and Company, 1876), p. 95.

Gulliver's attempt, through dissimulation, to convey an air of truth in the letter preceding Book Four, propagates a lie. The mockery of truth in the letter does much to add authority to Book Four of *Gulliver's Travels*, in which Gulliver has, in his attempt to reconcile the reason of the Houyhnhnms and the "noble savagery" of the Yahoos, descended into pure madness. Although eighteenth-century convention has many authors narrate their texts to their "gentle reader," Swift goes beyond convention by demonstrating "truth" to be a precarious quest, never a fixed reality.

Hawthorne, in emulating Swift's use of the editor/author letters between Gulliver, and Gulliver's "publisher," Sympson, derives a successful pattern for his own ironic reading of Lincoln via the self-appended, though unclaimed, footnotes to his own article. Like Swift, whose political agenda is complex,⁶ Hawthorne also has a political cause advanced by this instance of narrative artistry. Although Swift's ironic treatment was somewhat more profound than simply an address to the political foibles of eighteenth-century England, his implementation of the publisher's letter and Gulliver's remarks serves as a literary precedent for Hawthorne's use of his own footnotes to propagate a political satire of Lincoln.

I propose that Hawthorne--despite the moments of praise that define, for some readers, a respect for the nation's chief executive--uses Swiftian satirical technique to characterize Lincoln as a backwoods humorist fit only for politics. Hawthorne thereby engages in a political campaign that he declines to acknowledge openly. He does so,

⁶See F. P. Lock, *The Politics of Gulliver's Travels* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 35 ff., for a discussion of Swift's targeting of governmental abuse.

moreover, through the vehicle of the *Atlantic Monthly*, which he thought to possess a little too much of a “Black Republican” tinge for its own good.⁷ Hawthorne’s contribution to the *Atlantic Monthly* thus critiques that journal’s ideology. Years earlier, in “Legends of the Province House,” he had covertly critiqued Democratic politics in the “official organ of the National Democratic Party, (*The Democratic Review*) at the express invitation of the party’s official propagandist and with the concurrence of the party’s all-but-official ideologist and patron.”⁸ So, too, “Chiefly About War Matters,” in the *Atlantic Monthly*.

The political and social climate of the 1860s, especially with respect to slavery, bears decisively upon the article--if only because Hawthorne was so reluctant to grapple with the “peculiar institution.” He wished to have his life remain unmarred by either slavery or by the inconvenience of war: “I sympathize with nobody and approve of nothing,” he wrote in a March 1863 letter to Henry Bright; “and if I have any wishes on the subject, it is that New England might be a nation by itself. But, so far as I can judge of the temper of the people, they mean to have a re-union; and if they really mean it, it will be accomplished.”⁹ Hawthorne was unconvinced of the morality of the war either way. According to Julian Hawthorne, Hawthorne hoped that the Union would give the

⁷ Hawthorne to William D. Ticknor (May 17, 1862) in *The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne. The Letters: 1857-64*, ed. William Charvat et al., 20 vols. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1962-) 18:457.

⁸Colacurcio, 455-456.

⁹ *Works*, 18:543.

South a “terrible thrashing, and then kick them out.”¹⁰ He was first of all desirous that his own life not be too much affected by a war; he seemed glad that he was too old and Julian too young to be involved in the conflict and, since he was relatively untouched by slavery, considered abolition no real motive for battle. His indifference to the slavery issue and his unwillingness for active involvement were clear. He nevertheless professed that the war had a strange beneficial effect on his spirits, although he didn’t “quite understand what we are fighting for or what definite result can be expected.”¹¹

Pertinent to Hawthorne’s indifference to slavery are a number of political contexts: 1848 saw the formation of a coalition of anti-slavery groups that led to the Free Soil Party, an amalgamation of earlier anti-slavery parties, the motto of which was “Free soil, free speech, free labor, and free men.” Free Soilers--those who were supporters of the Wilmot Proviso--then nominated Martin Van Buren, adamant abolitionist, for President.¹² Through a series of complicated political developments involving various splinter groups--ranging from Conscience Whigs to Barnburners--the Republican Party emerged as a response to Whiggery. In November, 1848, Zachary Taylor was elected President, the last Whig to be elected to the presidency. Unrelenting controversy occurred over whether to admit “slave” states into the Union, and whether new territories

¹⁰ Julian Hawthorne, *Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Wife*, 2 vols. (Boston: James R. Osgood, 1885), 2:270.

¹¹ Hawthorne to Bridge (May 26, 1861), in *Works*, 18:381.

¹² Joseph G. Rayback, *Free Soil: The Election of 1848* (Lexington, Kentucky: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1970), p. 24; Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., ed., *The Almanac of American History* (New York: Putnam, 1983), p. 255.

should be “free” or “slave.” The Mexican War was therefore perceived by anti-slavery factions as nothing short of a means to expand the area of slavery. Portents of secession led many Americans by 1850 to favor a compromise to keep the nation together. Congress adopted five bills based on Henry Clay's original resolutions, and these became known as the Compromise of 1850. Included in this compromise was the Fugitive Slave Act.

The National Whig Convention in Syracuse split over the Compromise of 1850. Southern states continued to talk secession and there was a tightening of enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Act. Although anti-slavery groups opposed the 1850 Compromise, by 1851 it had kept many Southern states in the Union. "Young America" grew out of the Democratic party by 1852. Stephen A. Douglas was among those who led this arm of the Democratic party, supporting an aggressive nationalism and manifest destiny. In June of 1852 the Democrats elected Franklin Pierce as President, reconfirming the Compromise of 1850. The Whig party became even more divided than the Democrats, especially with the death of their strong leader, Henry Clay. The Free Soilers then condemned the Compromise of 1850, claiming slavery to be a sin against God and man. By November the Free Soilers and the Whigs had declined in popularity, and the American or Nativist party, also known as "Know-Nothings," had begun to attract supporters. Political wars continued during 1854 over the Compromise of 1850, especially since slavery was escalating with the more rigid enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Act. The "Know-Nothings" were becoming more radical in their attempts to exclude Catholics and foreigners from political life, and by 1855 Southerners controlled this party. Pierce

continually supported pro-slavery forces. Free Soilers in Kansas outlawed slavery in their platform but also banned all blacks from Kansas. By 1856 the "Know-Nothing" party became known as the American party, attacking "Black Republicans" as a threat to the Union. Kansas, the site of virtual civil war, became known as "Bloody Kansas."

The Democrats nominated James Buchanan for President on a moderate platform. The "Know-Nothings" resurfaced in the Northeast as the Whigs nominated Millard Fillmore. Buchanan captured the presidency and the Whig party continued to deteriorate. In January of 1857, William Lloyd Garrison urged disassociation from the union because of his firm stand against any government that abided slavery. The Republican Party emerged from the Whig Party after the Whigs experienced a split over the question of slavery: Conscience Whigs and Cotton Whigs were divided over the slavery question. Distressed with the gradualism of the Cotton Whigs, Conscience Whigs distanced themselves from the very name of "Whig" by becoming Republicans.¹³ In June of 1858 the Republican party of Illinois nominated Abraham Lincoln for senator. Lincoln took a strong political stand against slavery and against Stephen A. Douglas, who tried to straddle the issue in the interest of holding together the Democratic party. Slavery had also occasioned discord in the Democratic Party by further alienating Southern Democrats and Northern Democrats, or Old Hunkers and Barn Burners. Although

¹³ For a discussion of the origin of "Cotton" and "Conscience" Whigs, see Rayback, p. 83. For a complete progression of the Whig party, see pp. 81-98. In a very brief nutshell, Cotton Whigs were more interested in preserving slavery for economic reasons, while Conscience Whigs were unwilling to sacrifice conscience over expediency in the slavery issue.

Douglas was elected to the senate in 1858, Lincoln emerged from the debates as a strong supporter of freedom for the slaves. With the debates and his stand firmly ensconced in the public mind, Lincoln was nominated for President at the Republican convention of 1860. This time his encounter with Douglas left him the victor because of the political dilemma created by Lincoln's politically abolitionist stand in contrast to Douglas' vacillation. On November 6, Lincoln was elected President. Although Lincoln for the most part tried to avoid provocative statements in an effort not egregiously to alienate the Southern states, his platform included the radical idea that the "normal condition of all territory of the United States is that of freedom."¹⁴ Thus, Lincoln's platform supported allowing only free states into the union. The political chaos had, by 1860, spawned a Republican president who, although unable to win a majority of the popular vote against three opponents, captured the Electoral College. Hawthorne and Lincoln were on different sides of the slavery issue, as well as different political parties. Herein lies the key to Hawthorne's *Atlantic Monthly* portrait of "the Chief."

How much of Hawthorne's affiliation with the Democrats was due to conviction and how much to the influence of his friends is unclear. Most certainly, though, he used his alliance with Pierce, a powerful Democrat who was to become President in the decade before Lincoln, to secure political favors when the profession of "scribbling" was insufficient to make ends meet. Because of his closeness to Pierce, he was appointed to the custom houses of Salem and Beverly and ultimately to the consulate in Liverpool.

¹⁴See Schlesinger, 277-295, for a more detailed synopsis of political party workings from 1848-1860..

Hawthorne remained loyal to Pierce even after the former President had fallen into public disrepute; indeed, Hawthorne refused to cancel a dedication to Pierce in *Our Old Home*, despite pressure to do so.¹⁵ Hawthorne remarked to his sister-in-law Elizabeth Peabody that he was glad to have the opportunity to support his old friend “when all the administration and abolition papers are calling him a traitor.” Hawthorne subsequently claimed that, regardless, the war against slavery “will only effect by a horrible convulsion the self-same end that might and would have been brought about by a gradual and peaceful change.”¹⁶

Less ambivalent about emancipation and miscegenation, and preoccupied with the preservation of the Union, Lincoln set wheels in motion to accelerate emancipation. Hawthorne, by contrast, wrote to Horatio Bridge, on January 15, 1857, that America was a country “too various and too extended to form really one country. New England is quite as large a lump of earth as my heart can take in,” and “I have no kindred with or

¹⁵ Aware of hostility against Pierce, especially against his slavery sentiments, Hawthorne wrote Fields (July 1, 1863), in *Works*, 18:579, that he intended to “dedicate the book to Frank Pierce, come what may.” Again (July 18, 1863), in *Works*, 18:586, Hawthorne declares that he intends to dedicate the volume to Pierce and could not, just to suit his “literary public” or for “pecuniary profit” abandon his old friend and withdraw the dedication.

¹⁶ Hawthorne to Elizabeth P. Peabody (July 20, 1863), in *Works*, 18:589, 590. Like the segregationists of the mid-20th century, Hawthorne was committed to gradualism in abolition of slavery. Regardless of his political party affiliation, his sentiments were with those who sought to preserve status-quo of the union. Whether Lincoln was committed to abolition at any cost is a matter of widely divergent opinions in scholarship—the general consensus of Lincoln’s politics was that he was committed to the preservation of the union also; thus, the difference in opinion was more in method than in essence—was more political than it was philosophical.

leaning towards the Abolitionists.”¹⁷ Hawthorne also observed, as a criticism of the Republican notion that the nation should be preserved at all cost, “We never were one people, and never really had a country since the constitution was formed.”¹⁸ Hawthorne’s comment about New England echoed the perspective of those who understood the sectarian fabric of Puritan society. Unity and uniformity, as evidenced by Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams, were often evasive.

Hawthorne was among many figures, political as well as literary, who criticized Lincoln. The great difference is the artistry with which he accomplished his purpose, with a Swiftian irony that, mimicking the editorial posturing in *Gulliver's Travels*--especially the pretense of argument between the putative author, Gulliver, and the alleged editor, Sympson--drove an arrow straight to the heart of the icon that he attacked.¹⁹ Crucial, with respect to the narrative artistry of “Chiefly About War Matters,” is Julian Hawthorne’s revelation about the attribution of the article’s ironic footnotes: although without reference to a Swiftian precedent, Julian remarked that the article had been “written with great frankness, insomuch that the editor of the magazine was somewhat apprehensive of the consequences; but Hawthorne would abate nothing of his utterances. He, however, ironically appended annotations to the more hazardous

¹⁷ *Works*, 18:8.

¹⁸ Hawthorne to Bridge (May 26, 1861), *Works*, 18:381.

¹⁹ Although less judgmental of Hawthorne than I, Randall Stewart has noted Hawthorne’s cunning in the writing of “Chiefly About War Matters”: “His lynx-like facility of observation did not diminish with the passing of time [and that] is shown by his remarkably shrewd description of Lincoln written in 1862.” *Regionalism and Beyond* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1968), p. 37.

portions, purporting to be the horror-stricken comments of the editor upon the writer's want of patriotism."²⁰ The article, which Hawthorne wrote for the *Atlantic Monthly* was severely cut by Hawthorne's editors, but not in ways that prevented Hawthorne, both in the remaining text and in the artful notes, from undermining the chief executive and perpetrating the myth of Lincoln that was almost universally accepted by Republicans and Democrats alike—that of an unscrupulous country bumpkin with political aspirations beyond his capacity.²¹

Rankled by the Republicans' success in office and relieved of his consulate because of the change in political leadership with the election of Lincoln,²² Hawthorne critiqued the incumbent president in "Chiefly About War Matters." But not without obstacle: James Fields refused to publish Hawthorne's description of the President in the upcoming issue of the *Atlantic Monthly*, instead requesting that Hawthorne remove pejorative passages that might prove inflammatory in unstable times. I contend that while Hawthorne agreed to remove the offensive portion, he accomplished more in the expurgation than in the original.

²⁰ Julian Hawthorne, p. 311.

²¹See David Donald, *Lincoln Reconsidered* (New York: Knoff, 1956), especially pp. 144-69, for a concise evaluation of the folklore that surrounded Lincoln, before as well as after his assassination. It seems that with his death he took on a heroic image quite at odds with the provincial Machiavellian characterization that plagued him during his life. He was, however, reelected in 1864 because he was perceived to have settled the war issue.

²² Nina Baym has noted that the war "deprived Hawthorne of his profession [as an office holder] and of his respect for it simultaneously." *The Shape of Hawthorne's Career* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), p. 267.

Hawthorne, with his friend Ticknor, had vacationed in Washington as guests of Horatio Bridge. What began as a social outing became the impetus for his article. When visiting the Capitol, Hawthorne had attached himself to a delegation from a Massachusetts whip factory that was presenting the President with a gift made by the inmates of the Massachusetts State Prison: an ivory handled whip, representative of Lincoln as scourge of the South for the lamentable institution of slavery. Shortly thereafter, Hawthorne forwarded the politically inflammatory article to Fields for *Atlantic Monthly* publication.²³ Fields transmitted the article to the printer unread. Hawthorne regretted Fields' indifference, being anxious to hear someone else's opinion "as to the expediency of publishing two or three passages in the article."²⁴ Hawthorne was anxious about the article's reception, given the description of Lincoln. Anticipating a partial rejection, he alleged, "I have already half-spoilt it by leaving out a great deal of spicy description and remark, and whole pages of freely expressed opinion, which seemed to me as good as anything I ever wrote, but which I doubt whether the public would bear." Hawthorne claimed that the portion he left in was:

tame enough in all conscience, and I don't think it will bear any more castration; but still, I don't wish to foist an article upon you that might anyway damage the Magazine. On the other hand, I shall be known as the author, and should be willing to take the responsibility of much worse things than I have written here; and moreover, I think the political

²³ Hawthorne to Fields (May 7, 1862), in *Works*, 18:455.

