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# Character Revelation in Hawthorne: A Study of Inappropriate Laughter and the Deceptive Quality of Appearance and Reality

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# CHARACTER REVELATION IN HAWTHORNE: A STUDY OF INAPPROPRIATE LAUGHTER AND THE DECEPTIVE QUALITY OF APPEARANCE AND REALITY

by

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# VITA

The author, Helen V. Garvey, is the daughter of Giuseppe Antonio Ferrante and Esther (Ardito) Ferrante. She was born September 22, 1956, in Beverly, Massachusetts.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

According to the OED "to laugh" is defined as "to manifest the combination of bodily phenomena . . . which forms the instinctive expression of mirth. . . ."[1] In the fiction of Nathaniel Hawthorne, however, laughter is rarely a response to mirth. In fact, a laughing or smiling character in Hawthorne is one of the surest signs that things are not as they appear. Agnes Mc Neill Donohue states in her book Hawthorne: Calvin's Ironic Stepchild: "Laughter and smiles in Hawthorne are rarely cheerful and we have learned to read of them with misgiving, mistrust, and foreboding."[2] Hawthorne's cast of laughing and smiling characters includes everything from witches, who characteristically cackle at their triumph in evil, to ministers, who hypocritically display to the world an irreproachable exterior, while inwardly they steep in secret sin. In each work to be discussed we will see that the deceptive quality of appearance and reality and inappropriate laughter are often the means through which man's inner depravity is outwardly reflected. This inappropriate laughter so prevalent in

Hawthorne's fiction functions not only as a commentary on man's inner depravity, it is also a major technique which reveals character. And in nearly every work to be discussed Hawthorne's narrative voice comments upon the destructive and ironic qualities of such inappropriate laughter and smiles evinced by his characters.

"Ethan Brand" for instance, the first of the four tales to be discussed, begins and ends with the appalling and diabolical laughter of Ethan Brand, through which he is self-defined and which ultimately symbolizes his complete transformation into the fiend. And in "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" Robin has six encounters with the town's people, in all of which he, in his innocence, is perplexed by their derisive and mirthless laughter; the climax of the tale results in Robin's first and only laugh, but which is also a derisive and mirthless laugh at his kinsman's expense, symbolizing his Fall from innocence. In the next tale, "Young Goodman Brown," we see man's encounter with evil which is shown to operate in the world with a stronger force than does good. Whether in a dream or in fact, Goodman Brown's encounter with evil results in his Fall as he remains impotent in his ability to choose good because he cannot completely reject evil. Goodman Brown becomes for a time at least the fiend, evinced in his terrible diabolic laughter which he shrieks while racing through the forest, all the while blaspheming and proclaiming that the world belongs to

the devil. And in "The Minister's Black Veil," subtitled "a parable," we see Reverend Hooper's character defined through his eight melancholy smiles. Completely alienated from society because he chooses to wear a black veil, he is first rejected by mankind, represented by his congregation, and then he is rejected by Elizabeth, his affianced, when in her refusal to marry him Reverend Hooper is denied personal affection. As his isolation from the world grows, and tortured by what appears to be the hypocrisy of his secret sin or possibly the sins of others, Reverend Hooper dies a gloomy death, wearing the same ironic mysteriously melancholy smile that he wore throughout life. These tales, in their brevity, poignantly grasp the reader's attention and focus it primarily upon the destructive quality of a character's inappropriate laughter, thus intensifying its effect; the novels, as we will see, contain all of these same qualities of inappropriate laughter, yet its effect is more subtly realized.

The four novels contain all of the same poignant qualities of ironic and destructive laughter as the tales, but interspersed throughout generally several hundred pages, the effect is often less obvious. In The Scarlet Letter for instance, the shortest of Hawthorne's novels, there are four major characters whose laughter is inappropriate. We can realize the cumulative effect, though not immediately felt, of Hester Prynne's laughter and smiles: although the unhappy

adulteress utters occasionally in the beginning of the novel several happy little laughs at some antics demonstrated by her little elf-child, Pearl, she is far more likely to wear a sad smile in resignation to her plight. And Pearl, her elf-like child, whose strange impish smile and unfeeling laughter at her mother's tears become more ironic as she gleefully laughs when grasping the scarlet "A" painfully searing her mother's breast, is without human sympathy. Arthur Dimmesdale, the wretchedly hypocritical clergyman who is too weak to confess openly his partnership in Hester Prynne's adultery, choosing instead to cherish the security of his position, is ultimately tortured by his own guilt to such an extent that he plunges further into sin; laughing bitterly he emerges from the forest, represented as the heart of evil in this novel. Ultimately, however, he smiles with the peacefulness that comes from confession of his sin as well as resignation to his fate, as he publically dies on the scaffold. Finally in this scenario is Roger Chillingworth, Hester's husband believed dead for the past two years, a study in evil. So determined to discover the identity of Hester's partner in sin and so determined to destroy him, Roger Chillingworth becomes a fiend; manifesting a wretched and disdainful countenance as physically he becomes stooped and decrepit-a symbol of his loss of human sympathy-and laughing diabolically all the while he, like Ethan Brand, is transformed into the fiend.

The second novel to be discussed, <u>The House of the</u>

Seven Gables, incorporates various types of laughter, much of which but to a lesser degree than in The Scarlet Letter, is ironic and destructive. In The House of the Seven Gables laughter is used most effectively in contrasting the characteristics of Hepzibah, whose grim and menacing but unintentional scowl is contrasted to the purposefully cultivated benevolent smile of Judge Pyncheon, whose "sultry" smile we are told could "tempt flies to come and buzz in it."[3] The complete irony here is that the appearance is not the reality: where Hepzibah's threatening scowl is not destructive, Judge Pyncheon's benevolent smile is. Hepzibah is a kindly old woman, albeit a prudish old maid who has lived alone in The Gables for the past forty odd years; and we might note at this point that despite the endearing light in which Hepzibah is cast the narrator, in conjunction with her brother Clifford, uncharitably laughs at Hepzibah's scowling and ugly appearance. And so this scowl is ironic in that it does not in any way represent her inner self, as Judge Pyncheon's smile in no way reflects his inner self. Judge Jaffrey Pyncheon is a despicable, animal-like villain, who sees his cousin Clifford imprisoned thirty years for a murder which the judge himself commits. He is one of the most morally depraved characters in Hawthorne's fiction. Donohue says it all in her statement: "To know him is to despise him" (91). Totally unrepentent of his crime, Judge Pyncheon's smiles reveal him as the ultimate hypocrite, void of all human sympathy. We learn to read of his smiles with

distrust as we realize their destructive quality: he is completly without conscience and dangerous to all whom he envisions as a threat to his self-serving ends.

The Blithedale Romance, like The House of the Seven Gables, also contains laughter which is purely ironic as well as laughter which is destructive. Coverdale, the narrator whose part in the novel is that of the cold detached observer, laughs and smiles with bitter scorn when he realizes that neither Zenobia, the beautiful, amazon-like woman about whose virginity he never ceases to speculate, nor Priscilla, care for him. They instead prefer Hollingsworth. And ultimately a man alone, Coverdale is totally unaware that his isolation from society is his own doing. Preferring to detach himself from human sympathy so that he can observe rather than participate in life, Coverdale is revealed at the end of the novel as the ultimate deceiver-the self-deceiver. Coverdale is thus revealed through his petty, derisive, jealous, and scornful laughter. Zenobia, another major character in the novel and the one with whom our voyeur Coverdale is so taken, laughs and smiles ironically either at Coverdale's expense or at her own mocking realization that her feminist beliefs are antithetical to those of Hollingsworth, with whom she is in love, and whose views of women are hardly enlightened. When we last see Zenobia at "Eliot's pulpit," she has accepted Hollingsworth's preference for Priscilla to herself; and thinking herself totally alone, Zenobia begins to sob hysterically. Realizing that she is in

fact not alone but rather is being watched by Coverdale she begins to laugh hysterically. We last see Zenobia, who has reached the limits of her endurance, uttering this tragic ironic laughter. She drowns herself that night. And too, there is in The Blithedale Romance the destructive laughter of a prototypical Hawthorne villain, Westervelt. Typically completely apart from the human sphere in his lack of feeling for others, not to mention his physical humanity which, we might add, is occasionally thrown into question by the narrator, Westervelt really has nothing in common with mankind. He has only selfish purposes for the attainment of selfish ends; his character is revealed through his laughter and smiles which are always sarcastic, diabolic, and riddled with hidden meaning.

In The Marble Faun we have what appears to be a relatively happy ending: Kenyon gets Hilda and although Donatello is imprisoned, Miriam is there waiting for him. There is the sense of hopefulness in The Marble Faun that is lacking in the other novels. The major characters whose laughter is necessarily tragic and ironic are Donatello, the "Faun," and Miriam, the woman with the dark past whom he loves so passionately and who is ultimately responsible for Donatello's Fall. Donatello, initially a child-like and rather tedious simpleton, is likened to "the Faun" of Praxiteles because of his joyful, laughing, sportive demeanor. When he later commits murder, spurred on by the approval he sees flash momentarily in Miriam's eyes,

Donatello suffers and through his suffering attains his humanity. No longer a carefree sylvan creature, the cathartic process he undergoes in this felix culpa humanizes Donatello. Throughout this process nothing is more obvious to his friends and the reader alike, than that his scornful laughter and deeply sad smiles are in complete contrast to the joyful Donatello we met at the beginning of the novel. And this signifies not only his inner depravity, the human propensity for evil which Donatello has only recently realized, but his Fall from a state of innocence into the human fold. Donatello is now in a state where he can understand and truly does repent of his evil act. And Miriam, the dark beauty with the equally dark past, silently and perhaps unwittingly consents to Donatello's questioning look when he kills her model. Her laughter and smiles are rarely innocent, usually reflecting instead hidden meaning or sarcasm, and are nearly always ironic. In much the same fashion as Zenobia, who reconciles herself to what she deems to be her fate, Miriam, whose character is interesting and complex, eventually resigns herself to what she considers her own "evil fate,"[4] manifested through her ironic laughter and smiles. And again unlike the other three novels, The Marble Faun contains no diabolic laughter with the exception of a smile from the model, supposedly Miriam's "evil fate." What laughter and smiles exist-and there are numerous instances of both-eventually become in true Hawthorne fashion tragic and ironic.

In the following pages I intend to discuss the tales and novels previously mentioned, devoting one chapter to each work. It will be shown that Hawthorne's use of inappropriate laughter and the deceptive quality of appearance and reality are the techniques used to reveal character and are the common threads running throughout each of these works.

## CHAPTER II

## ETHAN BRAND

In "Ethan Brand" laughter is so pervasive a force that character revelation is realized only in conjunction with Brand's terrible laughter. Richard H. Fogle in his book, Hawthorne's Fiction: The Light & The Dark, writes of Hawthorne's use of laughter in this tale: "Most prominent among the devices which bind the tale together are the recurrent references to the laugh by which Brand wordlessly expresses his unspeakable isolation and the irony of his search."[5] The tale begins and ends with Brand's laughter, as does his search for the Unpardonable Sin begin and end with his introspective musings at the lime-kiln. As the story begins the first thing we hear is Ethan Brand's "roar of laughter," which we are immediately told is "not mirthful."[6] This initial laugh reveals the characters of Bartram, the lime-burner who sits at nightfall watching his kiln on Graylock mountain, and that of his little son Joe. The child is immediately aware that there is something strange about this laughter as he asks: "Father, what is that?" Bartram, not at all disturbed by the sound answers

that it must be "some drunken man . . . some merry fellow from the bar-room in the village . . . shaking his jolly sides at the foot of Graylock." But the child persists with: "But, father, he does not laugh like a man that is glad" (1184-1185). Barely thirteen lines into the tale, this laughter reveals the purity and innocence of little Joe, who is sensitive to what will be later known as the sinful laughter of Ethan Brand. Yet his father, Bartram, described as an "obtuse, middle-aged clown," is revealed if not as a sinner, than certainly as one without innocence (1185). As the plot develops and we are introduced to Ethan Brand, we see that his laughter is the focal point of the story, revealing the character of others and ultimately reflecting back upon himself.

Within moments of this strange laughter there stands Ethan Brand, who has just returned from his eighteen year search. Upon learning his identity Bartram is none too concerned as he laughingly asks: "The man that went in search of the Unpardonable Sin?" (1187) Bartram asks him if he has found the Unpardonable Sin and if so what it is. Ethan Brand points to his own heart and replies: "Here." We are told that suddenly and

> without mirth in his countenance, but as if moved by an involuntary recognition of the infinite absurdity of seeking throughout the world for what was the closest of all things to himself, and looking into every heart, save his own, for what was hidden in no other breast, he broke into a laugh of scorn. (1187)

We are now aware that Ethan Brand's sin, the nature of which

we can only guess at this point and certainly his reaction to it, result in his Fall. If we are not convinced of this Hawthorne's narrative voice comments on this inappropriate laughter:

> Laughter, when out of place, mistimed, or bursting forth from a disordered state of feeling, may be the most terrible modulation of the human voice. The laughter of one asleep, even if it be a little child,-the madman's laugh,-the wild, screaming laugh of a born idiot,-are sounds that we sometimes tremble to hear, and would always willingly forget. Poets have imagined no utterance of fiends or hobgoblins so fearfully appropriate as a laugh. (1187)

Ethan Brand says of his Unpardonable Sin: "It is a sin that grew within my own breast" (1189). Authorial comment states that as he replied Ethan Brand was "standing erect with a pride that distinguishes all enthusiasts of his stamp" (1189). Ethan Brand continues:

> A sin that grew nowhere else! The sin of an intellect that triumphed over the sense of brotherhood with man and reverence for God, and sacrificed everything to its own mighty claims! The only sin that deserves a recompense of immortal agony! Freely, were it to do again, would I incur the guilt. Unshrinkingly I accept the retribution! (1189)

Here we have it. Not only does Ethan Brand show spiritual pride, he freely chooses to fall again. At this point Joe returns from the village with the "jolly fellows" Bartram sent for (1187); once acquainted with Ethan Brand, all are eager to learn the results of his search. During this interaction the characters of the villagers are revealed and we also learn the specific nature of Ethan Brand's sin.

The villagers who return to see Ethan Brand are no more "jolly" than he is; and so we are once again made aware of

the deceptive quality of appearance and reality in relation to their inappropriate laughter and semblance of mirth. Bartram, it seems, can no more discern Ethan Brand's scornful laughter from that of a genuinely "jolly" fellow, than he can discern innocence from sin. The first person we meet is the stage agent described as a "dry joker, though, perhaps, less on account of any intrinsic humor than from a certain flavor of brandy-toddy and tobacco-smoke, which impregnated all his ideas and expressions, as well as his person" (1189). The second character is Lawyer Giles, a title he still retained from the courtesy of the town's people. Many years of liquor "imbibed at all hours, morning, noon, and night," had caused his demise from "intellectual" pursuits to all manner of "bodily labor" (1189). This labor had transformed Giles into a crippled wretch with part of one foot chopped off and his right hand missing. Next to the lawyer is the village doctor about whom we are told: "Brandy possessed this man like an evil spirit. . . ." And although he is attributed the gift of healing to the extent that he "sometimes raised a dying man . . . by miracle," we are also told that he "quite as often . . . sent his patient to a grave that was dug many a year too soon" (1190). We could more correctly term this group a drunken mob than "jolly fellows." As these "three worthies" greet Ethan Brand we are told that the sight of them is too much for him to bear:

> No mind, which has wrought itself by intense and solitary meditation into a high state of enthusiasm, can endure the kind of contact with low and vulgar modes of thought

> and feeling to which Ethan Brand was now subjected. It made him doubt-and, strange to say, it was a painful doubt-whether he had indeed found the Unpardonable Sin, and found it within himself. The whole question on which he had exhausted life, and more than life, looked like a delusion. (1190)

This statement is completely ironic. No one is more loathsome than Ethan Brand, who willingly chooses to pursue intellectual endeavors at the expense of his fellow man; a man whose spiritual pride leads him to proclaim that he would gladly choose to fall again. Ethan Brand's reaction is to shout: "Leave me, ye brute beasts, that have made yourselves so, shrivelling up your souls with fiery liquors! I have done with you. Years and years ago, I groped into your hearts and found nothing there for my purpose. Get ye gone!" (1190). Here again is irony. Unknowingly, Ethan Brand is essentially vindicating all of these people who sin only against themselves. And while we would note that the doctor has killed several of his patients-through quackery, drunkenness, or both-it does not appear that he sets out to do so purposefully; or for that matter, that he is even conscious of what he has done. Yet Ethan Brand-who in his pride is unable to see what sin he commits-purposefully seeks out the one sin Unpardonable to God. And this, in itself, should cause Brand to realize that he is not better than these people, who externalize, in gross fashion, but a mere part of Brand's inner depravity. In fact, he is not better than anybody. Fogle views Ethan Brand differently, however; he states that: "Ethan Brand, who has cast himself away by

his own choice, is frequently more admirable than the inferior sinners about him" (54-55). It seems that Ethan Brand is, in fact, less "admirable" precisely because he "has cast himself away by his own choice." And it appears that Ethan Brand even realizes as much. While he may initially have judged himself superior to these drunks, he finally meets the sad eyes of Humphrey, a fourth member of the group. This "white-haired" Humphrey is Esther's father: Esther being "the very girl whom, with such cold and remorseless purpose, Ethan Brand had made the subject of a psychological experiment, and wasted, absorbed, and perhaps annihilated her soul, in the process" (1191). Ethan Brand is now fully aware of the extent of his own depravity.

While it appears to be the general consensus that Ethan Brand and Esther were in love, it seems rather difficult to accept that anyone could treat a loved one in this manner. It seems more appropriate and more in keeping with Ethan Brand's character that he did not love, but rather used Esther, who almost certainly loved him. This would make it easy for Brand to treat her without feeling, as simply the subject of a "psychological experiment." As we will later see with Roger Chillingworth in The Scarlet Letter, with Coverdale in The Blithedale Romance, and with the stranger in "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," there is little more loathsome to Hawthorne than the sin which results from what Donohue terms "the separation of the head and the heart" (211). And now, with

Esther's father standing before him, Ethan Brand knows there is indeed an Unpardonable Sin. And he alone has committed it. He mumbles: "Yes, it is no delusion. There is an Unpardonable Sin!" (1191) Although we feel no sorrow for Ethan Brand, we are gratified that he is at least aware of what he has done. There is a break in the dialogue at this point as an old German Jew happens upon the scene distracting Ethan Brand from further discussing his sin. In this next scene we hear Brand's second peal of terrible and inappropriate laughter, a laugh which isolates him from humanity.

The "old Dutchman," as he is called by one of the youths who come to see Ethan Brand and hear of the Unpardonable Sin, brings out his diorama of pictures representing various places all over the world (1191). When this show is concluded Bartram's little Joe peeps into the box and amuses himself with the distorted image the magnifying glass wreaks upon his features. Engaged in such play, the child suddenly shrinks with horror because he sees Ethan Brand looking at him. This is again another instance where the child's innocence is contrasted to Ethan Brand's sinfulness. What happens next is probably the one incident in the narrative which sheds more light on Ethan Brand's character than anything else. As the traveller and Ethan Brand are exchanging words, a dog who "seemed to be his own master" appears out of nowhere. Almost as suddenly as he

appears, the dog begins chasing his tail. We are told that:

> Never was seen such headlong eagerness in pursuit of an object that could not possibly be attained. . . . Faster and faster, round about went the cur; and faster and still faster fled the unapproachable brevity of his tail. . . . until, utterly exhausted, and as far from the goal as ever, the foolish old dog ceased his performance as suddenly as he had begun it. (1192-1193)

The crowd viewing this spectacle, a crowd comprised of drunkards and such "half-way sinners" (1188) as Bartram, burst forth with "universal laughter" (1193). That there is nothing in any of these spectators' lives worth laughing at, is apparent to no one more than the guilty Ethan Brand. Having long ago lost his human sympathy, Brand is now completely isolated from the human sphere; his laughter is self-referential as it reflects back upon itself and only manifests Brand's advanced stage of development into the fiend. Seated upon a log, "and moved, as it might be, by a perception of some remote analogy between his own case and that of this self-pursuing cur," Ethan Brand "broke into the awful laugh, which, more than any other token, expressed the condition of his inward being" (1193). The critics have much to say concerning this particular scene in the tale.

Robert Dusenbery, in his article entitled "Hawthorne's Merry Company: The Anatomy Of Laughter In The Tales And Short Stories" makes the interesting comment that Ethan Brand "uses laughter to stop laughter."[7] He comments on the fact that the crowd, "aghast" at the horror of the "inauspicious sound," stops laughing (1193). Dusenbery points out that: "As the slant of light falls upon Brand, all laughter ceases,

and the wrong that Brand has done to these people and the corruptions that have followed them through their days are reviewed by the author through a series of flashbacks" (286). It is true that Brand admits groping into the "hearts" of these people, and finding "nothing"; and although Hawthorne describes the stage agent, the lawyer, and the doctor, as pathetic drunks, he does not really accomplish this "through a series of flashbacks." And Brian Way, in his essay "Art and the Spirit of Anarchy: A Reading of Hawthorne's Short Stories" states flatly:

> If any evidence is required to prove that he has discovered and committed the unpardonable sin, it is to be found in his appalling laughter, not in obscure references to a forbidden intellectual quest, nor in the even slighter suggestions of a wicked psychological experiment performed upon the woman who had loved him.[8]

Well, if we are to accept Way's premise, and we are not, that there is no quest and no "psychological experiment," then we must completely ignore the text. In this fashion we can easily dismiss one of the tale's most pervasive themes, the quest. We must ignore not only Bartram and virtually every other character in the tale who recognize Ethan Brand as the man who went in search of the Unpardonable Sin, we must ignore Hawthorne. He informs us of Esther, "the very girl" who was the victim of Ethan Brand's experiment. If there were no Esther, then why would Ethan Brand have felt the pangs of guilt and shame when he looked into her father's sad eyes? And, too, we must ignore Ethan Brand when he recognizes his sin and admits that he commits "the sin of an

intellect that triumphed" over God and man. Not only must we ignore the text of Ethan Brand, we must render completely impotent the concept of intertextuality: we must not, as we have done, look elsewhere in Hawthorne for the possibility of a common theme.

