1987

The Transformation: The Puritan Past and Language in Hawthorne's Novels

Joan A. Mullin
Loyola University Chicago

Recommended Citation
http://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss/2609

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Loyola eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Loyola eCommons. For more information, please contact ecommons@luc.edu.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License.
Copyright © 1987 Joan A. Mullin
THE TRANSFORMATION: THE PURITAN PAST AND
LANGUAGE IN HAWTHORNE'S NOVELS

by

Joan A. Mullin

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

June

1987
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank Loyola University for the Dissertation Fellowship which allowed me to complete my work this past year. Likewise, I am grateful to the Graduate School of Loyola University for assistantships from 1982-1986 without which my course work could not have been started.

I have fortunately received the assistance of my dissertation board from the beginning of my studies: Dr. Paul Messbarger's curiosity in pursuing the roots of American thought stimulated many of my ideas; Dr. James E. Rocks patiently guided me throughout my years of graduate and professional work; and last, and Calvin knows, not least, Dr. Agnes McNeill Donohue's relish for the Puritan past and Hawthorne have been as instrumental in my work as her scholarship, teaching, and humor have been influential. I would also like to thank Dr. Micael Clarke for her insight, encouragement and fruitful discussions.

Finally there remains to be acknowledged the unflagging support offered by family and friends. In particular I wish to thank Joril Kvamme and my graduate colleagues for their encouragement. Likewise my gratitude goes to my parents, John and Mary Frangesch, who have always helped when help was most needed. I cannot possibly thank Robert T. Mullin in proportion to the support he has given me; that my
graduate work was even begun, much less completed is due to his encouragement, sense of humor and willingness to occasionally be a single parent. I further would like to recognize our two young sons, Jeremy and Jake, for unknowingly serving as a balance in my life and for maintaining an uncanny understanding that work had to be done.

In acknowledging all these people, I would like to express the wish that the work which comes hereafter will reflect and repay their support.
VITA

Joan A. Mullin, the daughter of Mary (Koss) Frangesch and John F. Frangesch, was born August 29, 1949 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Ms. Mullin attended St. Rita grammar school in West Allis, Wisconsin and Pius XI high school in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In May of 1971 she graduated from the University of Wisconsin - Whitewater with a Bachelor of Science in English Education.

Ms. Mullin taught English at Walther Lutheran high school in Melrose Park, Illinois for eight years while attending Northeastern Illinois University. In December of 1978 she received a Master of Arts degrees in English Literature from Northeastern.

Before beginning her doctoral work at Loyola University of Chicago in 1982, Ms. Mullin managed an international market communications firm for two years in Chicago. In September, 1982, she received a teaching assistantship from the Graduate School at Loyola which she held for the next four years. In 1986 she received a Loyola Dissertation Fellowship enabling her to complete the requirements for the Doctoral degree in June of 1987. In 1987 she was also initiated into the Alpha Sigma Nu honor society.
During her years at Loyola, Ms. Mullin has taught as well as directed the campus Writing Centers, and served as Coordinator for Articulation and Outreach for the English Department. She served as a member of the Writing Programs Committee of the English Department for four years, and as a board member of the English Graduate Student Association. She has presented conference papers at the CAES conference, the Conference on Christianity and Literature, the GRE/CGS conference and at the MMLA. Ms. Mullin is a member of the Illinois Association of Teachers of English, the National Council of Teachers of English, and the Modern Language Association.

She is married to Robert T. Mullin and is currently living in Ohio with her two children where she is Director of the Writing Center at Toledo University.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td>THE WORD AND THE &quot;WORD&quot;: THE CALVINIST BASIS FOR AMERICAN RHETORIC</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.</td>
<td>THE &quot;WORD&quot; AND THE WORD: HAWTHORNE AND NINETEENTH CENTURY ATTITUDES TOWARDS LANGUAGE</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.</td>
<td>HIDDEN WORDS AND OPEN SILENCES: THE SCARLET LETTER</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.</td>
<td>THE PRESENT RE-CREATED: THE BLITHEDALE ROMANCE</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI.</td>
<td>THE MARBLE FAUN AND THE BATTLE-MAIDEN</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII.</td>
<td>&quot;A POSTSCRIPT&quot;</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WORKS CONSULTED</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

It is with language that concepts become concrete. For authors, pamphleteers and politicians caught in the nineteenth century's need to establish a national identity, words became the agents whereby an historical past was discovered and reinterpreted in order to formulate an image of what it was to be American. Searching their brief legacy nineteenth century authors developed an American literature which proclaimed independence from British influence and consequently reflected this freedom in a romanticism that relied on the American environment for its color. Those Americans who later became part of the literary canon of the later nineteenth century authored works which stand as stylistic transitions between inherited European beliefs about language and new concepts about a national literature. But while Americans sought to develop their own rhetorical style from the raw material of a new country, the inherited attitudes they held towards language directed their ability to successfully do so. Caught in the nineteenth century with a seventeenth century inheritance writers and philosophers struggled to synthesize the disparate ideologies in public forums and private texts -- just as
their Puritan benefactors had done hundreds of years earlier in the aftermath of Renaissance England. Some nineteenth century thinkers, stimulated by the bounty and natural beauty around them, celebrated the ability of the American to draw from a corresponding innocent state within, but not all found themselves ascribing to the visionary new man of Emerson, Ripley, Thoreau or Whitman. As Nathaniel Hawthorne outlined his sketches, however, he did not see "the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by a conscious endeavor" (Thoreau, 75); Hawthorne instead envisioned a man influenced by Adam's "first step awry," wherein was planted "the germ of evil;... since that moment, it has all been a dark necessity" (Hawthorne II 174).¹

Raised on Calvin, weaned on Pilgrim's Progress, steeped in New England history, Hawthorne searched the colonial past through a Puritan literature whose preoccupation with language and writing conflicted with a theological belief in man's inability to understand or reproduce Truth. Inherent in this belief and evidenced in Hawthorne's work is the tension between the impotence and omnipotence of language. While on the one hand this dyad seems to serve as a paradigm for the nineteenth century controversy raging between the Biblical exegetists and the transcendentalists, Hawthorne's attitude towards language actually reflected the theological

¹ All references to Hawthorne's works will be from the Centenary Editions.
and therefore cultural past of Americans. This dissertation argues that the tension which threads Hawthorne's works of fiction results from a conflict between the belief that words signify merely manufactured concepts subject to man's unreliable perceptions, and the possibility that words can both stand for a concrete reality and create an aesthetic experience necessary to that reality. In order to understand the Puritan influences on Hawthorne's style, it will be first necessary to examine the Calvinist theology which directed Puritan attitudes towards writing.

The second chapter will outline the Puritan reliance on the Word and therefore on typology and metaphor in their own writing. Such a dependency reflected the tension inherent in Calvin's system. On the one hand, Calvin said:

> A simple external manifestation of the word ought to be amply sufficient to produce faith, did not our blindness and perverseness prevent. But such is the proneness of our mind to vanity, that it can never adhere to the truth of God, and such its dulness, that it is always blind even in his light" (III 498-99).2

Despite this emphasis on the fallibility of words, Calvin had to resolve a conflict presented by what he saw as one of man's gifts from God -- the ability to use words. A century later, the New England Puritan Thomas Hooker, echoed Calvin's rationale, and attempted to justify the role of the

---

2 All references to Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion will be identified by volume and page number from the 1845 Henry Beveridge translation since it is a translation which comes closest to nineteenth century word patterns.
preacher's sermon to a community increasingly dissatisfied with what it felt was the magistrates' self-appointed authority. Hooker reminded them that despite equal fallibility, "Words are appointed by God in his Providence to be carriers as it were, by whose help the thought of our minds and the savory apprehensions of truth may be communicated and conveyed over to the understanding of others" (Application, 207).

The tension created by the doctrine of depravity and the doctrine of right uses serves as the theological basis for the language of Calvinism and ultimately all of Puritan America, and precipitates both action and inaction in Hawthorne's texts. The third chapter will trace these Puritan patterns and attitudes in Hawthorne's early journals and letters and place the author within his nineteenth century context. Whereas Emerson and other writer/philosophers were reacting against those Puritan constraints, Hawthorne's work supported inherited rhetorical attitudes from the American past.

That the significance of man's spoken and unspoken symbols permeates Hawthorne's work is particularly evident in the focus of The Scarlet Letter and The Blithedale Romance.  

3 These two novels exhibit a clear emphasis on two aspects of language which will be discussed. While The House Of The Seven Gables has both of these elements operating in the novel, this second work of Hawthorne's presents specific problems because the author purposely changed the direction of the plot so as to satisfy his wife's wish for a happy ending. Seven Gables needs an in-depth treatment of its own.
The fourth chapter will examine how plot and character pivot on the use of the word in the "Puritan" novel, The Scarlet Letter, which reflects the historical, theological and rhetorical milieu of the time. The fifth chapter demonstrates that through an unreliable narrator in The Blithedale Romance Hawthorne questioned man's ability to create worlds with words. In both these novels and their prefaces, as well as in the letters and journal entries from these periods, Hawthorne exhibited an allegiance to the Puritans' concept that man's language, unless directed by God's grace for His glory, signifies nothing but man's own impoverished interpretation of visible signs, resulting merely in fantasy and romance.

However, Hawthorne's The Marble Faun, challenges the author's previous emphasis on the wrong use of language, and the concomitant ascription to the Puritan doctrine in which this attitude towards language was grounded. Chapters six and seven examine this last work of fiction in which Hawthorne not only questioned the power of man's signs but actually gave verbal shape to the doctrinal question which separated the Puritan from other Christian sects - whether or not the original Fall in the Garden was a felix culpa. The verbalization of this doctrine is shown to be important as it reflects Hawthorne's exploration of man's ability to create works of truth and beauty. It will be demonstrated that, affected by his exposure to European art, Hawthorne
proposed a dialectic in his last novel which explored aesthetic principles previously shunned by him because of the Puritan attitude which guided his use of language. While *The Marble Faun* examines a transformational use of language which contradicts the static typological system of Calvin, Hawthorne never resolves the issue either within the novel or in another work of fiction. Having examined both sides of the dialectic in his novel, Hawthorne left a legacy of aborted romances attesting only to a dissatisfaction with words and the old symbols from his past.
In his definitive work, The Institutes of the Christian Religion, John Calvin explained that man was a depraved sinner undeserving of God's favor, for Adam had fallen from his original pristine state: "although we grant that the image of God was not utterly effaced and destroyed in him, it was, however, so corrupted, that any thing which remains is fearful deformity" (I 164). The "deformity" caused by sin, Calvin argued, prevented a union between man and the natural world in which God "has inscribed His glory"; his majesty was not to be perceived "by our depraved judgment" (I 67).

After Eden, man's intelligence and all his perceptual capacities were muted by sin; without God's favor, man was left with a will which could not will adequately because of an inability to rightly perceive. Man's original state was thought to correspond to the perfect circle representative of God's eternal nature:

a sense impression was carried to the Common Sense faculty in the mind where it was identified; it was then given imagery by the imagination, stored in the memory, judged by Understanding and embraced or rejected by the Will -- located in the heart -- which then directed the Affections (White 11).
White further noted that this perfect chain was "short-circuited" by the Fall in Eden (11). Calvin believed that God had stamped his glory on all of creation but "in vain, therefore, does the Creator exhibit so many bright lamps lighted up to show forth the glory of its Author... the worlds are images of invisible things" to man (V 62).

This blindness to the invisible meanings which lay behind God's outward signs did not excuse man from seeking Him.

[God] has been pleased in order that none might be excluded from the means of obtaining felicity, not only to deposit in our minds that seed of religion... but so to manifest his perfections in the whole structure of the universe... On each of his works his glory is engraven in Characters so bright, so distinct, and so illustrious, that none, however dull and illiterate, can plead ignorance as their excuse (I 51).

God's image, however, "is now only partly seen in the elect, in so far as it can be regenerated by the Spirit" (I 165). Calvin pictured all people to be like old men who see a book and know there is writing but cannot decipher the words (I 64). This idea of God as Author, man as reader, world as text, permeates Calvin's Institutes and supports the rhetorical premise that language exists only to imitate the Word. For Calvin, "the brightness of the Divine Countenance

---

1 This concept describing the ideal man of the past was of course not unique to Puritan thought since it was first proposed by Aristotle, and elaborated by Seneca, Cicero, Magnus and Aquinas. However, dependence on classical authors in addition to the church fathers was not seen as a medieval inheritance but rather a corroboration of the Puritan typological view of the history of ideas.
is a kind of labyrinth -- a labyrinth to us inextricable, if the Word do not serve as a thread to guide our path" (I 67).

In order to follow the thread, man was directed to search God's texts -- the Bible and the world -- and carefully preach His Word not man's. Paradoxically, though only the elect could read the text of the world, that did not mean they comprehended its full significance. Calvin knew how prone the human mind is to lapse into forgetfulness of God, how readily inclined to every kind of error, how bent every now and then on divining new and fictitious religions...We must go to the Word, where the character of God, drawn from his works, is described (I, vi, 3, 66).

Attempting to resolve the dilemma between man's depravity and God's gift of speech, Calvin claimed that the depth of signification could be glimpsed by acknowledging the gap between His perfection and man's inadequacies. As a result, while Puritans were confident about the legibility of this world - i.e. its existence as a group of 'characters' written by God's hand - they seldom confused that legibility with intelligibility (Clark, 279).

Since accurate details could not possibly be manifest. Man was merely to use this world to indicate but not reach the next, use signs that would refer him to their significance, but also defer it to - both in the sense of putting off to and acknowledging the superiority of - the divine realm. Efforts to step beyond those limits were heretical and doomed to failure (Clark, 279).

Even while the face of Puritanism shifted, the concept of man's verbal inadequacies remained constant. Almost two
hundred years after Calvin, Samuel Willard exhorted his American ministers in *A Compleat Body of Divinity* to know for certain, that when your Understanding hath fluttered as high as the wings of Reason can carry it, you will find such riddles in the Deity, as you will never be able to unfold...Where we cannot resolve, let us contemplate, and what we cannot comprehend, let us wonder at: where our reason is non-plust, let it be our work to gaze at ourselves in astonishment (43).

But despite the consequent servile position in which this theology placed man, Calvin proposed that perseverance on earth demanded a constant and active testimony to heaven's righteousness; his solution was to utilize a preaching style which imitated the generation of the Word by God (Calvin III 1). Proposals such as these created a paradox in Calvin's theology for on the one hand he claimed that "faith is the knowledge of the divine will in regard to us, as ascertained from his word" and that man's limited interpretative powers should be put to use reading God's worldly signs; on the other hand though, came the stern warning that "the human mind...is far from being able to rise to a proper knowledge of the divine will" (III 475).

The ambiguity of this position was only partly resolved with the emphasis on metaphor and allegory. Both in the Old Testament and the New, "our divine Master, not confining himself to words, has by a parable set before us, as in a
picture, a representation of true humility" (III 66).  

However, wary of personal interpretation, Calvin defers to the verbal pictures of the Bible. Theoretically, in the act of imitating Biblical allegory and metaphoric images, man's use of God's word would still work upon the reason, will and affections, and with the intervention of the Holy Spirit, move man towards understanding God's will. Calvin was careful to explain that:

By the word we ought to understand not one which, muttered without meaning and without faith, by its sound merely, as by magical incantation, has the effect of consecrating the element, but one which, preached makes us understand what the visible sign means (IV 493).

The conversion experience could take place, therefore, only when the message delivered through human means was related to things of heaven. Whether elect or reprobate, if a man attempted to use reason for human purposes, he erred; he could not appeal to the emotions for carnal reasons or attempt to will an act for himself for in these attempts of self-authorship, man rejected God's Authorship. If, however, God's Biblical metaphors were imitated, then with the intercession of the Holy Spirit, words "rightly used"

---

2 Many texts discuss Puritan typology, the most notable being Ursula Brumm's study of American typology. See also Sacvan Berkovitch's The Puritan Origin of the American Self, John Irwin's American Hieroglyphics, Earl Miner's collection, Literary Uses of Typology, Mason I. Lowance's The Language of Canaan, and Eugene White's Puritan Rhetoric. For a complete discussion of the use of Christ as the ultimate metaphor in the Puritan typological system, see Robert Daly's God's Altar: The World and the Flesh in Puritan Poetry.
would point men towards understanding and create the desire to move towards God's will. Therein lay the justification of authorship as an active pronunciation of the Biblical message. If Milton, Bunyan, or Calvin himself proposed to reveal God's truth, he could justify doing so by drawing from the typological pool in the Bible and creating a metaphor or allegory which would reflect the Biblical pattern. As a result, any author felt he could "exercise his Muse in God's service...but at the same time he had to confront the issue of his own unworthiness and human limitations" (Lewalski 107). The ultimate success of a work would therefore depend on the "right" word choice which evoked the "right" picture in order to produce the "right" response. To insure these responses Calvin's works, as is true with all Puritan texts, contained carefully numbered and ordered outlines of causes, effects and reasons. He was so cautious with word usage that in one instance, though he stated that the explanation of God's covenant could be summed up in one word, he used thirty: "because this brief summary is insufficient to give any one a full understanding of the subject, our explanation to be useful must extend to greater length" (II 370).

Calvin's theological directives, as well as his restrictive concepts of language appealed to his English followers. Puritanism took hold in England as the Renaissance spirit for individuality gave way to a desire
for regularity and rules. Baugh claims that this produced a need for conformity to a standard that the consensus recognizes as good. It sets up correctness up as an ideal and attempts to formulate rules or principles by which correctness may be defined and achieved. The most important consideration in the foundation of this standard is reason... where it was possible, reason was often supported by the force of authoritative example, particularly classical example (253).

Thus the need for authority was another cultural influence on the growth of a Puritan language theory. In his work The Puritan Revolution and Educational Thought, Richard Greves points to the English attempt to formulate guidelines for language usage in the sixteenth century. Much of this grew out of a fear of inaccuracy. Summarizing the English position, Francis Bacon warned that

"Language hindered cognitive process because it confused knowledge of natural phenomena by its inaccuracy... Man's understanding was obstructed by the unfit choice of words and was led into fruitless controversies and idle fancies...Language could not be trusted" (Greaves 94).

Combine Calvin's caution concerning words with the sixteenth century need for identity, system and regularity, and what develops is the English Puritan "plain style". Most evident to anyone who studies the plain style, however, is that it is not plain.4

3 See also Joan Webber's introduction and Scheick, 103 ff. and Greaves, 8.

4 For a thorough discussion of the intricacies of the plain style, see Van Hof, especially pages 229 ff. Scheick also outlines the complexity of the Puritan style,
Puritan sermons and tracts are densely packed with metaphor, vivid description, potent imagery and allegory. The "plainness" referred to the deliberateness with which oral and written communications were constructed. Jonathan Edwards' famous sermon wherein God holds us over the pit of hell "much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect over a fire" runs for over twenty pages, yet the entire sermon is based on seven words: "Their foot shall slide in due time" (Deut. XXXII. 35). Despite the span of centuries and the theological differences which separated the two men, Edwards performed what Calvin did before him: he defined each word denotatively and connotatively; he outlined the various implications of the word combinations; he pointed to passages controversial among Biblical scholars. And this was done in just the first part of the sermon. 5

In the second section of the sermon, the minister explored the lesson to be drawn from the passage. Implied as well as stated meanings were defined so that by the third part of the presentation various applications could be drawn for church members. All rhetorical techniques were here employed to analyze the text. During the sermon, "reason could first especially 105 ff.

5 The notoriously long Puritan sermons had several parts because it was believed that "Sermon rhetoric is not an isolated service, but part of an organic process of an approach to the word, a means of opening it" (Van Hof 11).
be persuaded by proofs, demonstrations, and the silencing of objections; then, since the aim was not only to persuade men but to work upon their hearts, the will and the passions could be moved by eloquence" (Watkins, 6).

The sermon recreated, to the best of man's veiled abilities, a circuit which vaguely resembled the original natural pattern Adam and Eve first possessed. However, though words were the only means by which the "innermost faculties" of an audience could be reached, instead of balancing the sermon to influence all of man's faculties, Puritans appealed to logic and reason in order to subordinate the dangerous will and even more dangerous imagination or passions. To demonstrate this subordination, Michael Clark uses Urian Oakes' (1682) and Milton's explanation of the problem of the imagination:

> it is by the creation of the world that we know God, not the world itself as a "similitude" of its creator. When we turn to the images of "birdes...& of creepy things," we fall prey to the same "pleasant savory smell" that tempts Eve to believe Satan's promise that she can "ascend to Heav'n, by merit thine, and see/ What life the gods live there, and such live thou." To prohibit this anarchy of the imagination, the Puritans were forced to establish the hierarchy that raised the will and reason above the other faculties (283).

But they were equally forced to acknowledge the value of emotion and imagination as a force as well as a gift from God. Three-fourths of a sermon was devoted to rationale, but the last part, the application, made an appeal to the emotions -- the heart -- the seat of imagination which alone
could stir men to action. Words must not only be arranged logically and examined individually, they must be ordered to reach an audience's understanding, and most importantly, contain just enough appeal to move that audience to act.

Acknowledging that the words of the minister must cause a response from a wide audience, the strictly structured sermon form allowed a great deal of freedom for both individual understanding and flexibility of preaching performance. While handbooks and lecture manuals prepared ministers for sermonizing, Calvin's own method of extemporaneous speaking served as the model; ministers were taught to be free from excessive notes so as to respond to the audience and change the approach as interest flagged or boredom set in. Ministers were told to

provide a several portion, for the several conditions of men's souls; ... Ministers should look at their people, not as if they are all of one mould and frame; people come to the congregation, as men to a market. They come not to buy things that are good, but what may be most for their use; so Ministers may set down many good things before people, but if they do not seem to belong to them, they regard them not (Cotton A Practicall 92).

The charge to respond to the community became a dominant issue in the training of new ministers, and preachers were reminded that

as the end of rhetoric, including poetry, was ethical, the end in most cases also justified the means. Provided he was morally upright in motive and purposes, the speaker or writer might use every argument to advance his cause" (Mulder, 39).
The desire to reach all parishioners compounded an already complex situation: taught to seek the truth, a minister must yet present that truth to reach a variety of understandings. Nicolas Byfield, pastor of St. Peter's church in Chester (1637), both explained and exemplified the ministerial pose:

It requires a great deal of the spiritual policy and skills to win souls. A minister that would do it must sometimes be like a fox. It is written of the fox that when he is hungry after prey and can find none, he lies down and feigns himself to be a dead carcass and so the fowls fall upon him and he catches them. Even so a minister who hungers after the winning of his hearers must sometimes be driven to make a very carcass of himself by denying himself and turning himself into all forms that his hearers may be enticed to flock to his doctrine" (Richardson 41).

The paradox of teaching truths by presenting a fiction further endangered the use of metaphoric images for it was recognized that deceptive language could lead to deceptive living. Robert Harnes warned his fellow seventeenth century Puritan ministers not to fall prey to Anglican verbosity, never to teach "'any godly point, but he first wrought it on his own heart'"(Watkins 15). In a search to find honest images for their presentations, ministers and others were encouraged to write autobiography.

For men like Bunyan and Richard Baxter, an autobiography was the basis for preaching from which Scriptural texts could be personalized, spiritual action dramatized. Likewise, for Cotton Mather the diary form provided a sense of realism not often conveyed to the common man unused to Biblical exegesis:
"Examples, as by a secret charm, draw out the heart unto imitations. When we press holiness, people think, our doctrine is calculated for Angels and Spirits that have divested themselves of concerns of flesh and blood and so go away with prejudice. But when they read the lives of persons that had like passions, temptations, necessities with themselves, with what holy diligence they carried on their hopes of a blessed eternity, it has a marvelously convictive influence upon them" (from "Quotidiana", Mulder, 43).

Autobiographers, therefore, sought to record what they believed to have happened and what they thought its significance. Such self-consciousness about what one said and did made men in the seventeenth century painfully aware that "'Language most shewes a man: It springs out of the most retired, and inmost parts of us, and is the Image of the Parent in it, the mind. No glasse renders a man's forme, or likenesse, so true as his speech'" (Ben Jonson quoted by Mulder 20). Belief in the revelatory nature of language produced Puritan diarists who regularly recorded daily occurrences to serve as indices for the progress of the soul. In order to obtain the desired objectivity, entries were most often in narrative form rather than in self-portraiture or meditation. Thus, just as the sermon laid out an historical comparison of the text with a contemporary interpretation, the autobiographer narrated his daily events in order to study them from a perspective at some future point. The narrative provided the necessary point of view from which action could be observed, examined,
and taken to heart in order to provoke further "right"
interpretation and action.

When Robert Blair, as a student at Glasgow University, came upon an edition of Petronius it did not take him long to decide what to do with it: "I went to the fire, and with my tongs I lifted out the best burning coal, and laid in this book in the place of it, lying on the burning coal above it." Why did Blair just not say, "I burnt the book"? ... He wanted his readers to respond with the deliberation and thoroughness with which he acted, attitudes which he would have regarded as essential in any attempt to deal with evil (Watkins 209).

Robert Blair "lifted out the best burning coal" for Petronius rather than preach against the inherent evils of the book. The Puritan diarist who recorded events as he believed them to have happened was aware that written events may shape themselves differently for others. Thus the diarists sense of being 'in the text' while being outside of it, of being both author and reader, writer and critic, caused him, like the preacher, to take on a number of roles, as he proceeded not only to record daily events, but to respond to previous entries.

The ability to respond to a text -- either the text of the physical world, a sermon or a book -- and the parallel ability to interpret signs correctly remained problematic for the audience, preacher and author. If a minister used various roles to reach various intellects, than he risked confusing some of the audience while enlightening others. The Hutchinson trials as recorded in John Winthrop's journal of 1630-1649 exemplify the dangers of misinterpretation and
the responsibility of the Puritan preacher to carefully lay open the Word. In this controversy, it became evident that the eminent John Cotton had caused a misunderstanding in the mind of his parishioner by his preaching. Hutchinson contended that Cotton's instruction brought her to the conviction that, among other things, man was in union with the Holy Ghost. There was, of course, no written proof of his intent to mislead; his sermons, not only oral but written, stood in his favor. But when Hutchinson's followers attempt to defend themselves, Winthrop noted their words and phrases... were of human invention, and tended to doubtful disputation, rather than to edification, and had no footing in scripture, nor had been in use in the purest churches for these hundred years after Christ (Hosmer, I, 199).

The importance of written evidence which was carefully thought out and studied here stood to exonerate Cotton while the oral testimony of Hutchinson's followers only proved to Winthrop that their reasons were impaired. While the emphasis on writing not only reflects the binding legal contract upon which English law was built and transferred to New England, it also served as insurance against oral testimony which was subject to the passions of the moment. As the Puritan's understood it, the further man moved from the original fall in Eden, the more his "natural" abilities degenerated. Written explanations served to emulate the covenental form used by God who sealed his spoken Word in the written form of the Bible. Thus diaries, testimonials
and written sermons were safer indicators of a person's condition. God "spoke" not directly in burning bushes but with words which were written -- and so must man.

The Hutchinson debate was only one of many theological controversies challenging the right of interpretation of signs and events where personal translations were pitted against the magistrates' Biblical authority. Winthrop complained the contenders

were all illiterate men, the ablest of them could not write true English, no not common words, yet they would take upon them the interpretation of the most difficult places of scripture, and wrest them any way to serve their own turns (Hosmer II 147).

In the same way Winthrop proceeded with scorn to demonstrate how Biblical exegesis culled from years of study could defeat bedeviled interpretations of the uneducated. Thus language, and the ability to read signs were linked with the ability of the educated to translate God's signs. The role of the preacher/author was therefore instrumental. What Breitweiser pointed out about Mather was true of all New England writers: Satan was the personification,

the name, of the abysmal empty space between the apparent and real meaning. Mather's battle with Satan was permanently semantic. [For him] before eyes are free of tears at history's end, ministers must supplement faulty vision with trusty signification" (92).

Later, Jonathan Edwards would become embroiled in theological controversy as he attempted to reconcile "faulty vision with trusty signification" of his own. Edwards was accused of having forgotten, in John Cotton's words, to
look that your bred be spirituall, that is, pure Word dispensed with the Spirit and the Power, mingle no Traditions or tricks of your wit with it, if you doe, your Seed is corrupt, and wants vigour, a velvet Scabbord dulls the edge of the Sword, so the word deckt over with Human eloquence is like a Sword in a velvet scabbord, it hinders the power of it, what hath the Chaffe to do with the Wheat? Jer. 23. 28, 29. You must not mingle the word with the dreams and fancies of men, but dispense the word in the power and evidence of the Spirit, and labour to have the Word sealed in your hearts, that you may speak out of the heart and inward affection; that Word which comes from the heart, sooner goes to the heart (Cotton A Practicall, 47).

This directive appears to conflict with Nicholas Byfield's encouragement to "be like a fox." Yet in A Brief Exposition with Practicall Observations upon the Whole Book of Ecclesiastes written a year before the book on Ecclesiastes was written, Cotton stressed that

> to teach Preachers the Imitation of Solomon in studious Invention, Judgement, and Order of words; first of power; second, of delight; thirdly, of uprighteousness; fourthly, of truth... Talents should be employed to best advantage (250).

That Cotton seemingly contradicts himself emphasizes the linguistic dilemma of the American Puritans who tread the line between "truth" and fantasy, "plain style" and embellished rhetoric. Cotton continually attempted to clarify the distance between right and wrong use of rhetorical and poetic devices in his essay on Ecclesiastes.

Early on, he states that such methods can be used to teach us. It is no vanity to teach the variety of the creatures in Rhetorical elegancies; here [in Ecclesiastes] are many Tropes of Rhetorick used; so Rom. 12.5. with these cautions: 1. That the Rhetorick be suitable to the matter, grave and holy, else it is bastard Rhetorick. 2. That it set forward the end of
the discourse, to wit, to affect the heart with the sense of the matter at hand (Exposition 8).

As a true Puritan would, Cotton appeals through imagery to the heart, considered the seat of the imagination to which all appeals of the reason must point in order for a conversion experience to be complete. Ironically, this rich and powerful image is employed in a passage which denigrates "tricks of your Wit. Whether such a complex balance was achieved or whether language was judged as appealing too much to the mind or the passions depended on several qualities: the author's intentions, constantly monitored through the diaries; the balance between imagery and plain truth; and the end the text sought, whether it was glorification of the divine or the human author.

Such questions concerning intent and meaning as well as effectiveness produced authors also highly conscious of structure. Though the sermon form by far outweighed any other approach for outright preaching of the word, poetry and narratives were recognized as valuable devices for the explanation of God's word. Jonathan Mitchell's preface to Michael Wigglesworth's Day of Doom acknowledges the poetic form and use of imagery as a ministerial tool, asserting that:

A verse may find him who a sermon flies, 
Saith Herbert well. Great truths to dress in Milton 
Becomes a preacher, who men's Souls doth prize.... 
In costly Verse, and most laborious Rymes; 
Are dish'd up here Truths worthy most regard; 
No Toys, nor Fables (Poets' wonted crimes)
Here be, but things of worth, with wit prepared (412).

Fiction as was known by the rest of the seventeenth century world was not a form of writing encouraged by the Puritans, and yet the major works of Bradford, Winthrop and the Mathers contain many elements of narrative: tone, point of view, and imagery, which attest to the recognized power of words to please the wit as well as the senses. Puritan authors continued to use not only sermons to interpret natural events, but poetic devices outside the Biblical form which would provoke the desired response.

Poetry was not an uncommon vehicle for expression as Puritans experimented with words in a variety of forms. While diaries attest to the flexibility allowed language representation, diarists like Cotton Mather incorporated descriptive imagery and poetry into their entries. Others, like Samuel Danforth II (1686) wrote to justify their craft:

"Thy Maker made them [stars] signs and why I grow
Except to signify; Then men may know
By observation and Experience
What tis they signify, (in my poor sense)"
(Daly 33)

The poet, like the preacher or the diarist, sought to solidify meaning so that a window of understanding may be opened to the audience. But in his study of Edward Taylor, Daly points to the minister's continued emphasis on the inadequacies that even the finest of man's images created. Examining Edward Taylor's manuscripts Daly found:
From the pattern of Edwards' revisions, moreover, we know that their choices were deliberate, that he often replaced an apt metaphor with a preposterous one, strove to make his prosody rough and tumbling, revised to make clear the inadequacies of his metaphor (190).

Even as the Puritan theocracy in America began to crumble this devotion to the word as a vehicle for God's authoritative Word remained. That the Puritan world had been separated by schisms only signified the ongoing decay which plagued mankind since the Fall; it would not be surprising, therefore, that by the nineteenth century the legacy would have been passed to a fiction writer.6 Displaying the same disdain towards man's ability to perceive and convey truth, Hawthorne's rhetorical stance bears strong witness to the Calvinist's suspicion of man's words. Unlike his contemporaries who sought to establish an American idealism in romantic works celebrating man's possibilities, Hawthorne shunned retranslating the past as a hopeful message for the future. His plain style in The Scarlet Letter could co-exist with the metaphor, typology and description used by his ancestors. His ambiguity signals the same desire to warn against claiming  

6 A review of Hawthorne in Littell's Living Age pointed to the prevalent Puritan idea of degeneracy and declared, "'However much we may regret that such a thing should be it cannot be denied that in the present day the novelist and poet rival the preacher in the influence and importance of their instructions'"(Cameron 57). Bell also discusses the nineteenth century idea that "words had decayed as had society; whereas they once rang true they were now mere artificiality" (172-73).
interpretive powers beyond human capacity. And his works of fiction could be justified by Calvin as his moral intent discloses, like the theologian, a "darkening tale of human fraility and sorrow" (Hawthorne I 48).
CHAPTER THREE

THE "WORD" AND THE WORD:
HAWTHORNE AND NINETEENTH CENTURY ATTITUDES TOWARDS LANGUAGE

Thee most memorable things which have born a very
great Aspect upon Humane Affairs, did near the same
time, namely the conclusion of the Fifteenth, and the
beginning of the Sixteenth Century, arise unto the
World; the First was the Resurrection of Literature;
the Second was the opening of America; the third was
the Reformation of Religion" (Cotton Mather, 118).