²⁴ Hawthorne to Ticknor (May 17, 1862), in *Works*, 18:456.

complexion of the Magazine has been getting too deep a black Republican tinge, and that there is a time pretty near at hand when you will be sorry for it. The politics of the Magazine suit Massachusetts tolerably well (and only tolerably) but it does not fairly represent the feeling of the country at large; and it seems to me that it would be good policy to be preparing to respond to another, and wiser and truer mood of public sentiment. After all, I think I left out almost everything that could possibly be objectionable (that is to say, everything in the least worth retaining,) in the article; so that I need not have mentioned it to you at all. Nevertheless, my advice about the Magazine may be worth considering.²⁵

Most Americans, even those in Lincoln's own party, felt, during Lincoln's term of presidency, that many of the characteristics Hawthorne would ascribe to Lincoln were fitting. Scholars claim for Lincoln a "low contemporary standing," that of "a simple Susan, a baboon, an aimless punster, a smutty joker."²⁶ Hawthorne took that consensus and rendered it a literary caricature. Fields, however, would have no part in the imprudent painting of the chief executive. He received the article from Hawthorne, which, prior to Bowdlerization, contained the following narrative:

By and by there was a little stir on the staircase and in the passageway and in lounged a tall, loose-jointed figure, of an exaggerated Yankee port and demeanor, whom (as being about the homeliest man I

²⁵ Hawthorne to Ticknor (May 17, 1862), in *Works*, 18:457.

²⁶ Donald, 3.

ever saw, yet by no means repulsive or disagreeable) it was impossible not to recognize as Uncle Abe.

Unquestionably, Western man though he be, and Kentuckian by birth, President Lincoln is the essential representative of all Yankees, and the veritable specimen, physically, of what the world seems determined to regard as our characteristic qualities. It is the strangest and yet the fittest thing in the jumble of human vicissitudes, that he, out of so many millions, unlooked for, unselected by any intelligible process that could be based upon his genuine qualities, unknown to those who chose him, and unsuspected of what endowments may adapt him for his tremendous responsibility, should have found the way open for him to fling his lank personality into the chair of state--where, I presume, it was his first impulse to throw his legs on the council-table, and tell the Cabinet Ministers a story. There is no describing his lengthy awkwardness, nor the uncouthness of his movement; and yet it seemed as if I had been in the habit of seeing him daily, and had shaken hands with him a thousand times in some village street; so true was he to the aspect of the pattern American, though with a certain extravagance which, possibly, I exaggerated still further by the delighted eagerness with which I took it in. If put to guess his calling and livelihood, I should have taken him for a country school-master as soon as anything else. He was so dressed in a rusty black frockcoat and pantaloons, unbrushed, and worn so faithfully

that the suit had adapted itself to the curves and angularities of his figure, and had grown to be an outer skin of the man. His hair was black, still unmixed with gray, stiff, somewhat bushy, and had apparently been acquainted with neither brush nor comb that morning, after the disarrangement of the pillow; and as to a nightcap, Uncle Abe probably knows nothing of such effeminacies. His complexion is dark and sallow, betokening, I fear, a insalubrious atmosphere around the White House; he has thick black eyebrows and an impending brow; his nose is large, and the lines about his mouth are very strongly defined.

The whole physiognomy is as coarse a one as you would meet anywhere in the length and breadth of the States; but, withal, it is redeemed, illuminated, softened, and brightened by a kindly though serious look out of his eyes, and an expression of homely sagacity, that seems weighted with rich results of village experience. A great deal of native sense; no bookish cultivation, no refinement; honest at heart, and thoroughly so, and yet, in some sort, sly--at least, endowed with a sort of tact and wisdom that are akin to craft, and would impel him, I think, to take an antagonist in flank, rather than to make a bull-run at him right in front. But, on the whole, I like this sallow, queer, sagacious visage, with the homely human sympathies that warmed it; and, for my small share in the matter, would as lief have Uncle Abe for a ruler as any man whom it would have been practicable to put in his place.

Immediately on his entrance the President accosted our member of Congress, who had us in charge, and, with a comical twist of his face made some jocular remark about the length of his breakfast. He then greeted us all round, not waiting for an introduction but shaking and squeezing everybody's hand with the utmost cordiality, whether the individual's name was announced to him or not. His manner towards us was wholly without pretense, but yet had a kind of natural dignity, quite sufficient to keep the forwardest of us from clapping him on the shoulder and asking him for a story. A mutual acquaintance being established, our leader took the whip out of its case, and began to read the address of presentation. The whip was an exceedingly long one, its handle wrought in ivory (by some artist in the Massachusetts State Prison, I believe), and ornamented with a medallion of the President, and other equally beautiful devices; and along its whole length there was a succession of golden bands and ferrules. The address was shorter than the whip, but equally well made, consisting chiefly of an explanatory description of these artistic designs, and closing with a hint that the gift was a suggestive and emblematic one, and that the President would recognize the use to which such an instrument should be put.

This suggestion gave Uncle Abe rather a delicate task in his reply, because, slight as the matter seemed, it apparently called for some declaration, or intimation, or faint foreshadowing of policy in reference to

the conduct of the war, and the final treatment of the Rebels. But the President's Yankee aptness and not-to-be-caughtness stood him in good stead, and he jerked or wiggled himself out of the dilemma with an uncouth dexterity that was entirely in character; although, without his gesticulation of eye and mouth--and especially the flourish of the whip, with which he imagined himself touching up a pair of fat horses--I doubt whether his words would be worth recording, even if I could remember them. The gist of the reply was, that he accept the whip as an emblem of peace, not punishment; and, this great affair over, we retired out of the presence in high good humor, only regretting that we could not have seen the President sit down and fold up his legs (which is said to be a most extraordinary; spectacle), or have heard him tell one of those delectable stories for which he is so celebrated!! A good many of them are afloat upon the common talk of Washington, and are certainly the aptest, pithiest, and the funniest little things imaginable; though, to be sure, they smack of the frontier freedom, and would not always bear repetition in a drawing-room, or on the immaculate page of the Atlantic.²⁷

In this, the original text, the condemnation is obvious: Having waited half an hour in one of the antechambers for Lincoln to make an appearance, Hawthorne remarks on the President's lack of punctuality, describing Lincoln as homely and as one whose

²⁷ James Thomas Fields, *Yesterday With Authors* (Boston: James R. Osgood, 1872) pp. 99-100.

appearance would bring shame to America. Moreover, Hawthorne reinforces the European stereotype of Americans as uneducated bumpkins. He further characterizes the President as a buffoon and a clown, irreverently calling him “Uncle Abe,” in the same manner that he had in letters to Una Hawthorne, to his friend George William Curtis, and to Horatio Bridge.²⁸ Above, Hawthorne sardonically apologizes for the less than complimentary portrait of the President--“Good Heavens! What liberties have I been taking with one of the potentates of the earth, and the man on whose conduct more important consequences depend than on that of any other historical personage of the century!” Hawthorne also insists, with a play on “liberties,” that American citizens should be entitled to take liberties, especially with the president: indeed, a noted writer such as Hawthorne should be allowed the “liberty” to write a seemingly innocuous piece without being accused of treason. Hawthorne here implies that the Democrats are a party of freedom or *liberty*--the Republicans more of a tribal chieftaincy, monarchy, and dictatorship.

Hawthorne additionally questions the intuition of the people about Lincoln's integrity, since the populace is not always right. He attacks Lincoln for having naively underestimated the task of the presidency and for having an inflated sense of self-worth--as only a backwoodsman from Kentucky would possess. A president whose honesty is his only commendable attribute will simply not do. In perhaps the most provocative of these understated criticisms of Lincoln, Hawthorne claims that Lincoln has now become

²⁸ Hawthorne to Una Hawthorne (March 16, 1862); Hawthorne to George William Curtis (October 8, 1862); Hawthorne to Bridge (Jan 21, 1863), *Works*, 18:437, 496, 526.

as good as William Seward, his "prime minister." That choice of words--as opposed to the more appropriate "Secretary of State"--further denigrates Lincoln by rendering him something of a mere figure-head, relying on the intelligence of others.

Fields, of course, did not "disappoint" Hawthorne's fear of rejection. He called for a revision after receiving the article in May of 1862. Observing that the paper was otherwise excellent, he deemed Hawthorne's description of Lincoln to be in poor taste at a time of national instability:

On p. 92-93, also notice my mark. I don't like*[*At bottom:**as an Editor and Publisher] the way you speak of the Southerners there & hope you will let me strike out the expressions that seem to me wd. outrage the feelings of many Atlantic readers. Pray you ameliorate your description of the President, and change the other passages I have marked, or allow me to suggest in the proof what I think wd. be better changed. The whole article is piquant & tip top in all other respects.²⁹

Hawthorne agreed to delete some of the passage, which Fields later published verbatim in *Yesterday With Authors* (1872) after the deaths of both Lincoln and Hawthorne: since "both President and author have long ago met on the other side of criticism and magazines, we will leave the subject to their decision, they being most interested in the transaction."³⁰

²⁹ MS, Huntington; quoted in Austin, pp. 218-19.

³⁰ Fields, p. 101.

At the time, although Hawthorne had rather expected the article to be cut, it was not without rancor toward Fields that he agreed to do so. When, in 1991, James Bense suggested that Hawthorne all along intended for the article to contain prank editorial comments, he did not have available Hawthorne's now-published response to Fields. The fact of the matter is that Hawthorne feigned resignation in this subsequent letter to Fields, maintaining the "historical value" that would be wasted, all the while planning revenge for the forced cutting by way of the inflammatory footnotes and innuendoes. Hawthorne eventually used a Swiftian technique in forging ostensibly "editorial" comments far more critical of Lincoln than anything in the original manuscript:

I am going to comply with your request. I am the most good-natured man, and the most amenable to good advice (or bad advice either, for that matter) that you ever knew; so have it your own way! The whole description of the interview with Uncle Abe, and his personal appearance must be omitted, since I do not find it possible to alter them; and in so doing, I really think you omit the only part of the article really worth publishing. Upon my honor, it seems to me to have a historical value--but let it go. I have altered and transferred one of the notes, so as to indicate to the unfortunate public that it here loses something very nice What a terrible thing it is to try to let off a little bit of truth into this miserable humbug of a world!³¹

³¹ Hawthorne to Fields (May 23, 1862), *Works* 18:461.

As we shall see, those notes appended by Hawthorne--which he attributes to Fields in much the same way that Swift used Gulliver's editor supposedly to remove certain of Gulliver's passages "to fit the work as much as possible to the general capacity of readers," and to which Gulliver responded that he "hardly kn[e]w his own work"³²--were more damaging than the deletions themselves. "Chiefly About War Matters"³³ appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* in July 1862 with the emendations suggested by Fields. After having recounted some other things about Washington life, including a description of members of Congress that was likewise deleted, the article continued:

Of course, there was one other personage, in the class of statesmen whom I should have been truly mortified to leave Washington without seeing; since (temporarily, at least, and by force of circumstances) he was the man of men. But a private grief had built up a barrier about him, impeding the customary free intercourse of Americans with their chief magistrate; so that I might have come away without a glimpse of his very remarkable physiognomy, save for a semi-official opportunity of which I was glad to take advantage. The fact is, we were invited to annex ourselves, as supernumeraries, to a deputation that was about to wait upon the President, from a Massachusetts whip factory, with a

³²*Prose Works*, 11:10, 5

³³ The segment printed below is from the original. The footnotes Hawthorne added are placed within the text for accessibility in reading.

present of a splendid whip. Our immediate party consisted only of four or five . . . [who, in the company of some others swarmed in to]³⁴ take the chances of a presentation. Nine o'clock had been appointed as the time for receiving the deputation, and we were punctual to the moment; but not so the President, who sent us word that he was eating his breakfast, and would come as soon as he could. His appetite, we were glad to think, must have been a pretty fair one; for we waited about half an hour in one of the antechambers, and then were ushered into a reception-room, in one corner of which sat the Secretaries of War and of the Treasury, expecting, like ourselves, the termination of the Presidential breakfast. During the interval there were several new additions to our group, one or two of whom were in a working-garb, so that we formed a very miscellaneous collection of people, mostly unknown to each other, and without any common sponsor, but all with an equal right to look our head servant in the face.

By and by there was a little stir on the staircase and in the passageway, etc., etc.

³⁴Brackets are textual.

At this point the portion eventually restored by Fields was cut, with the following note by Hawthorne, that, with Swiftian irony, he feigned to be offered by the editors:

We are compelled to omit two or three pages, in which the author describes the interview, and gives his idea of the personal appearance and deportment of the President. The sketch appears to have been written in a benign spirit, and perhaps conveys a not inaccurate impression of its August subject; but it lacks reverence, and it pains us to see a gentleman of ripe age, and who has spent years under the corrective influence of foreign institutions, falling into the characteristic and most ominous fault of Young America.

Beyond this, Hawthorne stipulated that Fields “mark the omissions with dashes; so-- + + + + +.”³⁵ Taken together, the added note and marks of expurgation are far more damning of Lincoln than was Hawthorne’s original text, for the notes leave more to the reader’s imagination. Hawthorne appended several more notes disguised as editorial afterthoughts, continuing in the same vein of fictionalizing commentary as though the notes had been fashioned by Fields. The notes dupe the *Atlantic* readers, while gaining sympathy for Hawthorne and his party:

- We do not thoroughly comprehend the author’s drift in the foregoing paragraph, but are inclined to think it to be reprehensible, and its tendency impolitic in the present stage of our national defense.

³⁵ *Works*, 18:461.

- We hardly expected this outbreak in favor of war from the Peaceable Man; but the justice of our cause makes us all soldiers at heart, however quiet in our outward life. We have heard of twenty Quakers in a single company of a Pennsylvania regiment.
- Can it be a son of old Massachusetts who utters this abominable sentiment? For shame!
- The author seems to imagine that he has compressed a great deal of meaning into these little, hard, dry pellets of aphoristic wisdom. We disagree with him. The counsels of wise and good men are often coincident with the purposes of Providence; and the present war promises to illustrate our remark.
- We regret the innuendo in that concluding sentence. The war can never be allowed to terminate, except in the complete triumph of Northern principles. We hold the event in our own hands, and may choose whether to terminate it by the methods already so successfully used, or by other means equally within our control, and calculated to be still more speedily efficacious. In truth, the work is already done.
- We should be sorry to cast a doubt on the Peaceable Man's loyalty, but he will allow us to say that we consider him premature in his kindly feelings towards traitors and sympathizers with treason. As the author himself says of John Brown, (and so aptly, we thought it an atrociously cold-blooded dictum,) "any common-sensible man would feel an intellectual

satisfaction in seeing them hanged, were it only for their preposterous miscalculation of possibilities." There are some degrees of absurdity that put Reason herself into a rage, and affect us like an intolerable crime,-- which this Rebellion is, into the bargain.