And specifically, we must render as completely invalid The Scarlet Letter's Roger Chillingworth, whose great sin is to violate the "sanctity of a human heart."[9] We must ignore Aylmer in "The Birthmark," whose obsession to obtain perfection causes him to kill the one person he loves, his wife. If we are to accept Way's premise that there is no search and no "psychological experiment," we must, above all, ignore whatever parallel or analogy might exist between these two individuals and Ethan Brand. And while Way dismisses as evidence of Brand's sin both the "forbidden intellectual quest" and the "wicked psychological experiment performed upon the woman who had loved him," he does concede that a sin is committed, the evidence for which is to be found in Brand's "appalling laughter": yet we are left only to speculate at best, as to its dark origins. And to condemn Ethan Brand's laughter without any sort of evidence for so doing is suspect. Admittedly rare, there can be found such characters in Hawthorne who in and of themselves, emit happy and appropriate laughter. In "The Gentle Boy," for instance, Ilbrahim, in spite of having more than his share of troubles, is initially described as having an "exuberant cheerfulness";[10] and of the other little Puritan children

playing outdoors Hawthorne writes: "The glee of a score of untainted bosoms was heard in light and airy voices, which danced among the trees like sunshine become audible . . . . the bliss of childhood gushes from its innocence" (904). Now how these gleeful and "untainted" children later behave is quite another matter; the point here is that laughter in and of itself, when innocently engaged in, is not sinful. It is only in connection with evil that we consider Ethan Brand's laughter appalling and inappropriate. For Way to simply discount all of the tale's evidence which clearly depicts the nature of Brand's sin, and then to label his laughter "appalling," though for no apparent reason, makes little sense and is a complete departure from the text.

And too, there is Nina Baym, another modern critic whose thinking is in line with Way's; in her book, The Shape Of Hawthorne's Career, she writes: "Interpretations of this story that concentrate on the theological implications of Brand's delusion (the Unpardonable Sin) miss Hawthorne's emphasis."[11] This seems rather novel, considering Brand's sin is not only the focal point of the story, it is the only reference point we have to define Brand: even our own study which concentrates on character revelation through Brand's inappropriate laughter and the deceptive quality of appearance and reality reverts ultimately back to Brand's sin. How could we read his laughter as inappropriate, ironic, and diabolic, if he were not a depraved sinner? Hyatt H. Waggoner, though her predecessor by many years, could be

responding directly to her when he writes in his book, Hawthorne: A Critical Study,: "Hawthorne was a symbolist, he was not a modern symbolist. Treating him as though he was has accounted for a number of critical misinterpretations of his work."[12] It would appear that Baym misses "Hawthorne's emphasis" when she states that Hawthorne does not emphasize sin in this tale. Hawthorne's emphasis on sin is not only common to all of his works, it is, in fact, one of the Hawthorne hallmarks.

Ethan Brand's second bout of laughter, in fact, ultimately isolates him from humanity as he becomes completely a fiend. Appalled at Ethan Brand's strange laughter, the crowd quickly disbands leaving Bartram and his son "to deal as they might with their unwelcome guest" (1193). Previously the subject of the crowd's fascination, Ethan Brand becomes the "unwelcome guest" because of his appalling and ironic laughter. Although the villagers know only that they are suddenly uneasy and wish to leave, Ethan Brand knows much more. He has finally arrived at the same sort of self-realization, though certainly to a different degree, that we will later see Robin achieve in "My Kinsman, Major Molineux." Although his spiritual pride has made him doubt his own depravity during his interview with the motly but still human town's people, Ethan Brand now knows without a doubt that he alone is indeed guilty of the Unpardonable Sin. As everyone departs, only Little Joe, "a timorous and imaginative child," has a sense of foreboding, contrasting

his innocence once again to Ethan Brand's sinfulness (1193).

Ethan Brand shows no remorse concerning his self-discovery. On the contrary, he is totally complacent: he has chosen his fate and knows what he must do. As Ethan Brand "bade, rather than advised," Bartram and his son to go to sleep he said: "For myself, I cannot sleep. I have matters that it concerns me to meditate upon" (1193). And thus Ethan Brand contemplates, again in front of the lime-kiln, the events which transformed him into a fiend. We are told that: "He began to be so from the moment that his moral nature had ceased to keep the pace of improvement with his intellect" (1194). Realizing that he is indeed a fiend, Ethan Brand exhibits the same spiritual pride that we saw earlier in the story when he told Bartram that he would "willingly" accept retribution; here he says: "My task is done, and well done!" (1194) Like Arthur Dimmesdale of The Scarlet Letter, Ethan Brand is pleased that if innocence must be lost, the sin is, at least, "Unpardonable." And as he stokes the fire and contemplates the point at which he went morally astray, Ethan Brand makes no pretense of penitence, but celebrates his evil. Of this Fogle states: "The last act of the drama of the Unpardonable Sin is thus played out against a decor of red and black, the appropriateness of which is sufficiently obvious" (51). Brand commands the fire: "Embrace me, as I do thee!" (1195); so saying, he jumps into the furnace. At this point Ethan Brand emits his third and final roar of laughter-of the same strange sort he

exhibits at the beginning of the tale. Of this incident Donohue comments: "A horrible peal of laughter is heard that disturbs the uneasy sleep of Bartram and Joe, but they do not rise until sunlight-and it is a perfect and beautiful day, the day after Brand has gone to hell" (217).

In Ethan Brand we see the destructive power of this ironic laughter. This destructive laughter is the connecting link to every incident in the story. Ethan Brand destroyed himself long before we ever meet him and hear his terrible laughter. His inappropriate laughter, the only outward sign of his complete inner depravity, and the deceptive quality of appearance and reality are the binding forces which reveal his character. While Brand's laughter isolates him from humanity, it simultaneously evokes a universal response to his condition. His laughter is the only key incident around which everything else evolves. In fact, Ethan Brand is the only active participant in the story-he is the doer of the action. Ethan Brand laughs; everyone else responds. It is interesting to note that Ethan Brand laughs exactly three times, until with his third and final laugh he denies his own humanity. This appears to be a biblical parallel with Peter who denies Christ three times. It is difficult to fathom how Ethan Brand could commit the sin he did and not feel an overwhelming need to appeal to rather than revile God's mercy. Yet for Ethan Brand, who so desperately needs relief, there is none. Hawthorne seems to create characters who are (or think they are) beyond the reach of humanity or the

bounds of providence. What we have is a character whose "jolly" and mirthful appearance does not accurately reflect the reality of his complete spiritual depravity. Unlike Donatello of The Marble Faun, who as we will later see fights against it, Ethan Brand simply gives in to his human propensity for evil; and to such an extent that laughing all the while, he is ultimately consumed by it.

## CHAPTER III

### MY KINSMAN, MAJOR MOLINEUX

"My Kinsman, Major Molineux," unlike "Ethan Brand," is the study of a youth whose innocence is lost not consciously, but as the consequence of worldly experience; this worldly experience is manifested through his laughter. And while Robin's innocence is tainted so that he cannot return home, he acquires worldly experience which allows him to belong more readily to the community of mankind with its propensity for evil: he does not fall into the community of fiends as does Ethan Brand.

And again, unlike the solitary laughter of "Ethan Brand," "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" utilizes the laughter of the laughter of the crowd and the deceptive quality of appearance and reality as the medium through which character is revealed and developed. In this tale Robin has six encounters in his search for his kinsman; and in each instance Robin is greeted with laughter. After disembarking from the ferry Robin first encounters the man of the "sepulchral hems."[13] Innocent and inexperienced, Robin takes hold of the man's skirt and asks directions to the

Major's residence. Much to his surprise Robin is rebuked and threatened with the stocks. Releasing the man, Robin is aware of an "ill-mannered roar of laughter" coming "from the barber's shop" (1211). Bewildered at first by the man's behavior and this strange laughter as well, Robin is eventually able to reconcile both events as he is a "shrewd youth" (1211). He reasons that the barbers laugh at him for choosing this obviously rude and inappropriate guide. He vows to be "wiser" the next time (1211). But as the story progresses we realize that the term "shrewd" becomes increasingly ironic. Robin will never become "shrewd" until he falls from innocence, as it is impossible, at least in Hawthorne, for one to be both "shrewd" and "innocent." Continuing the search for his kinsman, Robin arrives next at an inn, where his inquiries are received with equal disdain.

As Robin approaches the inn tired and hungry from the day's thirty-mile hike, he is aware of a "fragrance of good cheer" that emanates into the night air (1211). Entering, he notices a man with a grotesque face whispering to a "group of ill-dressed associates" (1212). As Robin contemplates this scene the innkeeper approaches, and after acknowledging that he is from the country, bids Robin a "long stay" in the city (1212). Misinterpreting the innkeeper's welcome as a sign of respect to someone obviously related to the Major, Robin asks where his kinsman can be found. When suddenly the room becomes silent Robin again misinterprets this as a sign that all present wish to be his guide. Nothing could be further

from the truth. As suddenly as he bade Robin a friendly welcome, the innkeeper immediately begins reading the notice on the wall pertaining to a runaway bounden servant, noting the great likeness between this criminal and Robin. Thinking better of a confrontation, Robin leaves with the same satisfaction obtained in his first encounter: outside he hears a "general laugh" emerging from the tavern (1213). Furious and again bewildered Robin tells himself that had he "one of those grinning rascals in the woods" he "would teach him" a thing or two with his cudgel (1213). Again, this second peal of laughter from the crowd reveals the innocence of Robin's character-his cudgel, cut from a sapling, symbolizes the natural innocence of Robin's country background. As the mob laughs, Robin becomes as impatient as he is confused but continues in his search for his kinsman.

Searching in the street and meeting no one, Robin happens upon a house with its door ajar, revealing a pretty young woman and a strip of her scarlet petticoat. Totally innocent of the fact that this is a brothel and the young woman an employee thereof, Robin asks the girl where his kinsman resides. He is told: "Major Molineux dwells here" (1214). Completely taken in by what appears to be the kindness of his kinsman's maid-as this girl is the only person to respond civilly to Robin's inquiries-Robin is about to follow her indoors when she is frightened away by the noise of the approaching town crier. Hoping for a similar show of friendliness to a tired traveller, Robin asks for the

fourth time where he can find the Major. The lantern bearer's answer is: "Home, vagabond, home! Home, or we'll set you in the stocks by peep of day!" (1215) Robin repeats his question but there is no reply. But as the lantern bearer turns the corner Robin hears a "drowsy laughter" (1215). Still getting nowhere fast, Robin continues searching for his kinsman while pondering these two events -first with the girl and now with the town crier. And preferring to reflect upon the girl, although unaware of exactly what she is, Robin, with his usual degree of shrewdness remembers that he "read in her eyes what he did not hear in her words" (1215). Marching onward, all the while attempting to make sense out of the strange reactions his simple question has provoked, Robin has his fourth encounter which again ends with laughter at his expense. Now roaming the streets Robin comes upon two different groups of men, some of whom are dressed in "outlandish attire," and all of whom pause "to address him." But that the "few words" these men uttered were "in some language of which Robin knew nothing," they finally "bestowed a curse upon him in plain English and hastened away" (1215-1216).

Frustrated and hungry, Robin begins to entertain the idea of using force if necessary upon the next person he meets if a suitable answer is not obtained concerning the location of Major Molineux's residence. Deciding this course of action appropriate, Robin encounters "a bulky stranger, muffled in a cloak" (1216). Immediately, Robin holds up his

cudgel, barring the stranger's way, and demands to know where he can find his kinsman. The stranger says: "Keep your tongue between your teeth, fool, and let me pass!"; to which Robin responds: "No, no, neighbor! . . . I'm not the fool you take me for. . . ." (1216). Further reading reveals that Robin is, in fact, the very fool this stranger takes him for: yet Robin is still too naive to know it. As the stranger unmuffles his face and speaks thus, Robin observes that it is the same man with the grotesque face he met at the inn. This time, however, the man's appearance is different: half of his face is black and the other half is red. Still innocent, Robin cannot infer the symbolism of these colors. He is unaware that black is often used to symbolize guilt and red to symbolize sin-as we will later see both colors thus used in The Scarlet Letter with Hester Prynne's scarlet "A" and Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale's black robes. Robin is also unaware that red and black are most often the colors used to symbolize the devil, as Fogle points out in "Ethan Brand." Robin is completely perplexed, especially when this stranger tells him that the Major will pass by in one hour. And after grinning "in Robin's face," the stranger suddenly disappears from sight (1216). The odd behavior of all these smiling strangers has Robin on the brink of despair, as he suddenly sinks down upon the steps of a church and attempts to make sense out of the night's past events.

Robin begins to think that his kinsman may be dead Then he begins to dream about his family back in the country.

He sees his father, the minister, performing the family evening service outside in the fading sunlight. The service concluded, Robin sees his family returning into the house. When he tries to follow them inside Robin sees the door latch, locking him out. In a dreamlike state and unsure of where he is, Robin thinks that for a moment he sees his kinsman's face looking at him from a window across the street. At that moment another stranger passes by and Robin shouts: "Hallo, friend! Must I wait here all night for my kinsman, Major Molineux?" (1218) And with that, Robin initiates his sixth encounter, which is by far the most important in the tale. Robin unites himself with the one person who is aware that he is about to undergo a painful experience.

This stranger is described as a "gentleman in his prime, of open, intelligent, cheerful, and altogether prepossessing countenance," who accosts Robin "in a tone of real kindness" (1218). And just as the "jolly fellows" in Ethan Brand are anything but "jolly," this man is anything but kind and "cheerful." He, like Roger Chillingworth of The Scarlet Letter, is another one of Hawthorne's cold clinical observers anxious to witness Robin's Fall. This is evident in his statement: " . . . I have a singular curiosity to witness your meeting. . ." (1219). Robin, still at this point completely innocent, has no idea to what this stranger is alluding, and is simply grateful for the company. Thinking that he has found a sympathetic friend rather than a

disinterested and detached observer, Robin tells him of the stranger with the dual colored face. The "gentleman" responds: "May not a man have several voices, Robin, as well as two complexions?" (1220), indicating that this situation is perfectly normal. And while we realize a deeper meaning in these words and understand this stranger to possess at the very least worldly experience, Robin does not. Nor does Robin realize that all of the other "cheerful" characters he has encountered thus far are so only at his expense. His innocence precludes an understanding of the duplicity of man's moral nature. And so Robin unwittingly responds in what he no doubt deems a "shrewd" manner with: "Perhaps a man may; but Heaven forbid that a woman should!" (1220) As Robin makes this obvious reference to the prostitute he encountered earlier this evening, he prides himself on what he believes is an ability to discern that the girl may not have been all that she appeared to be. This is the first time Robin gives any thought to the possibility of conflict between appearance and reality; but his thinking progresses no further. Sitting on the church steps with this stranger, Robin suddenly hears in the distance a "wild and confused laughter" (1220). Unaware that his time is at hand Robin naively says: "Surely some prodigious merry-making is going on. I have laughed very little since I left home, sir, and should be sorry to lose an opportunity" (1220). With these prophetic words Robin and the stranger anxiously await the arrival of the laughing crowd and what results in Robin's Fall.

As the crowd draws near and people still sleepy appear in their windows, the laughter grows louder. The scene is described by the narrator as: "A mass of people, inactive, except as applauding spectators . . ."; and adds that: ". . . several women ran along the sidewalk, piercing the confusion of heavier sounds with their shrill voices of mirth or terror" (1221). The crowd, united through laughter, is complete in all respects but one. Robin is not laughing-not yet. But as the tension builds and the crowd draws nigh, Robin sees the "double-faced fellow" for the third time (1221). Little knowing what this man and his companions know, Robin excitedly awaits the crowd. Suddenly, the procession stops and Robin sees his kinsman, Major Molineux. The major has been tarred and feathered. We are told that his "face was pale as death," (1221), which ties in with the first man Robin encountered, the man of the "sepulchral hems." As the Major attempts to muster what little bit of pride he might have left, yet humiliated beyond all measure, he sees Robin and recognizes him at once. Staring at his kinsman in horror and disbelief, Robin suddenly hears a "peal of laughter," from the crowd: it was a "great, broad laugh," that "sailed over the heads of the multitude" (1222).

Trying to fathom what is happening Robin hears the laughter from all those who had made fun of him that night. But Robin does not become angry. He does not react against this mob who so badly abuses his kinsman; nor does he become incensed at the realization that he has been duped by

everyone in town. Witnessing this spectacle of his kinsman's degradation Robin is confronted and must choose, as everyone must, between good and evil. The tale reaches its climax as Robin is all at once "seized" by an impulse which caused him to send forth "a shout of laughter that echoed through the street" (1222). And as loud as the crowd became, Robin's laugh "was the loudest" of all (1222). Clearly, Robin makes his choice: he chooses evil. And so his "friend," the observer, the "double-faced fellow," and the whole town as well, witness Robin's Fall. This impulse that overtakes Robin is the evil in his nature suddenly awakened, squelching his innocence. Robin is now truly initiated into the community of mankind, with all of its propensity for evil-unlike Ethan Brand, who surrenders to his propensity for evil to the extent that he is finally consumed by it and becomes a fiend. Once Robin is thus initiated the "gentleman" observer speaks to Robin as a member of the same brotherhood; he can now truly become Robin's "friend," as they both share this propensity for evil.



Although Robin fails this test in the eyes of his kinsman by purposefully choosing not to do what is morally right, he does, however, pass this same test exceptionally well in the eyes of the sinful town. The observer says to Robin: "Well, Robin, are you dreaming?" (1222) Watching the procession pass by and not unaware that what he did was wrong Robin replies "rather dryly" to him: "Thanks to you, and to my other friends, I have at last met my kinsman, and he will

scarce desire to see my face again. I begin to grow weary of a town life, sir. Will you show me the way to the ferry?" (1223) Although Robin's comment shows that he is aware that what he did was wrong, he would like to believe that he can return home if he so chooses. Just as Ethan Brand never thought to look first into his own heart for the Unpardonable Sin, so too is Robin unaware that his sin is the greatest of anyone that night. Robin is not like these people who think it good sport to tar and feather the present office holder. Robin laughs at the suffering and degradation of a blood relative; someone who we know regarded Robin as "the favorite" (1219); someone who promised to launch Robin into a successful career. But Robin does not seem to fully realize or he does not wish to acknowledge that he cannot go home. The observer, who realizes the degree to which Robin sins, refuses to show him to the ferry. He says: " . . . If you prefer to remain with us, perhaps, as you are a shrewd youth, you may rise in the world without the help of your kinsman, Major Molineux" (1223). Robin really is "shrewd" at this point, shrewdness being equated with moral depravity. He is no longer innocent to the world's evil.

We can see that laughter in this tale, as is the case with "Ethan Brand," is the focal point around which everything evolves as well as the major technique used in revealing character. All of the laughter in "My Kinsman" is ironic and inappropriate. While all of the characters appear to be jolly and mirthful, they are in reality, depraved

sinners. But Robin reveals his innocence in his inability to distinguish appearance from reality when he is confronted by all of this laughter. Robin realizes, too, that his own depravity, manifested in his one "shout" of laughter which is "the loudest" of all, results from his human propensity for evil. Of laughter in this tale Waggoner states that: "Hawthorne made much of laughter as a mask of evil in all his works, but nowhere did he use it with more powerful effect and more subtle and far-reaching meaning than here, where it is the dominant image throughout" (59). And Donohue, who views this tale in Dantean terms writes: "In 'My Kinsman Major Molineux,' Hawthorne's most successful device of horror is the use of laughter, grim, sadistic, and mirthless, to signify the fearsomeness of Robin's journey into the "Inferno-city. . ." (48). And Mary Allen is another critic, who in her essay "Smiles and Laughter in Hawthorne," proposes the interesting idea that Robin "would hardly have joined the mob so readily if they had not been jovial."[14] Unlike Ethan Brand, who willingly, knowingly, and gladly chooses to fall, Robin is an innocent boy. I agree that to entice him into sin it is necessary that the evil deed have a sort of sugar coating-like laughter. By sharing in this laughter Robin can be part of the group-he can be accepted. Robin's fallacious thinking appears to be that since everyone is doing it, it must be alright: the alibi employed by the great rationalizers of the world. Where Ethan Brand searches for the Unpardonable Sin, Robin searches for his kinsman: what

Robin finds instead is his humanity with all of its potential for evil.

Dusenbery, a critic who compares laughter in "Ethan Brand" and "My Kinsman," offers as well a Dantean explanation of the various types of laughter in these tales. In the same vein as Donohue he states that in "My Kinsman": "The merry company laughs its way to Hell; and laughter represents gradations of evil among men" (288). We can certainly regard the town as what Donohue terms the "Inferno city," with all of its lost and damned souls. Brian Way and Victor Jones, on the other hand, are also modern critics, but they view Robin in a different light. Brian Way, the very same who would have us believe that the only "evidence" of Ethan Brand's sin-the nature about which we can only speculate, since all textual evidence pertaining to Brand's specific deeds is to be discounted-resides in his "appalling" laughter, proposes that Robin might not be able to return home and might not be able to remain in the town. He writes: "It is unlikely that Robin will return to the certainties of his country home, nor can we be sure that his 'shrewdness' will enable him to put together a new world-view out of the fragments of the old" (25). This statement seems ambiguous: where can Robin go? He either returns home to the country or he stays here in the city: there are no other choices. And it is more than "unlikely" that Robin will return to his home in the country. It appears to be impossible.

Certainly, Robin could physically take the ferry across

the river and return home-psychologically he cannot. When Robin is in that dreamlike state on the church steps he glimpses the truth when he sees the door to his house shut him out. He knows he no longer belongs there. Had Robin dropped to his knees and begged his kinsman to forgive his cruel laughter maybe he could have returned home, as Ethan Brand might have spared himself eternal damnation if he was ever once penitent. But that is not the plot. Such as it is, we can only imagine the response from Robin's father, the minister, upon hearing that his son laughed longer and louder than anyone else at the sight of his kinsman who had been tarred and feathered. As for Way's deduction that it is "unlikely" that Robin will remain in the city, the ending seems, on the contrary, to substantiate the idea that Robin belongs in the city. Now that Robin is initiated, he is qualified to live there. He can now join the brotherhood of evil and succeed in it. It seems that Hawthorne's sympathies are clearly with the old man and not with Robin when the narrative voice comments-as it did in "Ethan Brand"-on inappropriate laughter when we are told: "On they went, like fiends that throng in mockery around some dead potentate, mighty no more, but majestic still in his agony. On they went, in counterfeited pomp, in senseless uproar, in frenzied merriment, trampling all on an old man's heart" (1222). "Counterfeited," "senseless," "frenzied," and "trampling," are hardly tearms of endearment. Robin has participated in the activities this night; so it appears highly "unlikely"

that Robin can return home even if he so desires.

Another critic, Victor H. Jones, feels that the tale propounds as strong a political theme as a moral one; he states in his article,"Laughter In Hawthorne's Fiction": "Both politically and morally Robin holds himself superior to all the townsfolk."[15] I disagree with this statement, especially in light of Robin's moral nature revealed so directly through his laughter. In the first place, Robin has spent all of his eighteen years in the country leading a simple and innocent life. We are told that because Robin's older brother would inherit the farm, there is no other alternative but for Robin to go to see his kinsman. Robin is not a social climber. It is true that when he first arrives Robin thinks that if people knew he was related to the Major they would treat him differently; but this is because Robin is so proud of his kinsman and has so much respect for him. Robin, in his innocence, just assumes his sentiments are shared by everyone. And so it does not seem to result from a feeling of personal superiority, but rather from a sense of family pride that Robin searches for his kinsman.