While these words in Mather's Magnalia were addressed to his
early eighteenth century audience, the same could be applied
to the nineteenth century. By the beginning of that
century, the "memorable things which have born a very great
Aspect upon Humane Affairs" in America could be summed up as
the "Resurrection of Literature," evident in the emergence
of a national literature and the influence of romanticism in
America; "the opening of America" as the spirit of
Jacksonian democracy pushed industry and exploration both
South and West bringing new products and ideas to the East;
and the Reformation of Religion. While this latter movement
culminated in the appearance of the Transcendentalists and
is signified by Emerson's "Divinity School Address", debate
concerning language began in the religious movements just
prior to the 1800's and centered on a reformation of
interpretative methodology. The New England ministers of
the nineteenth century, like the Puritans in the seventeenth and Calvin in the sixteenth century dissembled words in theological debates and explored the origin and meaning of language.¹ In a discussion of Hawthorne's attitude towards language it is important to understand this intellectual climate which surrounded him. Only by realizing the differences between the two centuries' concepts of language do Hawthorne's ties to the seventeenth century become apparent; only by understanding Emerson's, Elizabeth Palmer Peabody's or Bronson Alcott's concepts of language does the attitude which directed Hawthorne's fiction become apparent.

Primary to the debates of the nineteenth century stood the argument between the Trinitarians and the Unitarians, who were locked in discussing the relationship between the word of man and the Word of God. The Unitarians demanded empirical readings and the Trinitarians favored symbolic interpretation. For the Unitarians, language was affected by man's limits and by time; words had to be placed in their historical setting and understood within the context of accompanying cultural restrictions. Strongly affected by Locke, Unitarians explored the several implications of

¹ Philip Gura explains the various battles which raged in the nineteenth century in "The Transcendentalists and Language: The Unitarian Exegetical Background." See also chapter one in The Wisdom of Words where Gura offers evidence that "many of the important philosophical problems of the early nineteenth century stemmed from differing conceptions of language and its uses" (1).
time-bound Biblical metaphors by examining the historical meaning of a text before drawing a contemporary analogy. Trinitarians stressed the divine significance of God's Word which never changed; it was up to man to analyze the metaphoric code of the Bible in order to find a central meaning. Words were external signs which provoked thought and led to a spiritual concept. After the verbal image had performed its "duty" by being planted in the mind, the symbolic sense of that image could be apprehended. Words were tools which led to spiritual truth.

What is evident in both these positions is their common heritage. The Unitarians practiced the historical exegetical analysis established as part of the Puritan formulaic sermon wherein an examination of various historical implications carried by the Biblical language was compared with other scholars' interpretations. Samuel Danforth's election day sermon of 1670 demonstrates this ability to "lay open" the historical backgrounds of those who "have left their pleasant cities and habitations to enjoy the pure worship of God in the wilderness" (63). The minister reflected on the number of Old Testament incidents which related to the explicated passage and asked: "To what purpose" did the Israelites leave their home; what did it mean to "'hold a feast to the Lord' [or to] 'sacrifice to the God of their fathers'?"(63). But Danforth also concluded his interpretation with a typological analysis in
which are combined the historic and symbolic explications. Danforth reminded his readers that "The Lord foreseeing the defection of Israel after Moses his death, commands him to write that prophetical song recorded in Deuteronomy 32 as a testimony against them" (64); the meaning at this point was updated and applied in a jeremiad to the Puritans' own "Errand in the Wilderness". The printed version of this sermon included Thomas Shepard's introduction which both exemplified and stressed the historical (Unitarian) and the mysterious, symbolic nature of Biblical language (Trinitarian):

'A word spoken in due season,...how good is it!' (Prov. 15.23). And again, 'A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver' (Chap. 25.11). Such were the words of our Lord Jesus, who (accommodating himself to the way of doctrine used by those eastern nations) did by parabolical discourses delight to breathe forth the deep mysteries of divine and heavenly wisdom (Danforth 54 emphasis mine).

Acknowledging Christ's accommodation to "those eastern nations" Shepard still speaks in metaphors of the parables whose breath, like their mysterious meanings, one may only hope to catch.

Though combining both the historic and symbolic elements in a sermon was part of the original formula for Puritans, the emphasis on one or the other began to appear in sermons near the end of the seventeenth century. By the nineteenth century the schism between the two approaches had become irreconcilable; had each group sifted through the
controversy they would have found, as had Bradford with Wheelwright during the Hutchinson trials, that the rifts were caused merely by terms of "human invention, and tended to doubtful disputation." All groups agreed to the primacy of the Bible as the Word of God; all agreed that cautious interpretation was necessary. But neither agreed on the approach to interpreting Biblical language. Were words historically bound and interpretation subject to changes of signification which must be decoded? Or did words contain an inherent power which enabled them to sustain meaning? And finally, what was the "truth" that words signified? Was this truth knowable and could man hope to reach a spiritual reality by dissecting words? The crux of the argument hinged on the different uses of metaphor and type.

While Puritans employed metaphors to communicate pictures, they did not believe that the metaphors were true. For Puritans, only God knew Truth and while he may give typological signs and speak in metaphors through the Bible, man's interpretation of these signified only a limited truth. Michael Clark points out that "while Puritans were confident about the legibility of this world -- i.e. its existence as a group of 'characters' written on God's hand -- they seldom confused that legibility with intelligibility" (279). Contrary to this cautious understanding of the limits of metaphor, the majority of authors in the nineteenth century empowered verbal images. Emerson's
concepts of language and metaphor exhibit the difference between these two centuries' attitudes towards words.\(^2\)

Emerson did not dispense with the whole of Puritan theology for his roots lay in New England Puritanism. He too believed in the degeneracy of language, but he did not accept that as part of man's increasing burden. In the Romantic tradition of his time Emerson rationalized that primitive man spoke in metaphors which pointed to true meaning in nature and that therefore metaphors contained a powerful validity. Every word for Emerson and his followers was "a metaphor borrowed from some natural process" and sacred experiences could be described in secular language through metaphoric images (Journal V, 213). Emerson felt "a man's power to connect his thought with its proper symbol, and so to utter it, depends on the simplicity of his character... upon his love of truth, and his desire to communicate it without loss" (Essays 22). Though Emerson believed that there was "a line of remoteness from the line of things in the line of words...by and by comes a word true and closely embracing the thing....The aim of the author is not to tell the truth - that he cannot do, but to suggest it" (Journal III, 491). Agreeing that no word was as complete as the object it signified, Emerson yet argued that

\(^2\) Gura's and Shurr's criticism presents the Transcendentalists' general attitudes towards language touching on various essayists in the nineteenth-century. For a specific discussion of Emerson's concept of process in language see Hagenb chle.
words did suggest thoughts and these abstract concepts could be understood precisely because they were not meant to be material. The nonmateriality of thought became the link between man's world and the spiritual realm: thought, without substance, linked with the sacred which was equally without substance. For Emerson, "the use of the outer creation [was] to give us language for the beings and changes of the inward creation" where God could be found (Essays 20). This establishment of man's verbal interpretive powers directly contradicted the representative stance of Samuel Mather:

> Men must not indulge in their own fancies, as the Popish writers use to do, with their Allegorical Senses, as they call them;... it is not safe to make anything a Type merely upon our own fancies and imaginations (55).

Unlike the Puritans, Emerson believed that words were powerful tools with which truth could be understood; for him metaphors and types were a means for reinstating man in his proper relation to nature.

As Shurr shows, Emerson was not alone in his beliefs; other contemporaries were struggling "against the powerful presence of Calvinism in their native culture" (47). Alcott, Channing and Elizabeth Palmer Peabody were all investigating the origins of the language and devised theories similar to Emerson's. As nineteenth century Americans in the midst of Romanticism they searched the past for the origins of words, studied the latest German tracts
on the matter and taught courses promoting language's power. Most nineteenth century essayists concluded with Emerson that

> Only words that are new fit exactly the thing, those that are old, like old scoriae that have been exposed to the air and sunshine, have lost the sharpness of their mould and fit loosely (Essays 20).

Most authors chose sides in this philosophical debate even Thoreau, who prided himself on his separation from such spiritual matters. In *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* of 1849 Thoreau included a long "Sunday" section wherein was mourned the loss of the essence of Christ's language (Gura 12). But Thoreau's transcendentalist reliance on the self for truth nonetheless placed him in Emerson's camp; for Thoreau, truth in the world could be signified with one's own new vocabulary and understood through symbols. There was at least one author, however, who had not become caught in the debates which fragmented America's religious inheritance. Though the nineteenth century minister and author had lost sight of a Puritan rhetoric which combined both the historic and symbolic importance of meaning, Nathaniel Hawthorne's attitude towards language reflected the wholeness of his inheritance. This is not to imply that Hawthorne was a Puritan misplaced in the nineteenth century, but that

> he believed the insights of Calvinism to be deeper than the moralism of the Boston Brahmins or the visions of the Concord seers. In Hawthorne as in no other American writer, Puritanism, freed from its
doctrinal precisions, took central position (Warren 90).

What "doctrinal precisions" Hawthorne had freed himself from is debatable because for him the essence of Calvinism prevailed. Like other writers of his time Hawthorne looked to the origins of American culture, but whereas Emerson saw history as an organic evolution, Hawthorne held the Puritan view: "his fiction focused on the recurring type in historically altered situations rather than on any basic alteration in society itself" (Kaul 142). What this means in a discussion of nineteenth century attitudes towards language is that though the popular movement exhibited a belief in the credibility of language and a concomitant reliance on man-as-interpreter-of-truth, Hawthorne initially used words in the belief that they were merely shadows of truth. In a letter to Joseph Worchester, thanking him for a copy of his dictionary, Hawthorne commented that

"Of all the Lexicographers, you seem to me best to combine a sense of the sacredness of language with a recognition of the changes which time and human vicissitude inevitably work upon it. It will be ominous of anarchy in matters moral and political, when our Dictionaries cease to be mainly

3 For a detailed study of Hawthorne's ties to Calvin's theology see Agnes Donohue's *Hawthorne: Calvin's Ironic Stepchild*.

4 Ursula Brumm examines Hawthorne's attitude towards history in her discussion of his use of typology and finds that "Hawthorne does not regard time and history as being continual change and flux. Rather he regards them as something cyclical and recurring, where the same situations and types recur over and over again in different masks and costumes" (128-29).
Conservative; and for my own part, I would not adopt a single new spelling, unless it were forced upon me by the general practice of the age and country; — nor willingly admit a new word, unless it brought a new meaning along with it" (Wagenknecht 26).

Though he believed, as did others of his century, in the degeneracy of language Hawthorne's response was typically Puritan; he did not resolve, as did Emerson, to devise a new language in the belief that it would signify spiritual truths. For Hawthorne as for the Puritans, to create a "truth" out of man's symbols was tantamount to believing man could create something from himself. This was a fallacy the Puritans warned against and a practice the Transcendentalists promoted. Instead of rewriting the past for the sake of romanticizing it as did other nineteenth century authors writing historical novels, Hawthorne constantly explored the role played by man's understanding of language's power; in Hawthorne's works authorship by man in any capacity is a recurring topic which lends itself to a discussion of the validity of man's power to create at all. As shall be argued throughout, the ironic and ambiguous qualities of Hawthorne's works rest on these attitudes towards language.

There were influences in Hawthorne's life which affected these language concepts, and comments in Hawthorne's journals and letters grow out of these initial attitudes towards verbal signs. Early in Hawthorne's life, the impact of his Puritan past was evident. In his first works as well
as in the "Custom House" Hawthorne made no secret of his Puritan background. But there were factors other than his ancestry which connected Hawthorne's understanding of language to that of the seventeenth century. Both John Bayes and Randall Stewart indicate Hawthorne's reliance on Hugh Blair's *Rhetoric* (Bayes 260, Stewart 16). Published in 1783, Blair's book supported the current trend in nineteenth century universities which promoted the English Common Sense style; but both of these were influenced by the Ramists, who in turn had directed the Puritans' concepts of rhetoric. Bayes suggests that it was perhaps because of Blair that Hawthorne kept a journal or commonplace book (260). But it is just as likely that Hawthorne's journal writing habit grew from his admiration of John Bunyan and Richard Baxter. Blair's rhetoric suggested the keeping of a diary for private purposes, but the Puritan objective was quite different and much closer to Hawthorne's.

At the age of six Hawthorne's favorite book was *Pilgrim's Progress*. This spiritual autobiography had a tremendous impact on Puritan diarists along with Richard Baxter's

5 Though both the Puritans and those of the Common Sense school believed that man should observe nature, the latter believed that reality existed and was ultimately knowable by man through his perceptions. The Puritans (and Hawthorne) ascribed to the ambiguity of nature's signs due to man's imperfect perceptions.

6 According to Fields, Hawthorne's publisher-friend, the young Hawthorne reportedly carried *Pilgrim's Progress* wherever the family visited and sat in a corner continually rereading it (9).
Reliquiae Baxterianae which was also read by Hawthorne as a young man. Unlike the kind of journal recommended by Blair, both these works were studied versions of a man's life. They were diary-like accounts but had public purposes. Even journals such as Samuel Sewell's, which more consistently evidences an unedited version of daily occurrences, still retain the sense of an audience outside the writer. The diarist would study his own accounts and would often rework passages before recording them or add passages to earlier entries for clarification or as commentary. The concept of audience therefore did not merely include God and author, but also included the author at another point in his life, presumably as a changed man. Since man's words and actions were considered the text of his life, it was expected that both would undergo "editing". Benjamin Woodbridge represents this common image in his poem, "Upon the Tomb of the most Reverend Mr. John Cotton":

A living breathing Bible: Tables where
Both Covenants at large engraven were
Gospel and Law in's ear had each its column
His Head an Index to the Sacred Volume.
His very Name a Title Page; and next,
His Life a Commentary on the Text.
O what a monument of glorious worth,
When in a New Edition he comes forth
Without Errata's, may we think he'll be,
In Leaves and Covers of Eternite (Meserole, 410-11).

For the Puritan, the physical union of man with God's written word ideally reflected the spiritual union of man's soul with God. The Puritans' lives were public and their
punishment for sin, which included the discarding of the secret confessional, points to the necessity of continually considering themselves as part of a larger community. In order to serve as a "Commentary on the Text" a good Puritan would study his actions as they were recorded by him and attempt to recognize the absence or presence of a life similar to that directed by the Word. It is because of this sense of community and the need for action in daily life that a Puritan diarists' audience extended beyond his various selves. Both physically and abstractly on paper one's life was to be open to scrutiny and presented as example. Lewalski points out that in Book II of Pilgrim's Progress "we are invited to understand that although the pilgrim's progress allegorizes the spiritual journey of all Christian pilgrims, yet any particular pilgrim's progress is itself an episode within God's all-encompassing typological scheme" (107). In the same manner diaries were considerably more public than our modern concept of "diary" implies for the author expected to find evidence of election in journal passages. This led to the development of a narrative persona whose participation in writing included examination and rationalization; paradoxically, while searching for clues to the conduct of the self, the "inmost me" could be hidden from both the author and his audience. What is common to both the Puritan diarist and Hawthorne is this awareness of private persona as public self.
Since many ideas for Hawthorne's stories have as their source earlier journal entries it is well known that he reread his journals. But the compilers of the Centenary Edition of Hawthorne's works discovered a self-consciousness comparable to that of the Puritans. Many passages in his journals have obviously been edited or recopied from earlier versions. This same editorial procedure to protect the "inmost Me behind its veil" (Hawthorne The Scarlet Letter 4) was found to be practiced in his private letters. Passages were edited, composed elsewhere and recopied. 7 As if to further insure an image of his public self, Hawthorne requested that certain friends burn particular letters, a practice maintained from early boyhood on. Such a practice reveals what Irwin has termed Hawthorne's "subjectivity [as] the subject of his writing" (263).

This same necessity to explore the self in one's writing was common to the seventeenth century writer who was "explicitly interested in his prose and often comment[ed] extensively upon it, becoming his own first critic," and revising continually so as to better judge the position of the spiritual self (Webber 4). This was the point of Calvin's directive (I 471-72) on the study of self which was constantly echoed in the Reliquiae Baxterianae, Pilgrim's Progress, Mather's Magnalia Christi Americana, and the many

---

7 For a discussion of this practice see Centenary XV, 5-7.
other Puritans works read by Hawthorne. Kesselring's study of Hawthorne attests to his reading colonial works which involved a self analysis on the part of either the author or reader or both. Hawthorne showed a preference for histories, journals, historical society reports and court proceedings of early New England. The Life and Times of John Dunton is one of several historical accounts read by Hawthorne that described interchanges between London and New England residents; in this case a famous conversation between John Dunton and John Cotton is recorded (Kesselring 10-11). In addition Hawthorne read many tracts and sermons by English ministers such as Samuel Parr, Bishop Hurd, Jeremy Taylor and Richard Baxter, and several New England divines including Samuel, Increase and Cotton Mather, all of whom were instrumental in forming the seventeenth century American conscience. Hawthorne concluded that there was an important "difference between the cold lifeless vaguely liberal clergyman of our own day, and the narrow cushion-thumper of the puritanical times. On the whole, I prefer the last-mentioned variety of the black-coated tribe" (VIII 338-39).

From such readings Hawthorne recorded journal entries agreeing with "the black-coated tribe" that "'Though we speak nonsesense, God will pick out the meaning of it'"
The minister's prayer exemplified Calvin's statement that

"the eloquence that is suited to the spirit of God is of such a nature that it does not swell with empty show, or spend itself in empty sound, but is solid and efficacious, and has more of substance than eloquence" (Van Hof 172).

Hawthorne simplified this idea when he wrote that "the greatest possible merit of style is, of course, to make mere words absolutely disappear into the thought" (XVI 421). The need for simplicity and clarity in Puritan tracts corresponds to Hawthorne's recognition that "it is not the words but the thoughts" which matter (VIII 256). By the nineteenth century Emerson may have believed that a descent into the self promised the discovery of a "new man" and Thoreau may have felt that it would produce a "new language", but Hawthorne ignored claims which placed man as the purveyor of truth. With Calvinistic disdain Hawthorne disparaged the "seer of Concord" recording in his journal that "Bees are sometimes drowned in the honey which they collect - so some writers [get] lost in their collected learning" (VIII 229). A desire to capture the essence of objects in words was a foolish pursuit for Hawthorne observed that

Man's finest workmanship, the closer you observed it, the more imperfections it shows; as in a piece of polished steel a microscope will discover a rough

---

8 Though most entries summarize ideas from his readings this quotation was particularly noted as "an extemporary prayer by a New England divine" (VIII 18).
surface. Whereas what may look coarse and rough in Nature's workmanship will show infinitely minute precision... [Nature] works from the innermost germ, while [man] works merely superficially (VIII 157-58).

In Hawthorne's journals the use of similes and metaphors which refer to Nature are reminiscent of the careful observations demanded of both the Puritans and transcendentalists; but though the descriptions abound in both groups' essays the reasons for which they are employed differ. Whereas Emerson's verbalized observations were to align him with nature, Hawthorne agreed with Cotton Mather that even as man attempted to define the world he was otherwise absorbed in [his own] thought; for then, when your eyes happen to be attracted to the landscape, you seem to catch Nature unawares, and see her before she has time to change her aspect. The effect lasts but for a single instant, and passes away almost as soon as you are conscious of it.... [It is] as if you caught a glimpse of a face unveiled, which veils itself from every wilful glance. The mystery is revealed, and after a breath or two, becomes just as much a mystery as before (VIII 486 emphasis mine).

Hawthorne's use of seems and as if metaphorically qualify the reality that momentarily man has pierced nature's mystery; even an illusive solution is unable to be perceived for a brief moment of recollection. There was a continual gap for Calvin between what we saw and what actually existed, and for Hawthorne this "unreality of earthly things" was "made evident by want of our congruity between ourselves and them" (VIII 168).

Yet Hawthorne's profession as writer committed him to the
use of words just as the Puritan ministers were obligated to
verbal signification of the world. Every week the minister
"explored the relation between doctrine and
experience, [and] men found they were being given a
lens with which to bring their inward lives into
focus, a process that became more systematic and
meaningful as they named and discovered what they
found there" (Watkins 16).

Man's need to name what was seen, Calvin found, was grounded
in the reprobate's response to God's original edict that
Adam name all the animals: in that first Eden words implied
dominion over that which was named. For Calvin, our
original natures were fragmented by sin and our longing to
exert power over earthly matter through words was a
manifestation of our longing to unite our sinful, physical
self with the spiritual world - with the Word. Man's desire
to capture abstract concepts with concrete words paralleled
the desire for wholeness originally possessed by Adam and
Eve. 9 To Calvin the power of Biblical language was
typologically repeated in God's relationship to man: "it is
always by his [God's] word that he manifests himself to
those whom he designs to draw to himself" (II 474). Whereas
Emerson believed that a union with the spiritual was
possible through man's "new words", Puritans and Hawthorne
recognized that "language -- human language -- after all, is

9 Michael Clark outlines the Puritan recognition of the
"discrepancy between what a worldly sign signifies and what
our inner knowledge reveals. [For them] it is that
discrepancy which was necessary so that we may desire the
self-searching necessary for revelation of faith" (286).
but little better than the croak and cackle of fowels, and other utterances of brute nature; sometimes not so adequate" (294). 10

Despite this mistrust of language writing was as important to Hawthorne as it was to the Puritans. This was not because words themselves were potent and carried truth but because man was "so swollen with arrogance and ambition and so blinded with self-love" that he imbued them with power himself (Calvin I 317). Man willingly invested words with power in order to promote his own ideas, his own image over God's. For this reason, Calvin believed, the very words which led man to sin must be harnessed as vehicles for God's law. 11 Therein lay the Puritan rationalization for writing down explanations of God's law: a complete understanding of the Word would enable a man to mimic the spiritual message in his own imperfect words. This could only be done with the continual knowledge of how "dangerous"

10 While Foster outlines Hawthorne's rhetorical devices in terms of a desire for the power words can wield, he forgets that characters such as Dimmesdale are presented as sinful figures when they use words for power. Chillingworth is an excellent example in the same novel. The desire Foster detects originates in the Calvinistic need to abandon man's quest for personal power and to accept the Word and God's omnipotence.

11 In his discussion of the arts in general Calvin used specific examples saying that "because sculpture and painting are gifts of God, I seek a pure and legitimate use of each, lest those things for which the Lord has conferred upon us for His glory and for our good are not only contaminated by absurd waste but are also turned to our destruction" (I 12).
it was "to wander from the simple words of God to the dreams of our own brain" (Calvin II 593). The paradox inherent in this attitude towards language -- that words must be used even though they may signify nothing but man's imagination -- produced in the Puritan and Hawthorne a caution about language and an ambiguous attitude towards the power of verbal referents.¹²

Hawthorne's letters to his wife Sophia often point to the frustration that "the soul of my thought has not readily assumed the earthly garments of language" (XV 305). While on the one hand this is a conventional complaint of lovers, Hawthorne emphasized that "Words come like a thick wall between us" or like a veil (XV 440).¹³ The paper solidified the barrier between abstract concepts - the love he felt for Sophia - and physical manifestations of those ideas in words. Attempts to eliminate the gap still produced an inadequate expression of the original thought.¹⁴

¹² Hawthorne's writing continually acknowledged the problem of authorship - "when we see how little we can express [...] it is a wonder that any man takes up a pen a second time" (Hawthorne VIII 250). See also Hawthorne's letters in XV pages 316-318, 321, and 495.

¹³ Hawthorne also used this veil symbol in his fiction (i.e. "The Minister's Black Veil" or "The Custom House" to name two famous pieces); in both his fiction and private letters words/veils similarly act to obscure meaning.

¹⁴ Puritan Edward Taylor expressed a similar result in a letter to his wife: that "'striving to catch these sparks into a Love Letter unto yourself, and to gild it with them as with a Sun Beam, [I] find that by what time they have fallen through my pen upon my Paper, they have lost their Shine, and fall only like a little Smoke thereon instead of
such an image parallels the Puritan idea of what happens when God's Word (the abstract and sacred) connects with man's mind (the earthbound physical element); again, the result is an inadequate understanding of the world as it is known to its creator. In Eden such verbal exertion was thought to be unknown; but as silence and wholeness of the physical and spiritual elements signaled man's original state, fragmentation and wordiness characterized the fallen man. Hawthorne wrote Sophia that

Articulate words are a harsh clamor and a dissonance. When man arrives at his highest perfection, he will again be dumb! -- for I suppose he was dumb at the Creation, and must perform an entire circle in order to return to that blessed state (XV 512)

By choosing writing as his profession, Hawthorne was placing himself in the same paradoxical bind as that of his Puritan forefathers. For Hawthorne as for his Puritan ancestors, signs signified the eternal; they must be proclaimed and examined, but they cannot be changed. It is often thought that the "iron rod" which Hawthorne believed ran through his fiction is The Scarlet Letter motto "Be

...gilding them" (Daly 167). Daly proceeds to show how this same attitude directed Taylor's poetry and provides the tension that exists between the spiritual and earthly realms.

15 Clark points out that Hawthorne "was to use this world to indicate but not reach the next, use signs that would refer him to their significances, but also defer it to - both in the sense of putting off to and acknowledging the superiority of - the divine realm. Efforts to step beyond those limits were heretical and doomed to failure" (279).
True! Be True!" 16 But throughout his novels rings back the echo "What is Truth?" Man's futile attempts to empower himself with words is a Calvinist "iron rod" that directs Hawthorne's fiction. In a world without Eden's wholeness, Dimmesdale's silence is as damning as Chillingworth's desire to gain power through his manipulation of words. Hester's belief that she can change the world is as foolish as the community's attempt to change the meaning of her A. Those who find a positive ending in The Scarlet Letter have themselves attempted to change meaning.

In "The Custom House" Hawthorne writes of his choice to be an author and of the Puritanic disdain his forefathers must have for such a skill as his. Yet he refers to the "strong traits of their [his Puritans forefathers'] nature [which] have intertwined themselves with mine"; in a paragraph about writing and in the subsequent paragraph about the decaying reputation of the Hawthorne line the elements of degeneracy and authorship are joined. These two subjects, imposed by the verbal bind of Calvin's theology, direct the development of all Hawthorne's fiction; failure to acknowledge the emptiness of man-made signification particularly motivates the downfall of the "heretical and doomed" in The Scarlet Letter, The Blithedale Romance, and The Marble Faun.

16 Hawthorne wrote to his publisher "In all my stories, I think, there is one idea running through them like an iron rod, and to which all other ideas are referred and subordinate" (XVI 488).
Hawthorne was originally going to name *The Scarlet Letter, The Judgment Letter* (XVI, 308). While the latter does not evoke the symbolic color of the eventual title, the idea that a single letter could serve as judgment points to the importance of language in the novel. Though the overt plot of *The Scarlet Letter* concerns itself with hidden sin, the characters are motivated by an inability to correctly perceive or articulate the first, the simplest, the single letter which lies before them throughout the novel. Hester transforms the letter A into an artistic work, mixing her punishment with her pride, and Dimmesdale transforms his part in creating the letter to false rhetoric; the presence of the letter impels Chillingworth to transform himself from a humanistic man of letters into a silent agent of torment. Such transformational attempts lead to destruction, and whether by the end of the novel the sign has been correctly interpreted by the remaining characters, including the
reading audience, is subject to much doubt. It seems that even in the last scene of the novel "the scarlet letter had not done its office" (166). The ambiguity represented by the oft used "seems" in the novel serves to emphasize the imperfection of man's perceptual and verbal abilities. Puritans who assumed the signs of the world could be correctly interpreted and articulated could be accused of heresy; they dared equate their understanding with God's. While Emerson's essays cautiously promote such equality, Hawthorne's work warns against any presumptuous interpretation. Instead, as seventeenth century preachers offered many images to appeal to a varied audience, Hawthorne maintains his objectivity through ambiguity. Language points only to a perceived truth; the actual truth remains hidden.

Just as an author composes a meaning by combining and juxtaposing signs, so do the characters in The Scarlet Letter compose their own meaning from the signs they perceive. For author and characters, the problem of perception includes interpretation of signs: the order in which those smaller parts are combined. The letter a acts

1 A.N. Kaul suggested that in The Scarlet Letter Hawthorne "was questioning not [the Puritans'] religious beliefs but rather the validity of human conclusions drawn from accepted premises" (147-48).

2 All references to Hawthorne's works will be to volume I of the Centenary Edition of The Scarlet Letter unless otherwise noted.
merely as a single word or sound which alone does not mean; it indicates the beginning of an alphabet; it points to "a" particular; it acts as a sign indicating a meaning. But ultimately the A stands as a component of a larger system, a particle indicating a larger meaning which is in turn revealed to a community. This community, however, can be led from truth by a Dimmesdale who is clever enough to disguise verbal signification or a Chillingworth who alters truth with an identity change and then hides behind words whose meanings are meant to be ambiguous; these two use ambiguity to disguise truth rather than allowing ambiguity to suggest truth. Similarly, Hester denies meaning by her artistic and verbal handiwork which changes the a and leads to false interpretation. In the same manner, the author controls the novel's movement and its meaning for the reading community. For Hawthorne, "authoring" meant using words to indicate a meaning which existed between "moonlight and firelight", between the imagined and the perceived, between abstract concepts and physical objects. While the author is wrestling with creating a novel that "means", the

3 In the American Notebooks Hawthorne recorded the idea to create "letters in the shape of figures of men &c. At a distance, the words composed by the letters are alone distinguishable. Close at hand, the figures alone are seen, and not distinguished as letters. Thus things may have a positive, a relative, and a composite meaning, according to the point of view" (183).

4 Dimmesdale's numerous public "confessions" mislead his parishioners as Chillingworth's earnest debates with the pastor disguise his diabolical intent.
characters in The Scarlet Letter are enacting the problem of meaning; both attempts are controlled by the precepts which guided the Puritan concept of language.

In Puritan terms, man's ability to communicate accurately was fragmented by the events in Eden; he has since been reduced to the indirect and verbose. In his study, Sutherland noted that The Scarlet Letter "points to the fact that the letter, the language itself, is adulterated" (89). Allusions to decay and defilement begin in "The Custom House". When the narrator discovered the letter which allegedly became the basis of the novel, he had been picking through piles of old documents "which were now only an encumbrance on earth" (28). Likewise, when he lifted the tattered A from Surveyor Pue's yellowed scroll the narrator displayed a piece of material which had decayed -- a sign whose meaning had deteriorated because time had "greatly frayed and defaced" it (31). But upon placing it over his heart the narrator experienced "a sensation not altogether physical, yet almost so" (32). Though the meaning was not clear, the significance of the sign as a sign remained; even if the author added his own imagination to "the motives and modes of passion" (33) connected to the letter, the sign's ability to indicate a meaning had not changed. In the novel as well as in the preface the red a will produce various images for every
person; but despite any imaginative interpretation the letter still carries significant original power.

The importance of language and its complications are further suggested by Hawthorne's use of the first letter of the alphabet; contrary to the efforts of anyone in the world or in the novel, the Puritans believed that out of a dark historical past, despite man's attempt to embellish them, God's signs prevailed. For Calvin, the inerrancy of the Word was unquestionable. The Puritans and Hawthorne's contemporaries acknowledged the outward decay of signs consequential of the Fall, but Hawthorne's novel further assures the reader that no transformation of an old sign into one that signifies a new meaning is possible. Attempts to recharge language with new meaning were thought to lead to misinterpretation; signs could only stand as ambiguous signals which carried fragments of truth. For both the Puritans and Hawthorne multiple meanings were necessary as indications of man's depravity and the hidden truth which existed only behind the Veil. This chapter will examine the recurring references to verbal ambiguity in The Scarlet Letter which connect the preface to the novel and which direct the characters and action. What becomes evident in such an examination is that Hawthorne's writing, unlike that of his nineteenth century contemporaries, probed the function of signs within the community and substantiated a
belief in the limitations of language as did Edward Taylor, Cotton Mather and, of course, John Calvin before him.

****

Moonlight, in a familiar room, falling so white upon the carpet, and showing all its figures so distinctly,—making every object so minutely visible, yet so unlike a morning or noontide visibility, is a medium the most suitable for a romance-writer to get acquainted with his illusive guests....all these details, so completely seen, are so spiritualized by the unusual light, that they seem to lose their actual substance, and become things of intellect (35).

In this section of "The Custom House", Hawthorne describes the conditions conducive to romance writing and apparently discourages reading his text as a reflection of reality. What he does instead is challenge the definition of reality: are daylight images any more "real" than those perceived by moonlight? Ringe points to the moonlight passage as an example of "the condition under which [Hawthorne believed] the mind might perceive a world neither wholly fanciful nor wholly real" (56). Such a description fits the Puritan concept of a world wherein misconstrued reality perceived by degenerate man leaves words vibrating between two spheres, never wholly representing either.

While Hawthorne sought abstraction in moonlight, he found that the stark weight of the material world pulled him towards a humanized vision of progress and left him unable to find that middle ground. The conditions in the Custom
House depicted by Hawthorne are blamed for his inability to "dream strange things and make them look like truth" (36). This mundane world demanded no more than old, stale jokes for communication: Custom House men are pictured asleep in their accustomed corners, with their chairs tilted back against the wall; awaking, however, once or twice in a forenoon, to bore one another with the several thousandth repetition of old sea-stories, and mouldy jokes, that had grown to be pass-words and countersigns among them (I 14).

