The Individual and Society in Selected Novels and Tales of Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Study in Hawthorne's Use of the Crowd

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The Individual and Society in Selected Novels and Tales of Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Study in Hawthorne's Use of the Crowd

by

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

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VITA

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CHAPTER I

HAWTHORNE AND SOCIETY

The problem of the individual's alienation from society is perhaps as characteristic a theme as one can find in American literature—not that it is a peculiarly American problem. But American authors, like Thoreau, Emerson, Whitman, Dickinson, Melville and Hawthorne—if they have a common denominator—seem to focus their most serious attention upon this problem.

According to Thoreau, a man must cease depending upon society and its baubles if he is to learn what life has to teach. To a large extent Thoreau received this message from Emerson, whose "Self-Reliance" is a milestone in the expression of at least one facet of the man and society theme. Whitman gave poetic approval to Emerson's dicta. In a sense, all three men advocated a kind of isolation from society in suggesting that Americans become self-reliant, that they divorce themselves not only from the past but even from various aspects of the present—European, or, more particularly, British domination, for example.

Hawthorne, like Melville and Dickinson, was almost completely unable to shake off the past.

Emerson defined his position as that of an endless seeker with no past at his back. Hawthorne in contrast felt the
presentness of the past. It is, he thought, in and all around us, it is what we have to work with and start from. From Hawthorne's point of view Emerson's metaphor of the past which was not at his back was wrong in the sense intended by Emerson and right in a sense not intended: The past is never at one's back but in one's blood and in the very shape of things. . . . The past can be transcended only to the extent that it is faced, accepted and understood.1

The key to the contrast that exists between these two sets of authors lies not, on the one hand, in an attempt to disjoin modern nineteenth-century man from his progenitors and his European brethren, nor, on the other hand, in a simple desire to retain ties with the past and across the sea; this would suggest a misreading of Emerson and an oversimplification of the problem. Hawthorne could never completely accept transcendental self-reliance because it so often required a kind of aristocratic, albeit intellectual, withdrawal from the mainstream of life. Emerson avowed a detachment from the past only insofar as it fettered man, or kept one from achieving the almost divine role that he envisioned for mankind. But even such detachment was fraught with danger.

Emily Dickinson's poems are a record of her apparent inability to adopt a kind of existential, or personal, theology in the face of Calvinism. Melville's preoccupation with the pagan and the Christian likewise emphasizes his inability to become "self-reliant" in the sense alluded to. Hawthorne's immer-

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sion in Calvinistic Puritanism is conclusive evidence of his inability to sympathize with Emerson's almost naive insistence that one need simply make up his mind to disregard his Puritan past to cross into the transcendental paradise.

To ignore the past in this sense would be tantamount, for Hawthorne, to rejecting life, or, at least, an important, inescapable portion of it. Much the same can be said of man's responsibility. Self-reliance in action, such, for example, as Hawthorne viewed it at Brook Farm, could be the beginning of the end in ultimately leading a "transcendent being" to a state of isolation from society. Henry S. Kariel makes this point clear in describing the factors which constituted Hawthorne's concept of sin.

Man's error is his obsessive desire for perfect knowledge, virtue, or art [in a world that is doomed to imperfection because of its existence in time] [Hawthorne] attempted to show again and again that man's destiny rests with the material realities of the world, that it is sin to attempt to transcend society and its living institutions, to go beyond compromises and imperfections. Men are attached to society by their shortcomings as individuals. They share nothing but their deficiencies, their proclivity to error. The cement of society is the recognition of this fact. Therefore, mere self-reliance and self-cultivation cannot be social virtue; and when carried to an extreme, they must shatter any community. Man's spiritual and intellectual pride, his basic sin, induces him to contemplate himself, to be indifferent to society, to withdraw from imperfection, from social life, and thus to conceal the inescapable human fault, to hide his guilt. The pain of guilt can become tolerable only when revealed and shared, only in a community of sufferers. To deny this is to invite dispersal, disunion, disintegration.2

There can be no doubt about the importance of the "community of sufferers" in Hawthorne's interpretation of the human condition. Several of the gatherings, or crowds, which are discussed in later chapters of this treatise perform just such a commiserating function.

The distinction between the idealistic, or transcendental view of the individual and society and Hawthorne's position ought not be overemphasized, however, since Emerson and Hawthorne obviously have not based their studies of mankind upon the same view of basic human nature in the first place. Furthermore, as A. N. Kaul points out, the isolation that Hawthorne describes in so many of his works is not so much a matter of physical solitude as one of moral alienation, of "solitude in the midst of men." This is the kind of alienation evident in the character of Roger Chillingworth, for example, a figure isolated from humanity by the monomaniacal revenge that has unseated compassion in his deformed human nature. Although man's greatest potential disaster is moral, or spiritual, alienation, such an aberration does not occur in a vacuum. Thus, Hawthorne often depicts the problem of the individual and society through initial anomalies in the religious, political and social spheres, and, occasionally, as in The Scarlet Letter and "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," through a combination of all three.

Hawthorne, like his contemporaries, was concerned with the problem of a man's retaining his individuality while, at the same time, fulfilling his responsibilities toward mankind. This point must constantly be borne in mind: The crowds that will be studied in ensuing chapters are not to be viewed simply as physical gatherings, but, quite often, as the manifestation of the bond of society.

One of the purposes of this introductory chapter is to reveal some of the conflicting views of biographers and critics regarding Hawthorne's social commitment; such a study will, hopefully, provide a better understanding of the ambiguities which characterize the novels and tales analyzed in later chapters. Many critics, Hyatt Waggoner for example, feel that Hawthorne, of all his contemporaries, has best dealt with the problem of the individual's relationship with society.

He dealt with the relationship not in terms of glib generalizations about the infallibility of instinct and the need for the individual to be wholly self-reliant, or with Carlyle's dour insistence on the necessity of obedience and subordination, or with Whitman's substitution of feeling for thinking, but with subtlety, firmness and depth. . . . He saw the dangers of alienation, and the necessity of it, for the artist or for anyone else who valued only that which is worth valuing. He saw the individual as inevitably alone, yet needing always to maintain contact with the magnetic chain of humanity.

This dilemma, the crux of Hawthorne's treatment of the individual and society, is discussed especially well in Newton Waggoner, 258-59.
The author points out that in America there appears to be no alternative between a self-destroying ruthless individualism that preys upon itself (e.g., Ethan Brand) and a lifeless standardization which can only drive the sensitive man back into himself. Arvin recognizes the fact that Hawthorne himself had to undergo the pains of this dilemma.

Who but a man whose inner life had been enriched and deepened by a proud pursuit of his own ends, a prolonged wrestling with subjective realities, could have conveyed so true an impression as Hawthorne did in all these sketches, of the pompous insignificance of what Emerson would call "things" and the solidity, in comparison, of human desires? 

The contingencies of man in solitude and man in society suggest problems that Hawthorne not only wrote about but lived with as well. What one learns from the biographies is that the conflicting values of estrangement and involvement were as real to the author as they were to the characters in his books. As even the most casual Hawthorne reader knows, there is a depressing abundance of biographical and critical commentary on this subject. Of the biographies that I have perused in preparing this paper, Julian Hawthorne's Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Wife and Randall Stewart's Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Biography seem the most helpful. The merit of the former lies rather obviously in its having been written by the author's son; the latter is particularly valuable as the interpretation of a man who has come

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6 Ibid., 130.
closer to understanding Hawthorne, by way of his editions of the Journals, than any person since Sophia Peabody. It is no secret that Mrs. Hawthorne was quite determined to present her husband as she thought he would have wanted to appear to future generations. The modern consensus seems to be, however, that Sophia depicted Hawthorne as she wanted him to appear, that the author himself would have been horrified at her inane scribblings and biographical mutilations.

Hyatt Waggoner suggests that no one can learn anything of real value toward an understanding of the author from the biographies. "The impression one is likely to get from reading the most reliable and definitive biography is that there is little connection between the man and his works." Julian Hawthorne and Randall Stewart, however, feel otherwise. Stewart indicates in his preface to The American Notebooks that the Hawthorne estranged from society is more the creation of his Victorian wife than anyone or anything else. In fact, Mr. Stewart appears to make Hawthorne's immersion into society an underlying aim of his study.

The author's son takes a somewhat different view. What appears to account chiefly for Hawthorne's relative aloofness, according to Julian, is the character of his father's widowed mother, Elizabeth Clarke Manning.

7Waggoner, 7.
His mother, a woman of fine gifts but of extreme sensibility, lost her husband in her twenty-eighth year; and, from an exaggerated, almost Hindoo-like construction of the law of seclusion which the public taste of that day imposed upon widows, she withdrew entirely from society, and permitted the habit of solitude to grow upon her to such a degree that she actually remained a strict hermit to the end of her long life. 8

Julian Hawthorne further points out that such behavior on Mrs. Hawthorne's part could hardly fail to have at least some effect upon the children, among whom Nathaniel was the only boy. The number of his friends at Bowdoin and the activities in which he engaged indicate that any early deleterious effect which his mother's estrangement from society might have had on the youth was not permanent. While attending the rustic, yet reputable, Bowdoin College, Nathaniel established several friendships that were destined to last a lifetime. Among such close friends were Horatio Bridge, Franklin Pierce, Jonathan Cilley and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

In attempting to expel the picture of Hawthorne as a somber, solitary figure, Randall Stewart focuses his attention on the so-called "Solitary Years" (1825-1837), a period that began with his graduation from Bowdoin and ended with the publication of Twice-Told Tales. These are the years during which Hawthorne is supposed to have dropped from view, the years during which the solitary morbidity that some feel marks his most characteristic work is alleged to have been firmly implanted in the

8 Julian Hawthorne, Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Wife (Boston, 1885), 4-5.
Hoping to discount this view, Randall Stewart enumerates the acquaintanceships that Hawthorne maintained by means of walks, talks, and numerous exchanges of correspondence during the solitary years. The biographer lists Hawthorne's walks through North Salem, his Boston trip with Mr. Procter, his drive to Nahant, and his ride to Ipswich with Bridge. "A morbid solitariness," Stewart concludes, "is hardly compatible with such mobility." The frosting on the cake, however, is his allusion to the fact that during the "solitary years," Hawthorne is alleged to have undergone three flirtations.

Perhaps Malcolm Cowley is near the truth when he says that the years following his stay at Bowdoin marked Hawthorne's apprenticeship and early travels. Cowley feels that Hawthorne was isolated during these years partly because of his Salem address but chiefly because of his desire to make a living through literature instead of business or law. Furthermore, while most of his acquaintances were Emersonian idealists, he had already established himself as a psychological realist, a fact that is substantiated in the tales written during these years. A. N. Kaul observes, "With regard to the enforced isolation of the artist, it is perhaps worthwhile to cite Hawthorne's comment in the notebook for 1840 upon the long period of his own retired

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life.

And now I begin to understand why I was imprisoned so many years in this lonely chamber, and why I could never break through the viewless bolts and bars; for if I had sooner made my escape into the world, I should have grown hard and rough, and been covered with earthly dust, and my heart might have become callous by rude encounters with the multitude.10

Here is a statement on Hawthorne's relationship with society, or the multitude, that probably comes nearest the truth. In a captivating essay on Hawthorne, Kaul discusses the role of art in attempting to reconcile what has already been mentioned as the most perplexing dilemma that Hawthorne and many of his contemporaries had to face: the problem of establishing an individual identity while maintaining contact with the magnetic chain of humanity. Art can be, Kaul says, a form of communion without conformity "... for what makes people cease to partake of the universal throb is not physical isolation but spiritual coldness, while art is based upon human sympathies."11

The problem of Hawthorne's isolation, then, is not so much a matter of whether or not he ever alienated himself but why he did so. The solitary years were the proverbial forty days in the desert that helped prepare Hawthorne to write so well about the human condition and, in particular, of the over-riding problem of the individual and society. Kaul takes this view; so, too, does Charles O'Donnell in an article entitled "Hawthorne and

10Kaul, 168-69. 11Ibid., 167-68.
Dimmesdale: The Search for the Realm of Quiet." O'Donnell, like most of the critics whom I have studied, recognizes the essential Hawthorne dilemma that has been the theme of this essay; like his predecessors, he also recognizes Hawthorne's commitment to human solidarity as the only solution to the problem. "The only possibility for constructive human action lies in society, within the community of mankind."

Particularly interesting in O'Donnell's essay is his view on the function of art and the artist. Art, says O'Donnell, helps to bridge the gap between the world of affairs and the world of the mind; in this he agrees with Kaul. The artist must of necessity temporarily disassociate himself from society if for no other reason than to sharpen his perception so that his relationships with mankind will be fruitful in the spiritual sense.

The artist can never blindly accept civilization; he must first fight through the thicket (sometimes only of the mind) before he can re-emerge, return to society. But the journey forever clears the vision, and he can never again wholly participate in the aspirations or illusions of the day people, the unthinking people. The wilderness, the journey through night, has made him aware of isolation as a value, almost as a temperamental necessity; it has made him aware of the value of self-hood, of the dangers and complexities of the forces opposing him, of the flimsiness of absolutes, the inevitability of physical defeat, the desirability of spiritual victory. The aware man returns to the world where the unaware people bask in the deluding certainty of bright sunlight, but the dark thicket is part of his consciousness.

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13 Ibid., 318.
Hawthorne's personal isolation, though often exaggerated by his own family and, therefore, by early commentators, is a fact that can be verified in the author's own journals. On the other hand, if his tales, sketches, novels and journals are to be considered a reliable indication of Hawthorne's temperament, it is apparent that his occasional separations from the community were not simply a misanthropic attempt to avoid people. That Hawthorne ultimately threw in his lot with an occasionally degenerate, often ignorant, always bewildered human brotherhood is an extremely important, though often misunderstood, fact.

Extant correspondence and journal accounts of the solitary years indicate that Hawthorne enjoyed human experience more as an observer than as a participant. An interesting entry, dated Monday, August 27, 1837 and characteristic in its implications, appears in The American Notebooks.

The farm boys remain insulated, looking at the passing show, within sight of the city, yet with nothing to do with it; beholding their fellow creatures skimming by them in winged machines; and steamboats snorting and puffing through the waves. Methinks an island would be the most desirable of all landed property; for it seems like a little world by itself; and the water may answer instead of the atmosphere, or vacancy, that surrounds planets.14

Here Hawthorne reveals a problem which was to perplex him throughout his life. To live on an island, divorced from the mainland and society, and to study, scrutinize, observe humanity skimming by—these were the activities for which Hawthorne was

temperamentally suited; but he knew only too well the spiritual
degeneration and ultimate annihilation that such a course of
alienation afforded, for he wrote about just such self-destruc-
tion in the characters of Roger Chillingworth, Ethan Brand,
Rappaccini and others.

The Notebooks abound with Hawthorne's observations of his
"fellow creatures skimming by."

Scenes and characters--A young country fellow, twenty or
thereabouts, decently dressed, pained with a toothache . . .
(p. 43)

Fat woman, stage-passenger today--a wonder how she could
possibly get through the door . . .
(p. 44)

One of the most sensible men in this village is a plain,
tall, elderly person . . .
(p. 44)

A man in a pea-green frock coat, with velvet collar. An-
other in a flowered chintz frock coat . . . .
(p. 44)

People washing themselves at the common basin in the bar-
room, and using the common hair-brush--perhaps with a con-
sciousness of praiseworthy neatness . . . .
(p. 44)

A man with a cradle on his shoulder, having been cradling
oats . . .
(p. 44)

Passed a doctor high up on the mountain, in a sulky, with
his black leather saddle-bags . . .
(p. 45)

An old man selling the meats of butter-nuts under the stoop
. . . 
(p. 46)
The people here show out their character much more strongly than they do with us—there was not the quiet, silent, dull decency as in our public assemblages—but mirth, anger, eccentricity, all showing themselves freely. . . .

(p. 48)

All these selections were entered during the years 1837-38.

Julian Hawthorne, too, sensed this habit of his father to view his fellow creatures skimming by. Although modern biographers, like Stewart, appear certain that Hawthorne took great pleasure in his ability to mix with men far removed from his own interests, Julian's observations about his father's essential aloofness—even in the midst of crowds—are significant.

Thus if he chatted with a group of rude sea captains in the smoking-room of Mrs. Blodgett's boarding-house, or joined a knot of boon companions in a Boston bar-room, or talked metaphysics with Herman Melville on the hills of Berkshire, he would aim to appear in each instance a man like as they were; he would have the air of being interested in their interests and viewing life by their standards. Of course, this was only apparent; the real man stood aloof and observant, and only showed himself as he was, in case of his prerogatives being invaded or his actual liberty of thought and action being in any way infringed upon.15

As an artist, Hawthorne's sensitivities forced him apart from men; as a link in the chain of humanity, however, Hawthorne recognized his role only too well. He realized, too, the dangers attendant upon his role as an artist. The exceptional man is isolated by reason of his superiority, and, as Kaul points out, it is as much a sin for the man of unusual sensitivity to fall prey to conformity as it is for the man of imagination to lose

15Julian Hawthorne, 88-89.
hold of the magnetic chain of humanity. On the one hand there exists a Dimmesdale, while, on the other, an Ethan Brand. Both, by failing to live up to the expectations and responsibilities required by their natures, earn an equally emphatic spiritual annihilation, Dimmesdale's deathbed conversion not withstanding. "My father," said Julian Hawthorne, "was two men, one sympathetic and intuitive, the other critical and logical; together they formed a combination which could not be thrown off its feet." 16

In April of 1841, Hawthorne joined the Brook Farm movement. But this was an attempted fusion of the individual and a rarified society doomed to failure almost from the start. The account of his stay exists in fictionalized form in The Blithedale Romance, which is analyzed in a later chapter. The short duration of Hawthorne's stay at West Roxbury cannot be attributed to waning idealism. As a matter of fact, his reasons for going there in the first place were quite mundane; he hoped, by investing $1000 of his own funds, to reap a handsome return so as to enable him to marry his espoused Sophia. This financial gamble was so disastrous, that the happy union had to be delayed until July of 1842.

Hawthorne had never been in complete sympathy with the transcendental vogue, a fact which caused Sophia, one of the movement's enthusiastic supporters, mild dismay from time to time.

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The meaningful community life, it must be pointed out, was not for Hawthorne a matter of external slogans and schemes. It could arise only from the individual's deep realization of his own insufficiency, and it could be based only upon genuine emotion, upon such feelings as love and compassion. This was the conclusion to which Hawthorne's brooding over his own sense of isolation had led him.\(^{17}\)

Hawthorne was distrustful of professional reformers. This attitude is apparent not only in his reactions toward Hollingsworth in *The Blithedale Romance*, but in his political position as depicted, for example, in his biography of Franklin Pierce. Whenever Hawthorne writes about the need for spiritual rejuvenation as well as its attainment, he shows that such regeneration comes from within; Hester, Clifford and Miriam are cases in point. The basic troubles in mankind can generally be traced to an upset in the delicate balance of head and heart, intellect and emotion, reason and passion. These are forces that no self-styled reformer can, nor even dare, tamper with. The imbalance of the head and the heart signals the malfunction of internal forces; it is, therefore, only from within that these forces can be set aright again.

During the years of Hawthorne's greatest productivity, the late forties and early fifties, when he wrote *The Scarlet Letter*, *The House of the Seven Gables*, and *The Blithedale Romance*, the author alternated involvement with strategic artistic withdrawals. "I religiously seclude myself every morning (much against my will)," said Hawthorne, "and remain in retirement\(^{17}\)".
till dinner-time or thereabouts. "It was pleasant and stimu-
lating to walk on pavements and feel the pulsing life of crowds." Berkshire, he told Bridge, was too much out of the way. "I have learned pretty well the desirableness of an easy access to the world... It will do well enough to play Robinson Crusoe for a summer or two, but when a man is making his settled dispositions for life, he had better be as near a railroad station as possible."20

His appointment as consul at Liverpool, or, more correctly, his stay in Europe, is supposed to have made Hawthorne "easier in society than formerly," according to Robert Lowell and other friends.21 Indeed, while in England, the author was able to overcome a lifelong dread of public speaking to the extent that he made more and more speeches at political and social functions. While there, too, he attended quite a few parties. "He prized this record of his immersion in active life at the center of things—the completest he had ever experienced."22 According to various accounts of Hawthorne's consulship, the author made many friends in England by virtue of his kindliness and generosity. On many occasions he gave of his own often meagre funds so that a poor vagabond might wend his way back to his native shore. Interestingly, during this period of socializing, Hawthorne did not write anything except the English journals.

While in Italy, Hawthorne found great comfort among the society of artists who resided in Rome. He thoroughly enjoyed

18 Stewart, A Biography, 112. 19 Ibid., 119.
20 Ibid., 118. 21 Ibid., 215. 22 Ibid., 167-68.
Rome's "peculiar mode of life, and its freedom from the enthrallments of society."

Then, too, a community of interests has its advantages, for "though," he observed, "the artists care little about one another's works, yet they keep one another warm by the presence of so many of them." It was this warming environment produced by kindred workers which Hawthorne himself had felt the lack of in his early life. 23

After his return to America, in June of 1860, Hawthorne continued his social life, such as it was. He refurbished the Wayside, entertained guests, and managed to travel somewhat, although his excursions were curtailed because of failing health.

An impressive amount of material has been written on the subject of Hawthorne's handling of the problem of the individual and society. Some writers, like Henry Fairbanks, seem to feel that Hawthorne, while sympathizing with the masses, inevitably isolated himself from them.

Yet the life of the artist in America had cut him off from society and from reality. . . . Not less than his inherited propensity for solitude, nor less than the insidious egotism of obstinate ambition, had the life of the artist imposed a mark upon his countenance. 24

Marius Bewley arrives at a somewhat different view.

The penalty of genius was isolation, exclusion from the democratic community whose tendency, as Cooper had said, was "in all things toward mediocrity." . . . Here, then, is a

23 Ibid., 193.

clearly defined split in the consciousness of the American artist of the time. Wasn't it possible that the practice of his art, which by its very nature set him apart from society as an observer and an analyst—wasn't it possible that it somehow constituted a betrayal of his own nature as an American? It often seemed so to Hawthorne's New England conscience. But, with a shift of mood, wasn't it the artist after all who was betrayed by his political and social traditions?25

But A. N. Kaul comes closest to the truth, I think, when he writes this of the same problem.

[Hawthorne's] attitude represented a hope that democratic men would achieve a better community than the one they had left behind—the European community of class and privilege—if they acknowledged the inescapable fellowship of all human beings and translated the theoretical claim of universal brotherhood into the values and conduct of living relationships.26

As references to the biographers and critics have shown, Hawthorne is ambiguous about the relationships between individuals and society. An analysis of several of the works will further demonstrate this. But it is certain that he had a great compassion for humanity, that he thought a great deal about the problem and that he was occasionally frustrated because of the dilemma it posed.

Hawthorne always gave as much as he could to his companions; but it was not within the possibilities of his temperament for him to give them much more than they gave him. He could not force his depths to be visible to them; and if they could not see into them, they must perforce limit themselves to the outward aspect... He was powerless to reveal himself fully, save in fit company; and such company, for him, was rare.27

26 Kaul, 154. 27 Julian Hawthorne, 90.
"Hawthorne," says Randall Stewart, "was an analyst of human relations, of the nice relationship of person to person, of the adjustment of the individual to society." In a sense, as Stewart suggests, Hawthorne is anti-Romantic insofar as he criticizes the romantic preoccupation with the self. Byron, Shelley, Wordsworth—all are examples of Romantic egocentricity. One can easily imagine the distress that Whitman's "singing himself" for several hundred pages would have caused Nathaniel Hawthorne. Hawthorne was too much the realist to be subdued by idealistic philosophers who placed too much emphasis on individual worth, who told men to look within themselves to find God, who relegated sinful, imperfect men to the top of Olympus.

Hawthorne was profoundly influenced by his Calvinistic heritage in spite of the fact that he often castigated the dismal, cold, gray Puritan throng in his works. Yet, there are other times when, as Herbert Schneider points out, Puritanism represents the maturity of the human mind, as, for example, in "The Maypole of Merry Mount." Notwithstanding Henry James's attempt to relegate American Calvinism to the role of a prop in Hawthorne's novels and tales, Hawthorne lived and breathed Puritanism, just as he was immersed in the age of which he wrote. Time and theology, therefore, cannot be relegated to the rela-

28 Stewart, A Biography, 252.

tively unimportant role of "setting."

The concept of the individual and society can be artistically illustrated in many ways. In order to present the problem dramatically, Hawthorne often juxtaposed a solitary figure, or, occasionally, a solitary group alongside a relatively large throng. The crowds in these tableaux perform various functions. Sometimes, as in Chapter 1 of The Scarlet Letter, the throng comments upon the actions of a character or group of characters. At other times, as in the last chapter of The Scarlet Letter and in "The Ambitious Guest," the crowds provide characteristic ambiguity by furnishing various interpretations—many often at odds with one another—of actions that have transpired.

The aesthetic function of Hawthorne's crowds is another important consideration. Thus, in addition to elucidating, wherever possible, their function of accentuating individual isolation and the relationship between the crowd and Hawthorne's irony and ambiguity, I hope to discuss the crowds' roles in the symbolic structure of several works as well as their contributions to tone and atmosphere.

The problem of the individual and society permeates 19th and even 20th century American literature; likewise, its dramatization by means of isolated figures and assembled throngs is evident in the writings of many American authors, such as Poe, Irving and, of course, Melville. One immediately thinks of Ahab and the crew aboard the "Pequod" as a classic example of the
psychological role and dramatic effect which Hawthorne's contemporary assigned to the crowd. Nor, of course, is the phenomenon limited to American fiction. Dickens, Hardy and Conrad are but a sampling of the British writers who knew the advantage of artistically manipulating the throng to dramatic advantage.

What I have tried to do in this first chapter is illustrate the many attitudes held by critics concerning Hawthorne's social commitment. Chapter 2 deals more fully with the nature of Hawthorne's crowds and the methods whereby the author utilized the throng to depict in his novels and tales the central problem of the individual and society.
CHAPTER II

HAWTHORNE'S USE OF THE CROWD

"My brother," wrote Elizabeth Hawthorne, "went out when there was a fire, and if there was any gathering of people in the town he always went out; he liked a crowd."¹

Hawthorne's liking for crowds has already been alluded to in connection with his sensitivity to the bond of humanity. The role of the individual in society, too, has been discussed insofar as it is an important—perhaps the central—thematic consideration in many of the novels and tales. What I want to deal with in this portion of my study is the use that Hawthorne makes of the gathering, or crowd, in adding psychological realism to his works, in dramatizing the problem of the one and the many, and in adding an aesthetic dimension to the works. Ensuing chapters will then be devoted to a careful explication of major works; in each instance the roles that the crowds play will be emphasized.

In dealing with the very important psychological aspects of the crowd as a social phenomenon, Gustave LeBon considers several key aspects: (1) general characteristics of crowds; (2) the sentiments and morality of crowds; (3) the ideas, reason-

ing power, and the imagination of crowds; and, (4) the convictions of crowds. All of these considerations he includes under the general heading, "The Mind of Crowds." In a second section of his book, LeBon considers "The Opinions and Beliefs of Crowds. Because LeBon, in a careful, scientific manner, indicates rather obviously that he knows what he is about, and because his headings include the characteristics by which Hawthorne's crowds might best be judged, I have decided to use the sociologist's outline in dealing with this first major aspect of Hawthorne's crowds. Furthermore, the striking similarities between what Hawthorne's crowds do and what the psychologists and sociologists predict crowds will do under certain circumstances provide an insight into Nathaniel Hawthorne's keen understanding of human nature.

To begin, it might be useful to define the limits of the term "crowd" from the sociologist's point of view. A crowd is formed when several persons—whether physically united or not—engage in sentiments and ideas germane to all the persons in the group and when their conscious individual personalities vanish.

The psychological crowd is a provisional being formed of heterogeneous elements, which for a moment are combined, exactly as the cells which constitute a living body form by their reunion a new being which displays characteristics very different from those possessed by each of the cells singly.²

LeBon's definition of the psychological crowd brings to

mind many gatherings in Hawthorne's novels and tales which fulfil these requirements. Perhaps one example will suffice for now, since major portions of ensuing chapters will verify Hawthorne's amazing awareness of crowd psychology. Consider the familiar gathering that greets Young Goodman Brown on the Walpurgisnacht when he first comes into contact with assembled evil.