As for Robin's alleged moral "superiority," there appears to be no textual evidence to support this idea. Robin finds the man of the "sepulchral hems" strange; the innkeeper and his patrons rude; the "double-faced fellow" bewildering; and the observer sympathetic. Robin spends the better part of the night trying to get a straight answer to his question concerning the location of his kinsman s residence. Even if

he wanted to, Robin has no time to ponder the depravity and relative depravity of everyone in town. He does not even know they are laughing at him, let alone that they are depraved, which again clearly demonstrates Robin's inability to discern appearance from reality in relation to all of the ironic and inappropriate laughter he encounters. If Robin had been aware of the moral nature of the individuals he encountered, he would not be innocent. But Robin is completely innocent and not aware such evil exists until he falls himself. Only after his Fall is Robin able to distinguish innocence from sin-appearance from reality-because he recognizes a kinship with the rest of mankind, which recognition reveals his character and is manifested in his one great "shout" of laughter.

At any rate, Hawthorne appears to be clear on the issue. Using laughter as he does, as the one absolute binding force, the sole link to which all else in the tale is connected, Hawthorne seems more concerned that we realize Robin becomes morally sidetracked, than that we read the tale as either a political statement, or one wherein Robin suffers from spiritual pride even before he arrives in the town; and that inappropriate laughter-Robin's and everyone else's-and the deceptive quality of appearance and reality work together in "My Kinsman," as they do in the remaining works to be discussed, to reveal character.

## CHAPTER IV

### YOUNG GOODMAN BROWN

In "Young Goodman Brown" we find many of the same elements that exist in "Ethan Brand" and "My Kinsman, Major Molineux". While the outcome of "My Kinsman" is certainly different from that of "Young Goodman Brown," both Robin and Goodman Brown go on a search and must choose between good and evil. Where Robin, in searching for his kinsman discovers the existence of evil in the world, which choice of evil results in his loss of innocence and initiation into the community of mankind, Goodman Brown, on the other hand, goes into the forest with the predetermined purpose of choosing evil-for one night only! Goodman Brown deludes himself with the belief that he can stray from the "straight and narrow" path for this one night and somehow it will not affect his spiritual state-as we will later see, Hester Prynne deludes herself with this same belief. But when he is actually confronted with the choice between good and evil Goodman Brown becomes mentally paralyzed and cannot choose. Realizing the pervasiveness of evil in the world, Goodman Brown cannot totally reject evil; but neither can he totally accept his

faith. When he emerges from the forest the narrator tells us that from that day forward Goodman Brown was "distrustful" of everyone and that "his dying hour was gloom."[16] And When Goodman Brown emerges from the forest with the belief, whether the result of dreams or facts, that his own wife as well as many of the religious pillars of the community have participated the previous night in a witches' meeting, he is never the same. The deceptive quality of appearance and reality and the inappropriate, ironic and destructive laughter that Goodman Brown echoes in the forest before his reemergence into the world reveal his character.

When Goodman Brown first enters the forest after leaving his wife, Faith, whose protests "tarry with me this night, dear husband," fall on deaf ears, we are grimly aware that his purpose is dark, although we do not know specifically the nature of his business (1033). Keeping what appears to be a rendezvous with someone we later know to be the devil, Goodman Brown has a moment's hesitation and says that he is going "to return whence" he came (1034). At this proposal "he of the serpent" smiles and quips: "Sayest thou so?" (1034) Satan knows about Goodman Brown what we know about Robin when he asks the stranger to take him to the ferry so he, too, can return home. But Goodman Brown cannot go home anymore than Robin can. Goodman Brown's curiosity and lack of faith lure him so far into the realm of evil, that he cannot go home: he cannot recapture his innocence simply because he now chooses to do so. As Donohue

succinctly states: "He believes that he, but no one else, can spend one night in the forest consorting with the devil and then return the next day, unblemished, to cling to the skirts of Faith 'and follow her to heaven'" (178). And although Goodman Brown cannot reattain the state of innocence he knew previous to his excursion into the forest, he is still naive and innocent enough to tell this stranger of his "minister's piety," and that he would "tremble both Sabbath day and lecture day" (1035). In response to Goodman Brown his companion "burst into a fit of irrepressible mirth," and then "shouted . . . again and again," but finally says: "Well, go on, Goodman Brown, go on; but, prithee, don't kill me with laughing" (1035). At what is there to laugh but Satan gaining another soul. At this point Goodman Brown's faith is tested when he hears voices, including Faith's, (hence the pun) and he realizes he is not the only one in the world to question his beliefs. Goodman Brown fails this test: he simply gives in to his human propensity for evil and like Ethan Brand, is consumed by it-but only for this one night, or so Goodman Brown believes. This is the point in the story where he not only acknowledges evil in the world and simply resigns himself to it, but where Goodman Brown utters the horrible laughter which reveals him as a fiend.

When Goodman Brown suddenly hears Faith's voice he cries out: "Faith! Faith! Faith!" The narrator tells us that the "unhappy husband held his breath for a response" (1038). But the only response Goodman Brown receives is "a

scream, drowned immediately in a louder murmur of voices, fading into far-off laughter" (1038). Now a desperate man, and believing that he has been abandoned by his wife, Faith, his religious faith abandons him as well. And so Goodman Brown proclaims: "My Faith is gone! There is no good on earth; and sin is but a name. Come, devil; for to thee is this world given" (1038). Here we have it. Like Ethan Brand, Goodman Brown at this moment casts aside what little moral fortitude he has left as he reconciles himself to what he considers a battle inevitably lost. And now, as we saw with Ethan Brand, Goodman Brown, "maddened with despair, so that he laughed loud and long," rushes "onward with the instinct that guides mortal man to evil" (1038).

What appears to be a cheerful Goodman Brown, exhibited in his great bouts of mirthful laughter, is in reality a man completely depraved: he shares the devil's laughter and is himself a demon at this point. As Goodman Brown races through the forest we are aware of the "frightful sounds" therein, "as if all Nature were laughing him to scorn" (1038). But Goodman Brown pays no attention to anything in his frenzied state of mind: the narrator tells us that Goodman Brown "was himself the chief horror of the scene, and shrank not from its other horrors"(1038). So Goodman Brown continues onward deeper and deeper into the forest of evil shouting: "Ha! ha! ha!", whenever "the wind laughed at him" (1038). He shouts back: "Let us hear which will laugh loudest" (1039). At this point, whether it be a permanent

change or no Goodman Brown, like Ethan Brand, becomes a fiend, scorning humanity's battle against evil.

As we saw in "Ethan Brand" and "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," Hawthorne's narrative voice comments on the odiousness of Goodman Brown's ironic and destructive laughter with:

> In truth, all through the haunted forest there could be nothing more frightful than the figure of Goodman Brown. On he flew among the black pines, brandishing his staff with frenzied gestures, now giving vent to an inspiration of horrid blasphemy, and now shouting forth such laughter as set all the echoes of the forest laughing like demons around him. The fiend in his own shape is less hideous than when he rages in the breast of man. Thus sped the demoniac on his course. . . (1039).

As we will later see, this description of Goodman Brown is much like that of Arthur Dimmesdale of The Scarlet Letter after his emergence from the forest, where he, too, decides momentarily upon the uselessness of fighting any longer the battle against evil. And now, feeling a "loathful brotherhood" with his congregation, "by the sympathy of all that was wicked in his heart," Goodman Brown has much in common with such sinners as Hester Prynne, Arthur Dimmesdale, and Ethan Brand, who also feel their connection with mankind in the brotherhood of evil (1040). Arriving at the witches' meeting Goodman Brown sees Faith and hears the devil say that: "Evil is the nature of mankind." He continues with: "Welcome again, my children, to the communion of your race." Goodman Brown shouts: "Faith! Faith! Look up to heaven, and resist the wicked one" (1041). Whatever happens after this we know only that Goodman Brown suddenly awakens and

finds himself in the forest. And whether the previous night was a dream or no, the effect is the same: Goodman Brown is a changed man from this day forward. He is in fact what Ethan Brand refers to as a "half-way" sinner: Brown cannot any longer accept his faith-nor can he reject it. And at the same time he projects his own doubts, resulting from his own depravity, onto everyone else. In his book entitled The Province Of Piety: Moral History In Hawthorne's Early Tales, Michael J. Colacurcio confirms this opinion in his statement: "Brown's attitude plainly involves some sort of guilty projection: his own will-to-evil is already causing him to begin the transfer of his own moral obliquity to others."[17]

When Goodman Brown emerges from the forest he is in a more advanced state of spiritual decay than when he entered it. Donohue writes that: " . . . Goodman Brown, who recognizes evil in everyone he meets after his diabolic excursion into the forest, ironically seems able to endure his own evil because he does not recognize it" (165). The stages through which Goodman Brown passes in his progression toward total depravity, however temporary such depravity may be, are evinced through his terrible and appalling laughter. Goodman Brown has met the devil and has had his faith in God (and in Faith) sorely shaken. And while he ultimately rejects complete domination by evil-and by that we can only refer to Brown's one unflinching stand against the devil when he shouts to Faith to look heavenward and "resist" evil-he is, nonetheless, a much worse man than he was when we first

met him. Fogle says of Brown's speech: "It would appear from this that he had successfully resisted the supreme temptation-but evidently he is not therefore saved" (15). Flirting with and ultimately seduced by the temptation to encounter evil, Goodman Brown enters the forest on his dark errand only to tell the devil that he wants to return home. As if it were possible for one to meet, by choice, with the devil and then return to a state of innocence. And if there was ever a time when Goodman Brown was in such a state of innocence, it was necessarily before he ever entertained the idea of entering the forest: why does Goodman Brown enter the forest in the first place, unless he has already some doubts in his faith?

And just as The Scarlet Letter's witch, Mistress Hibbins, recognizes Arthur Dimmesdale as a member of the brotherhood of evil after his trip into the forest, Goodman Brown recognizes sin in others through his recent initiation into that same brotherhood. Thus initiated, Goodman Brown dies shrouded within spiritual doubt and isolation. In spite of his ultimate rejection of evil-at least his verbal one-it seems that Goodman Brown cannot forget what he suspects to be everyone else's depravity. That for a brief time Goodman Brown was himself totally depraved, completely a fiend, as evinced in his terrible and debilitating laughter, is apparently of little consequence to him. Although Brown certainly had doubts in his faith even before he attends the witches' meeting, it seems that the effects of this

experience are responsible for his inability to cultivate the necessary spiritual fortitude to overcome these doubts. Specifically, Brown's experience in the forest brings about two immediate results which contribute to his lifelong state of depravity: Brown believes that everyone he sees there is depraved-a belief that may or may not be true; and more importantly, Brown is oblivious to the depravity within himself, in much the same way that Ethan Brand is unable to see that the "Unpardonable Sin" is within himself. And although there are differences between Goodman Brown and Ethan Brand, specifically, the former's inability to choose between good and evil and the latter's complete and unquestioning surrender to it, there are also similarities between these two characters.

Goodman Brown's terrible and fiendish laughter and the deceptive quality of appearance and reality reveal two things about his character that make him very much like Ethan Brand: Brown is completely oblivious to his own depravity and he is also a self-deceiver-a deceiver of the most miserable sort for Hawthorne. Goodman Brown deceives himself with the notion that he need only give the appearance that he is not spiritually depraved by removing himself from what he believes to be an evil world; and that somehow by behaving in this way he can isolate himself from the depravity of others. But in fact, it is Goodman Brown who is the most depraved. His ironic and mirthless laughter uttered for that brief time in the forest defines him as demonic. He is spiritually

tainted and has not the religious conviction to counter the evil to which he subjects himself. And so the appearance he presents to the world, that of a secluded and solitary man, self-righteous in his fear of contamination by those whom he deems evil, is a lie. The reality is that Goodman Brown is not a better man for turning his back on what he believes to be an evil world and elevating himself above it, he is a worse man for it. Like Ethan Brand, his spiritual pride precludes his consideration of the possibility that such depravity might lurk within his own breast.

It is very interesting to note that in this tale it appears that Hawthorne creates a character who is not better, and is in fact worse, when his laughter ceases. Although Brown's character is revealed when he laughs fiendishly, he never laughs again for the rest of his life after he emerges from the forest: but for what state of spiritual decay Brown is in, he might as well have continued his ironic, destructive, and mirthless laughter to the end of his life. Appearance and reality operate to such a high degree in "Young Goodman Brown" that we hardly know where appearance ends and reality begins. We do not really know if this excursion into the forest is merely the result of Brown's dream; and if not a dream, we do not know if all of these people are sinners or merely the result of what H. J. Lang refers to as "spectral evidence." He suggests that just as "spectral evidence" was used to hang witches in Salem, so too does the devil use this sort of evidence to trick Brown into

believing that everyone else is evil. Lang asserts that: " . . . On spectral evidence . . . alone could we condemn Faith or the Reverend Elders."[18] Whatever the case, the effects on Brown are the same. It is the deceptive quality of appearance and reality and Brown's inappropriate laughter that reveal his character. Fogle writes: "Most pervasive of the contrasts in 'Young Goodman Brown' is the consistent discrepancy between appearance and reality, which helps to produce the heavy atmosphere of doubt and shadow" (26-27). In his book entitled Hawthorne's Tragic Vision, Roy R. Male also assesses Brown's inability to discern appearance from reality as he comments on the quality of Brown's life after his emergence from the forest. Male writes: "Brown's dying hour is gloom, then, because he fails to attain a tragic vision, a perspective broad enough and deep enough to see the dark night as an essential part of human experience, but a part that may preclude a new and richer dawn."[19] Brown simply cannot come to terms with his own depravity; nor can he face its consequences.

Perhaps Melville, a contemporary of Hawthorne, states it best-or at least most colorfully-when in his essay "Hawthorne and His Mosses By a Virginian Spending July in Vermont" he writes:

> 'Who in the name of thunder' (as the country-people say in this neighborhood), 'who in the name of thunder, would anticipate any marvel in a piece entitled 'Young Goodman Brown'? You would of course suppose that it was a simple little tale, intended as a supplement to 'Goody Two Shoes.' Whereas, it is deep as Dante. . . .[20]

Melville's assessment is correct. The depth of "Young Goodman Brown" is not initially apparent. It is only after we see how strongly intertwined are appearance and reality in this tale that we become aware of its many levels of meaning.

And so, in "Young Goodman Brown" Hawthorne's masterful use of the deceptive quality of appearance and reality, particularly as it pertains to Brown's inappropriate laughter and character revelation, results in a work which is at once clear, as far as Brown's spiritual depravity is concerned, and yet ambiguous in that the tale's specific events leading up to his lifelong spiritual condition are, as Fogle states, shrouded within "the heavy atmosphere of doubt and shadow."

# CHAPTER V

## THE MINISTER'S BLACK VEIL

Unlike "Young Goodman Brown," which at least makes the reader aware of some dark albeit vague purpose prompting Goodman Brown to go into the forest, "The Minister's Black Veil" reveals no absolutely specific explanation of Reverend Hooper's sin. Why Reverend Hooper wears the veil is ultimately a mystery. There appears to be, as we will later see, some textual evidence supporting the idea that he wears the veil in reference to his own secret sin; but whether the result of secret sin or simply symbolic of the veil Hooper claims every man wears to shield his own guilty heart from the world, the result is the same. Wearing this black veil Reverend Hooper shows little or no emotion except for his "melancholy smile."[21] The smile is ironic, representing the destructive power of laughter: Reverend Hooper becomes isolated from humanity in much the same way that many of Hawthorne's characters often do. The plot centers around Reverend Hooper and people's reactions to him; and it develops as the deceptive quality of appearance and reality and Hooper's inappropriate and ironic smiling reveal him to

be a tortured and isolated man.

The first time we see Reverend Hooper smile is after preaching a sermon, wearing a black veil all the while, to his perplexed and appalled congregation. After the sermon he returns to his parsonage, but not before he turns and observes his congregation with a "sad smile" (875). Reverend Hooper's isolation and alienation from humanity increase each day he wears the veil. Yet the smile always remains, revealing how sad and lonely this once loved and admired man has now become. As Donohue says: " . . . The complexity of the Reverend Mr. Hooper's choice of the black veil is emphasized again and again by his gently glimmering smile" (48). In all of the eight times we see Reverend Hooper smile there is never, as is the case in all of the tales thus far discussed and in nearly every instance of the novels yet to be discussed, an occasion where his "glimmering smile" is not ironic. And wearing this "glimmering smile" all the while, Reverend Hooper loses his bond with mankind. When we see Reverend Hooper smile for the second time it is at his reception of the church embassy, whose mission is to find out why the minister wears the veil and to ask that he remove it. Unable as they are even to formulate speech to make the request, Reverend Hooper is aware of their thoughts and merely observes the group with "the glimmering of a melancholy smile" (877). These two instances of Reverend Hooper's ironic smiling represent the first stage of his isolation from humanity: alienation from mankind in general,

represented by his congregation. The next stage of Reverend Hooper's isolation, again represented by his ironic smiling, concerns rejection on a personal and necessarily more significant level: rejection by a loved one.

The third time we see Reverend Hooper smile is when he is rejected by his affianced, Elizabeth. Speaking in a pragmatic light Elizabeth sees the black veil as simply a "piece of crape," the only "terrible" quality of which she says "hides a face which" she is "always glad to look upon" (877). And too, we might mention at this point, that this is the very same sentiment echoed at the beginning of the tale by a townswoman who sensibly notes: "How strange, that a simple black veil, such as any woman might wear on her bonnet, should become such a terrible thing on Mr. Hooper's face!" (875) But a "terrible thing" is exactly what the black veil becomes as its significance attains monumental proportions, eventually rendering the man nearly an insignificant aspect thereof. And so when Elizabeth reduces the significance of this veil to merely a "piece of crape," we are told that: "Mr. Hooper's smile glimmered faintly" (877). He then generalizes the significance of the veil with: "There is an hour to come, when all of us shall cast aside our veils. Take it not amiss, beloved friend, if I wear this piece of crape till then" (877-878). In response Elizabeth becomes more serious, intimating the nature of rumors about town which concerns the Reverend's involvement with scandal and secret sin. Upon hearing this we are told

however, that: " . . . Mr. Hooper's mildness did not forsake him. He even smiled again-that same sad smile, which always appeared like a faint glimmering of light, proceeding from the obscurity beneath tne veil" (878).

Because he refuses to remove the veil Elizabeth ultimately refuses to marry him, which in turn, excites the first show of passion from Reverend Hooper. He describes the loneliness behind his veil and pleads with her for understanding. Unswayed, Elizabeth still refuses to marry him. And now, rejected by a loved one as well as his congregation, Reverend Hooper is fully aware of his complete isolation from humanity. It seems that if Elizabeth had not forsaken him, and we are not in the least indicating that she should not have, he might have been better able to bear his alienation from the rest of mankind. But now totally alone, Reverend Hooper reconciles himself to a lonely existence unto himself. Understanding as much, we are told that when Elizabeth looked back she saw that "even amid his grief, Mr. Hooper smiled to think that only a material emblem had separated him from happiness, though the horrors, which it shadowed forth, must be drawn darkly between the fondest of lovers" (879). And so the plot continues as Reverend Hooper enters into his third and final stage, where totally alone, he accepts and bears his plight, but always with an ironic smile: his smiles appear to present a picture of happiness, when in reality happiness continually eludes Hooper.

In this third stage, recognized by the community and

himself as an outcast, Mr. Hooper "sadly smiled at the pale visages of the worldly throng as he passed by" (879). It is now too late for him to be a part of this community. Rejected by the world in general and Elizabeth in particular, he can only watch the world pass by him. And so in this third phase Mr. Hooper becomes the culmination of an Arthur Dimmesdale, the tortured, guilt ridden, yet ultimately hypocritical clergyman of The Scarlet Letter, who feels for the greatest part of his life that he cannot unburden his one great sin to mortal man; and also of a Hester Prynne, whose scarlet letter enables her to empathize with the sins of others. Reverend Hooper, by "the aid of his mysterious enblem," which "enabled him to sympathize with all dark affections," is in this same way attuned to the sins of others (879-880). He, like Hester Prynne, is welcome only to those in "mortal anguish" (880). The narrator tells us that: "Dying sinners cried aloud for Mr. Hooper, and would not yield their breath till he appeared. . ." (880). And to such an extent is Reverend Hooper an expert on secret sin, that when he delivered a sermon on the subject to the legislature-speaking perhaps with the same voice of experience as Arthur Dimmesdale, who also delivered a most convincing sermon on secret sin-he "wrought so deep an impression" that the laws passed that year were the sternest the town had witnessed since its "earliest ancestral sway" (880). And so, completely alienated from all human sympathy and affection, Reverend Hooper dies with the same ironic smile on his lips that he

has worn since we first met him. Struggling to prevent the attempts from those by his bedside to remove his veil, he musters one last burst of strength to deliver his final sermon, again on secret sin.

But even if Reverend Hooper was not able to prevent the younger minister from removing his veil, the narrator points out that there was "a faithful woman at his pillow, who, with averted eyes, would have covered that aged face, which she had last beheld in the comeliness of manhood" (881). Unable to understand what "eccentricity," as Fogle refers to it (34), motivates his strange behavior, yet loving him all of her life in spite of it, Elizabeth is there caring for him on his deathbed. We are told: "There was the nurse, no hired handmaiden of death, but one whose calm affection had endured thus long in secrecy, in solitude, amid the chill of age, and would not perish, even at the dying hour" (880). Her lifelong love for Hooper points out another aspect of the deceptive quality of appearance and reality. No matter what Elizabeth does or does not understand about Hooper's veil-and from what we can glean from the text it appears that she understands very little-, no matter that long ago she refused to marry Reverend Hooper and purposefully chose to remain apart from him as long as he wore the veil, the irony is that Elizabeth still loves him. And so, surrounded by Elizabeth, the young Reverend Mr. Clark, and several other persons who "were visible by the shaded candlelight" (880), Hooper tells them that they are all wearing veils. Upon hearing this the

narrator informs us that his "auditors shrank from one another, in mutual affright" (882). So saying, Father Hooper as he is now called, falls "back upon his pillow, a veiled corpse, with a faint smile lingering on the lips" (882). And with this last smile Hooper reveals himself completely as a man apart: alone and isolated from the rest of mankind in his lifelong pain and suffering.