Attributed to the editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, the tone of these notes intensifies the satirical ambience already established.

Swiftian as well is a "letter to the editor" that appeared three months following the publication of "Chiefly About War Matters." There, Hawthorne intentionally deceives readers by lamenting, "You can hardly have expected to hear from me again, (unless by invitation to the field of honor,) after those cruel and terrible notes upon my harmless article in the July Number." He further claims that the portion of the article that had been deleted "would have been a treasure to the future historian; and I hold you responsible to posterity for thrusting it into the fire."³⁶ He thus continues to mislead the public into believing that the editor, Fields, is responsible for the emendations. He signs the letter to the editor, "Truly, yours, A Peaceable Man."

Julian Hawthorne knew that the notes were calculated narration :

Intentionally absurd though these "comments" were, they seem to have possessed verisimilitude enough to deceive most readers; and I remember that one person, who felt the indignation which they pretended to express, declared, when apprised of their true authorship, "Then I have no respect

³⁶ "Leamington Spa," *Atlantic Monthly*, 10 (October, 1862), p. 451.

for a man who runs with the hare, and hunts with the hounds!" But our sense of humor in New England was, at this period, not seldom exanimated by our insatiable political conscientiousness."³⁷

Julian is aware that his father dissembled in the notes, even though those notes had deceived many. For instance, a Connecticut-born author "Ik Marvel" was fooled into thinking that they were inserted by the editor. The author called the notes "marginal impertinences," that would have made him swear, had he been a swearing man, and said that a "man's opinions can take no . . . philosophic range nowadays, but they call out some shrewish accusation of disloyalty."³⁸

Here the notes caused more of a political stir against the President's party than the comments might have had those been left as Hawthorne first wrote them. In "Chiefly About War Matters," Hawthorne reviled Lincoln and the Republican party, and beguiled erudite readers, even as he appealed to his audience as a victim of political censorship. The example of Swift in the area of literary satire had served him well.

³⁷Julian Hawthorne, p. 311.

³⁸Julian Hawthorne, p. 312.

CHAPTER 5

THE ART OF SURVIVAL: NARRATING THE SELF

Regardless of the genre—whether in tales, journals, romances, or letters—Hawthorne employs sophisticated narrative strategies. As noted above, he artfully manipulates the reader with religious rhetoric; he summons up the jeremiad to create a theoretical resolution to poverty; he contrives a mythology surrounding the career of Lincoln; and he renders ambivalent Bacon’s “antinomianism”—not because he *believed* her idea about Shakespeare’s inauthenticity, but because he appreciated her creative, quasi-literary narration. As the current chapter will illustrate, Hawthorne as artfully navigates the currents of political discourse. He admits as much in a letter to Horatio Bridge concerning the Franklin Pierce biography: “Though the story is true, yet it took a romancer to do it.”¹ Similarly belletristic are the letters, journals, and magazine publications in which Hawthorne exhibits political posturing through literary utterance. His masterful use of narration served him and his friends in garnering political appointments and in securing the Presidency for Pierce. When Pierce and the Democrats were no longer in power, Hawthorne disclaimed political affiliation; finally, he described himself as “sick to death”² of fighting about politics, as disillusioned with the American

¹Hawthorne to Horatio Bridge in *Works* (October 13, 1852), 16:605.

²Comment in Hawthorne’s letter to Bridge (March 30, 1854), *Works*, 17:188.

system, and as preferring the innocence of anti-bellum New England to modern times. Nonetheless, I contend that Hawthorne persistently sought to achieve either political or highly personal goals—to cultivate favors from those who were in power or to ally himself amiably with posterity through calculated narration.

Hawthorne's first interest in politics dates from his days at Bowdoin College from 1821-1825, although as a young man growing up in New England he was never far removed from political life. At Bowdoin, his politics were partly shaped through friendships with Franklin Pierce, Horatio Bridge, and Jonathan Cilley, and by their membership in one of the two college literary societies: the Peucinians and the Atheneans. The Peucinians supported John Quincy Adams and were likely to be Whigs; the Atheneans, whom Hawthorne favored, were followers of Andrew Jackson and usually became Democrats. Hawthorne's lifelong association with the Democratic Party was related to the young Hawthorne's alliances with these classmates. Out of this early college association emerged a fraternity that was very powerful and lingering; this fraternity gave Hawthorne a forum for his political narration—one that he used in developing an agenda for his immediate needs and for his legacy.

Especially at Bowdoin was the line between the two clubs so drawn that Longfellow, a fellow student and a fellow aesthete, was not a close friend at the time, probably because he was a member of the Peucinians. But not only during college days did the clubs have significance. The rivalry matured into political as well as into literary wars. The Peucinians became the literati who embraced a reverence for the British

models in literature. The Peucinians became Whigs, and later became Republicans.³ Boasting a membership—including Bowdoin alumni as well as others—of literary men such as Cooper, Bryant, Whittier, Holmes, and Longfellow, the Peucinians went on to publish the *Knickerbocker* magazine in honor of Washington Irving. In contrast, the Atheneans became the more radical Democrats, the “Young Americans” in literature as well as in politics. Hawthorne, John O’Sullivan, and Poe were members of this group. These writers, committed to a search for an “American genius,”⁴ published their works in *Arcturus*, the *Democratic Review*, and *Literary World*. Their objectives included a battle for an international copyright⁵ and a search for a truly “American Literature”; they considered Longfellow and the other “Anglophiles” to be mere imitators of British writers. To Americanists, this was unacceptable, politically and aesthetically. Hawthorne rather early allied himself with these young Democrats and began the process that he would continue throughout his career—that of narrating himself to the world as Democratic. Battling to stay afloat financially and artistically, he became, when

³Randall Stewart, *Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Biography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), pp. 19-21.

⁴Michael Davitt Bell, *Hawthorne and the Historical Romance of New England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 75.

⁵The passage of the first American copyright law in 1790 made literature *property* and thus made authorship as a profession a possibility for American writers. It was not, however, until 1891 that an *international* copyright law was negotiated that allowed American writers to be paid for their work in England. With no international copyright law, British works could be published cheaply in America, and American authors had to compete with these cheap editions. Thus, there had to be an international copyright law before there could be a truly American literature. See Hervey Allen, *Israfel: The Life and times of Edgar Allan Poe* (New York: Rinehart & Company Inc., 1949) pp. 398-403, 419, for a discussion of the copyright question.

necessary, a master of manipulative literary dissembling. Thus, Hawthorne's political affiliation remains evasive because, as creative artist, he manipulated party politics.

Hawthorne's cultivated friendships—beyond Pierce, Bridge, and Cilley—with others who would be useful to him throughout his career. He became acquainted with many Salem Democrats, including William B. Pike, a Methodist lay preacher and Jacksonian Democrat who was thought to be a model for Hollingsworth in *The Blithedale Romance*.⁶ Hawthorne was to use these connections not only as fertile ground for his creativity, but also to secure political appointments and favors for himself and for others. Early evidence of the importance of these friendships to Hawthorne's politics can be found in his letters, which reveal how Hawthorne, a self-proclaimed Democrat, was not above political manipulation to secure a desired outcome.

For instance, in his association with O'Sullivan, Hawthorne, who had submitted some two dozen pieces to O'Sullivan's *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, described himself as a Democrat. Hawthorne became acquainted with O'Sullivan and the *Democratic Review* through Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, Hawthorne's sister-in-law, who had also used her connections with George Bancroft to secure patronage employment for Hawthorne. O'Sullivan, who coined the phrase "manifest destiny," was a radical Democrat and "Young American."⁷ Though he was considered by many to be a charlatan and his magazine to be jingoistic, he was nonetheless a political friend of

⁶ Stewart, 53.

⁷ The same sentiments that informed the politics of the '40s and 50s and created "Young America" also informed the literature.

Hawthorne.⁸ Still, Hawthorne had almost been drawn into fighting a duel with the colorful O'Sullivan, who had supposedly offended an occasional lady-friend of Hawthorne's, Mary Crowninshield Silsbee, later the wife of Jared Sparks. For this and other reasons, Hawthorne did not trust O'Sullivan, although O'Sullivan was Una Hawthorne's godfather. From Liverpool Hawthorne wrote Sophia who, with her daughters, was staying with the O'Sullivans in Madeira, that she was not to get too friendly with O'Sullivan whose character was uncertain.⁹ Still, Hawthorne found O'Sullivan to be politically useful, and O'Sullivan even became Hawthorne's confidant in political matters. In a letter to O'Sullivan, Hawthorne wrote, "When I next see you, I shall have some queer tales to tell about the faith and honor of politicians"—of one politician at least, George Bancroft, a learned Democrat and historian who, although loyal to Lincoln, helped Hawthorne in political appointments. Hawthorne called Bancroft "an astounding liar."¹⁰ Although Hawthorne did not quite trust O'Sullivan in all matters, O'Sullivan became a personal accomplice in Hawthorne's political narration. Still, Hawthorne's early political comradeship and literary posturing did not end with O'Sullivan. The most renowned of the Hawthornian alliances was with the soon-to-become fourteenth president of the United States, Franklin Pierce.

⁸ Longfellow thought O'Sullivan to be a Humbug; Thoreau denigrated him as simply one of the "not bad," and Emerson questioned the veracity of Democracy as a "government of bullies tempered by editors," the editor he had in mind, O'Sullivan. *Works*, 15:56.

⁹Hawthorne to Sophia (February 7, 1856), *Works* 17:436-439.

¹⁰Hawthorne to J. L. O'Sullivan (March 15, 1840), *Works* 15:419; Hawthorne to W. B. Pike, *Works* 15:410.

Hawthorne's immediate and enduring friendship with Pierce flourished partly because of Pierce's political power and ability to procure much-needed financial backing for Hawthorne. Pierce, in turn, benefited from Hawthorne's narrative artistry during the Presidential campaign. When Pierce was nominated for the presidency, Hawthorne wrote to the Democratic nominee, "It has occurred to me that you might have some thoughts of getting me to write the necessary biography. Whatever service I can do you, I need not say, would be at your command." Hawthorne modestly disparaged his own ability to secure the authorship of the Pierce biography: "But I do not believe that I should succeed in this matter so well as many other men. It needs long thought with me, in order to produce anything good, and after all, my style and qualities, as a writer, are certainly not those of the broadest popularity, such as are requisite for a task of this kind."¹¹ Partly in response to this circuitous appeal, Pierce prevailed upon his old college friend.

Hawthorne also told Pierce that the biography would use all diplomatic means to have voters perceive Pierce as the man whom they would elect as their Chief Executive. With respect to controversial issues, Hawthorne was "sensible of a very difficult and delicate part of my task, in your connection with the great subject of variance between the North and South. There is no way, however, open to my perception—no course either of true policy, or worthy either of you or your biographer—save to meet the question with perfect candor and frankness, and to state what has been your action and what your

¹¹Hawthorne to Pierce (June 9, 1852), *Works*, 16:545.

position; not pugnaciously, and by no manner of means, defensively, but so as to put you on the broadest ground possible, as a man for the whole country.”¹² Thus Hawthorne’s intention was to emphasize the strengths—and to minimize the weaknesses—of Pierce to guarantee his election.

To achieve this purpose with the biography, Hawthorne recalled Pierce as having been a thoroughly genteel and gracious young man: “He was distinguished by the same fascination of manner that has since proved so magical in winning him an unbounded personal popularity.” Hawthorne also claimed that the source of Pierce’s character “lies deep in the kindness of his nature, and in the liberal generous, catholic sympathy, that embraces all who are worthy of it.”¹³ The type of character that Hawthorne described was one who would woo voters and win the election for Pierce; Hawthorne would simultaneously promote his own prospects for obtaining a good governmental job that would facilitate his capacity to engage in more creative endeavors. Further praising Pierce, Hawthorne claimed that “He had all the natural gifts that adapted him for [politics]: courtesy, firmness, quickness and accuracy of judgment, and a clearness of mental perception that brought its own regularity into the scene of confused and entangled debate.” Thus, Hawthorne attributed to Pierce characteristics that would stand the Presidential candidate in good stead. Hawthorne alleged as well the powerful essence of Pierce’s character as a man of vision who nonetheless was adept at keeping

¹²Hawthorne to Franklin Pierce (July 5, 1852), *Works*, 16:560.

¹³Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Life of Franklin Pierce*, Photocopy of *The Life of Franklin Pierce*, Boston: Ticknor, Reed, and Fields, 1852, (New York: Garrett Press, Inc., 1969) p. 17.

others in check: "It is rare that a man combines so much impulse with so great a power of regulating the impulses of himself and others as Franklin Pierce."¹⁴ The character that Hawthorne was creating is one who could be trusted to the highest office of the nation. Hawthorne further compared Pierce to President Jackson;¹⁵ as far as Hawthorne and his constituency were concerned, that was close to calling Pierce a god. The campaign biography was a magnificent success. Even Hawthorne's defense of Pierce's view of slavery was politically calculated, as Hawthorne found Pierce to be one who loved his country so dearly that he refused to support anything that would bring about its division. This sentiment carried with it significant political clout because the era into which Pierce was about to be thrust was the era in which the slavery issue was portentous. The biography accomplished the purpose for which it was written—that of securing the Presidency for Pierce and political favors for Hawthorne.

The biography was written to appeal to a constituency that preferred the status quo of slavery to the upheaval of war and division. Hawthorne artfully described Pierce to this constituency as one who opposed the abolitionists' views. This narration lent credence to Pierce's belief—and that of most of the South—that the institution of slavery was a one that would gradually disappear on its own. In the biography Hawthorne claimed that Pierce "looks upon slavery as one of those evils which divine Providence does not leave to be remedied by human contrivances, but which, in its own good time, by some means impossible to be anticipated, but of the simplest and easiest operation,

¹⁴*The Life of Franklin Pierce*, p. 25.

¹⁵*The Life of Franklin Pierce*, p. 28.

when all its uses shall have been fulfilled, it causes to vanish like a dream.”¹⁶ The above statement caused Theodore Parker to link Hawthorne to Carlyle as “the only two men of Genius in this age” who supported slavery.¹⁷

Hawthorne promoted Pierce through “fictive” utterances. One commentator called the biography “Hawthorne’s new romance”; another claimed it to be “as pleasant reading as the best of the author’s romances,” since Hawthorne “narrates facts as charmingly as he does fiction.”¹⁸ Thus, Hawthorne, in the process of gaining the election for Pierce, had achieved the desired political appointment for himself. In spite of Hawthorne’s claim that he had made “an inward resolution that I would accept no office from him [Pierce],” he does admit that he might be persuaded to accept the consulship at Liverpool.¹⁹ Of course, this is just what Pierce offered, and what Hawthorne received in payment for his work on the biography when it led to Pierce’s election on November 2, 1852.

Anticipating his reasoned support of Pierce, Hawthorne had been, even as a young man, mindful of the political implications of his utterances. Hawthorne, who felt it to be to his own advantage to protest Republicanism in favor of more democratic

¹⁶ *Works*, 12:417.

¹⁷ *Works*, 16:608, quoted in Woodson notes as a letter to W. M. Thackery, August 7, 1853.

¹⁸ See *Works*, 16:608, note 6; the quotes are before the publication of the biography from the *Boston Journal*, August 25, 1852, and the *Washington Union*, September 14 of the same year.