... Among them, quivering to and fro between gloom and splendor, appeared faces that would be seen next day at the council board of the province, and others which, Sabbath after Sabbath, looked devoutly heavenward, and benignantly over the crowded pews, from the holiest pulpits in the land. ... But, irreverently consorting with these grave, reputable, and pious people, these elders of the church, these chaste dames and dewey virgins, there were men of dissolute lives and women of spotted fame, witches given over to all mean and filthy vice, and suspected even of horrid crimes. It was strange to see that the good shrank not from the wicked, nor were the sinners abashed by the saints.3

It is strange, indeed, that Deacon Gookin and his revered pastor should consort openly with the town wretches, that the dewey virgins should mingle with men and women of spotted fame, that the pious should mix with the dissolute sinners of Salem village; but that is exactly what they are doing. What Hawthorne is attempting to show, I think, is that individual propensity for good or for evil disappears completely in the light, or darkness, of one's membership in the communion of sinners. The sentiment, or more properly, the common characteristic of every participant in the sylvan ceremonies is his share in original sin. In this light, all individualism vanishes. The unconscious motivations,

or, in this case, afflictions, of a race unite it; the conscious aspects, like education, environment, and training, make its members distinct from one another. In the collective mind, LeBon suggests, intellectual aptitudes, or conscious elements, are weakened; thus, individuality is all but lost. That is why those in attendance at the meeting in the forest are able to go about their business the next day as though nothing had happened. They are unaware of their complicity in evil during the Walpurgisnacht, or, for all practical purposes, of the hold that evil has over all mankind. Goodman Brown retains an awareness of the communion of sinners for dramatic purposes.

"So far as the majority of their acts are considered, crowds display a singularly inferior mentality." Hawthorne's crowds are, generally, no exception. Consider, for example, the crowd that greets Hester as she emerges through the prison door.

With one exception, the crowd is blindly united in its disapproval of Hester's apparent disregard for the moral and social codes of Boston. Perhaps as much as anything else, The Scarlet Letter is a record of the education of the Boston throng, which is unconsciously swayed from utter condemnation of Hester Prynne, to a practically complete acceptance of her as the epitome of, if not personal virtue, at least domestic and social virtue. Surely The Scarlet Letter is a record of the education of Hester and Dimmesdale and the utter deterioration of Roger Chillingworth.

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4 LeBon, 9.
it also describes the sociological amelioration of the Boston Puritans. It is well to bear in mind the seven-year duration required for these reforms to materialize, particularly in terms of what LeBon has to say about the crowd and reform.

Nature has recourse at times to radical measures, but never after our fashion, which explains how it is that nothing is more fatal to a people than the mania for great reforms, however excellent these reforms may appear theoretically. They would only be useful were it possible to change instantaneously the genius of nations. This power, however, is only possessed by time. Men are ruled by ideas, sentiments and customs—matters which are the essence of ourselves. Institutions and laws are the outward manifestation of our character, the expression of its needs. Being its outcome, institutions and laws cannot change this character.5

Edward Strecker's conclusions about the mentality of crowds are similar to those of LeBon.

The weight of evidence is in favor of the belief that a "crowd" thinks, feels, and behaves on a much lower level than the customary levels of the individuals composing it. The debasement of behavior is the deeper as the crowd increases in size.6

Robin's rather uncharacteristic behavior is not too surprising, then, when he succumbs to the magnetic quality of the mob in "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" and becomes what Strecker calls a "crowd-man."

The contagion was spreading among the multitude, when all at once, it seized upon Robin, and he sent forth a shout of laughter that echoed through the street—every man shook his sides, every man emptied his lungs, but Robin's shout was the

5LeBon, 7.

These lines comment not only on crowd mentality; they suggest another prominent characteristic. "Little adapted to reasoning, crowds, on the contrary, are quick to act." One of the unsolved puzzles of "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" has been the motivation, or lack thereof, for Robin's actions at the end of the story. Is it possible that Robin's sudden decision to throw in his lot with the unruly mob is another manifestation of man's subconscious membership in the communion of sinners, a theme already alluded to in earlier comments on "Young Goodman Brown"? If this is the case, then perhaps LeBon's "unconscious motivations of race" are what account for Robin's behavior. What this theory does to "freedom of the will" in Hawthorne I am not prepared to say. I am inclined to agree with Henry Fairbanks that Hawthorne is a proponent of free will, for Robin does make the deliberate choice of joining the mob by means of a sympathetic laugh; or is his action simply the unconscious reaction of a member of the brotherhood?

LeBon summarizes the general characteristics of crowd behavior as follows:

8 LeBon, 17.
The crowd is always intellectually inferior to the isolated individual, but from the point of view of feelings and of the acts these feelings provoke, the crowd may, according to circumstances, be better or worse than the individual. All depends on the nature of the suggestion to which the crowd is exposed. 10

In discussing the sentiments and morality of crowds, LeBon lists impulsiveness, irritability, incapacity to reason, the absence of the critical spirit, and the exaggeration of the sentiments as their chief characteristics. What is particularly apposite to Hawthorne's crowds is what the sociologist calls the crowd's propensity for thinking in terms of images. "A crowd thinks in images, and the image itself immediately calls up a series of other images, having no logical connection with the first." 11 Many examples of this phenomenon are to be found in Hawthorne. One that immediately comes to mind is the appearance of the heavenly light during the famous scaffold scene in Chapter 12 of The Scarlet Letter. The light was reputed to have appeared in the form of an "A," which many townspeople construed as symbolizing the angelic qualities of the recently deceased Governor Winthrop while to Dimmesdale it suggested the sin which he had kept hidden in his bosom for so long. Because "A" had come to symbolize the "revered" Hester's ability, the Puritan throng no longer made the association arrived at by their guilt-ridden pastor. In any event, the scene provides an interesting example of the ill-conceived, often illogical meanings assigned to signifi-

10 LeBon, 37. 11 Ibid., 45-46.
cant and occasionally insignificant occurrences by Hawthorne's throngs. It is probably apparent that the crowds being dealt with here need not mill about the streets in mob-like fashion; what is required is that they be united by a common idea or, as is most often the case, by a common stimulant or image.

Crowds appear to be given to simple, though at times, extreme sentiments. "The opinions, ideas, and beliefs suggested to them are accepted or rejected as a whole, and considered as absolute truths or as not less absolute errors."\textsuperscript{12} "Authoritativeness and intolerance are sentiments of which crowds have a very clear notion . . . ."\textsuperscript{13} To enter into a discussion of the nature of American Calvinism, or Puritanism, would be beyond the pale of this thesis. But several things that LeBon has to say about the characteristic allegiance and morality of crowds have bearing, at least in offering possible reasons for society's acting the way it does. Consider, for example, the implications of the following extracts when one substitutes the Puritan God for hero and the Puritans for the crowds themselves.

The type of hero dear to crowds will always have the semblance of a Caesar. His insignia attracts (sic) them, his authority overawes them, and his sword instills them with fear.\textsuperscript{14}

[Crowds are really quite conservative.] Their incessant mobility only exerts its influence on quite superficial matters. . . . Their fetish-like respect for all traditions is absolute; their unconscious horror of all novelty capable of

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 59. \textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 61. \textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
changing the essential conditions of their existence is very deeply rooted. 15

"The Maypole of Merry Mount" provides the convenient example of a Puritan throng motivated, in dismantling the maypole, by an unconscious horror of all novelty, of a crowd incapable of permitting such "worship of Baal" to enter their closed society, the essential conditions of which had been rooted very deeply indeed. For Hawthorne, very much a part of the Calvinistic tradition that he describes, the error of the Puritans lay not in their religious devotion but in their inability or unwillingness to imitate the mercy of the master whom they espoused.

Discussing the ideas of crowds, like dealing with their sentiments and morality, is a difficult, almost hopelessly involved, undertaking. Psychologists and sociologists, like LeBon and Martin, appear to be at odds as to exactly what the crowd mind consists of. The former, in discussing the morality of crowds, says that crowds are too impulsive and mobile to be moral in the ordinary sense of the term; yet they are capable of great devotion and sacrifice, occasionally, of acts loftier than those of which the individual is capable. A case in point is the Crusaders. Nevertheless, LeBon relegates any reasoning power of crowds to a minor position; they seem to be motivated primarily by emotions and something he calls the collective mind. Everett Martin, on the other hand, is suspicious of this mystic ration-

15 Ibid., 63.
ale, insisting that the assumed impersonal collective mind of the crowd has no existence in a sound psychology.

A peculiar psychic change must happen to a group of people before they become a crowd. And as this change is not merely a release of emotion, neither is it the creation of a collective mind by means of imitation and suggestion. My thesis is that the crowd-mind is a phenomenon which should best be classed with dreams, delusions, and the various forms of automatic behavior.16

It seems fairly safe to assume that the crowd-mind is not characterized by careful deliberation or rational development in any case. Martin says that its ideas are ready-made, that they possess finality and universality, that they are fixed and, therefore, do not develop, that they are, in effect, compulsions.17 This will do quite nicely for some of Hawthorne's crowds, though not all, since occasionally, as in The Scarlet Letter, their ideas change; yet, it does take Hester seven years of hard labor to bring about this transformation.

LeBon says that crowds become enamored of two kinds of ideas—accidental ones, resulting from a momentary infatuation, and fundamental ideas, resulting from heredity and/or environment.18 I have already alluded to the relative slowness of crowds in coming upon ideas or arriving at decisions and, later, in discarding them, but these lines are particularly germane to Hawthorne's important "individuals" and their relation to soci-

17Ibid., 26. 18LeBon, 68.
Hester's, as well as Zenobia's, frustrated attempt at playing Joan of Arc in an era and among a people not yet ready for her can hardly go unnoticed in the light of such a commentary.

Because their reasoning ability is what it is, the imagination of crowds is easily impressed.

Crowds, being incapable both of reflection and of reasoning, are devoid of the notion of improbability; and it is to be noted that in a general way it is the most improbable things that are the most striking.

This is why it happens that it is always the marvelous and legendary side of events that more especially strike crowds. When a civilization is analyzed it is seen that, in reality, it is the marvellous and the legendary that are its true supports. Appearances have always played a much more important part than reality in history, where the unreal is always of greater moment than the real.

It seems to me that part of what LeBon is saying here strikes at the very nature of Hawthorne's art. For is not Hawthorne very much concerned with the transcendence of appearance over reality, not in the idealistic Emersonian sense, but in terms of the importance of individual interpretation of reality, or, at least, individual presentation and, therefore, manipulation of reality? I think that his Preface to The House of The Seven Gables, in which Hawthorne distinguishes between the novel

19 Ibid., 73. 20 Ibid., 75-76.
and the romance, bears this out. For Hawthorne was always careful to label his works romances, by which he meant:

The former—while as a work of art, it must rigidly subject itself to laws, and while it sins unpardonably so far as it may swerve aside from the truth of the human heart—has fairly a right to present that truth under circumstances, to a great extent, of the writer's own choosing or creation. If he think fit, also, he may so manage his atmospheric medium as to bring out or mellow the lights and deepen and enrich the shadows of the picture. 21

The many examples of Hawthorne's crowds that make marvelous and legendary analyses of actions which they have witnessed or heard about need not be elucidated here, since such accounts will soon be dealt with in detail. But once again, their true-to-form behavior could easily have provided LeBon case histories of the phenomenon which he describes. Hawthorne seems to have realized quite some time before the psychology of crowds became an attractive sociological pursuit that crowds think in terms of images. "It is only images that testify or attract them and become motives of action." 22 The French sociologist goes a step further and suggests that he who knows the art of impressing the crowd's imagination has learned the art of governing them. Perhaps this, among other reasons, is why the fire and brimstone sermons of the Mathers and even Jonathan Edwards were so terribly effective against the Puritan throngs.

Because their convictions generally grow out of emotional

22 LeBon, 76.
acceptance rather than from rational observation, the conclusions arrived at by crowds are often violent, even extreme. Their beliefs, gradually arrived at, are the result of many factors: race, traditions, time, political and social institutions, and education.

This [Religious] sentiment [of crowds] has very simple characteristics, such as worship of a being supposed superior, fear of the power with which the being is credited, blind submission to its commands, inability to discuss its dogmas, the desire to spread them, and a tendency to consider as enemies all by whom they are not accepted.23

Of course, the basis for this and similar statements, by Martin, for example, is the belief that there are no verities, that there are no objective truths—only truths that are acceptable to or at least thought of by an individual. In view of the fact that I am more concerned with the observable actions of crowds than with the bases for all their actions, I absolve myself from the impossible task of proving that there was and is an objective reality which the Puritans had grasped and to which they paid their allegiance. From the theological point of view, I shall simply disagree with LeBon's statement that "Not truth, but error has always been the chief factor in the evolution of nations," if, by this, he means that gods, heroes and poets have no other function than to supply the illusion without which man cannot survive.

In The Crowd, LeBon speaks of the classification of

23 Ibid., 82.
crowds into heterogeneous and homogeneous types; as subdivisions of these classes he enumerates street crowds, juries, parliamentary assemblies, political and religious sects, military, priestly and working castes, and crowds of various "classes": the middle class, the peasant class, and the upper class. Hawthorne's crowds, too, may be classified, though not in such an elaborate way.

Hawthorne's crowds are primarily of the homogeneous variety insofar as their constituents are generally Puritan New Englanders. Because inferior characteristics are less accentuated in proportion as the spirit of the race is strong, Hawthorne's New England crowds seldom descend to the condition of mobs. The throng in "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" is an obvious exception. Hawthorne's crowds are generally long on emotion but short on reason. Likewise, they are often fickle, bigoted, and emotionally immature; hence, the author often uses them to advantage in depicting the depravity of man and the proclivity to error of human judgement.

In some ways, the crowds perform the function of the old Greek chorus in passing judgements on both people and events. More often than not, just as in the case of Sophoclean choruses, their judgements are erroneous or downright stupid. Their comments may be justified, however, in view of the additional light they throw on the subject or, in Hawthorne's case, in view of the

\[24\text{Ibid., 180.}\]
further ambiguity which they bring about. The contradictory reports of the crowds often dramatize the various levels at which a tale might be read. The instance of Dimmesdale's chest wound is a case in point. The author could hardly put himself in the compromising position of asking some of the inane questions that the townspeople ask. The crowds often make quite clear the fact that there is a great deal of ambiguity in a story by Hawthorne, just as there is in life. And it redounds to the credit of the throngs that at least one element either hits or comes close to the solution which the author suggests just might be somewhere near the heart of the matter—if there be one.

The anonymous street crowds that one often finds milling about perform various functions which no single paragraph can define. This type, seen in The House of the Seven Gables, The Marble Faun, The Scarlet Letter, "Wakefield," and "Ethan Brand," to cite but a few examples, is often one peg below the choral crowd in terms of mentality. Though they are occasionally called upon by unseen forces to pass judgement, their chief function is to provide a dramatic backdrop to accentuate the central characters. Sometimes, as in "Ethan Brand," their constituents are isolated and spotlighted to depict various aspects of the human condition.

Another crowd type is that associated with the masques of which Hawthorne seemed so fond. Examples are to be found in The Blithedale Romance and The Marble Faun. In many ways the most
bizarre of Hawthorne's gatherings, these crowds of the masque provide a temporary escape from reality in the world of the imagination and suggest the ephemeral nature of man's happiness.

One kind of crowd never gets onstage: the absent, omniscient crowd to which the somber words "they say" are often attributed. In a sense, this type may be merely an extension of the "choral crowd," or the crowd of social consciousness.

What constitutes a crowd for purposes of this study is a group having a psychological focal point upon which all its members are, to varying degrees, attuned. Consequently, there can be seen in Hawthorne's fiction such phenomena as the political crowd, in "The Gray Champion" and "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," the theological and/or social crowd, in "The Minister's Black Veil" and "Young Goodman Brown," and the crowd of social isolation, in "Wakefield" and "Ethan Brand." These types, as a matter of fact, constitute the viewpoint from which several of Hawthorne's tales are to be viewed in Chapter VII of this study.

The gatherings need not qualify as mobs or huge throngs in order to be considered. A group of three people, for example, if it seems rather obviously intended to be viewed as an organic unit by the author, has pertinence here. The "group function" of Hester, Pearl and Dimmesdale in the scaffold scene quite clearly qualifies, then, in any careful study of Hawthorne's social consciousness.

Whatever type the crowd or group might be, Hawthorne appears
to have assigned to many of them a psychological or emotional function. In "Hawthorne's Crowds," D. K. Anderson suggests, for example, that they magnify the emotions of individual characters and cites as examples the shame of Dimmesdale, the loneliness of Clifford, the bewilderment of Robin, the indignation of the Puritan leaders, and the sadness of Kenyon. Likewise, in works like *The Scarlet Letter*, "The Gray Champion," and "The Minister's Black Veil," the crowds are intended to provide a touchstone—though often ironically deceptive—for the emotional response of the reader. And, as has already been indicated, the group is sometimes used to provide a link between the real and the unreal, as in *The Blithedale Romance*, "The Maypole of Merry Mount," and *The Marble Faun*.

There remains another important facet in this overview of the functions of Hawthorne's crowds, and that is the aesthetic function they perform. Perhaps the word "aesthetic" ought to be explained, since it is used here in a restricted sense. Aesthetici: here refers to the sensuous characteristics and suggestiveness of crowds as opposed to their psychological functions. Hawthorne's use of predominant types of imagery to signal various emotions and ideas has been the subject of numerous critical accounts. Hawthorne's crowds serve a twofold artistic function: a psychological role and an aesthetic, or sensuous, role. The sensuous function of the crowd can most easily be discussed in terms of the chief kinds of imagery that the reader has come to
recognize in Hawthorne's fiction. Thus, color, the light and the dark, and sound provide familiar image clusters in which the crowds function.

"Hawthorne utilizes color, light and shadow," says Walter Blair, "not only for their narrative value, but for their ability to provide moral significance as well."25 The somber garb of the Puritans, therefore, provides an interesting contrast with the dress of Hester Prynne in The Scarlet Letter and that of the fanciful revelers in "The Maypole of Merry Mount." Likewise, interesting effects are produced by the contrasts that often exist between the sounds of the crowd and the condition of the central figures, as can be seen in the case of Miriam and Donatello after the faunlike youth rids Miriam of her oppressor. The merry sounds of their companions suggest the lonely path that the two must pursue in the wake of their complicity in the sin of murder. Images of sight and sound, then, given actuality by groups of people, provide important artistic amplification of Hawthorne's chief themes: the isolation of the individual from his fellow men and the problem of sin.

These same themes are further dramatized by the very composition and spatial relationships of Hawthorne's crowds. It is not mere chance, for example, that places the Puritan throng

between Arthur Dimmesdale and Hester Prynne in the first scaffold scene in *The Scarlet Letter*. Society separates the two lovers, and only Dimmesdale's at least ostensible reconciliation with the society from which he has alienated himself will ultimately enable him to be reunited with Hester with no intervening crowds or onlookers. Clifford's "looking down upon" the mass of humanity from which he has separated himself, in *The House of the Seven Gables*, provides another dramatic example of the importance of spatial composition. Still another is to be seen in the pushing, jostling throng of "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" with which Robin is almost forced to fall in step as he enters the stream of life.

When one deals with individual behavior and crowd, or social, behavior, a danger arises. Are the individual and society to be viewed as antithetical? There are those who believe this to be the case. Hawthorne, I think, would not agree. As a social entity, the individual cannot exist in a vacuum and long survive. Ethan Brand is all too obvious an example of the individual forced to view himself apart from humanity; so Hawthorne's attitude on the subject is unmistakable.

Since the individual is therefore a social being as such, and the social is just a way of acting together, the social problem does not grow out of a conflict between the self and an impersonal social principle. The conflicts are, in fact, clashes among certain individuals and groups of them, or else—and this is a subject to which social psychology has paid insufficient attention—the social struggle is in cer-
tain of its phases a conflict within the personal psyche itself. 26

Martin's last sentence is particularly interesting in terms of the application that it has to many of Hawthorne's isolated figures. Is not the chief problem, or struggle, of Hester, Dimmesdale, Miriam, Hilda, Clifford, Zenobia, Robin and a gallery of others a conflict within the personal psyche itself? The crowds, then, are a potent force dramatizing the human conflicts that exist; they are not to be viewed primarily as one side or the other of irreconcilable forces that pit the individual against society.

Whatever essential conflict that exists between the individual and society, often dramatized by the crowds, must be temporary. If a man is true to himself, he must incur the penalty of isolation as did Hawthorne and many of his central characters. Thus Hawthorne provides a variation of his felix culpa theme, whereby man must fall if he is to rise to heights above the normal level of man, to use the words of Donald Ringe. Presumably, one achieves the light, according to Hawthorne, then returns to humanity in an attempt to share what he has found. Those who have lost sympathy with the human heart, whose powers of rational perception preclude a return to humanity, have acquired too much of a good thing and have, thereby, committed the unpardonable sin.

26 Martin, 3.
The Unpardonable Sin might consist in a want of love and reverence for the Human Soul; in consequence of which, the investigator pried into its dark depths, not with a hope or purpose of making it better, but from a cold, philosophical curiosity,—content that it should be wished in whatever kind or degree, and only desiring to study it out. Would not this, in other words, be the separation of the intellect from the heart?

"In Hawthorne's mature work, the crowd far more often than not is a controlled and effective element of art." Hawthorne has used the crowd to comment directly and indirectly on the condition of man. He has deftly and artistically manipulated it to depict his major themes of sin, isolation, and involvement. The function of the ensuing chapters of this dissertation will be to delineate this artistic manipulation by explicating several of the novels and short stories, chosen chiefly to illustrate the several functions of the crowds described earlier in relation to the larger theme of Society and the Individual.

27 Stewart, American Notebooks, 106.
28 Anderson, 50.
CHAPTER III

THE SCARLET LETTER

Nowhere within the canon of Hawthorne's works is the problem of the individual and society depicted with more dramatic intensity and artistic finesse than in The Scarlet Letter. In his first important and, perhaps, finest novel, the issue is handled from various points of view. In this chapter, I shall discuss first the roles of the important individuals and then that of the throng in Hawthorne's study of the effects of sin upon the individual and society.

In Hester, Hawthorne provides the example of an individual who has alienated herself from society through the sin of adultery. Whether the ensuing conflict is resolved as the result of Hester's return to the fold or the Puritans' eventual semi-acceptance of the heroine for her inherent goodness has long been the subject of ardent critical speculation. For some readers, of course, the conflict is never reconciled. But that Hester's fall has effected some kind of moral amelioration—the felix culpa—is hardly to be doubted.

As is apt to be the case when a person stands out in any prominence before the community, and, at the same time, interferes neither with public nor individual interests and convenience, a species of general regard had ultimately grown up in reference to Hester Prynne. It is to the credit of human nature, that, except where its selfishness is brought into play, it loves more readily than it hates. Hatred, by a
gradual and quiet process, will even be transformed to love unless the change be impeded by a continually new irritation of the original feeling of hostility. In this matter of Hester Prynne, there was neither irritation nor irksomeness. . . . Then, also, the blameless purity of her life during all these years in which she had been set apart to infamy, was reckoned largely in her favor. With nothing now to lose, in the sight of mankind, and with no hope, and seemingly no wish of gaining anything, it could only be a genuine regard for virtue that had brought back the poor wanderer to its paths.

It was perceived, too, that while Hester never put forward even the humblest title to share in the world's privileges,—further than to breathe the common air, and earn daily bread for little Pearl and herself by the faithful labor of her hands,—she was quick to acknowledge her sisterhood with the race of man, whenever benefits were to be conferred.  

Hawthorne seems not so much concerned with the statistics of the reconciliation between Hester and her Boston brethren as he is with her return from isolation to "her sisterhood with the race of man." Whether or not Hester was intended to be the prophetess of "some brighter period," which some have read—mistakenly, I believe—as the author's plea for transcendental morality, is secondary. What is of primary importance is Hester's reunion with humanity, the welding of her fate with theirs, however unsatisfactory this may appear to the modern reader.

What is wrong with Hester's accomplice in sin, Arthur Dimmesdale, is that he fails to reunite himself with humanity. By setting himself apart from mankind, even as its most abject sinner, the young minister is guilty of committing a grave sin, his scaffold repentance notwithstanding. In one way, Dimmesdale

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is the greatest sinner in *The Scarlet Letter* because he is a minister of God, because he preaches a gospel that neither Hester nor even Chillingworth had ever completely accepted. Like Ethan Brand's, Dimmesdale's self-immolation is not really meritorious in the eyes of Hawthorne because the clergyman, after having sinned, never seeks a true reconciliation with the society from which he has alienated himself. The objective truth or error of the Puritan case is quite inconsequential; Dimmesdale accepts and preaches it, and that is what matters.

Arthur Dimmesdale is unable to assure Hester at his death that he and she will meet in eternity, although he feels reasonably sure that he has been saved through his suffering. No lama is needed, therefore, to enable one to determine which member of the loving pair the clairvoyant minister thinks may not be saved. In reply to Hester's question "Shall we not meet again?" Dimmesdale gasps,

"Hush, Hester, hush!" said he, with tremulous solemnity. "The law we broke! --The sin here so awfully revealed! --let these alone be in thy thoughts! I fear! I fear! It may be, that, when we forgot God, --when we violated our reverence each for the other's soul, -- it was thenceforth vain to hope that we could meet hereafter, in an everlasting and pure reunion. God knows; and he is merciful! He hath proved his mercy, most of all, in my afflictions. By giving me this burning torture to bear upon my breast! By sending yonder dark and terrible old man, to keep the torture always at red-heat! By bringing me thither to die this death of triumphant ignominy before the people! Had either of these agonies been wanting, I had been lost forever! Praised be his name! His will be done! Farewell!"

Reduced to the role of Dimmesdale's scourge by the presumptuous minister, Chillingworth hardly seems to matter in the light of this last speech. But in spite of Dimmesdale's relegating characters to positions of satellite importance, Roger Chillingworth seems rather obviously intended as a manifestation of the detached, scientific observer, in the tradition of Ethan Brand, who has long since relinquished any claim to the affections of humanity. Because he is from the start aware of his isolation and determines to act accordingly, perhaps Chillingworth is not truly as wretched as the minister who does not practice his proverbial preaching. Nevertheless, the old leech too, is guilty of the unpardonable sin and, thus, provides still another conception of the individual versus society theme.

Pearl, as more or less symbolic of Hester and Arthur's detachment, need not be extensively considered here. Her acceptance of Dimmesdale, manifested by a kiss, after he reveals his sin in the light of day, is a fair indication that Pearl's role as symbol has come to an end and that she is now able to assume her rightful role as a member, in good standing of society, that she is one who "would grow up amid human joy and sorrow, nor forever do battle with the world, but be a woman in it."³

As has been pointed out by scholars again and again, Hawthorne is not concerned in this work with a particular sin

³Ibid., 303.
but with the effects that sin produces in men. The most singularly observable effect of sin in Hawthorne's works is its alienation of a man from his brethren. Such isolation is sometimes the effect of an individual's castigation by society; more often than not, however, it results from a conflict that exists within the individual, himself. In Hester's case, the conflict might be between her own warm, loving, passionate nature and the cold, strict Puritan society in which she finds herself after apparently losing her equally cold husband. What ostensibly saves Hester in her creator's mind is not her sorrow for sin—for there is no evidence that she ever repented her transgression—but her unwillingness to allow harsh treatment to completely separate her from the chain of humanity. Neither Chillingworth nor Dimmesdale regains his feeling for mankind; thus, each is lost in his own way.

Since, because of the nature of this study, emphasis must be placed upon the multitude, perhaps it would be well to begin viewing the problem as it is dramatized through Hawthorne's crowds.

Because it is not thematically germane, "The Custom House" will be excluded and the analysis will begin with Chapter 1, "The Prison-Door." Hawthorne has considerately begun his tale with a superb example of several uses to which the crowd is put in the course of the novel.
A throng of bearded men, in sad-colored garments, and gray, steeple-crowned hats, intermixed with women, some wearing hoods, and others bareheaded, was assembled in front of a wooden edifice, the door of which was heavily timbered with oak, and studded with spikes.4

How like a classical tragedy Hawthorne has begun his romance. A rather barren setting is depicted, and the Boston Puritans, grim and dispassionate for the most part, stand before the prison door, passing judgment on the inmate within and, thus, providing the required expository background—all in the manner of the old Greek chorus. Those gathered, "amongst whom religion and law were almost identical," are dressed in "sad-colored garments," befitting the joyless Calvinists of whom they are a sampling. It is interesting to note the dexterity with which Hawthorne immediately establishes the mood of his tale through a mere physical description of the Boston throng and the setting. Their beards and hoods, for example, emphasize aspects which conceal, which set apart one man from the other; their steeple-crowned hats leave no doubt as to the role of religion in their society. How like a proscenium is the heavily timbered jail, the "black flower of civilized society," which offers such a contrast with the wild rose-bush, just as the Puritan throng does Hester as she walks forth into the sunshine.

Early in the second chapter, the true nature of the assembled throng is described. "Amongst any other population, or

4Ibid., 67.
at a later period in the history of New England, the grim rigidity that petrified the bearded physiognomies of these good people would have augured some awful business in hand."\(^5\) Two qualities of the Puritans are worth noting: they are intent and they are characterized by rigidity, attributes noted by LeBon as being classical qualities of the crowd. In spite of their rigidity, however, as Hawthorne points out, it would be impossible for the observer to tell whether the throng were awaiting the exit of a naughty child or a notorious malefactor, since a grim Puritan visage is not characterized by degrees of intensity. The cold, unthinking crowd is evidence, therefore, of only one thing—that a breach of Puritan law, perhaps only etiquette, has occurred.