By the nineteenth century it was already commonly noted that an abstract and therefore spiritual life had become secondary to the concrete and material. While language was to be a facilitator for God's truth, it had actually become culturally coded with man-made significances and no longer referred to God-made significances. Nineteenth century critic Moses Coit Tyler noted that New England's Puritan sermons are commonly spoken of mirthfully by an age that lacks the faith of that period, its earnestness, its grip, its mental robustness; a grinning and flabby age, an age hating effort, and requiring to be amused. The theological and religious writings of New England are not now readable.... They represent an enormous amount of subtile, sustained, and sturdy brain-power. They are, of course, grave, dry, abstruse, dreadful; to our debilitated attentions they are difficult to follow; in style they are often uncouth and ponderous....They are devoted to a theology that yet lives in the memory of mankind only through certain shells of words long since emptied of their original meaning (192-93).

The images of decay with which Hawthorne painted both men and environment correspond to this idea of verbal and
intellectual decay in the nineteenth century. Just as the presence of the weeds in the opening chapter of The Scarlet Letter threaten the growth of the rose bush, so too man's degenerate symbol system created a static environment wherein meaning was lost.

Unlike other writers of his time, Hawthorne did not believe that a man could recreate new meanings from nature, and he rejected the self-made symbols of the world. Hawthorne instead turned to the abstract night wherein "all the details, so completely seen, are so spiritualized by the unusual light, that they seem to lose their actual existence and become things of the intellect" (35). Moonlight erased fine lines which man perceived and further brought into question the reality of all objects. For the Puritans this erasure of definitive lines signified the inadequacy of man's perceptions. The world only served as type; words only indicated meaning just as God's truth was only indicated by the Biblical Word. In raising the concrete to the abstract, Puritans worked within a realm of symbol and type which, though not "actual", was as real as man's perceptions allowed: limited truth could be known which in turn would indicate a limited spiritual truth. Words indicated various symbolic concepts which, combined, continually expanded a referential picture. But the picture never changed because the binding Word never altered. Within the Puritan system, "mouldy jokes" could not act as
pass-words, for reevaluation of signs was a never-ending activity wherein man continually glimpsed portions of a painting but never saw the whole picture.

Given the need to discover a metaphor for the Word, both the Puritans and Hawthorne resorted to the use of many words and pictures to reach a varied audience with varied understandings. In the seventeenth century Chappell reminded ministers that words were "not obvious to everyone, or conspicuous at first sight, but sometimes are to be drawn out and reduced to form" (9). Similarly, Plumstead noted that Cotton Mather's historic sermon of 1689 exemplified the role-playing employed by ministers to keep the audience's attention and to reach every listener through dramatic appeal. In this particular case, Mather as

the dry announcer of doctrine [in the "Application"] becomes an actor who takes on different parts - of Asa, of the old men of the first New England generations, and of the innocent child who cries 'Peace' " (114).

If the Author, or, in imitation, the author, had done his job by couching meaning in various signs, the intellect, will and affections would be continually moved towards the truth to which words pointed. Some critics, like Van Leer, fail to see that such multiple perspectives result from Hawthorne's concepts of typology and language's limitations and view The Scarlet Letter as a wildly allusive narration ... [which] presents ... themes in such a curious mix of Puritan rhetoric and more contemporary formulations that one almost
Bayer, however, points to the similarity between the sermonic strategy of the Puritans and Hawthorne's thematic development: The Scarlet Letter's "episodic, highly scenic structure is a reminder of the cumulative drift of oral [i.e. Puritan sermonic] composition" (262-63). Noting Hawthorne's "oral-aural cast of the beginning of 'The Custom House'", Bayer speaks of Hawthorne's rhetorical strategy in terms of an "exordium" (251), similar to discussions of the sermonic technique of Puritan ministers. In her work, Johnson also demonstrates that the oral process directed Hawthorne's writing;

Hawthorne solves for himself what he takes to be an aesthetic crisis for his age; in particular, his fixation upon a letter become a metaphor is a direct outgrowth of the Bunyanesque vision of the word become Word" (252).

The Word, however, did not merely exist as passive object but stimulated spiritual movement. Puritan rhetorical arguments were structured to create individual action, and oral techniques should cause a man to believe he had been summoned to act. Hooker notes that this will to act is closely connected with the speaker's ability to preach "as if he were in the bosom of a man: he may tell him things in his eare which he thinks no man knows of" (The Soules 80). Centuries later, Hawthorne also addressed "not the many who will fling aside his volume, or never take it up, but those few who will understand him, better than most
of his schoolmates and lifemates" (3). Such a confession on the author's part entices the readers to include themselves among the "elect". Incorporating a similar appeal to the reader, John Bunyan had apologized for producing a seventeenth century spiritual autobiography, saying he printed it to gratify those who would enjoy it. He prefaced Pilgrim's Progress with the aphorism:

If that thou wilt not read, let it alone;
Some love the meat, some love to pick the bone"
(2).

Bunyan's direct appeal to his Puritan audience personalized the sermonic composition, and the technique parallels Hawthorne's approach in "The Custom House". He began this section by discussing his position as an "intrusive author" who would "again seize the public by the button, and talk of my three years experience in the Custom House" (3). Continuing his conversation with the reader, Hawthorne prepared the audience for his discovery of the scarlet letter by maintaining that the Custom House essay is based on fact. "It is a little remarkable" declared Hawthorne, also referring to Mosses from an Old Manse, "that...an autobiographical impulse should twice in my life have taken possession of me, in addressing the public"(3). While Hawthorne stressed the autobiographic nature of his work, he also employed the genre to give credence to his fiction as did Bunyan. The seventeenth century Puritan assured his readers that
I no abuse
Put on the words, things, readers; or be rude
In handling figure or similitude,
In application; but, all that I may,
Seek the advance of truth this or that way (5).

Hawthorne similarly sought justification of his romance-autobiography:

It will be seen, likewise, that this Custom House sketch has a certain propriety, as explaining how a large portion of the following papers came into my possession, and as offering proof of the authenticity of a narrative therein contained (4 emphasis added).5

But authenticity of Hawthorne's material becomes as questionable as the existence of a real Christian in a real Valley of Despair. Both authors play with language which functions as suggestive typology rather than as palpable truth. Hawthorne subtly signals the reader to cautiously interpret his signs in the novel when he claims

to follow faithfully the example of Pope's Memoirs by P. P. The whole point of the mock autobiography is to explore the boorishness of that scatologically named biographer; and following his example is an admission of one's own incompetence as witness (Van Leer 64).

While the narrator of the Custom House later pledges "the authenticity of the outline", he further admits: " I have

5 Correspondences continue between the purpose of "The Custom House" and Bunyan's "Introductory Apology". For example, Bunyan's prefatory words support the marriage of Hawthorne's two nineteenth century works: " I did not understand/That I at all should make a little book/In such a mode; nay, I had undertook/ To make another; which, when almost done, / Before I was aware, I this began "(l). Parallels in The Scarlet Letter and Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress are further explored in David Smith's John Bunyan in America.
allowed myself, as to such points, nearly or altogether as much license as if the facts had been entirely of my own invention" (33). Where Surveyor Pue's outline and the story begin and end is as indeterminable as the outline of objects in moonlight. What readers of Bunyan and Hawthorne must discern is the object indicated by language.

That Hawthorne would refer to a mock autobiography within his own "autobiography" further brings into question his introductory claim to discover a sympathetic reader, and verifies his desire to hide the "inmost Me behind its veil" (4). Irwin notes that in order to find a sympathetic reader the narrator would have to "reveal his inmost self, an act that would leave him dangerously vulnerable and that would embarrass all who are not the reader 'of perfect sympathy'" (266). On the other hand, Hawthorne's claim for concealment might be seen to present the reader with at best an "incomplete" text which Irwin also refers to as "the problematic nature of both veiling and revelation" which occurs throughout the novel (267). But while Hawthorne seems to be following a Puritan historical setting in the novel, he is also displaying a seventeenth century mistrust of language. He subtly reminds, by reference to Pope's Memoirs as well as by alerting the reader to his ancestor's opinion of his craft, that words can be misleading and destructive -- as they had been in Eden and as they will be in the novel.
In his preface Bunyan writes of *Pilgrim's Progress*:

"It is dark!"  What though?
"But it is feign d."  What of that I trow
Some men, by feign d works as dark as mine,
Make truth to spangle and its rays to shine (4)

As used by Bunyan, "authentic" then refers not to a physical realism but to a moral purpose; this abstraction of terms justified his "advance of truth". In the same manner, "some sweet moral blossom" was far more important to Hawthorne than determining the line between moonlight and firelight. While "the darkening close of a tale of human frailty and sorrow" (48) must be grounded in historical "fact", it must also represent a spiritual truth:

I do not know what you will think of the Romance, [wrote Sophia Hawthorne of *The Scarlet Letter* to Mary Mann]. It is most powerful, & contains a moral as terrific & stunning as a thunder bolt. It shows that the Law cannot be broken (XVI 313, n.3).

Despite the variety of interpretations given *The Scarlet Letter* since its publication, the simple law that God's Word cannot be broken, changed, fixed or amended in any way forms the seed from which a moral blossom is produced, as well as from which interpretations spring. Complications arise when it must be decided what the Law means. Puritans believed there ought great care to be taken in the applying of the [Word of God] to the mind of man; that this arm of God may be laid bare and in the evidence of his Spirit, -- the radiation or bright shining of the Principle, or of the Doctrine, in the uses or in the confectory, may be accommodated to the hearers, so that the use may be as a cart, by which a divine axiome is brought to the mind (Chappell 132-33).
While many techniques and symbols may be employed to compose various images, a "divine axiome" with God's help, will be indicated. For the narrator in the Custom House attic, the essential significance of the letter "streamed forth from the mystic symbol, subtly communicating itself to my sensibilities, but evading the analysis of my [nineteenth century] mind" (31). Beyond the scope of man's interpretive, verbal powers, God's message might nonetheless be apprehended; within the Puritan system such moments were physically and emotionally powerful as the degenerate moved towards the regenerate.

While God might move an individual with one word, an author, in poor imitation, must hope to move many men with a variety of images. This leads to multiple metaphors and seemingly contradictory messages. In a direct appeal prefaced by several parallel images, Hawthorne requested that readers accept the moral blossom which may bloom in spite of man's depravity and prepared his readers for paradoxical images which lead to multiple interpretations. The rose bush grows alongside a prison - the earthly punishment decreed by man for the breaking of his written law. Yet "the black flower of civilization" (the prison) shelters the wild rose, itself a combination of thorns and beauty.6 The appearance of Hester and her fantastically

---

6 Wild roses are only pink and the combination of the white and red lends itself to multiple interpretations, any number of which can be positive or negative.
embroidered scarlet letter seems at once to corroborate the
puritans' slander as well as substantiate the plea of the
woman who says, "'Let her cover the mark as she will, the
pang of it will be always in her heart'" (51). But the
matron who is horrified at Hester turning punishment into
pride points to the center of the novel: Hester, as has all
mankind, embroidered her sin so that it could no longer be
interpreted as a sign of God's broken law. She shrouded it
in mystery so that an understanding of its office was left
open to various interpretations:

But the point which drew all eyes, and, as it were, transfigured the wearer, - so that both men
and women, who had been familiarly acquainted with
Hester Prynne, were now impressed as if they
beheld her for the first time,- was that SCARLET
LETTER .... It had the effect of a spell, taking
her out of the ordinary relations with humanity,
and inclosing her in a sphere by herself (53-54).

While it might be argued that the sin separated Hester
from the community, it is clear that the embellished letter
creates the chasm. Theologically, all were in the same
sphere of sin, but Hester attempted to change her
relationship to the community by altering the symbol of her
sin; she used her artistic ability to create beauty where
none should be. Furthermore, Hester impressed the others,

7 Hester's removal from the community, her subsequent
exile and continued philosophical "embroidering" recalls
Hawthorne's inability to create stories until his removal
from the Custom House. Puritans were warned not to ignore
God's creation in favor of their own - a temptation to those
in isolation. Hawthorne explores this particular artistic
dilemma in The Blithedale Romance.
marked them with this new significance. The recurrence in *The Scarlet Letter* of embroidered words used to cover truth recall's Calvin's reminder that God's essence, indeed, is so incomprehensible, utterly transcending all human thought; but on each of his works his glory is engraven in characters so bright, so distinct, and so illustrious, that none, however dull and illiterate, can plead ignorance as their excuse (I, 51).

Hester engraved the simple standard of punishment with her own "bright" "distinct" characters. In the opening of *The Scarlet Letter*, the appearance of Hester and her A indicates the human desire to create meaning and an unwillingness to allow signs to denote meaning without human additions. Yet as the ending of the novel indicates, the letter, and thus God's definition of Law, prevails. On one level the entire novel plays with sign, type and symbol, but the manipulation and false interpretation of signs based on Puritan tenets which directed their rhetoric similarly motivates the authoring of the novel. While the historical concerns of Hawthorne's tales and his use of typology are analyzed as these relate to his characters and themes, the incorporation

---

8 While it may be argued that the A was a human sign to begin with, Dimmesdale later quite accurately points to Pearl as a neutral and God-sent emblem of the sin. Hester continually "embroiders" Pearl also by dressing her in rich and fantastic clothing until her meaning is obscured.
of Puritan rhetorical attitudes as a force behind Hawthorne's use of language has not been studied. 9

In the first scaffold scene the "boldness and rotundity of speech among these [Puritan] matrons" turns on a discussion of the letter as well as on "marks and brands, whether on the bodice of her gown, or the flesh of her forehead" (51). The arrival of the ministers was another sign for

when such personages could constitute a part of the spectacle, without risking the majesty or reverence of rank and office, it was safely to be inferred that the infliction of a legal sentence would have an earnest and effectual meaning. Accordingly, the crowd was sombre and grave (56 emphasis added).

While the crowd responded to the outward significance of "such personages", the main characters did not. The silence imposed by the arrival of the magistrates becomes an ironic silence, for the procession's "earnest and effectual" meaning is actually lost in the labyrinth of Hester's and Dimmesdale's pride: she does not name him and he does not name himself. Dimmesdale and Hester are further joined in silence by Chillingworth, whose first gesture to Hester is to lay his finger on his lips (61). Silence for the Puritan

---

9 While critics have long recognized the use of ambiguity in Hawthorne's work, much of it has been attributed to the author's historical concerns: see in particular Walter, Winters, Matthiessen, Colacurcio and Millicent Bell. Much has been written on Hawthorne's use of Puritan typology and symbol; most representative are the works of Ursula Brumm, John Irwin and Allan Gardner Lloyd-Smith.
was as dangerous as its opposite, verbosity, and throughout the novel, silence signifies sin. Whereas embroidered words embellished the truth, silence denied it; the balance to be struck lay somewhere between as images lay between moonlight and daylight. There is continual play between the extremes of language and silence, embellishment and plain style. Dimmesdale is isolated from others because he like Hester disguises his "meaning"; but whereas she has quietly embroidered a mark and lives in silence, Dimmesdale embellished his rhetoric and wanders in a labyrinth of language.

In the novel, this gap between silence and language encourages ambiguous meanings and leaves action open to faulty interpretation. The community believed Dimmesdale had the gift of tongue "symbolizing, it would seem, not the power of speech in foreign and unknown languages, but that of addressing the whole human brotherhood in the heart's native language" (142). It "seems" so to the community which in the novel consistently judges with its heart divorced from its head -- the Puritan idea of man's native condition or postlapsarian state. Hawthorne offers words of caution such as seems, apparently, perhaps, it may be that, and suggests alternative solutions; but though he warns that "when an uninstructed multitude attempts to see with its eyes, it is exceedingly apt to be deceived" (127), his reading audience becomes part of the community which judges
with its heart because of the ambiguity of the novel's language. Thus Dimmesdale is initially described as isolated from the others by his look of otherworldliness which gave him a "freshness, and fragrance, and dewy purity of thought, which, as many people said, affected them like the speech of an angel" (66). By the middle of the novel it is not clear to which angel the narrator refers -- Michael the defender of God or Lucifer the manipulator of words; the confusion is never wholly resolved.

The offering of contradictory possibilities in the novel points to the inadequacies of language and interpretation: without all of man's original faculties only a minute portion of an already partial view of truth can be perceived. For the Puritans, when the intellect had insufficient information with which it could direct the will, emotions could surface and sway reason. Hawthorne ironically commented in the novel that

> when, however, it [the community] forms its judgement, on the intuitions of its great and warm heart, as it usually does, the conclusions thus attained are often so profound and so unerring, as to possess the character of truths supernaturally revealed (127).

An excessive reliance on feeling reflects an Emersonian solution to the problem of discerning truth; while "Hawthorne realized that this kind of unlimited, unchecked expansion was perhaps possible in some Golden
Age....humanity was now fallen" (Sutherland, 88). Dimmesdale's speeches are consistently reduced to emotional appeals and his words continually reveal the rhetorical duplicity which Puritans believed language contained. In his first scaffold appeal to Hester, he explained that

"If thou feelest it to be for thy soul's peace, and that thy earthly punishment will thereby be made more effectual to salvation, I charge thee to speak out the name of thy fellow-sinner!...What can thy silence do for him, except tempt him -- yea, compel him, as it were -- to add hypocrisy to sin?" (67 emphasis added)

In a discussion of language in *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne's use of emotional appeals signals the need for cautious interpretation: while the Puritans acknowledged that the words must touch the heart so that the will could adequately desire God's truth, they also warned against too strong an appeal to the emotions. In the novel, the community recognizes that "the feeling that is so evidently manifested, rather than the direct purport of the words, caused it [the message] to vibrate within all hearts, and brought the listeners into one accord of sympathy" (67). Dimmesdale plays to the emotions and the crowd responds to this appeal, not to God's Truth as revealed through the preacher's sermon. Unknowingly, the community vibrates to the truth that language itself is a "pollution and a lie"; they are responding to the emotional content of the pastor's

---

See also Millicent Bell's discussion of Emerson and Hawthorne in "Hawthorne's View of the Artist" (especially 42) which concurs with Sutherland.
words and, as the pastor recognizes, not to the words themselves. By appealing to emotions and using the implications of his language, Dimmesdale sets himself apart from the community by reinforcing an image as demi-god, and he further divorces himself from the fathering of Pearl. While he asks Hester to name him, he doesn't want to be defined as an adulterer; the identification would involve an all too human act for this Puritan divine. Puritan ministers were trained to speak of those things which they "first wrought in their own hearts" and Dimmesdale does overtly speak of sin, aligning himself as a sinner with the rest of the community. But the emptiness of Dimmesdale's words is plainly acknowledged in the description of ministers who

would have vainly sought -- had they ever dreamed of seeking -- to express the highest truths through the humblest medium of familiar words and images. Their voices come down, afar and indistinctly, from the upper heights where they habitually dwelt (142).

Though this passage is comparing other ministers' talents to Dimmesdale's ability to make his community's hearts "vibrate in unison" (142), the irony lodged in the comparison becomes clear:

The minister well knew -- subtle hypocrite that he was! -- the light in which his vague confession would be viewed ... He had spoken the very truth, and transformed it into the veriest falsehood (144).

Dimmesdale's transformation of words pivots on his rhetorical artistry and his torment depends on his silence,
but Hester silently transforms a sign through artistic embellishment and is tormented with words:

Clergymen paused in the street to address words of exhortation, that brought a crowd, with its mingled grin and frown, around the poor, suffering 'woman" (85).

All nature knew of it; it could have caused her no deeper pangs had the leaves of the trees whispered the dark story among themselves, - had the summer breeze murmured about it,- had the wintry blast shrieked it aloud!" (85).

[Children] pursued her at a distance with shrill cries, and the utterance of a word that had no distinct purport to their own minds, but was none the less terrible to her, as proceeding from lips that babbled it unconsciously" (85).

The unconscious babble of children functions as a metaphor for man's ineffectual language; words, no longer Eden-like in their every syllable, cannot be trusted to glorify God's truth. Yet characters move between rhetorical excess and silence indicating the polarity of language throughout the novel. At one point the silence of prayer joins both extremes, and the mutability of meaning emerges as Hester forbore to pray for her enemies; lest, in spite of her forgiving aspirations, the words of the blessing should stubbornly twist themselves into a curse (85).

But despite Hester's and Dimmesdale's verbal polarity, they are connected by their common sins of adultery and pride, and by their interior worlds. They trust, not their Puritan God, but a god of their own making and it is here that words prove most dangerous. Puritan autobiographies were written to be read; thoughts were meant to be reexamined and
measured. Neither Hester nor Dimmesdale pen their consciences but rely instead on their free-flowing thoughts for comfort.\textsuperscript{11} Dimmesdale's ideas manifest themselves in a mixture of Catholic and Quaker physical expiation wherein he prescribes the punishment for the sin. Hester's interior monologue turns her to Antinomianism, and philosophically she follows in Anne Hutchinson's footsteps:

she felt or fancied, then, that the scarlet letter had endowed her with a new sense. She shuddered to believe, yet could not help believing, that it gave her a sympathetic knowledge of the hidden sin in other hearts. She was terror-stricken by the revelations that were thus made (86).

Left to their own thoughts, both Hester and Dimmesdale elevated themselves to the position of judge, using their own verbal and emotion-laden standards. They are joined in this common failure by Chillingworth.

After his gesture of silence to Hester, Chillingworth changed his name. Such an act mirrors the division between meaning and sign and the degeneracy of language which is thus divided. Prynne the humanist-scholar becomes Chillingworth the isolated physician. As Chillingworth's isolation becomes cemented by his divorce from the community he -- like Hester and Dimmesdale -- sets himself up as judge:

He had begun an investigation, as he imagined, with the severe and equal integrity of a judge, desirous only of truth, even as if the question

\textsuperscript{11} Their tendency to rely on their own philosophies aligns them with Emerson.
involved no more than the air-drawn lines and figures of a geometrical problem, instead of human passions, and wrongs inflicted on himself (129).

In the process of using himself as sole referent for thoughts, Chillingworth loses contact with the outside objects which signs signify and sets up his own moral code. The split between Prynne and Chillingworth, concrete sign and abstract meaning, becomes so great that Chillingworth's thoughts no longer mirror God's world - he has become demonic. The postlapsarian split between heart and head leads to man's presumption of authority and is evident in Hester's first words to Chillingworth: "Thy acts are like mercy...But thy words interpret thee a terror" (76). Unlike Dimmesdale, whose words were misinterpreted by a community, Chillingworth's words signified the demonic purpose belied by his actions.

Within the Puritan system, man could not correctly interpret all signs, but that did not mean that man, as a sign of himself, could not reveal his own meaning through words and actions. Dimmesdale maintains,

"There can be, if I forbode aught, no power, short of Divine mercy, to disclose, whether by uttered words, or by type or emblem, the secrets that may be buried within a human heart" (131).

12 Clark outlines the Puritan idea that perceptions could create "fantastic images" which would then not respond to the promptings of a rational mind (282-283).

13 In his study of Puritan sermons Scheik found stressed the idea that "thoughts and deeds are words. Together with words per se they incorporate and reflect the whole man" (112).
This disclosure of Dimmesdale's belief covers all possible signifiers -- word, type or emblem -- from which he hoped to hide. But in the same sentence he has also denied a basic Puritan belief -- that thoughts develop into language and action, based on the desires of the human heart.14

Dimmesdale is confusing God's secret truth with his own ability to veil the truth and Chillingworth is assuming his discovery of a sequence of actions will disclose a final truth. Chillingworth presumes that if a man has

"the power, which must be born with him, to bring his mind into such affinity with his patient's, that this last shall unawares have spoken what he imagines himself only to have thought" (124).

The unconscious babble of the patient over whom Chillingworth assumes control reveals in the "utterance of a word" that Dimmesdale fathered Pearl. However, Chillingworth did not accurately read the sign which is Dimmesdale. Unlike God, Chillingworth was blind to the nature which motivated Dimmesdale's act; though the human sign was there to be read, the interpretation was faulty. The effort to unravel signs has given Chillingworth a terrible knowledge, but his demonic character is formed as a result of his incomplete interpretation of meaning: he has appropriated only a part of the whole truth and the

14 See Clarke's article which explores the Puritan concept of the transference of desire into will and action.
assumption of godhood causes his downfall as it had caused
Lucifer's. Calvin warned that

original sin was a corruption spread throughout our consciousness and affections in such a manner that correct intelligence and reason is perverted in us, and we are like poor blind people in the dark. The will is also subjugated to every sinister desire, full of rebellion, and addicted to evil. In short,... we do not have a single drop of ability to do good, and all our powers are defective (as translated in Riccardi, 35)

While the human community may not interpret a man's signs accurately, that does not mean the sign is not there to be read with God's help. Pearl is the physical sign of sin which Hester seeks to embroider and which Dimmesdale seeks to ignore by silence. The narrator describes her as a sign capable of various human interpretations: "Her nature appeared to possess depth, too, as well as variety; but - or else Hester's fears deceived her - it lacked reference and adaptation to the world into which she was born" (90). Denied reference by the magistrates' isolation of her mother, Pearl is a fragmented product of the headstrong Dimmesdale and the heart-silent Hester. Pearl is thus removed from the human community and is contrasted with it in terms which identify a human community -- in terms of language usage. Hawthorne notes that as a child Pearl learned to speak unusually early, being first drawn to her sister symbol, the scarlet letter. Later,

if spoken to [by children] she would not speak again. If children gathered about her, as they sometimes did, Pearl would grow positively terrible in her puny wrath, snatching up stones to
fling at them, with shrill incoherent exclamations that made her mother tremble, because they had so much the sound of witch's anathemas in some unknown tongue (94).

pearl's communication is enigmatic because as a symbol her definition is subject to interpretive changes; she lacks a fixed point of reference: "as to any other kind of discipline, whether addressed to her mind or heart, little pearl might or might not be within its reach, in accordance with the caprice that rules the moment" (92).

The fragmented Pearl fluctuates between appeals to the mind or heart refusing to accommodate herself to her mother's interpretation, signifying the error of her parents' fragmentation as well as their inability to accept the sign of their sin. "The child could not be made amenable to rules" (90) because the definitions imposed by others attempted to constrict the meaning of Pearl. Her mother felt like one who has evoked a spirit, but, by some irregularity in the process of conjuration, has failed to win the master-word that should control this new and incomprehensible intelligence (93).

While in human terms Hester merely wishes to control her child within the boundaries of the theocracy, she also wished to impose a human definition upon a God-given sign. Ursula Brumm defined the Puritan use of emblem -- a term Hawthorne applied to Pearl -- as a "meaningful image or sign, the phenomenon that contains a message from God. It is a message or a meaning that is always fixed and precise, even though it may not always be clearly recognized" (126).
Hester had indeed "evoked a spirit... by some irregularity" and responded to this "irregularity" by decorating and changing it instead of by accepting it. Because the sign, pearl, is interpreted throughout the novel as "elfish", "witchlike", "little imp", and "a child of the Lord of Misrule", she becomes everything but a natural child. Of all the characters who describe Pearl, Mr. Wilson comes closest to the Puritan stance when he responds to Chillingworth's proposition to guess who Pearl's father is by analyzing the child's nature:

"nay; it would be sinful, in such a question, to follow the clew of profane philosophy....Better to fast and pray upon it; and still better, it may be, to leave the mystery as we find it, unless Providence reveal it of its own accord" (116).

As a sign Pearl is ambiguous, invoking both positive and negative meanings. She is "inhuman" because she lacks the definition a human child needs -- a father -- but more so because she lacks the balance between head and heart, extremes of which Dimmesdale and Hester represent. When she momentarily finds that balance during the second scaffold scene, Pearl's language is pertinent, but her role as a symbol of verbal turmoil becomes magnified by the events surrounding the entire chapter.

Hawthorne sets "The Minister's Vigil" during a dark night where deprived of sight, Dimmesdale is described through aural/oral pictures. His shriek in the darkness "was beaten back from one house to another; as if a company
of devils, detecting so much misery and terror in it, had made a plaything of the sound, and were bandying it to and fro" (148). The disparity between sound and sense as outlined in Puritan theology is demonstrated as Dimmesdale's words are stripped bare, and revealed as mere echoes which rebound back to their originator. Lacking verbal force, his shriek "had perhaps sounded with a far greater power, to his own startled ears, than it actually possessed" (148).

Dimmesdale, continuing to serve as representative for man's verbal condition, believes he speaks to Mr. Wilson, but his words "were uttered only within his imagination" (151). Left without the power of language, Dimmesdale is forced to recognize God's signs in the shape of a fiery A; but he has strayed so far from reason that he can only "behold the wonder through the colored, magnifying, and distorting medium of his imagination... [and shape] it more distinctly in his after-thought" (155). Calvin not only warned of such misinterpretation in his Institutes, but used an example repeated in Dimmesdale's midnight vigil:

But the discerning of that which they saw hardly led them to the smallest consideration of the truth much less the attainment of it. They are like the traveler in the middle of a field at night. A flash of lightning enables him to see far and wide for a moment. But the visibility vanishes so quickly that he is swallowed up in the darkness of night before he can take a step much less be led on his way by such assistance (II, 18).

Continuing Calvin's imagery, the narrator in The
scarlet Letter notes that Dimmesdale not only sees the lightning flash of an A in the sky, but discovers a revelation addressed to himself alone, on the same vast sheet of record! In such a case, it could only be the symptom of a highly disordered mental state, when a man, rendered morbidly self-contemplative by long, intense secret pain, had extended his egotism over the whole expanse of nature, until the firmament itself should appear no more than a fitting judge for his soul's history and fate (155).

Dimmesdale's destructive self-absorption simultaneously recreates the state of original sin - the "disordered mental state"- and parodies Emerson's concept of the self emerging into the soul. Hawthorne exposes Dimmesdale's notion that God's signs can be interpreted and articulated by man. At the height of this egotistical act of interpretation, the human chain of Hester, Pearl and Dimmesdale is broken. Heart and head are again fragmented and the formerly verbal Pearl can only mumble "something into [Dimmesdale's] ear, that sounded, indeed, like human language, but was only such gibberish" (156). Pearl mirrors the state of language divorced from its original referents -- the postlapsarian state of man's verbal system. In his American notebooks Hawthorne called this "separation of the intellect from the heart" man's "unpardonable sin" (VIII 251).

The polarization of his faculties continues to be the source of Dimmesdale's inability to reconcile his outward rhetoric with his internal knowledge. As Chillingworth helps Dimmesdale off the scaffold he rightly cries: "'Aha!
see now, how they trouble the brain, -- these books! -- these books!" (157). While it should serve as a warning against too much rationalization, it does not, for the next day the minister returned to the comfort of his rhetoric and preached a discourse which was held to be the richest and most powerful, and the most replete with heavenly influences, that had ever proceeded from his lips. Souls, it is said, more souls than one, were brought to the truth by the efficacy of that sermon" (157).

The use of the word efficacy, or ability to produce an effect, signals Dimmesdale's talent for manipulating emotions with words rather than his ability to reveal truth. Dimmesdale continues his rhetorical parrying by denying the previous night's vigil even to himself: "so confused was his remembrance, that he had almost brought himself to look at the events of the past night as visionary" (158). He willingly accepts the sexton's story that the A represented the governor's death, asserting that "'I had not heard of it'" (158). These few sentences demonstrate not only the ambiguity of signs but also Dimmesdale's preference for hiding behind words.

At this time, when the A is revealed to Dimmesdale, Hester's A becomes reinterpreted by the community. Though the magistrates took longer to forgive her because of their "iron framework of reasoning," the townspeople, "interpreting Hester Prynne's deportment as an appeal...show[ed] its former victim a more benign countenance than she cared to be favored with, or perchance,
than she deserved" (162, emphasis added). In "Another View of Hester" the community changes the A to mean "able", but this change of meaning is immediately contradicted by another exploration of Hester's new and radical ideas.

Unlike Dimmesdale, for whom words rule with emotion, Hester's life "turned, in a great measure, from passion and feeling, to thought" (164). Veering dangerously from Puritan tenets, Hester believed that thought was enough "without investing itself in the flesh and blood of action" (164).15 Hawthorne's description of Hester's state of mind includes references to Puritan Biblical imagery: "fragments of a broken chain" "the sword [which had] overthrown nobles and kings" (164) and the person who "wandered without a clew in the dark labyrinth of the mind, now turned aside by an insurmountable precipice; now starting back from a deep chasm" (166). In an exchange of traditional gender roles -- Dimmesdale all emotion, Hester all thought -- the referential abilities of both characters are perverted. Dimmesdale cannot act for he has lost the ability to use thought as a guide; it is Hester who offers a rational plan to Dimmesdale.

In the pivotal scenes which surround the forest meeting between Hester and Dimmesdale, Hawthorne's references to

---

15 This again seems to be ridiculing Emerson's habit of being long on ideas and short on action; Hawthorne might well still remember Emerson's role, or lack of it, in Brook Farm.
words, signs and language multiply. Hester wishes to "'speak a word'" with Chillingworth, "'a word that concerns us much'". "'Aha!'" [he replies] And is it Mistress Prynne who has a word for old Roger Chillingworth?" (168). The discussion between the two begins with Chillingworth's news that people are considering the removal of the scarlet letter. "Were I to be quit of it, [replies Hester] it would fall away of its own nature, or be transformed into something that would speak a different purport" (169). The discussion of sign and referent extends to the changes on Chillingworth's face as read by Hester and the similar change in Dimmesdale, but the conversation continually returns to Hester's A until finally:

"I have left thee to the scarlet letter," replied Roger Chillingworth. "If that have not avenged me, I can do no more!"
He laid his finger on it with a smile.
"It has avenged thee!" answered Hester (73).

But it is clear that the letter has worked both for and against Chillingworth. Hester is told "'Ye that have wronged me are not sinful, save in a kind of typical illusion, neither am I fiend-like, who have snatched a fiend's office from his hands'" (174). Grasping the role of judge, Chillingworth asserts the final Puritan heresy by claiming sin an illusion and by denying his own course. 
"'It is our fate,'" he claims. "'Let the black flower blossom as it may,'" he asserts alluding to predestination, but claiming at the same time to know what destiny is meant
for each of them (174). Chillingworth has taken the interpretation of men's fate upon himself.