It appears that the critics, like the congregation, offer valid explanations for the "real reason" Reverend Hooper wears this black veil. Many of the critics concur that Reverend Hooper's assertion that every man wears a veil to cloak his sins from the rest of mankind, and that his black veil is merely the physical manifestation thereof, is the "real reason" Hooper wears the veil. And this is certainly justified by the text. Donohue, for one, is emphatic in her assertion that: "Mr Hooper commits no special sin; he is branded by the Original Sin that the Calvinist Hawthorne saw as the essential disfigurement of humanity" (141). And in this vein Male views Hooper's veil as an emblem of his personal recognition of humanity's general sin. Male proposes that Hooper "must detach himself" from the "group"-his congregation-"in order to confront his own soul." He continues with: "Only then does he see that the very sins and aberrations that separate him from others are the one universal bond of humanity. This, I take it, is the point of 'The Minister's Black Veil'" (17). And while my interpretation is more specific, Fogle's explanation is

interesting because it focuses on the ambiguity of the tale: he simply states that having "chosen the symbol of the black veil and invented an action for it," Hawthorne "refrains from pushing the reader to a single conclusion." He adds that: "The minister himself believes the veil to be an emblem of the secret sin that poisons the souls of all mankind, but we are not compelled to accept his reading of the matter" (40). And Lea Bertani Vozar Newman, a modern critic who seems to focus as well on the tale's ambiguity, asserts that "the most illuminating" interpretation of this tale "is Fogle's"; she states: "He refuses to reconcile the 'dubiety' in the tale. The veil is as much a symbol for secret sin (and Hooper for Everyman) as it is a symbol for perverse pride (and Hooper for the ostracized sinner)."[22] And Colacurcio, whose interpretation is diametrically opposed to mine states that while "attempts to link" Reverend Hooper "to Dimmesdale in terms of specific guilt are probably misdirected, Hooper does seem a 'forestudy' of intense introspection and privateness" (315). He later adds: "In his attempt to make a symbolic prophecy about the sinfulness of absolutely <u>every</u> person's secret or subjective life, he seems forced to use his own self as exemplum" (331).

While most of the preceding interpretations of this tale seem valid in that they are supported by the text, only Poe's interpretation seems to consider the additional textual clues which point specifically to Hooper's guilt for his own secret sin. Poe writes that:

> 'The Minister's Black Veil' is a masterly composition of which the sole defect is that to the rabble its exquisite skill will be caviare. The obvious meaning of this article will be found to smother its insinuated one. The moral put into the mouth of the dying minister will be supposed to convey the true import of the narrative; and that a crime of dark dye, (having reference to the 'young lady') has been committed, is a point which only minds congenial with that of the author will perceive.[23]

It would appear that Hooper's choice to wear the veil in conjunction with his ironic "glimmering smile" is the result of a specific incident, which appears to have been a love affair with the maiden at whose funeral he presides. The textual evidence which supports this argument concerns six specific incidents: when people are leaving the church after the funeral sermon for this young lady, where Reverend Hooper wears his veil-having worn it for the first time that very morning at Sunday services-two women remark that they each have a "fancy" that "the minister and the maiden's spirit were walking hand in hand" (876); and that Reverend Hooper dons the veil almost as soon as we hear about this maiden's death appears too much a coincidence; added to this the fact that Reverend Hooper never denies and in fact confirms to Elizabeth as true the speculation about town concerning his involvement with scandal and secret sin when he says to her: "If I hide my face for sorrow, there is cause enough, and if I cover it for secret sin, what mortal might not do the same?" (878).

Then there is the most noted piece of evidence where the maiden's corpse "shuddered" when Reverend Hooper bent over it (875); Of course, in typical Hawthorne fashion he

purposefully lessens the credibility of this incident by having his narrator casually remark that this event was witnessed by a lone observer, a "superstitious old woman" (875). And to heighten the ambiguity, we are later told of the minister's habit of walking daily to the cemetery, where he would lean "pensively over the gate" (879). It is irresistible to think that Reverend Hooper must be looking at the grave of the same maiden with whose spirit he was supposedly walking, and whose corpse might have "shuddered" at seeing his face; and finally, is Reverend Hooper's complete empathy with those sinners in "mortal agony," as well as his efficacy in preaching on secret sin as if he, like Arthur Dimmesdale, speaks from experience. And although Colacurcio claims that "attempts to link" Hooper "to Dimmesdale in terms of specific guilt are probably misdirected," it appears clear that Hooper is in many ways exactly like Dimmesdale.

Secret sin is a recurrent theme throughout Hawthorne's works. We see this not only in regard to Dimmesdale, the hypocritical minister of The Scarlet Letter who appears to the congregation as nothing short of a saint when in reality he steeps in the secret sin of adultery, but also in regard to Judge Pyncheon of The Gables who presents the appearance of the benevolent philanthropist, when in reality he is a depraved sinner, guilty of murder. It seems that all of Hawthorne's depraved characters-and while we do not know for certain that Hooper is depraved, he does not deny when

specifically asked by Elizabeth the possibility of his own secret sin-have some specific sin for which they are guilty. And in this light it appears that the text substantiates the theory that Reverend Hooper wears this veil as an emblem of his own secret sin, rather than the secret sins of others.

It should be noted as well that there do not seem to be any characters in Hawthorne who are as inherently good as Hooper would necessarily have to be in order to be a martyr for mankind. Hooper gives up everything that makes his life worthwhile: he gives up the love of his congregation-the affection of mankind in general-as well as the love of Elizabeth-personal affection. That he becomes an isolated and solitary man and with no motivation other than his seemingly sudden and unexpected desire to suffer for mankind seems inconceivable. Hooper's newly found affinity with the sinners of the world-those in "mortal anguish"-seems more likely to be the direct result of his personal experience rather than the result of his sudden wearing of a black veil. Hooper is not a Christ-like figure. And it seems that he, like Dimmesdale, is too weak and afraid to openly confess his hypocrisy; and so he masks his sin, his depravity, and his real character behind the veil, which certainly can symbolize, as anything can, the depravity within every man. So it appears that Hooper's "eccentricity" in wearing the veil, in conjunction with his inexplicable, mirthless, inappropriate, and ironic smiling render him strange, enigmatic, and seemingly guilt ridden, rather than sincere,

altruistic, and saint-like.

At any rate, whether Reverend Hooper is actually guilty of the secret sin of carnal knowledge-which in conjunction with the hypocrisy of the clergy is a theme echoed again and again in Hawthorne-or is merely donning the physical manifestation of the same sin we all share is, nonetheless, somewhat a mystery. And this mystery, coupled with the irony of Reverend Hooper's everpresent "glimmering smile," only heightens the ambiguity. Hyatt H. Waggoner states that: "From these very simple patterns of action"-Reverend Hooper's eight smiles-"Hawthorne developed designs of great complexity" (101). He later adds: "In Hawthorne's work the texture is decisive, the 'truth' dubious, ambiguous, indecisive" (106). And while the decisive meaning behind much of Hawthorne's work is, in fact "ambiguous," the general quality of the laughter is nearly always ironic and destructive.

It should be noted, however, that there are incidents in Hawthorne where we encounter innocent laughter, such as that of innocent children at play as previously noted in the tale "The Gentle Boy." When we previously discussed this tale it was only to point out the fact that such innocent laughter does exist, however occasionally, in Hawthorne. At that time we merely alluded to the fact that the gentle and childish laughter of these Puritan children does not remain so. In fact, we hear their innocent laughter only once: later, we see these same innocent children nearly beat

Ilbrahim, the Quaker boy, to death. And too, there comes to mind the comment of Coverdale, who in The Blithedale Romance tells us that: "There is hardly another sight in the world so pretty as that of a company of young girls, almost women grown, at play, and so giving themselves up to their airy impulse that their tiptoes barely touch the ground." And Coverdale adds: "Their steps, their voices, appear free as the wind, but keep consonance with a strain of music inaudible to us" (482). But when and where in Hawthorne's fiction do we ever repeatedly hear this sound? The sound of joyful, carefree, innocent, laughter fades away as we are instead made aware of the burden society places upon women, clearly depicted in the characters of Zenobia, Hester Prynne, and Miriam. And so it seems fair to say that whatever smattering of joyful, carefree, innocent laughter does exist in Hawthorne it is, at one point or another, negated; and Zenobia tells Coverdale as much when one day in response to one of his many remarks concerning the joys of womanhood she challenges him with: "Did you ever see a happy woman in your life? Of course, I do not mean a girl . . . but a grown woman"; Zenobia later adds: "How can she be happy, after discovering that fate has assigned her but one single event, which she must contrive to make the substance of her whole life?" (473) Rather, the pervasive form of laughter and smiles in Hawthorne's fiction is as we earlier quoted Donohue as stating: "rarely cheerful," and of which: "We have learned to read . . . with misgiving, mistrust, and foreboding."

It seems then more accurate to say that for the great majority of the time the inappropriate and ironic laughter uttered by Hawthorne's characters-of the sort we just encountered in "The Minister's Black Veil," as well as that laughter in the other tales previously discussed and described as diabolic, derisive, mirthless, and melancholy-and the deceptive quality of appearance and reality reveal character; and we will see as well that throughout the novels character is revealed in the same manner.

## CHAPTER VI

## THE SCARLET LETTER

In The Scarlet Letter Hawthorne uses the deceptive quality of appearance and reality and inappropriate laughter very effectively as a primary technique which reveals character. Pearl, Arthur Dimmesdale, and Roger Chillingworth, laugh and smile throughout the novel; yet the cause for such laughter is in nearly every case prompted by sad, pathetic, or tragic circumstances. Pearl, for example, the unfeeling "elfish" (142) child whose humanity is continually made suspect by the narrator, expresses her first smile when as a baby in the cradle she reaches up and grasps her mother's scarlet "A." Subsequently, Pearl's most happy and joyful times result from her mother's tears or anxiety. And there is Pearl's father, Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale, the upstanding and revered pillar of society who knows in his heart that he is the ultimate hypocrite: that he becomes a tortured and feeble-minded man is evinced through his increasingly "bitter" and scornful laughter (169). And finally Roger Chillingworth, Hester's husband and the man whose obsession with revenge causes him to single-handedly

drive Arthur Dimmesdale to the brink of lunacy, is transformed gradually into the fiend, manifested through his inhuman laughter and smiles. And although not a major character there is also Mistress Hibbins, the old witch lady who appears three times throughout the novel with other characters, at whom she either shrieks with laughter or smiles knowingly at the evil she detects hidden within their hearts. And so this group, each a study in destructive laughter, effectively illustrates the irony between the appearance of outward cheerfulness and the reality of inner depravity.

Pearl, the illicit offspring of Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale, is one of the greatest laughers in The Scarlet Letter. And, as is the case with the great majority of laughter in this novel, Pearl's laughter is always ironic, nearly always destructive, and often regarded as unnatural and almost evil. There are nearly two dozen references to Pearl's laughter and smiles, most of which are characterized as "mocking" (138), "fiend-like" (141), "wild" (162), "naughty" (146), and "peculiar" (146). From the moment we first meet Pearl her humanity is continually subject to question by a narrator who describes her as an "airy sprite" (138), an "imp" (139), or an "elf" (138). As if to lend credibility to such an idea, part way through the novel the narrator takes us into his confidence and informs us of Pearl's "One peculiarity" (140). We are told that as a baby: "The very first thing which she had noticed in her life was

. . . not the mother's smile, responding to it, as other babies do," but her mother's scarlet letter; we learn that when one day Hester bent over her crib, Pearl "grasped" at the "A," "smiling not doubtfully, but with a decided gleam" (140). As Hester tries to tear Pearl's hand away we are told: "Again, as if her mother's agonized gesture were meant only to make sport for her, did little Pearl look into her eyes and smile!" (140-141) Pearl's behavior had such an adverse effect upon her mother that: "From that epoch, except when the child was asleep, Hester had never felt a moment's safety; not a moment's calm enjoyment of her" (141). Tracing Pearl's development, we will see that her episodic laughter reveals her true character, which is not that of the charming child she appears to be. For as young a child as she is, Pearl's earliest interactions with her mother reveal her to be cruel and unfeeling. Even as a small "airy sprite" Pearl would play about the cottage floor for awhile and suddenly "flit away with a mocking smile" (138). Observing this, Hester would chase after Pearl and scoop her up and kiss her, making Pearl laugh all the harder. This laughter, in turn, "made her mother more doubtful than before" of her child's humanity, with the end result that thus agitated, Hester would burst into tears. Observing these tears, we are told that Pearl "[n]ot seldom . . . would laugh anew, and louder than before, like a thing incapable and unintelligent of human sorrow" (138).

And there is another incident which effectively

illustrates Pearl's seeming inhumanity, again revealed through her strange and almost diabolic laughter, manifesting her apparent and perverse pleasure in observing her mother's sorrow. One day when Hester and Pearl are outside gathering flowers Pearl starts throwing them at her mother, aiming carefully for the scarlet letter. Waggoner says of this incident: " . . . When Pearl throws flowers at her mother's badge and they hit the mark, we share her sense that this is appropriate. Burrs and flowers seem to have an affinity for Hester's letter" (141). Thus engaged, the child at last "gazed at Hester, with that little, laughing image of a fiend peeping out" (141). Nearly beside herself, Hester finally cries out: "Child, what art thou?" Pearl responds: "Oh, I am your little Pearl!"; but even while saying as much we are told that: " . . . Pearl laughed, and began to dance up and down, with the humorsome gesticulation of a little imp, whose next freak might be to fly up the chimney" (141). Incapable of human sympathy with nearly everyone she encounters, except for perhaps an ironically inhuman sympathy with Mistress Hibbins, the supposed witch with whom the implication by association is obvious, Pearl's character is further revealed through her equally capricious yet almost unnatural behavior at the governor's mansion and on the scaffold with Dimmesdale.

At the governor's mansion we again see Pearl portrayed as the not quite human child when she interacts with Reverend Wilson and Arthur Dimmesdale. One of the first things Pearl

notices at the mansion is the suit of armor hanging there which magnifies her mother's "A," as well as her own reflection in "exaggerated and gigantic proportions"; and noticing as much we are told that Pearl looked upward "smiling at her mother" with a look of "elfish intelligence" that had become "so familiar an expression" on her face (146). It was that "look of naughty merriment," which was reflected so strangely in this sort of mirror "that it made Hester Prynne feel as if it could not be the image of her own child, but of an imp who was seeking to mould itself into Pearl's shape" (146). And then, shortly after this episode we are told that Dimmesdale bent down and kissed Pearl on the brow; but she immediately "laughed, and went capering down the hall, so airily, that old Mr. Wilson raised a question whether even her tiptoes touched the floor" (152). And from such episodic laughter we see that Pearl's character is more clearly revealed as lacking any sort of human sympathy, in that her humanity is continually made suspect. Pearl's bouts of laughter or "elfish" smiles reveal a child whose sympathies are almost completely beyond the sphere of human compassion.

And there is another incident concerning Pearl's interaction with Arthur Dimmesdale on the scaffold which portrays her as beyond the scope of human sympathy. When Dimmesdale decides to stage his midnight pillory scene in what is referred to as a "mockery of penitence" (171), he is eventually joined by Pearl and Hester who happen along the

way. Upon the scaffold and holding the minister's hand, Pearl asks him if he will stand there with her and her mother "tomorrow noontide" (174). When Dimmesdale answers that he would do so, not tomorrow but on another day, in a manner he must have thought honest and sincere, Pearl, as if to again demonstrate that she is beyond the sphere of human compassion "laughed, and attempted to pull away her hand" (174). But she persists in asking her father when he will stand there with her and her mother. And again, when he attempts to be lofty and philosophical and responds that "the daylight of this world shall not see our meeting," Pearl simply "laughed again" (175). As this pillory meeting comes to a close, but not before the sky is lit up by what the narrator says was "doubtless caused by one of those meteors," we learn that: "There was witchcraft in little Pearl's eyes, and her face, as she glanced upward at the minister, wore that naughty smile which made its expression frequently so elfish" (175). And so it is that Pearl's ironic laughter and smiles throughout The Scarlet Letter reveal her as something almost, though not quite evil, but certainly beyond comprehension of human suffering. And it is only after Dimmesdale's death that Pearl sheds her first tear, seemingly acknowledging some sort of bond between father and daughter, and thus experiences that sorrow which humanizes her.

Now Pearl's father, Arthur Dimmesdale, the revered and outwardly irreproachable minister, is the ultimate hypocrite as he inwardly steeps in the secret sin of adultery. Henry

James clearly depicts the conflict between appearance and reality in relation to Dimmesdale in his essay, "The Three American Novels"; he describes Dimmesdale as "the tormented young Puritan minister," who chooses to carry "the secret of his own lapse from pastoral purity locked up beneath an exterior that commends itself to the reverence of his flock, while he sees the softer partner of his guilt standing in the full glare of exposure and humbling herself to the misery of atonement."[24] Of the twelve times Dimmesdale laughs and smiles, only the last smile, and that made as he dies upon the scaffold before the whole town, is not ironic. The remainder of this laughter, always destructive and ironic, is described as "bitter" (169), "sad" (201), "unquiet" (206), and solemn" (217); or it is equated by Dimmesdale himself with madness, "grotesque horror" (174), or impiety. Dimmesdale's complete hypocrisy and the extent to which he is depraved are reflected in what is at first "bitter" and scornful laughter. The first time we see Dimmesdale laugh is when he indulges in "practices more in accordance with the old, corrupted faith of Rome, than with the better light of the church in which he had been born and bred" (169): Dimmesdale practices self-flagellation. He realizes the extent of his sin-compounded by cowardice and deception-when in his silence he allows Hester to bear his share of the blame. And so plying on his shoulders "a bloody scourge," yet "laughing bitterly at himself the while, and smiting so much the more pitilessly because of that bitter laugh,"

Dimmesdale tortures himself in a useless and self-deluded attempt to assuage the guilt that nothing short of public confession will alleviate.

Of Dimmesdale's behavior the narrator makes the rather puzzling comment that he had "once found power to smile, and wear a face of gayety, there would have been no such man!" (170) Well, this statement appears to be completely ironic in that the appearance is not the reality: Dimmesdale would still be as guilty-and perhaps more so-had he somehow acquired this "power to smile," typifying the same sort of guiltless villain that we will later see Judge Pyncheon to be in The House of the Seven Gables. Inwardly, Dimmesdale is a sinful adulterer, regardless of his exterior. So it seems that the narrator is not merely ironic in this assertion that a smile would make Dimmesdale a different man, he is again utilizing the medium of inappropriate laughter as a further indication of man's inner depravity. There are two more instances of Dimmesdale's inappropriate, ironic, and destructive laughter which best reveal his true character, again emphasizing the conflict between the appearance of the minister's piety and the reality of his inner depravity.

The next instance which seems to best reflect Dimmesdale's inner state, the result of his living daily a hypocritical life, concerns his behavior during the midnight pillory scene, where he equates his temptation to laughter with madness and evil. After another one of his many midnight vigils, where through fasts and self-abuse he

fruitlessly attempts to rid himself of the agony of his guilt-which might already have been expiated through public as opposed to midnight confession-Dimmesdale is suddenly struck with an idea which takes him immediately to the pillory. Dimmesdale stands upon this pillory under cover of darkness in what the narrator terms a "mockery of penitence." We are told that it was: "A mockery at which angels blushed and wept, while fiends rejoiced, with jeering laughter!" (171) And standing thus, Dimmesdale suddenly hears footsteps and sees a lantern; recognizing the footsteps of Reverend Wilson-probably just returning from Governor Winthrop's dying chambers-this pious minister is struck with an impious thought. Reflecting on the Reverend's light, Dimmesdale irreverently imagines the governor heading straight for heaven at that very moment. Contemplating such thoughts, we are told that Dimmesdale "smiled,-nay, almost laughed at them,-and then wondered if he were going mad" (173). And questioning his own sanity, Dimmesdale gives in to another evil impulse as he imagines the town's people-people who misled as they are consider this hypocrite the very one to lead them straight to heaven-running about half-dressed to come and see him on the scaffold. Thinking these thoughts and "half frozen to death," not to mention "overwhelmed with shame," Dimmesdale is suddenly "carried away by the grotesque horror of this picture" (174). And so realizing his state of mental inebriety as well as increasing depravity, "the minister, unawares, and to his own infinite alarm, burst into

a great peal of laughter" (174).

The next significant instance of Dimmesdale's inappropriate laughter results from his visit in the forest with Hester and Pearl. In much the same fashion as we saw with Goodman Brown, Dimmesdale is, temporarily at least, transformed into the fiend. Shortly after Dimmesdale's previously described "midnight madness" as we might term it, on the scaffold, he meets one day while walking through the forest with his heavy heart-heavy with sin, guilt, and hypocrisy-Hester and Pearl. The result of this meeting is that Hester, with her usual "woman's strength" (179) in bearing not only her own share of the burden but Dimmesdale's as well, must bolster his spirits by convincing him that they can all three run away together and be a happy family. Believing this possibility feasible, Dimmesdale emerges from the forest with his heart lighter than it has been for these past seven years. So light, in fact, is Dimmesdale's heart that he rids himself of all remorse for his secret sin, which remorse it should be noted, however hypocritically revealed was at least keeping him human through suffering.

But now racing lightheartedly on his way Dimmesdale, by the time he emerges from the forest becomes a fiend, as did Goodman Brown. Nothing outwardly manifests Dimmesdale's inner state of depravity more appropriately than his diabolic laughter at his behavior toward a deacon of the church. We are told that Dimmesdale is barely able to "refrain from uttering certain blasphemous suggestions" he is thinking; and

that "even with this terror in his heart, he could hardly avoid laughing, to imagine how the sanctified old patriarchial deacon would have been petrified by his minister's impiety!" (213) Having revealed himself as a fiend-albeit temporarily-we can see that Dimmesdale reaches the limits of his endurance to the exquisite mental torture inflicted by Chillingworth, who as we will later see becomes completely a fiend. But somehow, in response to whatever good there is left within himself, Dimmesdale is transformed back into a human being when he decides to publicly confess his sins, in much the same way that Pearl becomes human through suffering. But this transformation for both father and daughter is purchased with Dimmesdale's death; and it is the only time we see him smile in a manner that is not inappropriate, destructive, and ironic, for he is finally at peace with himself.

When Dimmesdale finally publicly mounts the scaffold to confess his guilt for a sin that for the past seven years Hester has borne alone, we see that a transformation has occurred: he is no longer a fiend. Standing at last on the only spot in the world where he can escape Roger Chillingworth, Dimmesdale turns to Hester "with an expression of doubt and anxiety in his eyes, not the less evidently betrayed, that there was a feeble smile upon his lips" (234). And then, nearly dead, Dimmesdale tears open his shirt, supposedly displaying what the narrator claims and then disclaims to be an "A" on his breast, and suddenly collapsing

with weakness sinks down. He says: "My little Pearl,-dear little Pearl, wilt thou kiss me now? Thou wouldst not, yonder, in the forest! But now thou wilt?" We are told that he says this "feebly" and with "a sweet and gentle smile over his face, as of a spirit sinking into deep repose" (236). And so we can see that a hypocrite his whole life, Dimmesdale's only genuine smile of happiness for the peace he finds and for what he feels is worth more than the cost of his life, results from his satisfaction that whatever else he may be, he is at least a hypocrite no longer. And so dying, yet ironically living for the first time in seven years, Arthur Dimmesdale finds peace, cheating the novel's archetypal fiend and the last of its great laughers from his revenge.

Roger Chillingworth, Hester's husband who appears after two years, having apparently been drowned, becomes through his obsession for vengeance a fiend; his inner depravity is clearly manifested through his often insane and always diabolic laughter, as well as through his physical appearance. The first time we see Roger Chillingworth he wears a "bitter smile" at the sight of his wife standing upon the scaffold holding another man's child (121). And while his bitterness is understandable enough, the vengeance he seeks and the means by which he seeks it transform him into a fiend, especially in light of his own admission that he was wrong to marry Hester, knowing as he did that she never loved him. And so, his obsession with wreaking vengeance upon the partner of Hester's sin becomes the driving force in his life

to the extent that Chillingworth becomes nothing less than totally evil.