Whatever the offence, the crowd, with few exceptions, is against Hester. The intensity of its disapproval at this point in the action is significant particularly in terms of the extent of its later devotion to her. There is little room for gradations of feeling in the crowd-mind; extremes of sentiment are the rule, rather than the exception.

The first choral crowd of consequence in The Scarlet Letter is comprised of the Boston goodwives who are gathered about the prison door awaiting their first look at Hester. From several of these good women, "hard-featured dames of fifty,"

\(^5\)Ibid., 68.
the reader learns something of Hester's transgression and the "merciful overmuch" stigma assigned her as punishment. Where one might expect to find compassion—among the women of a community—he finds hardness, coarseness, even cruelty. Hawthorne here illustrates the brutality that women can display toward their own sex, particularly, in this case, since Pearl's father might be any one of their husbands. It is a man who finally points out to the women the harshness of their apparent view that there is no virtue in woman, "save what springs from a wholesome fear of the gallows."

Finally, Hester is brought forth to undergo the pitiless gaze of her townspeople. Her singular beauty provides a marked contrast with the coarse matrons of Boston. At this point, Hawthorne provides a dramatic tableau—perhaps one of his finest—depicting, as A. N. Kaul calls it, the breakdown of human relationships. On the one hand appears Hester clasping her three-month infant tightly to her breast as she will continue to do, at least figuratively, until the end of the romance. On the other hand, the alienation of man from society is dramatically portrayed by the gulf that exists between Hester and her fellow citizens. In spite of the fact that Hester has allegedly committed the greatest of Puritan sins, it is quite obvious that Hawthorne does not sympathize with the condemning throng. Theirs, after all, is the greater sin, the sin of the heart, for by their

6 Kaul, 188.
actions and through their attitudes they are forcing a fellow being outside the pale of human companionship. Hester's is a sin of the flesh; the crowd's is one of the heart.

The guilt which separates Hester from the throng is manifested in many ways. Hawthorne isolates Hester, primarily, by placing her on the pillory, which action, ironically, places her physically, as well as morally, above the accusing chorus of goodwives. Her richly designed garb, together with its embroidered emblem, contrasts with the somber gray of the crowd. Hester's height, her dark and abundant hair, her regularity of feature and richness of complexion establish the superiority of her over her accusers. Finally, Hester's silent dignity sets her above the harping chatter of the assembled gossips. On the basis of these contrasts, who could view as anything but ironic Hawthorne's comment "A blessing on the righteous Colony of the Massachusetts, where iniquity is dragged into the sunshine!"

On another level, above that on which Hester stands, are assembled the governor, several of his counselors, a judge, a general, and the ministers of the town. Perhaps even more than the throng are the inhabitants of the balcony guilty of Hester's alienation, since her estrangement is necessitated by laws which they have perpetrated. The three important figures in this scaffold scene--Hester, Dimmesdale and Chillingworth--are surrounded by people; yet each is isolated, Hester at the behest of others, the men because of their own actions. One sees here the isolat-
ing function of the crowd, though isolation for the moment is a blessing for Hester.

Dreadful as it was, she was conscious of a shelter in the presence of these thousand witnesses. It was better to stand thus, with so many betwixt him and her, than to greet him, face to face, they two alone. She fled for refuge, as if it were, to the public exposure, and dreaded the moment when its protection should be withdrawn from her.7

The isolating function of the crowd, then, is not to be underestimated. Like Ethan Brand, Hester Prynne, Arthur Dimmesdale and Roger Chillingworth stand amidst a town full of people; yet each is terribly alone. It is his transgression of the spirit of Calvinism, symbolized by the assembled Puritan throng, that isolates Dimmesdale. Chillingworth has wilfully alienated himself—or is about to do so—from society through his acts of hatred born of vengeance. Hester is the victim of the actions of both men; yet she feels the pinch of isolation more surely than the others—at least for the moment. The actual placement of these three characters, all on different physical levels, with the intervening crowd serving as an isolating device is typical of Hawthorne's dramatic genius. The scene is repeated several times throughout the work, but each time, one or more of the characters shift position. In the last scaffold scene, Hester, Dimmesdale, Pearl and Chillingworth inhabit one level, while the crowd retains its inferior position on the ground surrounding the scaffold. This interesting concept of spatial placement is

7Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter, 85.
amplified several times, even within the first scene of the romance. It is interesting to note the relationship of the chief characters in connection with the crowd in the closing paragraphs of Chapter 3.

"Speak, woman!" said another voice coldly and sternly, proceeding from the crowd about the scaffold. "Speak; and give your child a father!"\(^8\)

A few lines later, Dimmesdale likewise is heard exhorting Hester to reveal her fellow transgressor.

So forcibly did he dwell upon this symbol, for the hour or more during which his periods were rolling over the people's heads, that it assumed new terrors in their imagination and seemed to derive its scarlet hue from the flames of the infernal pit.\(^9\)

The crowd's hyperimaginative reaction to Dimmesdale's words, which "brought the listeners into one accord of sympathy," hardly needs elaboration. It would be well to bear in mind, though, Hawthorne's conscious placement of characters, for such manipulation provides a clue to an understanding of the puzzling final scaffold scene.

The structural and thematic importance of the crowd in Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter cannot be overstated. On at least one level of meaning, the story could not proceed without the crowd in its role as the Puritan society. In terms of the story's action, the essential factor is the revelation of Hester's partner in sin, bringing into the light of day Dimmesdale.

\(^8\) Ibid., 90.  \(^9\) Ibid., 91.
and his hidden sin. Chillingworth sets the pattern for the entire course of action when he says,

"It irks me, nevertheless, that the partner of her iniquity should not, at least, stand on the scaffold by her side. But he will be known!—he will be known!—he will be known!"  

Ostensibly, then, Dimmesdale must be made known; there is really no alternative. The minister must confess his guilt before the throng, just as Hester has had to do. "The Minister's Vigil," a chapter which falls symmetrically in the middle of the work, provides an indication that not only Chillingworth, but Hester, Pearl and Dimmesdale himself realize what must be done. Perhaps Hester's early realization of Arthur's responsibility of making all known to everyone is the reason for her often questioned silence on the subject of Chillingworth's subversiveness. In any event, it takes another half of the work before Dimmesdale either works up the courage to reveal himself, or, as some have suggested, before he musters a crowd large enough and sufficiently worthy of his revelation. The romance begins and ends with the central figures enacting their roles amidst crowds. In some ways these scenes are similar; in others, they are different. Oddly, Hester, Chillingworth and Dimmesdale do not really change much during the course of the seven years; but the attitudes of assembled society do. Part of what follows will trace this change and provide clues as to the reasons for the change.

10 Ibid., 84.
The crowd can be considered one of the four major characters in the work. In his introduction to the Modern Library edition of *The Scarlet Letter*, John C. Gerber suggests that the Puritan community is responsible for the action in the first part (Chapters 1-8); Chillingworth, for that in the second part (9-12); Hester, for that in the third (13-20); and Dimmesdale, for that in the fourth (21-24). It is true that the Boston throng functions primarily in the first section, but the shadow of Puritan society is felt throughout the work, no less in the last chapter than in the opening ones.

Hawthorne is certainly not suggesting that all men, if they are to have any peace, must expose their sins to the light of civic indignation. What he does suggest is that each man must be true to himself. Dimmesdale actually believes in the efficacy of public penance; but he appears at first unable to assume the moral responsibility to which he has subscribed; this comes as no surprise in the light of his vigils with Hester. The author does seem to hint that Dimmesdale can and must confess according to the Puritan and, therefore, his code. Hester, on the other hand, need not do so—although to some extent she does—because, as is apparent from the start, the Puritans' ways are not altogether Hester's ways.

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Before moving beyond the first major manifestation of Hawthorne's use of the crowd in *The Scarlet Letter*, I want to make one other point. "It was whispered, by those who peered after her, that the scarlet letter threw a lurid gleam along the dark passage-way of the interior."\(^{12}\) Thus the scene has opened and closes with only the crowd onstage. In Chapter 2, the choral crowd provides exposition as well as setting and atmosphere; at the end of Chapter 3, it provides imaginative speculation. In the first scene of Hawthorne's major novel, therefore, the thematic, structural, psychological and aesthetic uses to which the author puts the crowd are quite clearly established.

The importance of a symbol upon which the crowd might focus its attention is lost neither to the Puritan divine nor to Hawthorne. After Hester resumes her role in society, Boston Puritans are provided an example of what not to be.

Throughout them all, giving up her individuality, she would become the general symbol at which the preacher and moralist might point, and in which they might vivify and embody their images of woman's frailty and sinful passion. Thus the young and pure would be taught to look at her, with the scarlet letter flaming on her breast,—at her, the child of honorable parents,—at her, the mother of a babe, that would hereafter be a woman, at her, who had once been innocent,—as the figure, the body, the reality of sin.\(^{13}\)

This view of Hester is temporary, for while the benevolence of Puritan society at first extends only so far as to allow Hester to embroider their ruffs, scarfs, bands, caps and

\(^{12}\)Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, 91. \(^{13}\)Ibid., 102.
shrouds—never the white veil of an innocent bride—she eventually, ever so gradually, wins from them "a species of general regard." In the early years, Hester, as Hawthorne puts it, is branded with a sign more intolerable than that which marked the brow of Cain. "In all her intercourse with society, however, there was nothing that made her feel as if she belonged to it."  

Be it to the everlasting shame of the Puritan community that they practically succeeded in causing Hester to go the way of her estranged husband, to complete alienation from society. "She was patient,—a martyr, indeed,—but she forebore to pray for her enemies; lest, in spite of her forgiving aspirations, the words of the blessing should stubbornly twist themselves into a curse." Because the crowd is not a character of reason, but of emotion, it is vindicated when it instinctively elects to readmit Hester into its company. Hester's reunion with society is painfully slow in coming about, though it is never really quite complete. But in the quasi reunion, born of charity, two of the novel's four characters—Hester and the Puritan throng—are saved from the ravages of the Unpardonable Sin.

The public is despotic in its temper; it is capable of denying common justice, when too strenuously demanded as a right; but quite as frequently it awards more than justice, when the appeal is made, as despots love to have it made, entirely to its generosity. Interpreting Hester Prynne's deportment as an appeal to this nature, society was inclined to show its former victim a more benign countenance than she

14 Ibid., 108. 15 Ibid., 109.
cared to be favored with, or, perchance, than she deserved. 16

The foregoing lines are reminiscent of these by LeBon.

The crowd is always intellectually inferior to the isolated individual, but from the point of view of feelings and of the acts their feelings provoke, the crowd may, according to circumstances, be better or worse than the individual. All depends on the nature of the suggestion to which the crowd is exposed. 17

Hawthorne's suggestion seems to be that the Puritans' lack of aggregate intellectualism is what saves them from committing the gravest of sins by completely alienating Hester. She is thus spared the fate of Chillingworth and, according to some critics, Dimmesdale, who cut themselves off from society. Is the whole relationship between Hester, Chillingworth, Dimmesdale, and the Puritans, then, another manifestation of the delicate balance that must exist between the head and the heart? Perhaps so. The price that Hester has to pay to help maintain the balance is indeed a dear one, for she is forced to subjugate her natural passion and beauty. Herein lies the tragedy of life—a specific instance which lends credence to A. C. Bradley's perceptive definition of the nature of tragedy.

We remain confronted with the inexplicable fact, or the no less inexplicable appearance, of a world travailing for perfection, but bringing to birth, together with glorious good, an evil which it is able to overcome only by self-torture and self-waste. 18

16 Ibid., 196. 17 LeBon, 37.

To achieve the greater good of compliance and, thereby, union with society, Hester must sublimate her luxuriant and passionate individuality to the admittedly unreasonable demands of society; in spite of her sacrifice, the reunion, as has already been suggested, is never truly complete. Hester is forced to become more a woman of the head than, as before, of the heart. Hawthorne suggests that his heroine could never entirely assume the role of prophetess, as had Anne Hutchinson, in spite of Hester's scorn for her former position in society; and the reason for her inability to do so, ironically, is baby Pearl, the living symbol of her transgression against the outmoded laws of a passing system. Herein lies the answer to the riddle of Hester's ultimate position with regard to society. Her disposition, in addition to the thoughts nourished by her castigation from society, sets her apart as the manifestation of a new age, unrestrained by the shackles of ancient principles; yet these mores are so ingrained in her, they are so much a part of her spiritual heritage, that, in spite of the fact that she knows better, she cannot throw them off. Realizing the transcendent importance of maintaining a link with society—even a Puritan society—Hester acts not according to dictates of the heart or intellect but of instinct. That is why she returns to Boston at the end of the novel. Is the proffered suggestion as to the reason for Hester's actions perhaps tenable with regard to Hawthorne himself? Might this not be at least a partial solution to the
Hawthorne question? Hawthorne, like all his major tragic heroines--Zenobia, Miriam and Hester--return in one way or another to the land of their forebears, at least figuratively.

The examples involving Hawthorne's use of the group as a social unit in *The Scarlet Letter* are too numerous to discuss here. Consequently, I shall limit myself to a study of only the major manifestations of the phenomenon. One such instance is related to the interview that takes place between Hester and the local tribunal in "The Governor's Hall" and in "The Elf-Child and the Minister," Chapters 7 and 8.

Because of the Puritan throng Hester decides to call upon the governor. Although ostensibly visiting the governor to deliver a pair of newly embroidered gloves, Hester has really been concerned over reports that Pearl is to be taken from her.

It had reached her ears that there was a design on the part of some of the leading inhabitants, cherishing the more rigid order of principles in religion in governments, to deprive her of her child. On the supposition that Pearl, as already hinted, was of demon origin, these good people not unreasonably argued that a Christian interest in the mother's soul required them to remove such a stumbling-block from her path.  

These lines serve to point out the importance of the crowd-mind in democratic society. As Hawthorne points out, "At that epoch of pristine simplicity, however, matters of even slighter public interest, and of far less intrinsic weight, than
the welfare of Hester and her child, were strangely mixed up with
the deliberations of legislators and acts of state." What the
crowd does or thinks in this kind of society, then, is of para-
mount importance. The fertile, if distracted, imagination that
could attribute to Pearl a "demon" father, regardless of her
questionable quirks, is of the species that has already been
characterized by LeBon. Even the Puritan children "think" as a
unit.

As the two wayfarers came within the precincts of the
town, the children of the Puritans looked up from their
play,--or what passed for play with those sombre little
urchins,--and spoke gravely one to another:--

"Behold, verily, there is the woman of the scarlet let-
ter; and, of a truth, moreover, there is the likeness of the
scarlet letter running along by her side! Come, therefore,
let us fling mud at them!" Their reaction to a symbol, their confusing imagination
with reason, their equating inferior reason with truth, and
their ultimately resorting to violence in the defense of right-
mindedness follow a basic pattern. Here, indeed, are the cru-
saders of the 17th century.

Wisdom and compassion prevail at the meeting between Hes-
ter and Pearl with Governor Bellingham, Reverend Dimmesdale,
and Messrs. Wilson and Chillingworth. Of course, in this in-
stance, Hester has the benefit of dealing with the leading
social functionaries on an individual basis.

20 Ibid., 126. 21 Ibid., 127-28.
The immediately ensuing chapters of *The Scarlet Letter* are concerned largely with the emerging relationship between Chillingworth and Dimmesdale and need not, for the most part, be discussed here. But there are several lines in Chapter 9, entitled "The Leech," which are so similar to those already cited of LeBon that they cannot be passed over, although comment on them is hardly necessary. Hawthorne here describes the community's reaction to the Chillingworth-Dimmesdale association.

But--it must now be said--another portion of the community had latterly begun to take its own view of the relation betwixt Mr. Dimmesdale and the mysterious old physician. When an uninstructed multitude attempts to see with its eyes, it is exceedingly apt to be deceived. When, however, it forms its judgment, as it usually does, on the intuitions of its great and warm heart, the conclusions thus attained are often so profound and so unerring, as to possess the character of truths supernaturally revealed. 22

That the crowd usually reasons on the basis of its great, warm heart is open to question; but that its reason is often obstructed seems hardly open to question. In any event, the author appears quite aware of the importance of crowd-judgements and the ways in which these judgements come about. Whether its insight is born of the senses or of instinct, the crowd is certainly erroneous in its estimation of Dimmesdale, who manages to fool almost all of the people all of the time and, incredibly enough, even after he has confessed his guilt in the last scaffold scene.

The people knew not the power that moved them thus. They deemed the young clergyman a miracle of holiness. They fancied him the mouth-piece of Heaven's messages of wisdom, and rebuke, and love. In their eyes, the very ground on which he trod was sanctified.23

Although the crowd is not cognizant of the nature of Dimmesdale's eloquence, Hawthorne seems to suggest that it is born of the minister's personal knowledge of sin, another example of the felix culpa theme, which receives its finest expression in The Marble Faun.

The chapter entitled "The Minister's Vigil" provides a fine example of Hawthorne's manipulation of spatial relationships between members of a group. The scaffold serves as a stage upon which, or, at least, around which, all the major characters assemble.

Dimmesdale is the first to arrive at the scene. "The Minister's Vigil" is the symbolic enactment of what Dimmesdale must do to become spiritually reconciled with his Puritan flock. He must bring his sin into the light of day while standing on the scaffold upon which Hester had stood several years before. In this chapter, which functions as a kind of dress rehearsal for "The Revelation," Hawthorne assembles most of the major characters—only the crowd is lacking—and even provides the light of day in the form of a conveniently brilliant meteor.

23 Ibid., 174.
But before Mr. Dimmesdale had done speaking, a light gleamed far and wide over all the muffled sky. It was doubtless caused by one of those meteors, which the night watchers may so often observe burning out to waste, in the vacant regions of the atmosphere. So powerful was its radiance, that it thoroughly illuminated the dense medium of cloud betwixt the sky and earth. The great vault brightened, like the dome of an immense lamp. It showed the familiar scene of the street, with the distinctness of mid-day...

When the meteor shines, Dimmesdale is not the only recipient of its awful glare, for Hester and Pearl have mounted the altar of sacrifice upon which many have been observed to "burn out to waste." Indeed, Pearl has already prodded her father with one of the importunate questions for which she has by now become famous. "'Wilt thou stand here with mother and me, to-morrow noontide?'" This is precisely what the minister must do before the tale's twenty-four chapters have run their course.

Here for the first time Hester, Dimmesdale and Pearl stand together--on the same level--all but admitting the ignominious relationship they bear to one another.

And there stood the minister, with his hand over his heart; and Hester Prynne, with the embroidered letter glimmering on her bosom; and little Pearl, herself a symbol, and the connecting link between those two. They stood in the noon of that strange and solemn splendor, as if it were the light that is to reveal all secrets, and the daybreak that shall unite all who belong to one another.

Because he has forever alienated himself from society through his rationalistic egocentricity and, therefore, belongs to no one, Chillingworth is relegated to a place outside this

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24 Ibid., 186-87. 25 Ibid., 186. 26 Ibid., 187.
circle and on a different and, perhaps significantly, lower level.
It is Pearl who first observes the leech standing "at no great
distance from the scaffold." Pearl also berates the minister for
being untrue because "'Thou wouldst not promise to take my hand,
and mother's hand, to-morrow noontide!'" 27

By the time the next and final scaffold scene takes
place, much has transpired. In "A Flood of Sunshine," Hester's
passionate nature is released once again. She has indicated a
willingness to run off with Arthur, in spite of Pearl's symbolic
frowns. But there could be no happiness for the sinners, for as
Hawthorne says, "So it ever is, whether thus typified or no, that
an evil deed invests itself with the character of doom." 28 Hes-
ter surely feels this overshadowing doom as she rescues her
scarlet letter and senses the gray shadow hovering over her.
This scene is not, as some have suggested, simply Puritanical
backtracking on Hawthorne's part. The bond between Arthur and
Hester and their Puritan heritage is ultimately too strong to
sever completely.

The final scaffold scene is carefully planned by Haw-
thorne, the dramatist. Again, as in "The Market Place," all the
chief characters are present, including the Puritan throng in
all its solemn, somber splendor.

Hester, isolated as usual within the small "magic cir-

27 Ibid., 273. 28 Ibid., 253.
circle" provided by the crowd, has already assumed the role that she will play for the rest of her life.

Her face, so long familiar to the townspeople, showed the marble quietude which they were accustomed to behold there. It was like a mask; or, rather, like the frozen calmness of a dead woman's features, owing this dreary resemblance to the fact that Hester was actually dead, in respect to any claim of sympathy, and had departed out of the world with which she still seemed to mingle.29

Pearl, as usual, is dressed in appropriately airy gayety, as a symbol of the passionate side of Hester's nature which had begotten her. Little Pearl recognizes, as does Hester deep within her heart, what Dimmesdale must do. "'And will he hold out both his hands to me?'"30 She knows that the minister must acknowledge her and her mother before the Puritan throng as he did on the scaffold at midnight and in the darkness of the protective forest.

The Puritans, too, are appropriately jolly for the occasion of their New England holiday, though "They appeared scarcely more grave than most other communities at a period of general affliction."31

Chillingworth, after having booked passage on the same ship that was to carry Hester and Arthur to happiness, takes up his usual position in "the remotest" and probably most isolated corner of the marketplace, unaware of the final scene about to unfold.

29 Ibd., 270. 30 Ibd., 273. 31 Ibd., 274.
In Chapter 22, "The Procession," the final important figure arrives to complete the scene. Dimmesdale, who has been asked to deliver the election sermon, arrives in a state of almost unprecedented nervous energy which appears to have been imparted, in the words of Hawthorne, by angelic ministrants, apparently aware that the minister was soon to come home.

The question of Dimmesdale's sincerity in confessing his sin before the crowd has occasionally been raised in terms of whether the act is meritorious from the Puritan and from Hawthorne's point of view. Hester appears to have been betrayed once again. Concerning Hester's sad realization upon seeing Dimmesdale's majestic procession during the election day ceremony, Hawthorne says,

And thus much of woman was there in Hester, that she could scarcely forgive him,—least of all now, when the heavy footstep of their approaching Fate might be heard, nearer, nearer, nearer!—for being able to withdraw himself from this material world; while she groped darkly, and stretched forth her cold hands, and found him not.  

Surely her cold, empty hands exemplify the condition of Hester's heart, which is again chilled by the man she loves in a scene remarkably similar to the first marketplace scene in the book.

Only the mad soothsayer, in this case Mistress Hibbins, can see through Dimmesdale's pious veneer to ascertain his complicity in sin.

32Ibid., 285.
"Now what mortal imagination could conceive it!" whispered the old lady, confidentially, to Hester. "Yonder divine man! That saint on earth, as the people uphold him to be, and as—I must needs say—he really looks! Who, now, that saw him pass in the procession, would think how little while it is since he went forth out of his study,—chewing a Hebrew text of Scripture in his mouth, I warrant,—to take an airing in the forest! Aha! we know what that means, Hester Prynne." 33

Indeed, Hester does know what is meant by a walk in the forest, which symbolizes their original sin of passion. It also symbolizes the sin of desire which they committed during their recent encounter in the woods. Arthur and Hester's passion is a sin by Puritan standards, not necessarily by those of Nature, for as Hawthorne says of the forest during their encounter,

Such was the sympathy of Nature—that wild, heathen Nature of the forest, never subjugated by human law, nor illumined by higher truth—with the bliss of these two spirits! Love, whether newly born, or aroused from a deathlike slumber, must always create a sunshine, filling the heart so full of radiance, that it overflows upon the outward world. Had the forest still kept its gloom, it would have been bright in Hester's eyes, and bright in Arthur Dimmesdale's! 34

The placement of characters in the book's last scenes is quite important. Although they stand among the Puritan throng, each of the three major figures is isolated—from the crowd and from one another. Chillingworth stands gazing from afar, as has already been noted; Pearl struts about like a wild bird beholden to no one.

While Hester stood in that magic circle of ignominy, where the cunning cruelty of her sentence seemed to have

33 Ibid., 287. 34 Ibid., 243–44.
fixed her forever. The admirable preacher was looking down from the sacred pulpit upon an audience, whose very inmost spirits had yielded to his control. The sainted minister in the church! The woman of the scarlet letter in the marketplace! What imagination would have been irreverent enough to surmise that the same scorching stigma was on them both!35

The arrangement of characters in the 23rd chapter, "The Revelation of the Scarlet Letter," is, perhaps, deceptive. For the first time, Hester, Pearl, Dimmesdale and Chillingworth are assembled together and, significantly, on the same level.

They beheld the minister, leaning on Hester's shoulder, and supported by her arm around him, approach the scaffold, and ascend its steps; while still the little hand of the sinborn child was clasped in his. Old Chillingworth, followed as one intimately connected with the drama of guilt and sorrow in which they had all been actors, and well entitled, therefore, to be present at its closing scene.36

The crowd, which, in this final scene, surrounds the three principal actors, is, as usual, in a tumult. The Puritans are in many ways exactly as they were when Hester first mounted the scaffold alone. They are relatively unchanged, except for the fact that they have gradually and, at first, grudgingly re-admitted Hester to their company; but the sinner is to remain isolated for her remaining days.

Chillingworth, realizing that Dimmesdale's noontide confession before the multitude has ruined his chances of inflicting more punishment upon the minister, is left "to wither up, to shrivel away." Pearl's function as a symbol ceases when the sec-

35 Ibid., 293. 36 Ibid., 300.
ret sin is exposed; so she becomes human after suffering remorse for the first time at the death of her father. In this instance, suffering begets wisdom. The Reverend Dimmesdale is left to his eternal reward or punishment, depending upon the sincerity of his confession.

Only Hester is left, and again she is alone. The Puritan multitude keeps busy speculating about what actually happened on Election Day, about what became of Chillingworth and Pearl—even, for awhile, about Hester Prynne. Like all of Hawthorne's dark heroines, she returns, after awhile, "to Boston." Hester returns to comfort the wounded, the wasted, the wronged, the erring, even the sinful. Hester, too, has achieved wisdom through suffering; she now realizes that she will not be the prophetess of the bright new truth that would establish the relation between man and woman on a surer basis.

When one reads of the passing of Hester, he is reminded of the bright meteor of Chapter 12, the meteor that "burned out to waste." The beautiful, vibrant, passionate Hester is sacrificed to the demands of Puritan society; and, as Hawthorne implies, there is no alternative. The Scarlet Letter, like The Marble Faun, is a study of the effects of sin upon the individual and society. Although Hawthorne employs the throng in this novel to enhance the setting and tone of the tale, the primary function of the Puritan community is to dramatize, to accentuate the isolation that sin brings into the life of Hester Prynne.
The role of the crowd is, therefore, not only artistically effective but thematically indispensable.
CHAPTER IV

THE HOUSE OF THE SEVEN GABLES

Like The Blithedale Romance, Hawthorne's The House of The Seven Gables is not so much concerned with sin as with the individual isolation that it causes. "There is no fate in this world so horrible as to have no share in either its joys or sorrows." For all its overt concern with family curses, wills, greed and mesmerism, this novel deals essentially with man's isolation from what Hawthorne calls the ocean of human life, specifically, Clifford Pyncheon's alienation. The other characters function primarily as satellites whose presence dramatizes Clifford's seclusion.

Two chapters in the romance depict clearly Hawthorne's theme: Chapter 11, "The Arched Window" and Chapter 17, "The Flight of the Two Owls." These chapters are the structural counterpart of Chapters 12 and 23 ("The Minister's Vigil" and "The Revelation of the Scarlet Letter") of The Scarlet Letter. Like Dimmesdale, Clifford engages in a dry run of his plunge into humanity in the earlier of the two chapters. "The Arched Window" foreshadows Clifford's return to humanity, which materializes—though only briefly—when he and Hepzibah are forced to leave

1Stewart, The American Notebooks, lxix.
their Salem closet because of the convenient expiration of Judge Jaffrey Pyncheon.

The primary function of the Maul curse—"God will give him blood to drink"—is to provide the mystery needed to implicate Clifford in the demise of his apoplectic uncle. Indeed, as has already been noted, nearly all the characters and most of the incidents of the novel are intended to dramatize the central fact of Clifford's isolation from and eventual quasi-return to society.

Clifford's alienation, like Hester Prynne's, is effected by an emissary of the people—in this case not clerical judges but a civil magistrate. Falsely convicted of killing his uncle, Clifford has already—at the beginning of the novel—suffered through thirty years' imprisonment. Hepzibah's life, since his imprisonment, has been a veritable carbon of Clifford's enforced seclusion. Like Clifford and Hepzibah, even the house seems to have become isolated through the years. "The street in which it upreared its venerable peaks has long ceased to be a fashionable quarter of the town." Early in the book, Hawthorne makes clear his desire that the house symbolize the life of the Pyncheons who have lived and continue to live there. "It was itself like a great human heart, with a life of its own, and full of rich and sombre reminiscences." 