¹⁹ Hawthorne to Bridge (October 13, 1852), *Works*, 16:605.

principles, creatively and artfully manipulated his constituency whenever to do so benefitted himself politically and financially. To that end, Hawthorne began to create political personae for himself through a somewhat ironic narrative voice. An early example of Hawthorne's use of artistic rhetoric for political ends occurs in a letter to his sister, Elizabeth, when Andrew Jackson was President and had refused to declare a national fast day, despite popular belief that cholera was a punishment for sin.²⁰

Hawthorne wrote to his sister that she need proceed no further with "Hamilton"—an article on Hamilton's life coauthored by Elizabeth and Nathaniel—since he had had to finish it himself because of the possibility of her profaning the article with her Whig politics. He feared that her utterances would harm his prospects for currying Democratic favor. Therefore, to avoid having his name associated with an article that would ally him in any way with Whig politics, he wrote, "I approve of your life; but have been obliged to correct some of your naughty notions about arbitrary government."²¹ Hawthorne was unwilling to taint his political image by having a sister undermine his prospects for political appointment.

Not only did Hawthorne's rhetoric with his sister show his refusal to have her compromise his own political ambitions, but he also exhibited a keen literary sense of

²⁰Cholera broke out in Montreal in June 1832 and soon spread to New York state and towns along the Erie Canal. Although many died before the epidemic subsided, Boston and Salem were not affected. For more about this epidemic see Charles E. Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years: The United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), chapter 1. The idea that cholera was a national scourge used by God to bring a sinful nation back to purity through prayer and fasting would be quite consistent with the jeremiad consciousness in America.

²¹ Hawthorne to Elizabeth Manning Hawthorne (March 22, 1836), *Works*, 16:243.

audience in his bid for political appointments. For instance, when Hawthorne's friends Bridge and Pierce tried unsuccessfully to get Hawthorne an appointment as historiographer with Commodore Wilkes, who was being funded by Congress to explore the South Seas, Hawthorne prevailed upon his sister-in-law, Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, for support in other quarters. Under Hawthorne's tutelage, Peabody recommended him to George Bancroft as a possible candidate for the appointment at the Boston Custom House. She also solicited aid from, among others, Orestes Brownson.²² Hawthorne eventually secured his position at the Custom House.²³ Hawthorne's career as a public official, also according to his own design, filled the intervals between his writings. As Jonathan P. Arac has observed: "From the mid-1830s through the mid-1850s, each time a Democratic president came into office, Hawthorne received a patronage appointment: in the Boston Custom House, 1839-41; in the Salem Custom House, 1846-49; and as consul in Liverpool and Manchester, England, 1853-57. The one other interval was spent in a different kind of politics, at the Brook Farm utopian community in 1841."²⁴ Clearly

²² In a letter to George Bancroft, Hawthorne accepts the inspectorship of the custom house in Boston that has been wrought out of his solicitation through Elizabeth Palmer Peabody of Brownson and then Bancroft. See *Works* (January 11, 1839), 15:283.

²³ Elizabeth Palmer Peabody was equally instrumental in obtaining the Salem Custom House position for him in 1846. See Thomas Woodson's introduction, *Works* 15:22.

²⁴ Jonathan P. Arac, "Narrative Forms." *The Cambridge History of American Literature*, 3 vols., vol 2, 1820-1865, ed. Sacvan Bercovitch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 645. See also Arac, "The Politics of *The Scarlet Letter*," in *Ideology and Classic American Literature*, eds. Sacvan Bercovitch and Myra Jehlen (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 252-53, on Hawthorne's Democratic political beliefs.

these endeavors were political—albeit, the experiment at Brook Farm not as overtly political—and Hawthorne had appropriately utilized his political audience to gain the appointments and to keep himself in office or to seek more remunerative employment: first while he was at the custom houses of Boston and Salem, and then in his overseas appointment. Although Hawthorne was unsuccessful in seeking O’Sullivan to secure a change of political jobs in 1840, that of the postmaster job at Salem,²⁵ for the most part, his solicitations were successful. These appointments for himself occurred at Hawthorne’s design during the times in his literary career when he was silent, or at least not receiving financial remuneration from his writings. He admitted political designs to Hillard: “Be pleased on no account to mention this matter to any Salem man, however friendly to me he may profess himself. If any movement on my part were heard of, it would precipitate their assault.”²⁶ Aware that he was using circuitous political discourse, he knew that if he were discovered, these schemes would fail.

Hawthorne’s political representations of himself reflect equal amounts of need and political expediency. At times, Hawthorne seemed to be a true Democrat, supportive of the party’s policy; at times, when claiming nonpartisanship proved more

²⁵Hawthorne to William B. Pike (February 8, 1840), in *Works* 15:407; Hawthorne to O’Sullivan (February 10, 1840), in *Works* 15:409.

²⁶Hawthorne to Hillard (March 5, 1849), in *Works*, 16:264. Hawthorne suspected that he would be ousted from his job because of a perceived political situation coincidental with his serving at the custom house in Salem and did not want it to be revealed to the public since he was afraid that this would hasten his removal.

advisable, he did just that.²⁷ When the political tide first began to ebb for Hawthorne in June of 1849, he was turned out of the Salem Custom House. After he had benefitted from three years of financial subsistence from that work, and since the Whigs were now in office, Hawthorne's head fell to the Jacksonian spoils system. With a growing awareness on Hawthorne's part that he was about to become unemployed, he prevailed upon Hillard for help. Hillard appealed on behalf of Hawthorne to Abbott Lawrence, a prominent Whig manufacturer and an ex-Congressman and politician, who later became the American minister to Great Britain.²⁸ The appeal, however, was ineffectual, and Hawthorne was unable to regain a position. Whether their claim was true or merely a political charge, the Whigs declared that Hawthorne had used the custom house appointment for political purposes—that his rhetoric while there was highly supportive of the Democrats. Hawthorne argued that the charges against him were false, a mere political ruse to oust him, and stated that he never really wanted the job, but was forced into it—which he probably was—by financial need and not by *anyone*. It appears that the political party machine had devoured Hawthorne, who fell victim to politics. In the wake of his dismissal, he denied any party prejudice or any real party affiliation, claiming not to be political.²⁹ However, his actions reflected that he was clearly political

²⁷As the end of the Democratic supremacy comes, Hawthorne begins to justify his job on non-political grounds. See Hawthorne to Hillard (March 5, 1849), in *Works*, 16:263-64; Hawthorne to Longfellow (June 5, 1849), in *Works*, 16: 269-71; Hawthorne to Hillard (June 12, 1849), in *Works*, 16:277-78.

²⁸ Hawthorne to Mary Mann (June 9, 1849), in *Works*, 16:275.

²⁹ Hawthorne to Hillard (June 18, 1849). *Works* 16:279-282.

at this point in his life, and his declarations of political innocence were motivated by his unwillingness to leave the job that had been secured for him through politics. In a further attempt to retain his job through narrative guise, Hawthorne, denying being political, declared that his work had been under the supervision of Whig politicians—the opposing party—and that all the charges of partisanship were false: “As to my political action, I have voted, since I have been in this office, twice. I have listened to a portion of a political address . . . by Caleb Cushing.” Cushing was a Whig congressman who had run for governor as a Democrat, at Salem in 1846. Also, to back his claim that he was not acting on behalf of the Democratic Party, but rather was non-political, Hawthorne alleged that he “suffer[ed] under considerable odium, in the view of my own party, for having taken no part whatever. All my official conduct has been under the supervision and sanction of Colonel Mill, a Whig.”³⁰ For all its fervor, this narration was questionable.

Indeed, Hawthorne was listed as a member of the Democratic Town Committee in the *Salem Advertiser* on two separate occasions—November 9, 1846, and November 5, 1847. Also, on August 30, 1848, he was also listed in that same publication as a delegate to the Democratic State Convention in Worcester.³¹ Hawthorne, therefore, played both sides against the middle by first embracing the Democrats to get the appointment, and by

³⁰Hawthorne to Hillard (June 12, 1849), *Works* 16:278. Hillard, although vacillating in politics, was one of Hawthorne’s closest friends and correspondents, especially sympathizing with Hawthorne when he was turned out of the Salem Custom House.

³¹See Paul C. Cortissoz, “The Political Life of Nathaniel Hawthorne,” diss., New York University, 1955, p. 85.

then identifying himself with the party in power, the Whigs. Hawthorne next wrote Hillard another letter of entreaty for reinstatement to his job at the Salem Custom House. In this letter, rich with political rhetoric, he claimed that he had been accused of writing political articles for the Democratic paper, the *Salem Advertiser*. Vacillating politically in applying for reinstatement, denying party loyalty, and attempting to ally himself more closely with the Whigs, the party in power, he equivocated by trying to downplay his political rhetoric in the *Advertiser*: “My contributions to that paper have been two theatrical criticisms, a notice of a ball at Ballard Vale, a notice of Longfellow’s *Evangeline*, and perhaps half a dozen other books.” Chameleon-like, he protested that the memorial he had written about Jonathan Cilley, who had died as the result of a senseless argument that some thought to be politically motivated, “might as well have been written by a Whig as by a Democrat.”³² In that memoir, Hawthorne recalled that Cilley was possessed of a “natural eloquence—a flow of pertinent ideas, in a language of unstudied appropriateness, which he had calculated.”³³ Hawthorne’s narration of himself to suit his political strategy corresponds to his characterization of Cilley in the memoir of Cilley—what Thomas Woodson calls “typical Jacksonian primitivism.”³⁴ He could just as appropriately have labeled the rhetoric “typical Hawthornian political narration of the self.”

³² Hawthorne to Hillard (June 12, 1849), in *Works*, 16:277.

³³Hawthorne’s elegy of Cilley, “Biographical Sketch of Jonathan Cilley,” *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, II (1838) p. 70.

³⁴ *Works*, 16:278.

Despite the rhetorical posturing of Hawthorne, the Whigs were convinced that he had used the appointment at the Salem Custom House to promote a Democratic agenda. Now, for political and financial reasons, Hawthorne was forced to pander to the party in power, the Whigs. One Whig who had offered to use his influence to gain Hawthorne's reinstatement was Horace Mann, Hawthorne's brother-in-law. At first Hawthorne refused Mann's offer to help: "I would be very unwilling to have you enter into treaty with Mr. King, Mr. Upham, or other members of the local [Whig] party, in my behalf."³⁵ Hawthorne rejected Mann's offer partly because of a quarrel with King and Upham that precluded any help from these two political enemies. Daniel Putnam King became a Whig congressman in 1843 and worked with Upham to oust Hawthorne and others when the Democrats were no longer in power; Charles W. Upham, a former Unitarian minister of the First Church of Salem, had reassured Hawthorne, that Hawthorne need never fear removal from the Salem Custom House under Whig administration. Upham turned on Hawthorne when the administration changed and, like King, was active in having Hawthorne dismissed from the custom house.³⁶ Hawthorne's subtle revenge was to create a hypocritical character in *The House of Seven Gables*, Judge Pyncheon, whom he modeled after Upham.³⁷ Although Hawthorne did not really count on any help from King and Upham, he finally agreed to Mann's proposal of patronage: "After consenting that you should use your influence in my behalf, I should feel myself bound to accept the

³⁵Hawthorne to Horace Mann (June 26, 1849), 16:284, 285.

³⁶ Hawthorne to Hillard (June 18, 1849), *Works*, 16:280

³⁷Stewart, p. 89.

re-instatement, if offered.”³⁸ Hawthorne, assuming a non-political perspective, agreed to take his old Custom house job back if it were offered to him. He was probably most upset because Upham speculated that Hawthorne had simply been used by the Democrats to accomplish their political purpose, when all the while Hawthorne had ventured the political manipulations.³⁹ Still, Hawthorne continued to deny that his actions were politically motivated, writing that he was “inclined to think, from various suspicious indications that I have noticed or heard of, between the Whigs and one or two of my subordinate officers, that they are concocting, or have already concocted, a new set of charges against me.”⁴⁰ He contended that he would be glad to answer any charges presented to him. However, when it seemed that the political machinations might actually succeed and that Hawthorne might secure his old job back, the Salem Whigs and the Taylor Club met “to reaffirm their desire for his dismissal, and to appoint a committee headed by Upham to address a memorial to the government.”⁴¹ Although Upham knew that Hawthorne was innocent, he “pursued his course for political expediency.”⁴² Through Upham’s insistence, the Whigs were convinced that Hawthorne had indeed used the appointment for political ends, despite his denial. Hawthorne

³⁸Hawthorne to Horace Mann (June 26, 1849), 16:284, 285.

³⁹*Works*, 16:294.

⁴⁰Hawthorne to Horace Mann (July 2, 1849), *Works*, 16:287.

⁴¹ Winfield S. Nevins. "Nathaniel Hawthorne's Removal from the Salem Custom House," *Essex Institute Historical Collection* 53 (1917):170, quoted in *Works*, 16:288.

⁴²Stewart, p. 89.

subsequently wrote to Horace Mann, “Mr. Upham accuses me of suspending one or more Inspectors for refusing to pay party-subscriptions, and avers that I sent them a letter of suspension by a messenger, whom he names, and that—I suppose after the payment of the subscription—I withdrew the suspension.”⁴³ Still, Hawthorne correctly presumed that the whole case was “founded on some observation of the maneuvers of small politicians”—that Mr. Upham and his coadjutors had one of the inspectors turn traitor on Hawthorne to get him out of office. Hawthorne's career had fallen prey to the same spoils system that Andrew Jackson, Hawthorne's hero, had instituted. Because Hawthorne had been its victim, and because Upham had turned on Hawthorne, Hawthorne was ready to “kill and scalp him [Upham] in the public prints.”⁴⁴ Hawthorne, however, waited for the rhetorical scalping of Upham until he characterized Upham as Pyncheon. Woodson says that Hawthorne was probably most rankled because Upham claimed that Hawthorne was being used merely as a puppet—“the abused instrument of others.”⁴⁵ This especially would have troubled Hawthorne since he was, on the contrary, accustomed to politically narrating the scheme of his career instead of being the victim of the stratagem of others. Just as Hawthorne had at first used an affiliation with the Democratic Party to secure political favors, he then benefited from friends in the Whig Party to further his political and financial ends. He did so through the power of his pen—through political narration.

⁴³ *Works*, 16:291.

⁴⁴ Hawthorne to Horace Mann (August 8, 1849), *Works*, 16:293.

⁴⁵ *Works*, 16:294.

