HAWTHORNE'S USE OF THE SUPERNATURAL

IN THREE ROMANCES

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HAWTHORNE'S USE OF THE SUPERNATURAL
IN THREE ROMANCES

THESIS

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PREFACE

This thesis is a study of three of Hawthorne's long romances, The Scarlet Letter, The House of the Seven Gables, and The Marble Faun, with particular attention to his use of phenomena having the appearance of the supernatural as a means of exemplifying the theme of his romances. The first chapter takes into account the external factors which may have contributed to Hawthorne's use of the supernatural. These factors include the atmosphere and history of early New England, taking into consideration the author's rich Puritan heritage. Other elements noted are his early study and reading habits, the underlying purpose of his writing, his ideas concerning religion, and his use of the materials at his command.

In each of the next three chapters a study of the supernatural is made for the purpose of discovering its use in the development of plot, in the depicting of the setting, and in the delineation of character. The last chapter summarizes the findings of this study.

Although several of Hawthorne's short stories and tales are enveloped in the aura of the mystical as interpreted by the author, it is not possible to include them in this investigation.
The discussions in the chapters dealing with the separate romances are based mainly upon the writer's study of the primary sources. For all references to Hawthorne's works, except The American Notebooks, edited by Randall Stewart, the Old Manse Edition of The Complete Writings of Nathaniel Hawthorne, in twenty-two volumes, with introductory notes by H. E. Scudder, has been used. Footnote references to The Scarlet Letter and The House of the Seven Gables are made by title and page only. In the footnote references to The Marble Faun, the Roman numerals are the volume numbers of the individual title and not those of the complete edition.
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CHAPTER I

EXTERNAL FACTORS WHICH MAY HAVE
INFLUENCED HAWTHORNE'S USE
OF THE SUPERNATURAL

Dark and ominous, the shadow of the supernatural insinuated itself into practically everything Hawthorne wrote. The fact is especially true of the four longer romances produced by this shy, quiet child of Puritanism, and all it stood for in the annals of Salem and Boston. He was never able to escape the influence of that stern old ancestor who sent to the gallows so many of the poor, half-crazed victims of the curse of witchcraft. Not all of these "witches" went docilely. Some of them hurled imprecations at the judges who so wrongly, if conscientiously, sent them before time to face the Puritan's unyielding God.

The evil that men do lives after them;
The good is oft inter'r'd with their bones. 1

Seemingly such was the case with regard to the gloomy Puritan ancestors of Nathaniel Hawthorne. "The evil" in his case was the curse pronounced by a witch victim of Colonel John Hathorne. The sensitive nature of Nathaniel Hawthorne

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1William Shakespeare, Julius Caesar, Act III, Sc. 2, lines 81-82.
recoiled at the remembrance of such a malediction called down upon the head of the posterity of the Colonel. 

There are many elements to observe in studying the factors which appear to have influence on an author’s literary efforts. Some agencies are more obvious than others in every writer’s creations. It is those most outstanding factors which may have influenced Hawthorne that will be analyzed in the succeeding discussions.

The Puritans had made the profound but constantly repeated mistake of assuming that after thousands of years of groping by mankind, they had at last discovered the "ultimate truth"; that for the rest of the time men need do nothing but follow the precepts which God had revealed to them about life here and hereafter. The most interesting and the best-written pieces of seventeenth-century New England literature all gave evidence of reaction against the advancing forces of truth. Later Hawthorne wrote in The Scarlet Letter,

The generation next to the early emigrants wore the blackest shade of Puritanism, and so darkened the national visage with it, that all the subsequent years have not sufficed to clear it up. We have yet to learn again the forgotten art of gayety.²

That Hawthorne recognized the curse of intolerance is manifested more than once in his writings. His family was under

a curse pronounced upon it by one of the witch victims of Colonel John Hathorne.

No one of the line of Hathornes had been of so great importance probably as the austere Colonel, who was the founder of the line in America. The condition into which the race fell in the eighteenth century was described by Nathaniel Hawthorne, the author, as dreary and unpromising. However, whatever else these intervening men may have been, they were realistic men of action in contrast to their descendant who became an author of mystical romances. The shadowy figures of Major William Hathorne and his son Colonel John Hathorne, in the eyes of such a child as Nathaniel Hawthorne, must have been oppressive. "The fact that their hands had been stained with blood, the blood of Quakers and witches, was bad enough, and the tradition of a curse laid upon their line by one of those witches was no doubt still gloomier."

It was but natural that he, being the child of Puritans, should depend upon the "Chronicles of early New England, the conquest of the wilderness, the fanaticism of religious zeal, and the subdued coloring of infant Salem and Boston" for his material. It was only natural, too, that, being steeped in New England tradition

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3Newton Arvin, Hawthorne, p. 7.

4Herbert Gorman, Hawthorne: A Study in Solitude, p. 49.
and well acquainted with Puritan fanaticism, he could handle the available material so artistically. More will be said about that phase later, however.

Hawthorne's youth and early manhood were passed in the most solitary of surroundings. His mother, his sisters, an injury to his foot -- all contributed to emphasize a naturally reserved nature. It was from the paternal ancestors that he inherited this tendency to shyness and introspection. "Nathaniel Hawthorne walked arm in arm with solitude." Many people who should know declare that Hawthorne's withdrawal from the world has been over-emphasized, because he did see people and go about. However, in a spiritual sense, his withdrawal from the world has not been over-emphasized.

Dr. Loring, an intimate friend of the author's and an early admirer, says that Hawthorne had a two-fold existence -- a real and a supernatural -- and that while he was fond of the companionship of all who were in sympathy with the real and human side of life, it was the supernatural element in his make-up which gave him his high distinction. Hawthorne, shy by nature and training, was chary of those whose intellectual power and literary fame might seem to give them a right to some degree of intimacy. The working of his mind was so

5Ibid., p. 15.
sacred and mysterious even to himself that he was impatient of any attempt at familiarity with the power within him. He did at times, however, evidence a desire for such companionship as would leave undisturbed the inner sanctuary where his intellect worked at its sacred task.  

This detached and somber aspect of Hawthorne's genius was partly molded by his instinctive desire for solitude. Somewhere there was always silence, solitude, and twilight. Hawthorne simply could not be a part of the world around him; he would, instead, hover on the edge of it and observe it with faint amusement, but he could never bring himself to a participation in its affairs. It was his inability to accept life at its face value that prevented Hawthorne's participation in the breaking-up of the old New England.

He continued, rather, to "ride his horse of the night and to sit that ghostly steed with a high degree of grace and indifference."  

Hawthorne stands both in and aside from the genteel flowering of his contemporaries. He was neither of the Concord group nor of the Cambridge group; and he cannot be classed as a Transcendentalist, although he was intimate with the leaders of that idealistic group. His mood was essentially dark, and he was haunted by spectres; yet he was a dull, shy, quiet descendant of New England Puritans. The somberness of the ancient Puritans surrounded him.

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6John Mackinnon Robertson, *Criticism*, p. 31.

7Gorman, *op. cit.*, p. 95.
throughout his life as a sort of hampering power. 

It is a Puritan failing to be unable to understand the technique in any work or to value a thing because of its sheer beauty. There must always be a purpose behind the object, a moral somewhere implied. Running true to form, Hawthorne took exquisite pains with his own prose that it be beautiful, but his prose was a means to an end which betrayed a moral. Even his artistic aptitude could not get away from the strictly Puritan attribute of seeking and pointing out a moral. However, he strove to keep morbidity out of his writing. When one considers the fact that Hawthorne lived for twelve years of his manhood in the dark, unnatural atmosphere of his Salem home, the wonder is not that his writings should contain so much morbidity, but that they should display so little. That he did not become morbid is due in large measure to his wonderful imagination and powers of observation. As a matter of fact, he burned scores of sketches, some of which he thought were the most powerful he had written, because he felt they were morbid.

"To find the man's genius at its highest expression one must turn to the third classification of tales, the stories combining fantasy, allegory, and a sort of tortured

8Stewart, a recent biographer of Hawthorne's, is inclined to discount much of the emphasis laid upon the author's gloomy surroundings.
reality that trembles between two worlds." Both the weakness and the strength of Hawthorne's genius were to be found in his tales; and this weakness and strength come from the same source, his Puritan heritage. The weakness was to be found in an overpowering moralism, a monotonous insistence on ethical illuminations that, often enough, threw his tales out of their proper focus. "The best of Hawthorne's tales are surcharged with an unearthly glow, a brooding sense of the supernatural, a comprehension of the invisible and mystic auras surrounding the soul."  

After his marriage Hawthorne and his bride went, at the termination of their three hours' honeymoon journey from Boston, to the old gray parsonage which was to be their home for the next three years. In keeping with the somber nature of the author, the old Mense itself was moss-grown and presented, at the end of an avenue of black ash trees, a somewhat gloomy aspect. The story of Hawthorne's occupancy of this old house is a story of "shadows, of dim figures moving circumspectly and silently through long days of sunshine and rain and snow while the intellectually enfevered town of Concord pursued a varied orbit in a different direction."  

One should not get the impression, however, that Hawthorne had no part in the life of Concord in his day. He

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9 Gorman, op. cit., p. 49.  
10 Ibid., p. 50.  
11 Ibid., p. 67.
had contact with several of the more important literary lights who were his neighbors. These brief contacts, however, were "no more than slight stones flung into a pool."\textsuperscript{12} All the time Hawthorne, in his quiet way, was impressing his subdued personality on a few friends, who understood and respected his "involuntary desire not to be drawn out of himself."\textsuperscript{13} Thus Hawthorne spent the time of residence in the Old Mense, "a man who sat upon the edge of the circle, a little withdrawn."\textsuperscript{14} "The entire personality of the Hawthorne of this period is implicit in the story."\textsuperscript{15} He was shy, uncertain of his own powers, naturally somber, and easily discouraged.

During his three years in the Old Mense the need for money was always before him and was increased by the birth of his first child, Una, on March 3, 1844. More than ever, it was necessary to call upon an almost exhausted vein of resources in the field of short narratives. He wrote for such publications as The Boys' and Girls' Magazine, The Pioneer, The Democratic Review, and Graham's Magazine. The new tales he wrote were collected under the title of Mosses from an Old Mense and published in 1846. By that date two thirds of his life had passed away, and his claim to fame was based on one hundred short stories and sketches. He

\textsuperscript{12}Ibid. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{13}Ibid., p. 70. \\
\textsuperscript{14}Ibid. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{15}Ibid., p. 82.
was yet to write those narratives which would "cement his position as a creative genius." 16

If, however, he had written only the short stories and sketches, he would have survived through them. Although the genius was there, it was but vaguely emphasized for various reasons. In the first place, as a young writer, Hawthorne had no dominating objective. Unquestionably, he wanted to write, but had nothing in particular to say. "Sometimes his sketches read like the conversation of a man talking softly to himself." 17 Hawthorne, nevertheless, "grew in stature as a writer as the slow seasons passed." 18 Eventually the patient man, who had for so long merely set down his thoughts and observations, became an artist with a somewhat clearer objective; at least it is clearer now to his readers if not so evident to him at the time.

Salem has been reproached for her aloofness toward her famous son, but it must be remembered that Hawthorne never made any attempt to become a part of the life of the community. He kept to himself with an almost fanatical determination. "Salem simply did not know him except as a taciturn, striding figure who dwelt, perhaps in a cloudy world of his own." 19 He had little to do with the realities of the town and still less love to bestow upon them. Embittered

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16 Ibid., p. 72.  
17 Ibid., p. 73.  
18 Ibid., p. 74.  
19 Ibid., p. 91.
by his removal from the custom house, Hawthorne lived in Salem only a few months after leaving the position.

One's environment alone cannot be held responsible for the trend of his mind. The reading and study in which he engaged will have a part in shaping his thoughts and, as in the case of Hawthorne, perhaps, too, his own productions.

After the death of Captain Hawthorne, the widow returned with her three children to her father's home. The son, Nathaniel, was petted more than the two girls because his health was delicate. This delicate condition was aggravated by a foot injury received while he was playing ball. The consequent lameness persisted for a long time. The prescribed therapy consisted of pouring showers of cold water from a window in the second story upon the lame foot, extended from the window below. At the time of the injury Hawthorne was attending the school taught by J. E. Worcester, and throughout the period of his lameness the great teacher came to hear the boy's lessons. Later he was able to walk with the aid of crutches. Not until after some three years, when he was twelve, was the lameness entirely overcome.

A natural love of books, which he could foster by the leisure enforced by his foot injury, led to the early acquiring of the reading habit. Early favorites were Spenser's *Feerie Queene*, Thomson's *Castle of Indolence*, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, and the plays of Shakespeare. His sister
Elizabeth recalls that he liked to lie on the floor or to sit in a chair in the corner of the room near a window and "read half the afternoon without speaking." Of course, there is no harm to be found in reading Spenser and Thomson at any age, but in a boy who had already a premature love of solitude, the question was what was to keep him from living in that fantastic fairy world more hours of the day than were quite wholesome.

One line from Richard III he liked to quote with mock heroic effect, "My Lord, stand back, and let the coffin pass," appealed to his vivid imagination. Perhaps, too, because he liked to play pranks, he derived some satisfaction from seeing the surprised look on others' faces when he unexpectedly repeated the quotation.

According to Stewart, cats also amused Hawthorne; and the Manning household was well supplied with "felines bearing such Bunyanesque names as 'Apollyon' and 'Beelzebub.'" The summer that Hawthorne was twelve, his mother moved to Raymond, Maine, where the boy, sufficiently recovered from his foot injury to roam the woods, hunting and fishing, spent three delightful years. "His imagination was stimulated, too, by the absolute freedom he enjoyed." He later regarded the Raymond years as the happiest of his life.

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21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
But the carefree life could not continue forever. Now that his health was completely restored, it was necessary for the boy to settle down to systematic study. In spite of excuses to his Uncle Robert, he was sent back to Salem "where he began to study on July 5, 1819, the day after his fifteenth birthday." He first attended Mr. Archer's school on Merlbro Street, which had only recently been established. In March, 1820, he left Mr. Archer's school and began to prepare for college under the tutorship of Benjamin L. Oliver, a Salem lawyer. Mr. Oliver thought that his pupil would be ready for college in the autumn, "but Uncle Robert wisely objected to such an accelerated program." However, by the following summer, the boy was able to write to his mother that his teacher had no doubts about his getting into college and that his uncle "need be under no apprehension."

Study did not take all his time, however. He kept books, in the afternoons, for his uncle's stage company. He found the dollar a week earned in this way to be very convenient, but that the work interfered with his literary pursuits. There were, too, some recreational activities; and he and his sister Louisa attended Mr. Turner's dancing school. Other events which diverted his attention from his

\[23\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 6.}\]
\[24\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 7.}\]
\[25\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 8.}\]
study were the theater, church services, and a concert. He found the theater interesting, but he may not have enjoyed the concert very much for he always professed an inability to appreciate music. He seems still less to have enjoyed religious services which he attended regularly in 1821. He confessed to his mother that they had a sleep-producing effect.

During the pre-college years he was also doing much reading. In a letter to Louisa, written two years before he entered college, he mentioned having read Waverly, The Mysteries of Udolpho, The Adventures of Count Fathom, Roderick Random, and the Arabian Nights. The following year he wrote her about reading Scott and Godwin. He told about having bought "The Lord of the Isles," which he intended to send to her, as he liked it as well as any of Scott's other poems. He added that he had read Hogg's Tales, Caleb Williams, St. Leon, and Mandeville. He expressed admiration for Godwin's novels and an intention of reading all of them. He remarked that he had read all of Scott's novels except The Abbot, which he meant to read as soon as he could secure it. He regretted the fact that he had read them, as he should like to have that pleasure still awaiting him. Next to Scott's novels he liked Caleb Williams. Later that same year he made a list of books read: Melmoth, Tom Jones, Amelie, Rousseau's Heloise, Edgeworth's Memoirs, The Abbot,
and Lewis' *Romantic Tales*. "Apparently the purchase of a book was unusual; most of the fiction was obtained from a rental library."\(^{26}\) All these books read by a boy of sixteen give one an idea of how deeply he thought, and how much literature fascinated him. Even after he entered college he was a voracious reader. He preferred, however, to read books of his own selection instead of those prescribed by the college. In fact, it may be said that in a measure he neglected the formal course of study in order to read more.

There seemed to be no difficulty about choosing a college. Because of its proximity to Raymond, Bowdoin College at Brunswick, Maine, became an inevitable choice. Hawthorne was very happy over the choice because he would be able to spend his vacations at Sebeego. About this time, however, his aunt was trying to persuade Mrs. Hawthorne to return to Salem. Her son was using his persuasive powers to get her to remain at Raymond. One very telling argument was that at Raymond she was mistress of her own home, while in Salem she would be under the authority of his aunt. His arguments did not carry sufficient weight, for his mother returned to Salem in the summer of 1822. He did not, after all, have the happy vacations at Raymond which he had hoped for.

There were several factors which entered into the choice

\(^{26}\)Ibid., p. 9.
of a college besides its nearness to Sebago. The question of finances was perhaps a strong influence on Hawthorne, who was aware of his dependence on his uncle's generosity, and on his Uncle Robert, who had assumed the responsibility of paying his nephew's expenses. A third consideration was the fact of Bowdoin's "social and political liberality." 27 It has been described as completely democratic and not so much inclined toward federalism as Dartmouth. "Young men of Democratic, as opposed to Federalist, sympathies would be drawn to Bowdoin." 28 As is usual with entering freshmen, he was fearful of failing the entrance examinations. "After an hour of questioning in the president's office, Hawthorne was admitted." 29 The examination was oral, and he reported later that he had done as well as most of the candidates.

It is evident that in Bowdoin the major emphasis was upon Greek, Latin, mathematics, and philosophy. "From the modern point of view the chief weakness of the curriculum was the lack of history, the modern languages, and modern literature." 30 Hawthorne's record was not brilliant. As is the case with many young men of literary inclination, he did well in the things he enjoyed and not so well in others. Like most American college students, Hawthorne indulged in extracurricular activities. Reading, very naturally, formed

27 Ibid., p. 13.  
28 Ibid.  
30 Ibid., p. 17.
most of his. Unfortunately there is no record of this reading. His favorites included Swift and Johnson. He and others made several contributions to the library. Johnson's works in twelve volumes and Swift's works in twenty-four volumes were included in those gifts.

Hawthorne received a good education at Bowdoin, not only in the classics but also in English composition, Christian philosophy, and the natural sciences.

He had enjoyed a healthful participation in the social and intellectual life of the college community both in the meetings of the Athenean Society and the more convivial gatherings of the Pot-8-0 Club at Ward's Tavern. In the give-and-take of the college world, he had held his own, won a general respect and formed several friendships which were to last through a lifetime.31

After graduation from college Hawthorne continued the reading he begun in early life. Books of fiction were obtained from a circulating library; non-fictional works came from the Salem Atheneum. There is no list of rentals from the circulating library, but the list from the Salem Atheneum shows "between 1826 and 1837 no less than 1,200 withdrawals by Mary Manning and Nathaniel Hawthorne."32 Others probably shared in the reading, but it was for Hawthorne that the 1,200 withdrawals were made. Stewart lists the charges, made during the last two months of 1826, which will indicate the scope and variety of his reading, exclusive of fiction, at this time: George Crabbe's The Borough, Jeremy Taylor's

31 Ibid., p. 25. 32 Ibid., p. 27.

The years from 1825 to 1837 were active, busy, productive ones. Just as any young author, ambitious of enduring fame, would do, Hawthorne was reading a great deal and writing some. He was perhaps the severest critic of his own work. By this criticism he was able to master the writer's craft. Time was to tell how well he had read, studied, and written in preparation for the renown which came to him later.

Hawthorne created for a purpose, and in each romance he subdued everything, background, plot, characters and even the imagery, to this purpose. The thoroughness with which his purpose runs through every detail and word of a romance, and "fashions and tempers and unifies all to a simple pre-determined end, is one of the most convincing proofs of Hawthorne's power as an imaginative artist."33 No one, save a

man with a very definite, well-defined purpose, could have wrought so well as did this son of those old New England Puritans. It is impossible to read as much as did Nathaniel Hawthorne and not catch at least a measure of inspiration to follow in the literary footsteps of those who had gone before him. Hawthorne had doubtless given much consideration to the choice of a career and early declared in a letter to his mother his intention of becoming a writer.

I do not want to be a doctor and live by men's diseases, nor a minister to live by their sins, nor a lawyer and live by their quarrels. So, I don't see that there is anything left for me but to be an author.34

Hawthorne's reason for eschewing the ministry is interesting because of his view of sin and its consequences, which is the theme of most of his writings. Hawthorne, however, did not take the same point of view as that of the old Puritan preachers. Instead, his treatment of sin was "in method and purpose psychological rather than philosophical."35

The action of Hawthorne's story, with all its details, gradually takes shadowy form, never with the purpose of

34 George Parsons Lathrop, A Study of Hawthorne, p. 83. Lathrop appends the following editor's note: "This letter, long in the possession of Miss E. P. Peabody, Mr. Hawthorne's sister-in-law, unfortunately does not exist any longer. The date has been forgotten, but the passage is clear in Miss Peabody's recollection."

35 Floyd Stovall, American Idealism, p. 217.
bringing the reader too close to actual life, but with the
aim of "enveloping him subduingly in an atmosphere of spiri-
tual emotion, and of offering him unobtrusively at every
moment, in the acts, in the thoughts and feelings of the
actors . . . in the very air that he breathes, hints and
symbols of certain large truths about human life and human
endeavor." 36 Ordinarily, with romantic writers, artificiali-
ty comes from the "exaggerated effect that is purely artis-
tic." 37 Such is not the case with Hawthorne; it is his
desire to point a moral that dominates him. This wish in
one form or another pervades all of Hawthorne's fiction,
and it is not objectionable as long as it acts silently and
unobtrusively to bind Hawthorne's world together and make
it a significant whole.