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2 Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The House of the Seven Gables*, 42.
3 Ibid., 43.
Hepzibah is forced to open her cent-shop not only to provide the bare essentials for herself, but for Clifford as well. The shop turns out to be a happy prop, for not only does it reintroduce Hepzibah to society—howbeit in the smallest way—but it enables Hepzibah to permit Phoebe to stay in Salem with her and Clifford to share their otherwise depleted pantry. Phoebe, of course, functions as a symbol of life returning to the all but dead House of the Seven Gables.

Although he has already been installed as star boarder at the Pyncheon homestead, Phoebe's presence makes Holgrave a more important functionary in the novel. Many of his speeches, as will be shown, depict views with which Hawthorne is in sympathy; the young Maule becomes, in fact, a sounding board for some of Hawthorne's bland social outbursts.

The judge is the villain whose sole function appears to be providing a foil for Clifford. Interestingly, it is the Judge who is responsible for Clifford's alienation in the first place and his death which accounts for Clifford's return to the bond of humanity.

The first important manifestation of the problem of the individual and society is seen in Hepzibah's painfully enforced return to the Salem community by way of exposing herself to the public eye over the counter of the ignominious cent-shop. Holgrave recognizes quite early that Hepzibah's great shortcoming
has been her isolation within the circle of gentility outside that of Salem humanity. Commenting on the importance of her new venture, he says,

I look upon this as one of the fortunate days of your life. It ends an epoch and begins one. Hitherto, the life-blood has been gradually chilling in your veins as you sat aloof, within your circle of gentility, while the rest of the world was fighting out its battle with one kind of necessity or another. Henceforth, you will at least have the sense of healthy and natural effort for a purpose, and of lending your strength—be it great or small—to the united struggle of mankind. This is success,—all the success that anybody meets with!"4

At this early stage of her "coming out," Hepzibah is, of course, unable to appreciate the validity of Holgrave's encouraging words; but the reader recognizes in them a characteristic Hawthorne theme and the first expression of a thematic leitmotif that runs the course of the novel.

When Hepzibah overhears Dixey and another townsman passingly predict the probable failure of her enterprise, she is practically overcome with misery. "She was absurdly hurt, moreover, by the slight and idle effect that her setting up shop—an event of such breathless interest to herself—appeared to have upon the public, of which these two men were the nearest representatives."5 Thus Hawthorne establishes early the fact that Hepzibah is keenly aware of her relationship with and, to some extent, dependence upon society. "How could the born lady,—the

4 Ibid., 63. 5 Ibid., 67.
recluse of half a lifetime . . . ever dream of succeeding?\textsuperscript{6}

Indeed, the isolation of Hepzibah and her shop are prominent features of Hawthorne's third chapter.

On one side of the street this splendid bazaar, with a multitude of perfumed and glossy salesmen, smirking, smiling, bowing, and measuring out the goods. On the other, the dusky old House of the Seven Gables, with the antiquated shop-window under its projecting story, and Hepzibah herself, in a gown of rusty black silk, behind the counter, scowling at the world as it went by! . . . The House might just as well be buried in an eternal fog while all other houses had the sunshine on them; for not a foot would ever cross the threshold, nor a hand so much as try the door!\textsuperscript{7}

The curse of isolation is broken, however, upon the arrival of Ned Higgins, a local urchin. Youth serves to counteract the age, the antiquity, which Holgrave has suggested is at least partly responsible for the Pyncheon isolation. "The little school-boy, aided by the impish figure of the Negro dancer, had wrought an irreparable ruin. The structure of ancient aristocracy had been demolished by him, even as if his childish gripe had torn down the seven-gabled mansion."\textsuperscript{8}

This severing of ties with antiquity is not without its effect upon Hepzibah. "Now and then, there came a thrill of almost youthful enjoyment. It was the invigorating breath of a fresh outward atmosphere, after the long torpor and monotonous seclusion of her life."\textsuperscript{9} Hepzibah's initial venture into society is not altogether successful, however, because she retains too

\textsuperscript{6}Ibid., 67. \textsuperscript{7}Ibid., 67-68. \textsuperscript{8}Ibid., 70. \textsuperscript{9}Ibid., 71.
much of her Pyncheon gentility to allow an association of anything nearing familiarity. As a matter of fact, she is disappointed because her neighbors do not recognize her halo of sterling gentility. She fears that one of her customers is nothing more than a curiosity seeker. "The vulgar creature was determined to see for herself what sort of a figure a mildewed piece of aristocracy, after wasting all the bloom and much of the decline of her life apart from the world, would cut behind a counter."10

Hepzibah's antipathy toward society is not, at this point, limited to members of the lower class. Even gentlewomen merit her scorn. About one such dimity creature she thinks, "'For what good end, in the wisdom of Providence, does that woman live? Must the whole world toil, that the palms of her hands may be kept white and delicate?'"11 Hepzibah's immediate remorse at having given birth to such unkind thoughts probably reflects her remembering Holgrave's earlier comment about joining the united struggle of mankind, for is not her position essentially the same as that of her aristocratic customer?

In Chapter 4, Hawthorne once again reminds the reader of the association between a too tenacious hold upon antiquity and isolation.

Thus did Hepzibah bewilder herself with these fantasies of the old time. She had dwelt too much alone,—too long in

10 Ibid., 74. 11 Ibid., 75.
the Pyncheon House,—until her very brain was impregnated with the dryrot of its timbers. She needed a walk along the noonday street to keep her sane. 12

The noonday street, together with its sociological implications, has already been analyzed in the chapter dealing with The Scarlet Letter. It is the noonday stroll among society that both Hepzibah and Clifford must take—at least figuratively—before they can be extricated from the dry rot of isolation.

Uncle Venner's role in the novel is not altogether negligible. He provides Hepzibah and, later, Clifford with a link to the world. His role of town handyman, everyone thinks, keeps him alive. "But still there was something tough and vigorous about him, that not only kept him in daily breath, but enabled him to fill a place which would else have been vacant in the apparently crowded world." 13 Uncle Venner has evidently never lost sight of the importance of human correspondence, for, commenting upon Hepzibah's new commercial endeavor, he remarks, "Young people should never live idle in the world, nor old ones neither." 14

Before the end of Hepzibah's first day behind the counter, Phoebe—with all the supernatural brilliance of her namesake—arrives in Salem to spend some time with her relatives. The author describes his heroine in paradoxical, almost enigmatic, terms. "The young girl, so fresh, so unconventional, and

12 Ibid., 80. 13 Ibid., 81. 14 Ibid., 83.
yet so orderly and obedient to common rules, as you at once rec-
ognized her to be, was widely in contrast, at that moment, with
everything about her."15 In view of characters like Hester,
Miriam and Zenobia, it is difficult to take seriously--and to
believe that Hawthorne does so--such descendants of Apollo as
Phoebe and Hilda. Yet, even a cursory knowledge of Hawthorne's
wife, Sophia, is ample warrant that the author did not consider
such creatures beneath serious consideration. Phoebe is, per-
haps, the single greatest artistic weakness in the novel, second
only to its improbable conclusion.

Too much has been said about Phoebe's figurative associ-
ation with light and her May-November relationship with Hepzibah
and Clifford to warrant further discussion on these subjects
here. That she affords an almost frightful contrast with her
cousins, not only in terms of imagery, but in terms of her
youthful vivacity and nomadic energy is important to note, how-
ever. The easy relationship that she establishes between her-
self and, therefore, the Pyncheons and the Salem throng is
prerequisite to an understanding of Clifford's eventual return
to the fold. Hawthorne wants Phoebe's presence to be felt by
everyone; that is why he makes so much of the new life that she
brings into the household, why he symbolizes this life through
the renewed vigor of Chanticleer and his female companions and
through the luxuriant new growth in the garden. Phoebe's pres-

15 Ibid., 90.
ence evokes some of the most garish imagery in all of Hawthorne's works.

From the outset, Phoebe's role as a liaison between the Pyncheons and Salem society is firmly established. "It would be preferable to regard Phoebe as the example of feminine grace and availability combined, in a state of society, if there were any such, where ladies did not exist." The crowd, which is quite used to reading symbols, evidently surmises from the cheerfulness exuded by the old house that the life of the venerable edifice has undergone some magical renewal, for social and commercial traffic on Pyncheon Street skyrockets. "There was a great run of custom, setting steadily in, from about ten o'clock until towards noon,—relaxing, somewhat, at dinner-time, but recommencing in the afternoon . . . "

One of the conflicts in *The House of the Seven Gables* involves an academic struggle between lawlessness and orderliness. Since law lies at the base of man's association with his fellowman, of man's relationship with society, it might be well to reiterate a quality within Phoebe which Hawthorne has carefully pointed out on several occasions up to this point. This is important in order to understand not only the characters of Holgrave and Phoebe but the otherwise perplexing conclusion of the novel. "'But if Mr. Holgrave is a lawless person!' remonstrated

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16 Ibid., 104. 17 Ibid.
Phoebe, a part of whose essence it was to keep within the limits of the law.\textsuperscript{18} The point of the matter is that Phoebe's inherent sense of order is responsible for Holgrave's conversion to conservatism by the end of the work; thus this unlikely turn of events—though not aesthetically satisfying—is at least structurally prepared for.

After practically one third of the romance has run its course, Clifford is introduced. His light has all but gone out; yet there remains enough of a spark for Phoebe to enkindle. After being informed several times by Hepzibah that Clifford never liked the gloom, that he had always preferred the sunshine, the reader is not surprised to observe Clifford warmly welcome his forgotten kinswoman into the nearly empty family circle.

Hawthorne's description of Clifford is interesting.

\begin{quote}
There he seemed to sit, with a dim veil of decay and ruin betwixt him and the world, but through which . . . might be caught the same expression, so refined, so softly imaginative, which Malbone . . . had imparted to the minister! There had been something so innately characteristic in this look, that all the dusky years, and the burden of unfit calamity, which had fallen upon him, did not suffer utterly to destroy it.\textsuperscript{19}
\end{quote}

Within these remnants of the former Clifford lay the seeds of his regeneration.

At this point, however, Clifford is not really as concerned with his isolation from society as with his estrangement from the beautiful.

\textsuperscript{18}Ibid., 109. \textsuperscript{19}Ibid., 132.
Not to speak it harshly or scornfully, it seemed Clifford's nature to be a Sybarite. It was perceptible, even there, in the dark old parlor, in the inevitable polarity with which his eyes were attracted towards the quivering play of sunbeams through the shadowy foliage. It was seen in his appreciating notice of the vase of flowers, the scent of which he inhaled with a zest almost peculiar to a physical organization so refined that spiritual ingredients are moulded in with it. It was betrayed in the unconscious smile with which he regarded Phoebe. . . . Not less evident was this love and necessity for the Beautiful, in the instinctive caution with which, even so soon, his eyes turned away from the hostess, and wandered to any quarter rather than come back.

Clifford's flaw appears to be his obsessive desire for perfect beauty. The role of the beautiful Phoebe, then, in helping to reorient Clifford in the direction of social intercourse is unmistakable. Although she is perhaps an artistic failure as far as the novel is concerned, she is precisely what Clifford requires to fulfil the thematic role that has been assigned him.

Hawthorne also lays the groundwork for the family's ultimate departure from The House of the Seven Gables by having Clifford ask at the breakfast table on his first morning home, "Why should we live in this dismal house at all?" Even in what some critics have considered the weakest of his major novels, Hawthorne is the structural craftsman in planting the seeds of the novel's climax early enough to make the work as a whole quite plausible.

Clifford's return from prison evokes the usual short-lived, unfeeling interest in the Salem townspeople. Early in-
quisitory emissaries include Ned, whose mother wants to know "how Old Maid Pyncheon's brother does," and Jaffrey Pyncheon, who is less concerned with Clifford's well-being than with increasing his own scandalously large hoard.

In Chapter 9, entitled "Clifford and Phoebe," Hawthorne makes it clear that Clifford, not so much Hepzibah, is the one who needs to be forced back into the mainstream and sympathies of human society. Earlier, in alluding to Clifford's love for beauty, the author had pointed out that Clifford felt no real responsibility for mankind. "A nature like Clifford's can contract no debts of that kind. It is—we say it without censure, nor in diminution of the claim which it indefeasibly possesses on beings of another mould—it is always selfish in its essence.

Hepzibah, on the other hand, possesses a nature that is at once, in Hawthorne's words, high, generous and noble. Hepzibah has sought nothing more of Providence than the opportunity of devoting herself to her brother. Surely she has responded to Holgrave's call to enter upon the united struggle of mankind, albeit in a limited way. There is something distressing about Clifford's near disdain for Hepzibah's sincere efforts to cheer his days in the old homestead. It is not possible to be altogether sympathetic with him, in spite of his sharpened sense of the beautiful and the natural repugnance which such a being is

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22 Ibid., 143. 23 Ibid., 135-36.
supposed to feel toward his scowling, harsh-voiced, though loving, sister. After the first few days, then, Phoebe begins to loom important in Clifford's life not so much because she represents human companionship as that she is for Clifford an object of aesthetic merit. One who has always loved gayety and light cannot fail to respond to one of Hawthorne's most overt symbols.

Phoebe unknowingly changes The House of the Seven Gables from a grimy, sordid edifice into an almost youthful, fresh household. For Clifford, Phoebe has become an absolute necessity, "Not that he could ever be said to converse with her, or often manifest, in any other very definite mode, his sense of charm in her society." He becomes totally dependent upon the contiguity of her fresh life to make his blighted one less burdensome. Thus, for the first time in many decades, Clifford has consciously sought the companionship of a fellow human, whatever the present motive. Phoebe provides the all-important link between isolation and eventual social involvement.

She was real! Holding her hand, you felt something; a tender something; a substance, and a warm one: and so long as you should feel its grasp, soft as it was, you might be certain that your place was good in the whole sympathetic chain of human nature. The world was no longer a delusion.

In this context, Kaul's comments on Hawthorne's concern with the theme of alienated man makes eminent sense. "The existence of the individual has no meaning apart from the ties which bind him
to other human beings."26

Although Phoebe functions primarily as a symbol, she is an image that makes reality bearable for Clifford. "She was not an actual fact for him, but the interpretation of all that he had lacked on earth brought warmly home to his conception; so that this mere symbol, or lifelike picture, had almost the comfort of reality."27 At the same time, Hawthorne explains to future generations of scholars his marriage to Sophia Peabody. "Why are poets so apt to choose their mates, not for any similarity of poetic endowment, but for qualities which might make the happiness of the rudest handicraftsman as well as that of the ideal craftsman of the spirit."28

Clifford also finds much happiness and contentment in the symbolic Pyncheon garden. In Chapter 10, which deals with this important adjunct to the old house, Hawthorne points again to Clifford's increasing propensity toward a reunion with society by describing his tendency to view the flowers as human personalities. "But Clifford's enjoyment was accompanied with a perception of life, character, and individuality, that made him love these blossoms of the garden, as if they were endowed with sentiment and intelligence."29 "The Pyncheon Garden" is an important chapter because it helps to account for Clifford's approaching

26 Kaul, 154.
27 Hawthorne, The House of the Seven Gables, 172.
28 Ibid., 171.
29 Ibid., 178.
attempt to become once again a part of the world with which he has for so long had no contact. The garden life is for Clifford, Hawthorne suggests, "The Eden of a thundersmitten Adam, who had fled for refuge thither out of the same dreary and perilous wilderness into which the original Adam was expelled." But before long, Clifford is to realize the necessity of returning to the wilderness. There is no lasting escape from reality; happiness is not possible without entering the united struggle of mankind. What is bewildering is the fact that the struggle itself precludes permanent joy, too.

Clifford is spoken of as Adam and the fallen man on more than one occasion. What is bothersome in this novel is that Clifford does not partake of the tree of truth and knowledge as do Hester and Dimmesdale or Miriam and Donatello. Thus Clifford's alienation does not have the dramatic significance of those who have fallen through acts of their own will. The contrivance of Clifford's false trial and imprisonment does not possess the validity of the two couples' complicity in and punishment for sin. That is why, among other reasons, The House of the Seven Gables is an inferior novel. Clifford is more the victim of circumstances than anything else, and even the earliest dramatists knew that pure fatalism could seldom generate true tragedy.

Clifford's only true claim to sin is, as I have said, his ob-

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sesive clamoring for beauty.

The therapeutic value which the garden holds for Clifford is unmistakable.

Indeed, what with the pleasant summer evening, and the sympathy of this little circle of not unkindly souls, it was perhaps natural that a character so susceptible as Clifford's should become animated, and show itself readily responsive to what was said around him.31

Hawthorne imparts a tone of pessimism when he says of Clifford: "You are partly crazy and partly imbecile; a ruin, a failure, as almost everybody is. . . . Fate has no happiness in store for you."32 These last few words lead me to believe that the novel's so-called happy ending is a myth, that it is to be read ironically, at least as far as Clifford is concerned.

"The Arched Window," like "The Minister's Vigil" in The Scarlet Letter, comes at the halfway point in the book. Like the chapter in the latter novel, it is structurally and thematically of paramount importance, signalling, as it does, the protagonist's need for involvement in the everyday world. This theme of human complicity lies at the center of all the novels analyzed in this study. "The isolation which Hawthorne writes about is not a matter of physical solitude but of moral alienation, of 'solitude in the midst of men.'"33 Kaul must have had in mind, in thus describing Hawthorne's characteristic theme, just such a scene as is portrayed in this chapter.

31 Ibid., 190. 32 Ibid. 33 Kaul, 151.
Clifford has been urged to occasionally look out upon the life of Pyncheon Street to diversify his life a bit. The arched window at which he sits and through which he espies the world is described as resembling a stage shaded by a pair of curtains. Through the arch, Clifford envisions not merely a Salem street, but the world.

A cab; an omnibus, with its populous interior, dropping here and there a passenger, and picking up another, and thus typifying that vast rolling vehicle, the world, the end of whose journey is everywhere and nowhere. 34

Among other things that he observes is the train, with its terrible energy, which presently distresses Clifford but which proved so important in a later chapter of the novel. In fact, the description of the omnibus is remarkably similar to that of the train in Chapter 17, which will be discussed shortly.

What Clifford seems most to admire, though, is the apparently harmonious existence of the inhabitants of Pyncheon Street, of which he is not a part. "In all their variety of occupation . . . this fortunate little society might truly be said to enjoy a harmonious existence, and to make life literally a dance." 35 This concept of life must be attributed to the debility of the observer, however, particularly in view of what Hawthorne has said of the world in earlier chapters. Nevertheless, all the merchants and visitors on Pyncheon Street appear to be

34 Hawthorne, The House of the Seven Gables, 193.
35 Ibid., 196.
brought into harmony through the machinations of the Italian organ grinder. All facets of society are represented: the cobbler, the blacksmith, the soldier, the gentlewoman, the scholar, the milkmaid, even the miser. All are in tune with the organ grinder's turning crank.

Possibly some cynic, at once merry and bitter, had desired to signify, in this pantomimic scene, that we mistake, whatever our business or amusement,--however serious, however trifling,--all dance to one identical tune, and, in spite of our ridiculous activity, bring nothing finally to pass.

Thus the scene symbolizes Hawthorne's realization of the futility of human endeavor and, at the same time, the necessity of involvement in such activity no matter how meaningless--in spite of Hawthorne's rejection "of the whole moral of the show."37

The gold-counting miser mentioned earlier is seen again in the monkey who provides an image of the Mammon of copper coin, a "symbol of the grossest form of the love of money."38 Perhaps for Clifford the beast is a symbol of cousin Jaffrey. Whomever it represents, however, the monkey helps to complete the microcosm that the estranged Clifford sees from his arched window. Unless he joins this group, moreover, Clifford will be little more than the detached observer who inevitably comes to disaster because of his self-chosen alienation. It is probably not insignificant that Clifford is enthroned in an arch above the street level; thus his relationship with the throng below is quite simi-

36 Ibid., 197. 37 Ibid. 38 Ibid., 198.
lar to that of Dimmesdale in Chapter 3 of The Scarlet Letter.
What Dimmesdale and Clifford must do to expiate their sins is
descend from their pulpit and arched window to assume their right-
ful place among the crowd. Both are sensitive, almost poetic 
men. Neither has much in common with the horde. Yet they must
descend or be completely lost. Henry Kariel clearly illustrates 
the dilemma in saying,

Man's error is his obsessive desire for perfect knowledge, 
virtue, or art [in a world that is doomed to imperfection. 
Hawthorne] attempted to show again and again that man's des-
tiny rests with the material realities of the world, that it 
is sin to attempt to transcend society and its living institu-
tions, to go beyond compromises and imperfections. Men 
are attached to society by their shortcomings as individuals. 
... They share nothing but their deficiencies, their pro-
clivity to error. The cement of society is the recognition 
of this fact.39

Hawthorne has arranged a panorama of all walks of life 
outside Clifford's window: a gathering that includes the schol-
ar and the "jolly toper," a virtuous milkmaid and a greedy miser. 
All comprise the noble race of mankind from which Clifford has 
been alienated. Nevertheless, at this point of the narrative, 
Clifford is able to rejoin his fellow men no more than was 
Dimmesdale able to reveal himself before the public gaze in 
"The Minister's Vigil." "With a shivering repugnance at the idea 
of personal contact with the world, a powerful impulse still 
seized on Clifford whenever the rush and roar of the human tide 

39Kariel, 530.
grew strongly audible to him."\textsuperscript{40}

The powerful impulse to which Clifford falls prey is described in the following passage, which reflects Hawthorne’s own interest in crowds; for the author once said "It was pleasant and stimulating to walk on pavements and feel the pulsing life of crowds."\textsuperscript{41} On the same subject, the author’s sister wrote "If there was any gathering of people in the town he always went out; he liked a crowd."\textsuperscript{42}

As a mere object of sight, nothing is more deficient in picturesque features than a procession seen in its passage through narrow streets. The spectator feels it to be fool’s play, when he can distinguish the tedious commonplace of each man’s visage, with the perspiration and weary self-importance on it, and the very cut of his pantaloons, and the stiffness or laxity of his shirt collar, and the dust on the back of his black coat. In order to become majestic, it should be viewed from some vantage point, as it rolls its slow and long array through the center of a wide plain, or the stateliest public square of a city; for then, by its remoteness, it melts all the personalities, of which it is made up, into one broad mass of existence,—one great life,—one collected body of mankind, with a vast, homogeneous spirit animating it. But, on the other hand, if an impressible person, standing alone over the brink of one of these processions, should behold it, not in its atoms, but in its aggregate,—as a mighty river of life, massive in its tide, and black with mystery, and, out of its depths, calling to the kindred depth within him,—then the contiguity would add to the effect. It might so fascinate him that he would hardly be restrained from plunging into the surging stream of human sympathies.\textsuperscript{43}

Whether Clifford is simply mad, attempting suicide, overcome with fear, or desirous of rejoining mankind, Hawthorne,

\textsuperscript{40}Hawthorne, \textit{The House of the Seven Gables}, 199.
\textsuperscript{41}Stewart, \textit{A Biography}, 119. \textsuperscript{42}Anderson, 39.
\textsuperscript{43}Hawthorne, \textit{The House of the Seven Gables}, 199–200.
typically, does not clarify. As far as the novel is concerned, the probability is that Clifford desires to enter the stream of life; yet there lurks the suspicion that Clifford and his creator feel that death, through immersion in a being that sounds vaguely like Emerson's Oversoul, is the only answer. Hawthorne is certainly of little help, for he says,

As it was, the whole procession might have seen him, a wild, haggard figure . . . a lonely being, estranged from his race, but now feeling himself man again . . . ; but whether impelled by the species of terror that sometimes urges its victim over the very precipice which he shrinks from, or by a natural magnetism, tending towards the great centre of humanity, it were not easy to decide. Both impulses might have wrought on him at once.

... Or perhaps he required to take a deep, deep plunge into the ocean of human life, and to sink down and be covered by its profoundness, and then to emerge, sobered, invigorated and restored to the world and to himself. Perhaps, again, he required nothing less than the great final remedy—death.

What the reader does know, however, is that the throng plays an important role in this scene. It is clearly seen as a manifestation of the human interests with which Clifford has not thus far been sufficiently involved. Hawthorne's references to the sound of humanity, the roar of the human tide, emanating from the crowd is reminiscent of Wordsworth's "still, sad music of humanity."

Perhaps it is significant, too, that a similar scene takes place one Sabbath morning. The Sabbath influence is felt to affect the Salem throng assembled on Clifford's stage. Upon

\[44\] Ibid., 200-201.
seeing Phoebe off to church, Clifford suggests that were he to join her "I could pray once more, when so many human souls were praying all around me!" The crowd here assumes thematic importance of the first order. Hepzibah recognizes its role, and she, therefore, yearns to take her brother by the hand to "go and kneel down among the people, and be reconciled to God and man at once." Their attempt to be reconciled is, however, abortive. Clifford says "It cannot be, Hepzibah!—it is too late. . . . We are ghosts! We have no right among human beings,—no right anywhere but in this old house. . . . It is an ugly thought that I should be frightful to my fellow beings." Yet Hawthorne suggests that their isolation is self-inflicted.

They could not flee; their jailer had but left the door ajar in mockery, and stood behind it to watch them stealing out. At the threshold, they felt his pitiless grieve upon them. For what other dungeon is so dark as one's own heart! What jailer so inexorable as one's self!

At the close of the important eleventh chapter, Hawthorne points out that while all of Clifford's waking hours are not shrouded with gloom, many are spent amidst other fantasies of escape. He often sees himself as a boy among youths, whose pleasant voices emanating from the street below his arched window call him back to the joy of his own childhood. Hawthorne's words in describing the children are interesting, for they re-

\[45\text{Ibid.}, 203. \quad 46\text{Ibid.} \quad 47\text{Ibid.}, 204. \quad 48\text{Ibid.}\]
call the fact that it was the sound of the adult throng that had earlier called him forth from the room of the arched window.

"Their voices, also, were very pleasant to him, heard at a distance, all swarming and intermingling together as flies do in a sunny room."49 The simile is, perhaps, unfortunate; "intermingling," however, calls to mind the throng that Clifford earlier viewed as one broad mass of existence, "one great life,—one collected body of mankind, with a vast, homogeneous spirit animating it."50

In the eleventh chapter, then, the novel reaches a climax. The role of the Salem throng is presented clearly in terms that we have come to recognize in Hawthorne's works: The crowd is seen and heard as the mass of humanity to which Clifford must return; it is a homogeneous group which embraces all that is beautiful and ugly, youthful and aged, useful and useless in the world.

What follow this chapter are, for the most part, plot manipulations with philosophical intrusions that are intended to realize the promise of Chapter 11. This procedure follows much the same pattern utilized by Hawthorne in structuring The Scarlet Letter. The chapters entitled "The Daguerreotypist," "Alice Pyncheon" and "Phoebe's Good-by" continue Hawthorne's dabbling in the subject of mesmerism, which apparently intrigued

49Ibid., 206.  50Ibid., 199.
him, extend the subject of the Maule curse by revealing Matthew Maule's influence over Alice Pyncheon, enhance everyone's opinion of young Holgrave, who refrains from taking advantage of his power over Phoebe, and further the love interest. The culmination of the Holgrave-Phoebe relationship is, of course, the enjoining of the Maules and the Pyncheons and the subsequent dissolution of the Maule curse.

In these chapters, Holgrave is seen as a potential Roger Chillingworth or Ethan Brand. He is described as a cool and calm observer whose relations with the Pyncheons seem to be more in quest of mental food than heart-sustenance. The daguerreotypist himself suggests that, had he the opportunity, he would attempt to fathom Clifford to the full depth of his plummet-line. Although Holgrave never really takes advantage of his mesmeric powers and—to that end—is, perhaps, a disappointment, he does function as a spokesman for Hawthorne and, as will be seen later, Clifford. In spite of his crusading speeches, however, Phoebe manages to harness him completely before the novel has run its course. Holgrave preaches that

"In this age, more than ever before, the moss-grown and rotten Past is to be torn down, and lifeless institutions to be thrust out of the way, and their dead corpses buried, and everything to begin anew."\(^{51}\)

"I doubt whether even our public edifices—our capitol, state-houses, court-houses, city-hall, and churches—ought to

\(^{51}\)Ibid., 215-16.
be built of such permanent materials as stone or brick. It were better that they should crumble to ruin once in twenty years, or thereabouts, as a hint to the people to examine into and reform the institutions which they symbolize."

Later the loquacious Clifford suggests something similar when he tells his train companion,

"Why, therefore, should he build a more cumbrous habitation than can be readily carried off with him? Why should he make himself a prisoner for life in brick, and stone, and worm-eaten timber, when he may just as easily dwell, in one sense, nowhere,—in a better sense, wherever the fit and beautiful shall offer him a home?"