When Hawthorne finally saw that his release from the custom house was a definite and painful reality, he maintained that he was relieved to have been ousted and realigned himself with the Democrats. He wrote to Zachariah Burchmore, "I find it very agreeable to get rid of politics and the rest of the damnable turmoil that has disturbed me for three or four years."⁴⁶ He then allied himself with Burchmore, a fellow Democrat, with whom he had much in common because Burchmore had similarly been ousted. Hawthorne wrote Burchmore that he was "entirely out of political life," but was glad to see that Zack had "stood out so stiffly against all compromise with the Free-Soilers." Hawthorne regretted, however, that Burchmore must have found himself in an odd sort of a quandary, when Robert Rantoul, Jr. gave him the slip.⁴⁷ Rantoul was a Free Soil Democrat elected in the 1851 congressional election. Because Rantoul had succeeded in having the Salem legislature change the criteria for election to Congress from a simple majority to a plurality, he secured the election. In the previous elections neither Upham, Rantoul, nor Sewall had been able to win election to the Salem legislature. But with the change in the election law, Rantoul was elected and Upham's political plans thwarted.⁴⁸ That Upham had been frustrated in his quest for office caused Hawthorne to gloat because Upham had been dealt a turn by the political machine that Upham himself operated. For as much as Hawthorne disliked to admit it, he was still rankled by his

⁴⁶ Hawthorne to Zachariah Burchmore (July 15, 1851), *Works*, 16:340.

⁴⁷ Hawthorne to Burchmore (April 7, 1851), *Works*, 16:415.

⁴⁸ See editorial note, *Works*, 16:416.

ousting from the custom house, was angry with both political parties, and had practically decided at that point in time that he was neither Democrat nor Whig.

Although Hawthorne was still anxious to get his job back, he claimed that he was happy at having being ousted from the custom house. Actually his assumed bias against the “Free Soilers and Negroes,” his statement that he “didn’t give a d–n for office,” and his blessing on Zachary Taylor were creative narration, so that if he were not reinstated, he would not appear to be injured by what he considered to be political treachery.⁴⁹ Hawthorne was obviously dissembling when he claimed that he was glad to be out of office, because in “The Custom House” section of *The Scarlet Letter* he contended that Taylor was the one who caused him to lose his position at the custom house. And regardless of what he said in this letter to Burchmore, Hawthorne was still trying to become reinstated in the custom house. He therefore persisted in using narrational artistry in political dealing.

II

Hawthorne likewise used his influence to orchestrate the political careers of others. Because he could envision the part politics played in the lives of those to whom he had become attached, Hawthorne advised them how to narrate their own careers for political gain. Early on, he had predicted Pierce’s political eminence and in that prediction instructed Pierce to design a career much like the structure of a plot:

⁴⁹Hawthorne to Zachariah Burchmore (July 15, 1851), *Works*, 16:456.

I sincerely congratulate you on all your public honours in possession or in prospect. If they continue to accumulate so rapidly, you will be at the summit of political eminence, by that time of life when men are usually just beginning to make a figure. . . . If I were in your place, I should like to proceed by the following steps,--after a few years in Congress, to be chosen Governor, say at thirty years old,--next a Senator to congress,--then minister to England,--then to be put at the head of one of the Departments (that of War would suit you, I should think)--and lastly--but it will be time enough to think of the next step, some years hence.⁵⁰

That prediction was partially accomplished when Pierce became President in 1853. It is doubtful whether he followed Hawthorne's strategy, as he did not succeed in holding any of the other offices recommended by Hawthorne. Hawthorne's plan would have been a good one, though, and shows his propensity for "scripting" life.

With Pierce in the nation's highest office, partly because of Hawthorne's masterful literary manipulation of the voting public, Hawthorne expected, and received, the coveted Liverpool consulship. With this appointment, he was equally hopeful of securing political positions for his friends. For example, Hawthorne wrote F. D. Farley, promising him a custom house appointment by virtue of Hawthorne's association with Pierce.⁵¹ But Farley was not alone in receiving Hawthorne's advice. Throughout his career, Hawthorne viewed personal politics as inseparable from narrative strategy. He intimated

⁵⁰ Hawthorne to Pierce (June 28, 1832), *Works*, 15:223.

⁵¹ Hawthorne to F. D. Farley, (Feb 7, 1853), *Works*, 16:636.

his use of literary posturing to secure political appointments and instruction for political self-narration to Epes Sargent, Massachusetts-born editor, journalist, dramatist, poet, and biographer of Henry Clay : “I wish your fate had happened to cast you on the winning side in politics. It is exceedingly convenient for a literary man to be able to ensconce himself in an office, whenever his brain gets weary and his pen blunted. I have had good luck in this respect, and really do not know what so ideal and inefficient a fellow could have done without it.”⁵² Hawthorne here hints at the part that narrative posturing plays in political appointment and advises Sargent accordingly.

Hawthorne similarly advised many others of his friends about the “voice” to use in their political pursuits. He helped Zachariah Burchmore, Thomas R. Page, Richard Henry Stoddard, W. B. Pike, and John L. O’Sullivan,⁵³ and others, to secure political appointments. In a letter to Stoddard, for instance, Hawthorne invited Stoddard to participate in a narration calculated to beguile the political powers that control an appointment:

When applying for office if you are conscious of any deficiencies (moral, intellectual, or educational, or whatever else) keep them to yourself, and let those find them out whose business it may be. For example, supposing

⁵² Hawthorne to Epes (March 3, 1846), in *Works*, 16:151.

⁵³Under Hawthorne’s tutelage, Page became employed by the Boston Custom House as inspector in 1854. Stoddard and Pike were literary friends of Hawthorne’s-- Stoddard presided over a salon that Hawthorne frequented, and Stoddard got the customhouse job in 1853 partly because of Hawthorne’s help. Hawthorne seemed anxious to have Pike in Liverpool with him, possibly as a secretary (*Works*, 16:659). O’Sullivan received the charg eship to Portugal in February 1854 (*Works*, 16:664).

the office of Translator to the State Department to be tendered you, accept it boldly, without hinting that your acquaintance with foreign languages may not be the most familiar. If this unimportant fact be discovered afterwards, you can be transferred to some more suitable post. The business is, to establish yourself, somehow and anyhow.⁵⁴

Hawthorne, tutoring Stoddard in the art of unreliable narration to achieve political outcomes, reminds him to be indirect and evasive to achieve his political ends.

He also counseled Burchmore how to advance a career artfully : “I advise you to try to make friends with the enemy, before proceeding to open war. . . . Do not force them into an attitude of hostility, if they have not already taken it. If you have an interview with the President, speak of them in a friendly way, and do not (unless you are impelled) act on the supposition that they are hostile to you I do not understand how they can proceed openly against you, after giving you their letters.”⁵⁵ In other words, Burchmore must use charitable rhetoric about his enemies when he talks to President Pierce so that Pierce will form his own unflattering opinion about persons who do not return the courtesy, and Burchmore will be in the clear—that is, more honorable. Although Hawthorne, through his calculated narration, and through his instruction to others on the best way to orchestrate their own careers, helped many of his friends gain political appointments during Pierce’s administration, it is quite ironic that the friend whom he would have perhaps liked most to help, Herman Melville, was unable to secure

⁵⁴Hawthorne to R. H. Stoddard (March 16, 1853), *Works* 16:649.

⁵⁵Hawthorne to Zachariah Burchmore (March 14, 1853), 16:645.

an appointment. This failure, however, was probably not a failure in Hawthorne's rhetoric but because of Melville's criticisms of United States policy.⁵⁶

III

While the Democrats were in office, Hawthorne was successful in self narration as well as in scripting politics for many of his friends. But when Pierce left office and was no longer a viable candidate because of his unpopular concessions to the South, Hawthorne was, of course, removed from the consulate and thrust into political oblivion.⁵⁷ Hawthorne then began to narrate himself to posterity, which he did, first of all, by remaining loyal to Pierce—at all costs. After Pierce had fallen into public disgrace, Hawthorne was urged to distance himself from the ex-President. Hawthorne refused. At this stage of Hawthorne's life, since he was no longer dependent upon political favors for financial reasons, he was free to transcend politics and leave to posterity the legacy that he desired. He quite conspicuously insisted upon dedicating *Our Old Home* to Pierce; even though Pierce was politically finished, Hawthorne refused to abandon his friend. In a letter to Fields concerning the dedication, Hawthorne wrote, "I find that it would be a piece of poltroonery in me to withdraw either the dedication or the dedicatory letter. . . . I have no fancy for making myself a martyr when it is honorably and conscientiously possible to avoid it; and I always measure out my heroism very accurately according to

⁵⁶Stewart, p. 138.

⁵⁷Jonathan Arac, "Narrative Forms," *The Cambridge History of American Literature*, Volume 2: Prose Writing 1820-1865, ed. Sacvan Bercovitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 767.

the exigencies of the occasion, and should be the last man in the world to throw away a bit of it needlessly."⁵⁸ Even though this statement appears sardonically humorous, it is evidence of the new thrust of Hawthorne's narration—he is now demonstrating his integrity and loyalty to Pierce, unwilling to gain any more political favors from Pierce to further his own political ambitions.

Notwithstanding Hawthorne's consideration, Elizabeth Palmer Peabody reminded her brother-in-law of Pierce's colossal error in his willingness to tolerate slavery for the sake of the keeping the nation intact.⁵⁹ In a speech in 1863 at a Democratic rally, Pierce completely destroyed his credibility in an attempt to regain political control of his party. He was no longer politically viable because he refused to attack slavery at a time when a majority of the nation had become incensed against that evil. Pierce had failed to come to grips with a changing constituency and Hawthorne, who shared the platform with him, shared somewhat in his disgrace, especially since Hawthorne repeatedly refused to desert the old friend and political ally of Bowdoin College days and the political benefactor of adulthood. Elizabeth realized the seriousness of Pierce's blunders and urged Hawthorne, for his own political and literary good, to disengage himself from Pierce. Hawthorne wrote to her on July 20, 1863, just two weeks after that disastrous Democratic rally, that he did not think that the dedication to Pierce could have any momentous political consequences and that in view of his life-

⁵⁸*Works*, 18:586.

⁵⁹ See Roy Franklin Nichols, *Franklin Pierce: Young Hickory of the Granite Hills*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: University Press, 1958), p. 519-523. It was, however, easy to forget that others in the 1850's, including Lincoln, also shared in this error.

long intimacy with Pierce, he was still determined to dedicate *Our Old Home* to him. Hawthorne sensed that his old friend was the “only loyal man in the country although he knew that the administration and abolition papers were calling Pierce a traitor.”⁶⁰

Associating himself so closely with Pierce at this juncture was, of course, political suicide for Hawthorne; still, at this point in his career, Hawthorne was no longer in need of political favors and had determined to narrate himself for posterity. Although he had earlier used the financial rewards of political positions to enhance literary endeavors, after the political appointment was no longer crucial, Hawthorne exhibited cognizance of, and repulsion about, the political situation of America. From the vantage of a European consulate he wrote,

It sickens me to look back to America. I am sick to death of the continual fuss, and tumult and excitement, and bad blood, which we keep up about political topics. If it were not for my children, I should probably never return, but, after quitting office, should go to Italy, and live and die there But it would never do to deprive them of their native land, which, I hope will be a more comfortable and happy residence in their day, than it has been in ours. In my opinion, we are the most miserable people on earth.⁶¹

Because of his grievances with the American system, Hawthorne reiterated to Bridge a reluctance to return to America because that country was “so convulsed with party-spirit .

⁶⁰Hawthorne to Elizabeth Palmer Peabody (July 20, 1863), *Works*, 18:589.

⁶¹Hawthorne to Horatio Bridge (March 30, 1854), *Works*, 17:188.

. . . so crochety, so restless, so ill-tempered . . . with an actual fissure between the North and South, which may widen and deepen into a gulf, anon"; he nevertheless avowed that should a return take place it would be for the sake of his children.⁶²

Disillusioned with American politics of his era of the nineteenth century and no longer dependent upon the grace of a governmental bureaucracy for his financial well-being, Hawthorne also showed his indifference to "politics" by declining to attend political functions. He wrote to Horatio Woodman, a friend from Boston, who was intimate with the Boston literati and who founded the Saturday Club and helped to assemble its membership, "I care very little about his politics; although just now, in the ruin and dismemberment of the party to which I have been attached, it might behoove me to show a somewhat stronger political feeling than heretofore;--at least, a strong one enough to preclude me from joining in what I presume to be an acquiescent compliment to the Governor's public course, as well as to his private character . . . I decided not to come."⁶³ Whereas before he had feigned indifference to politics, Hawthorne now had no reason to bother with the inconveniences of political life.

In his later years, weary of politics, Hawthorne described himself simply as a patriot of New England. On the eve of the Civil War, he wrote to a friend in London from The Wayside in Concord: "What do you think is going to become of us?--of our Republic, I mean. For my part, I am ready for anything that may happen, knowing that, if the worst comes to the worst, New England will still have her rocks and ice, and be

⁶²Hawthorne to Horatio Bridge (December 14, 1854), *Works* 17:294.

⁶³ Hawthorne to Woodman (Nov. 5, 1860), *Works*, 18:336.

pretty much the same sort of place as heretofore.”⁶⁴ As far as Hawthorne was concerned, New England was his nation and he was unable to see too far beyond its welfare. With a growing disregard for the intricacies of politics, Hawthorne was anxious that his British counterparts, as well as his posterity, remember him merely as a New Englander. Further confirming a real disenchantment with politics, he glibly told Henry Bright, an Englishman who stood to be gratified by the dissolution of the nation, “I am ashamed to say how little I care about the matter. New England will still have her rocks and ice, and I should not wonder if we become a better and a nobler people than ever heretofore. As to the South, I never loved it. We do not belong together; the Union is unnatural, a scheme of man, not an ordinance of God; and as long as it continues, no American of either section will ever feel a genuine thrill of patriotism, such as you Englishmen feel at every breath you draw.”⁶⁵ When Hawthorne no longer saw himself as a political entity, when he no longer needed political office for financial remuneration, he revealed his true allegiance—to New England.

Hawthorne cared very little about the survival of the nation as such because he believed the South and North to be incompatible: “We never were one people, and never really had a country since the Constitution was formed.”⁶⁶ Because of this discord, he

⁶⁴Hawthorne to Bennoch (December 17, 1860), *Works*, 18:353. (Italics added).

⁶⁵Hawthorne to Henry Bright in Liverpool (Dec. 17, 18 60), *Works*, 18:355.

⁶⁶ *Works*, 18:380.

felt that the South should be amputated as a “diseased member.”⁶⁷ His growing disillusionment with both Whigs and Democrats, North and South ultimately showed Hawthorne's true politics, for he told Bennoch regarding the state of the nation at war: “It depends entirely on ourselves whether it shall finally turn out a blessing or a curse.”⁶⁸ He also denigrated the administration, indicating his apathy concerning the Civil War to Henry Bright:

The play (be it tragedy or comedy) is too long drawn out, and my chief feeling about it now is a sense of infinite weariness. I want the end to come, the curtain to drop and then to go to sleep. I never did really approve of the war, though you may have supposed so from the violence and animosity with which I controverted your notions about it, when I wrote last The war-party here do not look upon me as a reliably loyal man, and, in fact, I have been publicly accused of treasonable sympathies; whereas, I sympathize with nobody and approve of nothing; and if I have any wishes on the subject, it is that New England might be a nation by itself. But, so far as I can judge of the temper of the people, they mean to have a re-union; and if they really mean it, it will be accomplished.⁶⁹

Not only did Hawthorne recount his distress at the unfolding political climate in America to his friends Bennoch, Bright, and Bridge, but he also criticized those such as Longfellow for what he considered hypocrisy in wanting the war to go on. He found

⁶⁷Hawthorne to Horatio Bridge (Oct., 1861), *Works*, 18:412.