As a creator of allegorical romances, Hawthorne fol-
lowed the theorist's ideas in his writing, particularly in
the construction of his stories. He worked from within his
own mind toward the world of actual fact, for which world
he had a fine disdain. His main purpose was the creation
and construction of moral effects. Hawthorne observed, in
his long romances, all the requirements set forth by Poe,
especially the working out of a unique or single effect.
He then invented and combined such events as best aided him
in establishing the preconceived effect. This, too, was in

accordance with the rules laid down by Poe. Hawthorne's imagination was fascinated by some typical aspect of life, the "bitterness of the expiation of sin, the tragic oppression wherein the vices and even the virtues of the past weigh down on the innocent present."38 Such an aspect of life often reminded Hawthorne of some typical men or women whose character and fate reincarnated for him the special truth about life that preoccupied his mind at the time.

In his writing Hawthorne was seeking to discover the forces that abet, as well as those that impede, a rich personal development. If he had no claim to greatness as an imaginative writer, he could lay claim to distinction by reason of his devotion to this one question. Unwilling at first to accept any "easy adjustment to the world about him and dissatisfied later with the unreal adjustment he did make, Hawthorne was forced in his own life to taste the hardest fruits of disunion and isolation."39 Refusing to mitigate the tragedy of a situation, he allowed Dimmesdale, Judge Pyncheon, and Zenobis to go to their deaths without lifting a finger to save them. Their tragic endings embody the darker side of American personal life, the side which Hawthorne's nature enabled him to see with the utmost clarity.

The Scarlet Letter, written during a period of almost

38Ibid., p. 98. 39Arvin, op. cit., p. 205.
absolute poverty, is a clear triumph and vindication of Hawthorne's choice of literature as the objective of his life. He started writing because, as he said, there was no other recourse open to him, but more especially because he liked to write. Writing came easy to him now that he had something to say. "The far-away nebulous objective of some years before had materialized into something huge and visible."40 He was to go on now and produce two more excellent novels in a short time. The cordial welcome accorded The Scarlet Letter buoyed his spirits and strengthened his powers for sustained labor.

The House of the Seven Gables is the romance of heredity. The colors, gray and sombre, with a slight sprinkling of pale rose and green in the places where Phoebe's youthfulness appears, remind one of Hawthorne's own depressing background of seclusion. The author himself was aware of the kinship between him and the story of the old Salem house. His eagerness to see, his ability to meditate on what he saw, and his sympathetic readiness to understand, made him an "ideal historiographer of the community."41 Add to all this the artistic genius which was his, and the result is a creator rather than a recorder of life. He presented his works as things of the imagination, but their substance was the life

40 Gorman, op. cit., p. 90.
41 George E. Woodberry, Hawthorne, p. 103.
that had been lived, as he divined it after long observation and meditation. Naturally there are many phases of this life, and in taking possession of these phases, he found many things. A composite method was forced upon him. The House of the Seven Gables familiarizes one with the author more than any of his other writings.

The Marble Faun is a romance of the mystery of evil. It is the most elaborate of all of Hawthorne's stories, and as a "work of art is nearer lacking in unity of tone and design, because of the archæological and landscape detail of which the author is so lavish." 42 No city was ever embodied in fiction more greedily than Rome is embodied in The Marble Faun. However, Rome, in that romance is not the setting of a drama intimately connected with it; it is, rather, a background chosen for its picturesque remoteness, a background against which the drama may be effectively portrayed. Hawthorne is explicit about his purpose, as is indicated in the introduction:

Italy, as the site of his Romance was chiefly valuable to him [the author] as affording a sort of poetic or fairy precinct, where actualities would not be so terribly insisted upon as they are, and needs must be in America. No author, without a trial, can conceive of the difficulty of writing a romance about a country where there is no shadow, no antiquity, no mystery, no picturesque and gloomy wrong . . . as is happily the case with my dear native land. 43

42 Gates, op. cit., p. 97.

43 Preface to The Marble Faun, p. xxiii.
A master "spinner of beautiful webs,"\(^{44}\) Hawthorne puts into his patterns a moral for apt pupils. In all his romances he is more or less plainly in pursuit of some moral or spiritual truth. The Scarlet Letter is a romance of "expiation done in deeply glowing colors against the dark, sullen background of the Puritan temperament."\(^{45}\)

True as Hawthorne’s "thesis" is, when stated carefully in abstract terms, it is consistent, as he applies it, with a conception of character that is singularly false. According to this conception, freedom of choice exists, but on so narrow a basis that, once exercised in the wrong direction, it is forever resigned. We have seen how Zenobia attributes her downfall to her having swerved a hair’s breadth out of the beaten track; and, even more notable, we might recall Hawthorne’s own statement of the morals of The House of Seven Gables: the truth, namely that the wrongdoing of one generation lives into the successive ones, and, divesting itself of every temporary advantage, becomes a pure and uncontrollable mischief. Here the wrong choice is made, not only by an individual, but once by a long-lived family.\(^{46}\)

Early in The Marble Faun, Miriam, in speaking to Donatello, says something in connection with gloom and shadow.

We artists purposely exclude sunshine and all but a partial light, because we think it is necessary to put ourselves at odds with Nature before trying to imitate her. . . . We make very pretty pictures sometimes with our artfully arranged lights and shadows.\(^{47}\)

Why did Hawthorne choose as the theme for all his novels sin and its consequences, hardly putting pen to paper except

\(^{44}\) Gates, op. cit., p. 96.  
\(^{45}\) Ibid., p. 97.  
\(^{46}\) Arvin, op. cit., p. 219.  
\(^{47}\) Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Marble Faun, p. 51.
to set down something bearing on it? It certainly was not from the viewpoint of theology. He chose it for the same reason that

the great masters in literature always gravitate to it. The Hebrews put it into the first pages of their sacred books. Job chose it, and set a pace often followed but not yet overtaken. The Greeks built their drama upon it. Shakespeare and Goethe could not justify their genius except as over and over again they dealt with it. Dante put it in heaven and hell and all between. Milton could find no theme adequate to his genius but man's first disobedience. Shall we say then that a great genius makes sin his theme because it suits his purpose as an artist? Let us not so belibe him. He takes it because it is the greatest theme and also because it falls in either with his convictions as in the case of Milton, or with temperament as in the case of Hawthorne.\textsuperscript{48}

Hawthorne's purpose, then, may be summed up in a very few words. What he attempted was "essentially what Wordsworth did; to lift the material out of the realm of the commonplace\textsuperscript{49} and set it in the misty sphere of the unusual.

Although Hawthorne was not essentially a religious man, he was able, with a matchless harmony of words and image, to paint a mystic idea of moral righteousness and religious hope. A rose bush grows by Hester's prison cell; Hepzibah, in her most anguished moment at the railway


station, falls upon her knees and begs guidance for herself and her brother; Phoebe, the simple, the noble-hearted, voices the author's perfect code of faith combined with loving service: "people never feel so much like angels as when they are doing what good they may." In The Marble Faun Hawthorne has employed a beautiful simile of cathedral windows, the "unspeakable splendor of Christian faith" when revealed from within the soul.

Hawthorne had no religious affiliations; he did not attend church; and he did not accept ironbound dogma. That was one Puritan impulse of which he had fought clear. He believed in a Divine Providence, to be sure, and "his mind was interwoven with moralistic threads of impulse," but he certainly was not orthodox in the New England sense of the word, and it is very possible that his mind contained some astounding and iconoclastic conclusions. Notwithstanding the fact that Hawthorne was not what is usually termed a religious man, the depths of spiritual feeling which were hidden in that never-revealed heart no man may attempt to measure. He took no interest in the theological debates that dealt with the theme of sin; he took no part in any other practical questions of social life, except when forced

50 Nathaniel Hawthorne, The House of the Seven Gables, p. 323.

51 Gorman, op. cit., p. 124.

52 Ibid., p. 92.
to it by the necessity of making a livelihood.

Two dominating aspects of the Roman scene, art and religion, forced themselves into his consciousness; and he must have given them considerable thought. Hawthorne was not a church-goer, but the Puritan influence was perceptible in his life, his letters, and his books. He had grown up in a land where people worshiped in unadorned churches, where, indeed, every religious ceremony was devoid of color or other ornamentation. The old Puritans abjured every show of pomp or gaudiness. On the other hand, the Catholic church with its display of color, the beauty of the old cathedrals, the gorgeous vestments and sacramental vessels appealed to Hawthorne's love of the beautiful. Its mystery of the mass and its inspired pictures reached into the aesthetic mysticism of his nature. He began then to comprehend for the first time the need of the Protestants for an outlet for their emotions. It was only in the repressed hysterics, gloomy meditations, and the excitement of witch-burnings that the Puritans were able to give vent to the feelings that welled up inside them. The laden soul of the Catholic finds a safety-valve within his Mother Church, where he can free his mind and cleanse his spirit in the confessional. As a direct result of his own brooding observation, Hawthorne comprehended better than his New England contemporaries how much solace the solitary person might
experience from the "soothing ministrations of the confessor."\(^{53}\)

Greater than Hawthorne's vaguely aspiring interest in art is the surprising revelation of his instinctive reaction to the Roman Catholic Church. Like all good New Englanders, he was either indifferent or averse to much of the "ecclesiastical hierarchy and ceremony." He thought that the Roman priests were pampered and had carnal eyes, and he heartily wished they were better men, more worthy of their high office. Even the Pope failed to interest him greatly, and on Easter Sunday, 1858, he grew so weary of the prolonged ceremonial that he did not remain to witness the papal benediction bestowed from the balcony of the church.

Hawthorne did concede, nevertheless, that the Roman Catholic religion had "many admirable points." It appealed to him as "a faith which marvellously adapts itself to every human need." Perhaps the chief "means of adaptation was the confessional, for the special appreciation of which Hawthorne's long preoccupation with the psychology of guilt was an excellent preparation."\(^{54}\) The office of the confessional was not a new or alien concept to Hawthorne. While writing *The Scarlet Letter*, he once told James Russell Lowell that it had been part of his plan to make Dimmesdale confess himself to a Catholic priest. Lowell thought that such a device

\(^{53}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 125.\) \(^{54}\textit{Stewart, op. cit.}, p. 198.\)
would have been psychologically admirable. So it would; but Hawthorne, the historian, would probably have experienced some difficulty in finding a Catholic priest in the Boston of 1650.

Hawthorne saw, in St. Peter's, a range of confessionals, where penitents of various languages might confess their sins. "What an institution that is!" he exclaimed in his journal. "Men needs it so, that it seems as if God might have ordained it." Stewart relates that this and other notebook passages describing the confessional were utilized in The Marble Faun in that great and moving chapter entitled "The World's Cathedral."55

The author was interested, too, though somewhat incidentally, in the priest's rôle in the drama of the confessional. There may have been a personal reason for this, for according to Mrs. Hawthorne, many readers of The Scarlet Letter inflicted their confession upon the author. While standing, on one occasion, near the confessional in St. Peter's Hawthorne saw a priest suddenly come out of one of them, looking weary and moist with perspiration. "It must be very tedious," he reflected, "to listen to the minute and commonplace iniquities of the multitudes of penitents; and it cannot be often these are redeemed by the treasure-trove of a great sin." Hawthorne could look at both sides of the process -- the priest's

55Ibid., p. 199.
as well as the penitent's — and though deeply impressed by what he saw, he did not think it necessary for that reason to "surrender either his objectivity or his sense of humor." 56

When the author is able to take his "pretty little New England heretic into the confessional booth and bring her forth still a heretic but cleansed in spirit, newly washed, as it were in the sparkling bath of innocence, he shows how amazingly far he has traveled from Gallows Hill, Salem." 57

One may well compare this scene with the one in which Hester Prynne makes her unexpected avowal of her faith in the consecration of her sin with Dimmesdale. The two scenes form "a brief but flaring revelation of the potential aesthetic proclivities of men, proclivities that break away cleanly from a dark but intense New England heritage." 58

Hawthorne could not have seen much of his father as he was only four years of age when his father, a ship captain, died while on a voyage. As a consequence his father's death could have had but little direct effect upon such a small child. It was the indirect results that brought about its influence on a naturally reflective nature. Grief over her husband's death made a recluse of Mrs. Hawthorne; therefore at one stroke of fate the boy was, in a measure, deprived of

56Ibid.  
57Gorman, op. cit., p. 148.  
58Ibid.
both parents. The led, however, fostered a feeling for his father, and "the Captain's son was later to cherish a log-book kept by his father during one of his voyages to the Far East; Hawthorne inscribed his name in it several times and copied in the margins and between the lines many nautical phrases taken from the text of the log."59 Certainly his father's death aroused in him at the time no ideas of immortality, or for that matter, thoughts of any religious nature. On the other hand, after years of reading and thinking of various things, at his mother's deathbed, he gave much thought to the question of immortality. He at least "gained an assurance of a better state of being, but only after he had tasted the bitterness of death."60 Sorrow helped to crystallize his thoughts of religion and immortality.

That Hawthorne was very considerably influenced by his austere forefathers is an indisputable fact to which some consideration has been given. Attention has been drawn to his purpose in writing, his attitude toward religion in general, and to his habits of study and extensive reading. It now remains to observe to what use he put the wealth of material at his command.

If later generations have the conception that the intellectual and moral life of the people was as grim as the

59 Stewart, op. cit., p. 93. 60 Ibid., p. 128.
physical conditions under which they thought, prayed, worked, and fought, Hawthorne is likely responsible for it. Those people, though brave, intelligent fanatics — intelligent where superstition was not concerned — were doubtless morbidly sensitive in both religion and morals. The early government of Massachusetts "has rightly been called a theocracy," where the church-goers felt themselves very near to the Unseen. Yet the gist of all their praying was "for a closer walk with God." One is prone to forget, in considering the Theocracy as such, the quite real aspects of these men. One loses sight of the secular man, with his duties as soldier and sailor, as law-maker and state-builder; and there is a tendency to blame Hawthorne for this forgetfulness. Other men have written about the Puritans and their descendents, but none with the power and imagination of Hawthorne. He had unmistakably the historic consciousness. However, when he starts with a subject taken from history, in nine cases out of ten, he either gives it "an eerie twist," or makes it a mere point of departure into the conscience, where, as an artist, he is forever "pondering in his inherited preoccupation with sin, grim, dusky problems of good and evil." In his scheme of things,

61 Charles Townsend Copeland, "Hawthorne's Use of His Materials," Critic, XLIV (July, 1904), 58.

62 Ibid.

63 Ibid., p. 59.

64 Ibid., p. 60.
Hawthorne had no need for the secular Puritan; it is the sinning man, the persecuted and the persecutor, and the bewitched that held interest for him. This tendency held through his writing of *The Blithedale Romance* as well as the romances dealing with earlier days. The inveterate moralist caused Miles Coverdale to say,

I had never before experienced a mood that so robbed the actual world of its solidarity. It nevertheless involved a charm, on which -- a devoted epicure of my own emotions -- I resolved to pause, and enjoy the moral sillabub until quite dissolved away.65

Hawthorne came near to the core of New England mystery, the sense of evil at the heart of life, sin and its ways with the soul. He made plain the penance of conscience that follows on acted sin, and the workings of an ancient curse on the children to the third and fourth generations. The transformation wrought in the innocent by the knowledge of good and evil is such that it seems the very birth of the soul itself. These were the topics that held the attention of the full force of his genius and the perfection of his art. The author was both an artist and a thinker, his mind working in images and fancies; but he was, first of all, an observer. He relinquished slowly the less imaginative elements in his work, such as historic and legendary fact and the contemporary actualities he observed in his New England

surroundings. It was not the flow of life itself, but the mere aspect of things that were recorded. He was not indifferent to his surroundings nor impatient of them. He made the most of what his eyes saw, and of the suggestions that arose in his heart and imagination.

It was necessary for Hawthorne to base his subject on what he had seen with his eyes, or what was native in his blood. The Marble Faun, although it has an elaborate Roman setting, has American characters; the subject of the book is dear to a New Engander descended from the Puritans. Had Rome been as familiar to him as his theme and characters, it would have grown naturally as one with them -- as Salem, the old house, and the Pyncheon family, are one in The House of the Seven Gables -- and we should have been spared the reminder, common in many writers but exceedingly rare in Hawthorne, of the spectacle, the scene-shifter, and the property man.

Honest, hearty, external romance was not for Hawthorne. His heart was not with "Nathan Hale or any real flesh-and-blood historical figure."66 While incident was not unimportant with Hawthorne, it is important chiefly as the outward, bodily sign of inward drama, as Dimmesdale's habit of holding his hand over his heart.

66 Copeland, op. cit., p. 58.
Hawthorne has often been spoken of as if he were the historical novelist of New England. "In letter, nothing could be more false; in spirit, nothing more true." 67 Hawthorne seems at times merely to reflect life, giving it back uncolored by his personality, as a pure medium. There was a negative side to him, a certain irresponsiveness, a lack of interest, a lethargy, a dullness. One looks in vain in his career for deep convictions or any enthusiasm of nature, and, in that age of many reforms and stirring public interests, his apathy is the more noticeable; the story of Bithedale and of Brook Farm displays him as practically untouched by the moral passions of his time. 68

Copeland makes the following comment:

Nothing in criticism is more subtle, and nothing, I am persuaded, more just, than Mr. James's pages concerning this matter. I risk injustice to him for the pleasure of quoting here a word or two of that remarkable exposition.

...Nothing is more curious and interesting [says Mr. James] than this almost exclusively imported character of the sense of sin in Hawthorne's mind; it seems to exist there merely for an artistic or literary purpose. He had ample cognizance of the Puritan conscience; it was his natural heritage; it was reproduced in him; looking into his soul, he found it there. But his relation to it was only, as one may say, intellectual; it was not moral and theological. He played with it, and used it as a pigment; he treated it, as the metaphysicians say, objectively.

In less dignified language, he found a great lump of Puritan black lead, which, by some process he never explained, arrived upon his palette as the varying hues of fancy. 69

67Ibid., p. 59.  
68Woodberry, op. cit., p. 91.  
69Copeland, op. cit., p. 60.
As Hawthorne matured, there was a "hidden writing underneath the script, and the script was only the key to what was beneath."\(^7^0\) His art was abstract, and there was an increasing element of thought in it. Its significance grew with this element and his subtle skill in handling it. The peculiarity of Hawthorne's art is that the element of the abstract in it is so engrossing and takes so imaginative a form.

\(^7^0\)Woodberry, op. cit., p. 89.
CHAPTER II

THE SCARLET LETTER

In The Scarlet Letter the reader has the first clear fusion of all Hawthorne's virtues as well as of his vices. He never got entirely clear of the web of "dusky old New England,"¹ and was never more completely entangled in it than in the story of Hester Prynne and her suffering. In no other story did Hawthorne state his theme of sin and its consequence "with quite so much power."² At first the plot seems not to illustrate the power of life upon souls, who are responsible for their actions. Hawthorne, however, is not interested in actions; he is more concerned with moods.

Early in the winter of 1849, J. T. Fields, a Boston publisher, discovered Hawthorne. The author was in a very despondent mood over the slow sales of the Twice Told Tales. Fields insisted that time for publication had come and finally was able to inveigle Hawthorne into putting into his hands a manuscript that proved to be "the germ of The Scarlet Letter."³ In April, 1850, the first copies of the story,

¹Gorman, op. cit., p. 84.
²W. T. Trent, Great American Writers, p. 76.
³Gorman, op. cit., p. 82.
which had been expanded at Fields' suggestion to novel length, were off the press. The first edition of five thousand copies was immediately sold out, and a new printing was instantly under way. The most complete "epitome of Hawthorne's genius," The Scarlet Letter contained all the urgers that had made his short tales unique, and nothing that he was to do after it revealed any "facets that were not implicit in the curious handling of the tragedy of the Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale and Hester Prynne."

At first reading, The Scarlet Letter appears to be the history of a triangle with a background of Puritan New England. A closer perusal, however, reveals the fact that it is the story of after-effects. The sin has already been committed, and Hawthorne is chiefly interested in the results of that sin on the two men involved. The lover is the young minister, Arthur Dimmesdale; the adulterous wife is Hester Prynne, who wears the badge of shame, the scarlet letter A, embroidered on the bosom of her gown; and the injured husband is old Roger Chillingworth, the self-appointed physician to Dimmesdale. A more careful reading of the book, however, discloses the fact that this is "a triangle after the event," so to speak.

Hester, betrayed by the birth of the child, has openly

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4Ibid., p. 83.  
5Ibid., p. 84.  
6Ibid., p. 85.
endured her punishment and has no more to face except the ridicule of the villagers and the slow, painful path of regeneration. Dimmesdale, on the other hand, preaches every Sunday from the pulpit and receives the adulation of his hearers all the while that the secret consciousness of sin is eating into his heart and soul. The third member of the triangle, old Roger Chillingworth, watches day and night with a malevolent eye, and waits with a fiendish patience the ultimate outcome of the situation. Hawthorne is not concerned with their sin as such, but merely as a starting point for his story; and the great love that evidently existed between Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale is but a "shadowy specter in the far background of the book."7

The Scarlet Letter is one of the greatest studies of sin and its effect on the human heart ever written. It matters not how one may feel about the harshness of the Puritan laws nor how great or how small one may consider Hester's fault. She has sinned against the social code and against the laws of her God and her church. What is the effect of this sin upon the people most closely involved: herself, Dimmesdale, Chillingworth, her former husband, and her child?