Before the novel is ended, however, these Thoreau-like sentiments are all but forgotten by Holgrave, who prepares to move into the Judge's frame home, wishing all the while that it were stone so that each generation might alter the interior to suit its own taste "while the exterior, through the lapse of years, might have been adding venerableness to its original beauty, and thus giving that impression of permanence which I consider essential to the happiness of any one moment."

Later, Holgrave expresses Hawthorne's often repeated realization. "'Ah Phoebe, I told you how it would be! ... You find me a conservative already!'"

Like Hawthorne's, Holgrave's liberalism is lost to his familial traditional conservatism.

_The House of the Seven Gables_ has often been criticized because the major characters do not fulfill their dramatic promise. The liberal becomes a conservative; the tragic figure be-

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52 Ibid., 373. 53 Ibid., 309. 54 Ibid., 372. 55 Ibid., 373.
comes almost comic; and Phoebe remains the same. The ending is either a farce or an exercise in irony; these alternatives will be explored shortly.

To return to the plot's development, Phoebe's temporary departure paves the way for the culmination of the novel, for even limited tragedy could not come to pass with all her sunshine in the house. Indeed, all nature recognizes Phoebe's absence. Clifford's scanty sources of enjoyment are cut off while Hepzibah simply reflects the gray and sullen weather which overtakes Salem. Obviously the combination of bad weather and Hepzibah's scowl are too much for its clientele; so the shop's trade drops off markedly. In short, all is in readiness for the end of the tale, an end which Hawthorne takes far too long to effect. At this point the chief weakness of the novel becomes apparent. As I have already indicated, what the novel seems to be most concerned with is Clifford's rejuvenation. Hawthorne's real problem is his understandable inability to deal with the visitation of guilt from generation to generation, the love of Phoebe and Holgrave, the Waldo County Claim, the vindication of Clifford, the condemnation and effective removal of the Judge (and, by the way, of his nomadic son), and several other minor affairs within the remaining pages. Hawthorne does not allow himself enough time to adequately tie together all the loose ends. I am not suggesting, however, that the author would have been well advised to add another hundred pages to his romance; on the con-
trary, perhaps he should have ended the work some seventy pages sooner. Of course, inasmuch as he introduced all these problems early in the work, Hawthorne--as a practical matter--had no choice but to deal with them, however ineffectively.

Shortly after Phoebe leaves, Jaffrey enters the shop and suggests what everyone knows Clifford really needs.

"You do err, nevertheless, in keeping your brother so secluded. Why insulate him thus from all sympathy and kindness? Clifford, alas! has had too much of solitude. Now let him try society,—the society, that is to say, of kindred and old friends." 56

In a lengthy passage following Hepzibah's rejection of the judge's hypocritical suggestion, Hawthorne reveals the role of the blind public eye in helping to create self-deceiving frauds like the judge. In so doing, the author once again reveals the true nature of the throng to which Clifford and all men are condemned to return. In fact, the Salem crowd—the butcher, the barber, the fishmonger, several customers of Hepzibah's shop, and many of the local gossips—have acquainted the judge with what he calls "the secrets of your interior." 57 All are, therefore, unsuspecting accomplices in the Judge's conspiracy against Clifford. All, according to Jaffrey, would testify, if need be, that several weeks earlier Clifford had attempted suicide from the arched window. Again the role of the crowd is clear; the fickle, though ignorant, throng would at this moment

56 Ibid., 270. 57 Ibid., 281.
side with villainy and destroy Clifford. Yet, to show the im-
portance of remaining within the pale of humankind, Hawthorne
has Hepzibah come to the realization of what her own alienation
has effected.

In her grief and wounded pride, Hepzibah had spent her life
in divesting herself of friends; she had wilfully cast off
the support which God has ordained his creatures to need from
one another; and it was now her punishment, that Clifford and
herself would fall the easier victims to their kindred
enemy.\footnote{Ibid., 290.}

The interview between Clifford and Jaffrey never takes
place because of the judge's timely death by the old family dis-
ease. As a result, Clifford is imbued with sufficient mobility
to once again enter the world, literally and figuratively. The
account of Clifford and Hepzibah's brief journey is provided in
Chapter 17, "The Flight of the Two Owls."

Although Hepzibah dreads the thought of attracting the
attention of her fellow townsman, no one appears to notice, let
alone care about, the two fugitives. Again Hawthorne presents a
motley collection of people: a coachman, a forlorn old man, a
merchant or two, an editor, a miscellaneous politician and a few
retired sea captains.

Seeing a train at the Salem station, the two owls board
it.

At last, therefore, and after so long estrangement from
everything that the world acted or enjoyed, they had been
drawn into the great current of human life, and were swept
away with it, as by the suction of fate itself.\textsuperscript{59}

Within the train car, first Clifford, then Hepzibah, becomes a part of the interior life of the railroad.

It was novelty enough, indeed, that there were fifty human beings in close relation with them, under one long and narrow roof, and drawn onward by the same mighty influence that had taken their two selves into its grasp.\textsuperscript{60}

The train is bursting with life. A party of girls and a young gentleman are engaged in a game of ball; boys whose hands are filled with every conceivable confection saunter by; new people enter; old acquaintances continually depart. In the train, Hawthorne has chosen an apt symbol for the world to which the Pyncheons have returned. "Sleep; sport; business; graver or lighter study; and the common and inevitable movement onward! It was life itself!"\textsuperscript{61} The word "common" is significant, for it summarizes Hawthorne's often repeated theme that, for better or worse, man is engaged in the relentless pace of life not alone, but in communion with others. "Here we are, in the world, Hepzibah!—in the midst of life!—in the throng of our fellow-beings! Let you and I be happy!"\textsuperscript{62}

But, as Hawthorne says, Hepzibah's mind is too unmalleable to take new impressions so readily as does Clifford. For a brief interval he becomes her guardian, just long enough to give

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 303. \textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 304. \textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 305. \textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 305-306.
vent to his deepest feelings about the glories of the railroad and of the telegraph, whose most valuable adjunct is the rapidity with which it could convey messages of love, thus fixing the natural bond between men. Clifford speaks of the necessity of tearing down old houses that enshrine ancient curses and ancient institutions, of the foolishness of attempting to save for posterity what ought to be annihilated with the passing of each generation. In reading these comments about architecture, one is reminded of Thoreau's "Economy" and wonders whether Hawthorne's influence is not evident in the transcendentalist's beliefs about the efficacy of small, transportable dwellings.

The tragic moment that Clifford undergoes after leaving the train and Hepzibah's pitiful prayer when both realize that once again they are alone in the world come much closer to Hawthorne's characteristic view of the universe than the novel's conclusion portends. "'O God,--our Father,--are we not thy children? Have mercy on us!'" While Hawthorne himself was not an attendee of ceremonies, he was a deeply religious man, much of his spirituality being tinged with ancestral Calvinism. It is probably, in fact, his Puritanism that accounts for the depravity which is a necessary concomitant of original sin. There is also something of Calvinism in Hepzibah's hesitating plea "Are we not thy children?" Many of the novels and short

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63 Ibid., 316.
stories seem to waver between Clifford's sporadic and always short-lived exuberance and Hepzibah's almost eternal pessimism, with the climactic "Are we not thy children?"

Why the author felt compelled to provide the Lord's apparent affirmative answer to the question in this novel has bothered many critics. Perhaps Clifford's return to Salem, like Hester's return to Boston, is to be viewed as an ironic turn of events. Maybe the extended irony that characterizes Chapter 18, "Governor Pyncheon," is intended to be extended still further to include the incredible remarks of Holgrave and the triumph of Phoebe as well as the revelation of the secret will. One sees Hawthorne's attitude toward his wife reflected in Holgrave's answer to Phoebe's question about whether or not she has sufficient scope to make him happy. "'You are my only possibility of happiness! . . . I have no faith in it, except as you bestow it on me!'" 64

Is it possible that Hawthorne's improbable conclusion is an expression of his belief that fleeting happiness—and that is all men can claim—is to be found only in the simple, in that which is not profound, in that which is best seen in one of the novel's central images—the flower? Phoebe is called, appropriately, "The Flower of Eden." Hawthorne speaks of the events which conclude his book as being proper only to Eden, and, in

64 Ibid., 362.
reality, they can be viewed only in such an unreal, idyllic sense if the author's artistic integrity is to be maintained. Perhaps, after all, one must allow the author this final attempt at a happy ending, which is to be found in none of the ensuing novels.
CHAPTER V

THE BLITHEDALE ROMANCE

In his 1852 preface to *The Blithedale Romance*, Nathaniel Hawthorne specifies that his romance puts forward not the least pretensions to illustrate a theory or elicit a conclusion, favorable or otherwise, in respect to socialism. Rather, Hawthorne utilizes Brook Farm as a vehicle, a theatre "a little removed from the highway of ordinary travel, where the creatures of his brain may play their phantasmagorical antics, without exposing them to too close a comparison with the actual events of real lives." While Hawthorne is careful to point out that all his characters are fictitious, the interrelationships depicted among Blithedale's inhabitants provide a realistic psychological study of group life.

*The Blithedale Romance* does not stop at depicting the influence of individuals upon individuals, like that of Westervelt upon Priscilla; it attempts also to show the influence of a group upon the individual, like that of the Blithedale community upon Miles Coverdale, whom many critics read as Hawthorne. The function of this chapter, then, will be to illustrate how *The Blithedale Romance* dramatizes the problem of the one and the

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many, the individual and society, through its emphasis upon group relationships.

The chief characters in the novel embody qualities that the reader has come to recognize in Hawthorne's personages. In Miles Coverdale, for example, one observes elements of the detached observer of life; he is, in this respect, akin to Kenyon and Holgrave. In Zenobia one recognizes Hester Prynne's abortive attempts to firmly establish woman's role in the world. Westervelt is a weak reincarnation of Hawthorne's arch villain, Chillingworth. Priscilla is a sad Phoebe. Only Hollingsworth stands out as a different kind of character, one who cannot be easily classified as to type; he is a parody of the transcendental reformer.

Almost from the beginning one is suspicious of Miles Coverdale's motives for journeying to Blithedale. He appears to typify Hawthorne's detached observer, the young poet who draws from humanity experiences with which to enrich his intellect but who offers little in return. This self-centeredness is apparent in his initial conversation with Moodie. The old reprobate asks Coverdale to do him a very great favor. "'A very great one?' repeated I, in a tone that must have expressed but little alacrity of beneficence, although I was ready to do the old man any amount of kindness involving no special trouble to myself."²

²Ibid., 327.
Coverdale's unwillingness to become overly involved is also evident in one or two further random citations.

Arriving at my room, I threw a lump of cannel coal upon the grate, lighted a cigar, and spent an hour in musings of every hue, from the brightest to the most sombre; being, in truth, not so very confident as at some former periods that this final step, which would mix me up irrevocably with the Blithedale affair, was the wisest that could possibly be taken.  

At Blithedale, when Foster suggests that one of the men join him in selecting half a dozen pigs at Brighton, Coverdale muses, "Pigs! Good heavens! had we come out from among the swinish multitude for this?"

Coverdale's attitude toward the multitude cannot be overemphasized since it is through the young poet that the reader learns of the interrelationships of all the other characters in the story. It cannot be assumed that the poet's prejudices disappear when he relates the incidents that occur at Blithedale. Perhaps, also, it is not insignificant that this is the only novel in which Hawthorne utilizes the first person point of view. One cannot assume, of course, that such a choice invariably indicates the author's special affinity with his narrator, but Coverdale's occupation as well as several other considerations at least open for speculation the topic of the novelist's similarity to his creation. This problem will be considered occasionally as it appears germane to the development of the novel's concern with

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3 Ibid., 329. 4 Ibid., 343.
the individual and society.

In *The Blithedale Romance*, as in *The House of the Seven Gables*, Hawthorne's pessimistic view of mankind is evident. In the latter novel Hawthorne speaks of man's business as ridiculous activity which brings nothing finally to pass. In the work at hand Coverdale freely admits, "Whatever else I may repent of, therefore, let it be reckoned neither among my sins nor follies that I once had faith and force enough to form generous hopes of the world's destiny." The implication is that, in retrospect, Coverdale no longer has any such faith; it has to be assumed that the incidents at Blithedale have no small bearing upon his conversion to pessimism. Perhaps his disillusionment must be attributed to the narrator himself who, characteristic of his type, has not sympathetically entered into what Hawthorne calls the common struggle of mankind.

Coverdale seems always aware of his relationship with those around him. He speaks of the "four of us" who rode together through the storm. In his travel to the farm and during his first days at Blithedale, he desires to participate fully in the communal spirit. Coverdale speaks freely of "our mighty hearts" and "our cordial sympathy," of "our blithe tones of brotherhood." Around the fireside on the first night he and his companions "shook hands affectionately all round, and congratu-
lated ourselves that the blessed state of brotherhood and sisterhood, at which we aimed, might fairly be dated from this moment." 6 One is tempted to add "provided such companionship involve no special trouble to myself."

The third chapter is appropriately entitled "A Knot of Dreamers." None of the major dreamers is wholly unselfish, however. The three idealists that are of concern here—Coverdale, Zenobia and Hollingsworth—will not achieve the harmony which they seek because each harbors the selfishness which keeps Utopias like Blithedale from succeeding. The Blithedale Romance is Hawthorne's most candid dramatization of the problem of the individual in society. The entire work shows that man's enforced attempts to transcend self and to become immersed among the multitude—albeit a highly selective multitude here—are doomed. As Miles realizes from time to time, this attempt to achieve brotherhood is made at the expense of the participants' alienating themselves from the world.

But, to own the truth, I very soon became sensible that, as regarded society at large, we stood in a position of new hostility, rather than new brotherhood. . . . Constituting so pitiful a minority as now, we were inevitably estranged from the rest of mankind in pretty fair proportion with the strictness of our natural bond among ourselves. 7

Our bond, it seems to me, was not affirmative, but negative. We had individually found one thing or another to quarrel with in our past life, and were pretty well agreed as to the inexpediency of lumbering along with the old system any further. 8

6 Ibid., 334. 7 Ibid., 343. 8 Ibid., 391.
One of the participants who apparently had good reason to leave the world to become a charter member of Blithedale is Zenobia, the counterpart of Hester and Miriam. She, too, is one of Hawthorne’s dark, tragic women with a mysterious past, and, like the others, Zenobia comes equipped with an identifying symbol: an exotic flower of rare beauty “more indicative of the pride and pomp which had a luxuriant growth in Zenobia’s character than if a great diamond had sparkled among her hair.”

Zenobia, toward whom Coverdale exhibits great fascination, plays the role of hostess on their first stormy night at Blithedale; in this first night the poet finds a symbol of the “cold, desolate distrustful phantoms that invariably haunt the mind, on the eve of adventurous enterprises, to warn us back within the boundaries of ordinary life.” There can be no doubt as to Hawthorne’s attitude about the fate of the Blithedale experiment, for when his symbols begin manifesting omens so early, the game is surely up. This is especially apparent in Coverdale’s half-hearted pronouncement of the aims of the idealistic community.

It was our purpose—a generous one, certainly, and absurd, no doubt, in full proportion to its generosity—to give up whatever we had heretofore attained, for the sake of showing mankind the example of a life governed by other than the false and the cruel principles on which human society has all along been based.

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9Ibid., 337. 10Ibid., 341. 11Ibid., 342.
If there is any lesson in the works of Hawthorne, it is that life is indeed enigmatic and cruel and that mankind is not to be saved by an idealist who operates from outside the pale of human suffering. Had Holgrave been present at the first meeting of the community at Blithedale, he would surely have provided the same sound advice with which he encouraged Hepzibah upon the opening of her cent-shop. He would have told the participants that the only healthy and natural effort on behalf of men would involve lending one's strength to the united struggle of mankind, not from without but from within. In spite of any prefatory disclaimers to the contrary, Hawthorne, through his spokesman, Miles Coverdale, makes clear his conviction that such idealistic social enterprises as that at Blithedale are doomed from the outset.

Coverdale learns this truth primarily through his experiences at the farm, but he is not so foolish as to believe that the inevitable doom of such enterprises is inherent in the act of organization; rather it is to be found in the selfish motives of the men who enter into such experiments; in short, it lies in the natural depravity of men. Coverdale says, "In my own behalf, I rejoice that I could once think better of the world's improvability than it deserved. It is a mistake into which men seldom fall twice in a lifetime; or, if so, the rarer and higher is the nature that can thus magnanimously persist in error." 12

12 Ibid., 342-43.
The foregone conclusion of the experiment's failure is not a deterrent as far as the reader's interest in the novel is concerned, because the author has made clear in the preface to his work that Blithedale is merely a stage, a setting, in which to set his dramatization of a familiar theme. In a sense, this Arcadia, as Hawthorne calls it, is similar to the Eden to which Phoebe and Holgrave, Hepzibah and Clifford repair in the hope of finding happiness. The Blithedale Arcadia is proof that no such lasting peace is possible.

The complicated relationship among four of the novel's five major characters is revealed in the fourth chapter of *The Blithedale Romance*. Hollingsworth, a monomaniacal philanthropist, arrives with temporarily eclipsed sunshine and light. Hollingsworth has obviously already taken an interest in the sprite; Coverdale, too, is immediately intrigued by Priscilla; and Zenobia, because of the philanthropist's interest, disdains her prospective rival—conduct for which the narrator never thoroughly forgives her. Already the Blithedale life of love and free-heartedness has run amuck. In thus bringing these characters together, Hawthorne has provided one of the main threads upon which the novel's action depends. The other, of course, is the mesmerism sequence. Westervelt, who has already exercised his evil upon the lady and the young girl, will complete the character and plot entanglements through his entrance in Chapter 11, "The Wood-Path."
As was the case in *The House of the Seven Gables*, plot is not the strongest artistic element in *The Blithedale Romance*; yet Hawthorne's craftsmanship stands out in several ways. The concluding incidents are carefully foreshadowed, occasionally, in interesting ways. For example, a little tableau set on the first evening at the farm provides a fine cameo of the novel's tragic conclusion. In Chapter 5, Zenobia says of Priscilla,

"Since you see the young woman in so poetical a light . . . you had better turn the affair into a ballad. It is a grand subject, and worthy of supernatural machinery. The storm, the startling knock at the door, the entrance of the sable knight Hollingsworth and this shadowy snow-maiden, who, precisely at the stroke of midnight, shall melt away at my feet in a pool of ice-cold water and give me my death with a pair of wet slippers!"\(^3\)

The slippers, the water, midnight—all point to Zenobia's death, described in Chapter 27, "Midnight."

Other such plot devices are evident in Chapter 6, "Coverdale's Sick Chamber," wherein the poet refers to Zenobia as the "stump-oratress and an "enchantress, . . . a sister of the Veiled Lady."\(^4\) There are literally dozens of such clues scattered throughout the early chapters, some, admittedly, too blunt to be aesthetically pleasing. The imagery, too, provides a tempting diversion; the Arcadia imagery, that of light and darkness, the ballad motif—all are worthy of close analysis. I shall, however, limit my discussion of these subjects to what is needful in dealing with the broader subject of the individual

\(^3\)Ibid., 357. \(^4\)Ibid., 371.
and society.

By the end of Chapter 6, all the novel's major themes and characters have been introduced. The love interests are fairly well defined; the subject of the mysterious Veiled Lady has been introduced; the strained relationships between Zenobia and Priscilla and between Coverdale and Hollingsworth have been suggested. The chief interest in Chapter 6 is Miles Coverdale, however, for it clarifies the important role of the narrator. In Coverdale one sees shades of Holgrave and a hint of Ethan Brand and Roger Chillingworth, perhaps even a bit of Nathaniel Hawthorne. The young poet portrays the author's detached observer who, throughout the course of the novel, is never really able to assume his role among humanity.

Coverdale has already unconsciously rejected Priscilla by suggesting that Moodie seek "his great favor" from an older man, one more mature; the task of bringing Priscilla to Blithedale has, therefore, devolved upon Hollingsworth--Coverdale's foil--a man who commits himself too completely to a single cause. Although his motives may be sound, Coverdale also casts off Hollingsworth by rejecting involvement in the latter's projected philanthropic enterprise of converting New England criminals. Before too much time has elapsed, the poet rejects the entire Blithedale Community because, as he confesses, "An intolerable discontent and irksomeness had come over me. Blithedale was no longer what it had been. Everything was suddenly faded. The
sunburnt and arid aspect of our woods . . . did but imperfectly symbolize . . . my fields of thought."\(^{15}\) As a result of his leaving Blithedale, Coverdale also alienates Zenobia, who asks him at his departure, "Do you know, Mr. Coverdale, that I have been several times on the point of making you my confidant, for lack of a better and wiser one?"\(^{16}\) Coverdale seems doomed to be eternally cut off from society because of his inability to commit himself.

Often, Coverdale's role of observer seems accidental, however. For example, early in Chapter 6, he becomes the unwilling auditor of Hollingsworth's morning prayers because of the thin partition separating his room from that of the philanthropist. "My sleeping-room being but thinly partitioned from his, the solemn murmur of his voice made its way to my ears, compelling me to be an auditor of his awful privacy with the Creator."\(^{17}\) In fact, Coverdale seems forever to be the unwilling auditor or observer of someone's awful privacy. Later, while dallying in his tree hut, for example, he overhears a conversation between Zenobia and Westervelt. Shortly thereafter he witnesses an apparent altercation between Zenobia and Priscilla. After he leaves Blithedale, he espies Zenobia, Priscilla and Westervelt in a boarding-house across from his hotel. This last scene he observes largely because he has felt a hesitation

\(^{15}\) Ibid., 477. \(^{16}\) Ibid., 481. \(^{17}\) Ibid., 364.
about "plunging into this muddy tide of human activity and pastime. It suited me better, for the present, to linger on the brink, or hover in the air above it." While hovering on the brink of human activity, Coverdale is later present when Hollingsworth reveals the mystery of the Veiled Lady. After returning to Blithedale he chances upon Hollingsworth's terrifying revelation to Zenobia. In short, Coverdale always lingers on the brink of the activity he observes; he never immerses himself into the throng. He stands outside the charmed circle of human endeavor and, therefore, of human compassion. Hawthorne is generally careful, in describing these tableaux, to depict Coverdale's physical relationship to the group upon which he is eavesdropping. At times he is above the group; at others, on the same level; but always he is isolated outside the circle. Perhaps a few examples will suffice to illustrate Coverdale's position.

In Chapter 12, Coverdale describes his leafy cave located high in the air amidst the branches of a white-pine tree. He depicts his hermitage as "A hollow chamber of rare seclusion [that] had been formed by the decay of some of the pine branches, which the vine had lovingly strangled with its embrace, burying them from the light of day in an aerial sepulchre of its own leaves." It is from the vantage point of this tomb of isolation that Coverdale overhears a conversation between the lovely

18 Ibid., 487. 19 Ibid., 431.
Zenobia and the serpentine Westervelt, who has recently invaded the Eden of Blithedale. Coverdale soon realizes that Westervelt has some power over Zenobia.

Now, as I looked down from my upper region at this man and woman,--outwardly so fair a sight, and wandering like two lovers in the wood,--I imagined that Zenobia at an earlier period of youth, might have fallen into the misfortune above indicated. 20

Although he half desires to help Zenobia in some way, Coverdale cannot do more than look down from his upper region. The scene is, in some ways, reminiscent of that in The Scarlet Letter in which the similarly isolated Dimmesdale looks down into the activity of the Boston square and, more important, that of Hester and Chillingworth. It also reminds one of the scene in The House of the Seven Gables wherein Clifford views the activity of the Salem throng from the Arched Window.

Chapter 18, "The Boarding House," provides another fine dramatization of Coverdale's estrangement from society. In this tableau, Hawthorne again has Coverdale looking down, this time through his hotel window into that of a boarding house across the way. The heavily festooned window reminds Coverdale of a stage. Once again, he assumes the role of an observer, taking in the strange scene which includes Westervelt, Zenobia and Priscilla.

There now needed only Hollingsworth and old Moodie to complete the knot of characters, whom a real intricacy of events, greatly assisted by my method of insulating them from other relations, had kept so long upon my mental stage,

20 Ibid., 437.
as actors in a drama. . . . There seemed something fatal in the coincidence that had borne me to this one spot, of all others in a great city, and transfixed me there, and compelled me again to waste my already wasted sympathies on affairs which were none of mine, and persons who cared little for me.

I began to long for a catastrophe. . . . As for me, I would look on, as it seemed my part to do, understandingly, if my intellect could fathom the meaning and the moral, and, at all events, reverently and sadly. The curtain fallen, I would pass onward with my poor individual life, which was now attenuated of much of its proper substance, and diffused among many alien interests. 21

What Coverdale does not realize, of course, is that none of the scenes which he has such difficulty interpreting is to be fathomed through the intellect but, rather, through the heart.

A third example of Coverdale's lurking on the edge of society is to be seen in the poet's view of the forest Masquerade, with which I shall deal shortly, and his intrusion upon Zenobia's judgment at Eliot's pulpit. Miles immediately recognizes that this instance of unintentional observation is the worst intrusion of all, for upon crossing the boundary of the circle inhabited by Zenobia, Hollingsworth and Priscilla, he thinks,

One always feels the fact, in an instant, when he has intruded on those who love, or those who hate, at some acme of their passion that puts them into a sphere of their own, where no other spirit can pretend to stand on equal ground with them. I was confused,--affected even with a species of terror,--and wished myself away. The intenseness of their feelings gave them the exclusive property of the soil and atmosphere, and left me no right to be or breathe there. 22

21 Ibid., 498-99. 22 Ibid., 561-62.
Here again is an example of man alienated from the love, the struggles, the passions of lives from which Coverdale has earlier chosen to extricate himself. Having been forewarned by Zenobia to stay out of intimate associations in which he had no legitimate interest, the poet has, nevertheless, chosen to return to Blithedale solely "to learn the upshot of all my story." To provide a suitable conclusion for his ballad, a proper ending for the play that he has observed, Miles returns to the community, thereby earning the upbraiding delivered by Zenobia when he discovers her and her two companions in the forest.

"This long while past, you have been following up your game, groping for human emotions in the dark corners of the heart. Had you been here a little sooner, you might have seen them dragged into the daylight. I could even wish to have my trial over again, with you standing by to see fair play!"

For the first time since his climactic scene with Hollingsworth—which, incidentally, like similar scenes in The Scarlet Letter and The House of the Seven Gables, occurs precisely in the center of the novel—Coverdale is reunited with all the novel's major characters on the same level. Because of Hollingsworth's rejection of Zenobia, Coverdale feels that he has a right to be present, that he is now more a participant than an observer. But his intuition is proved wrong, for he is rebuffed when he tries to console Zenobia by way of berating Hollingsworth. Although he feels that his sympathy for Zenobia conse-

\[23\text{Ibid.}, 552.\ \ \ \ \ 24\text{Ibid.}, 562.\]
crates him to the priesthood, his tender ministrations are not gratefully received.

Coverdale's earlier realization of his role in relation to this small group proves prophetic.

Sometimes, in my solitude, I laughed with the bitterness of self-scorn, remembering how unreservedly I had given up my heart and soul to interests that were not mine. What had I ever to do with them? And why, being now free, should I take this thraldom on me once again? It was both sad and dangerous, I whispered to myself, to be in too close affinity with the passions, the errors, and the misfortunes of individuals who stood within a circle of their own, into which, if I stept at all, it must be as an intruder, and at a peril that I could not estimate. 25

Another such intrusion upon the circle of mankind, on a much larger scale, is that described in Chapter 24, "The Masquerade." Coverdale has decided to return to Blithedale in order to discover the outcome of the Zenobia-Hollingsworth-Priscilla conflict. The locale to which he returns Miles has alternately referred to as Eden and Arcady; perhaps because of the names which he presently gives the inhabitants, Arcadia is the more appropriate nomenclature. In any event, because he has an ominous sense of evil, Coverdale does not walk directly to the farm.

Yielding to this ominous impression, I now turned aside into the woods, resolving to spy out the posture of the community. . . . I would go wandering about the outskirts of the farm, and, perhaps catch sight of a solitary acquaintance . . . and entreat him to tell me how all things were. 26

25 Ibid., 552-53. 26 Ibid., 554-55.
Here, as in many other instances, Hawthorne dramatizes individual alienation by depicting circles of human activity into which the protagonist dare not enter. Coverdale's skirting around the pasture is reminiscent of Clifford and Hepzibah's slinking through Salem in the hope that they, too, would not be immediately discovered.

Miles is first made aware of the presence of the Blithedale community through the sounds emanating from the forest. "Voices, male and feminine; laughter, not only of fresh young throats, but the bass of grown people, as if solemn organ-pipes should pour out airs of merriment." These familiar sounds the poet compares with those that one might expect to come from Comus and his crew were they holding revels.