As references to interpretation are compounded in the chapters leading up to "A Pastor and His Parishioner", it is also clear that the "letter has not done its office" for Hester either. When Pearl appears with a long, green A of seaweed upon her, Hester refuses to see Pearl's A as different from her own; she interprets her child's curiosity as a sign of God's retribution just as Dimmesdale interpreted the A in the night sky as a personal sign from God to him. As Dimmesdale followed the "revelation" with a direct lie to the sexton, so too does Hester finally deny the purpose of the A to Pearl claiming that she wears it "for the sake of its gold thread" (181). By verbally denying the meaning of the letter to Pearl, Hester has prepared herself for casting off the scarlet letter in the forest scene. Once the characters move to the forest, the verbal references increase. In his study of The Scarlet Letter, Dolis points out that this is the most vocal of all chapters (377). Yet contrarily, silence is also emphasized for Hester Prynne is unable to "gather voice enough to attract [Dimmesdale's] attention" (189). When they do verbally recognize each other by name, silence follows: "without a word more spoken, -- neither he nor she assuming the guidance, but with unexpressed consent, --they glided back into the shadow of the woods" (190).
The elements of head and heart are joined in mutual consent but they are also bound by guilty silence and later, verbalized, faulty logic. Taking the lead, Hester tries to convince Dimmesdale that as a minister his preaching has redeemed him: "'Is there no reality [she asks] in the penitence thus sealed and witnessed by good works?'" (191). Emotionally, Dimmesdale denies his "efficacy", agonizing over his "'flock hungering for the truth, and listening to my words as if a tongue of Pentecost were speaking!'" (191). While Hester appeals to reason, Dimmesdale continues to speak to the heart, and the forest chapter, besides being the most vocal is also the most emotionally punctuated. The rational nature of Hester's speeches is sharply contrasted by Dimmesdale's exclamatory remarks. The only time Hester's emotional words match Dimmesdale's is when she asks his forgiveness: "'In all things else, I have striven to be true! Truth was the one virtue which I might have held fast, and did hold fast through all extremity; save when thy good, -- thy life, -- thy fame, -- were put into question'" (193). In this emotional plea, Hester admits to having altered her truth in favor of Dimmesdale. But while she verbally recognizes "'a lie is never good, even though death threaten the other side!'" (193), she continues to deny the letter and its office. Dimmesdale joins her.

Telling Hester to "hush" and concerning himself with the effect his knowledge will have on Chillingworth's
actions towards him, the pastor asks Hester to continue reinterpreting the new events for him: "'The judgement of God is upon me... It is too mighty for me to struggle with,'" says Dimmesdale as he submits to Hester's erroneous logic. Hester's solution is denial: "'Exchange this false life of thine for a true one,'" she begins, but then she advises him to "'be a scholar and a sage among the wisest,'" and finally "'give up this name of Arthur Dimmesdale, and make thyself another one, and a high one'" (198). She is urging Dimmesdale to redefine his life and ironically repeating Chillingworth's pattern of secrecy and false identity. Dimmesdale cannot do this alone, for as representative of the emotions, he lacks the impetus which, within the Puritan system, intelligence gives to the will. Hester responds, "'Thou shalt not go alone!'" and Hawthorne adds, "Then all was spoken!" (198). But it was not spoken, and the agreement to sin, like the adultery itself, continues in secret.

Innuendoes and implications couched in silence signify, as did Chillingworth's first gesture of silence, a denial of the truth. The narrator implies that Hester and Dimmesdale knew Pearl "had been offered to the world, these seven years past, as the living hieroglyphic, in which was revealed the secret they so darkly sought to hide, - all written in this symbol" (206-7). Yet they recognize Pearl's significance by denying her identity publically or by dressing her
mysteriously, and privately they ignore her as they make plans for their escape. Thus Pearl’s response is a rejection of both Hester and Dimmesdale for she cannot validate their new-found identity. As Hester and Dimmesdale sit together, “she then, remained apart, silently watching Hester and the clergyman; while they talked together, and made such arrangements as were suggested by their new position” (213). This “new position” imposed new characteristics on them all, and Pearl becomes silent and detached from those who give her identity; their definitions are based on false premises. Hester, on the other hand, becomes active and verbal after years of silence, and Dimmesdale, master of erudition, becomes a silent “Minister in a Maze”.

The minister proceeds into the town "amazed" and "in a maze". The play on words in the title signifies the importance of words in the chapter as well as the importance of language in the novel. That Dimmesdale is in a maze is clear for as he wandered into town his "mind vibrated between two ideas; either that he had seen [his church] only in a dream hitherto, or that he was merely dreaming about it now" (217). Physical objects are invested with new meaning -- Dimmesdale's meaning -- and thus he is amazed at his clarity of mind. The irony is that the minister has never been more morally muddled. Dimmesdale's fabrications demonstrate Calvin's warnings that "the brightness of the
Divine countenance... is a kind of labyrinth, - a labyrinth to us inextricable, if the Word do not serve us as a thread to guide our path" (I 67).

Dimmesdale is so a-mazed that he is tempted to destroy the Word with his own words. Five temptations present themselves to him and each is connected by Dimmesdale's need to undermine God's directives with his own via language. It is within the maze of logic that the minister searches to shake the faith of one of the elders of the church he meets on the road to town:

during a conversation of some two or three moments between the Reverend Mr. Dimmesdale and this excellent and hoary-bearded deacon, it was only by the most careful self-control that the former could refrain from uttering certain blasphemous suggestions that rose into his mind, respecting the communion supper. He trembled... lest his tongue should wag itself... he could hardly avoid laughing, to imagine how the sanctified old patriarchal deacon would have been petrified by his minister's impiety! (218).

Reduced to the image of a beast wagging its tongue, Dimmesdale has lost the capacity for using reason and the resultant words correctly. He next meets an old widow who constantly sought comfort from her young pastor's words on the gospels. This time, however, when Dimmesdale whispers in her ear, he

could recall no text of Scripture, nor aught else, except a brief, and pithy, and as it appeared to him, unanswerable argument against the immortality of the soul [which] would have caused this aged sister to drop down dead at once" (219).
Upon meeting a young woman obviously enamored of him, Dimmesdale believes he has a power over language which enables him to "blight all the field of innocence [in her] with but one wicked look, and develop all its opposite with but a word" (220). Hawthorne writes that Dimmesdale escapes this temptation by holding "his Geneva cloak before his face" (220), a pointed reference to the outward strains of Calvinism that are still protecting him. He further struggles with the temptation to teach obscenities to a group of children and longs to

"shake hands with the tarry blackguard [the crew from a Spanish Main] and recreate himself with a few improper jests, such as dissolute sailors abound with, and a volley of good, round, solid, satisfactory, and heaven-defying oaths!"(220).

The double play on recreating, meaning "to have fun", and re-creating, as in establishing another identity, seems purposeful especially when placed alongside the "tarry blackguard" (the devil) and the Spanish Main (the Catholic Church), two damnable and equivalent terms in Puritan theology. It is Dimmesdale's "habit of clerical decorum" which saves him from joining the rabble, not his exercised right will.

Dimmesdale finally meets with Mistress Hibbens, the acclaimed town witch, who taunts him with having gone to the forest to meet the devil without her. She promises Dimmesdale that "'without taking overmuch upon myself, my good word will go far towards gaining'" whatever he desires
Dimmesdale replies, "'I profess, on my conscience and character, that I am utterly bewildered as touching the purport of your words!'" (221). That Hibbens would have a "good" word is an ironic mimicking of the good Word, and that Dimmesdale has any conscience or character left is similarly questionable. Just as Hester lied to Pearl about the meaning of her scarlet letter, now Dimmesdale denies knowledge of the meaning of Hibbens' words. He is busily redefining his own image and ignores Calvin's warning that

as long as men are allowed to live according to their own inclination, they can do nothing but wander from the truth, hesitating and then dashing against all their purposes and actions...These same fictitious adorations [of man made truth] come forth from an abyss of naivety and a labyrinth of ignorance (Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians as translated by Riccardi, 90).

For the Puritans, once words entered the maze, meaning became masked or silenced as it deviated from its true source. Chillingworth and Dimmesdale are both prey to a damming silence; now that they know each other's identity, it would appear natural that a part of it should be expressed. It is singular, however, how long a time often passes before words embody things; and with what security two persons, who choose to avoid a certain subject, may approach its very verge, and retire without disturbing it (224).

This logic represents the labyrinthian thought processes to which man is subject. Unless something is named, it does not exist; sin done in secret is sin not committed. The Puritan reasoned that man was given the gift of speech so as
not to live in silence and therefore be in danger of creating a personal referential system.

The silencing of his nagging conscience enhances Dimmesdale's earthly senses and he eats with a "ravenous appetite" before turning to his writing. With his new sense of personal fullness, he flings

the already written pages of the Election Sermon into the fire, [and] he forthwith began another, which he wrote with such an impulsive flow of thought and emotion, that he fancied himself inspired; and only wondered that Heaven should see fit to transmit the grand and solemn music of its oracles through so foul an organ-pipe as he (225 emphasis added).

Without recognizing the erroneous logic lodged in that paradox, Dimmesdale writes all night and meets the morning with "bedazzled eyes. There he was, with the pen still between his fingers, and a vast, immeasurable tract of written space behind him!" (225). A Puritan minister never created a sermon out of himself because his words must depend on the Bible and its commentaries, and because he was trained not to trust his own isolated logic. In his *Compleat Body of Divinity* Willard warned ministers that they must

know for certain, that when your Understanding hath fluttered as high as the wings of Reason can carry it, you will find such riddles in the Deity as you will never be able to unfold...Where we cannot resolve, let us contemplate; and what we cannot comprehend, let us wonder at: where our reason is non-plust, let it be our work to gaze ourselves into astonishment. And here is Eternal Admiration. The glorious Angels cover their faces, and spend Eternity in crying Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of Hosts! And let us, in imitation,
sit down, and cry with the Apostle, "Oh the Depth!" (43).

Dimmesdale is amazed not at God's but at his own depth. His words have taken written precedence over the Bible. As he carries his pride into the church on Election Day, Dimmesdale is also bearing his word to the community.

In the last scenes before Dimmesdale's death all characters resume their original relationships with signs. While Dimmesdale triumphs through his speech Hester reaches the depths of her ignominy:

At the final hour, when she was so soon to fling aside the burning letter, it had strangely become the centre of more remark and excitement, and was thus made to sear her breast more painfully, than at any time since the first day she put it on (246).

Hester is held "statue-like, at the foot of the scaffold", by the minister's voice (243). Pearl flits about, enigmatic as ever while Chillingworth slinks through the crowd in silence. Dimmesdale is described as the emotional rhetorician whose voice "like all other music,...breathed passion, and pathos, and emotion high or tender, in a tongue native to the human heart" (243). His words are not so much understood on the literal level: "these, perhaps, if more distinctly heard, might have been only a grosser medium, and

16 Hawthorne describes Dimmesdale's energy as the possible "exhilaration of that potent cordial, which is distilled only in the furnace-glow of earnest and long-continued thought" (239). The allusion to hell and use of the liquor metaphor underscores the link between hell and those whose only referent is the self.
have clogged the spiritual sense" (243). The end of Dimmesdale's sermonic "shriek...of suffering humanity" (243) causes

a momentary silence; profound as what should follow the utterance of oracles. Then ensued a murmur and half-hushed tumult; as if the auditors, released from the high spell that had transported them into the region of another's mind, were returning into themselves, with all the awe and wonder still heavy on them (248).

References equating Dimmesdale's words to divine revelation abound in this section. Yet the minister's jeremiad "unlike the Jewish seers [who] had denounced judgments and ruin on their country," is thought to "foretell a high and glorious destiny for the newly gathered people of the Law" (249). While this is noble and impressive on an emotional level, by the proposed time of the novel as well as by the nineteenth century, such a blatant prophecy would have been undermined by the knowledge that New England was not the New Jerusalem. Hawthorne emphasizes this by juxtaposing the prophetic effect of Dimmesdale's sermon with a description of the crowd's rapture [breaking] into speech. The street and the market-place absolutely babbled, from side to side...His hearers could not rest until they had told one another of what each knew better than he could tell or hear (248).

The Tower of Babel image underscores the erroneous nature of the sermon; rather than clarifying the Word, Dimmesdale has caused confusion about his words. The crowd wishes to reinterpret what "each knew better than he could hear or
tell". This portrayal of man's inability to correctly perceive and communicate, sets the stage for Dimmesdale's "confession".

In the midst of babble and misinterpretation Dimmesdale attempts to reestablish a sign which denotes truth but as Foster points out in his study of the novel, Dimmesdale never confesses "any specific act which might interfere with his role as signifier of the divine" (150). Dimmesdale has done everything to promote his godly image so "that he has lost the credibility needed to reveal his own sinfulness" (Irwin 253). Even

the men of rank and dignity, who stood more immediately around the clergyman, were so taken by surprise, and so perplexed as to the purport of what they saw, - unable to receive the explanation which most readily presented itself, or to imagine any other, - that they remained silent and inactive spectators of the judgment which Providence seemed about to work (253 emphasis added).

While the authorities of the community are finally silent enough to let God's signs manifest themselves, they have been so misled by words that they are ready to disavow what their senses perceive. Dimmesdale apparently wants to let the letter "speak" on its own, but he has so prepared the crowd with his rhetoric that they are led to misinterpret the sign. Foster points out that "in the last part of his confession, Dimmesdale shifts to the third person, further divorcing sin from the particularity of the human act" (151). While Dimmesdale recognizes the A as a
sign of sin, he does not recognize the sin itself - he is still playing referential word games.\textsuperscript{17}

At Dimmesdale's "revelation" the crowd breaks into a strange, deep voice of awe and wonder, which could not as yet find utterance, save in this murmur that rolled so heavily after the departed spirit" (257). It is of course unclear as to whether this signifies a speechless accession to God's sign or whether the emotive nature of the crowd blinds it to the implications of Dimmesdale's sign, but the narrator does point out that "After many days, when time sufficed for people to \textit{arrange} their thoughts in reference to the foregoing scene, there was more than one account of what had been witnessed on the scaffold" (emphasis added 258).

The duplicitous judgement of the novel's characters is brought to bear on the readers as they are told they may choose among these theories. We have thrown all the light we could acquire upon the portent and would gladly, now that it has done its office, erase its deep print out of our brain, where long meditation has fixed it in undesirable distinctness (259).

Thus the readers also join in the desire to interpret and "arrange their thoughts" to suit events in the novel.

Switching to a narrative voice that establishes a "we"

\textsuperscript{17} Foster believes that Dimmesdale's "deception is in his pretending he could at any point confess the truth of his transgression, and thereby reestablish the unity of the signifier with the signified, without abandoning the desire for private authority" (147).
(authority) and "you" (reader-learner), Hawthorne places the burden of interpretation upon the perceiver and alleviates the author-sermonizer of the same responsibility. The moral is accentuated: "Be true! Be true! Be true! Show freely to the world, if not your worst, yet some trait whereby the worst may be inferred" (260 emphasis added). But one must question who is to do the "inferring", and on what basis will conclusions be drawn? Is this the same narrator who, while looking for a sympathetic reader, vowed nevertheless to keep the "inmost Me behind the Veil"? The resolution of such contradictions is not as important as the contrary nature of each. They represent the Puritan paradox: for man, perceptions must be expressed with signs, yet because of the innate depravity of the mind these signs cannot reveal all.

Near the end of his tale, Hawthorne shifts from authorial comments back to the novel, and reference to the function of signs in the two texts, the "autobiographic" and "fictional", become interwoven. It is learned that Chillingworth, the extreme of erroneous logic, dies once deprived of his rhetorical playmate. After being given the wholeness of mother, father, head and heart, Pearl can apparently live a fully human life. But this information comes "as a vague report would now and then find its way across the sea, -- like a shapeless piece of driftwood tost ashore, with the initials of a name upon it" (261). Given
all the human significance with which a sign can be
invested, Pearl still remains an unknown. Associated with
sign and letter, she continues to serve as a metaphor
signifying the limits of man's language. Hester's own
obsession with wearing her sign -- the one which both
identified her and with which she identified -- parallels
this verbal incompleteness. Hester at once attempts to
expiate her sin while continuing to redefine rules which
govern her. Instead of submitting to the Word, she
rationalizes that the time for a new order has not yet come
-- she was not to be the prophetess who would redefine
society. What she fails to see is that her hope for a human
prophetess in the future is as futile as the prophecy of a
New Jerusalem led by the Puritans and pronounced by
Dimmesdale in his Election Day sermon.

On the novel's final page, the sign takes its form in
the ancient device which names the double grave and
signifies a bygone day and the forgotten language of
heraldry. Since the heraldic sign itself could no longer
be trusted to signify meaning, the final words of the novel
are as necessary as language was to man after the initial
separation from God in Eden. No longer able to signify
truth, words must serve as indicators which point to a
truth: "ON A FIELD, SABLE, THE LETTER A, GULES" (264).

See Greenwood for an artistic rendering and
explanation of the device.
Lloyd-Smith notes that these words indicate a "mistrust of speech at the heart of the book and a victory for the written in its conclusion" (21). But the written message is cryptic; it is not grammatically organized. Hawthorne only leaves the reader a series of symbols to interpret. Whether the author has embellished the facts leading up to these signs, whether there ever was a scarlet letter, whether the moral blossom is couched in fiction or fact matters not as much as the apprehension of "a moral as terrific and stunning as a thunder bolt...the Law cannot be broken."

Hawthorne's work stresses that the ambiguity inherent in man's language can be used to adorn any intellectual concept capable of being created. But that same ambiguity can force a reader/author to peer beneath the surface of the page and discover that words, in a very real Puritan sense, are a product of the fragmented, postlapsarian mind. To forget that God's law takes precedence over man's embellishments is to forget that the letter is scarlet and darkens every sign that language touches; it is that need to create a world with language which has caused and continues to prevent man from penetrating the Veil. The implications of this Puritan vision of language for an author are fully explored in Hawthorne's *Blithedale Romance*. 
CHAPTER 5

THE PRESENT RECREATED -- THE BLITHEDALE ROMANCE

The Blithedale Romance has long held position as an historical novel because of its depiction of nineteenth century idealism in the form of a Brook Farm experiment. Historical critics further acknowledge the renewal of the Eden/Fall pattern in the novel and agree that Hawthorne's "chief subject [is]...the way the past invisibly invests itself in the present, and the way the present alternately struggles against the past's weight and seeks to renew its embrace" (Brodhead 8). Moreover, critical attention has been drawn to the connection between Brook Farm/Blithedale's purpose and the Puritan errand: Lloyd-Smith notes that the underlying premise of both experiments was "to build a city on a hill which would, by example alone, show the true way in religion to the world" (92); and Kelly Griffith Jr. elaborates the similarities between The Blithedale Romance and Pilgrim's Progress pointing to the "dream allegory

1 A.N. Kaul also notes that for Hawthorne, "the seventeenth century was decisive in fostering the essential American attitudes, character types, and ideals; and his fiction focused on the recurring type in historically altered situations rather than on any basic alteration in society itself" (142).
nature of the nineteenth century novel" (24-25). Agnes Donohue's *Hawthorne: Calvin's Ironic Stepchild* takes this connection one step further by examining Hawthorne's connection with Calvinist thought, and corroborates the observation of *The Blithedale Romance*'s narrator that

> our Sundays, at Blithedale, were not ordinarily kept with such rigid observance as might have befitted the descendants of the Pilgrims, whose high enterprise, as we sometimes flattered ourselves, we had taken up, and were carrying it onward and aloft, to a point which they never dreamed of attaining (117).²

These historical perspectives provide adequate evidence for the novel's grounding in Puritanism, but while acknowledging the historical, other critics have preferred to focus their attention on the "author" of *The Blithedale Romance*, Miles Coverdale, as an exemplary unreliable narrator.³ Recent narratologists, however, have begun to question whether
to label Coverdale an unreliable narrator... is to diminish Hawthorne's engagement with the central issue of his fiction in *The Blithedale Romance* and to ignore Coverdale's own self-parodic presentation of his motives, his vision, and his imaginative reconstruction of his experience (Carton 229).

² All references to *The Blithedale Romance* will be from the Centenary Edition, Volume III.

³ F. O. Matthiessen, James Justus, Nina Baym and Louis Auchincloss early on contributed to the examination of Coverdale's narrative masks. For more recent explorations of Coverdale's reliability see the work of Brodhead, Donohue and Hume.
and analyzes American writers within the context of nineteenth century German philosophy. Emerson, seeking to expand his theory of language by incorporating Eastern and Germanic philosophies, felt there were moments when Truth could be perceived because "parts of speech are metaphors ... the whole of nature is a metaphor of the human mind" (Emerson 21). The emphasis here is on the human spirit and its ability to perceive nature yet the roots of such a philosophy can be discovered in Puritan typology; Carton recognizes that the nineteenth century philosophical setting "reinforced the influence of an indigenous Puritan sensibility" (2).

But whether the central issue in a critical study of Blithedale is historicism, narratology or a blending of both, each view pivots on an author's manipulation of words to create an illusive reality which is then passed on as "truth". Hawthorne, though a reader of Schlegel's Lectures on the History of Literature, moves not towards Emerson's metaphors of the mind, but from focusing on the general interpretation of outward signs and the influence of misinterpretation on self and community in The Scarlet Letter, to self-creation through reinterpretation in The Blithedale Romance. Both authors in the latter novel receive the attention in this story within a story: Coverdale as imaginative author of the tale, and Hawthorne as imaginative creator of Coverdale. In Blithedale, self-
conscious narration points to words as words, to language as a creative function; reflecting the rhetorical concerns of the nineteenth century, Hawthorne explores language but centers on the moral implications of self-designing godhood on the artistic as well as the personal level. Charles swann noted that the concept of god as author is emphasized when Hawthorne steps out of the novel and allows Coverdale to tell the story (239). This reference to the narrator as god points to the recurring problem of imaginative creation in the novel which

most critics recognize. The story that Hawthorne repeatedly tells primarily concerns the relation of imagination to experience. Hawthorne struggles endlessly to define the nature of the imagination and to determine its function in relation to consciousness, the emotions, and the objective world (Rowe 54).

Carton agrees that

the central entanglement of The Blithedale Romance is that of imagination and actuality. This knot is the heart of the book; to unravel it completely, one would have to sever Coverdale the participant from Coverdale the spectator, Coverdale the character from Coverdale the narrator (239).

Coverdale is not any one of these, but both narrator and character, creator and created; he is not merely designing a story but complexly representing the lives of others as a truth-in-fiction and re-presenting himself in the process. Coverdale presumes motives, committing the Unpardonable Sin not only through a voyeuristic probing of the hearts, but by

4 Swann does not clarify whose godhood is thus stressed: Coverdale's or Hawthorne's.
knowingly charging the narrative with imaginative motives and thereby influencing the reader's perceptions of his-story.

Voices in *The Blithedale Romance*, therefore, are not just Coverdale's or Hawthorne's; as in the ending of *The Scarlet Letter*, author, narrator and reader are woven into the creative narrative process. The narrative emphasis in *The Blithedale Romance* stresses the necessity of choice by each participant in the novel; characters as well as readers must choose whether the identifying roles remain separate or whether barriers between perceived roles break down as language appropriates and creates identities.

Hawthorne makes it quite clear that each of these stories [represented by various characters in *The Blithedale Romance*] relies on a certain conception of human understanding intimately related to the problems of writing and imaginative representation at the center of the work. *The Scarlet Letter*, *The House of the Seven Gables*, and *The Blithedale Romance* are all expressly metaliterary works, each of which employs its dramatic action to comment on how and why one writes. Yet, more than the others, *Blithedale* subordinates the substance of what is told to problems inherent in the method of telling (Rowe 58).

The authors of the story (Coverdale's story and Hawthorne's story, two yet one) force the reader to create a world as the author's have created one -- to "author" a world view with ambiguous information and innuendoes. In this way, from a Puritan standpoint, the reader receives only the fragmented kind of knowledge available to our depraved senses. Stressing the unreliability of human truth, Hawthorne has Coverdale continually question the
veracity of the narrative while ostensibly presenting the truth, undermining any opinion the readers/authors may have designed. In this way the author calls attention to his fiction, to his art, and to his language, and thereby to the reader's assessment of each. This enforced self-consciousness mimics the seventeenth century author and calls for a blending of historical criticism outlining Puritan elements in *The Blithedale Romance* with the metaliterary. This chapter seeks to combine these two views and point to the verbal system which guided Hawthorne's choice of Coverdale as an unreliable/reliable narrator; it will thereby explore the continual ambiguity inherent in this approach which warns, in Puritan fashion, against the trap of language usage.

In his edition of selected Massachusetts election sermons, Plumstead pointed out that in the best errand sermons, the preacher transcends his role as a teacher of the law and becomes an actor. He has many roles to play. He may create different parts and speak them, as do Danforth in 1670 and Prince in 1730. He is a teller of tales, of great moments and epic quests in the history of his nation. He is to do for New England what Shakespeare did for his audience -- bring the dead pages of history alive, with their shame and their glory, into significance and meaning. He will tell of heroes, Biblical as well as American, and he must recapture for his audience the idealism of the original errand to America -- its innocence, its momentousness. The story must be told simply, but with passion, longing and pathos. He must don the mask (35).

5 See Joan Weber's study of the seventeenth century mind for a thorough explanation of this self-conscious mentality in other literary figures of the century.
Hawthorne, Coverdale, and the Puritan minister are all described in this correlation between Biblical allusions and fictional "stories"; they stand between the role of the puritan minister and the role of Shakespeare, between the heroes of the Bible and the heroes of the American past. Plumstead recaptures the tone of the Blithedalers, their "idealism...passion, longing and pathos" as well as the tone of Coverdale's narration. What better way for Hawthorne to infuse the present with the past, yet warn against the use of language than by creating his jeremiad/novel, The Blithedale Romance?

****

In the 'BLITHEDALE' of this volume, many readers will probably suspect a faint and not very faithful shadowing of BROOK FARM....The Author does not wish to deny, that he had this community in his mind, and he has occasionally availed himself of his actual reminiscences, in the hope of giving a more lifelike tint to the fancy-sketch in the following pages (Hawthorne in his Preface to The Blithedale Romance 1).

Now-a-days, in the management of his 'subject,' 'clairvoyant,'or 'medium,' the exhibitor affects the simplicity and openness of scientific experiment; and even if he profess to tread a step or two across the boundaries of the spiritual world, yet carries with him the laws of our actual life, and extends them over his preternatural conquests.... In the case of the Veiled Lady, moreover, the interest of the spectator was further wrought up by the enigma of her identity (Coverdale, Chapter 1, 5-6).

As in The Scarlet Letter, correspondences between the preface of The Blithedale Romance and the novel are evident
from Hawthorne's first sentences. Hawthorne, the author, uses words like "shadow," "reminiscences," "Sibylline," and, of course, "veiled" in his preface; these are immediately repeated by Coverdale, the "author" of the first chapter of *The Blithedale Romance*. While these parallels alone are not sufficient to connect the two, the above quoted passages set the tone for both the outer, Hawthorne-initiated novel and the inner, Coverdale-initiated work. Again, calling for a stance between fiction and reality, Hawthorne seeks that space illuminated by moonlight and firelight as discussed in *The Scarlet Letter*. The preface warns the reader not to look at the novel as an exact reflection of the Brook Farm experiment for the "Author has ventured to make free, with his old, and affectionately remembered home...as being...essentially a day-dream, and yet a fact -- and thus offering an available foothold between fiction and reality" (2). The reader is therefore warned not to consider the novel "true" but to acknowledge the author's world as a viable possibility. 6

Coverdale, who later recognizes his kinship with Westervelt the mesmerist, likewise begins his story with an analysis of the "management of his 'subject'...or 'medium'." Though he is here referring to the hypnotist's role, it is

6 A retrospective irony exists here in that much of the controversy (up to the present time) concerning *The Blithedale Romance* centered on whether Margaret Fuller was the model for Zenobia, or Alcott was Hollingsworth, and like speculations which counter the warnings in the preface.
later clear that the author-mesmerist has placed his audience under a spell wherein he treads "a step or two across boundaries" into another world, "yet carries with him the laws of our actual life." For Coverdale, references to mesmerism and the supernatural lead naturally to the subject of the Veiled Lady and the "enigma of her identity," a similar reference by Hawthorne having already been offered in the preface. Veiling, as it works in the novel and as it functions as a narrative tool, reinforces the Puritan objective for using language, as well as the Calvinist warning against the wrong-use of language. While language as a gift was to be used for God's glory and was seen as a personal reflection of one's own depravity, in so doing one could fall prey to "Authoring" a world according to the individual's understanding, irrespective of the limitations of language -- the veil -- which separates a person from truth. Calvin continually warned that

> if we reflect how prone the human mind is to lapse into forgetfulness of God, how readily inclined to every kind of error, how bent every now and then on devising new and fictitious religions...We must go, I say, to the Word, where the character of God, drawn from his works, is described accurately and to the life; these works being estimated, not by our depraved judgment, but by the standard of eternal truth (I 66-67).

---

7 At the end of the preface, Hawthorne calls for someone to "give the world [Brook Farm's] history", naming some of the participants who could do so, and withholding the names of "others, whom he dares not name, because they veil themselves from the public eye" (3).
Left to his own perceptions, one can only author illusions which expose, as in Coverdale's case, not the truth meant to be laid out, but the ego of the creator. 

"From whence," asks Calvin, "come so many labyrinths of errors in the world but because men are led by their own understanding only into vanity" (translated by Riccardi 44). Writing from Brook Farm to his wife-to-be, Sophia, Hawthorne echoed Calvin and anticipated both the character of his fiction, Coverdale, and himself as the writer of the preface of *The Blithedale Romance*:

Every day of my life makes me feel more and more how seldom a fact is accurately stated; how, almost invariably, when a story has passed through the mind of a third person, it becomes, so far as regards the impression that it makes in further repetitions, little better than a falsehood, and this, too, though the narrator be the most truth-seeking person in existence...Is truth a fantasy which we are to pursue forever and never grasp? (XV 538).

Yet Hawthorne, like the fictive voice he creates in Coverdale, is compelled to record and translate past events; it is this effort to translate which is central to *The Blithedale Romance*. In this novel as in *The Scarlet Letter*, the distinction between appearance and reality is again questioned; but the emphasis is more firmly placed on the narrator-author who is interpreting events and translating

---

8 As will later be discussed, this is true not only of Coverdale, but also of the "self-concentrated philanthropist [Hollingsworth]; the high-spirited woman bruising herself against the limits of her sex [Zenobia]; the weakly Maiden, whose tremulous nerves endow her with Sibylline attributes [Priscilla]" (preface to *The Blithedale Romance* 2).
them into words for his audience. Such translations take place physically within the novel's action: Coverdale translates Fourier for Hollingsworth; and they take place symbolically: Eliot's Rock memorializes the man who preached to the Indians in their own language and translated the Bible for them. Most importantly, Miles Coverdale, the narrator, is named after the Biblical translator of the sixteenth century whose vernacular version, though the first of its kind, was displaced by the Geneva Bible when it was discovered that Coverdale's was not an original translation. 9

Layer upon layer of interpretation from the past and present thus merge within the novel both in event and symbol to emphasize overt and covert reinterpretation. Hawthorne uses historical figures like Coverdale who have misrepresented works, and presents a very Puritan-like picture of the decay of language's ability to signify meaning. Within the novel, Coverdale points to the current reliance on psychic phenomena to interpret meaning as an indication "that the soul of man is descending to a lower point than it has ever before reached, while incarnate...We are pursuing a downward course, in the eternal march" (199).10 Hawthorne's

9 See Joan Magrett's article for further correspondences between the historic and fictive Coverdales.

10 McWilliams quotes Coverdale's later condemnation of mesmerism and notes that "Coverdale here challenges contemporary clichés about the progressive march of civilization by showing that mesmerism is not merely a recurrence of witchcraft, but a further [moral] decline" (121).
special emphasis on a mesmerist, Biblical translator, puritan preacher's pulpit, and French secular philosopher with Marxist tendencies (Fourier) points to this evolutionary trend, but further indicates man's historical attempts to recreate the world by retranslating it.

The controversy in Hawthorne's own time between the Unitarians and the Trinitarians as to the method of Biblical translation is underscored by Coverdale's assertion that he has performed the role of a commentator like a Greek chorus, while at the same time he shamelessly embellishes the tale before us. However, though Coverdale emphasizes this aloofness "from the possibility of personal concernment" (97), a chorus' role is to highlight significant events for the audience; it functions to verbally underscore action and symbol. Coverdale's choral function corresponds to the general belief [of Calvinism] that God uses natural events to give signs or signals to man. Such a sign does have a definite meaning, even though it may well be imperfectly understood. This means that of natural events, one must inquire after their significances -- a very important word to American Puritans (Brumm 18).

Coverdale's need to explain significances by interpreting word and sign again emphasizes his self-appointed godhood.

While Coverdale maintains his distance from the action and aligns himself with the "Chorus in a classic play" (97), he admits that "in writing out, my pen has perhaps allowed itself a trifle of romantic and legendary license, worthier of a small poet than of a grave biographer" (181).
Furthermore, despite the warning that "it was only through subsequent events that I arrived at a plausible conjecture" (8), Coverdale's act of translation pulls the reader into the act of interpretation and sets the reader up as another self-designated god immersed in the act of creation. "Significance" becomes a relative, humanized term referring to earthly interpretation instead of a spiritual term referring to God's signs. Hawthorne begins his novel with a preface which warns the reader not to overlay Brook Farm onto Blithedale, and Coverdale warns his readers that the "general glow [of Blithedale] must be represented, if at all, by the merest phosphorescent glimmer" (9); but these warnings lay questions of reality, appearance, believability and truth upon the reader as an interpreter of signs.12

The emphasis on the process of interpretation originates in the narrative or controlling stance chosen by the authors of Blithedale, and is paralleled by the action in the narration. In the novel, the reader as well as Coverdale is continually given opportunities to interpret events just as the Veiled Lady is given opportunities to interpret events by her mesmerist. Coverdale's initial suspicion of the Veiled Lady's performance, and later, of her mesmerist, Westervelt, points to a suspicion of his own art as does the

12 Carton evaluates the "glimmer" passage as evidence that the "source of illumination, here, charged with the task of re-presenting a positive light, is not a purposeful beam but a happy glimmer that a corrupt process generates" (230).
veiled Lady's eventual rejection of her role. When Coverdale directs a question to the Veiled Lady about Blithedale, her ambiguous answer is described as

a prophetic solution...of true Sibylline stamp, nonsensical in its first aspect, yet, on closer study, unfolding a variety of interpretations, one of which has certainly accorded with the event (6).