⁶⁸Hawthorne to Francis Bennoch in London (Oct. 12, 1862), *Works*, 18:500.

⁶⁹Hawthorne to Bright in Liverpool (March 8, 1863), *Works*, 18:543.

Longfellow "immitigable" for the war's "continuance." "To say the truth, any man must be sensible of the impossibility of ever bringing it to an end except by completest victory or direst defeat. The most uncompromising opponents of the war are beginning to see this."⁷⁰

Although at times Hawthorne had described himself as a Democrat, at times as a Whig, at times as one who was not political, he could never quite escape from his early beginnings as a political individual, simply by virtue of having been born into the century of the great upheaval in politics, the era of the Civil War. Some might say that to have been born on the Fourth of July indicated to Hawthorne a celebration of his own patriotism—the birth of the nation harmonious with one's physical birth. This portentous birth gave rise, at least in Hawthorne's mind, to his own kind of creativity when it came to scripting his life. He began adulthood as a member of a social/political club, the Atheneans, and he used that membership as a forum for his own financial and political world. He often used politics for his own financial gain. To his credit, however, he never abandoned his friends—Pierce was a case in point—though to do so would have benefited himself. While he unequivocally narrated his own life and career, he also succeeded in narrating the lives and careers of his intimates, and did so masterfully. Though he appeared to reject slavery when it suited his political purpose to do so, he never became a militant abolitionist, as did some of his fellow-New Englanders. He would have preferred his own little spot in New England, not desirous to support a fight

⁷⁰Hawthorne to Bright in Liverpool (March 8, 1863), *Works*, 18:543.

for America as a nation. Finally, Hawthorne, creating for posterity a literary and political man of arts, wrote his own history. In spite of all the seeming contradictions in his political character, the newly published letters paint an intriguing picture of the man Hawthorne narrating himself. Jonathan Arac notes, that “Hawthorne’s loss of his political appointment . . . ‘decapitated him’ . . . and [created] a ‘politically dead man’”⁷¹ Quite to the contrary, Hawthorne was ever in the process of using the vicissitudes to his life to create himself anew.

⁷¹Jonathan P. Arac, “Narrative Forms.” *The Cambridge History of American Literature*. Vol 1, 1820-1865. Ed. Sacvan Bercovitch. 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) p. 712.

CHAPTER 6

THE PREFACES: THE TRUTH TOLD *SLANT*¹

OR DECONSTRUCTING GENESIS:

HAWTHORNE'S NARRATORS

IN THE PREFACES

Aye you're a man that! ye old mesmerizer
Tyin' your meanin' in seventy swadelin's,
One must of needs be a hang'd early riser
To catch you at worm turning. Holy Odd's bodykins!²

A fitting denouement to an analysis of Nathaniel Hawthorne's use of narrative voice in his letters may be found in his narration of his prefaces. Although critics have commented deftly upon the prefaces, my study of Hawthorne's narrative voice in the letters facilitates a new outlook on "voice" in his prefaces. Even as early as the nineteenth century, some of Hawthorne's contemporaries, Poe and Melville especially,

¹Emily Dickinson, *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. Thomas H. Johnson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951), Poem 1129, "Tell all the Truth but tell it slant / Success in Circuit lies / Too bright for our infirm Delight / The Truth's superb surprise / As Lightning to the Children eased / With explanation kind / The Truth must dazzle gradually / Or every man be blind--."

²Ezra Pound, "Mesmerism," *Personæ*, ed. Lea Baechler and A. Walton Litz (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1990), p. 13. Though a tribute to Robert Browning's ambiguity, these lines also aptly describe Hawthorne's spurious narrative voice, especially in his prefaces.

discerned Hawthorne's oblique narration because they were likewise capable of subverting audiences.³ Poe did so in "The Philosophy of Composition," which may be less Poe's "philosophy" than a narrative device that challenges the reader. Melville likewise employs a spurious narrative voice to provoke a controversy with his readers, especially in "Hawthorne and His Mosses" (1850), which compares Hawthorne favorably to Shakespeare. Although Hawthorne was worthy of high praise, the hyperbole of Melville's comparison as an answer to the "Americanists' desire for a truly "American literature" reveals Melville's capacity to forge hyperbolic, unreliable narrators.⁴ Still, the subtlety entailed in an author's distancing himself from his personae was lost upon

³See, for reference along these lines: Edgar Allen Poe, Review of *Twice-told Tales*. *Graham's Magazine* 20 (April 1842): 254. Rpt. in *Hawthorne: The Critical Heritage*. Ed. J. Donald Crowley (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1970), pp. 87-94. Herman Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses. By a Virginian Spending His Summer in Vermont," *Literary World* 7 (August 17 and 24, 1850): 125-127, 145-147. Rpt. in *Hawthorne: The Critical Heritage*. Ed. J. Donald Crowley (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1970), pp. 111-126. See also James Duban and William J. Scheick's study of Melville and narrative voice, "The Dramatis Personae of Robert Browning and Herman Melville," *Criticism: A Quarterly for Literature and the Arts* 32.2 (1990): 221-240.

⁴For a comprehensive study of unreliable narration in Melville's works see James Duban, "Chipping with a Chisel: The Ideology of Melville's Narrators," *Texas Studies in Language and Literature* 31.3 (1989): 341-385. Duban advances the idea that nineteenth-century writers of the American Renaissance were as capable as Conrad, James, or Joyce of distancing themselves from narrators. James C. Keil discusses ambivalence in some of the Hawthornian prefaces: "The Custom House," "The Birthmark," "Rappaccini's Daughter," and "Ethan Brand" in "Reading, Writing, and Recycling: Literary Archaeology and the Shape of Hawthorne's Career," *New England Quarterly* 65 (1992): 238-264. See also Thomas R. Moore, *A Thick and Darksome Veil* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1994), p. xii, 21. Moore develops the fact that at least one of Hawthorne's contemporaries was cognizant of his literary subterfuge, and, in fact, used it himself: "Poe and Hawthorne toy with their audiences, Poe by playing to their weaknesses and thereby satirizing them, Hawthorne by his ambiguous parody."

contemporary readers. Even Emerson misread Hawthorne by believing that “Hawthorne invites his readers too much into his study, opens the process before them.”⁵ Emerson merely assumes that Hawthorne’s utterances in the prefaces are factual revelations of authorial perspective. Thus, it appears that Emerson was taken in by Hawthorne’s narrative dissembling in the prefaces. Henry James, too, was deceived because he accepted Hawthorne’s creative narration as authentic, especially the footnotes to “Chiefly About War Matters,” about which James remarked that he wondered why Hawthorne had allowed such subversive notes to remain in the essay.⁶ Thus, Hawthorne’s contemporaries were at times unaware of Hawthorne’s subterfuge in his prefaces although those dealt with different audiences and narrational strategies.

In the twentieth century the first study to be devoted solely to narrational interests in Hawthorne’s prefaces was Jessie Bier’s inquiry concerning Hawthorne’s theory of art. Bier deemed the prefaces “thick with meaning.”⁷ Scholars in the 1950’s were to acknowledge that Hawthorne was not dealing so much with truth as he was with texts—texts that bore only a casual relationship to truth.

⁵“Spiritual Laws.” In *The Selected Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Brooks Adkinson (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975), 190-205; *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, Centenary Edition IX, ed. Ralph H. Orth et al. (Cambridge: Belnap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 405.

⁶ Henry James, *Hawthorne* (1879; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1956), pp. 139-40.

⁷Jesse Bier, “Hawthorne on the Romance: His Prefaces Related and Examined,” *Modern Philology* 53. 1 (August 1955): 17-24.

Contemporary critics of the prefaces, mindful of Hawthorne's narrative voice, conclude that Hawthorne was "never quite sure what to think about his own writing" and that there was a conflict between Hawthorne the writer and Hawthorne the man.⁸ Other commentators go further: Hawthorne, they claim, deliberately confused truth and fiction in the prefaces; Hawthorne's aim was to keep readers off balance to prevent them from entering Hawthorne's "integral fictive world."⁹ Whereas existing scholarship relates the ambivalence of narrative voice in the prefaces to Hawthorne's inability to decide between aesthetically creative romance and reality,¹⁰ the current chapter, building upon preceding observations about Hawthorne's letters, sketches, and relationships, argues that the narration in these prefaces was quite calculated and purposeful. Hawthorne's nonfictional prose most completely discloses a preoccupation with what one critic has called "the slippery, untrustworthy nature of language and rhetoric."¹¹ This chapter

⁸Dan McCall, "Hawthorne's Familiar Kind of Preface," *English Literary History* 35 (1968): 422.

⁹Timothy Dow Adams, "To Prepare Yourself to Meet the Faces You Meet: Biographical Rhetoric in Hawthorne's Prefaces," *Emerson Society Quarterly: A Journal of the American Renaissance* 23 (1977): 92. Adams also claims that readers expect the author to be his most straightforward self in the prefaces (89), thus the reader is taken off guard when the preface is anything more than a simple statement of the author's actual belief. The prefaces, however, cannot be taken as a simple statement of truth with Hawthorne, no matter how much we'd like to believe him. See also an excellent study: Harry C. West, "Hawthorne's Editorial Pose," *American Literature* 44 (1972): 208-221.

¹⁰Bier, for one, seeks to prove that Hawthorne creates the prefaces to differentiate between a "romance" and a "novel" the latter which he considers to be realism--Hawthorne, of course, considers his long stories to be "romances," thus not accountable to truth, but with great invention and imagination, privileging with Aristotle the poetic"voice" over the historical. p.18, 23.

¹¹Thomas R. Moore, *A Thick and Darksome Veil*, p. 25.

deals primarily with the narrational masquerade of Hawthorne in prefaces that use a variety of “voices” to address numerous “readers.” I treat the prefaces as preparatory meditations that allow author and reader alike optimally to commune with the body of the text.

Although a preface usually reveals the author’s sentiments, that is not always so with Hawthorne, whose prefaces contain narrative personae who, while claiming to represent Hawthorne, manage to manipulate the reader. These personae, in the guise of a “narrator” or an “author,” become one personality to one audience and someone else to another. For example, the narrator might signify one identity, whom we’ll call an ideal reader, and quite another to a more hostile audience. That is, readers who are cognizant and supportive of his literary and social contexts will read the prefaces one way; the less informed or less sympathetic, quite another—and all of this by Hawthorne’s design. Thus, just as there was more than one “reader”—the real and the ideal and all categories in between—there are at least two authors, each of whom caters to various readers. For instance, this ambiguity occurs in Hawthorne’s preface to *The Scarlet Letter*.¹² The audience is set to hear a “true” autobiographical statement, much like the one Hawthorne

¹²Among those critics who have concentrated on Hawthorne’s rhetoric in “The Custom House are Marshall Van Deusen, “Narrative Tone in ‘The Custom House’ and the *Scarlet Letter*,” *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 21 (1966): 61-71; Dan McCall, “The Design of Hawthorne’s ‘The Custom House,’” *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 21 (1967): 349-358; David Strouck, “The Surveyor of the Custom-House: A Narrator for *The Scarlet Letter*,” *Centennial Review* 15 (1971): 309-329; Paul Jones Eakin, “Hawthorne’s Imagination and the Structure of ‘The Custom House,’” *American Literature* 43 (1971): 346-358; Nina Baym, “The Romantic *Malgre Lui*: Hawthorne in the Custom House,” *Emerson Society Quarterly: A Journal of the American Renaissance* 19 (1973): 14-25.

claims to have given in "The Author Makes the Reader Acquainted with His Abode." But the informed audience must realize that, in "The Custom House," Hawthorne ironically compares himself to an anonymous early eighteenth-century satirist who wrote a mock autobiography of Bishop Gilbert Burnet in his *Secret Memoirs*. The allusion casts doubt upon the "truth" of the preface. Hawthorne here addresses two different audiences—the casual reader, who will "fling aside his volume," and the ideal reader, who will understand all the nuances of meaning intended by the author. Hawthorne imagines that, while he is speaking to one friend, another friend—the latter "kind and apprehensive, though not the closest friend"—is overhearing the conversation. Determined to "keep the inmost Me behind its veil," Hawthorne, or the narrator—it is frequently impossible to determine which—consistently distances himself by his reference to the "Author," as if that were another person.

Compounding this air of ambivalence are the narrator's repeated references to Salem as the dearly beloved place of his birth—a town that "possesses, or did possess, a hold on my affections." This utterance reveals a somewhat ambiguous position since Hawthorne has just been evicted from the custom house in Salem and has no love for the town. He refers to himself as the "Loco-foco Surveyor" (Democratic) and seems coldly ironic when claiming "a worthier successor wears his dignity and pockets his emoluments." Thus, it is his way of lashing out at the political opponents who had had him removed from office. Even though we should be able to expect Hawthorne to be telling us the truth in the preface, he is obviously being less than truthful; his truth is a

fleeting thing, and Hawthorne, even in the first few paragraphs of the preface, refers to "truth" in such a way as to disavow it.

Just as fictive in nature is Hawthorne's assertion that "The Custom House" is non-political. Hawthorne obviously wished to chastise those persons who had removed him from office, and he set about to do it by way of this preface. He wrote Fields, somewhat evasively, that, in writing this preface, "all political and official turmoil has subsided within me, so that I have not felt inclined to execute justice on any of my enemies."¹³ Further vacillating in his contempt for the Salemites, Hawthorne told Horatio Bridge that the preface to *The Scarlet Letter* had been "good-natured" in its treatment of them.¹⁴ In the prefaces, as in the letters, truth is evaded.

Hawthorne employed narrative artifice in the prefaces relative to what Gerald Prince distinguishes as the interaction among narratee, virtual reader, ideal reader, and real reader. The *narratee*, the reader within the text whom the narrator addresses cannot be confused with the *real* reader--the one who holds the book. This real reader must also be distinguished from the *virtual* reader--the reader for whom the author thinks he writes. Of course, in Hawthorne's case that would be a number of different readers. There is also the *ideal* reader--the one who would understand every nuance of the

¹³Hawthorne to Fields (January 15, 1850), *The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne. The Letters: 1813-1843*, Thomas Woodson, et al., 20 vols. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1962-) 16:305, hereafter referred to as *Works*.

¹⁴Hawthorne to Bridge (April 13, 1850), *Works*, 16:329. See Harry C. West, "Hawthorne's Editorial Pose," *American Literature* 44 (May 1972): 208-221. West notes that in the Custom House section, Hawthorne merely concocts a disguise as editor of *The Scarlet Letter* because he has discovered the actual scarlet letter of days gone by. But he claims that no one has taken this pose seriously.

narration. This ideal reader probably does not exist but nonetheless is addressed hopefully by writers.¹⁵ Although designating and classifying readers seems to be a somewhat artificial construct, these four categories of readers are evident in Hawthorne's prefaces and comprise a forum for discussion.