As he moves in to observe the masquerading Blithedale throng, Coverdale notices that it is indeed a motley group, composed of an Indian Chief, the goddess Diana, a Bavarian broom-girl, a Negro, several Middle Age foresters, a Kentucky woodsman and a Shaker elder. To these are added shepherds of Arcadia, Puritans, Cavaliers, Revolutionary officers, and others. In short, the host includes representatives of all classes of many kinds of societies—as Hawthorne's large crowds often do. The author is fond of depicting masquerades like this for their suggestiveness. In the first case, the crowd is miscellaneous

\[27\text{Ibid.}, 556-57.\]
and suggests, therefore, any number of possible gatherings in any number of places. Secondly, Miles knows the group to be the Blithedale community of which he has been a member; on the other hand, their costumes and disguises make the participants strangers. To this extent, Miles is in but not of the Blithedale world. The crowd, therefore, dramatizes the self-inflicted isolation of which Coverdale is so much aware. This isolation is apparent in the words of the "goddess Diana" who, together with the other masqueraders, hears Miles' laughter from behind a tree. "'Some profane intruder!' said the goddess Diana. 'I shall send an arrow through his heart, or change him into a stag, as I did Actaeon, if he peeps from behind the trees!'"

The masquerade suggests more than the poet's isolation, however. The frenzy and abandon of their dance together with their almost diabolical laughter imply the innate depravity, the natural evil which Hawthorne often finds in the assembled throng no less than in the alienated individual.

So they joined hands in a circle, whirling round so swiftly, so madly, and so merrily, in time and tune with the Satanic music, that their separate incongruities were blended all together, and they became a kind of entanglement that went nigh to turn one's brain with merely looking at it. Anon they stopt all of a sudden, and staring at one another's figures, set up a roar of laughter; whereat a shower of the September leaves (which, all day long, had been hesitating whether to fall or no) were shaken off by the movement of the air, and came eddying down upon the revellers.29

In its dual role of amplifying the suggestion of the evil things

28Ibid., 558-59. 29Ibid., 558.
which, Miles has just felt, are about to befall and of dramatizing the isolation theme, the masquerading crowd performs important thematic and figurative roles. So that all sense of actuality is not lost, however, thereby totally negating the important following realistic scene, Hawthorne tempers his masque somewhat. This he accomplishes not only by having the throng recognize Coverdale, but by having one of its members—Silas Foster—appear in his ordinary dress.

But Silas Foster, who leaned against a tree near by, in his customary blue frock, and smoking a short pipe, did more to disenchant the scene, with the look of shrewd, acrid Yankee observation, than twenty witches and necromancers could have done in the way of rendering it weird and fantastic. 30

Here, then, is the usual Hawthorne ambiguity: The crowd is real, yet it is unreal; it is good, but it suggests evil; it is comprised of those whom he knows and with whom he has lived, nevertheless, these revelers are alien to Coverdale. Although their function is not exactly the same, as will be shown, the masqueraders bear a similarity to the frenzied throng which Young Goodman Brown meets in the forest.

The masqueraders provide the most colorful throng in the novel, but they are by no means the only crowd with an important role. Hawthorne describes the activities of other groups in The Blithedale Romance. To be sure, however, the Blithedale community—out of costume—is the most important crowd.

30 Ibid., 558.
The effect that the falling out of Coverdale and Hollingsworth has upon their associates at the farm provides an example of the sympathetic malleability that one often finds in a throng. Strong personalities, like that of the philanthropist, always sway the sympathies of the less intellectual, more emotional throng. Considering his strong will and monomaniacal tendencies, Hollingsworth's influence over his confreres is not at all surprising. "The type of hero dear to crowds will always have the semblance of a Caesar. His insignia attracts them, and his sword instils them with fear." Only Coverdale, who almost always acts as an individual, sees through the philanthropist. In rejecting Caesar's bid for absolute power, Miles creates an understandable concern on the part of the legion.

My outbreak with Hollingsworth, though never definitely known to our associates, had really an effect upon the moral atmosphere of the Community. It was incidental to the closeness of relationship into which we had brought ourselves. That an unfriendly state of feeling could not occur between any two members without the whole society being more or less commoted and made uncomfortable thereby, this species of nervous sympathy (though a petty characteristic enough, sentimentally considered, and apparently betokening an actual bond of love among us) was yet found rather inconvenient in its practical operation; mortal tempers being so infirm and variable as they are.

In one sense, it is this "general brain of the Community" which has begun to unnerve Coverdale and which is at least partly responsible for his removing himself back to town into the settled system of things to correct himself by new observations.
from an old standpoint. Blithedale itself is a kind of paradox in that a member necessarily alienates himself from one kind of society in order to engage in a closer bond of sympathy and love. What the novel proves, I think, in spite of its avowed purpose, is that such a bond is not truly attainable, at least not in this world.

The Blithedale Community, as was suggested in the discussion of the masqueraders, is composed of many types of individuals, and therein lies the paradox, the reason for Blithedale's failure. Most of its recruits are people disgusted with inescapable ordinary pursuits. "On the whole it was a society such as has seldom met together; nor, perhaps, could it reasonably be expected to hold together long. Persons of marked individuality—crooked sticks, as some of us might be called—are not exactly the easiest to bind up into a fagot."33

Hawthorne describes the make-up of the community in several places. Particularly interesting is his description of the distinction he sees between groups of young maidens on the one hand and boys on the other. Perhaps there is a corrupting influence that changes girls like those described in the following passage to the cackling shrews that greet Hester when she leaves prison.

Girls are incomparably wilder and more effervescent than boys, more untamable, and regardless of rule and limit, with

33Ibid., 390.
an ever-shifting variety, breaking continually into new modes of fun, yet with a harmonious propriety through all. . . . Young men and boys, on the other hand, play, according to recognized law, old, traditionary games, permitting no caprioles of fancy, but with scope enough for the outbreak of savage instincts. 34

It is true that Hawthorne's women—Hester, Zenobia and Miriam, for example—are often regardless of rule and limit; coupled with these women are men who, initially, at least, appear to act according to "traditionary" laws. Whether or not young men are capable of no caprioles of fancy—as a general rule—is questionable, however.

The Blithedale community, like most of Hawthorne's social groups, is given to gossip which more often than not totally misses the truth. Its members decide among themselves, for example, that Zenobia and Hollingsworth are lovers.

Meantime, the gossip of the Community set them down as a pair of lovers. . . . The bond of our Community was such, that the members had the privilege of building cottages for their own residence within our precincts, thus laying a hearth-stone and fencing in a home private and peculiar to all desirable extent, while yet the inhabitants should continue to share the advantages of an associated life. It was inferred that Hollingsworth and Zenobia intended to rear their dwelling on this favorite spot. 35

The group can be forgiven its error, particularly in view of Zenobia's overt infatuation with Hollingsworth. This passage holds another element of interest, however. Whether or not he intended them as such, the private and peculiar cottages symbolize the quality of individualism which Coverdale has suggested

34 Ibid., 403. 35 Ibid., 410-11.
would spell the eventual failure of Blithedale. A group cannot function efficiently while there is more than a single personality vying for leadership or, at least, autonomy. "A crowd is formed when several persons--whether physically united or not--engage in sentiments or ideas germane to all the persons in the crowd and when their conscious individual personalities vanish."36 In this respect, what is true of the crowd is, I think, true also of the Blithedale community.

On more than one occasion Hawthorne refers to the nebulous social crowd in The Blithedale Romance, the kind of crowd given to making ponderous, though usually mistaken, comments about current affairs. Several prominent features of crowd psychology are apparent in these references. The fickleness of the crowd is apparent in such passing comments as the following, which describes Fauntleroy's fortunes after his thievery. "His name, in a very brief space, was forgotten by the multitude who had passed it so diligently from mouth to mouth."37 Fauntleroy's decision to seek obscurity among the throng has a ring of familiarity about it, too. "Instead of any longer seeking to live in the sight of the world, his impulse was to shrink into the nearest obscurity, and to be unseen of men, were it possible, even while standing before their eyes."38 The crowd adds ambiguity--

to already mysterious occurrences by commenting on the mysteries of the Veiled Lady.

Yet, if the busy tongues of the neighborhood spared Priscilla in one way, they made themselves amends by renewed and wilder babble on another score. They averred that the strange gentleman was a wizard, and that he had taken advantage of Priscilla's lack of earthly substance to subject her to himself, as his familiar spirit, through whose medium he gained cognizance of whatever happened, in regions near or remote.39

Hawthorne avers, as usual, that these conjectures are all absurdity, or mostly so, but, typically, he does not clarify the issue. Thus the crowd performs the important function of setting up the screen of ambiguity behind which the author seems always lurking. In any event, the reader is never quite sure about the nature of the relationship between Westervelt and Priscilla. All he knows is that he has seen a similar situation between Matthew Maule and Alice Pyncheon as well as between young Holgrave and Phoebe in The House of the Seven Gables.

One other prominent throng ought to be mentioned in connection with the mesmerism sequence. Part of this group, by Hawthorne's own admission, represents the "mysticism, or rather mystic sensuality, of this singular age."40 I refer to the group assembled in a village hall at which Coverdale just happens to be present to witness Priscilla and Westervelt's last show together.

The audience was of a generally decent and respectable character: old farmers, in their Sunday black coats, with shrewd, hard, sun-dried faces, and a cynical humor, oftener

39 Ibid., 534. 40 Ibid., 544.
than any other expression, in their eyes; pretty young men,—the schoolmaster, the lawyer, or student at law, the shopkeeper,—all looking rather suburban than rural. . . . There was likewise a considerable proportion of young and middle-aged women, many of them stern in feature, with marked foreheads, and a very definite line of eyebrow; a type of womanhood in which a bold intellectual development seems to be keeping pace with the progressive delicacy of the physical constitution. 41

Two aspects of this throng are striking: first, although comprised of various occupations and ages, the crowd is a homogeneous group which is at once cynical and stern; second, an adjunct of the first, this is an urbanized or, at least, suburbanized, society. Perhaps herein lies the difference between the happy Blithedale maidens and their urban, intellectualized sisters of stern appearance. The city and town have often been depicted by Hawthorne as places where one undergoes the bitterness of experience. Robin of "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" is a case in point; Donatello of The Marble Faun is another. In addition to providing the proper atmosphere for the Veiled Lady's last appearance, this suburban crowd serves to isolate Hollingsworth, to hide him from everyone but the all-seeing Coverdale until the propitious moment for his mysterious intervention, which breaks the spell that Westervelt holds over Priscilla.

Even a truncated version of the choral crowd is to be found in The Blithedale Romance. The function of such a group is to pass moral and social judgements upon the actions of the

Ibid., 543.
crowd's contemporaries. This role is assumed by Coverdale.

My own part in these transactions was singularly subordinate. It resembled that of the chorus in a classic play, which seems to be set aloof from the possibility of personal concernment, and bestows the whole measure of its hope or fear, its exultation or sorrow, or the fortunes of others, between whom and itself this sympathy is the only bond. . . . It is my office to give applause when due, and sometimes an inevitable tear, to detect the final fitness of incident to character, and distil in his long-brooding thought the whole morality of the performance. 42

Because Coverdale does assume several of the functions often relegated to Hawthorne's crowds, the throng's role in The Blithedale Romance, is, perhaps, not often as dramatic as that of the crowds in The Scarlet Letter, for example. Nevertheless, in this work, as in so many others, Hawthorne remains demonstrably intrigued by individual and group relationships and by the crowd mind. Even this novel's unusual use of the first person narrative does not obviate the throng of social and moral conscience, the isolating crowd, and the Arcadian community.

42 Ibid., 430.
CHAPTER VI

THE MARBLE FAUN

The *Marble Faun* is no different from the other novels discussed in this study in that it too is concerned with the subject of the individual's relationship to society. It is similar to *The Scarlet Letter* in its study of man's complicity in evil and of his reaction to sin. The *Marble Faun* is unique in providing a case study of the loss of innocence and the attainment of an education in the ways of human suffering and sorrow. The vicissitudes of Donatello's education and the author's implications to the effect that such an enlightenment is required of every man comprise the focal themes of *The Marble Faun*.

Early in the novel Miriam foreshadows the path that Donatello must tread before he earns the right to her love by way of their experiencing together sin and sorrow. To truly love, one must suffer. Miriam says, "You cannot suffer deeply; therefore you can but half enjoy."\(^1\) At the end of the novel Kenyon says, "Sin has educated Donatello, and elevated him. Is sin, then,—which we deem such a dreadful blackness in the universe,—is it, like sorrow, merely an element of human education, through which we struggle to a higher and a purer state than we could otherwise have attained? Did

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\(^1\) Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Marble Faun* (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1883), 64.
Adam fall, that we might ultimately rise to a far loftier paradise than this?"2

Hawthorne asks this question often, but the answer is seldom, if ever, forthcoming. In this work, Hilda hushes the painful questioning of Kenyon just as Phoebe deters Holgrave in The House of the Seven Gables. The sculptor's acquiescence is just as disturbing as that of the dagguereotypist.

"Forgive me, Hilda!" exclaimed the sculptor, startled by her agitation; "I never did believe it! But the mind wanders wild and wide; and, so lonely as I live and work, I have neither pole-star above nor light of cottage windows here below, to bring me home. Were you my guide, my counsellor, my inmost friend, with what white wisdom which clothes you as a celestial garment, all would go well. O Hilda, guide me home!"3

The question of the felix culpa is raised too often in the novels and tales for the reader to assume that Hawthorne, like Kenyon, "never did believe it." The answer to the question, as in many similar situations, is left in doubt. Whether Donatello is better off at the end of the novel than he was at its beginning in his Arcadian state is not really the main point of Hawthorne's conflict. What is crucial is the author's insistence that to fulfil one's human destiny, a man must enter the stream of human suffering and activity and that sin is a prerequisite of this bond. It is Donatello's sin which transforms him from an Arcadian faun into a human, and, as Kaul has said, "The existence of the individual has no meaning apart from the ties which bind him to other human beings."4

2Ibid., 519. 3Ibid., 520. 4Kaul, 154.
Although Donatello is the focal point of the novel as far as the realization of its theme is concerned, various aspects of Hawthorne's thesis are dramatized by the other major characters: Miriam, Kenyon and Hilda.

Of the three, Miriam is by far the most interesting as well as complex character. Among other things she introduces into the novel one of Hawthorne's favorite trappings: the dark, attractive individual with a mysterious past. The author offers too many possibilities concerning her background to even list here, but the veil thrown over her past by the conflicting reports of all who claim even the vaguest insight is sufficient to make Miriam a woman of experience rather than innocence and one who, therefore, is well equipped to introduce the rural faun to the terror of urban sin.

Kenyon, like Holgrave and Coverdale, is the artist who occasionally has glimpses of reality; like the others, however, he succumbs to the New England Puritan morality of Hilda. In him, too, is seen the vacillating Hawthorne who cannot decide whether to face reality by plunging unhesitatingly into life or to attempt a fanciful escape into Arcadia through total devotion to his art.

Hilda, as I have already suggested, provides an alternative to Miriam. It is interesting, though not at all surprising, that the mirthful, easy, sensual Donatello should choose as his soul's mate the dark, serpentine Miriam instead of the innocent
inhabitant of the dove-cote, Hilda. The impending choice is depicted within the novel's opening paragraph, wherein the author describes some sculpture in Rome's Capitol.

Here, likewise, is seen 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

Within the first two chapters of *The Marble Faun*, Hawthorne introduces all the major characters, establishes the relationships of all the members within the small group, and indicates the main problem of the novel: to project Donatello from his state of happy Arcadian ignorance—from the isolation of his rural tower—to the human involvement which he learns in the city of Rome. The primary function of this chapter will be to trace Donatello's growth as a human, to observe the power of evil, which he initially meets deep within the earth, overcome the innocence associated with towers throughout the book. One suspects that there is a symbol lurking behind the fact that sin is born in and of the earth while innocence is maintained, though tenuously, in towers that reach to the heavens.

Not only is the symbolism of the towers and catacombs established early in the work, so, too, are the threads of imagery that permeate the book. In fact, the first few chapters of *The Marble Faun* boast many of Hawthorne's finest thematic and

symbolic analogues, presented, for the most part, in the forms of painting and sculpture. Because these analogues have a direct bearing on the theme of the individual and society, a discussion of several examples at this point will not be out of order.

Such a discussion can properly begin with the rich series of analogues that appears in Chapter 5, "Miriam's Studio." In this chapter, the reader is treated to a view of Miriam's apartment and studio and to a study of Donatello's reactions to the various artifacts that the Faun finds scattered throughout the room.

In the obscurest part of the room Donatello was half-startled at perceiving duskily a woman with long dark hair, who threw up her arms with a wild gesture of tragic despair, and appeared to beckon him into the darkness along with her. This painting is the first in a series viewed by Donatello that provides a foreshadowing of what will happen to the faun-like creature. Like most artists, Miriam is fond of creating self-portraits; many of the paintings in her room depict scenes in The Marble Faun. This portrait projects Miriam's involving Donatello in a life of sin; it also foreshadows Kenyon and Hilda's last meeting with Miriam.

But when the kneeling figure beneath the open eye of the Pantheon arose, she looked towards the pair, and extended her hands with a gesture of benediction. Then they knew it was Miriam. They suffered her to glide out of the portal, however, without a greeting; for those extended hands even while they blessed, seemed to repel, as if Miriam stood on the other side of the fathomless abyss, and warned them from its verge.7

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6 Ibid., 58. 7 Ibid., 520.
That Miriam's outstretched hands imply an invitation for Donatello to join the communion of sinners is quite certain, and that the Faun has emerged from Arcady a complete man as the result is established by Kenyon, who says, "'He perpetrated a great crime; and his remorse, gnawing into his soul, has awakened it; developing a thousand high capabilities, moral and intellectual, which we never should have dreamed of asking for, within the scanty compass of the Donatello whom we knew.'"\(^8\)

Certainly Donatello senses that his destiny is somehow entangled with that of the lady in the painting. "'When my eyes first fell upon her, I thought her arms moved, as if beckoning me to help her in some direful peril.'"\(^9\)

Turning from this portrait, Donatello dolefully studies a series of pencil and pen-and-ink sketches which also provide foreshadowing of several scenes about to unfold. He once again recognizes Miriam in the sketches, this time as the Jewess, Jael, who is depicted inflicting death blows with her murderous hammer to the head of Sisera. In view of the facts that Miriam is reputed to be a Jewess and that Donatello recognizes Miriam in the picture, the symbolic significance of the painting is obvious.

Hawthorne includes other such paintings in the gallery of sketches similar, in some ways, to the series of symbolic artifacts with which Poe fills "The Fall of the House of Usher."

\(^8\) Ibid., 519. \(^9\) Ibid., 58.
Over and over again, there was the idea of a woman, acting the part of a revengeful mischief towards man. It was, indeed, very singular to see how the artist's imagination seemed to run on these stories of bloodshed, in which woman's hand was crimsoned by the stain; and how, too,—in one form or another, grotesque or sternly sad,—she failed not to bring out the moral, that woman must strike through her own heart to reach a human life, whatever were the motive that impelled her.10

This portfolio of grotesque images is completed with a sketch of Herodias receiving the head of John the Baptist in a charger. One cannot help but envision Donatello's head on the plate "with a look of gentle and heavenly reproach, with sad and blessed eyes fixed upward at the maiden; by the force of which miraculous glance, her whole womanhood was at once awakened to love and endless remorse."11 By the end of the novel, Miriam shares Herodias' love and endless remorse as she prepares to await the release of Donatello.

Even in the portfolio of sketches depicting happier, more idyllic scenes, which the author hopes are more truly representative of the life that belongs to woman, one sees analogues of Miriam. One quality which all the pictures have in common is the inclusion of a figure portrayed apart, a figure in isolation. The figure is seen between the branches of shrubbery amidst which lovers sit; she is seen looking into the warm interior of a house through a frosted window; on another occasion she views a scene of happy rustic life from a passing chariot. "Always it was the same figure, and always depicted with an expression of deep sad-

10 Ibid., 61. 11 Ibid.
ness; and in every instance, slightly as they were brought out, the face and form had the traits of Miriam's own."

The frolicsome Carnival masquerade as well as the Sylvan dance of Chapter 10 is foreshadowed in a sketch representing a rustic dance of delightful extravagance in which Miriam, ironically, plans to include Donatello as the wildest dancer of them all. But the last portrait that the young Italian sees provides the culmination of all the other sketches, embodying as it does all that is Miriam, for it reflects her beauty and her gloom. "'The resemblance is as little to be mistaken as if you had bent over the smooth surface of a fountain, and possessed the witchcraft to call forth the image that you made there. It is yourself!""

The central figure of all these analogues is, of course, Miriam. It is she, after all, who provides the temptation that ejects Adam from Eden. As a temptress she is one of Hawthorne's finest creations. Essentially, this novel is the story of Donatello and his conversion to sin; but the Marble Faun is meaningful as a character only to the extent that he reflects the nature of Miriam, who has already undergone the transformation.

In spite of his admiration for her heavenly innocence, Hawthorne cannot truly admire Hilda, who lives at a height above the ordinary level of men's views and aspirations. While she

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12 Ibid., 63-64. 13 Ibid., 66.
does not share the ignominy of Miriam's mysterious past, Hilda, nevertheless, lacks the compassion that marks Miriam's understanding of Beatrice Cenci's infamous crime. Kenyon, too, lacks the understanding born of complicity in sin, for while he is occasionally the spokesman of a liberal Hawthorne, he rejects his deepest insights in order to please the Puritanical Hilda. Both Miriam and Hilda are characters in isolation, but Miriam's is the alienation that is born of sin; Hilda's is self-imposed. "Here she dwelt, in her tower, possessing a friend or two in Rome, but no home companion except the flock of doves, whose cote was in a ruinous chamber contiguous to her own."¹⁴ Thus Hilda is an incomplete human being just as the delicate portions of paintings which she renders are incomplete pictures. She is no more in touch with reality in her dove-cote than is Donatello in his tower among the Apennines.

The analogues already described and others which I shall depict make it quite clear that Hawthorne's attention as well as his sympathy is focused upon Miriam and Donatello. The novel's conclusion is not intended to be viewed as the author's characteristic return to the relatively safe rut of Puritanism from which Hilda and, therefore, Kenyon never escape. As a matter of fact, the typical "return to Salem" motif, described in my discussion of The Scarlet Letter and The House of the Seven

¹⁴ Ibid., 73.
Gables, should be viewed as ironical in the first place. In his most penetrative moments, Hawthorne accepts Hilda no more than he does Phoebe and Priscilla; they are Arcadian nymphs who have no place in reality, no role in the everyday drama of humanity.

Miriam is compared with several of the most tragic women of history. She is seen as Beatrice, for example, in Hilda's masterpiece. Kenyon's greatest work, "Cleopatra," bears no small resemblance to the passionate Miriam.

The spectator felt that Cleopatra had sunk down out of the fever and turmoil of her life, and for one instant—as it were, between two pulse-throbs—had relinquished all activity, and was resting throughout every vein and muscle. It was the repose of despair, indeed. . . . The expression was of profound, gloomy, heavily revolving thought; a glance into her past life and present emergencies, while her spirit gathered itself up for some new struggle, or was getting sternly reconciled to impending doom. In one view, there was a certain softness and tenderness,—how breathed into the statue, among so many strong and passionate elements, it is impossible to say. Catching another glimpse, you beheld her as implacable as a stone and cruel as fire. 15

 Miriam and her model, Brother Antonio, are depicted as the opposing forces in a sketch of "The Archangel Michael and the Demon" which the group study at an assemblage of Anglo-Saxon American artists. In one of his less graceful moments, Hawthorne asks this about the sketch.

Had Guido, in his effort to imagine the utmost of sin and misery, which his pencil could represent, hit ideally upon just this face? Or was it an actual portrait of somebody, that haunted the old master, as Miriam was haunted now? Did the ominous shadow follow him through all the sunshine of his earlier career, and into the gloom gathered about its close?

15 Ibid., 152-53.
And when Guido died, did the spectre betake himself to those ancient sepulchres, there awaiting a new victim, till it was Miriam's ill-hap to encounter him?16

Additional analogues affirming the central role that Miriam and, therefore, Donatello play would be superfluous. What Donatello supplies is a case history of the effects of original sin under the expert tutelage of Miriam. Hawthorne describes Donatello as the prototype of Adam, Miriam as Eve and the model as the serpent often enough to make unmistakable his desire to create another version of "Paradise Lost."

The serpent first appears in Donatello's life while he, against his natural instincts, is below the earth's surface in Rome's catacombs with Miriam, Hilda and Kenyon. Donatello's exposure to sin in the catacombs is a masterstroke on the part of Hawthorne, because the scene offers a sharp contrast to the innocence that both he and Hilda have maintained in their respective towers high above the pursuits of common men. Donatello has had the added advantage of maintaining himself in the rustic countryside far from the evil influence of urban life. Miriam's temporary disappearance amid the underground tunnels is not without symbolic significance. "'The most awful ideas connected with the catacombs is their interminable extent, and the possibility of going astray into this labyrinth of darkness, which broods around the little glimmer of our tapers.'"17 Donatello is introduced to sin in the catacombs, for it is there that within his

16 Ibid., 168. 17 Ibid., 41.
soul are implanted seeds of hate for the model, who is depicted as a satyr, a natural enough enemy of the Faun. How this exposure to sin effects Donatello's isolation from society will be discussed shortly.

At the beginning of the work, Miriam's alienation, however, is an established fact. She has already achieved the wages of sin, as did Hester and Zenobia before her.

By some subtile quality, she kept people at a distance, without so much as letting them know that they were excluded from her inner circle. She resembled one of those images of light, which conjurers evoke and cause to shine before us, in apparent tangibility, only an arm's-length beyond our grasp; we make a step in advance, expecting to see the illusion, but find it still so precisely far out of our reach. Finally, society began to recognize the impossibility of getting near to Miriam, and gruffly acquiesced.\(^{18}\)

Miriam is a figure of isolation who has created, or for whom there has been created, a circle within which society cannot function and outside which the protagonist dare not step. The problem of the novelist is to circumscribe Donatello with a similar circle of isolation to dramatize the awful effects of original sin.

The model performs a twofold function. In terms of the plot, he is the person from "back home," wherever that is, whose sole purpose is to drive Miriam to despair at the thought of his revealing an awesome secret. On another level he is the spectre of evil, the serpent in the garden whose presence is a constant

\(^{18}\text{Ibid.}, 36.\)
reminder that one has partaken of the tree of truth and knowledge.

"Inquire not what I am, nor wherefore I abide in the darkness," said he, in a hoarse, harsh voice, as if a great deal of damp were clustering in his throat. "Henceforth, I am nothing but a shadow behind her footsteps. She came to me when I sought her not. She has called me forth, and must abide the consequences of my reappearance in the world."19

Surely the model is eminently more successful as a symbol than as a character. Even Hawthorne admits that Brother Antonio appears melodramatic, almost maudlin.

There is another kind of isolation besides that wrought by sin; this alienation, as has already been suggested, is that which characterizes the strangely aloof, dispassionate Hilda whose moral certitude allows of no sympathy for the transgressor. Like Miriam, Hilda possesses few friends in Rome. In a sense, Hilda's alienation is more despicable in that it disallows love and compassion. "'You breathe sweet air, above all the evil scents of Rome; and even so, in your maiden devotion, you dwell above our vanities and passions, our moral dust and mud, with the doves and the angels for your nearest neighbors.'"20 Hawthorne may admire what Hilda represents—a being devoid of any of the sordid aspects of life—but he realizes that such beings cannot exist in this world; Donatello is proof of this. Kaul appears to suggest the same thing when he says, "It is not the study of mankind, but the loss of human sympathies that Hawthorne la-

19 Ibid., 46. 20 Ibid., 70-71.
Miriam recognizes the fact that she could not hope to win the sympathy of Hilda were she to reveal the secrets of her heart. Although she ostensibly seeks Hilda's forgiveness for the long deceased Beatrice Cenci, Miriam is quite obviously seeking for herself sympathy within her own little circle of comrades when she says,

"Do not fail to speak to her, and try to win her confidence. Poor thing! she would be all the better for pouring her heart out freely, and would be glad to do it, if she were sure of sympathy. It irks my brain and heart to think of her, all shut up within herself. . . . Poor sister Beatrice! for she was still a woman, Hilda, still a sister, be her sin or sorrow what they might."22

Miriam later recognizes the same lack of spontaneity, the same Puritan reserve within Kenyon and, therefore, despairs of finding anyone in whom she can confide. Donatello, at this point, simply would not understand. Each of the four major characters who inhabit the intimate circle is a prisoner in his own circle of isolation.

For a brief moment, two of these circles are crossed when Miriam and Donatello leave the city and walk in the Arcadian woods of the surrounding countryside. The chapter in which the scene transpires is appropriately entitled "The Faun and the Nymph." Although Miriam goes to great lengths to point out that she and Donatello are quite dissimilar, later events prove otherwise. Miriam says, "'We have no points of sympathy at all.