One of the greatest passages in the book is that where Hawthorne's skill shows Hester's own idealism being broken

7Ibid., p. 86.
down by the consciousness, as she looks into the eyes of the mob around her, that there is a secret sympathy for her, that in every heart there is a secret lust, a hidden sin. Here, the author remarks that Hester's imagination was somewhat affected by the strange and solitary anguish of her life. The poor woman began to feel, or to fancy, that the scarlet letter had endowed her with a new sense. "She shuddered to believe, yet could not help believing, that it gave her a sympathetic knowledge of the hidden sin in others." 8 These revelations struck terror into her heart, as she questioned their source. She was made to wonder if the outward guise of purity "was but a lie and that, if truth were everywhere to be shown, a scarlet letter would blaze forth on many a bosom besides Hester Prynne's." 9

"In nothing that Hawthorne wrote are the tragic possibilities of the theme more richly and intensely realized than in The Scarlet Letter." 10 The outcome of events was so pitiful not only because sin had its retribution, but because the harmony of so many lives had been fatally disturbed. They had been set at odds with the general purposes of the lives about them. The letter on Hester's bosom was viewed for the first time, and the reader was told that the letter "had the effect of a spell, taking her out of the

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8 The Scarlet Letter, p. 122.  
9 Ibid., p. 123.  
10 Arvin, op. cit., p. 187.
ordinary relations with humanity, and enclosing her in a
sphere by herself."11

The one moment in The Scarlet Letter when the symbolism
seemed forced and difficult to accept was when the phenomenon
of the scarlet letter appeared in the heavens over the Puritan
town. This manifestation of the letter was visible in
that form only to Arthur Dimmesdale. While others saw what
was described by some as a meteor, by others as a mysteri-
ous glow in the heavens, Dimmesdale's conscience fashioned
the spectacle into the emblem which Hester wore openly and
he wore in secret burned into his heart and soul. The idea
of a scarlet letter burning out of the bosom of Arthur
Dimmesdale like some sort of a horrible stigma is not in-
credible, and it forms a proper balance to the embroidered
insignia on Hester's gown. It is beside the point to de-
clare that these symbols are weakened by their obviousness,
for, after all, Hawthorne's idea of reality differed from
that of today. In fact, it may be said it differed from
that of the majority of people of his own day.

In one flashing instant Hester is cleared of all Puritan
influence when, in that last painful interview with
Dimmesdale in the forest, Hester cries out, "What we did had
a consecration of its own. We felt it so! We said so to
each other! Hast thou forgotten it?"12 This one outbreak

11The Scarlet Letter, p. 75.  
12Ibid., p. 282.
was but "an instant's flare on the somber highway of The Scarlet Letter." After all Hester is interested mainly in the effect of the hidden sense of guilt which is destroying Dimmesdale. The Puritan consciousness of sin delineated in some of Hawthorne's earlier tales is the dark thread that the reader follows through the ghostly labyrinth of The Scarlet Letter. Hester's guilt is absolved through her public suffering; yet the problem of her happiness and her love is never solved. One feels that Dimmesdale's problem of secret suffering is solved at the last when he makes public confession of his sin upon the very same scaffold where Hester once stood alone, except for her child in her arms. There is no end or solution to Chillingworth's problem. He is cheated out of his carefully planned revenge when Dimmesdale ascends the pillory with Hester, and his revenge turns upon him like "a ravenous and disappointed hound and rends him apart."

The center and climax of the situation, Dimmesdale in his midnight vigil on the scaffold, was the "sin breaking its secrecy in the minister's breast and blazing forth to all the world." The secret was only hinted at; the open confession is another matter, and came later.

The scene of The Scarlet Letter, as it was presented in

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13Gorman, op. cit., p. 86.  
14Ibid., p. 87.  
15Woodberry, op. cit., p. 159.
the book, had one quality "characteristic of the highest creative art."\textsuperscript{16} It was completely isolated. Not even Prospero’s enchanted isle was less a part of the real world than was the setting for this story. The lonely New England wilderness, aside from its being Puritan, "offered a fit stage for a concentrated, imaginative tale, complete within itself."\textsuperscript{17} Although the setting is historic, by its distance in time and sentiment it seems another soil, different from ours. The stage scenery is slight, a village street, a prison, a scaffold and a church. Later the background is the Governor’s house or the brookside. The drama begins and ends at the scaffold.

When Hester and Pearl go one day to visit Governor Bellingham, the man is found to be residing in a house built of wood but covered by a kind of stucco in which fragments of broken glass are intermixed and where "Cabalistic figures and diagrams"\textsuperscript{18} have been engraved. The interior reveals many tokens of medieaval times, the furniture is of an early time, and there is a suit of mail with a burnished breast-plate standing before an oak paneling. The entire place gives one the feeling of having walked from a world of realities into another world, that of unreality, peopled

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., p. 139. \textsuperscript{17} Ibid. 
\textsuperscript{18} Jane Lundblad, \textit{Hawthorne and the Tradition of the Gothic Romance}, p. 59.
with ghost-like figures of an earlier day.

Mirrors, which play such an important part in many tricks and illusions, are not used by Hawthorne in The Scarlet Letter. Instead, he uses other devices, such as the highly polished armor in the home of Governor Bellingham. The helmet and breastplate were "so highly burnished as to glow with a white radiance, and scatter an illumination everywhere about the floor." 19 Pearl spent some time looking into the polished surface of the breastplate, and directed her mother's attention to it. 20

Humoring the child, Hester looked and discovered that "owing to the convex mirror, the scarlet letter was represented in exaggerated and gigantic proportions, so as to be the most prominent feature of her appearance." 20

A different sort of mirroring was employed when Hawthorne had Hester to gaze into the child's eyes for her own image. Instead, suddenly, she fancied that she beheld not her own miniature portrait, but another face, in the small black mirror of Pearl's eye. It was a face, fiend-like, full of malice, yet bearing the semblance of features that she had known full well, though seldom with a smile, and never with malice in them. 21

With his accustomed evasiveness, Hawthorne shunned a closer analysis of what Hester really saw. Perhaps it was a revelation of a likeness between the child and her father. 21

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19 The Scarlet Letter, p. 149. 20 Ibid., p. 150.
21 Ibid., p. 137.
the other hand, the terms "fiend-like" and "full of malice" could have just as easily pointed to a revelation of the sinister influence of Roger Chillingworth. Again, the author allowed the reader to choose his own interpretation.

On more than one other occasion, the author caused reflections to appear, each time in water. One occasion was that on which Hester sent Pearl to play at the water's edge while she had a talk with Chillingworth.

The child skipped away to play. Here and there she came to a full stop, and peeped curiously into a pool left by the retiring tide as a mirror for Pearl to see her face in. Forth peeped at her out of the pool, with dark glistening curls around her head and an elf-smile in her eyes, the image of a little maid, whom Pearl, having no other playmate, invited to take her hand, and run a race with her. But the visionary little maid, on her part, beckoned likewise, as if to say, — "This is the better place! Come thou into the pool!" And Pearl, stepping in mid-leg deep, beheld her own white feet at the bottom; while out of a still lower depth, came the gleam of a kind of fragmentary smile, floating to and fro in the agitated water.

Another effect of the same kind is achieved when the author described little Pearl impishly playing about in the wood. This occasion was that of another meeting between the child's mother and someone with whom she would have private conversation. Hester felt a compulsion to warn the minister of the danger of his continued association with the old physician. First the mother and child were attracted to the little brook, where "letting the eyes follow along the

\[22\] Ibid., p. 241.
course of the stream, they could catch the reflected light from its water." After the minister and Hester had finished making their plans to go away, the mother called to her child to return. When Pearl reached the margin of the brook, she stood on the farther side silently watching her mother and the minister, and pointing to the emblem which Hester had cast aside, and which lay at the edge of the water.

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

The image persists as Pearl continued to stand watching her parents.

In the brook again was the fantastic beauty of the image, with its reflected frown, its pointed finger, and imperious gesture giving emphasis to the aspect of little Pearl.

Dimmesdale, on the scaffold at midnight, with Hester and Pearl, saw a marvelous phenomenon in the sky. Standing side by side with the blazing letter of shame visible on Hester's breast, and tortured by the realization of the invisible letter burning in his own breast, the minister observed the

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23 Ibid., p. 268.  
24 Ibid., pp. 300-301.  
25 Ibid., p. 303.
same symbol flash across the heavens. This manifestation was explained away, characteristically enough, by the author. It was doubtless caused by one of those meteors, which the night watcher may so often observe, "burning out to waste in the vacant regions of the atmosphere." 26 After Hawthorne had dispelled any conceptions the reader may form as to the supernatural aspects of the sight, the author went on to state that Dimmesdale saw a well-defined "A, marked out in lines of dull red." 27 However, the author offers at the same time the explanation that, "We impute it solely to the disease in the minister's own eye and heart." 28 He even goes further to say that the meteor may have shown itself at that point burning duskyly through a veil of cloud; but with no such shape as his guilty imagination gave it; or, at least, with so little definiteness that another's guilt might have been another symbol in it. 29

During all the time of their close association, Chillingworth had watched the minister very carefully, and was quick to detect any slight change, either in his actions or his manner. Hawthorne would have the reader believe that the old physician used his magic to effect these changes to suit his evil purposes. He was observing Dimmesdale with the closest attention when he found the clergymen on the scaffold with Hester and Pearl. Dimmesdale was aghast at

26 Ibid., p. 220.  
27 Ibid., p. 222.  
28 Ibid.  
29 Ibid., p. 223.
the manifestation that presented itself to him there. Chillingworth's acute perception, as well as his dark suspicions, helped him to form his conceptions with regard to his patient. Consequently, when the great scarlet letter glowed in the sky, perceptible only to the minister as such, it is true, Chillingworth, as well as the reader, was convinced that Dimmesdale was Pearl's father. The conviction was attained very subtly. There was nothing suggestive of the "evasiveness that a more modern technique might have employed." 30

Hawthorne repeatedly takes his characters to the cemetery. There Chillingworth found some mysterious herbs. In answer to Dimmesdale's question he says,

I found them growing on a grave, which bore no tombstone, nor other memorial of the dead man, save these ugly weeds, that have taken upon themselves to keep him in remembrance. They grew out of his heart, and typify, it may be, some hideous secret that was buried with him, and which he had done better to confess during his lifetime. 31

Little Pearl feels very much at home in the burial ground. She speaks of the Black Man who is coming to fetch her mother and the minister. "So she drew her mother away, skipping, dancing, and frisking fantastically among the hillocks of the dead people, like a creature that had nothing in common with a bygone and buried generation, nor owned herself akin to it." 32

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30 Leland Schubert, *Hawthorne, the Artist*, p. 151.
32 Ibid., p. 191.
Roger Chillingworth's role as a physician was shown by his interest in healing herbs and alchemy. His laboratory, which provided an important aspect of the setting, because of the result that the chemist's findings had on Arthur Dimmesdale, was described by Hawthorne as follows:

Old Chillingworth arranged his laboratory, not such as a modern man of science would reckon even tolerably complete, but provided with a distilling apparatus and the means of compounding drugs and chemicals which the practiced alchemist knew well how to turn to purpose.33

Sunlight and shadow flicker in and out of the story. There are many images of trembling motion, even of convulsive movement. Nature, indeed, helps to convey the idea of trembling. "The forest . . . creaked with a blast that was passing through it. The boughs were tossing heavily above their heads."34 The sunlight flickered to keep Dimmesdale, as well as Hester, in the shadow; and the sky, on the night of the minister's vigil, trembled with strange lights. By clever use of bits of motion, Hawthorne enlivened the story and intensified the idea of the supernatural found in the setting he prepared for The Scarlet Letter.

There is an air of unreality about Hawthorne's whole procedure of characterization, but it is less the result of a "failure to create living personages than it is the result of a careful aesthetic selectiveness on Hawthorne's part."35

33Ibid., p. 179.  
34Ibid., p. 282.  
35Gorman, op. cit., p. 89.
His three principal characters do not exist in a vacuum, but Hawthorne subdued their background into a vague picture. The Puritan town which provided the setting was hastily sketched, and non-essentials were omitted or viewed as if through a thin mist, so indistinct were they. Because of this subordination of setting, the characters stand out; the few accessories, such as the pillory and the balcony, are as if brought forth when needed and set aside after they have served their usefulness.

In *The Scarlet Letter*, as in many of Hawthorne’s stories, the sin was committed before the romance begins. The author is not concerned with a sin, whatever it may have been. It is the problem of the result of that sin which occupies his mind and attention. The reader does not see Hester until she is brought forth from the prison, where her child was born. The grim prison, the pillory, even Hester and the child are real enough, but Hawthorne managed to surround them and the whole proceedings in the market-place with an atmosphere of unreality. He introduced the reader to Hester by having the town-beadle precede her from the prison, "like a black shadow emerging into the sunshine."36

As Hester stood on the scaffold, those to whom she was well known and who "had expected to behold her dimmed and obscured by a disastrous cloud, were astonished, and even

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36 *The Scarlet Letter*, p. 72.
startled, to perceive how her beauty shone out, and made a halo of the misfortune and ignominy in which she was enveloped.\textsuperscript{37} After her three-hour ordeal was over, Hester returned to the prison. "It was whispered, by those who peered after her, that the scarlet letter threw a lurid gleam along the old dark passage-way of the interior."\textsuperscript{38}

Later, in the prison, Hester's husband laid his finger on the emblem, "which forthwith seemed to scorch into Hester's breast, as if it had been red-hot."\textsuperscript{39} Before he left her he sneeringly inquired of her whether or not she would be afraid of nightmares if she should wear the token in her sleep.

Hester felt that some good should come out of all her suffering. She perceived an affinity for all who had sorrowed. The author said, "Again a mystic sisterhood would assert itself, as she met the sanctified frown of some matron, who, according to the rumor of all tongues, kept cold snow in her bosom."\textsuperscript{40} While Hester laid no claim to the world's privileges, she was "quick to acknowledge her sisterhood with the race of men, wherever benefits were to be conferred."\textsuperscript{41} Wherever sorrow of any kind was present, there, too, Hester could be found. "There glimmered the embroidered

\textsuperscript{37}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 74. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{38}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 98.
\textsuperscript{39}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 103. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{40}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 123.
\textsuperscript{41}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 231.
letter, with comfort in its unearthly ray. Elsewhere the token of sin, it was the taper of the sick chamber."\(^{42}\)
Continuing this work of charity and mercy, Hester soon came to be known as "our Hester, the town's own Hester,"\(^{43}\) and the letter came to have the effect of the cross on a nun's bosom. Some of the unlearned and superstitious of her day, the author stated, had a story about the scarlet letter.

They averred that the symbol was not mere scarlet cloth, tinged in an earthly dye-pot, but was red-hot with infernal fire, and could be seen glowing all alight whenever Hester Prynne walked abroad in the night-time. And we must needs say, it seared Hester's bosom so deeply, that perhaps there was more truth in the rumor than our modern incredulity may be inclined to admit.\(^{44}\)

(\textit{In this manner Hawthorne again let the reader make up his mind about the weird properties of the letter, and its influence on the life of its wearer, but he did declare that her scarlet emblem "had the effect of a spell, taking her out of the ordinary relations with humanity, and enclosing her in a sphere by herself."\(^{45}\) Hawthorne was a portion of the Puritan tradition; but he was distinctly not a portion of the Victorian scene, and therefore could not adjust himself to it. "As a good Victorian he never could have dismissed Hester Prynne's sin so easily."\(^{46}\)})

\(^{42}\)Ibid.  
\(^{43}\)Ibid., p. 233.  
\(^{44}\)Ibid., p. 124.  
\(^{45}\)Ibid., p. 75.  
\(^{46}\)Gorman, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 117.
Related to the token which Hester wore openly was the brand worn in secret by Arthur Dimmesdale, the minister, and her partner in sin. The first reference to his gesture of holding his hand over his heart was in the scene at the market-place, when he urged the women to reveal the child's father. He was described as speaking to her and "leaning over the balcony, with his hand upon his heart." 47 He was not seen again until Hester and Pearl went to the Governor's house. Hester turned to him for support in her request that she be allowed to keep Pearl, and "the young minister at once came forward, pale, and holding his hand over his heart." 48 The minister's gesture may be an habitual one started many years before, but Hawthorne doubtless intended the movement to be related to Dimmesdale's own private scarlet letter. In a conversation between the minister and Roger Chillingworth, the clergyman said, "... it must needs be better for the sufferer to be free to show his pain, as this poor woman Hester is, than to cover it all up in his heart." 49 It was only a few pages later that the physician makes his discovery while Dimmesdale is sleeping. The author did not reveal to the reader what Chillingworth discovered, but left it to the imagination.  

In the next chapter, Dimmesdale imagined that Hester had

47 The Scarlet Letter, p. 97.  
48 Ibid., p. 161.  
49 Ibid., p. 192.
led Pearl into his study, and that Pearl was "in her scar-
let garb, and pointing her forefinger, first at the scarlet
letter on her bosom, and then at the clergymen's breast."50
Then came the minister's vigil on the scaffold at night
and the author wrote:

And there stood the minister, with his hand over
his heart; and Hester Prynne, with the embroidered
letter glimmering on her bosom; and little Pearl,
herself a symbol, and the connecting link between
the two.51

The phrase "herself a symbol" seems to connect the minis-
ter's gesture with the symbol on his heart.

When Hester was trying to strengthen and encourage
Dimmesdale, he told her that she could be happy because she
wore her scarlet letter openly while "mine burns in secret."52
Hester revealed to him the secret which she had come to dis-
close to him and he started to his feet, "gasping for breath,
and clutching at his heart, as if he would have torn it out
of his bosom."53 Once more, during the same interview, the
minister cried out, "pressing his hand nervously against his
heart, -- a gesture that had grown involuntary with him."54
A short while later he repeated the gesture, and Pearl asked
about it. Then Dimmesdale was seen "white and speechless,
with one hand on the Hebrew Scriptures, and the other

50Ibid., p. 208. 51Ibid., pp. 220-221.
52Ibid., p. 277. 53Ibid., p. 278.
54Ibid., p. 284.
spread upon his breast."55

At two other times Pearl referred to the minister's gesture, remarking at one time that "he is a strange, sad man with his hand always over his heart."56 With the persistence characteristic of children, she spoke of the minister's unhappy custom as she saw him pass in the procession. He was so strange looking she questioned her mother:

I could not be sure that it was he; so strange he looked. . . . Else I would have run to him and bid him kiss me . . . even as he did yonder in the dark woods. . . . Would he have cleft his hand over his heart, and scowled on me, and bid me be gone?57

Even the old witch, Mistress Hibbins, noticed this practice and mentioned it twice. The first time was as he was returning from the interview with Hester. He met the witch-lady and was reprimanded because he had not warned her of his going into the forest. Upon his explanation of his trip, she cackled and suggested that it was best not to discuss such things in daytime. Later when she beheld the minister in the procession, she made a point of talking with Hester about him and of the meeting between Hester and the minister. Referring to Hester's token, she remarked:

Thou wearest it openly . . . But this minister! . . . When the Black Man sees one of his own servants, signed and sealed, so shy of owning to the bond as is this Reverend Mr. Dimmesdale, he hath a way of ordering matters so that the work shall be disclosed

55Ibid., p. 324. 56Ibid., p. 333. 57Ibid., p. 348.
in open daylight to the eyes of all the world! What is that the minister seeks to hide, with his hand always over his heart?58)

Hawthorne drew a comparison between Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale and the consequences of the sins of each, when he remarked:

The sainted minister in the church! The woman of the scarlet letter in the market-place! What imagination would have been irreverent enough to surmise the same scorching stigma was on them both!59

Finally, when Arthur Dimmesdale mounted the scaffold and called to Hester and Pearl to join him, he turned to his people with these words: "But there stood one in the midst of you, at whose brand of sin and infamy ye have not shuddered!"60 His weakness was such that it seemed as if he must leave the remainder of his secret undisclosed. He overcame the weakness, however, and continued his revelations:

Now, at the death hour, he stands up before you! He bids you look at Hester's scarlet letter! He tells you that, with all its mysterious horror, it is but the shadow of what he bears on his own breast, and that even this, his own red stigma, is no more than the type of what has seared his inmost heart! Stand any here that question God's judgment on a sinner? Behold! Behold a dreadful witness of it.61

As Dimmesdale died, he exclaimed that God had shown him mercy by giving him this burning torture to bear upon his breast. In conclusion, Hawthorne noted that some who were

58 Ibid., p. 351. 59 Ibid., p. 358. 60 Ibid., p. 369. 61 Ibid., p. 370.
present at Dimmesdale's confession "testified to having seen, on the breast of the unhappy minister, a SCARLET LETTER." 62 The A on Dimmesdale's breast was never fully explained, but there were hints that it might be regarded as a case of stigmatization. Dimmesdale bade the crowd to look again at Hester's letter, declaring it was but the shadow of that which he bore on his own breast. Then in highly dramatic tones he demanded that his hearers behold the mark that he wore secretly. "With a convulsive motion, he tore away the ministerial band from before his breast. It was revealed!" 63 Hawthorne, however, stopped short of actual revelation to the reader. He came to an abrupt halt just when the expectation of the reader was greatest, and declared, "But it were irreverent to describe the revelation." 64 Here, again, Hawthorne evaded actuality.

Dimmesdale's worst sin consisted in concealment and hypocrisy. The assumption of sinfulness in a general way, without reference to specific acts, added to the spiritual appeals which were made from the pulpit. The minister early formed the habit of holding his hand over his heart as if he would hide the emblem of sin which he wore in the heart. What Hawthorne had in mind all along was that a sin involving hypocrisy can in no way be undone or gotten over except by

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62 Ibid., p. 373.  
63 Ibid., p. 370.  
64 Ibid.
confession, and so getting back to the truth; and his entire work is "bathed in truth." His sense of truth, as well as his sense of art, held him in leash. He could write only what he felt and knew.