In the preface to *The Marble Faun*, for instance, the persona of the narrator is distinct from that of the author. The narrator refers to the "author" of this work as someone who has previously addressed the readership of his publications "with a familiar kind of preface."¹⁶ He thus sets the reader up for a preface of the kind to which he (the public) has become accustomed. The narrator, someone who is not Hawthorne, then admits that he is addressing, first, the "Public" at large, and then "a character with whom he felt entitled to use far greater freedom"—that is, Prince's virtual reader, the one the author assumes he is addressing. Thus, Hawthorne, as narrator, designates one sort of reader as a "congenial friend," just as he had designated the congenial reader of "The Custom House," as one who would be "indulgent of his [the author's] shortcomings." To this reader, the narrator confesses the faults of the author as a "prim old author" and compares himself (as narrator) to the author. He says that, even though the author might have addressed the ideal reader, he, as narrator, had never "personally encountered, nor corresponded" with this perfect reader, the ideal one. Thus the virtual reader, the one to whom the author perceives that he is writing, becomes the ideal reader, the one that

¹⁵See Gerald Prince, "Introduction to the Study of the Narratee," in *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*, ed. Jane P. Tompkins (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), pp. 7-25.

¹⁶*Works, The Marble Faun*, Vol. 4:3.

would understand every nuance of the author's subtleties. At this point in the preface, the narrator, having written for the "Public"—that uninformed reader who overlooked his creations—becomes the author in his relationship with the reader.

So now, appropriately, this author/narrator claims that he has sent his work out to this ideal reader—the reader with "no address" which seems to indicate that this reader doesn't actually exist—since the one with no address is ideal rather than real. Or perhaps the ideal reader has died—has gone to the "paradise of gentle readers," since as the narrator informs us, the "Gentle Reader" is "apt to be extremely short-lived." Hawthorne is engaging his reader here, perhaps inviting him to become the ideal, while he, himself, as author/narrator, will retire behind one of several curtains or veils. For now the narrator once more becomes a person separate from the author as this narrator sees "the author was somewhat surprised" at the descriptions of various Italian objects. He, the narrator, even accuses the author of theft, as one who had "laid felonious hands upon a certain bust of Milton," stolen likewise a statue of Cleopatra and one of a pearl-diver. The narrator says that the author has "stolen" these objects for his book and wishes to return them to their owners. Then the narrator realigns himself again with his Public, disclaiming that anyone or anything in his romance resembles any real person, living or dead. Hawthorne has written this preface to a virtual reader, but has considered the existence of an ideal reader, knowing that no such person exists. However, in writing to an ideal reader, he has shifted the blame for a failure to communicate away from himself to the real reader, the one who will actually read the work. He has actually addressed this ideal reader, but at the same time taken into account the real reader, the popular

audience. He has likewise assumed the virtual reader to be his audience, all the while addressing the ear inside the narrative, the "narratee." Hawthorne has done this by stepping outside the narrative himself, having other personæ become "author" as well as "narrator."¹⁷

In the preface to *The House of Seven Gables* the narrator again distances himself from the writer and the author. This narrator claims to be telling a story with a moral that will emerge in "truth" only to the reader. This truth is ostensibly that "the wrongdoing of one generation lives on, and, divesting itself of every temporary advantage, becomes a pure and uncontrollable mischief." However, to present this truth, Hawthorne's narrator denies the reality of any historical connection and instead claims that the narrative was of the writer's "own making." In other words, Hawthorne is having the narrator say that the preface is not about Salem, that no particular family is involved, and that the book is merely a romance "having a great deal more to do with the clouds overhead, than with any portion of the actual soil of the County of Essex." Although this is what the narrator implies, the reader must be aware that an actual experience has transpired, one from which the author wishes to distance himself by use of the narrator.¹⁸ The reader must realize that Hawthorne may *mean* the exact opposite of what he *says* about actual or fictional persons and places. Significantly, although Hawthorne claims that this work is fictitious, he used this romance, *The House of Seven Gables*, as a forum

¹⁷*Works, The Marble Faun*, 4:1-3.

¹⁸*Works, The House of Seven Gables*, Vol. 2:1-3.

for revenge, setting out to embarrass Charles Upham, a politician with whom he was at odds, by creating the reprehensible Judge Pyncheon in Upham's image.¹⁹

The Blithedale Romance similarly makes use of a narrator who distances himself from the author to address one or more of the different kinds of readers. The narrator in this preface—seemingly Hawthorne but not exclusively Hawthorne—claims that he is not talking about Brook Farm or the United States. Still, readers may surmise from his ambiguity in the other prefaces, as well as from the similarity of Blithedale and Brook Farm, that the truth is other than he claims. In the heart of the story, Hawthorne is the implied author, but Coverdale is the narrator. Thus, the satire against the socialistic reformers who were Hawthorne's contemporaries is attributed, not to the author, Hawthorne, but to the narrator, Coverdale, behind whom the real Hawthorne hides. Contrary to Hawthorne's denial in the preface, Blithedale is clearly The Brook Farm Community. Coverdale is Hawthorne, himself; Zenobia is Margaret Fuller; Priscilla is probably his own Sophia, although in the text, as an additional camouflaging technique, he explicitly associates Priscilla with Margaret Fuller. Others are Ripley, Emerson, Alcott. And while the author of *Blithedale*, through his narrator, clearly satirizes the reformers and Transcendentalists of nineteenth-century New England, Hawthorne's rhetoric in the preface is intentionally contrived to distance Hawthorne from such an overtly critical stance. Thus, when he says that the "Author" does not "put forward the slightest pretensions to illustrate a theory, or elicit a conclusion, favorable or otherwise,

¹⁹ See Hawthorne's letter to Hillard (June 18, 1849), *Works*, 16:280.

in respect to Socialism," Hawthorne, is writing beyond the unsuspecting reader, allowing his virtual reader the privileged cognizance that he was actually making a commentary on his times and fellow New Englanders.²⁰

In the prefaces to his major novels, Hawthorne used narrators as well as implied "authors" to veil himself as he addressed different readers. In *Twice Told Tales*, too, Hawthorne digresses and assigns a third person designation to the "author," as once again the narrator is separated from that imagined author. This time the narrator defines the author as "the obscurest man of letters in America."²¹ That comment speaks to Hawthorne's ideal reader, the one who would understand all the nuances of his narration and cause that reader to disdain the *remark*, but not the *author*. Hawthorne, in affecting modesty to the real reader, addresses the virtual one, the one to whom he thinks he is writing, and to the ideal reader who knows Hawthorne's motive in intentionally keeping his name from the public eye until now. "These stories," he says, "were published [earlier] . . . without making (so far as he has ever been aware) the slightest impression on the Public"; they are thus "Twice Told" in more than one way, having been told *before* and to the "*Public*,"²² that ignorant and undeserving reader. Now they are told again, says the narrator, and this time to the informed or ideal/virtual reader because the first time

²⁰On the specious nature of Hawthorne's disclaimers see Roy Harvey Pearce, "Hawthorne and the Sense of the Past, or the Immortality of Major Molineux," *ELH: A Journal of English Literary History* 21 (1954):327-349, reprinted in *Historicism Once More: Problems & Occasions for the American Scholar* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp.137-174.

²¹*Works*, 9:3.

²²Italics are mine.

the tales were probably not being read by anyone. Hawthorne again relegates narration to the narrator, who then reflects upon the author who “burned them [the other stories] without remorse (and moreover, without any subsequent regret) and had more than one occasion to marvel that such very dull stuff, as he knew his condemned manuscripts to be, should yet have possessed inflammability enough to set the chimney on fire!”²³ The narrator claims here that the author, Hawthorne, has burned some dubious manuscripts,²⁴ and the ideal reader would regret that those stories are lost to his readership. Hawthorne then refers to the uninformed reader as “The great bulk of the reading Public [who] probably ignored the book altogether” and commends his ideal readers again as the few who “read it and liked it better than it deserved.” While addressing the ideal reader about an uninformed reader, the narrator, at Hawthorne’s bequest, veils Hawthorne behind the appellation of “author,” as well as burner of stories.

The narrator similarly claims he is not writing to the public, but only to friends “known or unknown,” or his ideal or idealized (virtual) reader. The preface ends with other disclaimers and an assertion that the author was only writing to an ideal reader:

Whether from lack of power, or an unconquerable reserve, the Author’s touches have often an effect of tameness; the merriest man can hardly contrive to laugh at his broadest humor; the tenderest woman, one would suppose will hardly shed warm tears at his deepest pathos. The book if you would see anything in it, requires to be read in the clear, brown,

²³*Works*, 9:4.

²⁴No textual evidence exists that these “burned” documents ever existed.

twilight atmosphere in which it was written; if opened in the sunshine, it is apt to look exceedingly like a volume of blank pages.

Thus, the only one who would be able to internalize this very vague manuscript is one who could profess to be a participant in the reading experience in such manner as to take part in its creation—the ideal reader. Not only is this reader the virtual reader—the one to whom the author thinks he is writing—but the virtual reader becomes linked to the ideal reader, the one who would understand all. The virtual reader communes, as well, with the narratee, the one whom the narrator is addressing—the reader who is imbedded within the text. In *Twice Told Tales*, then, the stories may be understood only by an ideal reader—one who will read in that “proper mood.”²⁵ Thus, they are twice told in both senses: they are republished, and the double narrative quality serves to subvert the general public at the expense of a more informed or ideal reader.²⁶

As innovative is the preface to *The Snow Image* that Hawthorne wrote in the form of a letter to Horatio Bridge. Since the letter does not appear in any of Hawthorne’s collected correspondences, it likely has for its primary audience the readers of *The Snow Image*.²⁷ Of course, the primary reader, the narratee, is Bridge. Bridge is the reader within the preface, to whom the preface is addressed. He therefore becomes not only the

²⁵*Works*, 9:6.

²⁶See, on the dialogue in author-narrator relationships, Gary Richard Thompson, “Romantic Context of the ‘Hawthorne Question,’” in *The Art of Authorial Presence* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1993) p. 15.

²⁷See *Works*, 16: 501 and Thomas R. Moore, p. 80. Moore notes that Hawthorne sent the “letter” to Ticknor on November 3, 1851, telling Ticknor that this was his preface for *The Snow Image*.

narratee, but also the virtual reader, the one whom the narrator is addressing. As the letter also addresses a wider audience, the virtual reader—the one being addressed—is also the reading public because this is the reader for whom the letter/preface was intended. In this letter, the narrator, possibly Hawthorne, seeks to defend himself against his critics who are complaining about his “Prefaces” and “Introductions.” And since there is no documentation of critics who are complaining, he must simply be anticipating these critics or absolving himself in advance of criticism. In this preface to *The Snow Image*, Hawthorne tells his reader that “ever since my youth, I have been addressing a very limited circle of friendly readers, without much danger of being overheard by the public at large”; he admits writing to two different categories of readers here: “friendly” or ideal and “public at large,” that vast array of Hawthorne’s “real” audience—the ones who clamored for more romantic utterances such as those of the “scribbling women writers.”²⁸ Hawthorne also expected to continue writing to the “choir,” “although strangers may have begun to mingle with my audience.”²⁹ The “limited circle of friendly readers,” of course, would be Hawthorne’s virtual audience, the audience that he expected to read the work; the “strangers” would be the antagonistic readers, the less-

²⁸Although James D. Wallace quotes Jane P. Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) in “Hawthorne and the Scribbling Women Reconsidered,” *American Literature* 62 (1990):204, as having this phrase “set the tone for criticism of sentimental fiction ever since,” and “epitomize distress of the conservative male confronted by the untidy energies of feminine creativity,” for the purpose of this study, Hawthorne is merely venting his frustration on an audience, a “reader,” if you will, one who would be more open to the writings of those women writers so described.

²⁹*Works*, 11:3.

than-ideal. Hawthorne clearly acknowledges a dual audience, but he is artistically attuned to each, answering the questions of one and posing excuses to another. Feigning an exclusive and private communication to Bridge, Hawthorne also addresses his virtual or ideal reader. While Hawthorne claims that he will speak expressly to Bridge as “friend speaks to friend” and would be cautious that the public and the critics shall overhear nothing “which we care about concealing,” he obviously intends the words of the preface for a wider audience.³⁰ Certainly, the “public” and the “critics” will hear everything Hawthorne has to say to Bridge, whom he calls his “Dictatee,” unless the preface goes unpublished; thus Hawthorne is disdainful of criticism, even as he invites it. He again acknowledges the “public” with a promise to them, through Bridge, that he will never again trespass “on its kindness, with any more of these musty and mouse-nibbled leaves of old periodicals, transformed, by the magic arts of my friendly publishers, into a new book.”³¹ Hawthorne finally resorts to a removal of himself from authorship of the tales by referencing the “author” as one whom no one could ever induce to think of preserving other of his tales. Hawthorne once again artistically used a narrative construct to veil himself as he addresses various categories of readers.

Not only does Hawthorne hide himself behind various veils in the prefaces to his romances, to *Twice Told Tales*, and to *The Snow Image*, he also uses a somewhat deceptive narrative voice in the prefaces to many of his shorter works—one of the most notable being “Rappaccini’s Daughter.” Hawthorne’s narrative voice in that preface

³⁰*Works*, 11:4.

³¹*Works*, 11:6.

takes the form of a critic of M. de l'Aubépine, supposedly the author of the story. It seems that Hawthorne had studied French with Horatio Bridge shortly before writing this story, and their French teacher had given them French names: to Hawthorne *Monsieur de l'Aubepine* and to Bridge *Monsieur du'ont*.³² From the preface, not only are Hawthorne and Bridge given French names that correspond to their English names, but French titles are given to Hawthorne's previous works: "Le Voyage Céleste à Chemin de Fer," "Roderick; ou le Serpent à l'estomac," "Le Culte du Feu," and "L'Artiste de Beau; ou le Papillon Mécanique." Then come the French designations for *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review* (*La Reveu Anti-Aristocratique*), in which "Rappaccini's Daughter" was first published. Thus, with this additional linguistic camouflage of a foreign language to distort the reader's perception of the writer, Hawthorne can remove himself one step further. He is now not only the narrator scrutinizing the author, but a narrator reflecting on the author whom the reader—that Public reader—would not be able to identify unless he happened to know French. In using the French, he is addressing the narratee and his virtual or perceived reader, who he also hopes to be the ideal reader.

In placing M. de l'Aubepine in the midst of the writers of his day, Hawthorne is hiding behind two persons: one, the narrator and, two, the fictive author who happens to be French. Hawthorne, the author, has the narrator tell us that the French author is one who "seems to occupy an unfortunate position between the Transcendentalists (who

³²See James R. Mellow, *Nathaniel Hawthorne in His Times* (Boston: Houghton, 1980), p. 90.

under one name or another, have their share in all the current literature of the world) and the great body of pen-and-ink men who address the intellect and sympathies of the multitude.” Hawthorne was well aware that at least two types of readers would be reading his preface, and he did not want to alienate them. The text of the preface continues through the triple round of voices—the author, the narrator, and the author about whom the narrator speaks—to characterize the author to his readers:

If not too refined, at all events too remote, too shadowy, and unsubstantial in his modes of development to suit the taste of the latter class, and yet too popular to satisfy the spiritual or metaphysical requisitions of the former, he must necessarily find himself without an audience,—except here and there an individual or possibly an isolated case.