There are not two creatures more unlike, in this wide world, than you and I!" The truth of this statement provides the contrast that makes their later fusion in a bond of sympathy dramatically potent. Throughout their walk, Miriam issues warnings that Donatello avoid her because she is a "dangerous person." The youth is already hopelessly drawn to her by the love which will, ironically, lead to his disintegration from one point of view and spiritual growth on the other. This chapter provides the structural lull before the storm of Chapter 18, "On the Edge of a Precipice." Miriam recognizes this fact and hungrily snatches at the happy moments before the fall. "'How close he stands to nature!' said Miriam, observing this pleasant familiarity between her companion and the bird. 'He shall make me as natural as himself for this one hour.'"

In "The Sylvan Dance," Hawthorne introduces the novel's first throng of importance. In the earlier chapters, the author concentrates upon individual relationships within the small circle of the novel's four important personages; an understanding of these inter-relationships is prerequisite to an adequate perception of the roles of this group and its individuals to society in general.

Like so many crowds of a similar nature, the throng of Chapter 10 is initially introduced by means of the sounds that

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23 Ibid., 99. 24 Ibid., 103-104.
it produces. The preceding chapter is replete with the imagery of an Arcadian garden. Miriam and Donatello are described as a nymph and a faun, and the music which they hear is ascribed to one of Donatello's kinsmen, Pan.

They had now reached an open, grassy glade (of which there are many in that artfully constructed wilderness), set round with stone seats, on which the aged moss had kindly assayed to spread itself instead of cushions. On one of the stone benches sat the musicians, whose strains had enticed our wild couple thitherward. They proved to be a vagrant band, such as Rome, and all Italy, abounds with; comprising a harp, a flute, and a violin, which, though greatly the worse for wear, the performers had skill enough to provoke and modulate into tolerable harmony. It chanced to be a feast-day; and, instead of playing in the sun-scorched piazzas of the city, or beneath the windows of some unresponsive palace, they had betheught themselves to try the echoes of these woods; for, on the festas of the church, Rome scatters its merry-makers all abroad, ripe for the dance or any other pastime.  

This crowd, composed of a cross-section of various societies—Italian, French, German, Swiss and English—performs several functions. In the first place, it helps to establish the joyful Arcadian atmosphere which is soon pitted in dramatic relief against Donatello's world after the fall. Secondly, since the two dance together to its music, the crowd establishes the basic sympathy existing between Miriam and Donatello, despite her protestations to the contrary. To be sure, the nymph recognizes at the same time that because of her earlier fall, this joyous setting is alien to her; but she allows herself to forget this for a brief hour. The crowd, therefore, is seen both as

\[25\text{Ibid.}, 107-108.\]
a manifestation of the chain that exists between all men and as a sign of the alienation from mankind which sin will soon introduce into their lives, particularly that of Donatello.

The sylvan throng in several of its functions is quite similar to the masqueraders in *The Blithedale Romance*. So that the crowd's romantic qualities do not overshadow its important thematic purposes, the scene witnessed by Miriam and Donatello includes the counterpart of Silas Foster of the Blithedale masqueraders.

Here, as it seemed, had the Golden Age come back again within the precincts of this sunny glade, thawing mankind out of their cold formalities, releasing them from irksome restraint, mingling them together in such childlike gayety that new flowers (of which the old bosom of the earth is full) sprang up beneath their footsteps. The sole exception to the geniality of the moment, as we have understood, was seen in a countryman of our town, who sneered at the spectacle, and declined to compromise his dignity by making part of it.²⁶

The sneering countryman, perhaps like the author, is not taken in by this sunny masquerade of joyousness. He stands as a reminder that such ephemeral moments of happiness must ultimately give way to years of pain and sorrow.

The unreality of this "golden age" and the reality of ultimate tragedy is apparent within this description of the sylvan dance.

You might take it for a marriage-pageant; but after a while, if you look at these merry-makers, following them from end to end of the marble coffin, you doubt whether their gay

²⁶Ibid., 109.
movement is leading them to a happy close. A youth has sud-
denly fallen in the dance; a chariot is overturned and broken
flinging the charioteer headlong to the ground; a maiden
seems to have grown faint or weary and is drooping on the
bosom of a friend. Always some tragic incident is shadowed
forth or thrust sidelong into the spectacle; and when once it
has caught your eye you can look no more at the festal por-
tions of the scene, except with reference to this one slight-
ly suggested doom and sorrow. 27

Hawthorne's use of the festal throng to dramatize in miniature a
central theme of the novel—the apparent transcendence of sorrow
in men's lives—is thus incontrovertible. Arcadia cannot exist
for long.

Just an instant before it was Arcadia and the Golden Age.
The spell being broken, it was now only that old tract of
pleasure-ground, close by the people's gate of Rome,—a
tract where the crimes and calamities of ages, the many bat-
tles, blood recklessly poured out, and deaths of myriads,
have corrupted all the soil, creating an influence that
makes the air deadly to human beings. 28

The isolating function of the crowd is substantiated in
the first lines of Chapter 11, "Fragmentary Sentences."

In the Borghese Grove, so recently uproarious with merri-
ment and music, there remained only Miriam and her strange
follower.

A solitude had suddenly spread itself around them. It
perhaps symbolized a peculiar character in the relation of
these two, insulating them, and building up an insuperable
barrier between their life-streams and other currents, which
might seem to flow in close vicinity. For it is one of the
chief earthly incommodities of some species of misfortune,
or of a great crime, that it makes the actor in the one, or
the sufferer of the other, an alien in the world, by inter-
posing a wholly unsympathetic medium betwixt himself and
those whom he yearns to meet. 29

The insulating barrier, accentuated by the now absent throng, is

27 Ibid., 110. 28 Ibid., 111-12. 29 Ibid., 114.
something that Miriam and her model have come to know as the re-
sult of their earlier transgression; Donatello is soon to enter
the paradoxically isolating communion of sinners. He is to
achieve membership in the strange confraternity which alienates
others like him as, for example, Young Goodman Brown. This para-
dox runs through Hawthorne's novel like a Wagnerian leitmotif.
Toward the end of Chapter 11, for example, after Miriam has
vanily attempted to extricate herself from the control of her
adversary, the throng is reintroduced to depict the artist's
fusion with and alienation from humanity.

The Porta del Popolo swarmed with life. The merry-makers,
who had spent the feast-day outside the walls, were now
thronging in; a party of horsemen were entering beneath the
arch; a travelling-carriage had been drawn up just within the
verge, and was passing through the villainous (sic) ordeal of
the papal custom-house. In the broad piazza, too, there was
a motley crowd.

But the stream of Miriam's trouble kept its way through
this flood of human life, and neither mingled with it nor
was turned aside. With a sad kind of feminine ingenuity,
she found a way to kneel before her tyrant undetected, though
in full sight of all the people, still beseeching him for
freedom, and in vain.30

These lines illustrate another familiar function of the
crowd. Though not to the extent evident in The Scarlet Letter,
the throng provides a medium in which the sinner acknowledges
and confesses his sins. There is evident in this scene an un-
conscious desire on the part of Miriam to reveal her own guilt
before the world in much the same fashion as does Dimmesdale.

30 Ibid., 121.
At this point, of course, the crowd does not understand, although it is quite aware that evil incarnate is pursuing Miriam wherever she goes; its only response is either total indifference or, occasionally, a mocking laugh which seems to suggest the pervasiveness of sin and evil.

Another kind of crowd is introduced in Chapter 12, "A Stroll on the Pincian." Following so soon the passage describing Miriam's relationship to the Roman peasants, the lines depicting Hilda's sojourn among the aristocracy on the Pincian are, perhaps, significant. This assembly is described as a foreign, miscellaneous, itinerant aristocracy; the fact that the group is not at all involved with the problems of Rome reflects, I think, Hilda's moral detachment from Miriam. "Here, in short, all the transitory population of Rome, the world's great watering-place, rides, drives, or promenades!"

This concept of detachment is amplified in Hawthorne's description of "An Aesthetic Company," a group of artists who call Rome their temporary home. In view of what I have said in other places about the role of the artist regarding the problem of the individual and society, these lines from Chapter 15 reveal nothing new, but they do provide a unique example of a "crowd" of artists. They confirm, too, what is perhaps the chief reason for the lack of true sympathy among Miriam on the one hand and Hilda and Kenyon on the other.

31 Ibid., 123.
Not that, individually, or in the mass, there appears to be any large stock of mutual affection among the brethren of the chisel and the pencil. On the contrary, it will impress the shrewd observer that the jealousies and petty animosities, which the poets of our day have flung aside, still irritate and gnaw into the hearts of this kindred class of imaginative men.32

What is probably the most important throng of all in The Marble Faun is that which accompanies Miriam, Donatello, Hilda and Kenyon on "A Midnight Ramble." The primary function of this crowd is to provide the kind of desirable contrasting mood which must have driven such a dramatist as Shakespeare, for example, to juxtapose gravedigger and porter scenes with the most anxious moments in his great tragedies. The crowd which accompanies the foursome to the Forum is a festive one, like that which comprises the frolicsome carnival of Chapter 49. Furthermore, its constituents comprise, for the most part, the younger portion of the community. Nevertheless, as is true of practically all of Hawthorne's important crowds, the present group is composed of all types. Furthermore, as Hawthorne points out, the joyous activity of the throng is almost sacrilegious in view of the place in which they are sporting; on another level, their mirth seems out of place because of Miriam's consternation and because of the momentous events about to come to pass.

It was a strange place for song and mirth. That black cross marks one of the special blood-spots of the earth where, thousands of times over, the dying gladiators fell, and more of human agony has been endured for the mere pastime of the multitude than on the breadth of many battlefields.33

32 Ibid., 159. 33 Ibid., 183.
On the other hand, the crowds are always laughing and making merry at the wrong times—unless one views their actions, as Hawthorne surely does, ironically. In any event, the various members of the group participate in such activities as chatting while seated on an ancient Roman altar, running races, playing hide-and-seek, singing songs and the like. Perhaps there is irony in Kenyon's statement, "'The Coliseum is far more delightful, as we enjoy it now, than when eighty thousand persons sat squeezed together, row above row, to see their fellow-creatures torn by lions and tigers limb from limb.'"

The crime which Miriam and Donatello commit is, nevertheless, performed in isolation—at least as far as the crowd is concerned. If I might conjecture on the nature of the crowd's complicity in the crime, I would suggest that it was, after all, the amorphous group which suggested they visit the Coliseum in the first place. Secondly, in laughing at the unusual relationship between Miriam and her pursuer, they become, to that extent, accomplices in the evil that exists between the two. The occasions upon which Hawthorne has indicated complicity in evil through such inappropriate laughter are many. Coverdale's diabolical laugh while he is talking with Westervelt in the forest, the laughter of the throng and of Robin in "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," and Ethan Brand's similar laughter are but a few examples.

34 Ibid., 185.
The central chapter of the book is "The Faun's Transformation," Chapter 19, embodying as it does Donatello's change from a faun of innocence to a man of sin. "It had kindled him into a man; it had developed within him an intelligence which was no native characteristic of the Donatello whom we have heretofore known."\(^{35}\)

Perhaps in no other chapter is the problem of human isolation and companionship in sin given such intense handling as in Chapter 19. Their crime cements forever the hitherto tenuous relationship between Miriam and Donatello. Although the latter, because sin is a new experience for him, runs off to his Appenine home for awhile, the confraternity of sin is for Donatello real and inescapable. Miriam achieves through the crime, or thinks she does, Donatello's understanding of her fallen nature—an understanding which the unreal Hilda could never achieve; "'We two slew yonder wretch. The deed knots us together, for time and eternity, like the coil of a serpent!'\(^{36}\) The coil of the serpent provides an effective metaphor for the knot of evil which, the two soon realize, binds all men together, and, at the same time, paradoxically alienates them from their fellow men.

Instinctively, they were heedful not to sever themselves so much as a pace or two from one another, for fear of the terror and deadly chill that would henceforth wait for them in solitude. Their deed—the crime which Donatello wrought, and Miriam accepted, in the instant—had wreathed itself, as she said, like a serpent, in inextricable links about both

\(^{35}\)Ibid., 203.  \(^{36}\)Ibid., 205.
their souls, and drew them both into one, by its terrible contractile power. It was closer than a marriage-bond. So intimate, in those first moments, was the union, that it seemed as if the new sympathy annihilated all other ties, and that they were released from the chain of humanity; a new sphere, a special law, had been created for them alone. The world could not come near them; they were safe!

The gulf, which the two sinners assume to exist between themselves and humanity, is illustrated in the passage that follows their realization. Once again, the crowd is utilized to demonstrate a prominent theme.

When they reached the flight of steps leading downward from the Capitol, there was a far-off noise of singing and laughter. Swift, indeed, had been the rush of the crisis that was come and gone. This was still the merriment of the party that had so recently been their companions. They recognized the voices which, a little while ago, had accorded and sung in cadence with their own. But they were familiar voices no more; they sounded strangely, and, as it were, out of the depths of space; so remote was all that pertained to the past life of these guilty ones, in the moral seclusion that had suddenly extended itself around them. But how close and ever closer, did the breath of the immeasurable waste, that lay between them and all brotherhood or sisterhood, now press them one within the other!

The laughing voices of their former companions at once provide a sharp contrast with the present mood of Miriam and Donatello and inform the reader—as they often do in Hawthorne—of a kind of diabolical complicity among all the ranks of men.

Miriam makes two errors. First, she assumes, as did Dimmesdale, that her sin sets her apart as the most wretched of sinners. Secondly, she falsely assumes that because of her role in Donatello's crime "there can be no more loneliness!" 

\[37\text{Ibid.} \quad 38\text{Ibid., 205-206.} \quad 39\text{Ibid., 206.}\]
Simultaneously, the young rustic considers "the ever-increasing loathesomeness of a union that consists in guilt." Neither of the pair yet knows the true nature of the bond of sin; before the novel has run its course, however, each will have acquired the sad realization of the nature of evil.

It is a terrible thought, that an individual wrong-doing melts into the great mass of human crime, and makes us,—who dreamed only of our own little separate sin,—makes us guilty of the whole. And thus Miriam and her lover were not an insulated pair, but members of an innumerable confraternity of guilty ones, all shuddering at each other.40

These lines provide one of Hawthorne's most succinct statements of his understanding of the doctrine of original sin.

In an attempt to keep before the eyes of the reader the sharp contrast that he envisions between prelapsarian innocence and the state of fallen man, Hawthorne has created Hilda, as I have already suggested. Unless he remembers what Hawthorne had in mind in relegating the unreal, innocent Hilda to the dovecote, the reader may become needlessly distressed over Hilda's perplexing rejection of the sin-stained Miriam in her time of greatest need. As it is, Hilda is hard enough to take. Hawthorne seems to be almost totally unable to create acceptable good characters. Perhaps this is an occupational hazard; Dickens had the same problem. In Chapter 23, "Miriam and Hilda," the author uses Hilda's rejection of her to further dramatize Miriam's wretched state—particularly since she and Donatello

40 Ibid., 208.
have decided not to see one another again.

Hawthorne amplifies Hilda's unreality, her existence as a symbol of innocence helpless in the face of evil, in these lines: "Never before had this young, energetic, active spirit known what it is to be despondent. It was the unreality of the world that made her so."41 The author has pointed out that the world which Miriam and, lately, Donatello have discovered is indeed bleak reality. One can only assume, therefore, that the unreality that Hilda ascribes to the world far below her dove-cote is, instead, a betrayal of her own existence as a symbol of idealized innocence. Thus, her rejection of Miriam—although it remains a detestable act in many ways—is understandable in terms of the novelist's intentions.

"You were to me as a younger sister; yes dearer than sisters of the same blood; for you and I were so lonely, Hilda, that the whole world pressed us together by its solitude and strangeness. Then will you not touch my hand? Am I not the same as yesterday?"

"Alas! no, Miriam!" said Hilda.42

What Hawthorne means to dramatize once again in Hilda's rejection is Miriam's lost innocence, which never can be regained. As personified innocence—as one for whom morality must be black or white—Hilda can do nothing else. Nevertheless, as a character, Hilda deserves Miriam's rebuke. "'Have I deceived you? Then cast me off! Have I wronged you personally? Then forgive me, if you can. But, have I sinned against God and man,"

41 Ibid., 240. 42 Ibid., 242.
and deeply sinned? Then be more my friend than ever, for I need you more!"\textsuperscript{43} Hawthorne really should have known better than to foist Hilda upon his readers. Her function in the novel is quite clear, but she is almost totally unacceptable as a person; thus, the symbol suffers, for as Miriam says, "'You have no sin, nor any conception of what it is, and therefore you are so terribly severe! As an angel, you are not amiss; but as a human creature, and a woman among earthly men and women, you need a sin to soften you.'\textsuperscript{44}

The structural function of Chapters 24 through 31 is to elaborate upon the idea of paradise lost. Donatello, who was perhaps an even more rarified symbol of innocence than Hilda, experiences the total misery of one who has lost the right to reside in Eden. These chapters emphasize the social alienation that is an adjunct of sin. Kenyon, who for awhile becomes a paragon of understanding, is present to witness the remarkable change that has come over the faun. These chapters also provide further insight into the origin of the mythical species of which Donatello appears to be the offspring. To dramatize the young count's isolation, Hawthorne introduces crowds of wandering musicians, jugglers, and neighbor peasant girls. "But very seldom had they the young count as a listener or spectator."\textsuperscript{45} When Donatello reaches the depths of disillusionment, Kenyon tells him

\textsuperscript{43}Ibid. \quad \textsuperscript{44}Ibid., 243. \quad \textsuperscript{45}Ibid., 278.
'We all of us, as we grow older ... lose somewhat of our
proximity to nature. It is the price we pay for experience.' 46
Kenyon notices all the while that Donatello now shows a far deeper
sense and an intelligence that begins to deal with loftier
subjects than hitherto. "In the black depths, the Faun had found
a soul, and was struggling with it towards the light of heaven." 47

"A wonderful process is going forward in Donatello's
mind," answered the sculptor. "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, quite as often, it must be owned, he compels me to smile
by the intermixture of his former simplicity with a new intel-
ligence. But, he is bewildered with the revelations that
each day brings. Out of his bitter agony, a soul and intel-
lect, I could almost say, have been inspired into him." 48

After this amelioration of soul and intellect has pro-
gressed far enough and so that Donatello might once again emerge
from solitude to take his place in the world, Kenyon suggests a
walking tour which is to terminate in a pre-arranged meeting with
Miriam in the great square of Perugia. "Solitude has done what
it could for him; now, for a while, let him be entered into the
outer world." 49

On their journey, the two pilgrims pass and take note of
several groups of one kind or another. These babbling throngs
gradually effect Donatello's change from alienation to involve-
ment in the affairs of the world. In any case, the important

49 Ibid., 328.
role assigned the crowd in his rejuvenation is unmistakable. It is surely no accident, after all, that Miriam chooses to meet her lover in the town square at high noon. Such a choice seems most appropriate since their crime was committed at midnight with the throng on the periphery. The town is filled with a variety of people, as is expected on such occasions.

Here they met shabby men, and the careworn wives and mothers of the people, some of whom guided children in leading-strings through those dim and antique thoroughfares where a hundred generations had passed before the little feet of today began to tread them.50

The gravity of the meeting about to take place is accentuated by the presence of the joyous people engaging in the everyday activities of Perugia. Hawthorne suggests that this miscellaneous crowd of buyers and sellers, aristocrats and peasants has a salutary effect on Donatello.

In truth, Donatello's countenance indicated a healthier spirit than while he was brooding in his melancholy tower. The change of scene, the breaking up of custom, the fresh flow of incidents, the sense of being homeless, and therefore free, had done something for our poor Faun; these circumstances had at least promoted a reaction, which might else have been slower in its progress. Then, no doubt, the bright day, the gay spectacle of the marketplace, and the sympathetic exhilaration of so many people's cheerfulness, had each their suitable effect on a temper naturally conscious of a presence that formerly sufficed to make him happy.51

In this noon-day throng, Hawthorne provides a marked contrast with that of The Scarlet Letter. The dissimilarity between the two points out, I think, that Hawthorne's crowds are not a

50 Ibid., 356. 51 Ibid., 360-61.
homogeneous group that performs in exactly the same manner under a given set of circumstances. The colorful, joyous, voluble Roman crowd offers both a visual and audio as well as moral contrast to the grim, gray, silent New England assemblage. The crowds are similar, however, in providing a witness as well as the necessary solitude for the reconciliation about to take place.

It is not improbable that Miriam had planned this momentous interview, on so public a spot and at high noon, with an eye to the sort of protection that would be thrown over it by a multitude of eye-witnesses. In circumstances of profound feeling and passion, there is often a sense that too great a seclusion cannot be endured; there is an indefinite dread of being quite alone with the object of our deepest interest. The species of solitude that a crowd harbors within itself is felt to be preferable, in certain conditions of the heart, to the remoteness of a desert or the depths of an untrodden wood. Hatred, love, or whatever kind of too intense emotion, or even indifference, where emotion has once been, instinctively seeks to interpose some barrier between itself and the corresponding passion in another breast.52

Kenyon recognizes its function; the crowd does not.

There they stood, the beautiful man, the beautiful woman, united forever, as they felt, in the presence of these thousand eye-witnesses, who gazed so curiously at the unintelligible scene. Doubtless, the crowd recognized them as lovers, and fancied this a betrothal that was destined to result in a life-long happiness.53

Other crowds, mostly of lesser importance, function in the novel's remaining chapters. For example, it is the inaudible devotions of peasants, citizens, soldiers, nobles, women with bare heads, and ladies in their silks that move Hilda into entering the confessional to relieve her soul of its awful burden.54

52 Ibid., 365-66. 53 Ibid., 370-71. 54 Ibid., 395.
Later, when Kenyon attempts to pursue Donatello after recognizing him in a Roman street, the penitent again takes advantage of the seclusion that the crowd offers and promptly loses himself among the throng. On the other hand, Kenyon vainly seeks the same anonymity among the carnival crowd, which assumes the melancholy that he feels.

The masqueraders in the Corso comprise the last important throng which Hawthorne assembles in The Marble Faun. Kenyon, as I have already indicated, has recognized one significant aspect of the crowd: it is alien to the individual. The author effects this alienation by presenting the throng as masqueraders in costume and mask. In one sense, the jollity of the group provides a marked contrast with the sculptor's sad mood; thus he feels lost amid this "mad, merry stream of human life." The crowd is homogeneous: "A true and genial brotherhood and sisterhood, based on the honest purpose--and a wise one, too--of being foolish." Hawthorne recognizes in its foolishness the throng's attempt to cover the earnest battle in which men seem always engaged. In another sense, the maskers take on a somber attitude; their mood becomes a correlative of Kenyon's own state of melancholy. Thus the crowd is seen to function not only as an individual, but, occasionally, as an extension of him who views it. "If decrepit and melancholy Rome smiles, and laughs broadly, in--

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55 Ibid., 447. 56 Ibid., 494-95. 57 Ibid., 496. 58 Ibid.
deed, at carnival time, it is not in the old simplicity of real mirth, but with a half-conscious effort, like our self-deceptive pretense of jollity at a threadbare joke. "59

Kenyon's isolation, the total lack of human sympathy in his darkest moments, is dramatized by the carnival crowd.

Unquestionably, a care-stricken mortal has no business abroad when the rest of mankind are at high carnival; they must either pelt him and absolutely martyr him with jests, and finally bury him beneath the aggregate heap; or else the potency of his darker mood, because the tissue of human life takes a sad dye more readily than a gay one, will quell their holiday humors, like the aspect of a death's-head at a banquet. 60

The crowd performs many roles in The Marble Faun. Its last function is perhaps one of its most dramatic. An awareness of its many offices in conjunction with this novel's analysis of the theme of the individual and society fills these lines with rich significance.

Donatello here extended his hand,—not that which was clasping Miriam's,—and she, too, put her free one into the sculptor's left; so that they were a linked circle of three, with many reminiscences and forebodings flashing through their hearts. Kenyon knew intuitively that these once familiar friends were parting with him, now. "Farewell!" they all three said, in the same breath.

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, which they had included within their small circle of isolated feeling. 61

59 Ibid., 493-94. 60 Ibid., 503. 61 Ibid., 506.
CHAPTER VII

THE CROWD IN SELECTED TALES BY HAWTHORNE

Of the many short stories written by Nathaniel Hawthorne, literally dozens might be cited as having application in this study of the author's use of the crowd. Because I have not assigned myself the impossible task of saying all there is to say about the subject, I shall conclude my study with an explanation of six of Hawthorne's better known short stories in which the throng performs a role sufficient to warrant such an analysis. I have chosen stories which seem to embody several major categories, or types, of crowds: the political ("The Gray Champion" and "My Kinsman, Major Molineux"), the theological and sociological ("The Minister's Black Veil" and "Young Goodman Brown"), and the crowd of moral isolation ("Ethan Brand" and "Wakefield"). Obviously, these categories are not mutually exclusive.

Other tales might have been chosen to dramatize these important roles of the crowd, of course. The fact that this is so amplifies, I believe, the important role that Hawthorne has assigned the throng in his study of the individual and society.

"The Gray Champion"

In none of the stories analyzed in this chapter is the
role of the crowd quite so prominent as in "The Gray Champion."
Except for the monarchists, led by Sir Edmund Andros, and Bos­
ton's former leader, Governor Bradstreet, none of the characters
in the story is given a name. In fact, when the governor first
arrives in Boston to display royalist might, he meets not noted
individuals but, rather, the Boston throng. It is, in fact, the
Puritan crowd that assumes the role of the protagonist in this
story; the Gray Champion, as I shall show shortly, is merely an
extension of the Puritan throng, the embodiment of the crowd-
mind.

A multitude, by various avenues, assembled in King Street,
which was destined to be the scene, nearly a century after­
wards, of another encounter between the troops of Britain,
and a people struggling against her tyranny. Though more
than sixty years had elapsed since the pilgrims came, this
crowd of their descendants still showed the strong and sombre
features of their character perhaps more strikingly in such
a stern emergency than on happier occasions. There were the
sober garb, the general severity of mien, the gloomy but un­
dismayed expression, the scriptural forms of speech, and the
confidence in heaven's blessing on a righteous cause, which
would have marked a band of the original Puritans, when
threatened by some peril of the wilderness. Indeed, it was
not yet time for the old spirit to be extinct.1

The Puritan multitude, characteristically composed of the
young and the old, of old Parliamentarians, veterans, ministers
and laymen, assumes the demeanor of the original Puritans, in
short, of any of their ancestors or progeny who had been or would
be imperiled by any form of tyranny. They conjure, from among

1Nathaniel Hawthorne, Twice-Told Tales (Cambridge: The
Riverside Press, 1883), I, 22-23.
themselves the Gray Champion, who is the physical embodiment of their noblest, most patriotic aspirations. This identity is apparent in Hawthorne's physical description of the old man.

Suddenly, there was seen the figure of an ancient man, who seemed to have emerged from among the people. . . . He wore the old Puritan dress, a dark cloak, and a steeple-crowned hat.  

The gray patriarch might, of course, simply be Governor Bradstreet around whom the crowd—forever in search of a symbol—had earlier rallied. Hawthorne is, as usual, ambiguous about the identity of the champion. The solution to the problem is left to the amorphous throng, some of whom suggest that his name "might be found in the records of that stern Court of Justice, which passed a sentence, too mighty for the age, but glorious in all after-times, for its humbling lesson to the monarch and its high example to the subject." In words similar to those which the author ascribes to the gray Puritan throng, Hawthorne adds, "I have heard, that whenever the descendants of the Puritans are to show the spirit of their sires, the old man appears again."  

Regardless of the Gray Champion's origin, however, he fills an important function for the Boston crowd in providing a symbol, a rallying point, by means of which they muster sufficient courage to face their enemy. Although Hawthorne suggests that Sir Edmund is overawed by the Gray Champion's visage, the governor's retreat is probably due to the threatening attitude of

\[\text{Ibid.}, 26. \quad \text{Ibid.}, 30. \quad \text{Ibid.}\]
the people who have found a leader. The Puritans, driven by
their desire to retain the freedom for which their ancestors left
the mother country, rally behind him who embodies their spirit.
"The unconscious motivations of a race unite it."\(^5\)

Hawthorne often uses color imagery in his works. In this
short story the somber grays of the people and their leader are
pitted against the magnificent hues of the adversary. In making
his throngs aware of and sensitive to the symbolic importance of
emblems of color, Hawthorne once again reveals himself a master
of crowd psychology, for, like LeBon, he asserts that it is only
images that testify or attract crowds and become motives of ac-

The whole scene was a picture of the condition of New
England, and its moral, the deformity of any government that
does not grow out of the nature of things and the character
of the people. On one side the religious multitude, with
their sad visages and dark attire, and on the other, the
group of despotic rulers, with the high churchman in the
midst, and here and there a crucifix at their bosoms, all
magnificently clad, flushed with wine, proud of unjust
authority, and scoffing at the universal groan.\(^7\)

Through these lines, Hawthorne also indicates an understanding of
effective political manipulation of the crowd-mind, for he rea-
izes that institutions cannot easily effect a change which runs
 contrary to man's inherited customs and ideals.