We get an uneasy feeling about Chillingworth that first moment we meet him when viewing Hester upon the scaffold he says: "It irks me . . . that the partner of her iniquity should not, at least, stand on the scaffold by her side. But he will be known!-he will be known!-he will be known!" (121) Our fears that nothing good awaits Dimmesdale are confirmed when visiting Hester in her jail cell that night Chillingworth says "with a smile of dark and self-relying intelligence": "I shall seek this man, as I have sought truth in books . . . . Sooner or later, he must needs be mine!" (128) And swearing to keep the identity of her husband a secret, Hester is very agitated at his strange and ironic smiles and asks: "Why dost thou smile so at me? Art thou like the Black Man that haunts the forest round about us? Hast thou enticed me into a bond that will prove the ruin of my soul?" Chillingworth simply responds "with another smile": "Not thy soul, No, not thine!" (129) Well, we now know for certain that Chillingworth plans to "ruin" Dimmesdale's soul; and so, however wronged he believes himself to be, his plotting the demise of Dimmesdale's soul renders Chillingworth a far worse sinner than Dimmesdale. In fact, Chillingworth carries out his plot to such an extent that he loses his humanity and becomes completely evil-a fiend, laughing and smiling all the while.

The first time we are aware of Chillingworth, whose

stooped and decrepit physical appearance accurately mirrors his inner spiritual depravity, is at the governor's mansion, where Hester, who comes to plead that she be allowed to keep her child, notices "how much uglier" are Chillingworth's "features" and how much "more misshapen" his figure has become (150). Chillingworth notes Dimmesdale's grave concern for Hester and Pearl and says "smiling" at the minister: "You speak, my friend, with a strange earnestness" (151). And since nothing could be further from the truth than that Chillingworth considers Dimmesdale a "friend" and that this is a smile of real friendship, Chillingworth reveals himself a fiend through his continually ironic and destructive laughter and smiles. We know for certain that Chillingworth completes this transformation into the fiend in which state he, unlike Dimmesdale and Goodman Brown who are only temporarily thus transformed, permanently remains.

Now nearly certain of the identity of Hester's partner in sin, Chillingworth unabashedly perseveres in his plot against the tortured and unsuspecting Dimmesdale. We see clearly the effects of Chillingworth's plot upon the minister when one day Chillingworth is in his laboratory and Dimmesdale stops by to see him. Convinced of the minister's guilt, Chillingworth broaches the subject of secret sin, coming as close as he possibly can but without actually doing so, of accusing Dimmesdale of such sin. Dimmesdale, in his nervous, frail, weakened condition, and all but subsumed by guilt, screams that he will never reveal anything to an

"earthly physician" (165); and so saying he rushes out of the room. But Chillingworth, with a characteristic "smile" says to himself: "It is as well to have made this step" (165). And later, when Dimmesdale apologizes for his outburst we are told that henceforth, whenever Chillingworth left Dimmesdale's rooms it was always "with a mysterious and puzzling smile upon his lips" (165). And it is at one such time in Dimmesdale's rooms that Chillingworth completes the transformation into the fiend.

One night, not long after this conversation with Dimmesdale in his laboratory, Chillingworth avails himself of the opportunity provided by Dimmesdale's "deep, deep slumber" to open the minister's shirt and look at his chest (165). And seeing what we are later led to believe is an "A," Chillingworth jumps up and down making "the whole ugliness of his figure . . . riotously manifest" his evil by the "extravagant gestures" he exhibits. So completely does Chillingworth resemble the fiend triumphing in evil that the narrator remarks: "Had a man seen old Roger Chillingworth, at that moment of his ecstasy, he would have had no need to ask how Satan comports himself when a precious human soul is lost to heaven, and won into his kingdom" (166). Thus completely transformed by evil, Roger Chillingworth never deviates from this state as he attempts to complete once and for all his dark plot to steal Dimmesdale's soul.

And now, we reach the point in the novel-chapter XIV, entitled "Hester And The Physician"-where so completely is he

transformed by evil into the fiend, that Roger Chillingworth can no longer, even if he so chooses, hide his inner depravity-not even with a smile. F. O. Matthiessen comments on Chillingworth's "desperate recognition" of his depravity in his essay, "Hawthorne's Psychology: The Acceptance of Good and Evil." Matthiessen states that Chillingworth's "will has become so depraved, so remote from divine grace that he can only feel a revulsion of horror from the 'dark necessity' that he cannot escape."[25] When, for instance, Dimmesdale stands upon the scaffold on that night with Hester and Pearl-as the light from what we have already been told must "doubtless" have come from a meteor lights up the sky-the minister is aware of the presence of Roger Chillingworth. We are told that he might "have passed with them for the arch-fiend, standing there with a smile and scowl to claim his own" (176). And then there is the incident with Hester, when she purposefully seeks out Chillingworth to plead with him to stop torturing Dimmesdale and to say that she intends to reveal his true identity. Hester, too, sees Chillingworth as the fiend who attempts to "mask" his "eager, searching, almost fierce, yet carefully guarded look" with a "smile"; but so far into the depths of evil has Chillingworth sunk that his smile instead of masking his real intentions "played him false, and flickered over his visage so derisively, that the spectator could see his blackness all the better for it" (184).

And, we might add, it is also at this point in The

Scarlet Letter that Hawthorne's narrative voice comments, as it does in "Ethan Brand," on the manner in which Chillingworth becomes a fiend: he commits what is discussed throughout much of Hawthorne's work as the Unpardonable Sin. We are told that Chillingworth "had effected such a transformation" into the fiend "by devoting himself, for seven years, to the constant analysis of a heart full of torture, and deriving his enjoyment thence, and adding fuel to those fiery tortures which he analyzed and gloated over" (184). And the final time we see Chillingworth's destructive and ironic smile is when Hester, Pearl, and Dimmesdale plan to escape. At the town's holiday for the governor's election Hester turns and sees Chillingworth "standing in the remotest corner of the market-place, and smiling on her; a smile which . . . conveyed secret and fearful meaning" (223). But alas, in foiling the escape plans of Hester and Dimmesdale Chillingworth is foiled as well in his own plan to drive Dimmesdale insane. Specifically, Chillingworth reasons that in such a state of insanity, Dimmesdale would be unable to distinguish right from wrong, which would necessarily preclude any possibility that he might openly confess his sin and thereby set right-if nothing else-his hypocrisy. Soon after this defeat of his plan, the sole purpose of his life these past seven years, Chillingworth dies a wretched sinner.

And so, The Scarlet Letter, of all Hawthorne's novels, is the one which utilizes to the greatest extent inappropriate laughter to reveal character. There appears to

be little controversy concerning the nature of much of the laughter and smiles encountered in this novel-what we have described as destructive and ironic-which reveal Dimmesdale as a hypocrite, Pearl as almost inhuman in her inability to comprehend suffering, and Chillingworth as a fiend. And with so much scornful, diabolic, and wretched laughter, it is difficult not to feel the sense of impending gloom which pervades the novel. Mark Van Doren, in his very interesting essay "The Scarlet Letter," beautifully echoes the reader's thoughts when in referring to Chillingworth's comment to Hester: "I pity thee, for the good that has been wasted in thy nature," he states: "These are terrible words, for they express a fear we have had, the fear that this magnificent woman has lived for nothing; for a few days of love, and then for dreary years of less indeed than nothing."[26] And although Van Doren goes on to add that Hawthorne "also has known how to make Chillingworth's words untrue" (132), Waggoner states the novel's tragic truth well in his statement that The Scarlet Letter is "a tragic story containing not much hope for those involved, and perhaps not much for the rest of us" (159). Waggoner continues: "The ambiguity at any rate is not dispelled by the dark light that falls on the tombstone or by the colors named in the heraldic motto"; he further states-with a welcome bit of levity-: "This light that is 'gloomier than the shadow' hardly seems to come from above . . . No wonder Hawthorne preferred 'The House of the Seven Gables'" (159).

And while it is certainly true that The Gables is a less gloomy work than The Scarlet Letter, the inappropriate laughter and smiles evinced by its characters and the deceptive quality of appearance and reality work together in that novel as they do in The Scarlet Letter to reveal character.

## CHAPTER VII

## THE HOUSE OF THE SEVEN GABLES

In The House of the Seven Gables Hawthorne uses laughter much more subtly than he does in The Scarlet Letter, where characters often burst into peals of laughter: we see Dimmesdale laugh bitterly and self-mockingly at his hypocrisy; Pearl laugh and smile in an "elfish" manner, reflecting her delight in witnessing her mother's sorrow; and Mistress Hibbins, who shrieks with laughter at some diabolic thought or deed-the guilt for which she detects hidden within the hearts of others. Instead of such intense bouts of laughter, we find in The Gables that Hawthorne utilizes smiles and the deceptive quality of appearance and reality to reveal character. We would add, however, that in this novel one can find happy and carefree laughter-as Phoebe Pyncheon demonstrates. Phoebe's laughter is ordinary and her character is simple-Donohue calls her a "witless sunbeam" (115). With Phoebe appearance is reality. There are, however, two complex characters in this novel which best illustrate the destructive and ironic qualities of inappropriate laughter: they are Hepzibah, the kindly but

scowling old maid, and Judge Pyncheon, the beneficent smiler, who is also one of the greatest villains in all of Hawthorne's fiction. The ironic quality of Hepzibah's scowl and the judge's smile points out the conflict between appearance and reality: in neither case does the outward appearance of these characters adequately reflect their inner spiritual state. And although Judge Pyncheon's smile holds true to form in Hawthorne in that it signals trouble, Hepzibah's scowl, on the other hand, is somewhat enigmatic. Not only is Hepzibah's foreboding scowl not an adequate indication of her inner spiritual state, her attempts at smiling, feeble as they are, do not as is usually the case signal trouble. Donohue states that: "All of the characters are masked: Hepzibah, with her scowl disguising a tender heart . . . . the judge, with his dog-day smile concealing murderous rapacity" (83). Focusing on these smiles and scowls we can see clearly the manner in which they contrast each other.

From the very first moment we meet Hepzibah she is characterized by a scowl which is misinterpreted by the world "as an expression of bitter anger and ill-will. "But," we are told, "it was no such thing" (262). And we are further told that she may have scowled: "But her heart never frowned" (263). We might add at this point, that in spite of this obviously kind and tender portrayal of Hepzibah, the narrator himself indulges three times in some rather cruel laughter at Hepzibah's appearance. The first time the narrator laughs at

Hepzibah she is scurrying about her cent shop, dreading the idea of facing the public. In her highly agitated state she drops marbles all about the floor, which prompts the narrator to say: "Heaven help our poor old Hepzibah, and forgive us for taking a ludicrous view of her position!" He adds rather nastily: " . . . We positively feel so much the more inclined to shed tears of sympathy, from the very fact that we must needs turn aside and laugh at her" (265).

The second time the narrator indulges in such cruel laughter results from Hepzibah's appearance, most notably the first afternoon of Clifford's arrival. Seemingly defending Clifford's displeasure at his sister's ugliness the narrator says: "There could be few more tearful sights,-and Heaven forgive us if a smile insist on mingling with our conception of it!" (323) And the final time the narrator laughs thus at Hepzibah's expense, this time seemingly defending the world for its misinterpretation of Hepzibah's scowl he states: " . . . The good lady's manifestations, in truth, ran about an equal chance of scaring children out of their wits, or compelling them to unseemly laughter" (423). This cruel laughter in which the narrator indulges is itself ironic, not only because it seemingly corroborates and condones the world's view of Hepzibah, a view which is completely inaccurate, but because it appears that the narrator also believes that Hepzibah should be the subject of ridicule and derision, when in fact, he does not at all portray her as such. Having reviewed the narrator's ironic laughter toward

Hepzibah, we will see that the world views her in much the same way, a view that is, again, totally false.

When Hepzibah's first customer enters her cent shop we are told that she is "pale, wild, desperate in gesture and expression, scowling portentously, and looking far better qualified to do fierce battle with a house-breaker than to stand smiling behind the counter. . ." (268). This first customer is Holgrave, the daguerreotypist boarding with her at the Gables; and he has come to offer his "best wishes" for her "good purpose" (268). In offering these wishes we are told that Holgrave did so with a "smile" (268), which caused Hepzibah to break "into a hysterical giggle," after which she "began to sob" (269). And when Holgrave attempts to pay for the biscuits he wants, Hepzibah will not allow it and replies: "Let me be a lady a moment longer," all the while wearing a "melancholy smile" (270). This is hardly the portrayal of a character the narrator regards with derision; nor is it the behavior of someone who inwardly harbors "bitter anger and ill-will" toward the world. And it is at this point in the story that Hawthorne, through his character Uncle Venner, reemphasizes the irony of the conflict between appearance and reality when he says to Hepzibah: "Put on a bright face for your customers, and smile pleasantly as you hand them what they ask for! A stale article, if you dip it in a good, warm, sunny smile, will go off better than a fresh one that you've scowled upon" (282). From this point on we will see that Hepzibah-perhaps in an effort to take Uncle

Venner's advice-does attempt to smile cheerily; but unable to surmount a habit of many years, and, we might point out, due to her nearsightedness rather than any malice of thought, Hepzibah continues throughout the novel to wear her ominous yet unintentional scowl.

Even when Hepzibah interacts with those she loves, first with Phoebe and then with Clifford, she is unable to dispense with her terrible scowl that so much contributes to the world's misconception of her character. During the preparations for Clifford's breakfast, for instance, we see Hepzibah bustling about the kitchen attempting to cook, but actually impeding rather than aiding Phoebe in this task. Watching Phoebe wash her china teacups, Hepzibah exclaims: "What a nice little housewife you are!" As she says this we are told that she was "smiling, and, at the same time, frowning so prodigiously that the smile was sunshine under a thunder-cloud" (289). But this is again ironic because there is nothing in Hepzibah's nature that even remotely resembles a "thunder-cloud." Of Hepzibah's character Fogle writes: "She is a reminder of the complexity of moral meaning and of life itself in the discrepancy between her appearance, which is darkened by a perpetual nearsighted scowl, and her real nature, which is not only loving but lofty" (126-127). And Fogle clearly puts into perspective Hepzibah's unfortunate-and unimportant-physical appearance when stating: "She is extremely interesting, as a tragic character with the untragic flaw of physical absurdity" (127).

There is another incident of this sort with Phoebe, significant in that we again see Hepzibah's unintentionally menacing smile portrayed ironically. This specific incident concerns Hepzibah's attempt at humor: when good naturedly discussing the treasure-English guineas supposedly hidden somewhere in the house-Hepzibah tells Phoebe with a "grim yet kindly smile" that if she finds it they can permanently close the shop (293). These continually negative descriptions of Hepzibah's smiles are the result of the narrative voice, which seems to purposefully keep before the reader the seemingly negative and menacing-ironic-quality of Hepzibah's smile juxtaposed to kindly portrayals of her loving and gentle nature. And the final instance which seems to best illustrate Hepzibah's ironic smiling results from her interaction with the one person she loves best in all the world, her brother Clifford. One day, already convinced she has committed something close to if not a sin, Hepzibah asks Clifford if by opening her cent shop she might have "brought an irretrievable disgrace on the old house," which inquiry the narrator informs us is made "with a wretched smile" (311). Again, there is nothing "wretched" in Hepzibah's character; and while the use of this intensely negative word seems puzzling, the effect it creates in relation to Hepzibah's all but "wretched" affection for Clifford reveals all the more clearly that she is gentle and kind. And so Hepzibah's character is revealed completely through her grim and ironic scowl and her contrasting benevolent behavior,

pointing again to the deceptive quality of appearance and reality.

Now Judge Pyncheon, on the other hand, has not Hepzibah's problem with scowling; on the contrary, he is one of the most sweetly smiling characters ever seen in any of Hawthorne's fiction: and he is also one of its greatest villains. Absolutely diabolic, Judge Pyncheon embodies all the worst Hawthorne has to offer in his villains: he portrays the hypocrisy of Arthur Dimmesdale, who in spite of his outward irreproachability is steeped inwardly in secret sin; he is like Roger Chillingworth, the arch-fiend who plots to ruin the wretched Dimmesdale's soul. But Judge Pyncheon surpasses even Roger Chillingworth in that he has not only accomplished already the ruination of Clifford's mind-in allowing him to remain imprisoned for the past thirty years for a murder the judge himself commits-but he threatens as well to have Clifford committed to an insane asylum if he does not tell him where the supposed treasure is hidden. Waggoner writes of Judge Pyncheon: "The 'light' shed by the judge's sultry smile is deceptive. Despite his appearance he is really a creature of darkness. If he had his way he would continue and compound the original injustice" (177). Even Ethan Brand, who for all of his evil at least acknowledges openly his kinship with the devil and as such proclaims himself a fiend. Judge Pyncheon is an even greater sinner than Ethan Brand because in addition to his hypocrisy and his evil, he is also a self-deceiver: he suffers no remorse

because he experiences no guilt for his sins.

In fact, Judge Pyncheon reads the sum total of his life in the same way as does the rest of the world he has deceived with his outward show of beneficence. The judge feels no guilt for his sins because he does not care about them; his sole concerns are purely selfish, yet always hidden with a smile. We will see that in spite of his smiling appearance Judge Pyncheon is in reality a destroyer. As Gloria C. Erlich writes in her book, Family Themes And Hawthorne's Fiction: The Tenacious Web: "The chapter called 'The Scowl and the Smile' distinguishes the Judge's public image of smiling benevolence from the oppressive, blighting effect he has on his relatives."[27] The narrator's acrimonious comments toward Judge Pyncheon's ironic smiling are noted early on when he tells us that an "observer" would "probably suspect" that this "smile on the gentleman's face was a good deal akin to the shine on his boots, and that each must have cost him and his boot-black, respectively, a good deal of hard labor to bring out and preserve them" (313). We grow to "despise" Judge Pyncheon all the more when we are further informed that his deceased wife "got her death-blow in the honeymoon, and never smiled again, because her husband compelled her to serve him with coffee every morning at his bedside, in token of fealty to her liege-lord and master" (317). We are not surprised to learn that she died only three to four years into the marriage.

F. O. Matthiessen comments as well on the judge's

ability to deceive the world with his smiling appearance-in every case an ironic smile-all the while masking his brutish nature. Matthiessen writes in his essay, "The House of the Seven Gables," that Judge Pyncheon "had learned the expediency, which had not been forced upon his freer ancestor, of masking his relentless will beneath a veneer of 'paternal benevolence'": this "freer ancestor" being Colonel Pyncheon, with whom the narrator compares the judge, stating that while Colonel Pyncheon sent three tired and worn out wives to their graves, Judge Pyncheon had sent only one there.[28] And there is one final description of Judge Pyncheon which likens him to The Scarlet Letter's Roger Chillingworth when Hester pleads with him to spare Dimmesdale. The narrator likens the judge's eyes to those of the fiend, as Chillingworth's eyes are likened to the fiend; we are told that "a red fire kindled in his eyes . . . with something inexplicably fierce and grim darkening forth. . ." (321). And with this obvious reference to the judge's low animal nature, the narrator continues with: "After such a revelation, let him smile with what sultriness he would, he could much sooner turn grapes purple, or pumpkins yellow, than melt the iron-branded impression out of the beholder's memory" (321).

What is interesting here is that Hepzibah and Phoebe, the only two characters who have any prolonged interaction with Judge Pyncheon, are not at all fooled by his smiles. On the contrary, both women, equally naive, Phoebe in her youth

and Hepzibah in her utter seclusion from the world, instantly recognize the destructive and diabolic qualities within the judge's nature-always disguised with a smile. Phoebe and Hepzibah understand that the appearance is not the reality: they sense the evil-what Donohue calls the "murderous rapacity"-that seems to emanate from the judge's very being. As Male pointedly states of Judge Pyncheon: "He and his benign smile are as superficial as the shine on his boots. In ironic contrast to Hepzibah, the 'snowy whiteness' of his linen hides the dark, corpselike soul within" (128).

That even before she sees Judge Pyncheon Hepzibah knows him for what he is is apparent when in response to Uncle Venner, who tells her that earlier in the day the judge had "raised his hat" and "bowed and smiled" to him, Hepzibah retorts "with something bitter stealing unawares into her tone": "Yes, my cousin Jaffrey is thought to have a very pleasant smile!" (280) And Phoebe, the first of these women to come in contact with the judge, immediately knows him for what he is as well. Phoebe, as we saw with Robin in "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," is from the country, and as such symbolizes innocence and goodness, qualities naturally repelled by the evil and animal-like nature of the judge. And so, in what Judge Pyncheon believes will be interpreted as a friendly gesture between blood related kin, he tries to kiss Phoebe; but she instinctively draws back. Having a moment earlier bowed and smiled to Phoebe as she "never had been bowed to nor smiled on before," Phoebe momentarily

glimpses the judge's real character as she observes his face suddenly change with rage at her immediate and unexpected withdrawal from him (313). But the very next moment Phoebe looks up she finds herself "quite overpowered by the sultry, dog-day heat, as it were, of benevolence," which we are told: " . . . This excellent man diffused out of his great heart into the surrounding atmosphere,-very much like a serpent, which, as a preliminary to fascination, is said to fill the air with a peculiar odor" (314). Here we have it. This likening of the judge to the serpent points out the essence of his character, revealed again and again through his smile, which we have come to read as ironic, destructive, and diabolic.

And so it appears that Judge Pyncheon's smiles-ironic and destructive as they are-fool no one; yet Hepzibah's unintentional scowl fools all but those who know her best-not to mention providing good sport for the narrator. One of the town gossips best describes the world's image of this kindly old soul as "a real old vixen" (275). It seems that Hawthorne purposefully has his narrator-and the world in general-poke so much fun at Hepzibah, not to mention describing her smiles as "grim" and "wretched," so that she might contrast all the more to Judge Pyncheon's "serpent"-like nature. And while the inappropriate laughter in The House of the Seven Gables is not intense and resounding as it is in The Scarlet Letter, the subtle achievement of character revelation manifested through the

ironic scowls and destructive and diabolic smiles of Hepzibah and Judge Pyncheon, respectively, portrays as effectively as any of the novels the conflict between what a character outwardly appears to be and the reality of his or her inner spiritual state.