Hawthorne tells us that Chillingworth was a "striking evidence of man's faculty of transforming himself into a devil, if he will only, for a reasonable space of time, undertake the devil's office." At the beginning of the romance, he is only slightly deformed with the left shoulder a trifle higher than the right; but as the story progresses he becomes more misshapen and humpshouldered. The transformation of the leech's character was evidenced not only by an increasing physical deformity but also by "an eager, scorching, almost fierce, yet carefully guarded look, and by a glare of red light which was emitted, on occasions, from his eyes."

Derived from the devil and wizard of Hawthorne's early tales and from abstract ideas recorded in the notebooks, the character of Chillingworth possessed at best only a galvanic vitality. He obviously had no points of contact with real life or with Hawthorne's actual observations and experiences. The ideas for the development of the character of Chillingworth may be found in an entry in the journal in 1842. "To

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65 Munger, op. cit., p. 524.
67 Ibid.
symbolize moral or spiritual disease by disease of the body.\textsuperscript{68} The mental seeping of Chillingworth may be counted a crime. Deformity is an attribute of the villain in the Gothic romance, which Hawthorne used in one form or another in many of his own stories.\textsuperscript{69} During Chillingworth's Indian captivity he had

enlarged his medical attainments by joining in the incantations of the savage priests, who were universally acknowledged to be powerful enchanters, after performing seemingly miraculous cures by their skill in the black art.\textsuperscript{69}

In Chillingworth's interview with Hester in the prison, the man's evil nature was exhibited when he admitted a "scheme of vengeance."\textsuperscript{70} He declared that even though the guilty man wear no symbol on his clothes, "I shall read it on his heart."\textsuperscript{71} His first suspicion of Arthur Dimmesdale was revealed when the minister so staunchly defended Hester's right to keep her child. After the clergyman had made his impassioned plea, Chillingworth said, "You speak, my friend, with a strange earnestness."\textsuperscript{72} Later, when Hester begged Roger Chillingworth to undo the worst of the ill that had been done by exercising his privilege of pardoning them, he phrased the pre-Calvinistic theory in his reply.

\textsuperscript{68} The Notebooks, p. 282.
\textsuperscript{69} The Scarlet Letter, p. 181.
\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., p. 103.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., p. 107.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., p. 163.
"Peace, Hester, peace!" replied the old man with gloomy sternness. "It is not granted me to pardon. I have no such power as thou tellest me of. My old faith, long forgotten, comes back to me, and explains all that we do and all we suffer. By thy first step away thou didst plant the germ of evil; but since that moment, it has all been a dark necessity. Ye that have wronged me are not sinful, save in a kind of typical illusion; neither am I fiend-like, who have snatched a fiend's office from his hands. It is our fate. Let the black flower blossom as it may! Now go thy ways, and deal as thou wilt with yonder man."\textsuperscript{73}

In such a speech, fatalism takes on a solemn grandeur; and, in The Scarlet Letter at least, it was exemplified so susterely and with a poetic energy so unmistakable that one can scarcely lament its abstract falsity. On deeper reflection, one may come to detect the falsity, and "so blossoms the black flower of the imagination."\textsuperscript{74}

Roger Chillingworth took leave of Hester and "went stooping away along the earth."\textsuperscript{75} A deformed, stooped old man, he betook himself again to his employment of gathering herbs, his grey beard almost touching the ground as he crept forward. With fascination, Hester watched to see whether or not the grass would be blighted by his footsteps. As she watched, she wondered about the herbs he was gathering, and became convinced that whether the herbs were poisonous or wholesome, they would be converted into something malignant at his touch. This poor wronged woman declared bitterly

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{73}Ibid., p. 250.
\item \textsuperscript{74}Arvin, op. cit., p. 220.
\item \textsuperscript{75}The Scarlet Letter, p. 251.
\end{itemize}
that even if it were sinful, she hated him. She marvelled that she could ever have been wrought upon to marry him. She "deemed it her crime most to be repented of that she had ever endured, and reciprocated, the lukewarm clasp of his hand, and had suffered the smile of her lips and eyes to mingle and melt into his own." 76 She concluded that he had committed a fouler offense than any which had been done him.

After the old physician became satisfied as to Arthur Dimmesdale's guilt, it is only a short time until, while the clergyman is sleeping, Chillingworth makes a discovery.

The physician advanced directly in front of his patient, laid his hand upon his bosom, and thrust aside the vestment that, hitherto, had always covered it even from the professional eye.

Then, indeed, Mr. Dimmesdale shuddered and slightly stirred.

After a brief pause, the physician turned away. But with what a wild look of wonder, joy and horror! 77

In the very next chapter the author speaks of Chillingworth as a diabolic magician who can call up "many shapes of death, or more awful shame, all flocking around the clergyman, and pointing with their fingers at his breast." 78

As Arthur Dimmesdale turned toward the scaffold with Hester and Pearl, old Roger Chillingworth "thrust himself through the crowd, or, perhaps, so dark, disturbed, and evil

76 Ibid., p. 253. 77 Ibid., p. 197.
78 Ibid., p. 200.
was his look, he rose up out of some nether region, to snatch back his victim from what he sought to do.\textsuperscript{79} When the minister had eluded him and had been helped to the scaffold, the leech followed closely, and, looking darkly at the clergyman, said, "Hadst thou sought the whole earth over, there was no place so secret, no high nor lowly place, where thou couldst have escaped me, save on this very scaffold."\textsuperscript{80} Neither Hester nor Dimmesdale was represented as the greatest sinner in \textit{The Scarlet Letter}; consequently, their punishments were less terrible than that of the third chief personage. It was the error of Roger Chillingworth that lay at the root of the whole tragedy. In the first place, the aging man of science committed a wrong when he attempted to revitalize his own being by contact with Hester's youthful vigor. When she murmured, "I have greatly wronged thee," he did have the justice to answer, "We have wronged each other."\textsuperscript{81} Later Hester tried unsuccessfully to find it in her heart to forgive him, because she felt that he had committed a great wrong by persuading her youthful, innocent heart that she could be happy by his side.\textsuperscript{82} Not content with this wrong to Hester, Chillingworth used his intellectual powers to discover Hester's partner in guilt. In the process he changed from a man to a monster.\textsuperscript{83}

\textsuperscript{79}Ibid., p. 336. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{80}Ibid., p. 367.  
\textsuperscript{81}Ibid., p. 105.
Witchcraft cannot be overemphasized in any study of The Scarlet Letter. Glimpses of Mistress Hibbins, the witch, were seen several times throughout the romance. She was first mentioned at the beginning of the story when Hawthorne noted that the crowd was as excited as it would be if "a witch, like old Mistress Hibbins, was to die upon the gallows." 82 Next she is seen at the Governor's house when she thrust her head out of a window and invited Hester to join her in the "merry company in the forest; I well nigh promised the Black Man that comely Hester Prynne should make one." 83

During Dimmesdale's vigil on the scaffold, she again "thrust forth her head from the lattice, and looked anxiously upward." 84 When she saw the gleam of Governor Bellingham's lamp, she vanished. "Possibly she went up among the clouds." 85 Pearl met her once, and seemed quite interested in the old woman, and in the witch's reference to the clergyman. When the old hag questioned the minister's habit of holding his hand over his heart, Pearl asked eagerly, "What is it, good Mrs. Hibbins? Hast thou seen it?" 86 Dimmesdale speaks of her wrath, saying it is the only thing which is more upsetting than the violent rage of Pearl.

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82 Ibid., p. 69.  
83 Ibid., p. 166.  
84 Ibid., p. 213.  
85 Ibid.  
86 Ibid., p. 351.
While Hester and Pearl were watching the election-procession, Mistress Hibbins joined them and again invited them to come to the forest at night. She implied that Hester was already close to the heart of the Black Man. The old witch knew, or at least guessed, the truth about Hester, Pearl, and Dimmesdale. Mrs. Hibbins, sister of the governor, is wont to speak of the witches' meetings in the forest to everyone she meets. To the minister, she cackled, nodding her head-dress at him, "Well, well, we needs must talk thus in day-time. You carry it off like an old hand. But at midnight, and in the forest, we shall have other talk together."87

Mistress Hibbins was not the only one in whom witchcraft appeared but it was seen in many small ways throughout the novel. Both Dimmesdale and Chillingworth were thought to be possessed of the Black Man no less than Hester. It was Pearl, however, who was most referred to as possessing "airy" qualities. At many points, reference was made to her possible relation to the "Prince of the Air."88 Mistress Hibbins declared that he was the child's father. There were a number of allusions to the elf-like quality of Pearl, and it was frequently suggested that there was more of evil in her than of good. Hester herself was often puzzled over the

flesh-and-blood actuality of the child, and could not help questioning whether Pearl were a human child. She seemed rather "an airy sprite, which after playing its fantastic sports for a little while on the cottage floor, would flit away with a mocking smile." 89

Pearl's mother called her an "elfish child," 90 and was constrained to wonder whence she came. The child answered that she was "your little Pearl," but as she said it she "laughed and began to dance up and down with the humorous gesticulation of a little imp, whose next freak might be to fly up the chimney." 91 There followed a denial on the part of the mother and then a serious question by the child as to who she really was. Unable to answer the child because of her own doubt and sense of guilt, Hester recalled the gossip of the town people, who, unable to discover the child's paternity, "had given out that poor little Pearl was a demon offspring." 92 Pearl was not the only child among the New England Puritans who was declared to be of such origin.

Old Mr. Wilson, seeing her at the Governor's house, wondered whether she was "one of those naughty elfs or fairies, whom we thought to have left behind us in New

89 Ibid., p. 130. 90 Ibid., p. 139. 91 Ibid., p. 138. 92 Ibid., p. 140.
England."\(^93\) After questioning her on the catechism, the old man of God said, "The little baggage hath witchcraft in her, I profess. . . . She needs no old woman's broomstick to fly withal."\(^94\) Chillingworth even took note of the child's unusual qualities and commented on them. "What, in Heaven's name, is she? Is the imp altogether evil?"\(^95\) Hawthorne himself mentioned the child's eerie nature: "There was witchcraft in little Pearl's eyes, and her face . . . wore that naughty smile which made its expression frequently so elfish."\(^96\)

Hawthorne's characters, while not exactly vague, exist only in so far as their place in the story calls for their existence. They are not made of flesh and blood so much as they are made of moonlight and abstract qualities. Little Pearl, that elfin figure, that "fantastical dancing, cryptically-speaking child belonging to Hester and Dimmesdale, is no more than an animated symbol crested to emphasize certain important moments in the intense and limited action of the book."\(^97\)

Always when Pearl would rush away from Hester, the mother felt a compelling urge to pursue the child and snatch her to her bosom to assure herself that Pearl was really

\(^{93}\)Ibid., p. 155.  \(^{94}\)Ibid., p. 165.

\(^{95}\)Ibid., p. 191.  \(^{96}\)Ibid., p. 221.

\(^{97}\)Gorman, op. cit., p. 88.
flesh and blood, and not utterly delusive. She was made more doubtful than before by Pearl's laugh when she was caught. Little Pearl often watched the other children playing in such grim fashion as the Puritan nature would permit, but she never sought to make acquaintance.

If the children gathered about her, as they sometimes did, Pearl would grow positively terrible in her puny wrath, snatching up stones to fling at them, with shrill, incoherent exclamations, that made her mother tremble because they had so much the sound of a witch's anathemas in some unknown tongue.98

On one occasion, already mentioned, when Hester, as mothers are wont to do, was gazing into her child's eyes seeking to find her own image, she fancied she saw another face, fiend-like and full of malice. "It was as if an evil spirit possessed the child."99 Hester was often tortured afterward by the same illusion.

Two phases of the letter A may be observed in the novel. One, of course, had to do with the letter itself as it appears on Hester's breast. Another phase was embodied in Pearl. This was the "least convincing form that the phantasm, to style it so, takes."100 In spite of the author's skill, Pearl is not quite subdued to his magic. She seems to be in a scene for a purpose. In a sense it may be said that Pearl is used to torture her mother with "refinements

100 Woodberry, op. cit., p. 147.
of pain ingeniously thought out and contrived by the author. "101 Nowhere else does Hawthorne give so clearly the impression, which he frequently gives, of "managing" his characters, as in depicting little Pearl.  

Pearl's connection with the theme is easily made through her mother's skill in needlework. Her peculiar kind of beauty seems to call for the decorative "touch which makes her like an exotic flower in the grey Puritan town." 102 No less than her mother, this elf-like child of brilliant color, seemed alien to the life in the midst of which she lived.  

Pearl was present at the meeting of her mother and the minister in the forest. Representing the "spirit of truthfulness, she was seized with an aversion to her father and refused to join their company, an unfavorable omen and dark presage of the minister's doom." 103 Pearl's behavior on this occasion, may be supposed to represent the author's own judgment, but he certainly "proves himself a good Puritan"104 when he says, "and be the stern and sad truth spoken that the breach which guilt has once made into the human soul, is never in this mortal state repaired." 105 Hester spoke of Pearl to Arthur Dimmesdale as "a fitful and fantastic  

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101 Ibid., p. 148.  
102 Ibid.  
104 Ibid., p. 226.  
105 The Scarlet Letter, p. 290.
little elf, sometimes." Finally in the "Conclusion," Hawthorne called her "the elf-child, the demon offspring, as some people up to that epoch, persisted in considering her." These are but a few of the many references in the romance to Pearl's nature and her possible connection with witchcraft, but they are sufficient to show the emphasis upon witchcraft in The Scarlet Letter.

Pearl was like a pure spirit in The Scarlet Letter "reconciling us to the gloomy scenes." She was like the sunshine in the forest. In fact, Hawthorne represented her in the forest as being so happy and carefree that she was able to catch the sunshine. "Pearl set forth, at a great pace, and, as Hester smiled to perceive, did actually catch the sunshine, and stood laughing in the midst of it." Pearl is the one consummate flower of Hawthorne's genius -- unsurpassed by himself and absolutely original. As Chillingworth was the malignant conscience that destroyed Dimmesdale, Pearl was the natural conscience that wholesomey chastened her mother. As Hester and Dimmesdale met upon the scaffold, Pearl, that ethereal being who had flitted her way through the romance, more elf than human, proved that she had a human heart by breaking it. This scene at the

106 Ibid., p. 299.  
107 Ibid., p. 377.  
death of her father, who just acknowledged her, has a sobering and humanizing effect upon the child.

To Hawthorne, crime, regardless of how monstrous it might be, was not so hideous as concealment. That idea was clearly emphasized in The Scarlet Letter. Hester grew in character through her open suffering. On the other hand, Arthur Dimmesdale deteriorated by concealing his part in the same crime. The secrecy surrounding the subtle crime of Roger Chillingworth brought about the complete disintegration of the man. Hawthorne handled these three people with a sureness that is characteristic of his art, and they move "through the cold moonlight of his imagination as abstractions germinated in a chilled semblance of flesh."110 Hawthorne's characters moved like spirits in a world unreal except as their truth made it real. They strayed but a moment and then sank back into the mystery from which they emerged. They stood for no person, but only for some law, kept or broken, which they symbolized. There was no Dimmesdale, no Hester, no Pearl, no Chillingworth, except as shadows of broken law working out its consequences in ways of penalty worked into the eternal order.

110Gorman, op. cit., p. 87.
CHAPTER III

THE HOUSE OF THE SEVEN GABLES

The publication of The Scarlet Letter had much to do with the liberation of Hawthorne, the recluse. He was freed from the influence of his strange mother and felt as if he were cast forth by his native town. The sale of the novel also brought grateful financial relief, and the family was enabled to enjoy a period of calm. As a result of the storms he had weathered, his health was not so good as it had been, and he had but fourteen years of life ahead of him. Probably one of the greatest and most beneficial results of the success of The Scarlet Letter was the drawing of Hawthorne out of his reserve. Friends surrounded him at Lenox, whither he had gone on leaving Salem. He now had a name and standing, and he even managed to achieve a sort of social esse. A curious sort of friendship grew up between Hawthorne and Herman Melville. There were long conversations between the two men over a multitude of things, including the existence of God. Other friends, including Fanny Kemble, Oliver W. Holmes, J. R. Lowell, James T. Fields, and John O'Sullivan, called at his home. The neighbors were kind and attentive and Hawthorne found himself a literary figure.
The warmth of friendship, the freedom from poverty, and the breaking clear of the habit of producing shorter sketches, coupled with the success of his first long literary production, all acted as an incentive to further endeavor. With such pleasant surroundings and a new field opened to him, Hawthorne began search for a new theme, and in September, 1850, he began work on *The House of the Seven Gables*, which he finished the following January. This new novel was a decided change from the dark symbolism of *The Scarlet Letter*. In this new book was to be found a recognizable New England. Even though Hawthorne strove to be as rational and stay as close to the earth as possible, that gleam of the unearthly that was present in all his work was also perceptible here. Hawthorne spoke of letting a little more sunshine into *The House of the Seven Gables* than into *The Scarlet Letter*, but "The materials here are only less somber than the materials of *The Scarlet Letter*."\(^1\) The evil actions of the drama are initiated by the pride and greed and heartlessness of the first Pyncheon, Old Colonel Pyncheon. On the very threshold of achieving the greatness for which he committed crime, he was struck down as a result of a curse muttered by the man he had defrauded.

Hawthorne was aware of the kinship that existed between himself and the old Salem house. This tale was not so

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\(^1\)Arvin, *op. cit.*, p. 192.
high-strung in imagination and moral feeling as his other works, and was more on the level of his familiar days. The less severe parts were hardly more than journalizing. In the story the things of the eye or the memory, such as the look of the streets and the gardens and their customary incidents, came easily, and almost without notice; situation and dialogue, on the contrary, are more self-conscious, and the legend of Alice shows imaginative tension. (The reader feels that some scenes are set, and the death of the judge, wearisome and forced in style, is positively "staged.") Hawthorne's heredity concentrated his interest on the moral world; and he naturally found his deeper mental life a meditation on sin, especially on the way that evil affects man. (In The House of the Seven Gables, the evil was in the form of an inherited curse rather than in the individual.) The theme was one of retribution, penalty, the inexorable debt that must be paid in time, a story of the Puritan sense of morals -- especially in the element of the inheritance involved -- and thus, was native to Hawthorne. At the end, indeed, the inherited curse of the house was the most unsubstantial part of the tale, while the entirely human character of Hepzibah stands clear in the foreground.

In The House of the Seven Gables, which is no more than a series of tales relating to one family and tied together by the common heritage of a curse, the supernatural was used
in the development of the plot. Very probably Hawthorne had in mind the legendary curse uttered against his own family by the condemned witch of long ago, when he selected the theme. While *The Scarlet Letter* is quite coherent, the later book falls to pieces as a novel. It is the narrative of scowling old Hepzibah Pyncheon's feeble and ineffectual efforts to preserve life in the crumbling old mansion and to be on hand to welcome back her brother Clifford after his long years of imprisonment. At times, however, one loses sight of the theme in the presence of the idea of the curse and its consequent picture of Puritan life.

In Hawthorne's second story he relates also the tale of old Colonel Pyncheon and his usurpation of land rightfully belonging to Maule and the consequent curse uttered against the family by old Matthew Maule, who was convicted of being in league with the devil. Interwoven into the two stories is that tale of Alice Pyncheon and the hypnotic influence exerted over her by a descendant of the old wizard. (Throughout the whole of the romance the schemes of Judge Pyncheon affect the various characters and incidents until his own evil plans are responsible for his downfall.)

Although the chain of events is loosely held together, Hawthorne did open a door to the succeeding generations of novelists by giving to his stories what Henry James would call "the sense of the past." So identified was he with the
past in New England that he might be expected to do just the thing he did do in The House of the Seven Gables. "The past, that curious groping chimera, invisible to the eye but felt as a stark presence, prowls through the ancient seven-gabled house and makes the dwelling its own... subdues the atmosphere to its peculiar emanations." There was something unearthly about the old house, as it fastened itself upon the intelligence and subconscious gestures of the beings who inhabited it; and the personages became sensibilities trembling on the verge of an unseen world. The all-consuming sense of sin dominated The Scarlet Letter; the shadowy sense of the past invaded and permeated The House of the Seven Gables. (A mysterious crime appears in a very central position in this romance. It is represented by the repeated and unexplained deaths in the Pyncheon family, which for a long time "remain unsolved riddles engendering evil deeds like Matthew Maule's hanging or Clifford's imprisonment." Colonel Pyncheon's acquisition of poor Maule's soil and the "selfish and ruthless, not to say criminal, way in which the Judge takes possession of his uncle's papers and fortune are also actions fraught with disastrous consequences which may be included in this category of sin.

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2Ibid., p. 97.  
3Landblad, op. cit., p. 65.  
4Ibid.
The frequent references to the blood which God gave the members of the Pyncheon family to drink in retribution for their sins is "of a decidedly Gothic brand." The sequence of the awful horror of the Maule's blood motif was, in one sense, the substance of the novel because upon Maule's curse hung the entire story. Hawthorne kept this motif in the foreground with all its gory ugliness. Within the first half-dozen pages the curse was planted. The dying man, pointing his finger with a ghostly look at the undismayed countenance of his enemy, said, "God will give him blood to drink!" The motif was repeated later when the Colonel's body was discovered. A mysterious voice spoke out loudly in tones which were like those of old Matthew Maule, the executed wizard, "God hath given him blood to drink." Even before this voice spoke out, Hawthorne noted that the friends who discovered the body of the Colonel saw that "there was blood on his ruff." Once again, still in the first chapter, Hawthorne remarked that whenever a Pyncheon "did but gurgle in his throat, a bystander would be likely to whisper, between jest and earnest [that] he had Maule's blood to drink." At the beginning of the second part of the story, there was another reference to the curse. Phoebe

5Ibid., p. 69.
6The House of the Seven Gables, p. 6.
7Ibid., p. 17.  
8Ibid.  
9Ibid., p. 25.
saw the Judge for the first time when he came into Hepzibah's little shop. She recalled an instance in the little-known history of her father's family.