The readers are not given the Veiled Lady's answers so as to judge for themselves, but rather assured that one of them "accorded with the event." In a similar, cryptic manner, Coverdale is careful to tone his descriptions with disclaimers and layer them with choices in an overtly genuine attempt at comprehensive interpretation. Yet it is the reader who must choose one interpretation just as Coverdale chose "one of which has certainly accorded with the event."

Coverdale's narration, like the Veiled Lady's mask, "was supposed to insulate her [and him] from the material world, from time and space, and to endow her [and him] with many privileges of a disembodied spirit" (6). Placing Coverdale as a link between two worlds veils him as an unapproachable voice speaking from a privileged position. This technique courts the reader's positive image of the narrator by infusing his tale with mysterious power. Carton notes that "the world's receptivity to our advances, of its submissiveness to the pressure of imagination, is essential

13 Power was similarly invested in the tale of The Scarlet Letter by the discovery of a still emotionally potent A in the Custom House.
to any attempt at its reformation or re-creation" (243). It is as necessary for Coverdale to be believed as it was for the fox-like preacher of the seventeenth century.

In the novel as well as in the seventeenth century, any and all masks could be employed not only to further Truth but to seek it. Coverdale's reported prying into Zenobia's drawing room seems justified by Perkins' direction for seventeenth century ministers:

\[
\text{if a minister must confesse his peoples sinnes, then it followeth conseque[n]tly that he must know them, and take notice of them, for else hee cannot confesse them... He must not only have a flocke, and knowe which is his flocke: or have a generall eye over it, but hee must have a particular and distinct knowledge of the state of it, and the more particular the better (n3 445).}
\]

Coverdale takes it upon himself to "have a particular and distinct knowledge" of his "flocke" and he continually insists on this sympathy with his "flocke", claiming a natural right to the secrets of their souls. When denied the opportunity to gain such information, he protests of Zenobia:

\[
\text{she should have been able to appreciate that quality of the intellect and the heart, which impelled me (often against my own will, and to the detriment of my own comfort) to live in others' lives, and to endeavor -- by generous sympathies, by delicate intuitions, by taking note of things too slight for record, and by bringing my human spirit into manifold accordance with the companions whom God assigned me -- to learn the secret which was hidden even from themselves (160).}
\]

But Coverdale maintains that he acts against his will, which within Calvin's system is to be determined by reason. By
aligning his intellect with the heart instead of head, the false minister, Coverdale, falls into the same trap as the false minister in *The Scarlet Letter*. Coverdale's flaw further parallels Dimmesdale's in that their intellectual perceptions of physical events may correspond to others', but their translation of the significance of events contains personal messages. 14

While language is personal by its nature, it is also communal, and it is the mixture of the objective sign and personal view which *The Blithedale Romance* addresses. The difference between God's sign (the objective) and man's verbal sign (the personal) is underscored immediately in the novel when Coverdale describes hailing a fellow traveler who "appeared to think our courtesy worth less than the trouble which it cost him. The churl! He understood the shrill whistle of the blast, but had no intelligence for our blithe tones of brotherhood" (12). While nature's message is clear, man's attempt to convey a sign will not be as clearly apprehended. The primary reason for this lack of communication rests upon the imagined brotherhood of the Blithedalers. Coverdale continues to upbraid the traveler for his "lack of faith in our cordial sympathy...one among the

14 Carton seems to broach this same split on a theoretical level when he points to the emphasis on the word "system" in the novel and notes that its use "generates the tension between the structuralist determinism and hermeneutic indeterminacy that informs *The Blithedale Romance*" (234).
innumerable tokens how difficult a task we had in hand, for the rejuvenation of the world" (12). The narrator here assumes a superior position and ignores the deeper brotherhood of sin which informs Puritan theology and underlies the imminent failure of the project. The Blithedalers' theory, based on words, must be followed by physical action. But Coverdale's "action" early on turns to non-action for his illness excuses him from participating in the Blithedale experiment; later, his retreat to the city does the same. The play between abstract words and physical reality continues throughout the novel.

As Coverdale starts out for Blithedale, he reports the weather -- a physical fact -- but immediately attaches to it symbolic importance emphasizing language: the country air was pure because it "had not been spoken into words of falsehood, formality, and error like all the air of the dusky city" (11). Continuing to combine the physical "facts" -- the weather -- with their symbolic import, Coverdale undercuts the vision of purity lodged in man's image of the country -- and the vision of accuracy lodged in the words used to describe that image -- by pointing out that as soon as the snow fell, it was "moulded into the impress of somebody's patched boot or over-shoe. Thus, the track of an old conventionalism was visible on what was
freshest from the sky" (11). Any event or sign "freshest from the sky" is interpreted by means of language and convention -- the only means available to mankind since the fall in Eden. With convention overriding pure sign, the act of reformation through reinterpretation becomes impossible. Throughout the novel, idealistic claims for progress directly parody Emerson and others who felt they had stept down from the pulpit; we had flung aside the pen; we had shut up the ledger; we had thrown off that sweet, bewitching, enervating indolence, which is better, after all than most of the enjoyments within mortal grasp. It was our purpose -- a generous one, certainly, and absurd, no doubt, in full proportion with its generosity -- to give up whatever we had heretofore attained, for the sake of showing mankind the example of a life gained by other than the false and cruel principles, on which human society has all along been based (19).

While Coverdale's initial assessment of rules reflects the conflict between law and man as it is evident in The Scarlet Letter, his "stepping down from the pulpit" -- aside from the obvious reference to Emerson -- implies the rejection of a greater Law. Coverdale here indicates that the "false and cruel principles, on which human society has all along

15 Baym, Kaul and Bewley discuss the conflict between the individual and society inherent in the novel, but each fails to acknowledge that language forms the basis of society.

16 Concentrating on the social failure of Blithedale, critics like Justus have pointed to Coverdale's inability "to accept or at first even to acknowledge the imperfect human context in which the ideal must realize itself if it is to realize itself at all" (33). See also note #15.
been based" are indeed preeminent in society. But the Puritans acknowledged that because the imagination was the freest of all faculties, directly tied neither to a transcendent God nor to the confines of the natural world, it could synthesize the sensations it received into phantasms of its own making. Such a power could result in an obsession with its own creations, or even worse, it could furnish these images directly to the appetite and create a desire which was totally ignorant and uninformed of the natural soul (Clark 282-283).

The basis upon which Puritan semiotics rests is theologically connected to God's Law and maintains that His images, though unknown, reign supreme.

While Clark's comment seems especially relevant in light of Coverdale's final, and unbelievable, confession in the novel, the failure to recognize his own obsession with the telling of the tale condemns not only Coverdale's interpretation of events, but the reader-as-interpreter. Calvin's analogy for man-as-interpreter -- short-sighted, old men who see a book and know there is writing but cannot distinguish the words (I 64) -- is apt here. By the end of the novel, Coverdale has squinted through his story, but we are presented only with another bedimmed view of events and remain "veiled" from the truth; as readers, we therefore create our own interpretations. Rather than determine how much of the story is "true", we are invited to look at the characters with the help of only the glimmer of firelight that pervades the first four chapters; the firelight also tints the descriptions of other characters in these initial
chapters with a "genial glow" reminding a perceptive observer that the images are merely images. The point is continually made by Coverdale and Hawthorne that physical events are perceived differently by all; readers are reminded that the interpretation must proceed further than the perceived surface structure.

In Hawthorne's attempt to record the reflection of a tree in a lake he noted that "sometimes the image of a tree might almost be traced; then nothing but this sweep of broken rainbow. It was like the recollection of the real scene in an observer's mind - a confused radiance" (VIII 158). The Blithedale Romance's verbal impression -- the confused radiance -- grows from the consistent imagery of veiling and masking. In the novel, words impress upon the reader that meaning is veiled and our vision of the world remains masked despite our verbal attempts to organize it. Coverdale reminds an uninformed reader that Zenobia's name is "as I suppose you know... a sort of mask in which she comes before the world" (8). For him, and the reader, the "accurate" naming of the physical object, in this case a woman, is not important because Zenobia "accorded well with something imperial... with her" (13). The name indicated "something" which correlated the substance and the spirit of the woman.

The action of words on the imagination can, as Calvin indicated, be stimulated by the "right" sound and produce an image close to truth. But the same action, undirected by a
will affected by intelligence, will have an opposite effect. Coverdale himself points out the difference when describing his and Zenobia's sexually tinged discussion of "the garb of Eden". Coverdale imagines Zenobia "in Eve's earliest garments," and insists that "the fault must have been entirely in my imagination -- but these last words, together with something in her manner" called forth the illusion (17). The suggestive danger of the imagination is again linked to the sexual as Coverdale attempts to discern whether "the great event of a woman's existence had been consummated....The world knew nothing of it, although the world seemed to know Zenobia well." This exchange between Zenobia and Coverdale is built on images taking verbal shape -- a dangerous failing of language -- which in turn signifies the degenerate mind.

Nina Baym identifies the novel as a reflection of the "mind objectified, the mind made accessible," (The Blithedale 547) and Coverdale's compilation of impressions building a "truth" does indeed reflect the impressions and therefore unreliable human mind. The very facts surrounding Priscilla are characterized by the "hint [in a letter], not very intelligible implying either that Priscilla had recently escaped from some particular peril, or irksomeness of position, or else that she was still liable to this danger or difficulty, whatever it might be" (49). To Hollingsworth, Priscilla is a "friendless creature" (30); to
Coverdale, "an immortal fairy" (34); and to Zenobia, a seamstress (34). These various impressions build an indefinite story through Coverdale's avoidance of "the literal by [his] asking rhetorical questions or offering through various characters contradictory explanations" (Donohue Casebook viii). 17 Priscilla's malleable nature fits the image of fairy as she takes the shape given her by others and becomes a "soft reflection" (123) of their worldly images. Exemplifying this chameleon quality, Priscilla yet objects when told she resembles the woman whose letter she holds: "'How could I possibly make myself resemble this lady, merely by holding her letter [i.e. her words] in my hand?'" (53). But it is precisely words within the novel and in the creation of the novel, which mold not only Priscilla's but all identities.

Coverdale, denoting himself as creator, prepares the reader for his assessment of Priscilla's changing nature by elevating the quality of his interpretative abilities to the spiritual realm:

there is a species of intuition -- either a spiritual lie, or the subtle recognition of a fact [again, the reader must chose] -- which comes to us in a reduced state of the corporeal system. The soul gets the better of the body...the spheres of our companions have, at such periods, a vastly greater influence upon our own than when robust health gives us a repellant and self-defensive energy (46).

17 While Donohue was referring to Hawthorne here, the description accurately describes Coverdale's techniques.
In true (Puritan) fashion, Coverdale fragments the body and the soul giving precedence to the spirit's power, but he also points to the inability of the "bedimmed" soul to reflect anything but "a spiritual lie" or a "subtle recognition of fact." However, his elevation to a spiritually advantageous position continually serves Coverdale as an excuse for the privileged status as interpreter. Thus Coverdale exemplifies Calvin's everyman who gives in to presumptive truths from pride and vanity (II 212-13). While Coverdale does not recognize this in himself, he is quick to point to others. From his first evening before the fire with Hollingsworth, Coverdale describes him as a contemplative, engrossed in "the solitude of his head and mind. The poor fellow had contracted this ingracious habit from the intensity with which he contemplated his own ideas" (36). Later, expanding this assessment, Coverdale points to Hollingsworth as

a cold spectral monster which he himself conjured up, and on which he was wasting all the warmth of his heart, and of which, at last -- as those men of a mighty purpose invariably do -- he had grown to be the bond-slave (55).

Yet Coverdale himself has become enslaved -- at least for the twelve years following the action of the narrative -- in the images he has "conjured up".

In his discussion of interpretation in American prose, Minter points to two types of characters: "the man of design participates in...careful planning and concerted devotion as
a means of assuring success [Hollingsworth]; the man of interpretation participates...to make interpretation...a means of taming unexpected and unacceptable failure" (6). coverdale's own words condemn him as the latter when he again describes Hollingsworth's
terrible egotism which he mistook for an angel of God. Had Hollingsworth's education been more enlarged, he might not so inevitably have stumbled into this pit-fall. He knew absolutely nothing, except in a single devotion, where he had thought so energetically, and felt to such depth, that, no doubt, the entire reason and justice of the universe appeared to be concentrated thitherward.... It is my private opinion, that,... Hollingsworth was fast going mad" (55-56).

Though Coverdale presents himself as all-knowing here, he also is the one who is ignorant of the human heart and uneducated in sympathy. Coverdale as narrator obsessively explains history for the sake of explaining his story. His explanation at the end of the novel, that the purpose of the events was "Nothing. Nothing. Nothing" (245) -- points both to his fruitless efforts to change what was, and to the endeavor which links him with a madness as great as Hollingsworth's. Coverdale could well have said not only of Hollingsworth but of himself:

Here arises that immense and vile medley of errors with which the whole earth has been stuffed and overwhelmed. For the nature of each human being is like a labyrinth, such that it is no wonder that individual nations have been scattered amidst various fabrications. Not only is this true for various nations, but almost every man has his own gods. For when rashness and petulance are added to ignorance and darkness, scarcely a single person has ever been found who did not fashion for himself an idol or spectre in place of God (Calvin I 12).
All of Blithedale's characters "fashion for [themselves] an idol or spectre in place of god." Whether this is because all are made in their creator's image (Coverdale's) is a moot point since he represents mankind's interpretive capabilities. For the readers, ideological re-presentation and re-creation impede truth and within the novel entrap Coverdale, Zenobia, Priscilla and Hollingsworth.18 Hollingsworth's image of reformed prisoners -- an ironic project in light of the imprisonment of all Blithedalers -- eventually "jails" the reformer mentally and physically. Hollingsworth lives too close to the physical world and assumes in his self-appointed godhood that this kinship with the earth allows him to reshape the lives of others through sheer force of his own will. Hollingsworth sees the "life of toil [as] taking... the fancy-work out of a man....[It] leaves nothing but what truly belongs to him" (68). As the Blithedale experiment shows, dependence on that which is man-made and earth-bound insures such failure. Because his vision is limited to earthly matters, Hollingsworth assumes that the spiritual can be changed by altering the earthly and attempts to mold everyone in his image. Influenced by his words, the Blithedalers become, as ironically, Coverdale

18 Carton's reference to the Custom House, Salem and ancestors applies also to the events and characters of The Blithedale Romance: "Bondage and compulsive repetition are, throughout Hawthorne's career, intimately and uncomfortably associated with the act of representation" (155).
sees them, Hollingsworth's "victims" who must worship the
idol of the reformer's imagination and
offer sacrifices of whatever is most precious, and
never once seem to suspect - so cunning has the Devil
been with them [the victims] - that this false deity,
in whose iron features, immitigable to all the rest
of mankind, they see only benignity and love, is but
a spectrum of the very priest himself, projected upon
the surrounding darkness (70-71).

Described in terms of the god of creation writing on a
dark page, Hollingsworth represents the cruel, Old Testa-
ment, Puritan God more than a New Testament Christ, as he
assumes control of those around him. Eventually, his
creations no longer have the ability to interpret cir-
cumstances apart from Hollingsworth's images. Priest-like,
the reformer speaks to the Blithedalers on Sunday, after
which, in a parody of a Puritan Sabbath, they sit beneath
Eliot's Rock and talk "around him, on such topics as were
suggested by the discourse" (119).

That Hawthorne even considered naming the novel
Hollingsworth becomes clear as this false priest's sermons
form the pivot upon which the action turns.
Hollingsworth's ability to manipulate conversations is
continually reported by Coverdale. When the narrator tries
to probe for information regarding Zenobia and
Hollingsworth's relationship, Hollingsworth rejects the
image of the two in a cozy cottage by pointing out how the
land would support not their home, but the reform building
he envisions. Coverdale, pulled into an argument, asks
Hollingsworth: "'And will you cast off a friend, for no unworthiness, but merely because he stands upon his right, as an individual being, and looks at matters through his own optics, instead of yours?'' (133). As a priest within the puritan system, Hollingsworth would have a right to demand as much, and of course answers in the affirmative. Coverdale asserts his individuality; but though he reports that he maintains distance from Hollingsworth, Coverdale raises the question of whether his "optics" are as faulty:

Let the reader abate whatever he deems fit. The paragraph may remain, however, both for its truth and its exaggeration, as strongly expressive of the tendencies which were really operative in Hollingsworth, and as exemplifying the kind of error into which my mode of observation was calculated to lead me (71).

Coverdale's use of the words "expressive," "tendencies," "exemplifying," emphasize that what he says is based on impressions; when impressions rule vision as they do with Hollingsworth and Coverdale, then observations and decisions are based on illusions. Coverdale's illusory vision of Zenobia is most damaging; even after seeing her malevolent look of jealousy, he maintains "as for Zenobia, I saw no occasion to give myself any trouble. With her native strength, and her experience of the world, she could not be supposed to need any help of mine" (78-79). Coverdale is

19 In The Institutes' introductory letter to the king of France, Calvin cites numerous incidents where opinions ruled by impressions have wrongly dictated even church policy. See Calvin, I, 12-13.
Quite sure of who Zenobia is despite her warning that his "poetic insight" was lacking (58-59). Later she notes that his smile "makes me suspicious of a low tone of feeling, and shallow thought" (120).

Zenobia senses that she has become frozen as Coverdale's artistic creation, and he had indeed designated her flower as the instrument which "transformed her into a work of art" (64). As a spectator supplies the dimension within which a work of art operates, Coverdale interprets Zenobia according to his set vision. Though Zenobia attempts to defy interpretation by accusing Coverdale of using Blithedale as material for a "ballad", and referring to Coverdale's "poor and meagre nature, that is capable of but one set of forms, and must convert all the past into a dream, merely because the present happens to be unlike it" (165), he treats these accusations as unjust. Yet twelve years later he creates his "ballad"/novel infusing Zenobia's language with prophetic power by means of his own artistic hindsight. The source of her power -- lodged in Coverdale's language -- is questionable because ultimately, her words have produced only more words signifying "Nothing."

Though Zenobia is presented on the one hand as a strong woman with the intuitive kind of knowledge Coverdale claims for himself, the source of her downfall is also language:

no woman in the world has ever once spoken out her whole heart and her whole mind.... We mumble a few weak words, and leave a thousand better ones unsaid. You let us write a little, it is true, on a limited
range of subjects. But the pen is not for woman. Her power is too natural and immediate. It is with the living voice (120).

Zenobia says all she can but it is too late and her loss of Hollingsworth is predicated on a war of words. She attempts to appropriate the priest's role by physically climbing into Eliot's Pulpit and preaching her word; she maintains that women have a "natural and immediate" tendency to do so, but contradicts the assertion with her own inability to be most effective when needed. Faced with Hollingsworth's greed and vanity, the meanings attached to him by Zenobia collapse and she has nothing to live for because her fabricated view of the world does not exist; she kills herself for "Nothing. Nothing. Nothing." There always has been "nothing" because the illusion of Hollingsworth and herself which she nurtured was merely a fantasy.

Hollingsworth denies her accusations and hides behind his own false words, behind the Veil -- Priscilla. In her role as the Veiled Lady, Priscilla -- whose identity is "veiled" throughout most of the novel -- stands between the earthly and spiritual realms. Her association with the world of fairy underscores Priscilla's vacillating role. As she changes from sprite to entranced medium in the forest, Coverdale seeks to explain that perhaps "she has the gift of hearing those 'airy tongues that syllable men's names' -- which Milton tells us about" (160). As mediator, the Veiled Lady's role is to translate the 'airy tongues' of the
unknown world into the known. Symbolically, it is this transcendental connection upon which Hollingsworth leans at the end of the novel. His illusions shattered, Hollingsworth needs to depend on a go-between to protect the worldly ex-reformer's conscience from the spiritual haunting of Zenobia. The failure of Priscilla to provide the desired translation which will ease Hollingsworth's pain is evident in the deteriorated picture of the reformer in his final scence of the novel.

All fail in this role as priest/interpreter, which is continually exchanged throughout the novel. Zenobia assumes it at the peak of her humiliation; Hollingsworth is revealed as priest when his malevolent nature eclipses his argument with Coverdale; Priscilla, as the Veiled Lady, is unveiled and eventually stripped of her "powers". In his analysis of the novel, Hedges suggests that Coverdale assumes the role of priest at Eliot's Rock as Zen's confessor -- but it seems evident that the priest-as-translator of the word is a role maintained by the self-anointed Coverdale throughout the novel. Here again Coverdale and Dimmesdale resemble each other: both elevate their "priesthood" above the people until priest becomes synonymous with God, or, more specifically, with Christ.

The image of Christ as mediator -- as the Word Incarnate -- permeates Coverdale's image of himself throughout the novel. Coverdale pictures himself as making an offering
from his tree to the community, in Christian symbolism reminiscent of both Calvary and the Last Supper: he would stagger into their midst "with shoulders bent beneath the burthen of ripe grapes and some of the crushed ones crimsoning my brow with a blood-stain" (99). This association with sacramental wine and Coverdale as god is never more evident than in Coverdale's lofty hermitage within the branches of a fir tree where, god-like, "at my height above the earth, the whole [effort at Blithedale] looked ridiculous!" (100). In his "leafy cave", whose images combine cross and grave,

a wild grape-vine, of unusual size and luxuriance, had twined and twisted itself up into the tree, and after wreathing the entanglement of its tendrils around almost every bough, had caught hold of three or four neighboring trees.... A hollow chamber, of rare seclusion, has been formed by the decay of some pine-branches, which the vine had lovingly strangled in its embrace, burying them from the light of day in an aerial sepulchre of its own leaves (100).

Images of religious paradoxes abound here: light/dark; life/death; the tree as a living body of Christ yet with decayed members; the vine with double edged tendrils, luxurious and fruitful, but used for joining boughs as well as for strangling. Into this hermitage the monk ascends looking "not for starry investigation, but for those sublunary matters in which lay a lore as infinite as that of the planets" (99). Casting his vision to the earth, settled in the midst of decayed boughs, the self-anointed mediator finds an admirable place to make verses,
tuning the rhythm to the breezy symphony that so often stirred among the vine-leaves, or to meditate an essay for the Dial, in which the many tongues of Nature whispered mysteries, and seemed to ask only a little strange puff of wind, to speak out the solution of its riddle (99).

From above, Coverdale lays his harshest "lines" upon the blithedalers, indictments which later correspond to his decision to "give my full assent to the punishment which was sure to follow" (161). Coverdale's judgement stems from his decision in the tree to "think it the design of fate to let me into all of Zenobia's secrets" (103), and from his earlier judgement that Hollingsworth "and Zenobia and Priscilla, both for their own sakes and as connected with him ... stood forth as indices of a problem which it was my business to solve" (69). Yet when fate does not oblige Coverdale, he chooses to arrange his own version of the action viewed from his perspective in the tree. Admitting that "what I seem to remember, I yet suspect may have been patched together by my fancy", he "questions whether I fairly understood" any of a conversation he reports between Zenobia and Westervelt (104). Warning the reader of his fictional point of view, he resolves, "that to no mortal would I disclose what I had heard" (105); yet, he has just repeated the conjectured conversation using definite verbs

20 Mocking the self-revelatory nature of Emerson's work and the "many tongues" whispered in the Dial by transcendental translators like Margaret Fuller, Coverdale becomes aligned with the human "priests" of the nineteenth century.
said," "cried," "answered," "exclaimed") impressing the immediacy and accuracy of his report upon the reader, while justifying his duty to report it. By his act of committing to text, verbally manipulated events Coverdale is guilty of Calvin's "two horns of pride":

one of them is when men forget about their own condition and claim for themselves not only more than is right, but what God claims for Himself alone....The other horn of pride is when men do not acknowledge their own vices, despise others in comparison with themselves, and please themselves with dissolute acts as though they were free from rendering account (Calvin's commentary on Ezekiel, 16:50, as translated by Riccardi 147).

His self-imposed godhood is exactly what Zenobia protests, and curiously enough -- since the novel is Coverdale's story -- an accusation reported by the narrator:

This stale sense of duty! [exclaimed Zenobia]... I have often heard of it before, from those who sought to interfere with me, and I know precisely what it signifies. Bigotry; self-conceit; an insolent curiosity; a meddlesome temper, a cold-blooded criticism, founded on a shallow interpretation of half-perceptions; a monstrous scepticism in regard to any conscience or any wisdom, except one's own; a most irreverent propensity to thrust Providence aside, and substitute one's own self in its awful place.... With all your fancied acuteness, you step blindfold into these affairs (170-71).21

Thrusting Providence aside, Coverdale attempts to renew the past with his present self-sacrifice as revealed in the novel. But despite the Christ-like images in which Coverdale clothes himself -- his sacrifice is questionable: he

21 This description could easily be used as a harsh criticism of Puritans in America. That Coverdale reports it underscores his attempts at "fairness", and his Puritan sense of guilt as well as his self-righteousness.
never had Priscilla to give up; similarly, he never had Zenobia to lose; Hollingsworth was a patronizing friend at best. Coverdale lost all these relationships because of his tendency to perceive others and interpret their "signs" from a purely subjective vantage point. He "thrust aside" instead of relying upon Providence, refusing to recognize the common bond of sin which subverts all interpretation.

Referring to the recurring images of knots and entanglements in the novel, Carton notes that "it quickly becomes apparent that all the relationships among characters and ideas in The Blithedale Romance are ambivalent, double-edged, and that the language of the book conspires in this ambivalence by its repeated conjunctions of putative opposites" (237). Hedges agrees that "What he tells primarily is the story of a catastrophic misunderstanding among Hollingsworth, Zenobia and Priscilla" (305-306). But the act of telling is most important here. While readers are told Coverdale and Hollingsworth are best friends, there are no incidents which show that the friendship existed on the level indicated. Coverdale tells us Hollingsworth sat with him while he was sick, but the incident he reports specifically includes an argument between the two about Fourier. Each scene between Hollingsworth and Coverdale becomes repeatedly more tense, from their argument in the fields about the work ethic, to their final disagreement over Hollingsworth's reform project. Coverdale's reenactments of
conversations show obscured language corresponding to the breakdown of the relationship between Hollingsworth and himself. 22 When Coverdale refuses to aid Hollingsworth in his pursuit, he relates that he never said the word -- and certainly can never have it to say, hereafter -- that cost me a thousandth part so hard an effort as did that one syllable... There was a convulsive movement of his throat, as if he were forcing down some words that struggled and fought for utterance. Whether words of anger or words of grief, I cannot tell; although many and many a time, I have vainly tormented myself with conjecturing, which of the two they were (135).

The "one syllable" is not reported, an effective narrative technique is ignored, in favor of many words reporting the emotion. The novel here, as elsewhere, focuses not on words as indicators of action, but on the self-conscious import of the words for the narrator/interpreter. Though Coverdale has "vainly tormented" himself wondering whether Hollingsworth was angry or grief-stricken, he follows that confession with a statement which weights interpretation towards the latter: "I should have been thankful for one word more, even if it had shot me through the heart, as mine did him" (136). Gilmore notes that "after this crisis, Coverdale seems to grow more fearful of language, to become more and more averse to naming or specifying. It is as though he imagines harmful feelings and events can be

22 Justus points out that "Hollingsworth's language in Chapter 15 is egocentric and absolutist, as befitting the radical reformer, [but] much of the extremist tone is a result of Coverdale's mediating consciousness" (26).
avoided unless they are verbalized" (96). Gilmore treats the action hereafter as if there is an omniscient narrator reporting it, for this is not the first time Coverdale has avoided significant dramatic descriptions. It is more noticeable after this point because Coverdale's physical isolation -- his removal to the town -- separates him from the illusion of brotherhood he had constructed. Coverdale's nonparticipation in life is underscored by his isolated search for meaning and his continual supplying of life's questions with conjectured answers.

James Justus' description of Coverdale's "spiritual rigidity" (32) coincides with the idea of decayed language present in the nineteenth century -- a philosophical gift from the Puritan legacy which is continually emphasized by awkward conversations in the novel. When Hollingsworth, Coverdale and Moodie meet at Blithedale, the circumstances of the interview speak for the breakdown of communication and Coverdale's concomitant reliance on the imagined. Moodie sat out of sight of Coverdale while the latter attempted to place himself in the old man's shoes. The entire scene is reported without any of the participants seeing each other and with Coverdale's revealing the conversation on the basis of his imagined point of view, repeating the emotion he believes he heard in Moodie's voice as it traveled through the bush behind which he sat (84).
That Coverdale has reported any of these conversations indicates that he believes his story in some way will vindicate his vision of himself, that

it is really impossible to hide [i.e. veil] anything, in this world, to say nothing of the next. All that we ought to ask, therefore, is, that the witness of our conduct, and the speculators on our motives, should be capable of taking the highest view which circumstances of the case admit" (162).

But Coverdale reports conversations obscured by Nature pointing to man's separation from his original state, and he does not always take the "highest" view, with his indictment of Hollingsworth and the sexual innuendoes tossed at Westervelt and Zenobia. He attempts to exonerate himself by blaming the cold tendency, between instinct and intellect, which made me pry with a speculative interest into other people's passions and impulses, ... [This] appeared to have gone far towards unhumanizing my heart.

But a man cannot always decide for himself whether his own heart is cold or warm. It now impresses me, that, if I erred at all, in regard to Hollingsworth, Zenobia and Priscilla, it was through too much sympathy, rather than too little (154).

Yet again, Zenobia contradicts this claim of Coverdale's with her own "story" and throws a veil, literally and symbolically, over Coverdale's version of events at Blithe-dale. Reporting Zenobia's tale of Theodore and the Veiled Lady, Coverdale prefaces the allegory with sudden reticence:

I know not whether the following version of her story will retain any portion of its pristine character. But, as Zenobia told it, wildly and rapidly, hesitating at no extravagance, and dashing at absurdities which I am too timorous to repeat... the legend seemed quite a remarkable affair (107).
This description of Zenobia's fiction could easily apply to Coverdale's *Blithedale* just as Coverdale's puzzlement over the more-than-obvious tale, that "I scarcely knew, at the time, whether she intended us to laugh, or to be more seriously impressed" (107-108) could be supplied by *Blithedale* 's readers. Yet the teller of the tale (Zenobia) clearly points to Theodore's lack of faith, and his desire to uncover the Veiled Lady equals Coverdale's need to pierce the secrets of the human heart, or, at the very least, believe he has discovered the secrets and divulge them. The reader in turn must also commit an act of faith and leave the Veil of the narrator intact, or risk losing the ambiguity surrounding any text in exchange for a set interpretation, a "truth".  

Lloyd-Smith, in his analysis of the allegorical features of Zenobia's tale, points out that "Theodore is petrified into a rigid posture of devotion to the unattainable, and a reverence for the sacredness that he profaned" (77). The description is also applicable to Coverdale's "posture of devotion" to the unattainable Zenobia in his ballad-novel, as well as to the "reverence for the sacredness profaned" by his interpretation.

Coverdale recognizes his story as a profanity early on:

> It is not, I apprehend, a healthy kind of mental occupation, to devote ourselves too exclusively to

---

23 This distancing of the reader within the novel's tale mirrors the distancing of the reader of Coverdale's story and, one remove further, the reader of Hawthorne's novel.
the study of individual men and women. If the person under examination be one's self, the result is pretty certain to be diseased action of the heart, almost before we can snatch a second glance. Or, if we take the freedom to put a friend under our microscope, we thereby insulate him from many of his true relations, magnify his peculiarities, inevitably tear him into parts, and, of course, patch him very clumsily together again. What wonders, then, should we be frightened by the aspect of a monster, which, after all - though we can point to every feature of his deformity in the real personage - may be said to have been created mainly by ourselves! (69).

Ashamed of his own creation, aware of his personal fiction and of the condemnation it levels at himself, Coverdale nonetheless is compelled to put into words what he has perceived. In a sham imitation of autobiography, Coverdale outlines an episode (the Blithedale) for his own compulsive purposes. As if the words will expiate the crime, Coverdale's compulsion to record the world in verbal signs of his own making corresponds to the Puritans' desire (and Calvinists' need) to record their lives in order to review their actions and renew their search for election. Inherent in Coverdale's narrative is this continual play between man's visions and the world's images, between man's imitations and God's signs. The need to find some small truth amidst the mass of verbiage generated is impressed by Coverdale on Hollingsworth when he notes that "'the profoundest wisdom must be mingled with nine-tenths nonsense; else it is not worth the breath that utters it'" (129). Picking through the remnants of his diary, a Puritan biographer, or Coverdale, might well ask which is the
nonsense and which the truth. Like a Puritan biographer Coverdale is not saying "'Who am I?' but presenting 'Here is who I am or intend to be.' His statements involve considerable display of concrete details, 'proof of identity' " (Webber 11).

But Coverdale's 'proofs' are conjectures: he estimates that Westervelt "seemed a very acute sort of person, and saw, in some degree, how I stood affected towards him" (92). When concrete details are missing, Coverdale supplies them: "I shall attempt to sketch it, mainly from fancy, although with some good grounds of surmise" (190). He begins sentences with "My sensations were as if..." (215) and too heavily relies on the emotional import of words he perceives. Words, rather than maintaining moral parameters, have slipped into the realm of the fairy, the imagined for Coverdale. 24 This process had begun in the seventeenth century when autobiographers feared the "increasing pressure upon men to make choices" as "roles which men had hitherto accepted without question were no longer perceived as inevitable". There was "increased awareness of the complexity of human nature; hence the elusiveness of any personal identity which seemed to be emerging from all the activity and thought" (Watkins 227). That is one reason why writing down one's life became so important: the need to

24 Carton expands this disintegration in Chapter I of Rhetoric.
separate one's self from the action of the world became a moral imperative. But Coverdale concludes: "Honesty and wisdom are such a delightful pastime, at another's expense" (142). While he tries to recover himself and thus create a moral imperative, Coverdale's "narrative... insinuates, repeatedly, that perception, memory, and language itself are all veils" (Carton 244).