And so, we have seen that in spite of a paucity of laughter-at least of the inappropriate and ironic sort-smiles and scowls abound in this novel. And as there appears to be little disagreement among critics that the conflict between appearance and reality is pervasive in this novel, so too they seem to largely agree that the appearance of The Gables happy ending is indeed, not the reality. Baym, in spite of her strong stand made in the preface of her book, wherein she asserts that that the Hawthorne studies of the 1950s are misinterpretations-specifically those studies by Fogle, Male, and Waggoner-is clearly in agreement with the critics who compiled those studies on the issue of The Gables' ending; she writes in her essay "The Significance of Plot in Hawthorne's Romances": "The story ends on a double, hence an ironic, note of both reconciliation and separation. The mood of The House of the Seven Gables, as Hawthorne wrote to a friend, 'darkens damnably towards the close.'"[29] And Waggoner, in typical Hawthorne fashion-wherein a statement is made and then retracted-writes of The Gables' ending: "As for the living characters, Hawthorne seems to want to encourage us to hope. But why should not the fine new house in the suburbs generate the same evils the old house did?" He adds:

"There is, after all, even a new fortune to go with it-or rather, an old, tainted one, newly acquired" (185). And while Waggoner may have felt The Scarlet Letter to be a less gloomy novel than The Gables, all of Hawthorne's novels-with the exception of The Marble Faun-are gloomy. It seems apparent that in Hawthorne's view the reality of a character's inner depravity nullifies whatever good works or appearance thereof he or she may exhibit.

And so, we will see in The Blithedale Romance-a novel with another gloomy ending- as we have seen in all of the works discussed thus far, that the deceptive quality of appearance and reality and inappropriate laughter reveal character.

## CHAPTER VIII

## THE BLITHEDALE ROMANCE

In The Blithedale Romance as with all of the works discussed thus far inappropriate laughter and the deceptive quality of appearance and reality are used to reveal character. And although such laughter is used to a lesser extent than in The Scarlet Letter, what laughter and smiles exist are most always ironic and very often destructive. While there is, in this novel, some simple laughter emitted by such ordinary characters as Priscilla, the three great laughers and smilers are also the most interesting characters: Westervelt, Zenobia, and Coverdale. And as we have seen so often in his fiction Hawthorne has his narrator, which in this novel happens to be Coverdale, the main character, comment upon inappropriate laughter: "We sometimes hold mirth to a stricter accountability than sorrow; it must show good cause, or the echo of its laughter comes back drearily."[30] A study of Westervelt's laughter and smiles reveals that there is no single instance where we can "show good cause" for his mirthful appearance; rather, it is again the irony between the appearance of a smiling exterior and

the reality of inner spiritual depravity.

The first time we meet Westervelt is through the eyes of Coverdale, who takes an immediate dislike to the stranger. Interrupting Coverdale's solitude on his walk through the woods, Westervelt startles and accosts him with: Halloo, friend!" (492) Realizing by Coverdale's response that he offends him, Westervelt, at this point still a stranger says smiling: "I regret that my mode of addressing you was a little unfortunate" (493). Yet this smile does not appease but further antagonizes Coverdale, who in spite of feeling "a little ashamed" of his "first irritation" asks "with no waste of civility" what the stranger wants (493). When this stranger presumes to inquire about Zenobia, with whom at this point in the novel Coverdale is infatuated, he becomes irate that Westervelt should have the audacity to refer to Zenobia's pen name. And unceremoniously, Coverdale points out that her pen name is to be used only by such close friends as himself. Westervelt's reaction to this chastisement is merely to utter "with a brief laugh": "Indeed!" But it is this "brief laugh" which causes Coverdale to despise Westervelt throughout the novel (493). When the subject goes beyond Zenobia and on to Hollingsworth, whom Coverdale portrays in an all but flattering light, we are told that Westervelt "burst into a fit of merriment, of the same nature as the brief, metallic laugh, already alluded to, but immensely prolonged and enlarged" (495). Well, we can see that Coverdale has nothing but dislike for this

stranger who has actually done nothing, but whose purposefully sarcastic and mocking smiles and laughter have been totally at Coverdale's expense. The remaining instances wherein Coverdale either observes or interacts with Westervelt are always in the presence of others.

Acting in his typically covert fashion, hence his name, Coverdale is one day in his treetop "observatory" when he next encounters Westervelt. Listening while undetected in his secret hideaway, Coverdale overhears a conversation between Westervelt and Zenobia and fails not to observe Westervelt's "peculiar laugh," which he describes as "one of the disagreeable characteristics of Professor Westervelt" (499). But this "peculiar laugh," though ironic in that it is never a response to mirth, is not what Coverdale finds most "peculiar" about him. The next time Coverdale has opportunity to observe Westervelt occurs later in the novel when he temporarily leaves Blithedale and takes up residence in a hotel. One day, while observing the boarding house across the back alley and making all sorts of assumptions about its occupants, Coverdale happens to notice a man looking out of the window. The man is Westervelt. Recognizing Coverdale, Westervelt smiles at him in such a manner that he displays his "gold-bordered teeth." And of this spectacle the narrator, or Coverdale, tells us that he "fancied that this smile, with its peculiar revelation, was the Devil's signet on the Professor" (532).

And so, we have the classic conflict between appearance

and reality again manifested through Westervelt's smile. The sum total of his ironic laughter and smiles reveals him to Coverdale now and later to the reader as well, as evil. In fact, at one point previous to this incident when Coverdale again observes Westervelt's laughter, he thinks that the handsomeness of Westervelt's whole physical appearance is a sham and that maybe he is really "a wizened little elf" (495). Of course, the irony here is that while we cannot say for certain whether or no Westervelt really is "a wizened little elf," we can say for certain that his whole physical appearance is a sham: he is the most depraved character in the novel. Male as well hints at Westervelt's supernatural quality when he points out that what makes "Westervelt completely repulsive is that he typifies a ghastly life-in death . . . . Westervelt has an indecent, clammy existence" (147-148). Totally selfish, and caring nothing for anyone nor anything but his own ends, we see Westervelt smile for the last time in connection with Priscilla.

After observing first Westervelt and then Zenobia and Priscilla through his hotel window, Coverdale, who lives his life vicariously through those around him-what Male calls his attempt "to live by proxy" (152)-goes across the back alley to their rooms so that he might know better the affairs of these three people, so recently a part of his life at "Blithedale." When he arrives Coverdale is much agitated that Westervelt, Zenobia, and Priscilla, are going out; and not only that, but they refuse to tell him where they are

going. Immediately, Coverdale asks Priscilla if it is her choice to accompany them, to which Westervelt retorts smiling: "Possibly, Priscilla sees in me an older friend than either Mr. Coverdale or Mr. Hollingsworth. I shall willingly leave the matter at her option" (541). The fact is that Priscilla has no will of her own, and prefers to follow instructions rather than to think for herself. And in addition, Westervelt is no "friend" of Priscilla nor anyone else; he merely finds it convenient to use Priscilla as the subject of his "Veiled Lady" act. That Priscilla is in jeopardy in this strange experiment matters little to Westervelt, whose final smile, here, ironic and destructive, reveals him as a fiend typically found in Hawthorne. Westervelt's laughter is different from that of Zenobia, who though never diabolic, also laughs and smiles ironically and ultimately self-destructively throughout the novel.

The laughter of Zenobia, the dark beauty and also the most interesting character in the novel-whom Male describes as so: "Redundant with life, she makes the other characters seem pale" (146-147)-falls basically into two categories: the first category concerns the mocking smile Zenobia presents to the world in general, and to Coverdale and Priscilla in particular: a smile which smile masks her proud spirit; and the second category concerns Zenobia's desperate laughter: her laughter becomes desperate when she realizes and resigns herself to the fact that her love for Hollingsworth, a man not nearly her equal, and who is convinced that a woman knows

no happiness unless under a man's subjugation, is unrequited. He chooses Priscilla instead of herself. And this desperate laughter eventually ends in Zenobia's tragic suicide. Early in the novel Zenobia, at first rather amused with Coverdale's incessant probings, eventually finds his observations of others tedious and irksome. For instance, when Coverdale first meets Zenobia he can do nothing but speculate on her virginity; and to such an extent are his thoughts thus preoccupied that one day while lying in his sick bed he asks himself: "What girl had ever laughed as Zenobia did?" (466) Fully aware that she is being thus closely studied, Zenobia finally asks Coverdale why he watches her and what he wants to know. Coverdale responds: "The mystery of your life" (466).

That Zenobia's life, or anyone else's for that matter, should be open to Coverdale is an assumption he somehow, in his self-appointed role as voyeur, feels justified in making. But Zenobia's response to such brashness is to look deeply into his eyes. Coverdale says he sees "nothing now, unless it be the face of a sprite laughing at me from the bottom of a deep well" (466). As in The Scarlet Letter where Pearl's mischievous eyes always seem to reflect such a sprite, we sense that Zenobia's laughing eyes mock Coverdale in much the same manner that Pearl's often mock her mother. And later, Coverdale finally arrives at what is for him a remarkably astute conclusion when he says that Zenobia "never laughed at Hollingsworth, as she often did at me" (478). Actually,

Zenobia does not laugh at anyone in the same ironic and condescending fashion that she laughs at Coverdale, with the exception of Priscilla, whom Zenobia views as her rival for Hollingsworth's affections.

There are three specific instances of ironic and destructive laughter concerning Zenobia which demonstrate clearly the conflict between appearance and reality: Zenobia's character is revealed as her inappropriate laughter reflects her true feelings for Priscilla. Now, it should be noted that Priscilla, a weak and rather pathetic creature who views her position in life as merely the adjunct to a man-a view which eventually endears her all the more to Hollingsworth-has little will of her own and is easily an object of ridicule for someone so highly intelligent and socially enlightened as Zenobia. Be that as it may, Zenobia, in spite of an outward show of smiles and what appears to be cheerfulness, reveals her true feelings toward Priscilla. One instance which best illustrates Zenobia's real sentiments toward Priscilla results from their gathering flowers in the forest one spring day. Just out of his sick bed, Coverdale happens by in time to see Priscilla decked out with flowers that Zenobia has so artfully arranged in her hair. But Coverdale astutely observes that there "is only one thing amiss" with this floral arrangement (473); and Zenobia, fully aware of Coverdale's meaning merely "laughed, and flung the malignant weed away" (473). That Zenobia would place such a "malignant weed" in among the flowers adorning Priscilla's

hair and laugh when attention is drawn to this rather nasty deed, points out the conflict between the appearance of her seemingly cheerful laughter and what seems to be an attitude of playful camaraderie, and the reality of Zenobia's true sentiments: she derives pleasure in treating Priscilla in a cruel and derisive manner.

Another instance which portrays the irony of Zenobia's laughter which essentially mocks Priscilla, occurs when Zenobia, jealous that Priscilla is seated by Hollingsworth's feet-a gesture which pleases him greatly-calls Priscilla and says that she intends to be her duenna. Upon being called, Priscilla, always timid and always fearful that she might in some way not please Zenobia, asks her: "Are you angry with me?" (484) Zenobia's response which attempts, though unsuccessfully, to mask her jealousy is to laughingly exclaim: "Angry with you, child? What a silly idea!" (485) But no sooner does she utter this protest in response to Hollingsworth's statement that Priscilla is "the one little person in the world with whom nobody can be angry" (484), than our narrator-observer Coverdale notes Zenobia's reaction which shows her real feelings for Priscilla, in spite of her outwardly sweet and smiling exterior. Coverdale tells us that Zenobia bids Hollingsworth "good-night very sweetly" and then nods to him as well "with a smile" (485); but Coverdale tells us that just as Zenobia "turned aside with Priscilla" he "caught another glance" of Zenobia's face. It was a glance that "would have made the fortune of a tragic actress

. . . when she fumbles . . . for the concealed dagger. . ." (485). Zenobia's outward appearance of smiles ironically masking inner rage immediately recalls Judge Pyncheon of The Gables, who in an attempt to bestow a kiss upon Phoebe's brow is rebuffed, and momentarily allows his rage to register upon his face as well, disturbing but for the briefest moment his "sultry smile." It would appear that while Hollingsworth might be of the opinion that such a sweet and harmless creature as Priscilla could not possibly incite anger in anyone, Zenobia feels differently toward her, masking her real feelings with smiles.

And the final instance when Zenobia is really quite cruel to Priscilla, though she attempts to hide this cruelty again with a show of smiles, concerns the episode when Zenobia tells the story of "The Veiled Lady," using Priscilla as the subject. With full knowledge that Priscilla has been used before by Westervelt in his "Veiled Lady" performances, and fully aware as well that Priscilla would again be afraid, Zenobia uses a piece of gauze for the veil and throws it over Priscilla. Zenobia then looks under this veil and says to Priscilla "with a mischievous smile": "How do you find yourself, my love?" (507) Well, we know that as Zenobia fully expects, she finds Priscilla ready to faint. And smiling or no, we are also aware at this point that Zenobia cherishes no love at all for Priscilla, hence the irony in referring to Priscilla as "my love." And although Zenobia has been trying to mask her true feelings toward Priscilla

through an appearance of laughter and smiles, the conflict between appearance and reality is manifest in her actions toward the girl: with her secret look of jealous rage; with the "malignant weed" she purposefully places in Priscilla's hair; and with the veil she throws over Priscilla to purposefully frighten her. All of these actions which expose her true feelings toward Priscilla are in direct conflict with Zenobia's laughing and smiling with Priscilla, as if she were her best friend in all the world. And in addition to such mocking and derisive smiles which Zenobia directs largely toward Priscilla and Coverdale, she also manifests desperate laughter and smiles, which are largely self-mocking and totally ironic and destructive, as they tragically precede her suicide.

There are five specific instances which best show the highly ironic and deeply tragic quality of Zenobia's seemingly carefree laughter and smiles. The first instance, which surprises the reader initially, results from Coverdale's asking Zenobia if when he goes to town he should announce that she will be giving a series of lectures on the rights of women. When Zenobia replies with a "half-melancholy smile" that: "Women possess no rights," we are indeed surprised (522). This statement, in coming from Zenobia, is completely ironic when we consider that from the opening pages of the novel she has been the champion of women's rights. But, of course, when we consider her love for Hollingsworth, a man whom we have previously described as

something less than enlightened-at least pertaining to women and their place in society-we are not surprised at Zenobia's sudden professed change of heart. We do, however, believe that Zenobia's statement, though uttered despairingly, is meant ironically. This incident seems to represent the beginning of Zenobia's increasing despair, which all the while she attempts to conceal through a posture of laughter and smiles.

The four remaining incidents which best manifest the conflict between appearance and reality in conjunction with the ironic and ultimately self-destructive laughter of Zenobia, all take place at "Eliot's pulpit." When Coverdale, true to form in his self-appointed role as observer, happens by "Eliot's pulpit" where he finds Zenobia, Hollingsworth, and Priscilla, he is asked by a laughing Zenobia: "Do you know, Mr. Coverdale, I have been on trial for my life?" (565) This is pathetic. There is nothing for Zenobia to laugh at; and so, losing her perspective on life as she realizes that she has lost Hollingsworth, Zenobia plunges the more deeply into despair, laughing and smiling all the while. And as Coverdale never responds but quietly observes Zenobia, she turns to Priscilla and asks her what she will do when she finds "no spark among the ashes" (569); this is an obvious reference to the great disparity in age between Hollingsworth and his chosen Priscilla, and to what Zenobia clearly sees as the lack of common interest between the two. When Priscilla responds simply: "Die," Zenobia retorts: "That was well

said!" Zenobia says this while wearing what we are told is an "approving smile" (569). We are now fully aware of the depths of Zenobia's despair in her acknowledgement of death as the solution to the problem concerning the possibility that Priscilla might realize an incompatibility with Hollingsworth. Despite what appears to be a happy and smiling exterior, Zenobia is, in reality, deeply hurt and on the brink of suicide.

The final incident which transpires on "Eliot's pulpit" is between Zenobia and Coverdale, and refers to what has occurred in the "love triangle" of Zenobia, Hollingsworth, and Priscilla. After Priscilla leaves with Hollingsworth, Zenobia, believing herself alone, breaks down and sobs. But glancing upward she notices Coverdale staring at her and asks smiling: "Is it you, Miles Coverdale?" (570) She continues despite this outward smile in the most acrimonious manner with: "Ah, I perceive what you are about! You are turning this whole affair into a ballad. Pray let me hear as many stanzas as you happen to have ready" (570-571). Zenobia's true feelings toward Coverdale's obsession with observing others are not entirely lost on him as he tells her to "hush," claiming that there is an "ache" in his "soul" as well (571). Because Coverdale's grief is unreal, in that his role of voyeur-observer allows him the freedom to detach himself from the tragedy at hand, Coverdale's exclamation of sorrow for a grief that for him is not heartfelt-not felt at all-makes him appear ridiculous: we cannot take his semblance

of sorrow seriously. Colacurcio describes him perfectly as "the feckless minor poet who never does see enough to understand what is involved" (33)-involved in living his own life. But Zenobia already knows this of Coverdale and responds with "a sharp, light laugh," and continues in this sarcastic vein with: "It is genuine tragedy, is it not?" (571) And as this final scene at "Eliot's pulpit" subsides and Zenobia is leaving, Coverdale takes her hand, commenting upon how cold it is. Zenobia responds to this comment in what is one of the greates ironies in the novel when she says laughing: "The extremities die first, they say" (573). The irony is so strong here not merely because the appearance of Zenobia's laughter makes the reality of her deep suffering all the more tragic, but because she is already inwardly dead-her heart is broken. Her "extremities" do not "die first": they die last. Zenobia commits suicide that night. And it is Zenobia's suicide over losing Hollingsworth to Priscilla which renders all of her preceding laughter on the subject all the more inappropriate, casting it in not only a desperate and tragic light, but in a ghoulish one as well.

The laughter of Coverdale is not in the same category as that of Zenobia, whose laughter is largely either mocking or desperate. Coverdale's laughter and smiles are generally bitter, often self-directed, and nearly always ironic. We will see that as Donohue points out: "Coverdale's smiles and laughter reveal his selfishness, his petulance, and finally his demonic self-delusion" (107). The first time Coverdale

reveals his true character, that of the cold detached observer who ponders carefully his reaction to a given situation, is when Priscilla first arrives: aware that her reception is less than warm, she bursts into tears. Observing her tears Coverdale tells us: "Perhaps it showed the iron substance of my heart, that I could not help smiling at this odd scene of unknown and unaccountable calamity . . . without the liberty of choosing whether to sympathize or no" (456). Baym, however, views Coverdale differently; she states: "Since it is Coverdale's story that we are following, the innumerable critical analyses of his character as detached voyeur are very much beside the point: but Coverdale's passivity is much to the point" (187). Well, it seems that Coverdale as "detached voyeur" is exactly the point; certainly, his "passivity" is the direct result of his preference to observe rather than participate in life. And is it not significant that Zenobia, a main character in this novel, eventually so tires of his snooping and spying that she sharply berates Coverdale for such behavior? Precisely because "it is Coverdale's story that we are following" are we concerned with his role as "detached voyeur." It seems that Donohue, on the other hand, is at least in line with the text when she describes Coverdale as "the totally selfish and self-deluded voyeur" (113). The calculated response, so necessary a part of Coverdale's character as observer, lessens his human sympathies with the rest of mankind and results in his alienation from the group at "Blithedale."

Coverdale's laughter and smiles are often inappropriate and most always ironic in that they rarely are what they appear to be.

The second time we see "the iron substance" of Coverdale's heart concerns Priscilla's patheticlly unsuccessful attempts to perform the simplest of tasks. Unused to great amounts of exercise, Priscilla continually stumbles as she tries to run. Observing her plight Coverdale says to himself: "Such an incident-though it seems too slight to think of-was a thing to laugh at, but which brought the water into one's eyes, and lingered in the memory . . . as antiquated trash" (482). Coverdale's initial reaction to laugh at Priscilla's inadequacies, then on second thought to cry over them, and finally to dismiss as "trash" whatever sympathy he might have felt for her, demonstrates the inappropriateness of his laughter: he is completely detatched from human sympathy. And throughout the novel, however much Coverdale might claim to sympathize with anyone, his initial reaction is always to laugh at what shortcomings he can find in others. So, we can see how his laughter is inappropriate in its cruelty, and ironic in that the smiling appearance he presents to the world is never the reality of his true feelings.

While the first two incidents demonstrating Coverdale's inappropriate and ironic laughter are directed at Priscilla, the next incident which reveals him as the cold-hearted voyeur results from his interaction with Zenobia, who tells

him directly that his smile is inappropriate and not at all what it appears to be. One day, when Zenobia is sitting on "Eliot's pulpit," the spot where so many of the novel's conflicts are played out, she comments: "If I live another year, I will lift up my own voice in behalf of woman's wider liberty!" To this our narrator-voyeur confides to us: "She, perhaps, saw me smile" (510). That for Zenobia this is no laughing matter and that she finds Coverdale's smile completely inappropriate is plain when she says: "That smile, permit me to say, makes me suspicious of a low tone of feeling and shallow thought" (510). Now, for the first time, whether judging his thoughts correctly or incorrectly, a character, and one endowed with a sharp intellect and keen insight, is aware of and comments upon the great discrepancy between what Coverdale is-a sceptic and a voyeur-and what he appears to be-a pleasantly smiling altruistic individual, who through his efforts at "Blithedale" hopes to improve the world. But Coverdale feels duty bound to defend his smile, and so he confides to the reader that he "had not smiled from any unworthy estimate of woman"; and that what "amused and puzzled" him was "the fact, that women, however intellectually superior, so seldom disquiet themselves about the rights or wrongs of their sex, unless their own individual affections chance to lie in idleness, or to be ill at ease" (510). It is perhaps best that Coverdale never confides such information to Zenobia, who like any other female listening to or reading Coverdale's words, might have

been prone to somewhat stronger speech than her above comment allows. At any rate, Coverdale clearly reveals himself as the epitome of the hypocrite, who masquerading under the auspices of the concerned friend, is in reality a "low feeling" voyeur, whose greatest joy in life is derived from living vicariously through others. But Coverdale never subjects himself to the same standards to which he subjects others.

And the next significant instance when we see Coverdale smile the circumstances are different in that he does not smile at the misfortune of others; it is shortly after Zenobia's comment concerning women's rights and Coverdale's ill-received and inappropriately smiling response to it. Hollingsworth, the great champion of women's continued subjugation, states what he believes is a woman's proper and "true" place. And while none of what he says is exactly in line with what Zenobia has up to this point been espousing, out of love for Hollingsworth, she merely becomes tearful and sadly agrees with him. Hollingsworth says, for instance: that woman is "the most admirable handiwork of God, in her true place and character"; that her "place is at man's side"; that her "office," is "that of the sympathizer; the unreserved, unquestioning believer"; that "All the separate action of woman is, and ever has been, and always shall be, false, foolish, vain, destructive of her own best and holiest qualities"; and that "Man is a wretch without woman; but woman is a monster . . . without man as her acknowledged

principal!" (511) And so that Zenobia will not fail to understand his point, Hollingsworth adds that in the event-unlikely as it seems to him-it should ever come to pass that women might stand to acquire more freedoms, he "would call upon" his "own sex to use its physical force, that unmistakable evidence of sovereignty, to scourge them back within their proper bounds!" (511) Of Zenobia's rather surprising and disappointing reaction to Hollingsworth's outrageous comments about women Coverdale again confides: "I smiled-somewhat bitterly, it is true-in contemplation of my own ill-luck" (512). Coverdale, again, is not what he appears to be: he is not concerned about the welfare of women nor is he concerned about anyone else. Rather, he is bitter because Zenobia, with whom Coverdale is still infatuated, does not berate Hollingsworth as she had earlier berated himself, who never actually uttered one unfavorable word against women. So, revealing his complete selfishness as well as his "petty jealousy," again manifested through the appearance of his smiling exterior, Coverdale is a character for whom it is difficult to feel sympathy. Coverdale's bitter laughter only grows more so as he realizes that he is not taken for what he hopes he appears to be: everyone's confidant and closest friend.