She had heard of the anathema flung by Maule, the executed wizard, against Colonel Pyncheon and his posterity, -- that God would give them blood to drink, and likewise the popular notion, that this miraculous blood might now and then be heard gurgling in their throats.10

As she talked with the Judge, Phoebe thought she could hear this very gurgle in Jaffry's throat. Again in Chapter Thirteen, in Holgrave's story of Alice Pyncheon, the carpenter Maule was talking to Alice's father. When the old man became so angry that he could not talk, he "could only make a gurgling murmur in his throat,"11 whereupon the carpenter pointed out jeeringly, "So you have old Maule's blood to drink!"12

In Chapter One the author linked the Colonel's blood-stained ruff with the curse. In Chapter Seven he emphasized the association when Clifford spoke of an elderly man "sitting in an oaken elbow-chair, dead, stone-dead, with an ugly flow of blood upon his shirt bosom!"13 Hawthorne reminded the reader indirectly of the curse, when he placed Jaffrey in the elbow-chair in which Colonel Pyncheon died, the chair in which Jaffrey, too, was to die. The author referred again to the fatal curse of blood when he spoke of Judge

10Ibid., p. 178.  
11Ibid., p. 302.  
12Ibid.  
13Ibid., p. 381.
Pyncheon, who might have "to show himself at a dinner table with that crimson stain upon his shirt-bosom."\(^{14}\) Then in the summary of the last chapter, Hawthorne talked about the murder of Judge Pyncheon's uncle and a bloody handprint on the old man's linen.\(^{15}\) Holgrave gave his explanation of the prophecy or curse:

This mode of death has been an idiosyncrasy with his family for generations past; not often occurring, indeed, but when it does occur, usually striking individuals about the Judge's time of life, and generally in the tension of some mental crisis, or, perhaps in an excess of wrath. Old Maule's prophecy was probably founded on a knowledge of this physical predisposition in the Pyncheon race.\(^{16}\)

In sharp contrast to the awful horror of the motif of blood was the tragic sweetness of the story of Alice Pyncheon. In Chapter One "Alice's Posies" were described; the flowers appeared again in Chapter Five, and it was there that first reference to Alice's harpsichord was made. Hepzibah told Phoebe about it when she was showing the girl the old house.

This lovely Alice had met with some great and mysterious calamity . . . and had gradually faded out of the world. But, even now, she was supposed to haunt the House of the Seven Gables, and, a great many times, especially when one of the Pyncheons was to die, she had been heard playing sadly and beautifully upon the harpsichord. One of these tunes . . . had been written down . . . It was so exquisitely mournful that nobody . . . could bear to hear it played, unless when a great sorrow had made them know the still profounder sweetness of it.\(^{17}\)

\(^{14}\)Ibid., p. 401. 
\(^{15}\)Ibid., p. 454. 
\(^{16}\)Ibid., p. 444. 
\(^{17}\)Ibid., p. 119.
In a later and complete chapter Hawthorne gave in the words of Holgrave the complete history of Alice Pyncheon's "mysterious calamity," as it befell her at the hands of Maule, the carpenter. This grandson of the old wizard and bearer of his grandfather's name was endowed with mesmeric powers, which he exercised over this daughter of a Pyncheon. Instead of being supernatural, his power was more that of sorcery. The author perhaps emphasized this quality in order to carry out the idea of supernaturalism. It was not until Chapter Fifteen that the harpsichord is actually heard. Clifford was playing it, and Hepzibah, involuntarily, thought of the ghostly harmonies, prelude of death in the family, which were attributed to the legendary Alice. The figure of Alice was among the ghosts who examined the Colonel's portrait after Jeffrey's death, in Chapter Eighteen.

Maule's well made its first appearance in the plot on the eighth page of the novel and its final appearance on the last page. All in all there were a dozen references to the well -- to remind one of the general stagnation of the house in Pyncheon Street and its occupants. The first mention of the evil nature of the well was in connection with the digging of the cellar for Colonel Pyncheon's mansion.

It was a curious, and, as some people thought, an ominous fact, that, very soon after the workmen begun their operation, the spring of water ... lost its pristine quality ... whatever subtler
cause might lurk at the bottom, it is certain the water of Maule's well . . . grew hard and brackish. \textsuperscript{18} Hawthorne considered the influence of the well on the plot to be sufficient to warrant a complete chapter. In this chapter he had Holgrave to admonish Phoebe, half jestingly, half earnestly, to be "careful not to drink at Maule's well!"\textsuperscript{19} Upon being asked for his reason, the daguerreotypist replied, ". . . because . . . it is bewitched."\textsuperscript{20}

The extremely peculiar chickens, the breed of which "was an heirloom in the Pyncheon family,"\textsuperscript{21} had been set at liberty at Clifford's suggestion. They roamed at will about the garden, and spent much of their time at the margin of Maule's well. The brackish water, "however nauseous to the rest of the world, was greatly esteemed by these fowls,"\textsuperscript{22} Clifford referred to the well by saying, "I am as transparent as the water of Maule's well."\textsuperscript{23} A little further on Uncle Venner suggested that Holgrave get one of Alice's posies and keep it in water from Maule's well until Phoebe's return. As the daguerreotypist turned away from the old man the old fellow remarked, "I have heard that the water of Maule's well suits those flowers best."\textsuperscript{24} Finally in the closing paragraph of the story, Hawthorne spoke of the well.

\textsuperscript{18}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 8. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{19}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 135. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{20}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 136.
\textsuperscript{21}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 217. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{22}\textit{Ibid.} \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{23}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 387.
\textsuperscript{24}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 420.
Maule's well, all this time, though left in solitude, was throwing up a succession of kaleidoscopic pictures, in which a gifted eye might have seen fore-shadowed the coming fortunes of Hepzibah and Clifford, and the descendant of the legendary wizard, and the village maiden over whom he had thrown Love's web of sorcery.25

Hawthorne's profounder moral work is to be found elsewhere. In The House of the Seven Gables, he was distracted from the main theme of sin, by the half-romantic attraction of the curse, clinging to generation after generation until it is finally solved in new lives. He was also diverted from a too-serious view by the fascination of the environment and atmosphere of old Salem, as it was known to his sympathies. The curse, after all, had come to be "an old wives' tale," even in the home of the witches. The life which the author presented in the romance was a faded one, disclosed in the old shut-up house. Everything had left it except the love of an old sister for her unfortunate brother. Here, in her late years, the broken favorite brother, released from his unjust imprisonment, came back to her. These two were victims of life. The curse was but a story in their dimmed memories; but, for all that, their lives were ruined.

The old curse was wearing itself out, and the young, new life, as represented by Phoebe, Holgrave, and little Ned Higgins, will never carry on the tale of the old house.

25 Ibid., p. 467.
At the end of the story, the old house will be dead, with the feeble spark of life it contained moved to another setting, and thus every step of the plot was toward a catastrophe. It was as if one were witnessing an execution. It was this atmosphere, this irremediable misery that imbued it with its somberness. It is only in this impression that the fatal element of the curse is truly felt. Though one, naturally, disbelieves in the reality of the curse, he cannot altogether escape from it in the imagination. There were ghosts in the old house, regardless of what one believes. Not even the voices of the lovers, nor Uncle Venner's fish-bowl, nor the clanger of the shop-bell drove them away. Meanwhile, in their presence, the life of the house, such as it was, went on. Hepsibah prepared the mackerel for breakfast, and Clifford, the guest, descended the stairs to his first meal in the old house, as if there were no ghosts there, "hearkening in the corners and peering from the old Colonel's portrait." Feeble as the life was in the old house, whatever came near it and most pertained to it lived most. The subordinate interests were less vital. The idyl of Phoebe and Holgrave faded away with their talk of the new age. The heavy tragedy of the villain's taking off by apoplexy, though it was the climax of the plot, remained only an episode. The house-interior and the wandering

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26 Ibid., p. 120.
figures flitting there held the center of the stage. The dullness of the lives of Hepzibah and Clifford reached its climax, when their courage failed them in the attempt to go to church.

What does it matter that it all ended, at last, happily? Stories will end so, but the real story, the genealogical story, the story of the curse -- did Hawthorne believe it at all? Did he believe in some inescapable moral inheritance, a mystery of fate, or did he merely "embroider on the groundwork of his old fancies, the village and landscape scenes of his youth?"27

Not only may one find the supernatural in following the curse throughout the romance in the development of the plot, but he may also detect evidences of the unreal in the descriptions of the setting. Hawthorne's supreme gift was the weird. He never wrote novels, but always romances, and the reader's mind must assist the writer. In The House of the Seven Gables the reader was introduced to a setting in a commonplace village, bleak and bare, with ordinary houses and everyday people; yet as he read further, he became aware that a strange thing had happened, and that the familiar streets and houses had suddenly grown strange and alien. The ability of the author to use the weird was demonstrated with the most delicate and perfect art in his story of the

27 Annie R. Marble, "Gloom and Cheer in Hawthorne," Critic, XLV (July, 1904), 32.
decaying old mansion and the events taking place within its eerie precincts.

The house with the seven gables and the happenings within its walls naturally create a lot of rumors, and even if Hawthorne declared that he was speaking of local sayings, he delighted in describing the ghostly happenings that are said to occur in the old building. An eighteenth-century member of the family, who was the first to open the little shop in the house, is, according to tradition, still visible there.

It used to be affirmed that the dead shop-keeper in a white wig, a faded velvet coat, an apron at his waist, and his ruffles carefully turned back from his wrists, might be seen through the chinks of the shutters. . . . From the look of unutterable woe upon his face, it appeared to be his doom to spend eternity in a vain effort to make his accounts balance.28

It is also averred that the whole company of deceased members of the house sometimes honor the house by visiting it.

First comes the ancestor himself, in his black coat, steeple hat, and trunk-breeches, girt about his waist with a leathern belt, in which hangs his steel-hilted sword. . . . So decided is his look of discontent as to impart additional distinctness to his features, through which, nevertheless, the moonlight passes, and flickers on the wall beyond. . . . Here come other Pyncheons, the whole tribe in their half a dozen generations.29

(Jeffrey Pyncheon saw this ghostly procession as he sat in

28 The House of the Seven Gables, p. 37.
29 Ibid., p. 407.)
the old parlor under the Colonel's portrait. As each person appeared, and pointed to the picture, the reader was reminded of the passing of that line of apparitions which Macbeth, the murderous king, witnessed. In this manner Hawthorne used the device of pictures in the setting.

In the preface to *The House of the Seven Gables* the author stated that the writer could, if he saw fit, "so manage his atmospheric medium as to bring out or mellow the lights and deepen and enrich the shadows of the picture." Reminiscences from his native town and old stories from the chronicles of the Hawthorne family provide a great deal of the material for *The House of the Seven Gables*. The old house where the story is enacted and which has given the book its title is a dark and gloomy structure. Although more than one house in Salem could lay claim to being the particular house the author had in mind, he declared in his introduction, that the mansion is an edifice "of materials long in use for constructing castles in the air."

According to the description in the opening chapter, the old house rises

in pride, but not modesty, and its whole visible exterior is ornamented with quaint figures, conceived in the grotesqueness of a Gothic fancy, and drawn or stamped in the glittering plaster, composed of

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30 Preface to *The House of the Seven Gables*, p. xxi.

31 Ibid., p. xxiv.
lime, pebbles and bits of glass, with which the woodwork of the walls is overspread. 32

The medieval effect is heightened by the seven pointed gables which present "the aspect of whole sisterhood of edifices." 33 The psychic atmosphere of the house is perhaps best described by citing Clifford's assertion that

the greatest possible stumbling block in the path of human happiness and improvement are those heaps of bricks and stones, consolidated with mortar, or hewn timber, fastened together with spikes and nails, which men painfully contrive for their own torment, and call them house and home... Morbid influences, in a thousand-fold variety, gather about hearths and pollute the life of households. There is no such wholesome atmosphere as that of an old home, rendered poisonous by one's defunct forefathers and relatives... A rusty, crazy, creaky, dry-rotted, damp-rotted, dingy, dark and miserable old dungeon. 34

Like so many old houses, especially those in literature, the old house had many queer sounds. All of these sounds were gathered together and amplified on the stormy night when the dead Judge sits alone in the house, and add a weirdness to the setting.

But, listen! That puff of the breeze was louder; it had a tone unlike the dreary and sullen one which has bemoaned itself, and afflicted all mankind with miserable sympathy... The old house creaks again, and makes a vociferous but somewhat unintelligible bellowing in its scatty throat... partly in complaint at the rude wind, but rather, as befits their century and a half of hostile intimacy, in tough defiance... It is not to be conceived beforehand, what wonderful wind instruments are these old

32 The House of the Seven Gables, p. 11.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid., p. 380.
timber mansions, and how haunted with the strangest noises, which immediately begin to sing, and sigh, and sob, and shriek, -- and to smite with sledge-hammers, airy but ponderous, in some distant chamber, -- and to tread along the entries as with stately footsteps, and rustle up and down the staircase. . . . It is too awful! This clemor of the wind through the lonely house; the judge's quietude, as he sits invisible; and that pertinacious ticking of his watch!  

This paragraph convinces one that there are ghosts in the old house and that they are restless wandering through it, making unearthly sounds all the while. There are several other good bits of sound-imagery which contribute to the supernatural setting. In Chapter Six, Phoebe heard "the murmur of an unknown voice" three times on the night before Clifford was first introduced to the reader. The first time it was "strangely indistinct and less like articulate words than an unshaped sound." The second time it was "an irregular respiration in some obscure corner of the room." And the third time, while Phoebe was in bed, it was a "strange vague murmur, which might be likened to an indistinct shadow of human utterance." To Phoebe, in a strange house, the sounds were, doubtless, very ghost-like and frightening. It was not alone by such descriptions that Hawthorne set the stage for the effect he wished to produce. He relied on other effects and personal reactions.

36Ibid., p. 137.  
37Ibid.  
38Ibid., p. 138.  
39Ibid., p. 139.
Pheobe, on hearing the sound for the second time, sat very still for a moment; and she was able to locate the sound more accurately. The fact that because of her weak eyes, Hepsibeh bade the girl not to bring the light into her presence heightened the effect of weirdness of the room enveloped in darkness. The pause made the reader feel something of Pheobe's reaction when he read that the sound was so vague that "its impression or echo in Pheobe's mind was that of unreality." 40

Hawthorne's predilection for mirrors in his settings, discussed in connection with The Scarlet Letter, is also noticeable in The House of the Seven Gables. The saying that in one room of the old house there hung "a large, dim-looking glass . . . which was fabled to contain within its depths all the shapes that had ever been reflected there -- the old Colonel himself and his many descendants." 41 Hawthorne conceived of a looking-glass as a means of passage into an unreal existence, as shown in the following statement:

The fantastic scene just hinted at must by no means be considered as forming an actual portion of our story. We were betrayed into this brief extravagance by the quiver of the moonbeams; they dance hand-in-hand with shadows, and are reflected in the looking-glass, which you are aware, is always a kind of window or doorway into the spiritual world. 42

40Ibid., p. 137.  
41Ibid., p. 24.  
42Ibid., p. 409.
In another place, Hawthorne states that "the posterity of Matthew Maule had some connection with the mystery of the looking glass, and that, by what appears to have been a sort of mesmeric process, they could make its inner region all alive with the departed Pyncheons."\(^{43}\)

Closely associated with mirrors in the author's mind were pictures. He said in his notebooks that "pictorial art is capable of something more like magic ... than poetry, or any other mode of developing the beautiful."\(^{44}\) In *The House of the Seven Gables*, the Colonel's portrait, mentioned on twenty different pages, dominated the room in which it was hung, just as the spirit of the Colonel dominated the strange house which he built. The map, which was so closely linked with the portrait, can hardly be mentioned aside from it. The hidden treasure, the deed, was also interwoven with the picture and the map. These three tokens of the family's decline became so closely intermingled that the hope which they offered collapsed with the falling of the picture, when Holgrave found the secret spring. Thus was finally brought forth the document of the Indian sagamores, by which the Colonel had become entitled to such wide domains, now irrecoverably lost to his descendants. The portrait in *The House of the Seven Gables*, with its hidden deed, was an embodiment of the old ancestral curse of the

\(^{43}\)Ibid., p. 25.  
\(^{44}\)The Notebooks, p. 77.
Pyncheon house. However, in the hands of Hawthorne, the portrait became more than a common romantic property. It indicated, by his repeated use of it in connection with other like matters, an underlying artistic impulse and inclination to the beautiful in its pure forms that was fundamental in his genius. Hideous as it was, it was compulsory that the inmates of the house suffer its presence and its watchfulness over all their doings.

(An important part was played by the ancestral chair of the Pyncheons, of which it was said that "it really seems to be enchanted like the one in Comus." Sitting in that same chair, the Colonel, the unmarried uncle of Clifford, and Judge Pyncheon, all got their mysterious attacks, or, as expressed in the language of the superstition, "got blood to drink." Above this chair hung the picture of Colonel Pyncheon, "the stern unmitigable features of which seemed to symbolize an evil influence, and so darkly to mingle the shadow of their presence with the sunshine of the passing hour, that no good thought or purpose could ever spring up and blossom there."

In telling the legend of Alice Pyncheon, Holgrave also recounted what was rumored of the old portrait.

This picture, it must be understood, was supposed to be so intimately connected with the fate of the house, and so magically built into its walls, that,

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45 The House of the Seven Gables, p. 399.
46 Ibid., p. 25.
if once it would be removed, that very instant the whole edifice would come thundering down in a heap of dusty ruin. All through the foregoing conversation between Mr. Pyncheon and the carpenter [Meule], the portrait had been frowning, clenching its fist, and giving many such proofs of excessive discomposure. . . . And finally . . . the ghostly portrait is averred to have lost all patience, and to have shown itself on the point of descending from its frame.⁴⁷

Hawthorne certainly has given a free rein to his imagination, but it must be remarked that it was not done in his own story, but in the old legend, which he made Holgrave read aloud to Phoebe.

*The House of the Seven Gables* had more of a ghostly atmosphere in general than any other of the full-length stories that Hawthorne published during his lifetime. The musty, dank, morbid and melancholy air throughout the book is "temporarily blown away only by Phoebe's gay and girlish figure."⁴⁸ The hatred of family oppression which pervaded the whole work probably was reminiscent of Hawthorne's own seclusion in his maternal home. Clifford's anathema over the family mansion "may court comparisons with passages from Ibsen's *Ghosts* or Samuel Butler's *The Way of All Flesh* of many decades later."⁴⁹ Realism had not yet come into its own, and Hawthorne used the materials at his command. The effects that he achieved from use of parables and hints

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⁴⁷Ibid., p. 287. ⁴⁸Landblad, op. cit., p. 69.

⁴⁹Ibid.
drawn from his early reading of blood-curdling ghost stories, are still impressive. Although *The House of the Seven Gables* was not Hawthorne's greatest work, he enjoyed writing it more than any other. He told his sister Elizabeth that it had more merit than *The Scarlet Letter*. He remarked to his friend, Bridge, that it was more characteristic of his mind and "more proper and natural for him to write."^50^ Sophia Hawthorne recorded her opinion of *The House of the Seven Gables*: "There is unspeakable grace and beauty in the conclusion, throwing back upon the sterner tragedy of the commence ment an ethereal light, and a dear home-loveli ness and satisfaction."^51^ In spite of the fact that the entire atmosphere of the romance is ghostly, the characters in *The House of the Seven Gables* were perhaps nearer to the realities of living people than the ghost-like characters in *The Scarlet Letter*. They certainly were colored by the supernatural element. Impractical about the matters of housekeeping and finances, the blinking, scowling Hepzibah Pyncheon was a true portrait of the times she represented. Her ghost-like qualities, if she may be said to have them, attach themselves to her merely by association with the old house and its history. Hawthorne's own life of solitude gave him a real conception

^49^Ibid.  
^50^Stewart, *op. cit.*., p. 112.  
^51^Ibid., p. 113.
of the fright and bewilderment attendant upon a person's being thrust suddenly and unceremoniously into the swirl of everyday life. Added to his personal separation from the life about him was the consciousness of the complete abnegation of the world on the part of the three women of his household. While it would be an exaggeration to draw a likeness between Hepzibah and Hawthorne's mother, it is a possibility that the author's knowledge of his mother helped materially in his perception of the depth of Hepzibah's feelings.

Stearns says that the characters of The House of the Seven Gables might be symbolized by two paintings, in the first of which Hepzibah Pyncheon stands as the central figure, her face turned upward in a silent prayer for justice; her brother Clifford, with his head bowed helplessly, at one side; and the Judge, with his chronic smile of satisfaction, behind Clifford; on the other side the keen-eyed Holgrave would appear, sympathetically watching the progress of events, with Phoebe at his left hand. Old Uncle Venner and little Ned Higgins might fill in the background. In the second picture the stricken Judge would be found in a large old-fashioned arm-chair, with Clifford and Hepzibah fleeing through a doorway to the right, while Phoebe and Holgrave, the one happy, the other startled, enter the left. With this composite picture in mind, one may pass on to a
consideration of the various characters individually, or at least those who are of most interest to the present discussion.