Hawthorne recognizes that he will have addressed numerous categories of readers and that his ideal audience will of necessity be limited, even “an isolated case.” Through his narrator’s commentary on the ostensible French author, Hawthorne, the actual author, addresses the expectations of nineteenth-century readers by giving them the obvious analogies and by then claiming that the *author* (the Frenchman) is all too fond of allegory. But all the while he is inviting the reader to sympathize with himself, Hawthorne, the actual author who is able to see the flaws in this fictive author:

His writings, to do them justice, are not altogether destitute of fancy and originality; they might have won him greater reputation but for an inveterate love of allegory, which is apt to invert his plots and characters with the aspect of scenery and people in the lands, and to steal away the

human warmth out of his conceptions M. l'Aubepine's productions, if the reader chance to take them in precisely the proper point of view, may amuse a leisure hour as well as those of brighter man; if otherwise they can hardly fail to look excessively like nonsense.³³

The preface concludes with another allusion to the contrived French writer and evokes a “proper” audience, one with a “proper point of view,” or the ideal readers.

The concept of a dual audience extends to the substance of the story. Even as Hawthorne tells his version of Dante’s Beatrice in the context of the New England Miracles Controversy, he conflates the fallen nature of language, our failure to communicate, especially where religion is involved, to Giovanni’s failure to understand his own Beatrice. He thus once again writes to more than one reader, the real and the ideal, using failed communication in lieu of an incomprehensible language—in this case French—in the preface.³⁴ As in the prefaces to the longer works, Hawthorne has addressed numerous readers, but only the ideal reader, possibly the New England elite, would understand his treatment of the miracles controversy, just as only those readers with an understanding of French could realize that the narrator of this preface was indeed Hawthorne, himself, disguised and veiled as M. de l'Aubepine. Thus, much in the same way that the faith/evidence controversy in the spiritual realm was bewildering to the

³³*Works*, 10:91-93.

³⁴See Michael J. Colacurcio, “A Better Mode of Evidence—the Transcendental Problem of Faith and Spirit,” *Emerson Society Quarterly* 54 (1969): 12-22, and *The Province of Piety: Moral History in Hawthorne’s Early Tales* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), pp. 305-09.

great majority of readers, the language barrier in the preface to “Rappaccini’s Daughter” made its meaning incomprehensible except to the ideal reader. Hawthorne’s elite readers would understand the story, while the general public would read the story as merely another obscure Hawthorne tale, beset with horrifying magic and satanic implications.

Other of Hawthorne’s short stories have functional prefaces—sometimes true, sometimes fictional—usually embedded within the first page or so of the text. Timothy Dow Adams, in his analysis of some of Hawthorne’s prefaces, contends that the prefaces waver between truth and deception.³⁵ The same holds true for narrative voice in the preface to “The Maypole of Merry Mount.” When the narrator claims that this story is based on the actual history of Mount Wollaston, and that the masques and customs can be verified by reading Strutt’s *Book of English Sports and Pastimes*, he positions the reader for a duality of meaning. Even in this supposedly “true” preface to “The Maypole of Merry Mount,” a separation exists between the ideal reader and actual reader. The more informed reader in this case would be one who knew that the games were as much a part of the British tradition as was the Anglican prayer book and were thus as much of an anathema to the New England patriots as outright sedition.³⁶ Although the preface to “Merry Mount” sounds authentic, Hawthorne is never more evasive than when he claims to be telling the truth. In setting up one reader to accept his preface as fact, he is quite

³⁵Adams, p. 90-91.

³⁶See Colacurcio, *The Province of Piety*, on the significance of Strutt, pp. 272-274.

likely to invite a more astute reader to read between the lines and see that what appears to be truth may indeed be fictitious and calculated.

Just as Hawthorne, in the preface to “The Maypole of Merry Mount,” employs an evasive narrative voice, using the book of games to parallel the Anglican prayer book, he also speaks to different categories of readers in the short preface to “My Kinsman, Major Molineux.” There, after explaining the disdainful treatment of British governors by colonists, the narrator invites the reader—in this case the narratee, the reader within the text—to “dispense with an account of the train of circumstances, that had caused much temporary inflammation of the popular mind.”³⁷ But the ideal reader of Hawthorne, expecting narrational ambiguity, must realize that the above dispensation is just what Hawthorne was discouraging. As Pearce argues, the narrator’s evasiveness concerning mob psychology raises issues about the historian’s complicity in corruption, and about guilt and righteousness generally. Something like Original Sin becomes the prime fact of our political and social history.³⁸ This explains the significance of the name “Molineux” as deriving from “the cross.” For this reason, although the story is political in its overtones, it is more covertly about the psychological or spiritual coming of age of a young man—and a nation. And even though Hawthorne seems to point toward a sympathetic understanding of the revolutionary patriotic perspective, he nonetheless is critical of a government and a religion that would cause great suffering at the expense of

³⁷*Works*, 11:208.

³⁸Roy Harvey Pearce, *Historicism Once More*, p.174.

a greater good. Hawthorne is not quite sure that the “end justifies the means” either politically or spiritually. Therefore, as he has done in previous prefaces, Hawthorne has used this preface to speak to more than one category of readers. There is first of all the narratee whom he has addressed; then there is the ideal reader. The latter would understand all the implications of “Molineux,” including the actual historical character by the same name, a Boston patriot, as well as the French translation of Molineux as “of the cross,” another conflation of the political and spiritual. The reader who fails to comprehend these facts would be altogether sympathetic to the revolution and would constitute the general reading audience whom Hawthorne also courted. Hawthorne has thus undermined the “myth” of the American Revolution as having been right regardless of who or what was sacrificed.

There is likewise an embedded preface in “The Antique Ring.” In this preface, Hawthorne, the author, has his narrator endow the fictional character, Edward Caryl, with story-telling ability, thus making him an implicit persona of Hawthorne himself. Caryl assists “the growth of American literature;” he also knows Hillard, Bryant, Mr. Giswold, and Hawthorne’s friend and editor, Ticknor. He has among his “productions” such literary accomplishments as “tales imbued with German mysticism, versions from Jean Paul, criticisms of the old English poets, and essays smacking of Dialistic philosophy.” He also “published fugitive pieces in the Magazines,” with which the narrator tells us “the public may yet be gratified.”³⁹ His narratee for this story—that is the

³⁹*Works*, 11:339.

narratee for the narrator's tale—the reader imbedded within the tale, is his fiancée, who is so overcome by the artistry of the tale that she “prizes it far above the diamond which enkindled your imagination.”⁴⁰ Thus, she becomes not only narratee, but also the virtual reader; the “real” readers are still several times removed from Hawthorne by his narrative artistry. Caryl is, of course, an autobiographical characterization of Hawthorne himself, to whom Hawthorne can award his own artistic attributes and thereby escape detection by the real audience and continue to hide himself behind the veil of anonymity, all the while expressing his concept of art. Hawthorne thus privileges art—the art of storytelling in this instance—over materialism. The tale and its imbedded preface illuminate that for the ideal reader, all the while veiling the real Hawthorne from the plebeian masses.

The prefaces help to elucidate Hawthorne's narrative voice in his novels and his shorter fiction. Hawthorne operates behind a series of rhetorical veils that include Hawthorne himself, his narrator, the author about whom the narrator speaks, and sometimes a foreign narrator. Through these narrative veils Hawthorne speaks to many different “readers” on many different levels. He creates a community of voices speaking substantively to his various readers. When a preface that we naturally assume to be truth turns out to be otherwise, we can assume that the professed fables—his tales, sketches, and romances that these prefaces have introduced—may be more fantastic, still.

⁴⁰*Works*, 11:352

CONCLUSION

A visit to Hawthorne's "House of Seven Gables," in Salem, Massachusetts, reveals a secret, hidden passageway, perhaps used to harbor runaway slaves during the Civil War. Inconspicuous, as well, were the women writers of the American Renaissance, whose efforts were overshadowed by the prominence and accomplishments of Emerson, Hawthorne, Melville, Thoreau, and Whitman. While both the hidden passageway and the hidden writers were rediscovered many years ago, it was not until recently that the entire corpus of Hawthorne's letters was finally published. For the Hawthorne scholar, these letters reveal a new perspective that illuminates his texts and creates a unique appreciation of the existing canon of Hawthorne works

We have seen that a deliberate and conspicuous authorial presence permeates all of Hawthorne's narratives, whether in his fiction, or in his letters, journals, essays, or prefaces. Hawthorne himself forged the key to understanding that creative presence—his narrative voice—in a letter to Sophia in 1841. He there reveals just how he perceived the elusive, transitory, and ambiguous nature of language, even when it might be the author's conscious intention to proclaim a matter as truth:

Every day of my life makes me feel more and more how seldom a fact is accurately stated; how, almost invariably, when a story has passed through the mind of a third person, it becomes so far as regards the impression that it makes in further repetitions, little better than a

falsehood, and this, too, though the narrator be the most truth-seeking person in existence. How marvelous the tendency is! . . . Is truth a fantasy which we are to pursue forever and never grasp?¹

Hawthorne assigns the imparting of truth to the realm of fantasy. He also exhibited cognizance of the elusive and equivocal nature of truth, recognizing the fallen nature of language--the decline in our ability to communicate that coincides with the decline of civilization--what Oswald Spengler observed as *Untergang*.² All the more difficult does discerning truth become when the author--Hawthorne in this case--advances circuitous narration to foil his audiences. His letters thus become his final invention, completing the canon of Hawthorne literature.

We have observed how the letters illustrate Hawthorne's creation of narrative art in the form of apparently factual correspondences. Although Hawthorne considered himself "purely and simply a Protestant,"³ the letters reveal that Hawthorne's religion could not be simply discerned, certainly not by what he professed them to be.

Hawthorne thus professed humanistic Protestantism but demonstrated a capacity to

¹Hawthorne to his fiancée, Sophia Peabody, while he was a tenant at Brook Farm. *The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne. The Letters: 1813-1843*, Thomas Woodson, et al., 20 vols. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1962-) 15:538, hereafter referred to as *Works*.

²See Philip Gura, *The Wisdom of Words: Language, Theology, and Literature in the New England Renaissance* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1981) for a discussion of the inadequacy of communication. See also Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West*, trans. Francis Atkinson (New York: Knopf, 1928) on the inevitability of decline in language.

³Leonard J. Fick, *A Study of Hawthorne's Theology: The Life Beyond* (Folcroft, Pennsylvania: Folcroft Press, Inc., 1955), p. 165.

interact rhetorically with other dimensions of religion, including Christianity. He also, in the letters and in some of his narratives, appropriated the Puritan concept of the jeremiad to both his letters and to the career of Hester Prynne. Not only have we observed the jeremiad working itself out in Hester's life, but in Hawthorne's as well. His letters reveal that Hawthorne applied the jeremiad personally because he considered himself at his best artistically when inundated by financial hardship. The conclusion that I have reached, again supported by Hawthorne's own reliance upon this biblical principle and his repeated mention of it in the letters, is that Hawthorne's art was in some measure contingent upon great suffering, as conveyed through a narrative technique compatible with "the American Jeremiad."

We have observed, as well, how Hawthorne's association with Delia Bacon revealed crucial dimensions of his own aesthetic values. In Bacon's case, unreliable narrative voice becomes synonymous with artistic creativity. Previously unmined material from Hawthorne's correspondences intimates the most crucial aesthetic significance of Hawthorne's attraction to the woman who denied the "authority" of Shakespeare. Hawthorne embraced Delia Bacon's philosophy not because he believed what she said about Shakespeare, but because he saw in her work and creativity—however unreliable the narrator—a resonance of his own literary genius and narrative dissembling.

The seditious treatment of Lincoln, especially in the footnotes to "Chiefly About War Matters," dissembles, as well, through Swiftian satire. It is, as we have observed, a political treatise designed to belittle Lincoln and the Republican Party. Earlier

scholarship, without the benefit of all of Hawthorne's letters, has erroneously deemed these footnotes factual. The letters suggest otherwise.

We have observed, too, how Hawthorne creatively narrated his politics to bring about desired effects. His masterful use of narration served him and his friends in garnering political appointments and in securing the Presidency for Pierce. Hawthorne further used his power of the pen to characterize himself favorably to posterity. His letters, as much as any of his stories, journals, and magazine publications, reveal this political posturing. Hawthorne artfully navigated the currents of political discourse to create for himself and for his political colleagues positions amenable to their careers by "creating" himself and his associates.

Finally, we experienced Hawthorne's creative narration, this time in the prefaces to some of his major works. In these prefaces, Hawthorne artfully controls an array of different unsuspecting readers by again employing an elusive narrative voice—at times through several veils of narrators, pseudo narrators, and putative authors. Hawthorne, in the prefaces, has created shifting authorial presences and negotiated with a number of readers.

In sum, this dissertation has shown how Hawthorne artfully employed narrative rhetoric, especially in his letters, but also in his novels, stories, prefaces, and sketches, as a vehicle to achieve certain goals, whether in the realm of religion, politics, or literature. He used religious rhetoric to his advantage in dealing with his mother and uncles, his publishers and friends, his religious associates, and even his wife. He used political rhetoric in dealing with his political constituency and to gain employment while he

wrote. He also manipulated language in an ambiguous manner to promote literary and philosophical enterprises. Through the artistry of words, Hawthorne has in many cases “hoodwinked the world.”⁴ I urge caution, therefore, in any attempt to interpret Hawthorne’s letters as the latest word from Hawthorne, for he employs a vast command of the intricacies of the language, using various narrative voices.

My dissertation demonstrates, as well, that such things as intrusiveness, self-consciousness, reliability, and a narrator’s distance from events customarily influence a reader’s response to a narrative. Readers of Hawthorne must address all of these areas of relative “voice” in his prefaces and letters, as well as in his fiction. His fiction is replete with unreliable narrators, such as those in “Rappaccini’s Daughter” and *The Scarlet Letter*. However, I further show that Hawthorne’s nonfiction is fraught with ambiguous narrative voice. His letters are a goldmine of nebulous rhetoric. He seems, like Poe, sometimes to pursue the ideal of asceticism by way of a suggestive indefiniteness of meaning; he does this with the view of bringing about a definitiveness of effect.

One critic argues that Hawthorne’s works are a neurotic retreat from a society hostile to poets and novelists.⁵ To classify Hawthorne with the aesthetes makes him equally a pathfinder of society—to him belongs the elevated vision. The poet and the

⁴See Herman Melville, “Hawthorne and His Mosses,” 1850, Rpt. In *Recognition* (1969), 29-41, and *Hawthorne: Critical Heritage* (1970), 111-26. Melville noted that Hawthorne “hoodwinked the world.”

⁵Gary Richard Thompson, *The Art of Authorial Presence* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 20.

spinner of yarns is especially privileged with insight that make him more able to see the truth and proclaim it in such manner as to have others relate to it, by virtue of their shared humanity. Poetic or artistic privilege expresses the inexpressible, speaking the truth uniquely so that we are able to relate to the literary experience and to the writer himself as one who has walked the way of all men. Hawthorne seems to have evoked this artistic privilege. That makes it especially hard to discern the real Hawthorne by reading his works.

In sum, Hawthorne seems to render his texts to suit his mood, using a religious, political, or literary context that accommodates his ends and serves to tell the story that has come to mind. The letters amplify our understanding of that most important feature in Hawthorne's works—the creative process.

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