The next instance that reveals his laughter as inappropriate again concerns his increasingly self-directed and bitter laughter. Walking through the woods back to the house, having just concluded his conversation with Zenobia

and Hollingsworth on the status of women in society, Coverdale reveals his complete ignorance of the degree to which his role as observer causes vexation and irritation in others; in what appears to be an air of absolute self-righteousness Coverdale tells us: "Sometimes, in my solitude, I laughed with the bitterness of self-scorn, remembering how unreservedly I had given up my heart and soul to interests that were not mine" (560). Such comments by Coverdale are so irritating and distracting-most assuredly the author's intention in creating such a character-that certainly we must agree with Waggoner when he writes of Coverdale, in what seems to be a characteristically subtle yet pointed fashion: " . . . Surely the chief difficulty in the way of a greater enjoyment of the novel is created by Coverdale" (208). Coverdale's assertion-and one made "bitterly" no less-is of course another way of saying that he minds everyone's business save his own; and Coverdale cannot, for anything, understand why not one single person thanks him for this supreme sacrifice. And he never does figure this out.

Fogle states that: "Coverdale is the study of a man doomed, not apparently through his own fault, never to live fully. With all his capabilities for living, he remains unawakened and outside" (155). Somehow, I cannot excuse Coverdale's excessive snooping and spying by attributing his nosy behavior to forces beyond his control: that is, I cannot agree that Coverdale's choice to live "by proxy" is "not

apparently through his own fault." On the contrary, that Coverdale lives-and it would seem dies-alone can be attributed to nothing and no one but himself. And Coverdale himself realizes as much when he says of himself: "That cold tendency, between instinct and intellect, which made me pry with a speculative interest into people's passions and impulses, appeared to have gone far towards unhumanizing my heart" (530). But it is Coverdale's greatest flaw that he refuses to believe it. He is ultimately the self-deceiver when he immediately rationalizes his role as voyeur with: "But a man cannot always decide for himself whether his own heart is cold or warm" (530). And so Coverdale deludes himself with the notion that his behavior is normal and acceptable. And in an essay attributed to George Eliot entitled "Contemporary Literature of America The Blithedale Romance" she states: " . . . As for Coverdale, he falls into a moral scepticism more desolating than death. . . ."[31] Where Fogle seems to place blame for Coverdale's obnoxious behavior as observer anywhere but with him, Eliot, it seems, gives Coverdale too much credit in allowing that he moralizes over his behavior. The fact is that Coverdale spends very little time in moralizing over but an infinite amount of time in rationalizing his self-appointed role as observer. Coverdale spends far more time observing and commenting upon the folly of others than he does in commenting upon his own; and while there is no question that Eliot-if she be the author of the essay-is correct in her assessment that

Coverdale's life is "more desolate than death," he, unfortunately does not really know why.

The final scene and also one which best reveals Coverdale's character through his inappropriate laughter and the deceptive quality of appearance and reality concerns his irresistible urge to return to "Blithedale" and the group's reaction to him. Moving through the forest as dusk swiftly approaches, Coverdale hears the far-off laughter of the masquerade party. Skulking along and stealing from tree to tree in order to conceal himself, Coverdale speculates upon the masquerade and upon the "oddity of surprising" his "grave associates" in "this masquerading trim" (563); he says: "I could not possibly refrain from a burst of laughter on my own separate account" (563). But his laughter is overheard and someone says: "Hush! Who is that laughing?" The answer is that it must be: "Some profane intruder!" (563) And a "profane intruder" is exactly what Hawthorne, through his narrative voice, thinks of those like Ethan Brand and Roger Chillingworth who violate "the sanctity of a human heart." And knowing Coverdale for what he is, the Devil at this masquerade recognizes his voice and says: "My music has brought him hither. He is always ready to dance to the Devil's tune!" (563)

And so, here we have it: Coverdale has fooled no one with his smiles. Everyone is aware that in reality Coverdale has selfish rather than altruistic motives: his only real interest is in witnessing the passions of other people-the

trials and tribulations of their lives. And not only is Coverdale content to observe rather than live his life, he cares little as well for "Blithedale's" ideals of social reform. Coverdale wants to be a part of "Blithedale" alright-just so long as it involves no "special trouble" to himself (442). It is the ultimate irony that the Devil should recognize Coverdale's voice; it is the symbolic recognition of what he, like Mistress Hibbins in The Scarlet Letter, knows to be evil in the hearts of others. And although he is not blatantly evil as is Mistress Hibbins, Coverdale's great sin is one of pride. He never questions that in watching others, through his self-admitted and self-appointed role as observer, he completely violates their privacy. And however often he may laugh and smile in an attempt to hide his real motives and real character, Coverdale's hypocrisy and dishonesty are revealed throughout the novel. He does exactly what Zenobia accuses him of doing: Coverdale makes a "ballad" out of the circumstances, misfortunes, and tragedies of other people's lives.

# CHAPTER IX

## THE MARBLE FAUN

The Marble Faun or The Romance of Monte Beni, Hawthorne's longest novel, is different from his other three in that it clearly aspires to a happy ending and it contains very little diabolic laughter. There are, however, many instances throughout the novel where characters do laugh and smile; and we will note, as we did in The House of the Seven Gables, that some of the laughter is appropriate. Hilda, for instance, often referred to as the "dove" because of her innocence and purity, demonstrates such laughter. Her laughter and smiles represent nothing more than what they appear to be: with Hilda, as with Phoebe in The Gables, appearance is reality. In fact so pure a character is Hilda that Male describes her "purity" as "repulsive" at times (173). But the great majority of the novel's laughter is, as is usually the case in Hawthorne, tragic, ironic, and thus inappropriate. That The Marble Faun aspires to a happy ending in spite of all its irony-of plot, theme, and character development-is demonstrated in two ways: Kenyon wins Hilda and we feel hopeful as well that Miriam and

Donatello, the novel's sinful and tragic lovers, will someday be together. Sinful and tragic as they are, Miriam and Donatello are also the novel's most interesting characters; and we will see that as the novel develops and presents us with such hopefulness for their reunion, the characters of Miriam and Donatello are revealed through their inappropriate laughter and the deceptive quality of appearance and reality.

Miriam, the dark beauty with the equally dark past, is the greatest laugher and smiler in the novel. She is, like Zenobia of The Blithedale Romance, the most interesting and complex character in the novel. The complexity of her character is manifested through her inappropriate laughter which is the majority of the time tragic and ironic. But where Zenobia is driven finally to commit suicide as the solution to her despair, Miriam sustains her burden with what the narrator of The Scarlet Letter terms a "woman's strength." Of the many instances when we see Miriam smile or laugh, whether condescendingly at Donatello, who is often likened by the narrator to a "pet dog" (598) who never leaves his master's side, or facetiously at Hilda, who piously thanks the heavens when Miriam is finally found in the catacombs with the man later to be knowm as her "evil fate," her smiles and laughter gradually become "strange" (606) and "unnatural"(751).

There are seven specific incidents where Miriam's smiles and laughter and the deceptive quality of appearance and reality best reveal the complexity of her character.

Still without a clue as to what Miriam's secret might be, we are further puzzled about the meaning behind some of her strange paintings. Donatello, who one day scurries over to Miriam's apartment to sit for his portrait, gazes at these paintings and finds them more than a little disturbing. Miriam observes his obvious distaste with one particular portrait which we are told "startled" him "at perceiving duskily a woman with long dark hair, who threw up her arms with a wild gesture of tragic despair, and appeared to beckon him into the darkness along with her"(613). Realizing that Donatello, child-like and rather simple, is frightened, Miriam says "smiling to see him peering doubtfully into the mysterious dusk": "Do not be afraid, Donatello" (613). And finally, so that Donatello will return to his usually joyful and sportive "faun"-like state, Miriam shows him another portrait-this time of a beautiful woman. And we will see that Miriam's smile becomes increasingly ironic in that the more confused Donatello becomes about the meaning behind her paintings, the more Miriam smiles.

As Donatello reviews a second painting-too distraught to contemplate further the dark and despairing quality of the first-we are told that: "Miriam watched Donatello's contemplation of the picture, and seeing his simple rapture, a smile of pleasure brightened on her face, mixed with a little scorn;" and of this supposed smile of pleasure we are further informed: "at least, her lips curled, and her eyes gleamed, as if she disdained either his admiration or her own

enjoyment of it" (617). Here we see that Miriam, through her smiles, manifests an appearance of happiness when in reality she is deeply troubled. We see this clearly when Donatello asks her why she cannot make this beautiful woman, who happens to be Miriam, smile. Hawthorne, through Miriam, says of inappropriate and "forced" laughter: "A forced smile is uglier than a frown" (618). Donatello, still at this point in the novel innocent and without sin, is unable to understand what Miriam means by this statement. Donatello cannot yet understand that there is a difference between appearance and reality: that a smile on Miriam's portrait would be ironic and inappropriate because it would represent a false state of happiness. Donatello, unlike Miriam, has not yet experienced any of life's tragedies; and so he cannot comprehend what it is that causes Miriam to speak in what seems to him such a strange and mysterious manner.

And in spite of Miriam's acknowledgement that: "A forced smile is uglier than a frown," it is interesting that she continues to smile thus ironically throughout the novel. Shortly after this incident, for instance, Miriam reveals further through her inappropriate laughter the complexity of her character one day while walking on the Borghese grounds where she meets Donatello. In response to Miriam telling him that he must surely be a Faun, Donatello tells her that he believes his happiness will last forever. Fogle writes: "The simplicity of Donatello is that of a subhuman being, who is yet capable of virtues which humans have not" (164). Miriam

responds to Donatello's assertion that his happiness will last forever with: "The child! the simpleton!" (636); and we are told that Miriam says this "with sudden laughter, and checking it as suddenly" (636). Although we still have no idea what Miriam's secret is, and what exactly it has to do with her model who follows her about day and night, we know at this point in the novel that she is deeply troubled and that her laughter, which she "suddenly" checks is completely ironic; we can see, however, the almost desperate and pathetic quality of Miriam's smiles when we are told that, after such sharp criticism of Donatello, Miriam looked at him and her eyes "filled with tears, at the same time that a smile shone out of them" (636). There is something troubling Miriam so deeply that she can only present an appearance of happiness; in reality she lives a lonely, troubled, and melancholy existence.

At this point in The Marble Faun Miriam's laughter and smiles become increasingly tragic as the tension and despair within her mount to such degree that she is ultimately driven to encourage and condone-with merely an approving look in her eyes-Donatello's murder of her model, the enigmatic character who truly appears to be Miriam's "evil fate." When Miriam and Donatello are dancing one day in the woods, for instance, out of nowhere-as is usually the case- Miriam's model is suddenly somehow dancing amidst the group. Although Miriam has but for a brief time lain aside her troubles and engaged in genuinely mirthful laughter and revelry, her sudden

awareness of the model jolts Miriam back into reality. And when Donatello goes over to Miriam he observes the sudden and dramatic change in her when we are told that "though he saw her within reach of his arm, yet the light of her eyes seemed as far off as that of a star, nor was there any warmth in the melancholy smile with which she regarded him" (640). Still without an explanation for Miriam's strange and ironic laughter and smiles, the reader is nevertheless fully aware of an increasing sense of dread on her behalf; and we will see that such feelings are not wasted as Miriam becomes the more deeply submerged in evil and the quality of her laughter changes from despairing to tragic.

Another significant instance when Miriam's ironic and inappropriate laughter and the deceptive quality of appearance and reality reveal her character occurs after Donatello murders Miriam's model. This murder, it should be noted, occurs only after Miriam's eyes flash approval to Donatello-already described as a "pet dog" in his worship of her-to commit this crime. When one day Miriam, Donatello, and Kenyon are in "The Church of the Capuchins," having previously decided to meet there, they notice that the man who was supposedly Miriam's model is lying dead and dressed like a monk. When Kenyon notices the blood begin to ooze out of the dead "monk's" nostrils he remarks that this is "strange," adding that this "monk" must have "died of apoplexy . . . or by some sudden accident, and the blood has not yet congealed" (698-699). To this Miriam responds: "Do

you consider that a sufficient explanation?"; we are told that Miriam asks this question "with a smile from which the sculptor involuntarily turned away his eyes" (699). We learn later of the supposed theory that a corpse will bleed in the presence of his or her murderer: of course, this explains Miriam's peculiar smile and the reason Kenyon "involuntarily turned away his eyes" from her. It seems, and particularly so in this instance in the chapel, that the conflict between Miriam's smiling exterior and the reality of some dark and ominous secret within her, is becoming apparent to those around her.

And while Kenyon merely averts his eyes for whatever reasons from Miriam's smile, Hilda, previously described as 'dovelike' in her purity and innocence, having accidentally witnessed the murder of the model, informs Miriam that she cannot any longer remain her closest and dearest friend. Suspecting that Hilda somehow knows the truth about her part in the murder,-Hilda, accidentally and concealed all the while saw Miriam's eyes flash approval to Donatello as he threw her model over the precipice-Miriam one day pays Hilda a visit. She finds Hilda very upset-very upset that in witnessing this murder her purity will in some way be tainted, rather than very upset on Miriam's behalf. At any rate, when Miriam sees how completely shaken Hilda is she advises her to confide in and share her burden with Kenyon. Hilda responds that she cannot confide in Kenyon because she "fancied that he sought to be something more"-than her

friend. Miriam says, "Fear nothing!" She says this while "shaking her head, with a strange smile," and adds: "This story will frighten his new-born love out of its little life, if that be what you wish" (711). And so we can see that Miriam's smiles and laughter which become not only "strange" but almost bitter the further we get into the novel, are not at all what they appear to be. In fact, Miriam is not only the most interesting and complex character in the novel, she is also the one who ironically laughs and smiles the most while suffering as much. And now that Hilda cannot in good conscience to herself remain friends with her, Miriam's only friend, (or more appropriately, "partner in crime") to whom she can turn is Donatello, the child-like simpleton, who because of his crime loses his 'faunlike' innocence and charm.

The final instance of significance when we see Miriam's character revealed through her ironic and inappropriate laughter takes place at the chapel on Donatello's estate during a meeting between herself and Kenyon. During this interview Kenyon notices that Miriam looks frail and nervous; and all because she fears that Donatello, whom only a short time before their mutual crime she would so disparagingly describe as having "hardly a man's share of wit" (594), will want nothing more to do with her. Miriam, as Donohue states, has become "enlarged by love, sacrifice, and sin and becomes a suffering, remorseful, and yet complete woman" (303). And Miriam can see that Donatello as well has become a "complete"

man through his suffering. And when Miriam tells Kenyon that she can do nothing but "brood, brood, brood, all day, all night, in unprofitable longings and repinings," Kenyon comments: "This is very sad, Miriam." Miriam merely responds: "Ay, indeed; I fancy so." We are told she responds "with a short unnatural laugh" (751).

At this point we can see that Miriam's laughter becomes tragic as her smiling and laughing appearance is completely opposed to the lonely, desperate, and tragic life she leads as a consequence of the guilt she believes is rightfully hers for taking part-whatever that may be-in her model's murder; and this guilt Miriam feels only adds to the burden of whatever dark secret she bears as well. Now Waggoner, interestingly enough, states that although "Miriam, herself" is "a victim of a dreadful evil," she "is at least as responsible as Donatello, and the murdered man both invited and deserved his fate" (211). While there can be no question that the model "both invited and deserved his fate," Waggoner's assertion that Miriam "is at least as responsible as Donatello" is questionable. And perhaps on a moral basis Waggoner is correct: Miriam, intellectually superior to Donatello and certainly aware as well of his shortcomings, should perhaps have known better than to use him to do her bidding-to kill the model she so despised. But realistically, and Donatello's free will aside, it is not yet a crime to have a certain look in one's eyes-nor is it appropriate to find someone guilty of murder for having such

a look. And while I do agree with the subtle truth behind Waggoner's condemnation of Miriam-that Donatello probably would not have killed the model had he not found in her eyes that look of approval he sought-it seems to stretch the point.

And despite what she must bear Miriam continues in her conversation with Kenyon, showing courage enough to speak her convictions when she broaches the topic of the felix culpa. When Miriam speaks of the necessity of sin as a means of achieving a higher spiritual state, Kenyon cannot follow her on this dangerous ground. Miriam simply says "with a thoughtful smile": "Ask Hilda what she thinks of it" (840). Well, Miriam knows as well as Kenyon and the reader alike that Hilda, pristine as she is, would be shocked at such an idea that evil could possibly lead to good and salvation. For Hilda, this would be heresy. And it is precisely because Miriam is fully aware of how shocked Hilda would be at such an idea that her smile is ironic. The irony is the greater when we realize as well that Hilda has terminated her friendship with Miriam for no other reason than that she saw a twinkle in Miriam's eye when Donatello killed the model. So we see again that Miriam's smile is not what it appears to be, but rather points to the ironic aspect of appearance and reality.

Now Donatello when we first meet him is exactly what he appears to be: a rather simple, unsophisticated, sincere individual-and nothing more. But all of this changes when he

becomes acquainted with sin, guilt, and suffering through his murder of Miriam's model. When we first meet Donatello at the opening of The Marble Faun it is at the museum with Miriam, Kenyon, and Hilda, in front of the statue of the "Faun of Praxiteles," where he is asked by the group to show them his ears, which in light of his great likeness to the Faun they all expect to be pointed and furry. When Kenyon asks Donatello to at least adopt the same pose as the statue we are told that: "The young man laughed, and threw himself into the position in which the statue has been standing for two or three thousand years" (594). And this is the manner in which Donatello is portrayed in what we might term his "pre-Fall" period-that period before Donatello commits murder. At this carefree and innocent time in his life the appearance and reality of Donatello's laughter and smiles are one and the same.

But soon after Donatello, who is in love with Miriam, kills her model his laughter and smiles become inappropriate and ironic; as Donatello becomes increasingly introspective, reflecting upon his crime, we see that his laughter and smiles are mirthless and despairing. And as we saw with Miriam, Donatello's character is revealed as well through his inappropriate laughter and the deceptive quality of appearance and reality. We see a good example of the change in Donatello, manifested through his laughter when Kenyon comes out to his estate for a summer visit. When Kenyon arrives he is kept waiting at the gate; finally, Donatello

looks out, sees Kenyon, and hurries down the staircase to greet him. We are told that: "On every reappearance, he turned his face towards the sculptor and gave a nod and smile" (714). But in spite of this show of smiles Kenyon "had a vague sense that this was not the young friend" whom they had "liked, laughed at, and sported with" in Rome (714). And Donatello is not that same "young friend." He has been changed by sin. Donatello loses his childlike playfulness as he becomes fully human through suffering and sorrow, in much the same way that Pearl in The Scarlet Letter finally becomes fully human through her sorrow over the death of Arthur Dimmesdale, her father.

As Donatello becomes increasingly introspective and questioning, not only does he become more human, he becomes more complex and interesting as well. So it is that as Donatello undergoes these changes he becomes all the more suitable for Miriam. Richard Holt Hutton discusses what is now an equality between Miriam and Donatello and the crime which cements their relationship. He points out that their "union" is "[s]o intimate, in those first moments" after the model has been murdered "that it seemed as if their new sympathy annihilated all other ties, and that they were released from the chain of humanity; a new sphere, a special law, had been created for them alone. The world could not come near them; they were safe!"[32] Now on Miriam's level, Donatello's laughter and smiles become like Miriam's: inappropriate and ironic; and Donatello's character, like

Miriam's, is revealed through his inappropriate laughter and the deceptive quality of appearance and reality.

There are two more instances which clearly reveal Donatello's character through his now ironic and inappropriate laughter. At Donatello's estate when he shows Kenyon to his chambers they come upon another room where they find two owls. Of these owls Donatello says "with a sad smile": "They do not desert me, like my other feathered acquaintances. When I was a wild, playful boy, the owls did not love me half so well" (736). Here, with these owls, we have the symbol of Donatello's inner depravity. Owls, as creatures of the night, with all of their obvious associations with evil, are only interested in Donatello now that he has fallen. When he was innocent and playful, scampering about in the daylight with all of the other animals of the forest, the owls "did not love" Donatello "half so well." And while the smile that Donatello portrays to the world is now "sad," its appearance does not fool the owls, who, like Mistress Hibbins in The Scarlet Letter, instinctively recognize something evil hidden within Donatello's breast. But Donatello is not wholly evil, in spite of his sin; he suffers deeply for the crime he commits. This suffering, of course, is totally responsible for Donatello's spiritual and intellectual growth; we see to what extent Donatello has grown when in spite of the guaranteed punishment awaiting him, Donatello decides to turn himself over to the authorities.

That Donatello decides to turn himself over to the authorities is not only a sign that he is ready and willing to accept the consequences of his actions, it also reveals the degree to which his character has developed since his childish , playful, 'faunlike' days. As Donohue points out: "Donatello has acquired credibility and manhood through his sin and his remorse, his pearl of great price. . ." (305). And Male, too, agrees that: "Like Dimmesdale, Donatello rises spiritually and intellectually. . ." (170). In this last instance of Donatello's laughter to be discussed it is plain that he has risen not only spiritually and intellectually, but that he has become as complex and interesting a character as Miriam. This complexity is exhibited through his laughter, now ironic and inappropriate, which is no longer what it appears to be. This change in Donatello is evident when we see his reaction to Miriam's attempt to dissuade him from going to the authorities. Having made up his mind to confess his crime and give himself up, Miriam asks Donatello for a delay of at least another day so that they might have a "brief time more of this strange happiness" (836). Donatello reluctantly acquiesces: "Well, one more day"; and Kenyon observes that Donatello agrees to Miriam's entreaty "smiling" (836). We are told that Donatello's smile "touched Kenyon with a pathos beyond words, there being gayety and sadness both melted into it" (836). And when Miriam recounts her failed attempt to dissuade Donatello from ever going to confess his crime, telling him that "there is no such thing

as earthly justice, and especially none" in Italy, "under the head of Christendom" (839), Donatello smilingly responds: "We will not argue the point again" (839).

And they do not "argue the point again." Donatello has grown so much both spiritually and intellectually that he can make such a decision and be taken seriously as well. We come to respect Donatello at the end of this novel. In spite of committing murder Donatello learns from his mistake. And too, he is neither the coward nor the hypocrite that Dimmesdale of The Scarlet Letter admirably exemplifies: Donatello can and does face up to the punishment he has rightfully earned. Waggoner, however, does not view Donatello's crime in quite the same light. That he does not believe Donatello has, in fact, rightfully earned his punishment is evident when he claims that it is "impossible to decide that Donatello is really responsible for the murder he committed" (210). Well, it seems that Donatello is-as everyone is-responsible for his actions; and this means all actions, including murder. Earlier we discussed Waggoner's comment that Miriam "is at least as responsible" for this murder as Donatello; but since "at least" allows for Miriam's responsibility to be greater than Donatello's, Donatello is rendered virtually blameless by Waggoner. This does not seem appropriate: Donatello is, after all, a man. And whether he is also a Faun or no, is really beside the point. He has grown enough spiritually and become enlightened as well intellectually, that he is able to see that he must not allow

the passionate animal side of his nature to rule him.