Hepzibah Pyncheon, with her near-sighted scowl, is a masterly picture, "a charming piece of descriptive writing." It was she, not Phoebe, who was the true heroine of the romance, or at least its central figure. Nowhere may one look more deeply into Hawthorne's nature than through this sympathetic portrait of the cross-looking old maid whose scowl was such that the custom of the shop fell off because of it. "A story got abroad that she soured her small beer and other damagable commodities by scowling upon them." Her only inheritance was the House of the Seven Gables, in which she had lived many years, poor, solitary, friendless, with a disgrace upon her family, sustained only by the hope that she might yet be a help and comfort to her unfortunate brother. She lived for him and suffered with him. Hawthorne did not mitigate the unpleasantness of her appearance, but he did show that there was a divine spark glowing within.

According to his son, Julian, Hawthorne had very little appreciation for music. Yet this writer of romance

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52 Henry James, Jr., Hawthorne, p. 123.
53 The House of the Seven Gables, p. 325.
54 Julian Hawthorne speaks, in Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Wife, of his father's insensibility to music, declaring that the author could never distinguish between "Yankee Doodle" and "Neil Columb."
exclaimed, "What an instrument is the human voice!"55 In this connection, he characterized Hepzibah's voice as having been "dyed black" or as being "like a black silken thread, on which the crystal beads of speech are strung, and whence they take their hue."56 The somberness associated with the supernatural end of which it is a part, was certainly present in those allusions to Hepzibah. Pitiful was her attempt to support the enfeebled brother, but noble and heroic was her resistance to the designs of the tyrannical cousin. It was her intrepidity that determined the crisis of the drama. Closely associated with this figure was that of the half-crazed brother.

There is no principal character in the proper sense of the word, if Clifford, the sensitive, unjustly accused victim, who late in life recovered his liberty, but must be considered a broken man, is not to be viewed as such. Because he was an idealist, Clifford's nature was guided by love and necessity for the beautiful. He was another example of Hawthorne's theme of isolation, of the alienation of the character from ordinary life. Clifford said to Hepzibah after they had decided to go to church and were already out on the street:

It cannot be, Hepzibah! It is too late! We are ghosts! We have no right among human beings, no right anywhere but in this old house, which . . .

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55The House of the Seven Gables, p. 136. 56Ibid., p. 194.
we are doomed to haunt! It is an ugly thought that I should be frightful to my fellow beings, and that children would cling to their mothers' gowns at sight of me.57

On a previous occasion, the author has referred to Clifford as a ghost. The first morning he was at home, he sat at breakfast, and looked about him, evidently trying to recognize the room and its contents. The effort, however, met with but little success, because it was too great to be sustained.

Continually, as we may express it, he faded out of his place; or, in other words, his mind and consciousness took their departure, leaving his wasted, grey, and melancholy figure -- a substantial emptiness, a material ghost -- to occupy his seat at the table.58

On the wild train trip which Hepzibah and Clifford took, he fell into conversation with a fellow passenger. Clifford presented such an enigma that the old gentlemen declared that he couldn't see through the poor demented fellow. Clifford's answer to this remark showed his idea of his own transparency, giving it a ghostly quality by connecting it with Maule's well. "I am as transparent as the water of Maule's well."59

( The character of Judge Pyncheon is composed of elements derived from various sources. Some of his traits

57 Ibid., p. 244.  
58 Ibid., pp. 150-151.  
59 Ibid., p. 387.  

were undoubtedly suggested by the Reverend Mr. Upham. One small detail of description is borrowed from The Scarlet Letter. "A red fire" in his eyes recalls the "glare of red light" in the eye of Chillingworth. In The House of the Seven Gables, the moonbeams, rather than the sunlight, reveal the dead body of Judge Pyncheon, a device used, perhaps, in order to introduce the ghosts of Judge Pyncheon's ancestors at midnight. What small amount of the supernatural which the Judge may have possessed was derived from his occupancy of the ancestral arm-chair, mentioned elsewhere. He did have that affliction, characteristic of the men of his line, which caused a peculiar gurgling sound in his throat at times. He gave fright to Phoebe on the occasion of their first meeting, because of this habit. Familiar with the history of the family and struck by the resemblance between the man standing before her and the likeness of the old Colonel, the girl became frightened "when she heard a certain noise in Judge Pyncheon's throat, . . . she very foolishly started and

60Upham was a leader in the movement in 1840 to expel Hawthorne from his office as surveyor in the Salem Custom House. Henry James emphatically states (Hawthorne, p. 194) that Judge Pyncheon is purely fanciful, that he is unlike Mr. Upham in every respect and unlike any one else of Hawthorne's acquaintance.

61The House of the Seven Gables, p. 186.


63The House of the Seven Gables, p. 407.
clasped her hands. . . The incident chimed in so oddly with her previous fancies about the Colonel and the Judge, that, for a moment, it seemed quite to mingle their identity.\(^{64}\)

Later, Hawthorne, in referring to the Judge and his own good opinion of himself, which coincided with that of the world, suggested that hidden from mankind, "there may have lurked some evil and unsightly thing." Continuing, the author stated, "We might say . . . that there was enough of splendid rubbish in his life to cover up and paralyze a more active and subtile conscience than the Judge was ever troubled with."\(^{65}\) Of course, the supernatural phenomenon of the Judge's death as a result of the curse must not be overlooked. By the time of his death, so similar to that of his ancestors, the Meule family had disappeared. Medical research had developed sufficiently that his demise was attributed to natural causes, so that there was no reference to his "having blood to drink."

The beautiful Alice Pyncheon, who fell into a tragic dependence on a witchcraft-practicing member of the Meule family, was also supposed to haunt the house, especially when one of the Pynchons was to die, and she had been heard playing sadly and beautifully on the harpsichord. Hepzibah caught a strain of music immediately before the

decrease of Judge Pyncheon. Clifford was absent from her and
in the course of the forenoon, Hepzibah heard a note of music, which (there being no other tuneful contrivance in the House of the Seven Gables) she knew must proceed from Alice Pyncheon's harpsichord. . . . Hepzibah involuntarily thought of the ghostly harmonies, prelusive of death in the family which were attributed to legendary Alice. 66

By her mysterious death, Alice became a vague personage in the history of the Pyncheon family. While it is true that she was under the mesmeric influence of a member of an enemy family, she possessed in her life-time no qualities which would classify her with the supernatural. It was only the haunting music she produced on the harpsichord as a death knell that placed her in that category.

Hawthorne's interest in mesmerism reflected the vogue of mesmeric phenomena in Boston in the 1830's and 1840's, both in theatrical exhibitions and as a means of effecting cures. Sophia Peabody, who suffered from severe headaches, proposed to Hawthorne the possibility of mesmerism as a curative measure. In a letter written from Brook Farm on October 18, 1841, he protested with unusual vehemence.

My spirit is moved to talk to thee today about these magnetic miracles, and to beseech thee to take no part in them. I am unwilling that a power should be exercised on them of which we know neither the origin nor the consequence, and the phenomena of which seem rather calculated to bewilder us, than to teach us any truths about the present or future state

66 Ibid., p. 327.
of being. If I possessed such a power over thee, I should not dare to exercise it; nor can I consent to its being exercised by another. Supposing that this power arises from the transfusion of one spirit into another, it seems to me that the sacredness of an individual is violated by it; there would be an intrusion into the holy of holies...67

In a similar language Hawthorne caused Holgrave to refuse to exercise on Phoebe his mesmeric powers.

To a disposition like Holgrave's, at once speculative and active, there is no temptation so great as the opportunity of acquiring empire over the human speech. Let us, therefore...68 concede to the daguerrotypist the rare quality of reverence for another individuality.

Holgrave was one example of incompleteness of character. In him the stubborn independence of his ancestors culminated, and he experienced both a footloose personal existence and a speculative detachment from the beliefs and purposes of his countrymen.

Phoebe scarcely thought him affectionate in his nature. She was too calm and cool an observer. She felt his eye, often; his heart, seldom or never. He took a certain kind of interest in Hepzibah and her brother, and in Phoebe herself. He studied her attentively...69 but... he never exactly made common cause with them... In his relations with them, he seemed to be in quest of mental food, not heart-sustenance. Phoebe could not conceive what interested him so much... since he cared nothing for them, or, comparatively, so little, as objects of human affection.

One need not hesitate in classifying the members of the Maule family with the community of sorcerers and magicians.

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67The Love Letters of Nathaniel Hawthorne, II, 62.
68The House of the Seven Gables, p. 308.
69Ibid., pp. 256-257.
Even Holgrave's modern profession, that of a photographer, is endowed with a magic and prophetic touch when Hawthorne speaks of it.

The sorcerers of the Middle Ages, with their alchemy and their faculty of infusing life into the picture they painted, might seem to an imaginative person of the eighteen thirties to be reborn in the chemists and photographers of the new time. That the practitioners of both these professions were, in Hawthorne's opinion, surrounded by a radiance of mysticism, is proved over and over again in his works. 70

It is said of the Maules, that

their companions . . . grew conscious of a circle about the Maules, within the sanctity or the spell of which, in spite of an exterior of sufficient frankness and good-fellowship, it was impossible for men to step . . . among other good-for-nothing properties and privileges, one was especially assigned them -- that of exercising an influence over people's dreams. 71

This characterization may be stretched a point to include also the mesmerism which appertains to the later descendent of the Maules, Holgrave. But every possibility of "linking popular sayings with reality is excluded when it comes to the excellent specimens of ghosts" 72 drawn by Hawthorne in another description of the Maule family which is included in the manuscript of Holgrave.

Their graves in the crevices of rocks, were supposed to be incapable of retaining the occupants, who had been so hastily thrust into them. Old Matthew

70 Lundblad, op. cit., p. 51.
71 The House of the Seven Gables, p. 32.
72 Lundblad, op. cit., p. 67.
Maule, especially, was known to have as little hesitation or difficulty in rising out of his grave as an ordinary man in getting out of bed, and was as often seen at midnight as living people at noonday.  

It would be difficult to find a more accurate and at the same time humorously skeptical description of a real, old-time wizard ghost than this. Holgrave's sorcery was of a more modern kind. He made pictures out of sunshine by means of his camera, but his pictures had a wonderful character of their own. He said that there was a wonderful insight in Heaven's broad and simple sunshine. While we give credit only for depicting the merest surface, it actually brings out the deepest secret character with a truth that no painter would even venture upon, even could he detect it.  

The young man also possessed other mysterious qualities. In a conversation with Phoebe he remarked, "I am somewhat of a mystic, it must be confessed. The tendency is in my blood, together with the faculty of mesmerism, which might have brought me to Gallow's Hill, in the good old times of witchcraft."  

A better expression of Hawthorne's view of old-time sorcery could not be found. He clearly perceived the identity of what his ancestors had termed witchcraft with phenomena that in his own days had found a scientific or at least a pseudo-scientific explanation. The author preferred,  

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73 The House of the Seven Gables, p. 273.  
74 Ibid., p. 131.  
75 Ibid., p. 317.
however, to use the old and romantic words and viewpoints in order to describe them and thus create the "mysterious twilight in which his personages felt best at their ease and could best express the truths that he wanted to impress upon his readers." The principle of mesmerism was applied in The House of the Seven Gables when Matthew Maule attempted to attain through Alice Pyncheon, who was in a state of mesmeric sleep, information regarding the whereabouts of a lost document, the discovery of which would place in the possession of the Pyncheons a vast estate. Although the attempt was unsuccessful, Maule, having once established his ascendency over Alice, continued to exploit her weakness and finally brought her to her death.

Of the Maule family it was known only that Matthew Maule's son had assisted at the building of the House of the Seven Gables, and it was believed that the family became extinct at his death. The Pyncheon family, on the other hand, flourished through two centuries more. In Holgrave's story of Alice Pyncheon a grandson of the old wizard appeared. He, too, was a carpenter, and it was in pursuit of his trade that he gained admittance into the Pyncheon mansion. No other Maule was met, however, until the daguerreotypist revealed his identity. Holgrave showed himself to be a descendant of Matthew Maule, from whom he had inherited

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76 Lundblad, op. cit., p. 67.
something of the "mesmerism" that caused the old "wizzard" to be suspected of sorcery. It was this young man who explained the curse that his ancestor had called down upon the heads of Colonel Pyncheon and his descendants.

In the Notebook, in 1837, Hawthorne recorded the observation that "men of cold passions have quick eyes." 77 This entry reminds one of Matthew Maule, whose evil eye possessed powers of witchcraft. Upon the death of Alice Pyncheon, he walked in the funeral procession, "gnashing his teeth" 78 in bitter regret because his victim has escaped the further operation of his diabolical powers, but Hawthorne, for once, did not let them move to their catastrophe. Holgrave did not meet the doom meted out to Chillingworth. (His love for Phoebe saved him by proving that his intellect had not been in complete control.) Perhaps, indeed, it was Phoebe who saved the entire group from the dismal destinies their own characters seemed to foreshadow. Holgrave, the representative of the New Age and at the same time possessor of the personal magnetism that characterized his ancestor, the sorcerer, was an attempt to amalgamate old beliefs in magic with the interest in the secret faculties of the soul that was so generally prevalent in Hawthorne's time. Phoebe personified the unspoilt freshness of youth;

77 Notebooks, p. 110.

78 The House of the Seven Gables, p. 305.
Nepzibeh was the dried-up branch of an old tree. Judge Pyncheon embodied selfish greed and ruthlessness.

In conclusion one can do no better than quote Hawthorne's own words by way of criticism of the romance. In a letter to Heretic Bridge he said:

The House of the Seven Gables, in my opinion is better than The Scarlet Letter; but I should not wonder if I had refined upon the principal characters a little too much for popular appreciation; nor if the romance of the book should be found somewhat at odds with the humble and familiar scenery in which I invest it. But I feel that portions of it are as good as anything I can hope to write.79

Hawthorne took advantage in this book of the opportunity to relieve his mind and consciousness of the curse inflicted upon him, not only by a "witch" of an earlier day, but also the curse of solitude and brooding. Lloyd Morris stated that

The House of the Seven Gables was Nathaniel Hawthorne's valedictory to his past. Into this book he put his memories of childhood and youth; he drew upon his family legend of an ancestral curse and vanished deeds for his plot; in its theme he studied the perpetuation of the past in the present environment and inheritance.80

In the last chapter, Uncle Venner, as he left the house,

seemed to hear a strain of music, and fancied that sweet Alice Pyncheon -- after witnessing these deeds, this bygone woe and this present happiness,

79 Lloyd Morris, Rebellious Puritan, p. 238.
80 Ibid., p. 83.
of her kindred mortals -- had given one farewell touch of a spirit's joy upon her harpsichord, as she floated heavenward from the HOUSE OF THE SEVEN GABLES!\[^{81}\]

\[^{81}\text{The House of the Seven Gables, p. 467.}\]
CHAPTER IV

THE MARBLE FAUN

Hawthorne resigned as Consul in August, 1857, but his successor did not arrive to take over the duties of office until September. The family was eager to be off to the Continent, but was detained when the children came down with the measles. It was not until January that all things were in readiness for departure. From England the Hawthornes went to Paris and thence to Italy, where the author busied himself in Rome with the study of the fine arts. With the arrival of warm weather, Hawthorne took his family from Rome to the more northern city of Florence, where they remained through June and July. Life was leisurely in Florence, and it was possible to think and let one's dreams crystallize.

In August, however, the heat forced them to seek yet a cooler place where Hawthorne could find a haven for beginning The Marble Faun. Soon an impoverished scion of an old Florentine family offered to rent his ville to the Hawthornes for a period of several months, at forty scudi a month. Accordingly, the family moved to Villa Montauto at Bellosguardo. In the forty-room castle, each member was
able to have at least three or four rooms to himself, with plenty left over for mutual occupation and enjoyment. The castle had extensive grounds devoted to grapes and figs, and an historic tower that was haunted! Any novelist should revel in such a setting for writing a romance. To Hawthorne, the prospect was doubtless extremely gratifying. Here, with owls gliding from the tower on ghostly wings, hooting eerily, Hawthorne wrote the first draft of *The Marble Faun*.

In this villa, fifteen miles from the city of Florence, Hawthorne again had his life to himself. Few visitors came to disturb him at his work. "It is possible that he saw signs and portents in Donati's comet, prophecies importing changes of times and states, and it is also possible that he felt the old sadness of Italy."¹ On the whole, however, he was contented. He enjoyed the feeling of really being away from America, a feeling he never experienced in Liverpool, where Americans were constantly coming and going. In Florence he found the remoteness that he sought. He was not to linger long in this enjoyment, however, as he wanted his children to be Americans. Since they were in the formative stage, he felt it incumbent upon him to take them back to the land of their nativity. As Hawthorne, accompanied by his family, returned home, he was a tired man; and the world

was changing. He belonged, body and soul, to the old New England; and he was not a man who adjusted easily to new conditions. It was with genuine relief, therefore, that he returned to his home at Wayside.

In Nathaniel Hawthorne all that was weird and romantic in the superstitions of Puritanism flowered into the finest art. Sin and its consequences were as present to his imagination as they were to the consciousness of his colonial ancestors. He had drawn his subjects from his own narrow neighborhood until, in 1860, he published The Marble Faun. Although the scenes are Italian, and the book was written in Florence, it is more American than Italian. The inconclusiveness of the story, the mystery that pervades it, and the subtle symbolism that bewilders the unimaginative reader, disappoint the lovers of romance and excite the curiosity of the student.

In Hawthorne the spiritual element is of chief importance. The reviewers of The Marble Faun demanded an explanation, and the Saturday Review complained that a mystery was set before the reader to unriddle, and at the end the author turned round and asked what was the good of solving it. Hawthorne's reply to the bewildered critics was that the story was not meant to be explained; it was Oedipus. He yielded so far to "solicitation as to add a postscript to the second edition, but the real riddles were still unsolved. The Marble Faun is suspended in a golden atmosphere
of ancient art and history, through which moved shadowy
and fantastic shapes. Hawthorne clothed all familiar
things with an air of unreality, or invested them with a
fairy glamour. Motley was moved to ask, after the publica-
tion of *The Marble Faun*, "Where . . . is the godmother who
gave you to talk pearls and diamonds?"

Despite the fact that Hawthorne was unable to compre-
hend the purpose of art, it played a part in his writing *The
Marble Faun*. He found himself in Rome a part of a circle
which was, in the main, an artistic one. Important among
these Roman friends was William Wetmore Story, the sculptor
and intimate friend of Robert Browning, whose statue of
Cleopatra plays a minor part in the romance.

In Rome, Hawthorne appears to have caught some of the
sunshine to himself, as he seemed more willing to mingle
with people and to be rather well satisfied with Rome.
However, he remained a tourist to the last, and it was in
this spirit that he walked through the streets of contem-
porary Rome, a city dirty, colorful, sinful. Hawthorne al-
ways thought of Rome as a city of the past. He made no at-
ttempt to comprehend the Rome of his day but satisfied him-
self with the world which he created for himself out of old
ruins, objective contacts, and the conversations of acquaint-
ances.

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Chautauqua, XXX (February, 1900), 523.

3 H. E. Scudder, Introduction to *The Marble Faun*, I, xvii.
The enthusiasm of an alien people aroused anew the creative urge within him and he found materials to his hand in the Roman scene. His long rest from creative writing had refreshed his brain, and it was filling up with new things. He had never before written about anything but New England; and he had been a part, in his reserved way, of the New England scene when he wrote. Although he could not be a part of the Roman scene, he could not escape from it. "He conceived the idea for a romance, therefore, that should circumscribe all that he had seen in his three months of wandering over the surface of Rome."4

Hawthorne's trick of presenting the story as if found in an old manuscript was not used in The Marble Faun, but he told the story in his rather skeptical way. It is felt that he assumed the reader to be inspired by a romantic feeling which makes all sorts of supernatural and wonderful things quite plausible.

He used the supernatural in the development of the plot in The Marble Faun. Various elements entered into the unfolding of this story as the author turned it over in his mind. Among the factors was the story of a dead monk and the effect the manner of his death had on most of the characters in the romance. The author's "ancient Puritan obsession came to the front and shaped his material for him,"5

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4Gorman, op. cit., p. 130.  
5Ibid.
and The Marble Faun became another study in sin and conscience. The basis upon which the novel rests is the idea of a happy, innocent creature without a soul committing a crime, and developing a soul as a result of self-torture.

The strange sin which was known to all Europe, and which was explained nowhere in the romance, appeared in the person of "The Specter of the Catacombs." The four principal characters in the story visited the catacombs, and Miriam wandered from her companions. They became fearful that she had lost her way in the labyrinth. She returned in the company of a hideous mendicant monk, who appeared to be acquainted with her history, and declared he would follow her henceforth as her shadow. Accordingly, he haunted her, following her in her rambles, standing before her by day and by night. The hideous sin of which they both had knowledge was not defined. The evil, leathsome presence of the monk, and his stealthy, silent shadowing of her embittered her life. Even her art was injured by the foul face that forever stared at her. In a moment of rage Donatello, obeying, as he believed, a signal of assent in Miriam's eyes, threw the monk over the Tarpeian Rock.

The next day when the two met at the Church of the Capuchins, they found a funeral in progress. There they viewed the body of the murdered monk laid out in the garb of a Capuchin; Hawthorne spared not the slightest detail of
horror end of the supernatural. Donatello was strangely moved by the chant beneath the church. He said, "...it oppresses me; the air is so heavy with it that I can scarcely draw my breath. And yonder dead monk! I feel as if he were lying across my heart." Miriam tried to comfort and encourage the youth as they approached the bier and saw "the dead face of the monk, gazing at them beneath its half-closed eyelids." It was the same visage that had "glared upon their naked souls the past night." The author then tells of an incredible occurrence as follows:

And now occurred a circumstance that would seem too fantastic to be told, if it had not actually happened, precisely as we set it down. As the three friends stood by the bier, they saw that a little stream of blood had begun to ooze from the dead monk's nostrils; it crept slowly toward the thicket of his beard, where, in the course of a moment or two, it hid itself.