Carton maintains that Coverdale's words are intelligently self-conscious:

Every word he [Coverdale] utters is infused with the suspicion of its own illusiveness; every truth he affirms is countered by the underlying suggestion that its purveyor may be, throughout, as he appears to himself when the Blithedale masqueraders chase him into the forest, "a mad poet haunted by chimeras" (244).

Justus believes that "though the springs of action remain hidden, those of Coverdale do not. For all his flaws he is the most familiar, the most knowable character in the book" (25). Yet Coverdale's observation that back yards of the town's houses are more "real" than the facades points to a blending of these critical views: "realities keep in the rear" (149). "'When reality comes,'" he tells Hollingsworth, "'it will wear the every-day, common-place, dusty, and rather homely garb, that reality always does put on'" (130-31). There were only rare moments when "Nature, as if she had been taken by surprise [was] seen unawares, with no opportunity to put off her real look, and assume the mask with which she mysteriously hides herself from mortals" (65-
Hawthorne's momentary reflection on a tree's image in the water, again reflecting itself in the mind as a "confused brilliance," repeats itself in the confused puzzle of language which forms The Blithedale Romance. Words, to be used by man, though used erroneously, may indicate meaning only if apprehended "correctly" and only if illuminated by God's images.

Coverdale continually uses contradictory word pictures like the "grandee of yesterday and the pauper of today" (185); he asks if the Blithedale project were a dream or reality, but reminds himself that "in my mind, the one and the other were alike impalpable" (206). Neither image could be touched because neither was accurate, neither "real". The joining of paradoxical terminology seeks to capture the truth which will lie somewhere in between when these images are again reinterpreted by another, but they are based on appearances and are human creations. In an unusually long descriptive section, Coverdale observes the paintings of food in a bar while waiting for Moodie:

All these things were so perfectly imitated, that you seemed to have the genuine article before you, and yet with an indescribable, ideal charm; it took away the grossness from what was fleshiest and fattest and this helped the life of a man, even in its earthliest relations to appear rich and noble, as well as warm, cheerful, and substantial (176).

Appearances, not realities, were the object of this particular work of art, but it was likewise a preference of Coverdale's --to make the "life of man, even in its
earthliest relations, to appear rich and noble": thus his sacrificial cry of love for Priscilla ennobles Coverdale's existence, and his claim of having become a poet of some renown, insures readers of his "warm, cheerful, and substantial" life.

But within the human sphere, appearances belie the subject from which the picture was drawn and art becomes merely interpretation. Coverdale's description of the bar's artwork divides this mere interpretation, and thus his tale, into three categories: physical illusion, historical fiction and imaginary representation. The pictures of meat and fish, painted with "the accuracy of a daguerreotype," are signs tied to physical objects appealing to the appetites. The pictures of Flemish "gallant revelers" are based on historic reinterpretation of men; these appeal to memory, or "fact" as reinterpreted in the mind. The third picture of a "ragged, bloated, New England toper ... was too well portrayed....Your only comfort lay in the forced reflection that, real as he looked, the poor caitiff was but imaginary, a bit of painted canvass" (176). Artistic re-presentation may therefore stimulate appetite, historical memory, or emotion but the interpretation of such signs lay wholly in the observer: the artist presented an image, but the "reader" supplied the point of view from which to read the sign and therein lay the danger of words and authorship. Images in the art described include the depiction of fatted
meat as lean, slovenly drinkers as revelers, and a "poor caitiff" as imaginary. In this latter image, when faced with the "too real" the interpreter rejects the painful as he rejects the painful in his physical and spiritual life, and relies on the imaginary. In spiritual terms this is a rejection of God's signs, historical and typological, in preference for human illusions.

McWilliams says that the "historical perspective through which the present can be known has collapsed [in The Blithedale Romance], leaving Coverdale to know only a heap of broken images" (122); but that collapse, for Hawthorne, had taken place centuries before in the garden of Eden. Similarly, Swann points out that the paintings remind us that "painters translate objects of their paintings on to canvas, and Coverdale interprets the translations" (245); but with an already fragmented vision, both the painter and the translator can only hope to provide fragments of interpretive moments which will in turn be picked up by other "readers". Such a complicated view reflects the Puritan rhetorical dilemma and rejects the nineteenth century transcendental solution to the problem of language. Though Emerson and others agreed that "the corruption of man is followed by a corruption of language," they also believed that "wise men pierce this rotten diction...[that] imagery is spontaneous.... It [language] is the working of the Original Cause" (Emerson 20-21). Contrary to this, the
puritans believed that any truth was a half truth because man was originally corrupted; the veil could not be pushed aside until man was willing to surrender his images in an act of faith. 25 Michael Clark falls into rhetorical flamboyance when he attempts to explain that, for Puritans, words must be used even though they are unreliable:

Even in their most optimistic tracts, rather than simply ignoring the pessimism of the contemptus mundi tradition, the Puritans used their paradoxical emphasis on the insignificance of the sign to convert the epistemological limits of the material world into formidable heuristic tools through a semiological sleight-of-hand that centered their grandest insights on their basest inadequacies (290).

The more Clark's quotation is read, the clearer it becomes; the more a sign is examined, the more pertinent it becomes. Even, therefore, an unreliable narrator offering "Nothing" offers a vision, a life, if the Christ image is to be continued, by which an interpreted design can be drawn. The validity of that interpretation can not be judged any more than the "truth" of the artist's vision can be measured because it is based on human signs; but language must be used nonetheless and interpretation must continue. John Carlos Rowe further acknowledges that the veiling of truth in the novel functions "to prompt an interpretive response

25 The Veiled Lady in Zenobia's tale asks Theodore to have faith, "to pledge thyself to me, by meeting these lips of mine, while the veil yet hides my face....Dost thou come hither, not in holy faith, nor with pure and generous purpose, but in scornful scepticism and idle curiosity?" The latter describes not only Theodore, but a general reluctance to accept spiritual signs.
from the viewer, who thereby betrays his own character in the method of his reading" (61). The nineteenth century novel then serves the same purpose as the seventeenth century autobiography did for the Puritan. One can only hope that the artistic design leads the reader to an instructed vision; in the case of the Blithedale, one can only hope that the reader does not conclude with the surface interpretation that the novel is "Nothing", any more than Bunyan's allegory would be considered "nothing". The artists' medium in both these cases are words which are both impotent and omnipotent: they lack power to present a correct vision, yet they present the only vision possible.

Back in town, Coverdale sees Blithedale as "a leaf of some mysterious volume, interpolated into the current history which Time was writing off" (140). It is a description applicable to the Bible, a volume whose works man could only hope to poorly imitate as Time measures off human existence; yet imitation must be done. Compulsively, Coverdale writes his story and continually points to it as poor imitation; thus Hawthorne's narrator points to his fiction (both Hawthorne's and Coverdale's) as a vehicle of interpretation. As in The Scarlet Letter, "communication becomes the means of offering those signs whereby they may discover their own truths" (Rowe 86). 26 In The Blithedale Romance, both

---

26 Whereas Rowe found this idea prevalent in The Blithedale Romance, here he felt it out of context with the
Coverdale as narrator and Hawthorne as author are self-conscious artists writing signs which stretch man's capacity for language usage to its limits, in order that these limits be acknowledged. At this time, the Puritan emphasis on words as imitators of the Word still directed Hawthorne's art. It was later that the author would take one step back and begin to explore the idea that language was an autonomous arrangement of symbols which carried as much authority as a physical sign. In The Marble Faun, Hawthorne explores the visual communication and questions the superiority of the Puritan rhetorical system.
CHAPTER 6

THE FAUN AND THE BATTLE-MAIDEN -- THE MARBLE FAUN

Initially used as a travel guide by its nineteenth century audience, The Marble Faun clearly indicated a departure from Hawthorne's usual style. Though the expected Hawthornean mystery, darkness, and murder permeated the plot, and though again there appeared the typological use of the Adamic Fall and the loss of innocence, long descriptive passages about the landscape and art of Italy seemed disruptive to those who wished to follow the story line. Critics have long sought to pinpoint the nature of the changes in the novel; they have offered a variety of explanations. McWilliams and R. W. B. Lewis address Hawthorne's break with his former understanding of the past's influence on the present (123, "The Return" 29). Brodhead further writes that Hawthorne "engages the cultural-historical issue of the moment: the fall story as this novel puts it, poses the question above all of the origin and significance of a separate 'higher' level of human faculty" (76). Some critics note that the long, unwieldy travel passages describing endless churches,
art work and countryside join "the massive and the
immaterial, the actual and the necessary, [and] commingle on
'the broadest page of history,' creating a substantive but
unreadable text" (Carton 253). Others have attempted to
demonstrate that Hawthorne created a thematic balance of art
and nature by juxtaposing these colorful passages.¹ Nina
Baym plunges through the rhetorical excesses by commenting
that "the book appears confused and self-contradictory. Yet
despite its agitated rhetoric, The Marble Faun has a driving
unity and a surprisingly straightforward narrative" (99).
Lewis agrees that "the novel's plot verges more than once on
incoherence and wanders somewhat helplessly for about a
dozen chapters, while we wonder whether Hawthorne will find
the sustaining power to finish it"; but "the
incoherence...remains for the most part superficial and in
the execution; it only slightly impairs our view of the
classical design of the action" ("Return" 25). Other
critics are impatient with merely following action; Von
Abele calls the novel "a distinctly unpleasant piece of
work, exhibiting in copious detail the inner stresses that
were within a few years to make sustained effort totally
impossible for Hawthorne" (85).

¹ Critics such as Wright, Dauber and Baym attempt to
show some unity between these descriptions and the narrated
story. See also Sutherland, 78-81, for a summary of this
point of view.
Von Abele, as well as others, point to various rhetorical inconsistencies within the novel; the most obvious problem, however, has to do with the identity of the narrator. While the third person narrative is sustained for most of the novel, two-thirds of the way through the reader is informed that Kenyon has related the story to the present narrator. Such an attempt to establish another authority for the story recalls similar efforts by the narrator of The Scarlet Letter (in relying on Surveyor Pue's scrap of paper) as well as Coverdale's "retelling" of his tale. However despite this brief disclaimer, and indeed, because of it, the "real" speaker in The Marble Faun is more difficult to determine than those in previous novels.

It is not easy, therefore, to disagree with critics who approach Hawthorne's novel from different angles and search for deviations from former techniques, for the novel varies distinctly from previous efforts. However, most find it difficult to pinpoint the departures from former themes, to catalogue the mass of typological and mythical symbolism which appears in the novel, and at the same time resolve the moral questions brought to bear in this seemingly repetitive retelling of the Adamic tale-with-a-twist. Efforts establishing cohesion based on previous critical theories falter because cohesion in The Marble Faun is indeed subject to the "inner stresses that were... to make sustained effort totally impossible for Hawthorne." However, these
"stresses" are not as negative as Von Abele indicates when they are examined in light of the shift from the previously overriding Puritan concept of language in Hawthorne's fiction. By tracing the remaining strains of the Puritan rhetorical attitudes in the novel, we can begin to understand what purpose the "unwieldy" descriptive and narrative passages perform in this intricately structured work; we can also glimpse the underlying tensions which contributed to Hawthorne's abandonment of fiction writing after this novel.

No longer obsessed with the representation of truth in words in The Marble Faun, Hawthorne turned to the representation of truth in works. It is tempting to say that Hawthorne rejected the Puritan forces which previously guided his text -- abandoned an imitation of the Word -- and embraced instead a humanistic philosophy celebrating man's ability to create, to transform a truth through material applications. But The Marble Faun is not so easily analyzed. Instead, shifting philosophic and narrative allegiances in the novel create a dialectic supporting on one side the forces of Puritanism, an omnipotent God, and a degenerate race of men, and on the other side, the human creative spirit, god-like in its ability to produce signs which rival nature's and thus allow for a clear perception
of truth.² The predestined and static vision implied by puritan theology is set against a Renaissance vision of wholeness: on one side is the sermon-like wordiness of a people trying to prove that their way is the right way; on the other, the aesthetic experience produced by art objects whose meaning fluctuates but whose presence testifies to the enduring beauty and truth possible in human creations. Contrary to Hawthorne's other novels, The Marble Faun explores the possibility that man's ability to produce material works of art is a proper and necessary imitation of God's acts of creation.

This shifted focus to art objects has been noted in Nathalie Wright's analysis of the art used by Hawthorne. Wright pointed out that in the novel objects and architecture symbolically correspond to the action and characters being represented in a particular scene (165). This use of objects also contributed to some critics' sense that Hawthorne turned to Catholicism and the idea of "good works" or that in the last novel Hawthorne returned to an analysis of Aristotelian mimesis.³ Hawthorne did not

---

² Donohue identifies the division between "Calvinist Hilda and Kenyon and Catholic Miriam and Donatello [who] seem to emblematize Hawthorne's divided conscience" (Hawthorne 282).

³ For representative opinions, see Leonard J. Fick and Charles Swann, respectively.
however simply convert to Catholicism or any other "ism";\(^4\) instead, classical myth, tradition, Puritan typology and works of art play equally active roles in the novel. The juxtaposition of these expands Hawthorne's palette of symbols thereby extending the referential possibilities of his words. Unlike the Puritan concept of reference, where another symbol replicated a piece of the picture already revealed and copied it, Hawthorne's expanded vision allowed for a transformation of the sign itself so that it indicated more than a surface meaning and more than a set typological idea. Unlike the transformation of sign and history in *The Scarlet Letter* and *The Blithedale Romance*, in this last novel transformation is allowed to stand for the necessary, evolutionary awakening of man and therefore for the increasing potential of his signs. In Calvin's *Institutes*, the unerring Word's meaning never changed; it was only fallible man who misperceived the symbol. In *The Marble Faun* Hawthorne suggests that artistic symbols could and should evoke meaning which evolved with time and man's intelligence; within this system the perception of meaning was aided by the aesthetic experience which continually provoked the viewer. By widening his sphere of verbal references to include the artistic, Hawthorne stepped beyond the Puritan strictures against signs and art, questioning whether words were limited only to imitating the Word.\(^4\)

\(^4\) See Donohue's *Hawthorne*, Chapter 10, 265-309.
Hawthorne examines whether truth can be known through language by exploring some nineteenth century attitudes towards language: his own, wherein truth can only be apprehended by surrendering to tradition, imitating the "old Masters", and the Romantic's and Transcendentalist's wherein truth was only possible in a pantheistic and idealistic reunion with nature. Most important, Hawthorne proposes the possibility that artistic creations transform materials and abstracted ideas into new truths for the present. The Marble Faun explores whether art can represent reality by joining the creative and imaginative and allowing a union of the abstract and concrete, the sublime and the base, the spiritual and the earthly. The novel further questions whether this can be done when words are invested with limited power and are made to carry the burden of intent only through meaning; he questions the Puritan rhetorical scheme.

Unlike those in previous texts, Hawthorne's characters in The Marble Faun do not represent signs in only a typological, repetitive sense. While indeed the characters do represent types, they also engage in lengthy conversations

5 For the purpose of this discussion, the terms "art", "artist", or "artistic" will refer to painting and sculpture as well as architecture. Unless otherwise noted, "literature" and "writing" will be terms used for Hawthorne's profession.
which support as well as contradict their particular type. The very debates demonstrate man's ability to transform myths and traditions into significant, new meanings by a fusion of seeming opposites. A discussion of the ugly and beautiful by artists ("In Aesthetic Company") represents a fusing of the past's signs with present action to further explore the text of the world. Hawthorne, as author, likewise follows this pattern as he links the Puritan mistrust of language with a Renaissance appreciation for artistic possibility through representation. The result is a novel whose words, by indication and structure together with meaning, attempt to perform the same aesthetic function as a piece of art.

It was Hawthorne's European tour which impressed him with the effectiveness of visual representation as opposed to verbal. Upon viewing a cabinet of gems in the Ufizzi gallery, Hawthorne wrote that:

> it is idle to mention one or two things, when all are so beautiful and curious; idle, too, because language is not burnished gold, with here and there a brighter word flashing like a diamond, and therefore no amount of talk will give the slightest idea of these elaborate handiworks (XIV 375).

---

6 The withholding of Miriam's identity recalls Zenobia's hidden name and Hester's muted identity and embroidered sign; Hawthorne has by now created his own type by repeating this dark lady with a hidden sin. Miriam's character, however, contradicts what is expected in a conclusion tinged with hope, not sorrow.

7 All references to Hawthorne's works will be to the Centenary editions: The Marble Faun, volume IV and The French and Italian Notebooks, volume XIV, unless otherwise noted.
While the idea that words cannot imitate objects is not new to Hawthorne, he began to play with the discrepancy between the possibilities of communication with art as opposed to literature. In his notebooks, Hawthorne starts with a common description of Sienna Cathedral, but ends with:

in fine it seems as if the spectator were reading an antique volume, written in black-letter of a small character, but conveying a high and solemn meaning. I can find no way of expressing the effect on me (XIV 450).

Yet he had just described a piece of art in literary terms which equated the verbal force of words on a page with the visual force of architecture. This is how the descriptive, "unwieldy" passages in the novel attempt to parallel art: by placing artistic references side by side with action to elicit an aesthetic response from the reader. Hawthorne repeats this idea in the novel: "unless words were gems, that would flame, and throw thence a tremulous glimmer into the reader's eye, it were vain to attempt a description of a princely chapel" (347). Unless words could command the visual power of art, they were impotent. Interestingly enough, in striving for a physical representation of the word, Hawthorne would be duplicating Edward Taylor's desire to imitate the fusion of Christ the divine with Christ the man, by metaphorically joining seemingly disparate physical images within a single poem. The tension between art and

8 It was not possible for Hawthorne to have read Taylor, but the preacher serves as an excellent example of a Puritan attempting to resolve art and theology. For an
language in Taylor's work is similar to the tensions in *The Marble Faun*; but when Taylor's theological loyalties stray from the Calvinist line, he always brings them back into unity with Puritan religious thought. In a manner similar to Taylor's, Hawthorne's characters in *The Marble Faun* create tension by undermining their verbally created images and deferring to the necessity of faith in the face of God's mystery; only, unlike Taylor, images in the novel are allowed to expand to their logical conclusions.⁹ Instead of subordinating physical, human creations to the spiritual supremacy of the Word, characters seek to define and redefine themselves in and through art, not only through the Bible or through Biblical images. *The Marble Faun* proposes that the Word is evident in physical creation, not in words. Artistic truths therefore can identify spiritual ones, and the narrative questions the Puritan concept of degeneracy and thus debates the possibilities lodged in human signs.

This chapter will demonstrate the changed focus of Hawthorne's vision, as affected by his stay in Rome, by analysis of Taylor's work in these terms, see in particular Robert Daly's *God's Altar*.

⁹ As will be discussed, this tension centers on Donatello. Hilda frustrates the image, Taylor style, but Kenyon and Miriam allow the Adamic myth represented by Donatello to develop beyond religious strictures; thus they can discuss the *felix culpa* while Hilda cannot.
exploring the character development in the novel.\textsuperscript{10} By examining character and plot as well as symbol, it will be seen that Hawthorne attempted not to abandon his previously held concept of language usage, but to transform it into an artistic tool that would create a literary work which would carry the visible and emotional force of sculpture. The transformation of the rhetorical, historical and artistic past parallels within the narrative the transformation of the human race from the fall to the nineteenth century.

But despite this historical undercurrent, the emphasis on the artistic effect of the product is the reason why a chronological examination of the novel is not possible. In \textit{The Marble Faun} the work as a whole, as a piece of art, is the focus, not its realistic facts and narrative time line. Like a work of art, its "structure", its chronological place in the history of art, and its realism can be examined, but the novel explores both art and the human race at various stages of transformation. Donatello and Hilda initially represent the need for experience in order to obtain the ability to speak to the world; later they are awakened to the possibilities in the world but are capable of communicating to only a few; at various points, Miriam and Kenyon are able to create a whole view of the human situa-

\textsuperscript{10} Because of the ongoing debate on several levels within the novel - plot, character, description, narrative stance, use of artistic works, dialogue - the examination of Hawthorne's journals and letters will be taken up in Chapter Six.
tion and speak to many. The various levels of character development as indicated by their response to language and sign indicates the structure of the novel more accurately than any purely chronological review of action. Contrary to critical claims, Hawthorne did not totally fail in his conception or execution of the novel; rather, as the postscript sarcastically puns, his audience, concerned yet with the static, mimetic, factual nature of words, missed the "point".

****

It is now seven or eight years (so many, at all events, that I cannot precisely remember the epoch) since the Author of this Romance last appeared before the Public. It has grown custom with him, to introduce each ... to a character with whom he felt entitled to use far greater freedom... I never, therefore, concluded him to be merely a mythic character (Preface 1).

The Gentle Reader, we trust would not thank us for one of those minute elucidations, which are so tedious, and after all, so unsatisfactory, in clearing up the romantic mysteries of the story. He is too wise to insist upon looking closely at the wrong side of the tapestry after the right one has been sufficiently displayed to him (Chapter L 455).

Hawthorne begins and ends the novel by addressing the reader; in both cases the burden of interpretation, in a familiar Hawthorne manner, is laid before the reader. It is important to note, however, that the prologue mourns the death of Hawthorne's previously imagined "Gentle Reader"; the reader is now under Hester and Dimmesdale's "mossy
gravestone" (3). Coinciding with these images of death are references to ancient methods of communication: the "scrolls" were previously "flung upon whatever wind" (2), (referring to ancient hieroglyphics as well as oral delivery). Repeating his former emphasis on words, Hawthorne recalls that previous "letters" were sent "without a definite address," since the words' destiny and ultimate influence could not be accurately known or determined (2). However, the language system previously employed by Hawthorne, like his imagined reader, is dead; only a "half-obliterated" and unrecognized memory of these remain for him.

The oral performance over, Hawthorne as author makes his "most reverential bow, and retire[s] behind the curtain" after setting forth "a few particulars about the work which is here offered to the Public" (2). While removing himself from the focus of attention seems no different than his hiding behind the veil, the results in terms of narrative point of view are significant for the narrator does reappear throughout the novel; he reappears each time "transformed", raised from the dead so to speak, as he supports various points of view and demands that his readers similarly "rise" to the challenge. Once Hawthorne dispenses with the former reader and author, the new author and reader emerge in an arena, "where actualities would not be so terribly insisted upon, as they are, and must needs be, in America" (3). He
speaks no more to an anticipated audience as much as to an audience which might anticipate him; from the beginning of the novel he thwarts expectations.

Unlike his other novels, the opening of *The Marble Faun* focuses on neither the group nor the individual but on both, on "Four individuals, in whose fortunes we should be glad to interest the reader, [who] happened to be standing in one of the saloons of the sculpture gallery, in the Capitol, at Rome" (5). 11 This first of many tableaux holds "'brief snatches of time'" in suspense because, as Miriam says, "'a story can be so much more fully told, in picture, and buttressed about with circumstances that give it an epoch'" (17). Miriam defends painting against Kenyon's sculptural "'fossilizing process'" (17). Yet Hawthorne combines the two arts, -- the one granting scope, the other minimizing the focus -- in his description of the first scene. Not only does the narrative begin with this visual representation of art, but the readers of this opening scene become, like the four, an observer within the gallery of the novel, inspecting the portrayals which stand in suspension before their eyes. Hawthorne stops before this picture of four to describe the surrounding environment; the description of art

11 *The Blithedale Romance* begins with Coverdale's emphasis on the self, and *The Scarlet Letter* begins with the crowd's attention focused on the prison door. In *The Marble Faun* the focus is immediately on the group, the individual and art.
offers the symbolic setting within which action will take place. The reader is shown

all famous productions of antique sculpture...still shining in the undiminished majesty and beauty of their ideal life, although the marble, that embodies them, is yellow with time, and perhaps a little corroded by the damp earth in which they lay buried for centuries (5).

Allowing the "all" in this quotation to include the characters and the readers, and "marble" to indicate the material body, this first gallery description identifies one side of humanity, worn by time -- corroded with earthly contact, yet with ideal beauty "still shining" through.

As positive as this image is, it is not left as a paean to humanism, for a "corroded" image yokes it to the Puritan idea of degeneracy. While the beauty still shines before the readers' eyes, Hawthorne points to a sculpture in the same gallery of

likewise...a symbol as apt, at this moment, as it was two thousand years ago, of the Human Soul, with its choice of Innocence or Evil close at hand, in the pretty figure of a child, clasping a dove to her bosom, but assaulted by a snake" (5).

Whereas the description of the previous sculpture emphasized the material substance which shields an inner beauty, this analysis begins with a spiritual image of the soul and moves outward to the earthly elements. While the first description was written in sweeping terms indicating the positive side of all representative sculpture, this time a particular piece is laid before the reader and negatively interpreted. The sculpture's allegory is neatly packaged in
an ironic example of Puritan theology: the child has a "choice"; yet her choice is obviated by the fore-knowledge of any observer: it is a picture of what will surely happen -- it is a predestined contact with evil -- a fall from innocence. With these two representations, Hawthorne sets forth the dialectic which runs through the novel. As Dauber recognizes: "The Marble Faun therefore, alternates between elaborate interpretation and confession of the poverty of interpretation" (202). Dauber, however, sees this as a problem, failing to recognize that the novel does not "confess" but questions interpretative methods of the past and holds these against the transforming possibilities of art.

As in the sculpture, the novel continually recognizes that man has fallen and will continue to do so, with evil and sin shadowing his innocence. Yet characters suggest that though man is corroded by earth and set upon by his enemies -- time and degeneracy -- he still maintains an ideal beauty which at moments shines forth by efforts of artistic imagination that join the earthly and the spiritual. Hawthorne no longer proposes that fiction find that space between moonlight and firelight, between heaven and earth, but that the two spheres join together and transform each other into a communicable sign. The central force behind this dialectic lay not only in the contrasting passages such as those cited, but most notably in the figure of the European
Donatello. His foil, the other "innocent" in the novel, is the American Hilda; it is she who rhetorically represents the Puritan figure of earlier Hawthorne novels.

Hilda is a "daughter of the Puritans". As with Hawthorne's earlier characters, she is removed from Eden and has degenerated according to her historical place in time. But because of her artistic talent, Hilda represents more: she is a copyist whose "art is simply another mode of her spiritual intuition and sympathy with holiness, and practically speaking, is a form of devotion" (Von Abele 18). Like a Biblical exegete, she consults the "old Masters" and copies their work, adding her own insight, "a worshipper of their genius in giving the last divine touch to her repetitions of their work" (58). As representative of the Puritan method of textual examination, Hilda pierces the surface image, believing herself capable of displaying the sign because she is guided by its creator's "spirit". As did the Puritan minister in his sermon, she concentrates on one small portion of a larger work, and with that concentration exposes "some high, noble, and delicate portion of it" (58).

The narrator praises her "thus sacrificing herself to the devout recognition of the highest excellence in art". She does not "cultivate her own ideas" (60) just as the seventeenth century sermonizer was warned to curb his imagination in favor of imitation. Hilda's function, like that of a preacher, was to be an instrument for the Word;
she was sympathetic to audience and message, able to communicate what had already been said. If left to her own reservoir of ideas, she would be prey to the degenerate imagination which would cause her to turn out "pretty fancies of snow and moonlight; the counterpart, in picture, of so many feminine achievements in literature" (61). This will not happen as long as she ignores the earthly in her pursuit of perfection, as long as she "looks at expression more than outline" (18). As a Puritan representative, Hilda sets out to

'recreate the world' through a visionary act... [but] her vision can only sustain itself so long as it remains unconscious of its world's fabrication, so long as it looks through its material object rather than at it, so long as it can elude or overcome the model (Carton 260).

Like the Puritan seeking to penetrate the sign to the essential Word, Hilda represents a Calvinist artist (and the American who produces Romances) whose pictures of the world lacked the reality which comes only from a close acquaintance with life, but so softly touched with feeling and fancy, that you seemed to be looking at humanity with angel's eyes. With years of experience, she might be expected to attain a darker and more forcible touch, which would impart to her designs the relief needed (II 55).

Hilda, true daughter of the Puritan, does not lack emotion, but her sympathy stems from an intellectual definition of the term not from experience. Hilda's intellect remains in control of her emotions and will. In demonstrations of her ability to overcome emotion, Hilda's dialogue would have
pleased John Cotton. Struck by the beauty of Hilda's Beatrice, Miriam is "'deeply sensible of its influences'"; yet she "'cannot seize'" the feeling apprehended in Beatrice's face (65). "'Nor can I, in words,'" replied her friend [Hilda]. "'But, while I was painting her, I felt all the time '"

(65), and then she proceeds to detail, in words, Beatrice's feelings. Just as Calvin used to deny there were words for God's mysteries and then proceed to explain them for thirty pages, so too Hilda is swept into an analysis of Beatrice by a need to interpret. Her feelings momentarily escape her until she is brought back by Miriam's inquiry as to "'Whether...there was no sin in the deed for which she suffered?'" (66).

"Ah," replied Hilda shuddering, "I really had quite forgotten Beatrice's history, and was thinking of her only as the picture seems to reveal her character. Yes, Yes: it was a terrible guilt, an inexpiable crime...Her doom is just!" (66).12

Recognizing that the outward sign is misleading her, Hilda controls her personal involvement by harnessing emotions and relying on logic. She vacillates between opening herself to possibilities and censoring them in favor of logic. When her religious beliefs are challenged on the basis of feeling, her response is avoidance - a Puritan characteristic reminiscent of Dimmesdale and Coverdale. Miriam asks of the Faun of Praxiteles:

12 This is reminiscent of Coverdale's impersonal judgement that the Blithedalers' tragic endings were quite "just".
"He is not supernatural, but just on the verge of Nature, and yet within it. What is the nameless charm of this idea, Hilda? You can feel it more delicately than I."

"It perplexes me," said Hilda, thoughtfully, and shrinking a little, "neither do I quite like to think about it" (13).

That anything could exist on the verge - a blend of earthly and spiritual - contradicts the Puritan concept of degenerate man, wherein all is either black or white. The symbol most representative of this Puritan view is, appropriately, Hilda's tower, described as "worthy to be Jacob's ladder, or, at all events, the staircase to the Tower of Babel" (53). This reflects the choices for Puritan Hilda in the novel; she will fall into either a "legitimate way to the divine, or a misguided effort that ends in the corruption and disunity of language" (Sutherland 89). Puritan rhetoric will not allow for the transforming power of an art which joins opposites, and thus rather than stand on the "verge" herself, Hilda is forced to fall on one or the other side when faced with Miriam and Donatello's crime. The Puritan cannot resolve the moral paradox within a strict theological system built on words denoting good and evil, allowing no shades of possibility in between.

Forced to contemplate the literal "sermons in the stones" (151) of the Tarpian Rock, Hilda finds her "Iron framework" (288) -- her system of moral law delineated by a language allowing for only a right or a wrong -- is under seige.

"The struggle between the forces of light and darkness,
between the church and the Antichrist, gave meaning to history...this conflict not only explained the past, but it also cast its lines into the future" (Middlehof 58); Hilda begins to see shades of grey. She is now forced to recognize not only the earthly sign but also the spiritual ideal targeted by language; this culminates in her loss of sympathy with art: she is now forced to acknowledge that outline and essence comprise the whole. Hawthorne comments in the French and Italian notebooks that "when their material embodiments presents themselves outermost, and we perceive them only by the grosser sense, missing their ethereal spirit, there is nothing so heavily burthensome as masterpieces of painting and sculpture" (429). So with Hilda, once in the tower of heaven, now in the Tower of Babel; her world is fragmented by the recognition that signs are comprised of earthly dross also and she no longer can interpret these signs as spiritual indicators. Within her turmoil, she now believes that the Old Masters she worshipped "were not human, nor addressed their works to human sympathies, but to a false intellectual taste, which they themselves were the first to create" (336).

Hilda's weariness of art is justification, in Puritan terms, that "a taste for pictorial art is often no more than a polish upon the hard surface of an artificial character" (339). The implication, were a reader to choose it, is that Hilda's formerly "artificial character" is
undergoing a transformation. First, Hilda halts the change by denying Miriam with a gesture; words fail to work for Hilda because, as she will find with art, "truth" is not revealed to her in these signs. The narrator explains that the character of our individual beloved one having invested itself with all the attributes of right... when he falls...we stare about us, and discover... that it was not actually the sky that has tumbled down, but merely a frail structure of our own rearing, which never rose higher than the house-tops, and has fallen because we founded it on nothing (328-29).

When Hilda's images fall, so does the verbal system which formerly ordered the balance between head and heart. She turns to pictorial art as a substitute for evoking a resolution to what lies within, but she likewise "doubted whether the pictorial art be not altogether a delusion" (336). Her Puritan background leads her to this conclusion because on the one hand she says "there is always the necessity of helping out the painter's art with your own resources of sensibility and imagination", yet ultimately she believes there is only one interpretation that can be reached. Because the rigidity of her theology does not allow for the visible reality witnessed by Hilda, she wishes to fling the knowledge of evil, the "dreadful secret into an endless cavern" (329), so as to resume her polarized view of the world.