Donatello's situation seems to be the reverse of the classic Hawthorne situation: "the head and the heart" are severed, but this time the heart rules. And while an intellect that predominates the heart results in such archetypal fiends as Ethan Brand and Roger Chillingworth who invariably commit the Unpardonable Sin, the text seems to indicate that the reverse is no better. We can see that when one allows himself or herself to be ruled totally by his heart-pure emotion-the result is sin as well: murder, in this case. And so, Donatello goes to prison for murder. But in spite of this seemingly tragic ending, by means of the felix culpa Hawthorne allows for a happy ending-at least in the earthly sense. For as Kenyon has Hilda, so too has Miriam hope that she and Donatello might someday be together. And if nothing else, we feel in The Marble Faun something that we do not feel in any of the other novels-hope for the fallen. Donohue states that: "Even though the story ends with Donatello in prison and Miriam wandering about as a penitential pilgrim, the reader does not sniff damnation for Miriam and Donatello . . ."; and "that somehow, somewhere, in the distant future there will be a glorious reunion of the couple, with the hellfire notably absent" (304-305).

Baym, however, appears not to consider that The Marble Faun is about man's Fall; she states flatly that: "'The Marble Faun' is the story of a failed artist" (229); Baym's later reference to Kenyon as that "failed artist" is, of

course, true-but as one of the many subthemes in this novel. We certainly agree that Kenyon, the "man of marble," ultimately sacrifices his art for Hilda's love. And Kenyon even acknowledges as much when shortly after his discovery of the Venus he responds to Miriam's exclamation of the statue's beauty with: "The time has been when the sight of this statue would have been enough to make the day memorable. . . . Ah, Miriam! . . . Imagination and the love of art have both died out of me" (835-836). But this subtheme does not appear to be the main theme of The Marble Faun. It seems evident that the fall of man-represented by Donatello's felix culpa-is really the main theme around which plot level and character development evolve.

So, we can see how inappropriate laughter, that which in this novel is tragic, desperate, and ironic, as manifested by Miriam and eventually Donatello, and the deceptive quality of appearance and reality reveal their characters as they point always to one of Hawthorne's most pervasive themes: irony. That Donatello evinces numerous smiles long after his Fall, and that Miriam, steeped in some sort of dark and ominous past, smiles and laughs even after her life attains a despairing and eventually tragic quality, point out merely another aspect of the novel's irony. The ironic laughter of Miriam and Donatello helps us to better understand and to more clearly see that Hilda, for instance, in her seemingly spotless purity is not really represented as spotless and sinless: Hawthorne portrays her as a priggish, unfeeling,

"fair weather" friend, whose selfish concern that she appear pure and sinless to the world precludes her empathy with mankind: with Miriam. And too, we see the often heavy-handed irony with which Hawthorne discusses various aspects of Catholocism-ranging from what he views as the absurdity of the monk's robes to the accusation that Catholics need never trouble themselves about sin when all they have to do is bless themselves with holy water and kneel down to any one of the saints who is just waiting to do personal favors for them anyway; and then, if all of that has not been enough, they can step up to the confessional and wipe the slate clean: Catholics have free license to go out and sin all week, secure in the knowledge that the slate can be just as easily wiped clean next week. And especially with Donatello's reenactment of man's Fall and the felix culpa, goodness and salvation attained through sin, we can clearly see the degree to which irony pervades this novel; and that character revelation through inappropriate and ironic laughter and the deceptive quality of appearance and reality are another aspect thereof.

# CHAPTER X

## CONCLUSION

In all of Hawthorne's works discussed in this paper which specifically include: "Ethan Brand," "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," "Young Goodman Brown," "The Minister's Black Veil," The Scarlet Letter, The House of The Seven Gables, The Blithedale Romance, and The Marble Faun or The Count of Monte Beni, laughter plays a significant role in character development. Specifically, inappropriate laughter and the deceptive quality of appearance and reality are shown to work together to reveal character in all of these works. And from the characters who reveal themselves through such inappropriate laughter we can draw three specific conclusions: that the more inappropriate the laughter the more complex or evil the character; that the greatest fiends are always highly intellectual; and that women never exhibit diabolic laughter.

One of the most interesting findings in studying Hawthorne's characters through their inappropriate laughter concerns the fact that the most complex characters are those whose laughter is the most inappropriate. This again, is

another manifestation of the deceptive quality of appearance and reality. Ethan Brand, for example, is first introduced to us by his strange laughter which reverberates throughout the hillside; he later laughs so loudly and mirthlessly after watching the dog chase his tail that the group around him disbands immediately, leaving Bartram and his son "to deal as they might with their unwelcome guest." In spite of the disquieting effect of his weird laughter, Ethan Brand holds our interest. We want to know what exactly it is that makes him appear as if he feels great joy, when we know that he hides something which makes his laughter completely ironic and inappropriate. And then there is Young Goodman Brown who laughs demonically as he races madly deeper and deeper into the heart of the forest, which symbolizes in this tale as it does in The Scarlet Letter the heart of evil. And while his insane sort of laughter is enigmatic, our interest is held by the complexity of his character, which results from the conflict between the appearance of Goodman Brown's mirth and the reality of his inner depravity.

And of all Hawthorne's tales studied thus far, no character is more enigmatic than Reverend Hooper of "The Minister's Black Veil." Suddenly appearing before his congregation and the world wearing a black veil and offering no reason for it, yet smiling all the while, he is shunned by his congregation and rejected by his affianced; we are without a satisfactory explanation for the minister's smiles. We have, of course, Mr. Hooper's explanation that his veil is

merely the physical manifestation of the veil we all wear. But somehow his explanation does not seem to ring completely true: there is the strong undercurrent throughout this tale that there is something more to this riddle than Mr. Hooper's sudden and unexplained need to don the physical manifestation of the spiritual veil he claims we all wear. Just as Dimmesdale of The Scarlet Letter has his secret, it seems that Reverend Hooper has his as well. His smiling then, increasingly ironic and inappropriate, is never what it appears to be; and to such an extent does the deceptive quality of appearance and reality operate in relation to Mr. Hooper's smiles, that his character becomes all the more complex. We never know for certain why Reverend Hooper wears always both the veil and the smile: is it because he is a martyr for mankind or because he is himself guilty of secret sin?

And what two characters are more complex than Zenobia of The Blithedale Romance and Miriam of The Marble Faun? With Zenobia, the dark and exotic beauty, whose beauty is symbolized by the tropical "hothouse" flower she always wears in her hair, we see such promise of intellect and human sympathy exhibited in her feminist ideals. But then, because of her unrequited love for Hollingsworth, who as we mentioned earlier is the champion of the continued subjugation of women, we notice the change in Zenobia's character. Gradually becoming a more and more desperate and tragic figure, her laughter simultaneously becomes more frequent and prolonged.

And though puzzled, we are very interested in discovering what really lies beneath such an appearance.

The complexity of Zenobia's character holds our interest as well as does Miriam's in The Marble Faun. When we first meet Miriam, another dark beauty, we are aware of an air about her that gives us the impression that she conceals something. Not only does Kenyon discuss the fact that no one knows anything about her, Miriam herself, when asked directly why her model always follows her about, merely smiles and makes some sort of comment that usually circumvents the issue. And while we eventually become frustrated in our desire to know what it is that Miriam conceals that makes her smile in such a "strange" and "unnatural" manner, we are all the more intrigued with her character. Where Zenobia is more of a known quantity in that she ultimately states why she has "been on trial" for her life, Miriam rarely reveals anything about her suffering. We are left to piece together and conjecture what we may from what textual evidence there is to account for the complexity of Miriam's character. Always smiling or laughing, yet always within the shadow of gloom, Miriam holds our interest long past the close of the novel.

And it also seems that various types of inappropriate laughter and the deceptive quality of appearance and reality lead one to conclude that the greatest fiends in Hawthorne are always highly intellectual. For Hawthorne, we see that the violation of the "sanctity of a human heart" is the greatest sin. Of the works thus far discussed the most

diabolic characters are: Ethan Brand, who the moment before he commits suicide surrenders himself to the devil and becomes a fiend as well; Roger Chillingworth of The Scarlet Letter, who not only becomes a fiend, but who feels justified as well in his lust for revenge; and Judge Pyncheon of The Gables, who is easily the most diabolic of the three. Unlike Ethan Brand and Roger Chillingworth who at least acknowledge what they are, Judge Pyncheon never acknowledges his evil; he prefers instead to deceive everyone, including himself, with his smiling appearance and show of beneficence.

That Ethan Brand should become a fiend is completely ironic in that his initial motive in searching for the Unpardonable Sin is curiosity. But, as is usually the case with such fiends in Hawthorne, Ethan Brand's intellectual inclinations and introspective propensities eventually dominate his human sympathy with mankind. He becomes so preoccupied with the intellectual and philosophical aspect of religion, so obsessed with the idea of finding the one "Unpardonable Sin" which God could never forgive, that somewhere along this path Ethan Brand loses his humanity. And it is when the connection between intellect and compassion-the "head and the heart"-is severed that he becomes a fiend, searching for eighteen years and looking coldly and clinically "into every heart, save his own," for this Unpardonable Sin. It is only after an eighteen year search, the number of years after which one is traditionally considered to be an adult, that Ethan Brand finally realizes

his sin. But believing and again intellectualizing that he is beyond divine mercy, and exhibiting spiritual pride as well, Ethan Brand ultimately surrenders himself to his evil. One night Ethan Brand declares his kinship with the devil and commits suicide as he throws himself into the lime kiln, reducing himself to so many fragments of bone and making Bartram's kiln "half a bushel the richer" for it.

And Roger Chillingworth, too, is a fiend of this same sort as Ethan Brand. From the earliest moments when we meet him we are told that he is an extraordinary scholar, and has devoted his life almost exclusively to the pursuit of knowledge. It should be noted, however, that he did take the time to convince Hester to marry him, a man much older than herself, and one whom she had already told she did not love. So when Chillingworth suddenly appears after two years, having apparently been drowned, and sees Hester standing on the scaffold holding a child that could not possibly be his own, he does not remember these truths; but instead devotes his energies to getting revenge against the partner of Hester's crime. And though he does not seek revenge against Hester, still his legal wife, he becomes so completely obsessed with finding out the identity of the man involved in this scandal, that he loses his human compassion in the process. When he finally discovers that Arthur Dimmesdale is the culprit, Chillingworth jumps up and down shouting for joy and looking like the devil himself. And again, like Ethan Brand, Roger Chillingworth was not initially evil. He, too,

began his "investigation . . . desirous only of truth," But a "terrible fascination" overcame him and he lost his humanity in the process (160). Had Chillingworth once shown the least amount of compassion for Hester's plight we might have felt compassion for him as well. But regardless of what sins Hester and Dimmesdale might be guilty, Roger Chillingworth is portrayed by Hawthorne as completely diabolic because he rejoices in the torture he systematically inflicts upon Dimmesdale and then coolly observes the minister's wretched and heartfelt agony. It is again another case where "the head and the heart" are separated, resulting in the violation of the "sanctity of a human heart," the greatest sin for Hawthorne.

Now Jaffrey Pyncheon is even more diabolic than both Ethan Brand and Roger Chillingworth. Of the three he is the greatest fiend because of the complacency with which he deceives both the world and himself as to his true motives; and because above all things he is completely and absolutely selfish. From the moment we become aware that the judge is guilty of the murder for which Clifford has spent thirty years in prison, we have almost to doubt his humanity. We later learn that Judge Pyncheon has not only suffered little more than an occasional pang of guilt-the duration of which we are told lasted "the little space of five minutes in the twenty-four hours"(380)-for his lie of thirty years, but that he has Clifford released only because he believes his cousin has undisclosed knowledge of hidden treasure. Here we see

that appearance is not at all reality: we are aware of the judge's real motives and the extent of his evil. But no one can say that Judge Pyncheon is not intelligent enough to know better. We are told that he went through law school making a fair name for himself, and that from there he went through the court system and established his reputation; but he has no concept of human suffering, in much the same way that Pearl of The Scarlet Letter has no conception of human sorrow. And so his deceit of others, not to mention of himself, through his "sultry" smiling appearance and outward show of beneficence and good works, makes Judge Pyncheon the most diabolic character in the works thus far discussed. He is the self-deceiving hypocrite who easily believes his own lies. Highly intelligent, though completely without conscience and purely selfish, Judge Pyncheon is a study in evil. Masquerading in smiling human form, he is in reality "very much like a serpent."

And too, it seems that from our study of inappropriate laughter and character revelation, we can conclude that with the sole exception of Mistress Hibbins, who not only is reputed to be a witch, but who flaunts the fact as well, women do not exhibit diabolic laughter. It seems to be a question of whether women are portrayed without this sort of laughter because they are not intellectual enough to be diabolic-as their male counterparts Ethan Brand, Roger Chillingworth, and Judge Pyncheon demonstrate-or because they are not capable of such evil. To study the question we must

look for intellectual women in Hawthorne. We find that they do exist: Zenobia of The Blithedale Romance is probably the most intelligent character in the entire novel-at least she is the most enlightened; and Miriam of The Marble Faun is equally intelligent. In fact, Miriam has problems far more serious with which to contend than unrequited love, yet her strength of character allows her to persevere.

Now, whether or no Hawthorne felt that women were capable of greater or lesser evil than men, it is difficult to know. Certainly, women as equally as men are portrayed as sinners. While the text reveals that Miriam, for instance, for all of her dark past is not at all evil, we can infer from the novel that she is partly to blame for Donatello's crime in that her eyes flashed momentary approval to him as he murdered her model. And if we look at Faith, the wife of Young Goodman Brown, whose inner depravity is suggested throughout the tale because of what happens in the forest one night, we do not see her treated in the same harsh manner; yet she is, after all, supposedly present at the same witches' meeting as her husband; and whether the incident be a dream or no, Faith supposedly loses her innocence as well as does Goodman Brown. Even the prostitute in "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" is portrayed more as a coquette than an evil doer. And if we consider Hester, the adulteress of The Scarlet Letter, we can see that for all of her sins she is never portrayed as evil. The closest she comes to becoming evil is in her association with Mistress Hibbins, the witch:

when leaving the governor's mansion, having petitioned successfully to keep Pearl, Hester tells Mistress Hibbins that she gladly would have gone into the forest that night to see the "Black Man" had she not been allowed to keep her child. But Hester is allowed to keep Pearl; and saying she would go into the forest to meet the devil is not the same thing as doing it, as Goodman Brown demonstrates. And so it appears that for whatever reason, whether it be still another case of appearance and reality and the complexity of human nature, or simply that Hawthorne's view of women-in spite of "Eve"-precluded the propensity for the same sort of diabolic deeds that their male counterparts exhibit, they never exhibit diabolic laughter.

Our approach has been to show that character revelation in Hawthorne through inappropriate laughter and the deceptive quality of appearance and reality helps shed light on a text's larger theme, as it points always to irony; and irony, is pervasive in Hawthorne's fiction. How often is it the case that in reading a particular text, and encouraged all the while by the narrator to believe that what we are told is true, that we read further on only to discover that the same narrator negates much of what he has said up to that point: a good part of what we have read now becomes ironic. One of the best examples of this technique occurs in The Scarlet Letter, where Hawthorne renders completely ironic much of what he appears to have been saying: specifically, Chapter XVIII entitled "A Flood of Sunshine " seems to negate

whatever hopes we might have fostered for Hester. She is, for all of her sins, portrayed as an admirable character: Hester has beauty, strength of character, and compassion. And easily caught up in Hester's romanticism that: "What we did had a consecration of its own" (200), we are suddenly brought back to reality when the narrator reminds us of what "the stern and sad truth" really is.

And too, from our study of character revelation through inappropriate laughter and the deceptive quality of appearance and reality, the conclusions we have drawn-that the more inappropriate the laughter the more complex or evil the character; that the greatest fiends are always highly intellectual; and that women (except for Mistress Hibbins, the professed witch) never exhibit diabolic laughter-lead us to believe that Hawthorne was most certainly obsessed with man's spiritual depravity. In fact, it has become increasingly clear as well that for Hawthorne laughter was suspect. Not only have we seen that the great majority of his characters laugh in an inappropriate and ironic manner, but we have seen as well that those few characters who do emit genuinely mirthful, innocent, and appropriate laughter are not nearly as complex or interesting as are their inappropriately laughing counterparts; and in those few cases where this cheerful and appropriate laughter is not negated, these seemingly "good" and "pure" characters, are not all portrayed in a terribly flattering light. Consider such characters as: Phoebe of The Gables, who is sweet, but who is

also described as something less than intellectual; or the young girls at play in The Blithedale Romance; and while our narrator-voyeur Coverdale marvels at the mellifluous sounds of their laughter, Hawthorne, through his character Zenobia, reminds him that girls may laugh, but women, when they realize what little opportunity life holds for them, never will; and too, we must consider Hilda of The Marble Faun, who is one of the "best,"-in terms of her purity and innocence-characters in Hawthorne's fiction. But here again is irony: Hilda is really guilty of spiritual pride and self-love, to the extent that she turns her back on Miriam, supposedly her best friend, who suffers deeply and is most in need of Hilda's friendship; and then there is the "gleeful" laughter of those little Puritans in "The Gentle Boy"; however innocently and sweetly these children may laugh, they make a good case, if ever there was one, for childhood depravity. No sooner do these children beckon Ilbrahim, the little Quaker boy, over to them, than one of the boys picks up a stick and thrashes his face so hard that he draws blood; the group then kicks him to the ground, and most certainly would have killed him, had not one of the neighbors-albeit reluctantly, Ilbrahim being a heretic-rescued the boy from these innocent children.

And so, it seems that Hawthorne's apparent preoccupation with man's spiritual depravity, which always in one form or another surfaces, precludes the possibility that his characters might emit genuinely mirthful, carefree, and

innocent laughter. This study on character revelation through inappropriate laughter points not only to the irony of appearance and reality, it points as well to the fact that appropriate laughter in Hawthorne is more an appearance and less a reality; somehow or another, in one way or another, appropriate laughter is negated. Our approach to character revelation in Hawthorne's fiction demonstrates not only another aspect of his irony, it presents more evidence that Hawthorne's view of man was based largely on a theological interpretation wherein man's depravity prevails. But amidst all of the irony and gloom pervasive in Hawthorne we find a richness in life. For all that he submerges us into the dark side of human nature, Hawthorne also allows us to come away from him with the feeling that we, too, have undergone a struggle; and that somehow we understand ourselves a little better for it.

NOTES

[1] Oxford English Dictionary, 1961 ed.

[2] Agnes McNeill Donohue, Hawthorne: Calvin's Ironic Stepchild (Kent: Kent State UP, 1985) 139.

[3] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The House of the Seven Gables, The Complete Novels and Selected Tales of Nathaniel Hawthorne, ed. Norman Holmes Pearson (New York: Random House, 1965) 413.

[4] Hawthorne, The Marble Faun Or The Romance Of Monte Beni, 838.

[5] Richard Harter Fogle, Hawthorne's Fiction: The Light & The Dark (Norman: U of Oklahoma Press, 1952) 47-48.

[6] Hawthorne, "Ethan Brand," 1184.

[7] Robert Dusenbery, "Hawthorne's Merry Company: The Anatomy of Laughter In The Tales and Short Stories," PMLA, 87, (1967): 286.

[8] Brian Way, "Art and the Spirit of Anarchy: A Reading of Hawthorne's Short Stories," in Nathaniel Hawthorne: New Critical Essays, ed. A. Robert Lee (New Jersey: Barnes & Noble, 1982) 21.

[9] Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter, 200.

[10] Hawthorne, "The Gentle Boy," 902.

[11] Nina Baym, The Shape of Hawthorne's Career (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1976) 117-118. All Subsequent parenthetical references to Baym pertain to this text.

[12] Hyatt H Waggoner, Hawthorne: A Critical Study (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1967) 258.

[13] Hawthorne, "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," 1210.

[14] Mary Allen, "Smiles and Laughter in Hawthorne," Philological Quarterly, 52 (1973): 127.

[15] Victor H. Jones, "Laughter in Hawthorne's Fiction," College Literature, 5 (1973): 57.

[16] Hawthorne, "Young Goodman Brown," 1042.

[17] Michael J. Colacurcio, The Province of Piety: Moral History In Hawthorne's Early Tales (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1984) 287-288.

[18] H. J. Lang, "How Ambiguous Is Hawthorne?",

in Hawthone: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. A. N. Kaul (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1966) 91.

[19] Roy R. Male, Hawthorne's Tragic Vision (Austin: U of Texas, 1957) 79-80.

[20] Herman Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses By A Virginian Spending July in Vermont," in The Recognition of Nathaniel Hawthorne, ed. B. Bernard Cohen (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan, 1969) 38.

[21] Hawthorne, "The Minister's Black Veil," 877.

[22] Lea Bertani Vozar Newman, A Reader's Guide to the Short Stories of Nathaniel Hawthorne (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1979) 206.

[23] Edgar Allan Poe, "Review of Nathaniel Hawthorne's Twice Told Tales," Edgar Allan Poe Selected Prose, Poetry, and Eureka, ed. W. H. Auden (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1950) 452.

[24] Henry James, "The Three American Novels, The Scarlet Letter," in The Recognition of Nathaniel Hawthorne, ed. B. Bernard Cohen (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan, (1969) 128.

[25] F. O. Matthiessen, "Hawthorne's Psychology: The Acceptance of Good and Evil," in Casebook on The Hawthorne

Question, ed. Agnes Donohue (New York: Thos. Y. Crowell, 1963) 307.

All subsequent parenthetical references to Matthiessen pertain to this essay.

[26] Mark Van Doren, "The Scarlet Letter," in Hawthorne: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. A. N. Kaul (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1966) 131-132.

[27] Gloria C. Erlich, Family Themes And Hawthorne's Fiction: The Tenacious Web (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1984) 139.

[28] F. O. Matthiessen, "The House of the Seven Gables," in Hawthorne: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. A. N. Kaul (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1966) 145.

[29] Nina Baym, "The Significance of Plot in Hawthorne's Romances," in Ruined Eden of the Present: Hawthorne, Melville, and Poe, ed. G. R. Thompson and Virgil L. Lokke (West Lafayette: Purdue UP, 1981) 62.

[30] Hawthorne, The Blithedale Romance, 483.

[31] George Eliot, "Contemporary Literature of America," in The Recognition of Nathaniel Hawthorne, ed. B. Bernard Cohen (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan, 1969) 65.

[32] Richard Holt Hutton, "Nathaniel Hawthorne," in The Recognition of Nathaniel Hawthorne, ed. B. Bernard Cohen (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan, 1969) 106.

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The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the thesis is now given final approval by the committee with reference to content and form.

This thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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