In this way Hawthorne made use of the old superstition about the phenomenon of blood flowing from a dead body. Miriam asked, "How can we tell but that the murderer of this monk may have just entered the church?"

This is one of the passages which make it impossible for the present-day reader to take this book quite seriously, though in many respects it is so surprisingly up-to-date. The "familiar and current superstition that Hawthorne here

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6 The Marble Faun, I, 258. 7 Ibid., p. 261.
8 Ibid. 9 Ibid., p. 263. 10 Ibid.
treats as a matter of course has, in the passing of the intervening century, become an antiquated and ridiculous conception.\textsuperscript{11}

With the main theme of the romance was involved an intricate study of the story of Beatrice Cenci. That story presented psychological problems that have fascinated many students of humanity just as it fascinated Shelley. It was clearly impossible for Hawthorne to analyze, define, and minutely consider the mysterious and monstrous sin which was the motive of the story without injuring the artistic purpose of his work. As a consequence, he merely indicated the crime, and dwelt, instead, upon its effects. He subtly suggested the story of Beatrice Cenci, but he dwelt upon Guido's picture of a "being unhumanized by some terrible fate and gazing out of a remote and inaccessible region, where she was frightened to be alone, but where no human sympathy could reach her."\textsuperscript{12} Miriam's resemblance to the picture was mentioned, and she defended Beatrice in her talk with Hilda about the painting. However, Hawthorne, the artist, did not mar his characters by actually identifying the past of Miriam with the hideous experience of the Cenci. A study of Chapter XXII will reveal the artist's method of lifting the crime into the atmosphere of high romance.

\textsuperscript{11}\textit{Lundblad, op. cit.}, p. 85.

\textsuperscript{12}\textit{Notes of Travel}, IV, 339-341.
Softening the tenseness and lurking evil by the charm of Hilda and her doves, the author also pleads for lenient judgment on Miriam and applies in various passages the words of Donatello: "If a stray sunbeam steal in, the shadow is all the better for its cheerful glimmer."\(^{13}\)

When Miriam and Donatello had perpetrated their crime, they felt that they had been united by a new, strange bond. The death of the old monk, who had acted as a model for the girl, as well as her tormenter, had strung them together for all time to come. As Donatello expressed it, their affinity was "forever cemented with his blood."\(^{14}\) Upon saying that, Donatello started involuntarily and told himself that it was "cemented with blood, which would corrupt and grow more noisome forever and forever, but bind them none the less strictly for that."\(^{15}\)

United for the first time after the purification, Miriam and Donatello met alone by the statue of Pope Julius III at Perugia. They soon separated again in order to proceed on their ways to Rome. Only a little later these two and the sculptor imagined that they beheld the bronze pontiff endowed with spiritual life. Hawthorne stated that "a blessing was felt descending upon them from his outstretched hand."\(^{16}\) This incident may be understood as an interpretation

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\(^{13}\) *The Marble Faun*, I, 53.  
\(^{15}\) *Ibid.*, p. 244.  
of the power inherent in every work of art. Here, too, the author makes the reader feel the influence of the supernatural as the statue was made to bless those standing near it.

The substance of Hawthorne's message in *The Marble Faun* seems to be expressed in these words of Kenyon:

> Sin has educated Donatello, and elevated him.
> Is sin then, — which we deem such a dreadful blackness to the universe — is it, like sorrow, merely an element of human education, through which we struggle to a higher and purer state than we would have otherwise attained? Did Adam fall that we might ultimately rise to a far loftier paradise than his?\(^{17}\)

Such a conclusion to the romance might seem well to constitute a fitting close to the study of the relationship of the supernatural to the plot of the story.

Hawthorne made the reader conscious of the element of the supernatural in the descriptions of his settings. He was careful to avoid scenes that were too clear-cut, or if he did use such, he took pains to surround them with an atmosphere of unreality. Those very realistic elements of the background were used in a manner that transmitted to the reader a feeling of "cloudland," to use the author's own words with reference to *The Marble Faun*. The story deals in symbolic form with the origin and meaning of evil. The background for the action is Rome, the very stones of whose streets tell tales of the struggle toward good and toward

\(^{17}\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 349.$
evil of many races of men. Against this background is depicted
the story of the symbolic fate of Donatello and Milde
de and Miriam, as types of the human will in its relation to
evil.

The title that Hawthorne first gave to the novel was
*The Romance of Monte Beni*, and it was first printed under
that title in America. Monte Beni was the ancestral castle
of Donatello, for which the Villa Montauto near Florence
was the model. The castle possessed ancient battlements and
an "owl tower" with a prisoner's cell, where in ancient
days a necromancer was kept prisoner. According to Kenyon,
it had also "an almost interminable vista of apartments...reminding him of the hundred rooms in Blue Bead's castle or the countless hells of the Arabian Nights."\(^{18}\)

More weird, however, is the description of the Cata-
combs of St. Calixtus, where Miriam had a mysterious and
frightening interview with her strange follower. The de-
scriptions which Hawthorne gave are said to be strictly
accurate. The passages, however, possessed an atmosphere
of dark mystery, corresponding to his conception of the
ideal surroundings for a ghostly interview, and to the au-
ther they must have been a great find. Conscientiously he
recorded the itinerary for the tourists:

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Sometimes their gloomy pathway tended upward,
so that, through a crevice, a little daylight glimmered down upon them, or even a streak of sunshine
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peeped into a burial niche; then again they went downward by gradual descent, or by abrupt, rudely hewn steps, into deeper and deeper recesses of the earth.\textsuperscript{19}

Further on "they found two sarcophagi, one containing a skeleton, and the other a shrunken body, which still wore the garments of its former lifetime."\textsuperscript{20} Miriam admitted to a belief in ghosts, but she added that she believed that the sepulchres were so old that they had ceased to be haunted. She said that the "most awful idea connected with the Catacombs is their interminable extent, and the possibility of going astray into this labyrinth of darkness."\textsuperscript{21} In a very few moments, indeed, she did become lost and encountered for the first time the "Spectre of the Catacombs."

Hawthorne's use of pictures in his settings has been mentioned in connection with his other long romances. The Marble Faun is no exception to that custom. In the Church of the Capuchins, where much of the action took place, were two pictures among many which form a part of the setting. These two pictures entered into the story so often that it is well to take particular notice of them.

Although Hawthorne had no great comprehension of the fine arts, he has definitely stated his opinion of imitative art on the whole. It is rather characteristic that Guido Reni found most favor with the author, and two of this

\textsuperscript{19}\textit{Ibid.}, I, 28. \textsuperscript{20}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 29. \textsuperscript{21}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 30.
artist's works played a part in the setting of the novel. One of them is the picture of the Archangel Gabriel putting his foot on the monster of evil, hung in the Capuchin monastery. The significance of this picture belongs chiefly to the discussion of certain ethical problems in the book, but some importance may be ascribed to the fact that the demon, on which the archangel is setting his foot and which is commonly reputed to resemble Cardinal Pamfili, is found to bear a striking resemblance to Miriam's model. The fact is acknowledged both by Kenyon and by Hilda and it added not a little to the weird characterization which, half seriously, half playfully, they assigned to Miriam's attendant, to think of him as personating the demon's part in a picture painted more than two centuries ago. The second picture was the portrait of Beatrice Cenci, which was connected in some way with Miriam's past. The author, of course, made no pretense of portraying actualities. If he had done so, he would have made a still graver mistake in transporting the scene of his story to a country which he knew only superficially. However, it may be noted that Hawthorne did attempt to deal with actualities in The Marble Faun more, perhaps, than in his earlier novels. He gave closer attention to descriptions of streets and monuments of Rome than he did to those of Salem and Boston. Because of this attempt at description he has been called unsatisfactory. This is a
condition which always results when an artist tries to "project himself into an atmosphere in which he has not a transmitted and inherited property."\textsuperscript{22}

There is probably nothing which contributes more to the idea of the weird than a moonlight scene. Many of Hawthorne's settings were viewed in the glimmer of moonlight. It was not surprising, therefore, that he gave an entire chapter to the happenings which took place with such a background. The younger members of the company of artists were, as always, enthusiastic over the idea of a moonlight ramble. They had gone but a little way when they came to the most famous fountain in Rome. It was the Fountain of Trevi, which drew its precious water from a source beyond the walls. Its magical qualities were mentioned by Miriam, who sipped as much of the water as her hand would hold and remarked, "I am leaving Rome in a few days; and the tradition goes, that a parting draught at the Fountain of Trevi insures the traveller's return, whatever obstacles and improbabilities may seem to beset him."\textsuperscript{23} She then invited Donatello to drink; and he complied, joined by the others.

Previously a fountain had figured in a scene when Miriam, still followed by the pertinacious model, was seen to be kneeling on the steps of the fountain, as if she were dipping her fingers into the water. Actually, she was kneeling

\textsuperscript{22}James, op. cit., p. 160. \textsuperscript{23}The Marble Faun, I, 199.
to her dark follower. At another time Miriam knelt and looked into the water of a fountain, as if it were a mirror. She urged that others of the party join her and heard a movement toward her. Suddenly there appeared, as if by magic, the face of the old monk who acted as her model, reflected beside hers.

As in other stories, Hawthorne here used the device of mirrors in the descriptions of his settings. One instance, however, will suffice for the present discussion. Hilda sat listlessly in her room in a chair near the portrait of Beatrice Genci, which had not yet been taken from the easel. Opposite the easel hung a looking-glass, in which Beatrice's face and Hilda's were both reflected. In shifting her position, Hilda happened to throw her eyes on the glass, taking in both images at one glance. "She fancied -- nor was it without horror -- that Beatrice's expression, seen aside and vanishing in a moment, had been depicted in her own face likewise, and flitted from it as timorously." Thus Hawthorne assigned to the mirror magical qualities.

An instance showing Hawthorne's trust in his readers' readiness to accept ghost-like effects was given in the description of the nightly visit paid by a company of tourists to the Coliseum. Here the sculptor Kenyon acted as the author's mouthpiece when he said:

\[24\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 284.\]
Fancy a nightly assemblage of eighty thousand melancholy and remorseful ghosts, looking down from those tiers of broken arches, striving to repent of the savage pleasures which they once enjoyed but still longing to enjoy them over again.  

Hilda's response to this statement was, "You bring a Gothic horror into this peaceful moonlight scene."  

From the tower of Montauto Ville there grew a bush. Hawthorne made a mystical allusion to the plant in The Marble Faun. Kenyon looked about him, and beheld it growing out of the stone pavement which formed the roof, a little shrub, with green and glossy leaves. It was the only green thing there; and heaven knows how its seeds had been planted, at that airy height, or how it had found nourishment for its small life in the chinks of the stones; for it had no earth, and nothing more like soil than the crumbling mortar, which had been crammed into the crevices in a long past age.  

Conway points out that Hawthorne had begun to recognize evergreen growths where his religious training had taught him to see only crumbling idolatry. It is certainly true that his ideas concerning the Roman Catholic religion had undergone a change.  

As in the development of the plot, and the description of his settings, Hawthorne enjoyed the supernatural in the delineation of character. The Marble Faun, with its atmosphere of the supernatural, had a single sin and but four  

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25 Ibid., p. 216.  
26 Ibid.  
27 Ibid., II, 66.
characters. Two of the characters, Hilda and Kenyon, were Bostonians; the character of Miriam was drawn from a Jewess whom Hawthorne had met in London. If Donatello had any distinct prototype, it was that "curious New England St. Francis who lived near to nature's heart -- Henry David Thoreau." A visit to Whitby -- to the abbey of St. Hilda -- suggested the name for the spotless heroine who represented as well as it may be the New England Puritanism. Kenyon, the artist, stood for Reason. Donatello was the innocent child of nature, a type of the early Greek. Characters of The Marble Faun, as always in Hawthorne's romances, faded into symbols.

Hawthorne's choice of The Marble Faun as the title of his novel fails to characterize the story. The subject of the romance is a living faun, the faun of flesh and blood, the unfortunate Donatello. In his Italian Notebook Hawthorne told of a visit to the Capitoline Museum, where he took a great interest in the so-called Faun of Praxiteles:

We afterwards went into the sculpture gallery, where I looked at the Faun of Praxiteles, and was sensible of a peculiar charm in it; ... The lengthened but not preposterous ears, and the little tail, which we infer, have an exquisite effect, and make the spectator smile in his very heart. This race of fauns was the most delightful of all that antiquity imagined. It seems to me that a story with all sorts of fun and pathos in it, might be contrived on the idea of their species having intermingled with the human race; a family with the faun

28 Smyth, op. cit., p. 523.
blood in them, having prolonged itself from the classic era till our own days. The tail might have disappeared, . . . but the pretty hairy ears should occasionally reappear in members of families.29

Such a figure was just what Hawthorne needed to illustrate his further developed theory about the rôle of sin in man's mental and intellectual development. Donatello, the chief personage of the story, was a scion of just such an old Italian family as was described in the notebook. He was beautiful, healthy, and gay, an unsophisticated child of nature without any consciousness of sin, but also without any higher development of character. At Rome he made the acquaintance of a coterie of young artists and fell in love with the beautiful and mysterious Miriam, a lady of unknown origin whose past life remained riddle throughout the book. When the young count, Donatello, seized the model, a sort of demoniacal beggar who annoyed Miriam, and threw him over the precipice, he came to know sin and to be familiar with a sense of guilt which never left him.

Miriam and Donatello roamed about separated, in quest of the happiness which neither of them could find. Donatello was different from the happy being to whom Miriam had said, "I forgot that you were a faun, you cannot suffer deeply; therefore you but half enjoy."30 He was different,

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29 *Italian Notebook*, April 22, 1858.

30 *The Marble Faun*, I, 60.
too, from the carefree creature who had begun to "dance and flit about the studio, like an incarnate sprite of jollity, pausing at the last on the extremity of one toe as if that were the only portion of himself whereby his frisky nature could come in contact with the earth."\textsuperscript{31} He had similarly shown his earlier carefree nature when he and Miriam were to meet in the grounds of the Villa Borghese. His enjoyment of the walk through the garden was of a lively nature, and he drew long delightful breaths. "Judging by the pleasure which the sylvan character of the scene excited in him, it might be a mere fanciful theory to set him down as the kinsman, not far remote, of that wild, sweet, playful, rustic creature, to whose marble image he bore so striking a resemblance."\textsuperscript{32} Following closely a description of the grounds where Donatello found himself, Hawthorne said, "If the ancient Faun were other than a mere creature of old poetry, and could have reappeared anywhere, it must have been in such a scene as this."\textsuperscript{33} Continuing his rollicking through the park, the creature ran races with himself and capered along with the freedom of a sprite. "In a sudden reprise he embraced the trunk of a sturdy tree . . . as a Faun might have clasped the warm feminine grace of the nymph, whom antiquity supposed to dwell within that rough

\textsuperscript{31}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 61. \textsuperscript{32}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 94. \textsuperscript{33}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 96.
encircling rind. "34 When he finally met Miriam, he did so by dropping from a tree. She referred to his sly qualities by saying, "I hardly know whether you have sprouted out of the earth or dropped from the clouds."35 Miriam continued in this vein for a good portion of their stroll through the grounds. Donatello was completely happy by her side and brimmed over with ecstasy at the privilege of being near her. "A creature of the happy tribes below us sometimes shows the capacity of this enjoyment; a man, seldom or never."36

In this comparison and many others Hawthorne proved that Donatello was veritably a creature with supernatural characteristics. This youth showed his close companionship with nature when a bird happening to sing cheerily, "Donatello gave a peculiar call, and the feathered creature came fluttering about his head, as if it had known him through many summers."37 When they were dancing to the unseen music in the grounds of the Villa Borghese, Donatello "snapped his fingers above his head, as fauns and satyrs taught us first to do, and seemed to radiate jollity out of his whole nimble person."38 Later, when Donatello, in company with Kenyon, was on the grounds of his own villa, he tried in

vein to summon the creatures of the forest. "All at once . . . the sculptor heard a wild, sorrowful cry, and . . . beheld Donatello flinging himself on the ground. Emerging from his hiding-place, he saw no living thing, save a brown lizard . . . rustling away through the sunshine." 39 Again Hawthorne shows the consequences of evil. Because of his sin Donatello is unable to communicate with the pure creatures of nature.

Kenyon, when staying at Monte Beni, modeled a bust of Donatello. During his work, "Kenyon gave up all preconceptions about the character of his subject, and let his hands work uncontrolled with the clay, somewhat as a spiritual medium, while holding a pen, yields it to an unseen guidance other than that of her own will." 40 It was just at the time when Donatello underwent his transformation, and the bust, after having first shown a beautifully innocent expression, was changed, by some accidental handling of the clay by the sculptor, so as to show "a distorted and violent look, combining animal fierceness with intelligent hatred." 41 If either Hilda or Miriam had seen the bust, the author told us, they might have recognized Donatello's face as it was when he flung the model down the Terpeian precipice. The final result, however, was different. When the sculpture

39 Ibid., II, 52.  40 Ibid., p. 84.
41 Ibid., p. 86.
was shown to Hilda later on, she said, "It gives the impression of a growing intellectual power and moral sense ... it is the Faun, but advancing toward a state of higher development."\(^{42}\) Thus the bust of Donatello showed his spiritual development, and it is seen that Hawthorne succeeded better in *The Marble Faun* than elsewhere in his endeavor to instill something of real human life into the bearers of his ideas. Donatello developed from a pagan and carefree youth, full of animal spirits, into a grown-up man with a deep sense of responsibility and conscious aspiration toward righteous life. His confession, like Dimmesdale's, was the result of internal pressure, the outcome of a free inner development -- a transformation.

Hilda and Kenyon were strolling among the groves of the Villa Borghese when they heard the music, already mentioned, to which Miriam and Donatello had danced in such wild abandonment. Soon they discerned a solitary figure advancing along one of the paths and recognized Donatello. They puzzled about his unwonted soberness, and Kenyon remarked, "He seems either very weary, or very sad. I should not hesitate to call it sadness, if Donatello were a creature capable of the sin and folly of low spirits. I begin to doubt whether he is a veritable faun."\(^{43}\) Hilda was surprised at this statement coming from Kenyon, and replied, "You have thought

\(^{42}\) *Ibid.*, p. 239.  
\(^{43}\) *Ibid.*, I, 139.
him . . . one of that strange, wild, happy race of creatures? . . . So do I, indeed! But I never quite believed, till now, that fauns existed anywhere but in poetry.\textsuperscript{44} In this manner Hawthorne fixed in the minds of his readers the belief in the supernatural qualities of Donatello.

When he visited Donatello, the Count of Monte Beni, Kenyon learned from Tomaso, the old butler, something of the count's pedigree. For several generations back, the written record was quite clear. Then the source became rather dim, and a genealogist would have found it necessary to depend upon tradition, which took the record beyond the Imperial ages into the Kingly epoch. Thence the line traced its origin back to the sylvan life of Etruria, "while Italy was yet guiltless of Rome."\textsuperscript{45} One legend averred that the Monte Beni family drew their origin from the Pelasgic race, which may be called prehistoric.

At a time when nymphs, satyrs, and such creatures took no pains to hide themselves, the lineage of Monte Beni had its rise. Its progenitor, a sylvan creature, not altogether human, had loved a mortal maiden and had won her to his haunts. Making the bridal bower, perhaps, in the hollow of a great tree, "the pair spent a happy wedded life in that ancient neighborhood where now stood Donatello's tower."\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{44}\textit{Ibid.}, \textsuperscript{45}\textit{Ibid.}, II, 27. \textsuperscript{46}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 29.
From that union sprang a vigorous progeny that took its place unquestioned among human families. Donatello is the last of this long line of the Monte Beni family. This family "were both proud and ashamed of these legends; but whatever part of them they might consent to incorporate into their ancestral history, they steadily repudiated all that referred to their one distinctive feature, the pointed and furry ears." 47

Kenyon thoroughly enjoyed these legends, but what especially delighted him was the analogy between Donatello's character, as he himself knew it, and those peculiar traits which the old butler's narrative assumed to have been long hereditary in the race. He was "amused at finding that not only Tomaso but the peasantry of the estate and neighboring village recognized his friend as a genuine Monte Beni, of the original type . . . nothing had either the power nor the will to do him harm. . . . He grew up . . . the playmate . . . of creatures of the woods." 48

All of those about the young count, however, sadly shook their heads as they recounted these tales and then added that he had changed into such a sober and even melancholy fellow since he had returned from Rome. The old butler was particularly distressed over the change and he said to the sculptor, "There has not been a single count in the

47 Ibid., p. 32. 48 Ibid., p. 34.
family these hundred years or more, who was so true a Monte
Beni, of the antique stamp, as this poor signorino; and it
now brings the tears to my eyes to hear him sighing over a
cup of Sunshine!"\textsuperscript{49} These stories of the transformation in
the carefree youth, Kenyon partly attributed to the state
of the world in general, but he also was partly suspicious
of Donatello's darker misfortune. He had no way, however,
of confirming or refuting these suspicions. After the young
men's outburst at the summit of the tower, the sculptor
knew that his reaction must have resulted from some secret
trouble. From some mysterious source he felt assured that
"a soul had been inspired into the young count's simplicity,
since their intercourse in Rome. He now showed a far deeper
sense and an intelligence that began to deal with high sub-
jects, though in a feeble and childish way."\textsuperscript{50} Try as he
might, Kenyon could not dismiss the matter from his mind, nor
could he find any means of helping Donatello, because he did
not know of his guilt. The sculptor could not dismiss from
his mind the count's confession that it troubled him to have
anyone look at him steadfastly. He said, "It is not my will,
but my necessity to avoid men's eyes."\textsuperscript{51} Under such com-
pulsion, it would be foolish to expect character to develop
richly. One would be able to dwell at even greater length

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., p. 36. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{50} Ibid., p. 71.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., p. 22.
upon the unearthly character of Donatello, the Faun, but the instances related here should be sufficient to convince even the most skeptical of his faun-like qualities.