In Puritan expiation, she must "go public" even if it is only in the Catholic confessional. There, the Puritan daughter finds refuge, not in a resolution between the
spiritual and temporal as symbolized by the priest, but in the supremacy of the public word. The English translation of the Latin words "PRO ANGLICA LINGUA" draws her to the confessional box: "It was the word in season!...She did not think; she only felt. Within her heart was a great need. Close at hand, within the veil of the confessional, was the relief" (357). Resorting to the secrecy of words, the veil of language, Hilda proceeds, as is true of Dimmesdale on the scaffold and pulpit, to name the evil which surrounds her; choosing to climb the Tower of Babel, Hilda uses language as an escape. In so doing she is both following the Calvinist line and unknowingly giving credence to the Puritan vision of man's degeneracy since the fall; words mask the material reality instead of resolving the moral dilemma. Rather than admit to the possibility of good and evil within the same structure -- even though that philosophy has always lurked within the paradoxical Puritan attitude towards language -- Hilda continues to exercise her "faculty...of ignoring all the moral blotches in a character that won her admiration. She purified objects of her regard by the mere act of turning such spotless eyes upon them" (338).

13 The narrator points out the rigidity of a system dependent on law and language when he notes that there was not "spiritual advantage...at all in our own formless mode of worship, which, besides, so far as the sympathy of prayerful souls is concerned, can be enjoyed only at stated and too infrequent periods" (IV 346).
Hilda says she returns to a polarized vision of the world because

"there is, I believe, only one right and one wrong; and I do not understand (and may God keep me from ever understanding) how two things so totally unalike can be mistaken for one another; nor how two mortal foes -- as Right and Wrong surely are -- can work together in the same deed. This is my faith" (384).

For Hilda, as for the Puritans, human creations are false and insubstantial: "now that she had known such a reality, ...it taught her to distinguish inevitably the large portion that is unreal, in every work of art" (375). She now questions how "holiness" could "be rewarded to the artists of an age when the greatest of them put genius and imagination in the place of spiritual insight, and when, from the Pope downward, all Christendom was corrupt" (375).

Her emotional self was not destroyed - merely subordinated to reason; she is still able to respond to Kenyon's Cleopatra and art as a means of communication.

Puritans actually did not condemn the role of the affections in writing and speech. Rather they merely contended that the literary expression of emotion, particularly in figurative language, should remain subordinate to logic and reason... one's literary style should reflect the whole man, with reason presiding over but not choking off the affections (Scheick 104).

But with her morality intact, Hilda remains more in control and sees herself "less pliable to the influence of other minds" (375). Signs as represented in art haven't the power to carry truth for Hilda because they are touched with the degenerate human spirit. This, however, is only one side of
the dialectic in *The Marble Faun*; the other is represented by Donatello.

Whereas the "Battle-maiden", Hilda, represents as staunch a polar position as her name indicates, the very use of the name "Donatello" points to the importance of resolution or "Transformation" as the title of the English edition of *The Marble Faun* indicated. The historical Donatello was known to Hawthorne -- who had viewed and commented on his sculpture in the gallery (XIV 494) -- and the sculptor was considered one of the fathers of the Italian Renaissance; he was the first since the Romans to return to three dimensional representation. But more important to this discussion, Donatello was hailed for his ability to join the common with the beautiful, the real and the mythic, the earthly and the spiritual, in sculpture which both alarmed yet impressed its viewers with truth and beauty. Hawthorne's Donatello represents a similar resolution in *The Marble Faun*. Beginning with the unknown (and unwritten) past, Hawthorne's faun progresses through an evolutionary growth, through his fall, to his enlightenment. Such an encounter encompasses not only history and myth, but literature and art as well. It is therefore apt that Hawthorne chose the name "Donatello" for his faun, for the mythic figure stood between the animal and human sphere and the historical sculptor transformed man's ideas about art by joining the human and spiritual, thus influencing the
philosophical view that prompted the Renaissance celebration of human creativity.

In *The Marble Faun* the state of Donatello prior to the murder of Miriam's model has been critically well-analyzed. The faun, originally in a "natural" state, repeats the Adamic fall and, through actions variously interpreted, transforms into a whole, though fallen, human, capable of sorrow. There is just a shadow of suggestion that he will eventually be capable of happiness. The pattern of his change likewise follows historically and artistically, the degeneration of myth and classicism, and the dark ages dominated by the Catholic Church, ending, for Donatello, somewhere in the seventeenth century where severe law as interpreted by man is still seen as comparable to God's law. That Donatello will progress "historically" is again, merely hinted, but the fact that he has evolved at all is contrary to the stasis maintained by Hilda. This movement can be traced in Donatello's changed speech and gesture which eventually imitates the resolution lodged in the sculptor Donatello's art: signs cannot be wholly imaginative or spiritual because the world is neither one nor the other. Donatello cannot remain in a mythical world nor a world of gesture because he is in a world where extremes meet and are transformed.

14 See any discussion of the novel, but most notably, the recent works of Donohue, Lloyd-Smith or Sutherland.
Initially, Donatello is too much the faun. This physical resemblance between the real man and the figures of art and myth as indicated in the first chapter, heralds the other side of the dialectic: the imaginative and the real (i.e., truth) can be embodied in art, and, similarly, that art can embody this reality by its action on the senses and intellect. Donatello, the "strange, yet true and natural conception of antique poetry and art" (10) joins words and art, myth and religious tradition with the present reality. The mythic "natural man" was a mixture of "neither man, [as we know him] nor animal, yet no monster, but a being in whom both races meet, on friendly ground" (10). But Donatello lives in the nineteenth century, not Eden. The physical reality is a combination of past elements transformed into present truth.

Like the Faun of Praxiteles, Donatello contains "the essence of all" the woodland traits as well as those "within that discolored marble surface" (10). The nature of each -- myth, marble and man -- was communicated to others in the novel not by words, but by form. Donatello therefore relied on gesture and movement which were "doubtless the language of natural man; though laid aside and forgotten by other men, now that words have been feebly substituted in place of

15 "Truth" begins to include not only the tangible but the imaginative. The distinction here is between the ability for a truth to be communicated only by God through his word and the ability of man to apprehend truth just as effectively by viewing his own creations.
signs and symbols" (77-78). Such a view of the natural man corresponds to the words of the nineteenth century German philosopher, Schlegel; Donatello had

grasped the precise relation between sound and concept with an intuition ...denied to man today who, 'having lost these faculties, would not know how to explain this relation between sign and the thing signified which an infallible intuition revealed to our ancestors (Aarsleff 385).

This nineteenth century view, though a romantic one known to Hawthorne, incorporates the Puritan vision of man's language before the fall and appears in this description of the faun:

It was seldom Donatello's impulse to express himself copiously in words. His usual modes of demonstration were by the natural language of gesture, the instinctive movement of his agile frame, and the unconscious play of his features, which, within a limited range of thought, and emotion, could speak volumes in a moment (77).

The novel indicates that this form which speaks louder than words has not disappeared from the race. It is still apparent in the plastic arts where movement is arrested and must speak for greater truths than can the flat appearance of words on a page. Donatello as a muted image of man's Adamic nature, has a "limited range of thought, and emotion". These are of course ascribed to his relatively pristine state -- a state with little language and much gesture. Such a state reappears in the arts which, unlike language which relies on words to suggest images, rely on gesture, as did Donatello. In fact, gesture, rather than language, direct the tableaux in all the climactic scenes of the novel: within the catacombs emerges "a figure standing
just in the doubtful limit of obscurity, at the threshold of
the small, illuminated chapel" (29); the benediction scene
in Perugia ends with a sudden moment frozen in time (324);
and of course, the glance which passes between Miriam and
Donatello is the visual gesture which causes all subsequent
action: "'I did what your eyes bade me do, when I asked them
with mine, as I held the wretch over the precipice'" (172).

As the mythical Donatello's innocence dissolves, language
replaces gesture. Patterning language development in
mankind, Donatello becomes verbal and precise as he now
stands "in the glow of that intelligence which passion had
developed in him" (173). The images of awakening which
surround this emergence concentrate on the aural and verbal.
Imitating a sleeper awaking from a deep slumber: Donatello's
voice hardly made its way through the environment of
unaccustomed thoughts and emotions, which had settled
over him like a darkened cloud. Not improbably, he
beheld Miriam through so dim a medium that she looked
visionary; heard her speak only in a thin, faint echo
(201). 16

Whereas before Donatello was an artless, natural man of
gesture, his gestures are silenced by knowledge and he
struggles to formulate an expression for this knowledge.
Kenyon notes the child-like progress of Donatello's speech:
"the sculptor could not but smile at the triteness of

16 Hawthorne later uses images from Plato's allegory of
the cave to describe the "dark caverns, into which all men
must descend....And when they emerge, though dazzled and
blinded by the first glare of daylight, they take truer and
sadder views of life, forever afterwards" (262).
[Donatello's] remark....He [the faun] had thought it out from his own experience, and perhaps considered himself as communicating a new truth to mankind" (218).

As Donatello becomes more verbally facile, Kenyon finds himself preferring the faun's simple tales to "information offered by ...musty documents" which lay in the library at Monte Beni (236). In the telling of the tale of Monte Beni, the fountain nymph-statue and frescoes acquire meaning with the additions of language and imagination. Oral myth and visual art become interchanged with the present reality so that within the one the other gains possibility. Neither is effaced but rather the presence of each is required for meaning. While these artistic, historical and natural shapes should help give meaning to Donatello's new language, Kenyon finds the faun (like Hilda at the same time) unable to respond to signs, locked in a purely self-referential prison. Like Hilda, Donatello wearies of the art which once pleased him; only Kenyon, the artist, is able to appreciate the combination of art and language. As a Puritan might deny as a cure for despondency, the tempting beauty of Monte Beni, so too do Donatello's old haunts fail to speak to him (216). He, in turn, no longer speaks to the animals for his voice, though able to mimic their calls, is belied by his physical self; his ability to repeat the Eden-like gestures has been lost (217).
Oral communication is prominent in the section at Monte Beni as Donatello seeks definition for his "awakening" but it is likewise an unwelcome burden for the formerly carefree faun. Previously, language and its daughters, law and religion, had no hold on Donatello; now they rule the scenes which follow his fall from innocence. Running from the law, he turns to the strictures of religion, and in a Puritan gesture, the faun attempts to throw "a cloud over [his] transparency" (250) by "thrusting" down his emotions -- throwing a veil over his formerly open expression. The veiled image is not the only one surfacing in this section which recalls other Hawthornean/Puritan discussions. Donatello is "now involved in a musty bewilderment of grievous thought, amid which he seemed to go struggling blindfold" (261-62). The struggle catapults Donatello into a turmoil paralleling Hilda's labyrinthine wandering through the galleries; but Donatello's solution is much different than hers.

When Kenyon speaks to Miriam at Monte Beni, he outlines the evolution of man's religious and historical mind, from a simple form of communication to a system ruled by structured forms evident in the formation of language, to the current state of Donatello. Progressing from a state of mythical "ideal", Donatello works himself through the rituals and words of religion paralleling Hilda's black and white vision of the world:
the germs of faculties, that have heretofore slept, are fast springing into activity. The world of thought is disclosing itself to his inward sight. He startles me at times with his perception of deep truths;...and by the intermixture of his former simplicity with a new intelligence" (282).

Kenyon concludes that "'Out of his bitter agony, a soul and intellect... have been inspired into him'" (282). The re-creation caused by an inspiration is here performed by Donatello. He is working his way through the patterns already established by those before him, and creating his own symbol system - a system which will both define the world and yet speak to him. Before Donatello becomes locked within any particular set of images -- most notably the Puritan or Catholic -- Kenyon notes that he

"needs a variety of thought... After his recent profound experience, he will re-create the world by the new eyes with which he will regard it. He will escape, I hope, out of a morbid life, to find his way into a heavenly one" (284).

The re-creation by Donatello the faun parallels the re-creation by Donatello the sculptor. While on his pilgrimage to Perugia, it is doubtful whether the faun can dispel the black veil which clouds his vision. Silence and language alternate as primary modes of communication until words become increasingly vital as Miriam is denied the one means by which her connection with Donatello is solidified - his verbal assent. He has "not a word to respond" early on (200), and afterwards ignores her presence in Monte Beni as well as on his pilgrimage; it is likewise a word from him for which Miriam waits at the fountain in Perugia. The word
is slow in coming, for Donatello has had to learn a new language. It is not until the meeting at the fountain where a single word is expressed -- Miriam's name -- that Donatello undergoes a transformation.\footnote{Evident in the speaking of a woman's name which begins a transformation through \textit{re-creation} is a pattern of the Word made flesh through the Incarnation.}

In a meeting of gesture and language, implication and fact, Donatello speaks a word whose force is equivalent, metaphorically, to the Word of creation.

Though but a single word, the first that he had spoken, its tone was a warrant of the sad and tender depth from which it came. It told Miriam things of infinite importance, and first of all, that he still loved her. ...The tone too bespoke an altered and deepened character; it told of a vivified intellect, and of spiritual instruction...he was now a man of feeling and intelligence (319).

Donatello had transformed ideas, had "enabled them by the sincerity of his reception," (323) and had likewise been transformed by them. Such an image of the Word, speaks of a continual transforming power, dependent upon transformation, not stasis, for its truth. What is interesting about the character of Donatello is that the flux continues to the end of the book.

Just as periods of stasis need periods of flux, so too Donatello's dance in the Borghese Gardens was before that kind of "pleasure had been darkened with those shadows that bring it into high relief" (84). Beginning in Perugia, Donatello is free to create his own life, yet he succumbs to
the morality of the Italian government. He examines his reasons intelligently to Kenyon; yet later, his voice is heard through a mask and "rendered remote and strange by the guilty veil through which it penetrated" (393). It is difficult to determine Donatello's fate for we see him last through the distraught Kenyon's eyes. Moreover, Donatello's fate is left purposely unresolved with only a hint of hope at the very end of the first edition of the novel. Hilda sees "sunshine on the mountain top", and one can only hope it is Monte Beni. But the novel does not resolve the artistic question through Donatello by having him flee, guilt-free into the Italian sunrise. Instead the play and counterplay is continued between the darkness and light which interacts with all characters at some point; there is no resolution as to which side of the "verge" Donatello will fall. This decision depends totally on the reference point of each viewer which then completes the "high relief" established by the work itself.

Similarly, by joining beauty with ugliness, shadow with light, Donatello the sculptor created three dimensional works which changed as one walked around them, which changed with perspective and time while still remaining constant in form. The juxtaposition of viewpoints determining the faun's fate parallels the "high relief" created by

---

18 For an analysis of what this means for Hilda, see Donohue's Hawthorne, Chapter 10, especially 294-95.
complimentary elements in sculpture. The existence of various view points places the burden of creation on both the artist and on those for whom the artist creates. The artist can present the moment's truth as it is visualized by himself in form, material substance, but the viewer must respond to the work. Within the novel, multiple points of view perform the same function. Refusing or unable to close with a moral imperative, Hawthorne instead offers a sculpture which, depending on its viewers' perspectives, will suggest a personal value.

While Hilda delineates the Puritan position and Donatello exemplifies the evolution towards a resolution of the Word and the word, Kenyon and Miriam guide the readers through the gallery of choices. The novel offers these two as balancing points and therefore neither offers the definitive "word". Unlike the definite good/evil characters of previous works, these two variously represent the choices offered by the novel. The characters of Kenyon and Miriam initially align themselves, respectively, with Donatello and the model, and thereby form counterpoints to the development of each.

Kenyon's position as sculptor offers discussion in the novel of the relationship of creator to created:

The sculptor has but to present [his assistants] with a plaister-cast [sic] of his design, and a sufficient block of marble, and tell them the figure is embedded in the stone, and must be freed from its encumbering superfluities; and, in due time, without the necessity of his touching the work with his own
finger, he will see before him the statue that is to make him renowned. His creative power has wrought it with a word (115).

This is a provocative description of creation, and, depending on one's point of view, can be interpreted as an example of man's daring to equate himself with God, or as a pattern of creation itself. God "wrought...with a word", and all else followed by his direction; yet -- if free will be allowed -- action occurred after creation without his "touch". The visit to Kenyon's studio also elicits comments on predestination (116) and degeneracy (123). Moreso, his statue of Cleopatra allows for a discussion of nudity in art. While Freudians and the followers of Lacan may analyze this section in psychological terms, it is also consistent with Hawthorne's concepts of history, degeneration and art. The confrontation between Miriam and Kenyon again clarifies two sides of the dialectic in the novel. Momentarily, as Miriam is tied to the model, her view is obscured, her words indicative of a dark system similar to Puritanism wherein signs indicate meanings which can never be known. Miriam comments in this same section that, "'As these busts in the block of marble, ...so does our individual fate exist in the limestone of Time. We fancy that we carve it out; but its ultimate shape is prior to all our action'" (116). Such a view seems indicative of predestination, but Miriam's fatalism is in part due to her association with a dark presence that obscures all signs. Miriam doesn't "'under-
stand what they [classical sculptures] have to say to this generation" (123). Her view of a degenerate race unable to clearly apprehend signs parallels the Puritan's vision of art. Kenyon, however, counters that:

"I shall steadfastly believe that future sculptors will revive this noblest of beautiful arts, and people the world with new shapes of delicate grace and massive grandeur. Perhaps...mankind will consent to wear a more manageable costume; or, at worst, we sculptors shall get skill to make broadcloth transparent, and render a majestic human character visible through the coats and trowsers [sic] of the present day" (124-25).

Here, Kenyon proposes the debate running counter to Hilda's vision, -- that signs will change in their shape as well as meaning, and further, that they will "render a majestic human character visible through the coats and trowsers of the present day". The outer structures of the present will be transformed in the future and the creative act will further allow a look at man's positive nature. The debate continues in this section as Miriam asks to see Kenyon's latest sculpture, yet says

"Tell me first what is the subject...for I have sometimes incurred great displeasure...by being too obtuse to puzzle out the purport.... It is so difficult, you know, to compress and define a character or story, and make it patent at a glance" (125).

With Puritan-like caution, Miriam wants her interpretation directed, but her comments further delineate the difference between bad artists who "first finish their groups of statuary...and then...choose the subject" (125), and good artists who produce powerful art, as represented in Kenyon's
Cleopatra. Symbolically, Kenyon removes the veil covering the piece and the narrator devotes a two page description to the historically accurate, emotionally forceful piece of art which speaks to its present viewers. Astonished, Miriam asks how he did it, and Kenyon replies, "'It is the concretion of a good deal of thought, emotion and toil of brain and hand.... But I know not how it came about, at last. I kindled a great fire within my mind, and threw in the material'" (127). Displaying a Puritan balance of thought, emotion and hard work, Kenyon tips the theological scale in favor of inspiration and imagination. This is only indicative of an uneven mixture of the Puritan and the artist lodged within Kenyon which at this moment tends towards the artist, a position maintained throughout his stay at Monte Beni.

Challenged by Donatello's depression, Kenyon attempts to draw him out through the saving graces of art, and through nature, art's companion. Pointing to the inability of language and to the bond between natural signs and art, Kenyon notes that

"A cloud, however, (as I myself have experienced) is apt to grow solid, and as heavy as a stone, the instant that you take in hand to describe it. But, in my own art, I have found great use in clouds. Such... have often suggested sculpturesque groups, figures, attitudes" (265).

Kenyon claims his art springs from the inspiration of natural objects which therefore are linked through the act of creation to God's creation. The act of creation in turn
presents an opportunity for man's inner resources -- his abstract imagination -- to join with natural substances and become concrete truths. This most naturally occurs at Monte Beni with Kenyon's sculpture of Donatello. Though Kenyon concentrated on his subject, it wasn't until the "last accidental touches, with which he hurriedly effaced the look of deadly rage... [that] the features of an antique Faun, [were] now illuminated with a higher meaning, such as the old marble never bore" (273-74). Just as Kenyon could not create the faun in clay until he let loose his own restricted image of Donatello and allowed an inner knowledge to take over, so too Donatello, now bound by the structures of language (law and religion) is preventing his own transformation. In a continuation of the debate in the novel, Kenyon later attempts to explain to Donatello, signs are like Milton's "'dim, religious, light" transmitted through painted glass'". However, says Kenyon, Milton should "'have illuminated that word, "dim," with some epithet that should not chase away the dimness, yet should make it glow like a million rubies, sapphires, emeralds, and topazes'" (305). But Donatello sees only "God's wrath", in a church window not its beauty, and maintains "Each must interpret for himself'" (305). The narrator comments here about looking at the window from the outside where "the combined scheme and purport of the picture" could not be discerned: "That miracle of radiant art, thus viewed, was
nothing better than an incomprehensible obscurity, without a gleam of beauty to induce the beholder to attempt unravelling it" (306). While each must interpret, Donatello is in danger of seeing no beauty where it does exist; he is looking at the wrong side of the tapestry and ignorant of the "combined scheme and purport of the picture." Kenyon continues to provoke and challenge Donatello's vision of the world, darkened, like Miriam's by its contact with the model, until the fountain in Perugia.

There are three transformations at the fountain in Perugia. Certainly, Miriam and Donatello are joined and transformed by each other. But Kenyon suddenly changes also, for here Kenyon turns from art objects to words as a means of expression; in the process, he becomes overwhelmingly Puritan. When Donatello and Miriam unite, Kenyon, who "stood watching the scene with earnest sympathy" (in Coverdale's fashion), decides to

"thrust himself between the two solely concerned in a crisis like the present....I may yet discern somewhat of truth that is hidden from you both -- may -- at end, interpret or suggest some ideas which you might not so readily convey to each other" (321).

Kenyon's words begin with encouragement though he recognizes the emptiness of his attempt:

"I shall not succeed in uttering the few, deep words which (in this matter, as in all others) include the absolute truth. But...the mysterious process, by which our earthly life instructs us for another state of being was begun for you by her" (321).

Then, however, this artist-turned-orator becomes as pessimistic as a seventeenth century preacher:
"not for earthly bliss, therefore... but for mutual elevation and encouragement towards a severe and painful life, you take each other's hands. And if, out of toil, sacrifice, prayer, penitence, and earnest effort towards right things, there come, at length, a somber and thoughtful happiness, taste it, and thank Heaven" (312).

Faced with the happiness of two who broke "the law", Kenyon's American Puritanism rises to the surface and he begins to speak of "interpretation", "painful life", "sacrifice, prayer, [and] penitence". 19

From here on the influence of artistic Rome loses its hold on Kenyon. He does propose to Hilda that she cannot understand

"what a mixture of good there may be in things evil; and how the greatest criminal, if you look at his conduct from his own point of view, or from any side-point, may seem not so unquestionably guilty, after all" (383).

But as Hilda's sympathies changed for Beatrice once she recalled "the crime", so too she denies the possibility that black could be intertwined with white. When Kenyon momentarily does suggest the idea of a fortunate fall, Hilda bids him "'Hush!'", a familiar term from The Scarlet Letter, and he does:

"Forgive me Hilda!... I never did believe it! But the mind wanders wild and wide; ... Were you my guide, my counsellor, my inmost friend, with that white wisdom which clothes you as with a celestial

19 Dauber points out in his analysis of the novel that "Interpreting alone remains an action that never yields results" (211). We have so far seen Donatello, Miriam and Hilda engage in this truism; now Kenyon succumbs.
garment, all would go well, Oh, Hilda guide me home!" (460-61).

And of course, she does.

Previously sure of his convictions, Kenyon's life becomes filled with verbal ambiguities as he relies more and more on words: for the distraught Kenyon, Donatello and Miriam offer enigmatic words of comfort about Hilda's disappearance (324); the priest offers comfort to Kenyon which is not comfort (416); Kenyon receives word from an "unknown hand" which communicates little (417); Donatello's voice at the carnival is strangely muffled to Kenyon; and words "seen" on the inevitable Hawthornean tombstones are wiped away along with remembrances of their occupants (420). On the Campagna Kenyon looks "'for Hilda, and find[s] a marble woman. Is the omen good or evil?'" he asks (423). Art is now a physical "omen", unable to be read by its former fellow creator; it no longer speaks to Kenyon. As his final choice, Kenyon clearly exchanges art for Hilda; when confronted with the discovery of a new Venus, he rejects it for Hilda: "He could hardly, we fear, be reckoned a consum­mate artist, because there was something dearer to him than his art" (424). Nina Baym comments on such shifts of tone when she notes that during the last carnival scene, when Kenyon is hit by Hilda's flower, "at the same time he is also hit by a cauliflower, and one is tempted to imagine that Hawthorne himself has hurled this expression of contempt for the sculptor's pitiful weakness" (113).
Fallen into the web of interpretation, Kenyon resorts to Calvin's imagery as he remembers how the four friends "had lived happily together, before the mysterious adventure of the catacombs. What a succession of sinister events had followed one spectral figure out of that gloomy labyrinth" (426). The transformation which had moved Donatello closer to realizing a balance, pushes Kenyon back to America and his Puritan inheritance. Such a resolution is not reached by Miriam, who shows American and European traits, as well as Puritan and artistic qualities.

Miriam stands for the more sophisticated reality of Europe, older, more self-conscious -- humanity full-blown rather than in the bud -- for which Catholicism was a more adequate morality because it acknowledged and accommodated itself to good and evil, growth and decay, squalor and beauty, egotism and devotion, as operable within the Providential scheme" (Abel 21).

In the course of the novel, Miriam moves beyond using words to find meaning and truth -- in fact she rebels against language's ability -- and becomes reliant on gesture.

In the beginning of The Marble Faun, Miriam conveys as much ambiguity with her words and actions as she is mysterious about her patronage:

She resembled one of those images of light, which conjurors evoke and cause to shine before us in apparent tangibility, only at arms length beyond our grasp: we make a step in advance, expecting to seize the illusion, but find it still precisely so far out of our reach (21).

Miriam cannot quite be "read". She is "an actor...an alien in the world" (92) who, like Coverdale, hides behind facades comprised of words and non-action: "She approached the edge
of a voiceless gulf between herself and them. Standing on the utmost verge, she might stretch out her hand, and never clasp a hand of theirs" (113). Miriam's refusal to put her agony into words separates her from humanity as much as Donatello's language of gesture separates him. While words have described the alienation of Miriam from others, it is the work of art which brings together the abstract description with the concrete person. The narrator comments after his description of the Beatrice Cenci picture, that "we forbore to speak descriptively of Miriam's beauty earlier in our narrative, because we foresaw this occasion to bring it perhaps more forcibly before the reader" (48-49). Such a meeting of concrete and abstract is already presaged by the atmosphere of Miriam's studio, "admitting only, from higher upward, that partial light which, with its strongly marked contrast of shadow, is the first requisite towards seeing objects pictorially" (410). This meeting of sky and earth is the same referred to by Miriam at the foot of the Faun of Praxiteles: "'Nature and art are just at one, sometimes'" (15). But it is "'necessary to put ourselves at odds with Nature, before trying to imitate her'" (40). These series of contrasts surround Miriam, who is herself full of contrasts. She shows in word, action and in her environment the need for such contrasts in order to bring life into "high relief". While these differences work to balance each
other, if taken to their extreme they cut her off from nature and humanity.

Operating around her are the obvious contrasts, Donatello, the "natural man", a positive image, and the model, an "unnatural man" and a negative image.20 Vacillating between the two, between light and dark, Miriam is eventually overshadowed by the model. In a series of tableaux -- the meeting in the Borghese Gardens, her kneeling to him at the gate of the city and by the Fountain of Trevi -- the model and Miriam swing in and out of life and art as they become representative of one or the other. Just prior to his murder, the model is seen in a "deep, empty niche, that had probably once contained a statue [but]... a figure now came forward" (170-71). Such descriptions provide images of characters as three dimensional pieces of art within the novel. Words and descriptions are limited in these sections because characters are closely linked with art images which "speak" for them.

Sculptural images are joined with the pictorial to produce similar scenes within the climactic "Edge of the Precipice" chapter; here, the pictorial tableaux unite gesture, word and art in a balance worthy of classical sculpture. In the scene before the murder Miriam falls on her knees in a

20 Nathalie Wright notes that "Donatello represents extreme nature; ...the Model, because of his vicious character and concealed identity, suggests the basically untruthful art of a perverted or decadent society" (162).
typical tableau. Action resumes but then rests, poised on the precipice in another tableau witnessed by Hilda. The reader, in turn, is further given another tableau: Hilda stands at the doorway watching the momentarily frozen action at the verge. Movement is resumed with the (verbal) cry of the model which in turn begins the characters' transformations.\textsuperscript{21}

From this scene onward silence and language play as important a role for Miriam as for the other three characters. Miriam's silence concerning her past destroyed Hilda's moral world as well as Donatello's "freedom"; and Donatello points out (punningly) that in Miriam's silent glance, the model received a "sentence". Before the murder, all was hidden gesture and silence for Miriam; words for her and Donatello were to be played with or withheld. Now, Miriam seeks language and language in turn becomes potent. Donatello's words "strike her like a bullet" (172) and they are "terrible word[s] to say" (198). Though she cannot bear Donatello's silence, it is Hilda's words which "cast [her] off" so that Miriam says she "'had no longer any terms to keep with the reserves and decorums of my sex. Hilda has set me free'" with her words (287). While Donatello explores religion for comfort and identity, Hilda haunts

\textsuperscript{21} It is appropriate that the "loud, fearful cry, which quivered upward through the air, and sank quivering downward to the earth" (171) audibly joins heaven and earth in one "quivering" scream for the Puritan Hilda.
galleries, and Kenyon redisCOVERs art in nature, Miriam seeks to combine all three by entombing herself within a work of art -- the chapel rooms of Monte Beni.

Within the marble chapel rooms, surrounded by rich carvings and empty niches where statues once rested, Miriam finds her natural voice and raises it in song: "The murmur of a soul bewildered amid the sinful gloom of earth, and retaining only enough memory of a better state to make a sad music of the wail, which would else have been a despairing shriek" (269). The voice moves Donatello and Kenyon to tears, not words, for like art, the song has combined form and language into a work which touches emotions. Donatello claims, "'It is not good for me to hear that voice'" (269); yet, punning her use of song, Miriam proposes that "Beauty...shall be one of the instruments by which I will try to educate and elevate him" (286). Not through reason, religion or nature but by beauty will Donatello be "elevated". Nonetheless, references to speech and silence accelerate until the benediction (literally the "good word") in Perugia.22

At the fountain in Perugia, Miriam recognizes that "'Unless, of his own accord, he speaks my name - unless he bids me stay - no word shall ever pass between him and me'"(317). She recognized that "his heart must call her

22 The action in Perugia takes place at high noon when contrasts disappear because of the direct light overhead. Each character chooses his side of the "verge" here.
soon, or the voice would never reach her" (319). Miriam recognized the need for Donatello's choice - the need for him to use words in order to get beyond language. When it seemed apparent that he had "no word" for her, Donatello spoke her name (319).  

"Though of a single word, and the first that he had spoken, its tone was a warrant of the sad and tender depth from which it came" (319). Mimicking the musical depths previously displayed by Miriam, Donatello's tone tells "things of infinite importance" (319). It is clear, however, that it is not the word which alone mattered. As if to underscore words' inability to carry meaning by themselves, the chapter ends with gesture: the benevolent benediction of Pope Julius's statue with all its hidden meaning on the surface...all three imagined they beheld the bronze Pontiff, endowed with spiritual life. A blessing was felt descending upon them from his abstracted hand; he approved, by look and gesture, the pledge of a deep union that had passed under his auspices (324).

The gesture, frozen in sculpture, is symbolically united with a "good word"; a benediction results.

The next time Miriam appears it is on the Campagna, and she is uniquely united with art. She appears in the dress of a contadina, a traditional garb indicative of the past; the discussion which ensues, initially, is about the new (ancient) sculpture of Venus discovered by them all. In the

23 Since Hawthorne relies on names to carry identity, it is interesting to note that "Miriam" means "bitter".
exchange, Miriam's words describe the art object as well as her own perspective of the novel's action:

"We were sitting here together,...when [Donatello's] keen eyes detected the fallen goddess, almost entirely buried under that heap of earth.... The eyes of us three are the only ones to which she has yet revealed herself...like the apparition of a lonely woman that lived of old and has long lain in the grave" (427).

The art image speaks for her, words do not "'because every word I speak brings me nearer to a crisis from which I shrink'" (428).

Miriam speaks once more at the carnival, telling the blind Kenyon that "'we gave you all the light we could'" (448). Linked in a binding circle -- reminiscent of the bracelet Miriam would later send Hilda -- Kenyon says farewell: "No sooner was the word spoken, than they loosed their hands; and the uproar of the Carnival swept like a tempestuous sea over the spot" (448). Just as an audible scream began the transformations by the Tarpian Rock, here the disruptive, disjunctive power of the word separates them all. Miriam is never "heard" from again, though she is seen in the "Eye of the Pantheon" wherein she "looked towards the pair [Kenyon and Hilda], and extended her hands in a gesture of benediction" (461) reminiscent of Pope Julius's sculpture in Perugia.24 With this image, the author's language has

24 Here too as in Perugia, light is shining directly from above, through the "Eye", creating no shadows; the two are divided from Miriam because of the theological system, and therefore the rhetorical system, which separates them.
thrown the reader back to an earlier artistic image, as he had similarly done with the Faun of Praxiteles and the painting of Beatrice Cenci.

Gesture has traveled full circle, from Donatello to Miriam; but she is transformed gesture, not innocent and Adamic as was Donatello in the beginning. The circular movement is reflected in a piece of art -- the wedding bracelet -- which ends the story. These ancient stones joined in a circle recall the circle of friends at the Carnival -- minus the Puritan Hilda -- as well as the circular movement of gesture imagery and the completed journey of Hilda and Kenyon back to America. But the novel does not let the piece of art speak for it as an ending. What began the novel was a tableau, and similarly a picture ends the novel. Indicative of a saved Miriam and Donatello, Hilda is posed prettily: with tears in her eyes, she holds the circle of stones (harkening back to the ancient stones, the Tarpian Rock, the marble of the Faun); she "had a hopeful soul, and saw sunlight on the mountain top" (462).