The specter whom Miriam had found in the labyrinth of the Catacombs apparently had some connection with a crime which in her past had involved Miriam. At any rate his hold upon her was so strong that in his presence the girl was moved to do many incomprehensible things. Nowhere, even in her studio, was she free of his presence. He even began to affect her art. All her paintings took on a similarity to the old man. He followed her to her home and sat outside the door until she came out into the street again. Owing to moral estrangement between the two, "there have come to us but a few vague whisperings of what passed in Miriam's interviews with the sinister personage who had dogged her footsteps ever since the visit to the Catacombs."^52 Be that as it may, one thing was certain. There was a sadly mysterious fascination in the influence that the ill-omened person held over Miriam. "That iron chain . . . which . . . bound the pair together . . . must have been forged in some such unhallowed furnace as is only kindled by evil passions and fed by evil deeds."^53

On a moonlight ramble the party came to the piazza of the Holy Apostles, where a crowd was raising loud cries of

^52 Ibid., I, 125. ^53 Ibid.
"Trajan" on all sides. One of the artists in the crowd spied the model and pointed him out: "Here is your model (who, they say, lived and sinned before Trajan's death) still wandering about Rome."\(^5^4\) The specters of the Gothic novel were certainly embodied in the person of Miriam's model. The character of this compound figure was partly spectral, but it was perhaps still more that of a sorcerer. He was, indeed, a strange mixture of different types. His costume was as varied as his personality. It was that of a Roman peasant, but under his broad-brimmed hat "a wild visage was indistinctly seen, floating away, as it were, into a dusky wilderness of mustache and beard. His eyes winked, and turned uneasily... like a creature to whom midnight would be more congenial than noonday."\(^5^5\) When he spoke, his voice was hoarse and harsh. His influence was sinister "such as beasts and reptiles of subtle and evil nature sometimes exercised over their victims."\(^5^6\)

From the character of the model, or the specter, as he was also called by Hawthorne, it seems only logical to turn to that of Miriam, with whom he was so closely associated. The girl appeared to be a bewitched person as soon as the model appeared in her presence. Upon catching sight of him, fancying herself wholly unseen, the beautiful Miriam began

\(^5^4\)Ibid., p. 209. \(^5^5\)Ibid., p. 36. \(^5^6\)Ibid., p. 125.
to gesticulate extravagantly, gnashing her teeth, flinging her arms wildly abroad, stamping her feet. It was as if she had stepped aside for an instant, solely to snatch the relief of a brief fit of madness." 57 Even though the author gave a sort of psychological explanation of her demeanor, stating that she wished to "relieve her nerves in this wild way," 58 the similarity between her gestures and the traditional witch dances was, nevertheless, striking. Earlier in the story, Miriam was depicted as a woman with a bent toward the supernatural, when Hawthorne stated, "She was . . . based . . . upon a cloud, and all surrounded with a misty substance." 59 Her later actions only bore out the earlier impressions which the reader received from this statement. One finds that a mysterious crime was the chief secret of Miriam's past. The connection between her and the old monk who acted as her model, and who was later found to be a Capuchin friar, was never made quite clear to the reader, but Hawthorne hinted several times at a parallelism between Miriam's experience and that of Beatrice Cenci, whose portrait was copied by Hilda.

On the occasion of their walk through the garden of the Villa Borghese, Donatello had declared his love for Miriam; perhaps his character needed the dark mysterious element

57 Ibid., p. 217. 58 Ibid., p. 218. 59 Ibid., p. 27.
which it found in her. She warned him, however, against an imaginary peril: "If you were wiser, Donatello, you would think me a dangerous person. If you follow my footsteps, they will lead you to no good." 60

Later, upon hearing music in a hidden grove, they began to dance to its cadence. Miriam showed her carefree and sprite-like nature in this dance. "In the girl's motion, so freely she flung herself into the dance, there was an artful beauty, and Miriam resembled a nymph, as much as Donatello did a Faun." 61 Nevertheless, she could never entirely free herself from her gloomy mood, even after she was delivered of her persecutor. At last she met Donatello at Perugia, and after having spent some time together at Rome during the carnival, they parted forever. While it is known that Donatello gave himself up to justice in order to expiate his sin, the fate of Miriam remains unknown to the reader.

The element of the supernatural touched Hilda, mentioned already in other connections, very little; but she was so closely associated with Miriam that some attention must be given her as a character in the drama of this Roman story. A shadow of guilt fell upon her when she witnessed the enactment of Donatello's crime. She was beautiful,

pious, and pure of heart. In a discussion of womankind, on
one occasion, Miriam marveled at Kenyon’s keen perceptions
on the subject. When she remarked that he had not found
the secret of his idea of womanhood in Hilda, he replied,
"No, . . . her womanhood is of the ethereal type, and incompati-
ble with any shadow of darkness or evil." 62

The characters of the small group were men and women of
the sort one would expect to find moving in the midst of
lights and shadows so artfully arranged. They existed, that
is to say, in the most conventional sense. Detach them from
their majestic background, if only for a moment, and see
how unsubstantially they were put together. Donatello, as
we know, owed his very existence, not to Hawthorne’s study
of human beings, but to his cogitations about a Greek statue;
and a cunningly chiselled marble, painted, too, in the fash-
ion which Hawthorne condemned in sculpture, poor Donatello
remained to the end. Therefore, instead of coming finally
to life, he was more unreal than ever, so that one could
donassign him, at last, to his prison cell with a sense of
relief.

Although Donatello’s companions were intended to be
real, he was intended to be real or not as the reader
pleases. He was different from them. "It is as if a painter
in composing a picture, should try to give you an impression

62 Ibid.
of one of his figures by a strain of music." 63 Miriam was a melodramatic shadow with whom only such a Faun as Donatello could fall passionately in love, and for whose sake he could commit a crime.

Miriam gave voice to a familiar philosophy. As she stopped in the antechamber of Kenyon's studio, she reflected upon the inevitableness of destiny, as she said to herself,

As these busts in the block of marble, so does our individual fate exist in limestone of time. We fancy that we carve it out, but its ultimate shape is prior to all our action. 64

If the fable had been translated into purely poetic symbols, it might have had a misty and disembodied truth. Actually it was a group of presumably real men and women the reader was to take an interest in; but he knew too little about them, and he was "put off too wantonly with a frivolous mystification, to believe in the justice or truth of anything that befalls them." 65

The historian, Motley, showed in a letter to Hawthorne that he thoroughly enjoyed the mysteries of The Marble Faun. He said in a letter cited in the introduction to the romance:

I like those shadowy, weird, fantastic Hawthornesque shapes flitting through the golden gloom which is the atmosphere of the book. I like the misty way in

63 James, op. cit., p. 164.
64 The Marble Faun, I, 158.
65 Arvin, op. cit., p. 262.
which the story is indicated rather than revealed. It is exactly the romantic atmosphere of the book in which I revel. 66

66 Introduction to *The Marble Faun*, I, xviii.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The lure of the symbolic and the marvelous tempted Hawthorne constantly to the brink of the supernatural. His artistic use of this element was delicate. The old-fashioned ghost was too robust an apparition for modern incredulity. On the other hand, Hawthorne's apparently supernatural occurrences almost always admit of explanation. The water in Neule's well turned bitter, but it was likely, so the author stated, a result of the disturbance of its sources when the cellar was dug. (The sudden deaths of the Colonel and the Judge may have been due to a curse, or simply to an inherited tendency to apoplexy.)

In his youth Hawthorne brooded much on the records and chronicles of early New England days. The atmosphere of his romances was colored by these records. The hard lives of the people unsouled by pleasure, imaginations constantly dwelling upon spiritual terrors, exaggerated views of man's culpability before Heaven, and asceticism that excluded joy even from religion, the contemplation of the wrath of an impleasable deity, bore dark fruit of morbid fancies and grim superstitions. That curious outbreak of fanatic cruelty, the Salem witch-hangings, took strong hold on Hawthorne's

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imagination and colored all his thoughts, although it is possible that he was already disposed to melancholy. Thus the fancy that haunted his childhood, that of being under a vague inherited curse, grew into the fixed idea that he was doomed to expiate the cruelty of his ancestors, who were renowned persecutors of witches. This feeling of haunting remorse threads its way like a dark strand through the tissue of most of his works. It is probable that it would have completely unhinged his mind if he had not rid himself of it by putting it into artistic form in the three great novels — The Scarlet Letter, The House of the Seven Gables, and The Marble Faun.

The supernatural atmosphere pervaded all his works, especially the fascinating short stories; and he found symbolic meaning in the most unpromising things. His great unrivaled power was in the vivid presentation of spiritual conflict; and his tragedies are tragedies of the soul, not so much of individual souls as of the general soul of man. Arthur Dimmesdale, the protagonist of The Scarlet Letter, is as universal as Hamlet; and like the Prince of Denmark, he might appear at any time in the world's history.

There can be no doubt that Hawthorne's early reading of the classics influenced to a great extent his use of the supernatural in his own writings. He realized his purpose of presenting the supernatural in his romances to a very
satisfying degree. No one can read his writings, his novels or the seven or eight stories dealing with the world of unreality, without discovering that fact.

Certainly Hawthorne's ideas concerning religion as it related to the supernatural underwent a change. When he wrote *The Scarlet Letter*, he was the stern unremitting Puritan of his ancestors. His reading may have effected something of a change in his religious attitude, but perhaps his residence in Rome had most to do with it. His strict Puritan training was responsible for his objection to nudity in modern sculpture. However, he was able to appreciate the sculpture of Rome to the extent that he based his central character in *The Marble Faun* upon the Faun of Praxiteles.

He was sufficiently changed in his religious views to be able to understand and properly estimate the value to the individual of the Roman Catholic Church. The idea of the confessional was to him a definite convenience if not a positive necessity. He utilized the confessional in *The Marble Faun* when he had Hilda to tell her story to a priest. The earlier and more strictly Puritan Hawthorne could never have done such a thing. He appeared to have escaped from the dreary creed in which he was bred; but he did not find refuge in a broader religious creed, unless it was in the cold Unitarianism that was so general among cultivated
Americans of his day. Although he did not embrace the Catholic religion and even condemned some of its practices, he may have found consolation in the supernaturalism which is fostered by the Roman church.

The words Hawthorne used to achieve emotional effects were vehicles of feeling rather than of meaning. Thus he created for his readers an atmosphere of illusiveness. In spite of the air of unreality which saturates all of Hawthorne's writings, truth and significance are present in his stories and contribute much to the greatness of The Scarlet Letter, The House of the Seven Gables, and several of the short stories. These qualities, however, were not the whole of his art.

The Scarlet Letter has been called the perfect book. From the standpoint of art that is very likely true. This story deals entirely with the consequences of a sin committed months before its opening. Running throughout the plot is the symbol of the scarlet letter, the one worn openly by Hester, and the one worn secretly by Dimmesdale. Certainly there is nothing of the supernatural in the beautifully wrought emblem worn by Hester, except that it came to be the one token that opened the doors of troubled households to her. One must look, then, for the unusual and unearthly aspects of the letter as it concerned the minister. It is very likely that Arthur Dimmesdale did not see a letter
flash across the sky on the night of his vigil. Certainly there was a manifestation, because others saw it. Dimmesdale's unconfessed guilt was responsible for his conscience giving the shape of a letter to the meteor flashing across the heavens.

The author failed to satisfy the reader's mind as to the A seen by Chillingworth on the minister's breast. He merely stated, significantly, that the old physician was horrified at what he saw. Suspecting Arthur's guilt, and eager to verify his suspicions, probably the leech made himself see that which he wished to see. Of course, there is the possibility that Dimmesdale, in his desperation, may have scratched or painted an emblem to be worn secretly, matching the one Hester wore openly. There is also the possibility that the letter over Dimmesdale's heart was a stigma produced by either supernatural or psychological means. On none of these points is the author specific.

In the consideration of the setting, one has to rely upon the devices of the Gothic romance. Actually there is but little in the setting of The Scarlet Letter which one might designate as supernatural. Hawthorne did utilize the Gothic devices of mirrors and pools of water, serving to reflect images, with hints of supernatural effects. The setting was, in the main, simple and austere. The prison, the scaffold, and the lonely cottage served as the stage
for much of the action. All the important occurrences took
place on the scaffold, which was very real in its harshness.
Nothing less than the whole universe, however, took part
with Dimmesdale's soul in that tremendous midnight scene on
the scaffold. The sleeping town, with all its familiar
features hushed and transformed in the obscure night, made
a sort of magic stage from which the young minister viewed
the wonderful phenomenon which presented itself to his eyes
alone on that night. It was on this scaffold, too, that he
made his revelation to the election-day crowd. On that
awful occasion some of those present declared that they saw
on his bared breast a letter A.

Of the characters in The Scarlet Letter, Pearl was pre-
presented as the most unearthly and elf-like. Throughout the
entire story she flitted in fairy fashion from place to
place. She, with her mother and Chillingworth, took a
spectral part in the awful vigil of the minister. Though
present in the flesh, they were infinitely less vivid to
Dimmesdale's conscience than the fiery letter A which he
saw in the sky. After the meteor faded, Chillingworth was
seen as the arch-fiend rather than as himself, and the earth
appeared as if it were the light of the light of the day of
judgment.

The details of Chillingworth's life were never made
known. He mysteriously appeared on the scene while Hester
stood, in all her shame, upon the scaffold. In all his undertakings around the village he was equally mystifying; all the potions he brewed were of an unearthly sort.

The central theme of crime follows through the plot in *The House of the Seven Gables*. As in *The Scarlet Letter*, the crime was committed before the opening of the story. In the tale of this musty old house the sin goes back several generations and resulted in a curse which followed the Pyncheon family down to the occupants of the house at the beginning of the narrative. It was finally removed by the marriage of the two remaining descendants of the two families. Woven into the story of the curse is an exposition of mesmerism. Here, as was so often the practice of Hawthorne, he led the reader to the very brink of the supernatural, presenting indisputable evidence in a convincing manner, only to explain away completely any apparently unnatural event. A case in point is the mysterious deaths of the men of the Pyncheon line. Hawthorne did a thorough job of convincing the reader that the curse was the cause of the sudden deaths of these men. Then he turned around and stated that apoplexy had caused their deaths, after all.

Of real flesh-and-blood characters Hawthorne had but a faint grasp; consequently, the spirits which his magic called up were so lightly clad in flesh that they were spectral. Clifford Pyncheon, the wronged prisoner in *The House of the*
Seven Gables, glided like a gray ghost through the gloomy scenes of the dreary story. All his capacities, except that of love of the beautiful, were lost during his prison years, and he continued to the end of the story to be a shadowy, ghost-like character.

The romance, though a contemporary novel, actually contained in the personality of Holgrave, another embodiment of the unemotional, common-sense New Englander. The novel had really, as far as anything so remote and mystical could have, a pleasant atmosphere which pervaded it with magical effects. Yet in this story the reader is sometimes allowed to descend from the mystical heights to the very real earth and to have contact with a quite real human being, whose fortunes were more interesting than the theme of the story, the working out of the inherited retribution in the form of the curse. This character was the grief-stricken Hepzibah Pyncheon, whose gray and austere life was so strangely and miraculously exalted by her pity and affection for her cruelly wronged brother.

Phoebe was probably happy with her lover, who was familiar with the practice of mesmerism, but she did not so engross the attention as her elderly cousin, Hepzibah. The pretty young girl did, however, give charm and artistic relief to the grim narrative of long-deferred retribution.

Perhaps the foreign flavor of Italy stirred within
Hawthorne's breast the exotic quality ever present within him. At any rate, two Hawthornes, the old one and the new one, were struggling in the pages of The Marble Faun. The old Hawthorne won, as one would expect him to do. The new Hawthorne tried hard to use the European scene; again the hold of early environment proved too strong, and the new man became no more than a shadowy figure. Always before Hawthorne had been faithful to the locale of his nativity. The Scarlet Letter was a shadow of his own spiritual past, an exemplification of strict Puritanism. The House of the Seven Gables resulted from a brooding over the New England scene as he knew it. The Marble Faun, on the other hand, represented a struggle to present a foreign scene. The struggle resulted in partial failure, because there is as much of New England as of Europe in The Marble Faun. Donatello may have been a faun, but he was a New England faun, who attained a soul through suffering, a suffering colored with Puritan morals.

As has been stated previously, Hawthorne was not interested in sin itself, but was intent merely on the spiritual results of sin. The theme of The Marble Faun is based on a sin that involved Miriam at some time before the beginning of the story and had some connection with a mysterious old man who attached himself to her and was her constant follower until, in a fit of passion, Donatello threw him over
a precipice. The concealment of the crime committed, together with the mystery of his influence over the girl, provided an air of unreality which permeated the whole story.

The reader, of necessity, was acquainted with Donatello’s sin, because the sin he committed constituted a thread of the plot. As the result of the perpetration of his crime and the subsequent suffering, the youth gained a soul and became an inhabitant of a real world instead of a dweller in that dream world of unreality in which he had formerly existed.

The weird story of the mysterious person who wielded such uncanny influence over Miriam and was in some manner bound up in her past was inextricably interwoven with the plot of the romance. The fact that he met his death by being thrown over the precipice where so many Romans had thrown themselves in despair upon the rocks lent horror as well as an atmosphere of the eerie to the story.

In the setting, perhaps more than in the plot, Hawthorne gave the feeling of the unreal. The air of Rome was stifling, poisoned by the breath of countless generations; it had been breathed too often. The air on the old seven-gabled house in the New England village of Salem had been defiled by the generations who had lived in it; it was unwholesome, yet, paradoxically, it was that very atmosphere of antiquity which had inspired the author and invested the
tale with its special charm. The physical contagion of antiquity in the old house, though, was nothing to the moral corruption of the house and the family. The sins of generations of Pyncheons sent out evil exhalations from every stone and timber of it. On the other hand, the prayers breathed and the blessings invoked, and all impulses of good, appear to have left no spiritual influence behind.

In The Marble Faun this atmosphere of stifling decay was magnified many times. The appalling mass of wickedness so tainted the moral atmosphere and infected the substance of the city that every possible crime lurked in the shadows. Here, too, the evil influences far outweighed, or even cancelled out, the good. The apostles, saints and martyrs, philosophers, and painters appear to have left no spiritual mark upon Roman stones. In such a setting as this, one may expect the most exaggerated unrealities and have his expectations realized.

Each of Hawthorne's romances was told in terms of a small group of characters, of whom three usually emerged farthest from the shadows. These characters, like the plot and the setting, played a part in producing the effect of the supernatural. While Miriam's past was mysterious, she presented very little of the supernatural, probably just enough to capture the interest of Donatello, the Faun. There were but few allusions to such unearthly qualities as
she possessed. She was definitely under the sinister influence of the old monk who lurked in the shadows, emerging often to taunt her with his knowledge of the secret which they shared. It was this bondage to the old man which accounted for all her actions that had an air of the eerie.

The old monk, who acted as a model for Miriam, and whom Hawthorne first introduced as the Spectre of the Catacombs, had something of the unknown about him that made him seem very unreal as a flesh-and-blood individual. His manner of stealth, appearing suddenly from nowhere, surrounded his being with an atmosphere of the supernatural.

It was Donatello, however, whom the author invested with the greatest air of unreality. By tracing his ancestry through the centuries to the prehistoric times when fauns actually lived upon the earth in their sequestered sylvan homes, Hawthorne almost convinced the reader that Donatello was a veritable faun himself. He gave to the carefree youth all the qualities possessed by the young man's ancient ancestors. A being so gay and light of heart and limb as the happy, soulless faun could have known little or nothing except unthinking enjoyment and irresponsible frolic and delight in mere breath and motion. Therefore, the fine, harmless, soulless creature, awakened to spiritual life by the shock of a grave sin and purified by suffering, was transformed by his crime into a sober, remorseful creature
who paid in the end for his misdeeds.

Hawthorne's fiction was almost wholly idea. He did not start with observed characters, but with an imagined problem or situation of the soul and invented characters, either real ones or those airy creatures that inhabit his romances, and scenes, often improbable, to fit. It has been pointed out that *The Scarlet Letter* did not narrate the story of Hester's and Dimmesdale's sin, but gave the sequel in their suffering. Also in *The House of the Seven Gables* and *The Marble Faun* the sin had preceded the opening of the story, which dealt in each case with working out a retribution.

Hawthorne was undoubtedly concerned with the problem of sin and redemption, but it is not likely that he wrote his novels or stories for sermons. Neither external nor internal evidence supports such a claim. If he tended to select moral problems, it was because they interested him and because he was able to use them to an advantage in working out the element of the supernatural. From that point of view, his moral interest counts in his favor. Wherein the mood of his stories would be different if he had not been so concerned with sin cannot be determined. In this connection, one may sum up the three romances by stating that *The Scarlet Letter* is a romance of pain; *The House of the Seven Gables* is essentially a romance of crime; *The Marble Faun* is
a romance of penitential despair.

Hawthorne never errs in his analysis of sin, its operation, or its effect. His characters are true to themselves; the environment suits the case; nature always conforms to the tragedy, either illuminating or darkening the play as it goes on. The author has no theory of his own; it is the same old story, eating the forbidden fruit and reaping the wages of sin -- death. And always interwoven with the plot, mingled with the setting, and injected into the characters is the element of the supernatural.
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