While the final image is suspect because it is Hilda's, it likewise contains emotion as well as a nature image -- Monte Beni -- which earlier in the novel had always indicated happiness and possibility. It is unfortunately not the kind of ending which has been adequately resolved by any critical attempts since Hawthorne's first audience demanded he add "A Postscript" for an explanation. By examining the postscript
in light of the rhetorical shifts already discussed, by therefore remembering that Hawthorne used imagery which recalled not so much the meanings of words, but the images -- historical, artistic, aesthetic -- which those words indicated, the sarcastic tone of the postscript can be understood. What is further clarified, is Hawthorne's disappointment, not only with his having produced a work whose artistic purpose was misunderstood, but his disappointment with his reading audience: both factors contribute to the author's growing dissatisfaction with a Puritan rhetoric which permitted only a typological, and "logical", use of language.
CHAPTER 7
"A POSTSCRIPT"

From the beginning of *The Marble Faun*'s postscript, Hawthorne is clear about his attitude towards having to write it:

He reluctantly avails himself of the opportunity afforded by a new edition, to explain such incidents and passages as may have been left too much in the dark; reluctantly, he repeats, because the necessity makes him sensible that he can have succeeded imperfectly, at best, in throwing about this Romance the kind of atmosphere essential to the effort at which he aimed. He designed the story and the characters to bear, of course, a certain relation to human nature and human life, but still to be so artfully and airily removed from our mundane sphere, that some laws and proprieties of their own should be implicitly and insensibly acknowledged (463).¹

The passage records Hawthorne's attempt to "artfully" remove the subject from the "mundane sphere" and create a work with "some laws and properties" of its own. His disappointment about his audience's insistence on facts, their need for conclusions to the story line, and their inability to receive his novel as a work of art, makes itself evident in

¹ In this chapter all references to the French and Italian Notebooks will be indicated by F&I; all other unmarked parenthetical references will be to *The Marble Faun*. 

196
the remainder of the postscript. Hawthorne hoped "to mystify this anomalous creature [the faun] between the Real and the Fantastic, in such a manner that the reader's sympathies might be excited to a certain pleasurable degree" synonymous with the experience one has before a work of art. He did not expect his reader to "insist upon being told, in so many words", what interpretation was best (463-64).

In order to explain the consequent events, Hawthorne the author becomes the narrator-turned-reader: "To confess the truth, he was himself troubled with a curiosity similar to that which he has just deprecated...and once took occasion to cross-examine...and to pry into several dark recesses of the story" (464). In a move as quick as Coverdale's, the "Author" of the postscript becomes a sympathetic reader-narrator who blatantly recalls the Blithedale narrator's "curiosity", "cross-examining", and "prying". An alert reader will become a resentful one as the inquisitor plays straight-man to Kenyon's insightful quips; Kenyon, in another authorial sleight-of-hand, changes from a character to a narrator. This new narrator embarrasses his "reader" with an explanation far beyond his ability to "know"; it "is clear as a London Fog" to the narrator-reader (465), and because he cannot follow the political intrigue described by Kenyon, the "reader" rushes on to his next question without

2 In a very Puritan-like response, Hawthorne publicly punishes himself by equating his failed narrator with the audience he disdains.
any real clarification of his first. "'You must recollect'," taunts Kenyon, and the reader muses, again slightly confused, "'How excessively stupid in me not to have seen it sooner'" (465). When matters begin to get "'delightfully lucid'", the inquisitor asks about Miriam's whereabouts, promising secrecy; the reader-inquisitor is repulsed with surprise. Even after an interval of deep consideration, it becomes obvious that nothing has been clarified for either the reader-narrator or the readers who identify with him.

To understand why Hawthorne wrote a postscript which clarified little, the artistic purpose behind The Marble Faun needs to be further examined. In a letter to James T. Fields in April of 1860, Hawthorne wrote that the novel was "'an audacious attempt to impose a tissue of absurdities upon the public by the mere art of style and narrative'" (Turner 348). This focus on "the art of style and narrative" is evident from the very beginning of the novel. Dauber notes that, by rejecting his previous reader in the preface, Hawthorne has alienated his audience; this "alienated observer observes himself seeking intimacy, and it is by turning from the work to the observation of it that he [Hawthorne] would now reach his reader" (193). The emphasis on observation of style or form coincides with the eye-

---

3 This is the same "secrecy" promised by Coverdale who also later revealed all secrets in the form of a novel.
opening Hawthorne received when he was exposed to European art. At first bored by the profusion of objects in galleries, Hawthorne became more interested in the "arranging of these sculptural remains, than by the value of the sculptures themselves" (F&I 25). This focus on form continued to fascinate Hawthorne until his attention turned to the sculpture itself.

The viewing of art, Hawthorne discovered, was tiring partly because the viewer had to extend himself to the object; this emphasis on participation more decisively shifts the burden of interpretation to the viewer or reader. Interpretation was made difficult at best by ambiguity in The Scarlet Letter and The Blithedale Romance, and this Puritan rhetorical stance seemed not to alter significantly in The Marble Faun. However, previous novels warned against the uselessness of interpretation for the sake of "knowing": The Marble Faun encourages a variety of explanations based on an artistic evaluation which allows for a joint "interpretation" by creator and viewer. It may be argued that this cooperative effort between creator and viewer is mirrored by the narrator's relationship to the story: readers find out two-thirds through the novel that the story was told by Kenyon to the "author". Whereas reinterpretation signaled a sign of sin in previous novels it may here
be offered as a sign for the reader to similarly recreate. In this last novel of Hawthorne's, "the reader is asked to engage in a mental exercise that transforms the given facts of the text. Similarly...[the novel's] merit lies in its incompleteness, in what it suggests" (Sutherland 85).

Though I disagree that Hawthorne merely asks for a "mental exercise", Sutherland, among others, does point out that the title of the English edition, The Transformation, was more than coincidental. I suggest that the title signals the aesthetic purpose of literature as Hawthorne now proposed it. Hawthorne was constantly concerned with his own profession in previous novels; but the parallel between art and life which is evident in The Marble Faun no longer sets the author up as preacher/translator. Encouraged by his exposure to Roman sculpture, Hawthorne explores the relationship between writer and reader, artist and viewer in an effort to resolve the theological and artistic questions which directed Hawthorne's use of language in all the novels.

Carton recognized that

4 It may also be argued that this reliance on former narrative "tricks" signals Hawthorne's indecision about the moral direction of this last novel. In either case, both ideas again indicate the debate about language in The Marble Faun.

5 At this point, proposing and believing are significantly different words. While Hawthorne proposed an aesthetic theory, that does not mean he believed it - or wanted to believe it. For a discussion of this ambivalence see Donohue's Hawthorne 306-309.
Miriam's history, Beatrice's crime, Donatello's heritage exist only in the form of interpretations, revisions, copies without originals. (In fact, although Hawthorne would not have known it, the Faun of Praxiteles that he saw in Rome was itself a copy, and Guido's Beatrice was neither by Guido nor of Beatrice). Thus the boundary between creation and criticism is effaced (259-60).

Moreover, the boundary between artist and viewer, writer and reader is erased, and all art becomes a joint effort to create a vision of universal truth which moves each person. While this seems not far from the Puritan minister's object of interpreting God's signs for all men, the author-minister assumes a lower profile in this last novel; instead of interpreting, the narrator chooses to hold the object before the reader and turn it about so that it can be viewed from all sides. It is then up to the artistic work and the viewer. In his description of St. Peter's, Hawthorne wrote that the cathedral says

"Look at me!" and if you murmur for the loss of your shadowy perspective, there comes no reply, save, "Look at me!" -- in endless repetition, as the one thing to be said....[Until it] has gradually extended itself over the whole compass of your idea (350).

Though the reader may demand to be led to a perspective -- just as Miriam demanded to know the subject of Kenyon's Cleopatra before it was unveiled -- the writer of this novel is demanding attention to the "art of the style and narrative". In allowing the work of art -- or novel -- into which the reader has stepped to extend "itself over the whole compass of your idea", the viewer does not subject himself to a "perspective" but immerses himself in "the
grandeur of the whole" to which he is witness. As each reader contributes to the entire vision of the novel, so too architecturally, Hawthorne noted

\[
each \text{ contributed its little all towards the grandeur of the whole...If you choose to see these things, they present themselves; if you deem them unsuitable and out of place, they vanish, individually, but leave their life upon the walls (350-51).}
\]

This same relationship between art and the viewer is expressed in Hawthorne's French and Italian Notebooks. Hawthorne's description of a display of gems serves as an appropriate example of what was demanded of the readers of The Marble Faun:

\[
\text{among so many, the eye slips from one to another with only a vague, outward sense that here are whole shelves full of little miracles both of Nature's material and man's workmanship...Greater things can be reasonably well appreciated with a less scrupulous, though broader attention; but in order to estimate the brilliancy of the diamond eyes of a little agate bust, for instance, you have to screw your mind down to them, and nothing else. You must sharpen your faculties of observation to a point, and touch the object exactly on the right spot; or you do not appreciate it at all (F&I 409).}
\]

Thus in art one had to observe the finest details as well as the overall form, the essence as well as the outline. In the creation of the object, a balance of emphasis had to be reached so that the one did not outstrip the other.

In the last chapter of the novel's first edition, Hawthorne asks that his readers accept the story "without tearing the web apart, with the idle purpose of discovery how its threads have been kept together" (455). No more than one would pry out the diamond eyes to see how they were
attached should the fabric of his story be rent. But Hawthorne uses the image of gossamer for his verbal web, not marble, noting that "any narrative of human action and adventure -- whether we call it history or romance -- is certain to be a fragile handiwork" (455). Hawthorne offers his woven object while reminding his "Gentle Reader" that he is

too wise to insist on looking closely at the wrong side of the tapestry, after the right one has been sufficiently displayed to him, woven out of the best of the artist's skill, and cunningly arrayed with a view to the harmonious exhibition of its colours (455).

Aware of his "tissue of absurdities", Hawthorne points to the texture and color of his art piece, asking his reader to observe its construction but to ultimately view it as a finished object "in which the spectator's imagination completes what the artist merely hints at" (F&I 492). The objection to examining the structure for accuracy echoes the conversations Hawthorne had with Powers about art, and in particular about the Venus. Hawthorne was disappointed when Powers explained all the anatomical errors of the statue, and it took some time before the author could again appreciate the piece (F&I 334-39). Through Hilda, Hawthorne points to the problems of literal-mindedness and emphasizes that emotion and imagination need to work together to create an aesthetic experience.

Attempts to undermine the literal-mindedness of readers are evident in the narrative stance; the voice in the novel
aligns itself most often with that of an "observer" by changing its point of view instead of maintaining a particular narrative perspective. As in none of Hawthorne's previous novels, the narrator in *The Marble Faun* attempts to maintain an objectivity as well as sympathy. When speaking of Puritan Hilda, the narrative comments are equally Puritan; when describing Kenyon's artistic vision at Monte Beni, the narrator is decidedly "anti-Puritan". Momentarily in each case, the narrator and character join in presenting one side of the story.

On the other hand, the narrative may be broken reflecting the narrator's reluctance to choose sides in this dialectic. By an obvious outside comment, the narrator will remind the reader that many of Hilda's anti-Puritan thoughts must be blamed on her excited state of mind, not attributed to her beliefs; at Monte Beni, the narrator excuses Kenyon's thoughts on the basis of his having drunk too much "Sunshine". At several points, descriptive passages interfere with the action: in the many galleries, churches and, for example, during Donatello's and Kenyon's pilgrimage. While pursuing the pair through the Italian countryside, the narrator steps back from the story to describe a gateway into town; purposefully, his universalizing description links the ruins of the past and the inhabitants of the present with the spiritual journey of the two pilgrims in a tableau (293-295). Two pages later, the narrative continues
objectively. Nina Baym notes that while the narrator "appears almost a bystander the narrative is ultimately his because all events in it derive their true significance from their effect on and meaning for him" (99). While this is ultimately true of any narrative, it does not account for the shifting narrative stance.

The ambiguity in earlier novels which led to an undermining of language's power is here transformed into balanced viewpoints. The reader and the narrator function as if they are two figures viewing an art piece in a gallery:

It is a delicious sort of mutual aid, when the united power of the two sympathetic yet dissimilar intelligences, is brought to bear upon a poem by reading it aloud, or upon any picture or statue by viewing it in each other's company. Even if not a word of criticism be uttered, the insight of either party is wonderfully deepened, and the comprehension broadened; so that the inner mystery of a work of genius, hidden from one [the objective narrator], will often reveal itself in the two (390-91).

There need be no verbal exchange in such company as indeed there cannot be between narrator and reader. In the work of fiction, the role of the author and narrator, equivalent to artist and object created, changes to provide a complete perspective for the reader/viewer. There seems never to be a particular perspective on which a reader can depend for an interpretation. Darrel Abel commented on this narrative phenomenon when he was describing the artist in the novel as one who

is completely disinterested in his role of seeing into the life of things, and he reveals the qualities of his vision with as little mingling of self-
consciousness as possible. It is the general recognition of the Artist's disinterestedness, his detachment, his capability of viewing things from all angles and accepting the special reality of each view ("Masque" 18).

That type of objective pose was previously tried by Coverdale but resulted only in a single point of view supplemented by conjectures, fantasies and egotism. The narrator's personal involvement in The Marble Faun, is not as important as that of the narrator in The Blithedale Romance. On the contrary, the story-teller in The Marble Faun seems to invite the reader to view "things from all angles" since he waits until the novel is nearly over before making the offhanded observation that the story is being re-created from facts related by Kenyon. By the alignment and juxtaposition of narrative points of view within the novel (as well as by the similar alignment and juxtaposition with pieces of art) words are embued with creative power in The Marble Faun.

That the narrator of The Marble Faun admits to the suggestive possibilities of joint creative narration is underscored by the difference in his handling of the chapter, "Fragmented Sentences". Unlike the narrator in a similar chapter of The Blithedale Romance, the narrator of The Marble Faun does not fill in the unknown words of conversation by providing his own version of what might have happened. Before reporting the words, the narrator pauses and warns that
In weaving these mystic utterances into a continuous scene, we undertake a task resembling, in its perplexity, that of gathering up and piecing together the fragments of a letter, which has been torn and scattered to the wind. Many words of deep significance -- many entire sentences, and those possibly the most important ones -- have flown too far, on the winged breeze, to be recovered....there must remain an unsightly gap, and a lack of continuousness and dependence on our narrative (92-93).

The "letter" is, as it was in The Blithedale Romance, "in fragments" but this time the narrator continually warns against trusting an interpretive narration and leaves a gap in the conversation. Moreover, he alludes to the "weaving" image which will end the novel as a metaphor for creating a "soft sculpture" wherein a portion of the novel is left imperfect; thus his tapestry resembles the disproportionate features of a piece of sculpture which join to create, not a truthful physical portrayal, but a powerful aesthetic effect.

Evidence mounts pointing to the waning power of words, in both the novel and in the French and Italian Notebooks. While trying to describe the Cathedral at Siena, Hawthorne noted that he could not do so with "ill-fitting words which never hit the mark" and he admired those in his family who were sketching the cathedral (F&I 464). The very same phrasing is used in The Marble Faun when the narrator attempted to describe painters with "epigrammatical allusions...but none of them quite hitting the mark, and often striking where they were not aimed" (134).
Hawthorne was especially frustrated in Geneva where he found the scenery "very striking throughout the journey[;] but I have come to see the nonsense of attempting to describe fine scenery. There is no such possibility" (F&I 551). Similarly of Lake Leman, Hawthorne found he was "writing nonsense; but it is because no sense within my reach will answer my purpose" (565). These mark Hawthorne's particular difficulty in describing natural beauty: "if scenery could be adequately reproduced in words, there would have been no need of God's making it a reality. It is the one possible expression of meaning which the creator intends to convey" (F&I 551). As nature was God's verbally inexpressible creation, so too was art:

> it is vain to attempt giving the impression produced by masterpieces of art, and most in vain when we see them best. They are a language in themselves, and if they could be expressed in no way except by themselves, there would have been no need of expressing those particular ideas and sentiments by sculpture (F&I 125).

The same observation is recorded in The Marble Faun; Kenyon views the sky from Donatello's Tower and rejects words in the face of natural beauty:

> "Nay; I cannot preach...with a page of heaven and a page of earth spread wide open before us! Only begin to read it, and you will find it interpreting itself without the aid of words. It is a great mistake to try to put our best thoughts into human language. When we ascend into the higher regions of emotion and spiritual enjoyment, they are only expressible by such grand hieroglyphics as these [clouds] around us".

---

6 See similar strong expressions in The Marble Faun on pgs. 133, 462, 548-49, 551, 555.
There are several points worth noting in this passage. Nature "interprets itself" and thus need not be enhanced with words. In the un-Puritan like fashion of Kenyon at this time, words are inadequate in "higher regions" which consist of emotions. But this rejection of words is based on the accuracy already offered by the "book" of heaven and earth. Thus within the existence of these opposites lay a "text" which could be apprehended. While Calvin believed that God imprinted the Word on man's soul and thus some, albeit clouded, version of spiritual significance might be apprehended from the natural substance of the world, his doctrine required interpretation and explanation of those signs. Within the novel, on the other hand, it is proposed that physical signs be allowed to stand on their own:

Nor language, nor any art of pencil, can give the idea of the scene; when God expressed Himself in this landscape to mankind, He did not intend that it should be translated into any tongue save His own immediate one (255).

God's word, spiritual truth, was therefore vividly apparent in the physical world. In a similar manner, the sculptor's material, or instrument, which serves him in the stead of shifting and transitory language, is a pure, white undecaying substance. It ensures immortality to whatever is wrought in it, and therefore makes it a religious obligation to commit no idea to its mighty guardianship, save such as may repay the marble for its faithful care, its incorruptible fidelity, by warming it with an ethereal life (135).

As the world is the physical manifestation of the joining of God's creation with material substance, so too art becomes
the permanent testament of man's vision of creation in physical substances. Thus for an artist a material like marble assumes a sacred characteristic; and no man dare touch it unless he feels within himself a certain consecration and a priesthood, the only evidence of which, for the public eye, will be the high treatment of heroic subjects, or the delicate evolution of spiritual, through material beauty (136).

Nature, the product of God's creation, therefore, complements man's art as much as man's art complements Nature. St. Peter's, "in front of the purple outline of hills, is the grandest edifice ever built by man, painted against God's loveliest sky" (107). Such descriptions serve as unions of art, religion, and history along with Nature. In an old church, the "effect of light and shade ... when windows are open and darkened with curtains, which are occasionally lifted by a breeze letting in sunshine" creates beauty where there was none; they are "rays of divine intelligence which enable us to see wonders, and to know that they are natural things" (F&I 198-99). Nature therefore bestows a blessing on man's art as when the lichens and ivy claim the ruins of England (3) or when "Nature ... adapted the Fountain of Trevi with all its elaborate devices, for her own" (145). In reverse, Monte Beni's beauty is due to the union of "growth, decay, and man's intelligence wrought kindly together, to render it so gently as we behold it now" (73). Whereas man may not create mountains or sunsets, he does "create" universal
truths out of God's material, and brings "them closer to man's heart and mak[es] him tenderer to be impressed by them, than the most eloquent words of preacher or prophet" (340).

Within the novel, such a power is seen derived from the yoking of opposites. As nature is God's creation vividly present, art is man's creation -- the joining of his thought and material. The emphasis on the joining of opposites -- e.g. the concrete and the abstract -- to achieve balance is continual throughout Hawthorne's French and Italian Notebooks and The Marble Faun. In the notebooks, Hawthorne commented that in Rome, "the sublime and the ridiculous come close together, and are not the least troubled by the proximity" (88). The novel, in turn, records numerous incidents of the sublime (the Faun of Praxiteles) and the ridiculous (Donatello) by joining art work and character as well as history and art. Religious commentary joins the artistic as the notebooks record art works which "reconciled the impossibilities of combining an Omnipotent Divinity with a suffering and outraged humanity" (491-92), and the discussion of St. Michael's picture in the Church of the Capuchins offers one of many comments about reconciliation of opposites (182-84). While summer and winter join in creating the atmosphere of St. Peter's (369), and the "common daylight" is transformed into "richness and glory in its passage through the...high-arched windows" (304),
contrasting elements also affect the human aspects in the novel. Pope Julius' statue in Perugia is the artistic "representative of Divine and human authority" (314) under which the opposites, Miriam and Donatello, are united.

As the saints in heaven transformed earthly prayers into heavenly petitions, so too in the novel Christian tradition joins classical myth. Upon viewing the Faun of Praxiteles, Kenyon declares that

he must really have existed. Nature needed, and still needs, this beautiful creature, standing betwixt man and animal, sympathizing with each, comprehending the speech of either race, and interpreting the whole existence of one to the other (13).

This need to link separate parts in order to form a whole vision resurfaces when Hilda refers to the legend of the seven-branched candlestick; "'when all the seven are kindled'" she muses, "'their radiance shall combine into the white light of Truth'" (371). The seven-fold story is repeated in the Etruscan bracelet set with seven scarabs, and received by Hilda at the end of the novel. All the stones were separate pieces, yet the stories formed a union which was needed for a certain "white light" of wholeness. The desire for a many-sided vision, a joining of disparates likewise arises in the French and Italian Notebooks when Hawthorne comments on statues

quaint, and not very beautiful -- Saint George, and many other saints, by Donatello and others -- but taking a sort of hold upon one's sympathies, even if they be ugly. Classic shapes escape you with their slippery beauty, as if they were made of ice. Rough and ugly things can be clutched. This is nonsense,
but yet it means something (404).

Meaning in nonsense and beauty in the ugliness of Donatello's work points to the "greatest achievement of Renaissance art...its duplicity" (Baym "Marble Faun" 104-5). 7 Within the plastic arts therefore, the errors and intricacies of the Gothic architecture preferred by Hawthorne combined to create a whole. Nathalie Wright, in her study of the art work in *The Marble Faun*, found that in Italy

as nowhere else, he [Hawthorne] saw [humanity's] weaknesses and limitations in perspective: besides a long series of catastrophes survived by the spirit, as recorded in beautiful and enduring works of the imagination (167).

It was the endurance of art which seemed to surpass the effectiveness of words. Knowing that the Calvinist view of the word had really rested on the force and immediacy of the spoken sermon, Hawthorne relates with sadness the loss of oratorical power and the concomitant loss of the power effected by words:

The very fact that they [members of Parliament] are men of words, makes it improbable that they are likewise men of deed...The world has done with it [oratory] except as an intellectual pastime, The speeches have no effect until they are converted into newspaper paragraphs; and they had better be composed as such, in the first place, and oratory reserved for churches, courts of law, and dinner-tables (F&I 367).

As words had served their day, some representative art was also subject to time. Indiscriminately,

---

7 Though Baym is specifically referring to the "continual celebration of Venus in the guise of celebrating the Virgin," which Hilda comes to recognize, the same pattern is evident in other opposites joined in the novel.
this should be the final honour, paid to all human works that have served a good office in their day; for, when their day is over, if still galvanized into false life, they do harm instead of good (F&I 360).

Words and their meanings were more susceptible to becoming "galvanized" whereas artistic creations were of the imagination and, in the novel, "represented as more substantial and long-lived than anything in the world" (Wright 166). The Word, in Hawthorne's previous system, was the only substantial object. This theological system dictated that human language could not hope to equal such authority: write, but don't believe; believe but don't trust the words you write. Within the Puritan system

God's creation was verbal and metaphoric and therefore had to be understood verbally and metaphorically, through [rhetorical] figures that linked the visible and natural to the invisible and supernatural (Daly 23).

Thus the rigidity imposed by newspaper columns or a mechanical set of religious tenets had, over time, congealed the spontaneity of word usage as well as meaning. To risk not assigning words a particular meaning within a structure was to risk allowing distortion of intent. Gossip (most notably, about Miriam's model) ran rampant in Rome because "nobody has any conscience about adding to the improbabilities of a marvelous tale" (32). Later, as the portrait of Hilda becomes re-titled by its owners, the narrator comments "thus coarsely does the world translate," and he speaks of "misinterpretations" (330-31). The novel proceeds to
apologize for its attempts at description of the Faun "however inadequate may be the effort to express its magic peculiarity in words" (8). Art, unlike words, was more likely to communicate and endure because "'it is a substantial fact, and may be tested by absolute truth and measurement!'" (7).

Various critics have sensed the vacillating tone created by the debate over art and language. Carton picks up Hawthorne's own image of river-as-story (213 and 228-29 in The Marble Faun) and notes that "wandering and evasion comprise the redemptive methods of his discursive art and the guilty conditions of existence" (256). Dauber notes that "the 'Transformations' of The Marble Faun are, as it were, the word made flesh...the meaningless word inevitably cannot be understood, and the flesh is offered as its substitute" (203). Marble and paint are offered in The Marble Faun more often than "flesh". While Dauber was addressing the new reality present in the novel, these proofs of "realism" are often undercut by the movement of characters and art "from black and meaningless stone, into, beauty, life and back again into senseless material" (Lloyd Smith 135). But these critics fail to see these patterns as a constant rhetorical movement in which words are denied and used in a balance of descriptive background and suggestive foreground -- art and language. For the fictional work to present the same aesthetic force which operated in sculpture
and painting, characters assumed artistic guises and art was given so the readers could view verbally "drawn" works which "spoke" to them.

The Marble Faun explores this desire to balance revelation and concealment, art and words, as a replacement for the need to withhold information behind the Veil in imitation of the inscrutable Puritan God. Brumm believes Hawthorne saw the world as the Puritans, where "in the end, every visible object becomes a potential emblem, behind which an even paler God stands in an ever more puzzling relationship" (126). But by the end of The Marble Faun Hawthorne has at least proposed an alternative possibility: that signs may not be unchangingly emblematic. A verbal artist may use words for their aesthetic import rather than in a rigid or purely emblematic sense. Artistic signs did not necessarily hide a greater vision, nor did words have to obscure truth. Hawthorne found in art a juxtaposition of signs which justified - and clarified - his use of ambiguity: "There is nothing so fascinating as a Gothic minster, which always invites you deeper and deeper into its heart both by vast revelation and shadowy concealments" (Our Old Home 151-52).

As the created world reveals God, so too human artistic creations should be revelatory; that could be accomplished by encompassing opposites within a whole. Thus even in a novel of words (the verbal) and image (the pictorial) must lie a balance. For the first time, Hawthorne allows action
and character to be revealed primarily through dialogue. The immediacy of language as it is presented in dialogue parallels the immediacy of the "effluence of divinity in a first sketch", variously discussed by characters in the chapter entitled "In Aesthetic Company" (131-41). Such immediacy can only be verbally imitated through dialogue when a person is expressing himself, like the artist, "at the pinch of the moment" (137). Emphasizing the aesthetic force carried by first drawings, the ensuing discussion likewise signals the reliance on the spoken word to produce similar responses within a novel.

Hawthorne relies on descriptive passages to carry the same pictorial force of the novel that he saw in a medieval "jewel of a book":

what a spiritual charm it gives to a book, to feel that every letter has been individually wrought, and that the pictures glow for that individual page alone. Certainly an ancient reader had a luxury which the modern one lacks (F&I 421).

The joint presence of art and language, evident on a medieval page produced an immediacy of effect in a reader which Hawthorne expressed a wish to imitate. Unable to produce the illuminated page, Hawthorne joined imaginative actions with visual descriptions that in turn linked classical (oral) myths to the present time. Such a joint effort should produce not merely a story-with-completed-plot but an artistic work which, while holding to a universal truth, produced an aesthetic experience for the reader. It
was exactly this reaction which allegedly produced *The Marble Faun*; seeing Kenyon's sculpture of Donatello, the narrator offers likewise a portrait of his novel:

One observer in a thousand is conscious of something more and lingers long over this mysterious face, departing from it, reluctantly, and with many a glance thrown backward... he sees... the riddle of the soul's growth, taking its first impulse amid remorse and pain and struggling through the incrustations of the senses. It was the contemplation of this imperfect portrait of Donatello that originally interested us in his history, and impelled us to elicit from Kenyon what he knew of his friend's adventures (380-81).

Hawthorne's favorite narrative use of the word "us" engages the readers and challenges them to break through their own "incrustations of the senses" by contemplating the "imperfect portrait of Donatello". Thus as the visual work of art produced the written work of art for the narrator, the written work of art will produce an aesthetic experience for the reader. It was therefore up to the artist to allow the viewer to stand before the work of art and continue to create from the creation. Hawthorne noted in *French and Italian Notebooks* that the viewer of art "must make a generous gift of his sympathies to the sculptor and help out his skill with all his heart, or else he will see little more than a skillfully wrought surface" (102). As Hawthorne notes, it is "the pure light of inspiration" in an incomplete "sketch" which makes it so suggestively powerful and aesthetically appealing: "The finished picture, if a good one, leaves the spectator nothing to do, and, if bad,
confuses, stupefies, disenchants, and disheartens him"
(138). And in the Hilda section, the narrator offers that if Art had not strayed away from its legitimate paths and aims, it ought to soften and sweeten the lives of its worshippers, in even a more exquisite degree than the contemplation of natural objects (340).

The readers of The Marble Faun, however, were not prepared to stand in silent homage before a novel of suggestion and be "sweetened".

The resolution to the debate in this last novel -- whether words can create the aesthetic impact of a work of art -- seemed answered by his readers with an overwhelming "No". Thus the tone of Hawthorne's "A Postscript" is judgmental and sarcastic, wherein the narrator must be held to public ridicule as the failed narrator-reader, and Kenyon who gave up art for Hilda, serves as guide to ambiguity. It is with much irony that Kenyon claims "on that point [Donatello's ears], at all events, there shall not be one word of explanation" (467). Not one more word would be expended on clarifying any more factual "points".

James Boyd White noted in When Words Lose Their Meaning, "one cannot maintain forever one's language and judgment and feelings against the pressure of a world that works in different ways" (4). In his later years, Hawthorne salvaged the journalistic memoirs of his time abroad and published a few essays about the Civil War but no fiction. No doubt

---

8 This line from the novel was first entered, and then expanded, in French and Italian Notebooks (402).
many factors -- his health, the war, the travel abroad -- including his own dissatisfaction with writing contributed to the failure of his later fiction, but Austin Warren noted that "the failure at the end of his life is to have feelings which can't find their right symbols and symbolic images which can't find their correspondent feelings" (137). In *The Marble Faun*, Hawthorne had combined the mistrust of language given him by the Puritans with the Renaissance celebration of human beauty and creativity to create "his own Man of Marble" (3). But the rejection of his efforts takes shape in the postscript: Hawthorne places the forces of Puritanism, the narrator-reader, Kenyon and Hilda, victoriously atop of St. Peter's, the representative of Catholic as well as aesthetic forces. The need for interpretation demanded by his readers clearly preempted any attempt to create a fiction in which aesthetics ruled, and his anger at having to write a postscript contributed to the unfinished projects of a man who attempted to join art and literature in a "fairy precinct, where actualities would not be so terribly insisted upon" (3).

When a speaker finds "that he no longer has a language adequate to his needs and purposes, to his sense of himself and his world, his words lose their meaning" (White 67). Hawthorne seemed unwilling to return to his old symbols, as
any study of his aborted fiction shows. 9 His last unfinished works show an inability to carry familiar Adamic themes to their previously logical conclusions. Reflecting his observations about Michelangelo's works (F&I 372), Hawthorne wrote his friend and publisher, James T. Fields, in 1858 that "'if I had my choice, I should leave undone all the things I do'" (Turner 348). Hawthorne could not return to the Puritan rhetorical system which ruled previous novels wherein his imitation of the Word emerged as a warning against using language for re-creative purposes that would align men with God. Whereas The Scarlet Letter and The Blithedal Romance were directed by this attitude towards language, The Marble Faun displayed a conflict over language's ability to create a reality. This last novel points to the possibility that aesthetic responses validate and enlarge man's experience and growth. No longer purposefully pointing only to man's degradation, The Marble Faun's character and plot suggest that the fall in Eden might have made possible a necessary evolution of language and art. Without the paradox inherent in the Calvinist attitude towards language, Hawthorne lost the previous symbol system which maintained the tension in his earlier novels and which had directed characters and plots. Unable to pursue the aesthetic principles he began to establish in

9 For an examination of the moral muddle indicated by Hawthorne's final attempted works, see Donohue, Hawthorne (310-37).
his last novel, reluctant to fall on either side of the "verge" he created, Hawthorne created no more. The Marble Faun stands as Hawthorne's last "completed" work of art.


---. "How the Puritans Won the American Revolution."
---. "The Image of America: From Hermeneutics to Symbolism."
---. The Puritan Origins of the American Self. New Haven:
---, ed. Typology and Early American Literature. Boston:
  University of Massachusetts Press, 1972.
Bier, Jesse. "Hawthorne on the Romance: His Prefaces Related and Examined."
  PMLA LXXV (June 1960): 250-262.
Blench, J.W. Preaching in the Late Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries; A Study of English Sermons 1450 - c.1600.


Daly, Robert. God's Altar: The World and the Flesh in


Downame, John. The Christian Warfare; wherein is first generalie shewed the malice, power and politike strategems of the spirituall enemies of our
salvation, Satan and his assistants the world and the flesh, with the means also whereby the Christian may withstand and defeate them. Third ed. London: Felix Kingston, for William Welby, 1612.


Ferraro, W.M. "An Interpretation of Hawthorne and the American Character." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 85 (Spring, 1986): 165-75.


Gura, Philip F. "The Transcendentals and Language: The Unitarian Exegetical Background." In Studies in the


Laser, Marvin. "'Head,' 'Heart,' and 'Will' in Hawthorne's Psychology." Nineteenth Century Fiction X (September 1955): 130-40.


Shea, Daniel B., Jr. Spiritual Autobiography in Early


Wright, Nathalia. "The Language of Art: Hawthorne." In

APPROVAL SHEET

The dissertation submitted by Joan A. Mullin has been read and approved by the following committee:

Dr. Agnes Donohue, Director
Professor, English, Loyola

Dr. Paul Messbarger
Associate Professor, English, Loyola

Dr. James E. Rocks
Associate Professor, English and
Chair, English, Loyola

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

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

8/2/87
Date

[Signature]
Director's signature