Men are ruled by ideas, sentiments and customs—matters which
are the essence of ourselves. Institutions and laws are the

\(^5\)LeBon, 31. \(^6\)Ibid. 76.

\(^7\)Hawthorne, Twice-Told Tales, 26.
outward manifestation of our characters, the expression of its needs. Being its outcome, institutions and laws cannot change this character.\(^8\)

In "The Gray Champion," Hawthorne dramatizes several functions of the crowd. Given to irrational conclusions—"'Satan will strike his master stroke presently,' cried some";\(^9\) "'The Pope of Rome has given orders for a new St. Bartholomew!' cried others"\(^10\)—the crowd is typical in the low common denominator of its mentality. It responds unconsciously to symbols. Its members seek a leader—an individual—to govern them, and they immediately respond to the marvelous, legendary hero provided them. The throng is a spontaneous "creature" of emotion rather than reason. "A tremulous enthusiasm seized upon the multitude."\(^11\) "His voice stirred their souls."\(^12\) And, finally, after the champion departs, the throng provides sundry unreasonable conclusions as to the nature of the Gray Champion and his sudden disappearance.

Hawthorne has perpetrated another political allegory and provided the crowd as the dramatic scapegoat for all the questions and problems usually attendant upon protracted metaphors.

"My Kinsman, Major Molineux"

Like "The Gray Champion," "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" is a story with political overtones. What occurs on the literal

\(^8\)LeBon, 7.  \(^9\)Hawthorne, Twice-Told Tales, 23.
\(^10\)Ibid., 24.  \(^11\)Ibid., 28.  \(^12\)Ibid., 29.
level of interpretation of both stories can be explained in terms of James II's lifting of the Old Charter, by virtue of which the colonists had chosen their own governors. Thus, Major Molineux is simply another in a series of public officials who were the victims of popular insurrection. In spite of Q. D. Lewis' interesting observations about Robin's symbolizing young America and Major Molineux' typifying British rule, I am inclined to agree with Seymour Gross that "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" is primarily a restatement of the theme of initiation.

Robin is the prototype of several characters discussed in this study, including Young Goodman Brown and Donatello. The similarities between the latter and Robin are perhaps more pronounced. Both Robin and Donatello are rustic youths who undergo "the painful but paradoxically curative power of an apprehension of the nature of moral reality. The awareness on the part of a simple, naively happy young man that the terms upon which he has been accepting life are experientially false is the meaning which informs the tale."

A necessary adjunct of this "coming of age" theme is Hawthorne's typical concern with the problems of the individual and society and of human isolation. From the moment he sets foot

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14 Seymour Gross, "Hawthorne's 'My Kinsman, Major Molineux': History as Moral Adventure," Nineteenth Century Fiction, XII (September, 1957), 98.

15 Ibid., 105.
on the landing-place, Robin is, for all practical purposes, an alien in a foreign land. Where the "shrewd youth" expects to find the hospitality of his kinsman and the major's fellow citizens, Robin receives scorn and ridicule.

The first townsman whom Robin meets is described by Hawthorne as a man of sepulchral tones who responds to the youth's questions in a tone of excessive anger and annoyance. Each time this character is reintroduced into the story, he is described as some sort of spectre or omen of death. Since the tale is quite clearly an allegory of man's introduction to reality and to sin, Hawthorne might intend him as a symbol of death, which is a concomitant of original sin. Whatever the case, after having disillusioned Robin, the old man leaves "pursued by an ill-mannered roar of laughter from the barber's shop." Hawthorne has thus introduced into his story two important motifs: the role of the crowd and that of laughter, neither of which is to be viewed independently of the other. Laughter is the audio image that represents the communion of sinners of which Robin is to become a member; the crowd is, of course, the visual manifestation of the same phenomenon. All of the townspeople, whether by direct involvement in the major's castigation or by their indirect complicity in laughing at tormented innocence, are members of the confraternity. Robin, who joins the throng by laughing along

16 Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Snow Image and Other Twice-Told Tales, 619.
with them, forever closes the gate to innocence symbolically shut in the dream of his rustic family. What I want to do here is trace Robin's development from the paradoxical isolation of innocence to the involvement of sin and experience.

Hawthorne stipulates quite clearly that Robin's development is one of growth, for in addition to making ironic references to the youth's "shrewdness," the author says, after the boy's first encounter with death incarnate, "You will be wiser in time, friend Robin." Furthermore, in words similar to those describing the catacombs where Donatello has his first brush with evil, Hawthorne describes the labyrinth through which Robin must travel. "He now became entangled in a succession of crooked and narrow streets, which crossed each other, and meandered at no great distance from the water-side."

Robin's second encounter is no more successful than his first. He is as alone among the throng of itinerant mariners as he was in the winding village streets. The sympathy that he feels for two or three sheepish countrymen is, evidently, one-sided. Among the group Robin sees an unusual person whose bulging forehead provides a crass clue that he is the personification of Satan; certainly his eyes that glow like fire in a cave remove all doubt. Again, however, the group accentuates Robin's isolation. The evil character of the throng becomes obvious.

\[17 \text{Ibid.} \quad 18 \text{Ibid., 620.}\]
as the men engage in wicked sneers, grins, shortles and outright laughter when Robin leaves.

After Robin returns to the narrow lanes, he encounters a temptation in the form of a gaily colored, gallant throng.

Embroidered garments of showy colors, enormous periwigs, gold-laced hats, and silver-hilted swords glided past him and dazzled his optics. Travelled youths, imitators of the European fine gentlemen of the period, trod jauntily along, half dancing to the fashionable tunes which they hummed, and making poor Robin ashamed of his quiet and natural gait.\textsuperscript{19}

One sees in these lines remnants of the gradual transformation which Robin is undergoing. The throng has not only made him aware of his isolation; it has also disposed the youth to think of his naturalness, perhaps his innocence, with shame. Add to this Robin's natural disposition toward violence—evident on the many occasions when he considers using his oaken cudgel on the uncooperative villagers—and one sees the incontrovertible direction in which the youth is headed.

Robin's next temptation is one of the flesh, for he meets a scarlet petticoated young lady who invites the youth upstairs for the evening. Hawthorne is thus amplifying his theme of the natural depravity of all men by involving womankind in evil, as he often does. Faith, of "Young Goodman Brown," is a case in point. This role of woman is further clarified in a conversation that takes place shortly before Robin sees his kinsman.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 624.
"May not a man have several voices, Robin, as well as two complexions?" said the friend.

"Perhaps a man may; but Heaven forbid that a woman should!" responded the shrewd youth, thinking of the seductive tones of the major's housekeeper.  

These lines become especially significant when one recalls that the silvery peals of her laughter in union with the sepulchral "hems" substantiate the contagion which seizes Robin so that he too "sent forth a shout of laughter that echoed through the street."  

Although Robin easily eludes sins of the flesh, he cannot escape the subtle appeal which the silvery laughter makes to his natural depravity.

The throng plays a similar role in this story to that played by the evil confraternity in "Young Goodman Brown." Hawthorne dramatizes the unity of this communion of sinners by stating "There were at least a thousand voices went up to make that one shout."  

Yet the author emphasizes the discord and confusion characteristic of a group united in sin. He speaks of the commotion, their "tuneless bray," and the "antipodes of music" which they create.  

As usual, this throng is miscellaneous.

A mighty stream of people now emptied into the street, and came rolling slowly toward the church. A single horseman  

. . . appeared like war personified; . . . In his train were wild figures in the Indian dress, and many fantastic shapes without a model, giving the whole march a visionary air, as if a dream had broken forth from some feverish brain, and were sweeping visibly through the midnight streets. A mass of people, inactive, except as applauding spectators, hemmed the procession in; and several women ran along the sidewalk,
piercing the confusion of heavier sounds with their shrill voices of mirth or terror. 24

When the procession reaches the spot where Robin is standing, "The shouts and laughter of the people died away, and there remained only a universal hum, allied to silence." 25 The sounds of the throng once again loom important. The silence at Robin's recognition of his uncle electrifies the scene and makes his own laughter stand out all the more.

The contagion was spreading among the multitude, when all at once it seized upon Robin, and he sent forth a shout of laughter that echoed through the street,—every man shook his sides, every man emptied his lungs, but Robin's shout was the loudest there. 26

After Robin joins the group and thus, allegorically, bears witness to his involvement in original sin, in natural depravity, he becomes one of the many and, at the same time, a figure of isolation once again. For, as Hawthorne has often pointed out, sin is what unites men while, simultaneously, it isolates them. A wiser Robin has learned a lesson from the throng, and he realizes that he will never again return to his former sylvan innocence. "On they went, in counterfeited pomp, in senseless uproar, in frenzied merriment, trampling all on an old man's heart. On swept the tumult, and left a silent street behind." 27

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24 Ibid., 637-38. 25 Ibid., 638. 26 Ibid., 640.
27 Ibid.
"The Minister's Black Veil"

"The Minister's Black Veil" is similar to "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" in that it, too, illustrates the effects of sin upon an individual, but as art it is much inferior to the latter story because this message seems to be its sole reason for being. The black veil is one of Hawthorne's more maudlin, direct symbols of the isolating effect of a man's secret sins.

Although the author occasionally attempts to obscure the significance of the veil—chiefly through the sundry rumors reported abroad by Father Hooper's parishioners—the parson's final speech all but clears up the mystery.

"Why do you tremble at me alone?" cried he, turning his veiled face round the circle of pale spectators. "Tremble also at each other! Have men avoided me, and women shown no pity, and children screamed and fled, only for my black veil? What, but the mystery which it obscurely typifies, has made this piece of crepe so awful? When the friend shows his inmost heart to his friend; the lover to his best beloved; when man does not vainly shrink from the eye of his creator, loathsomely treasuring up the secret of his sin; then deem me a monster, for the symbol beneath which I have lived, and die! I look around me, and, lo! on every visage a Black Veil!"28

As the minister earns the fear and disdain of his flock by donning the black veil, so, too, would the members of the community achieve similar alienation were their secret sins known to one another.

With the exception of Hooper, Elizabeth and the Reverend

28 Hawthorne, Twice-Told Tales, 69.
Mr. Clark, no one of importance is named. The anonymity of the parishioners can be attributed to Hawthorne's desire to indicate that all men are subject to the effects of sin. Once again the heterogeneous crowd plays the role of the antagonist while, at the same time, it is the protagonist insofar as the veiled minister is no more than an extension of the throng's sinful nature. The crowd in this tale assumes, then, a theological role in that its reactions to the minister depict the wages of sin.

The central role of the Milford throng, like that of the Boston community of *The Scarlet Letter*, is assured by their assuming the center of the stage within the first paragraph of the story.

The old people of the village came stooping along the street. Children, with bright faces, tripped merrily beside their parents, or mimicked a graver gait, in the conscious dignity of their Sunday clothes. Spruce bachelors looked sidelong at the pretty maidens, and fancied that the Sabbath sunshine made them prettier than on weekdays. When the throng had mostly streamed into the porch, the sexton began to toll the bell, keeping his eye on the Reverend Hooper's door.29

The crowd's happy disposition and pleasurable activities provide the kind of dramatic contrast needed to make the veiled minister's entrance as awesome as it is intended to be. As one might expect, the highly imaginative, wonder-struck crowd immediately commences to account for the phenomenon of the masked minister. No one likes the change, and, of course, no one understands it. Because the community has the typical crowd mentality

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29 Ibid., 52.
its members fail to grasp all the subtleties of the minister's Sabbath sermon.

It was tinged, rather more darkly than usual, with the gentle gloom of Mr. Hooper's temperament. The subject had reference to secret sin, and those sad mysteries which we hide from our nearest and dearest, and would fain conceal from our own consciousness, even forgetting that the Omniscient can detect them. 30

On the sub-rational level, the congregation feels that the Reverend Hooper has somehow managed to lift the spiritual veils with which each of them has hidden his own sins; on the other hand, no one is evidently completely aware of the reason for his pastor's overtly wearing the mysterious mask.

At the close of the services, the people hurried out with indecorous confusion, eager to communicate their pent-up amazement, and conscious of lighter spirits the moment they lost sight of the black veil. Some gathered in little circles, huddled closely together, with their mouths all whispering in the centre; some went homeward alone, wrapt in silent meditation; some talked loudly, and profaned the Sabbath day with ostentatious laughter. A few shook their sagacious heads, intimating that they could penetrate the mystery; while one or two affirmed that there was no mystery at all. 31

What is incredible but not at all surprising is that neither the throng as a unit nor the individual parishioners can surmise the mystery of the minister's black veil. Instead the townspeople proceed to smother the incident in unconvincing ambiguity. The more superstitious of the lot suggest that Reverend Hooper engages in conversations with the deceased, that his spirit walks with those of the dead, that the veil conceals a fearful secret,

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30 Ibid., 55. 31 Ibid., 55-56.
and the like. No one seems willing to accept the veil as merely a symbol. Even his betrothed Elizabeth balks at the thought of marrying Reverend Hooper, who offers no indication that at least someday the veil will be removed. "'Have patience with me, Elizabeth!' cried he, passionately. 'Do not desert me, though this veil must be between us here on earth.'"32

"The Minister's Black Veil" might provide an interesting metaphor for a sermon, but it is not a good short story. The symbol of the veil is all too clear to the reader and far too ambiguous to the throng for the story to be plausible. Together the veil and the throng perform their intended function. "All through life that piece of crape had hung between him and the world; it had separated him from cheerful brotherhood and woman's love, and kept him in the saddest of all prisons, his own heart."33

But as a work of art, the story fails.

"Young Goodman Brown"

"Young Goodman Brown" is a story that illustrates man's loss of faith and innocence because of the natural depravity resulting from original sin. Thematically, Goodman Brown's story is similar to those of Donatello and Robin. In terms of plot, this tale is inferior; on the other hand, it is among the finest allegories in English and American literature. Although the characters and incidents are highly symbolic, they appear to

32 Ibid., 63. 33 Ibid., 67.
function comfortably within the vehicle of the Walpurgisnacht. One could easily undertake a profitable study of Hawthorne's skilled manipulation of imagery in this story, particularly the religious imagery that vivifies the Black Mass which Goodman Brown and his Faith attend.

Actually the Salem throng functions in an important way only during the last third or so of the story, but it is not possible to adequately evaluate its role without making several preliminary remarks about the first segments of the story.

Typically, the story begins at sunset. Hawthorne's important, often ominous, events often occur at dusk or during the night. "The Minister's Vigil" in The Scarlet Letter, Zenobia's death, Miriam and Donatello's crime, the gray champion's appearance, and Robin's loss of innocence are examples of such momentous nocturnal occurrences. Often, too, Hawthorne provides a noontide scene which affords dramatic contrast and, sometimes, amplification of the nighttime events. Such is, of course, the case in this story. It is his recognition of Deacon Gookin, Goody Cloyse and the others unabashedly strutting about Salem village on the following morning that affords Goodman Brown complete realization of the insidiousness of the communion of sinners.

Brown's virtually solitary trip into the woods symbolizes man's essential isolation and the necessity of his embarking upon evil by himself. The throng that he eventually meets sug-
gests that all men are involved in sin of one sort or another; each takes his own path, but all arrive at the same place.

Hawthorne plants the usual clues as to the nature of Goodman Brown's nocturnal journey into the woods. In the first place, the protagonist bids adieu to his Faith; secondly his companion carries a staff which twists and wriggles like a living serpent; thirdly, and this action is surely indicative of impending evil, "the elder traveller had listened with true gravity; but now burst into a fit of irrepressible mirth, shaking himself so violently that his snake-like staff actually seemed to wriggle in sympathy."34

What is important about the journey that he has undertaken is the fact that Goodman Brown appears to have little control over his actions. At the beginning of the tale, he tells Faith, "'Of all nights in the year, this one must I tarry away from thee.'"35 Later, while enroute, after expressing scruples about the trip, the young traveler is told by his ancient companion that he can turn back soon if he remains unconvinced of the merit of such a journey. Goodman replies, "'Too far! too far!'... unconsciously resuming his walk."36 On several occasions the young man expresses doubts, but always his--and every man's--natural inclination toward sin seems to draw him on.

The universality of sin is dramatized in the black forest.

34 Hawthorne, Mosses From an Old Manse, 93. 35 Ibid., 89.
36 Ibid., 92.
by the presence of a crowd of Goodman Brown's fellow parishioners. "As the red light arose and fell, a numerous congregation alternately shone forth, then disappeared in shadow, and again grew, as it were, out of the darkness, peopling the heart of the solitary woods at once." The assembled throng is particularly well suited for its thematic role, including as it does individuals from all walks and ranks; it is, in Goodman Brown's words, a grave and dark-clad company.

In truth they were such. Among them, quivering to and fro between gloom and splendor, appeared faces that would be seen next day at the council board of the province, and others which, Sabbath after Sabbath, looked devoutly heavenward, and benigmantly over the crowded pews, from the holiest pulpits in the land. Some affirm that the lady of the governor was there. At least there were high dames well known to her, and wives of honored husbands, and widows, a great multitude, and ancient maidens, all of excellent repute, and fair young girls, who trembled lest their mothers should espy them. Either the sudden gleams of obscure light flashing over the obscure field bedazzled Goodman Brown, or he recognized a score of the church members of Salem village famous for their especial sanctity. Good old Deacon Gookin had arrived, and waited at the skirts of that venerable saint, his revered pastor. But irreverently consorting with these grave, reputable, and pious people, these elders of the church, these chaste dames and dewy virgins, there were men of dissolute lives and women of spotted fame, wretches given over to all mean and filthy vice, and suspected even of horrid crimes. It was strange to see that the good shrank not from the Wicked, nor were the sinners abashed by the saints. Scattered also among their pale-faced enemies were the Indian priests, or powwows, who had often scared their native forest with more hideous incantations than any known to English witchcraft.

Without extensively pursuing the issue at this point, I would like to call attention to two blocks of characters often

37 Ibid., 100-101. 38 Ibid., 101.
found among Hawthorne's gatherings: The Indians and the women. Both serve a common purpose, inasmuch as they represent, or are intended to represent, the last word in horror—the Indians, of a physical type, and the women, of a moral kind. The Indians, therefore, are intended to add a gothic note to the scene with their weird array, their wild incantations, and native witchcraft. The women, on the other hand, depict in the most dramatic way the moral degradation of the throng and the insidiousness of sin. A study of Hawthorne's works reveals quite clearly the fact that he holds high the ideal of womanhood; nothing could, therefore, be more effective in illustrating evil than the author's including women among assembled evil. He degrades the highest to show the depths of man's sinful nature. That is why Hawthorne introduces Faith into the evil confraternity and why Goodman Brown throws discretion and scruples aside when he sees her pink ribbons flutter to the ground.

The sound of the assembled throng greatly adds to the effectiveness of the scene. "Another verse of the hymn arose, a slow and mournful strain, such as the pious love, but joined to words that expressed all that our nature can conceive of sin, and darkly hinted at far more."39 It is not long before Goodman Brown recognizes the loathesome brotherhood with whom he feels the sympathy of all that is wicked in his heart. Within moments

39 Ibid., 102.
he and Faith are made partakers of the mystery of sin and are, thereby, made more conscious of the secrets of others' guilt. It is as though Goodman Brown and all his confreres had been wearing black veils for all their preceding lives and on this one night the veils were lifted.

Young Goodman Brown can never forget the demon's words.

"By the sympathy of your human hearts for sin ye shall scent out all the places--whether in church, bedchamber, street, field, or forest--where crime has been committed, and shall exult to behold the whole earth one stain of guilt, one mighty blood spot."40

But there is no exultation. His memory of these words and of the throng assembled in the woods that night converts Goodman Brown into a sad, darkly meditative, distrustful, desperate man whose dying hour was gloom." Thus, Hawthorne allegorically suggests, do many lose their faith in the knowledge that all men succumb to the overwhelming influence of evil.

"Ethan Brand"

While Hawthorne creates a dramatic situation which adequately explains Robin's spiritual condition and isolation in "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," "Ethan Brand" is practically pure symbol and theory. In "Young Goodman Brown," the reader views the protagonist's journey from innocence to experience. Brand's conversion to the communion of sinners is an accomplished fact at the beginning of the tale; the reader is merely subjected to

40 Ibid., 103-104.
repeated Dimmesdalean self-incriminations until, in one of Hawthorne's most maudlin scenes, Ethan Brand plunges into the hellish kiln.

The plot of "Ethan Brand" is quite simple. Bartram, a begrimed lime burner, and his innocent son are tending a kiln situated at the foot of an ominous mountain called Graylock. Suddenly a solemn roar of laughter, which shakes the neighboring forest, marks the frightening entrance of Ethan Brand, a warmed-over Chillingworth. Brand, former kiln burner at Graylock, has been traveling about the world, driven by an inexplicable urge to discover the unpardonable sin. Ironically, after many years of research, he finds what he has sought within his own heart.

"It is a sin that grew within my own breast, replied Ethan Brand, standing erect, with a pride that distinguishes all enthusiasts of his own stamp. "A sin that grew nowhere else! The sin of an intellect that triumphed over the sense of brotherhood with man and reverence for God, and sacrificed everything to its own mighty claims! The only sin that deserves a recompense of immortal agony."\textsuperscript{41}

Almost before Brand has finished his announcement, "The rough murmurs of tongues, and the footsteps of what seemed a pretty numerous party, stumbling over the stones and rustling through the underbrush\textsuperscript{42} are heard. The townsfolk provide a contrast that makes Brand's eerie reappearance all the more ominous. "Laughing boisterously, and mingling all their voices

\textsuperscript{41}Hawthorne, The Snow Image and Other Twice-Told Tales, 485.

\textsuperscript{42}\textit{Ibid.}
together in unceremonious talk, they now burst into the moonshine and narrow streaks of firelight that illuminated the open space before the lime-kiln.\textsuperscript{43}

The important elements of the crowd at this point are what Brand calls the three "half-way sinners": an anonymous stage agent, Lawyer Giles, and the village doctor. Shortly before Brand reveals the nature of the Unpardonable Sin, he is admonished by Bartram, made nervous by Ethan's poking at the brands in the hellish kiln. "'Don't, for mercy's sake, bring out your devil now!'\textsuperscript{44} Brand's reply is interesting. "'Man! ... What need have I of the devil? I have left him behind me, in my track. It is with such half-way sinners as you that he busies himself.'\textsuperscript{45}

This speech is important not only because it reveals the alleged immensity of Brand's sin, but because it illustrates his relationship with society, of which Bartram, the stage agent, the lawyer and the doctor provide a cross-section. It is difficult to pin down Hawthorne to a definite appraisal of mankind and sin, but Ethan Brand, in Satanic fashion, gloats in the totality of his diabolical affiliations and rudely dismisses half-way sinners, much as does Dimmesdale, though in a far subtler manner.

The stage agent is a wilted and smoke-dried man, whose

\textsuperscript{43}Ibid. \textsuperscript{44}Ibid., 484. \textsuperscript{45}Ibid.
greatest asset seems to be that he is known as a "dry joker, though, perhaps, less on account of any intrinsic humor than from a certain flavor of brandy, toddy and tobacco-smoke, which impregnated all his ideas and expressions, as well as his person." Giles, a lawyer overgiven to toddy and cocktails that caused him to slide from intellectual to bodily labor, has "slid into a soap vat." In his new position as a soapboiler (perhaps a parody on kiln-burning), Giles is described as, literally, the fragment of a human being. His one saving point, the counterpart of the stage agent's wit, is the fact that he fights "a stern battle against want and hostile circumstances." The fifty-year-old village doctor is described as "a purple-visaged, rude, and brutal, yet half-gentlemanly figure, with something wild, ruined and desperate in his talk." The doctor, too, is possessed by brandy. His saving factor, ironically described by Hawthorne, is an alleged wonderful healing skill through which he has on occasion miraculously raised a dying man, though, admittedly, equally often he "sent his patient to a grave that was dug many a year too soon."

Against this panorama of the town's leading worthies, Brand cannot help but stand out as a heroic figure. At the first

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46 Ibid., 486. 47 Ibid. 48 Ibid., 487. 49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.
sight of their old friend, the three offer Ethan the healing power of a mysterious black bottle guaranteed to be far more worth seeking than the Unpardonable Sin. But Ethan Brand, who has traveled too widely to be turned aside by muscatel, rudely dismisses the sottish threesome.

"Leave me," he said bitterly, "ye brute beasts, that have made yourselves so, shrivelling up your souls with firey liquors! I have done with you. Years and years ago, I groped into your hearts and found nothing there for my purpose. Get ye gone!"

This declamation, filled with overtones of Christ's dismissal of Satan in the desert, is a remarkable Byronesque reversal of morality; for the reader can hardly help but feel incensed at these half-way sinners who dare to approach the august majesty of complete evil. Hawthorne, thus, effectively relies on the artistic manipulation of character and ironic reversal to create the heroic stature of Ethan Brand. In this story, the throng not only accentuates the central figure; by means of its own moral ineptitude it glorifies evil incarnate.

The melodramatic announcement that Ethan Brand has worked psychological mayhem on a hitherto unmentioned Esther and the prestidigitation of the German Jew Satan figure with the diorama need not be discussed here. But the merry gesticulations of several of the village youths have thematic relevance that ought not be disregarded.

\[\text{Ibid., 488.}\]
While these things were passing, a merry scene was going forward in the area of cheerful light, beside the spring and before the door of the hut. A number of the youth of the village, young men and girls, had hurried up the hill-side, impelled by curiosity to see Ethan Brand, the hero of so many a legend familiar to their childhood. Finding nothing, however, very remarkable in his aspect,—nothing but a sunburnt wayfarer, in plain garb and dusty shoes, who sat looking into the fire as if he fancied pictures among the coals,—these young people speedily grew tired of observing him.

The crowd of youths serves several purposes. First, their lack of interest in Ethan Brand takes some of the polish off the Byronic hero and, in so doing, creates an ambiguity as to Hawthorne's real intentions regarding his central character. Is the reader supposed to grudgingly admire Brand for having achieved the hubris that characterizes him; or does Hawthorne suggest through his gleeful assembly that Ethan's sin is "magnanimous" only in his own eyes—as is Dimmesdale's—and that he is to be more pitied than admired? As a corollary to this concept, the throng also effects the isolation, or, rather, dramatizes the alienation that accompanies knowledge of sin. Finally, the merry mood of the group provides the sharp dramatic contrast which is supposed to make the final scene more terrifying. The limestone heart thwarts this function, however.

Just as the throng prepares to leave, it evinces a familiar note of complicity in evil by laughing at the dog which acts as though it were possessed by the devil. Their "universal laughter" at the canine performer provokes the evil laughter of

52 Ibid., 489.
Ethan Brand whose "mirth" not only dismisses the throng but serves as a symbol of his total depravity.

Meanwhile Ethan Brand had resumed his seat upon the log, and moved, it might be, by a perception of some remote analogy between his own case and that of the self-pursuing cur, he broke into the awful laugh, which, more than any other token, expressed the condition of his inward being. From that moment, the merriment of the party was at an end; they stood aghast. . . . Then whispering one to another that it was late,—that the moon was almost down,—that the August night was growing chill,—they hurried homewards. 53

In the solitude that is left in their wake, lonely Ethan Brand destroys himself amidst a fearful peal of laughter.

"Wakefield"

Of the several short stories with which I have dealt in this chapter, "Wakefield" provides perhaps the least dramatic examples of Hawthorne's use of the crowd. There are other tales, "The Maypole of Merry Mount," for example, in which the throng is more clearly in evidence than in the story here discussed. I have chosen to conclude this study with "Wakefield" because it provides an uncluttered view of what is probably the crowd's major function: to depict a cross-section of the humanity toward which Hawthorne seems so much drawn but which could, on the other hand, swallow up one's sense of individual identity.

Wakefield's individuality is rather tenuous to begin with.

What sort of a man was Wakefield? We are free to shape out our own idea, and call it by his name. He was now in

53 Ibid., 492-93.
the meridian of life; his matrimonial affections, never vio-

lent, were sobered into a calm habitual sentiment; . . . he
was intellectual, but not actively so; his mind occupied it-
self in long and lazy musings, that ended to no purpose, or
had not vigor to attain it; his thoughts were seldom so
energetic as to seize hold of words. Imagination, in the
proper meaning of the term, made no part of Wakefield's
gifts. With a cold but not depraved nor wandering heart, and
a mind never feverish with riotous thoughts, nor perplexed
with originality, who could have anticipated that our friend
would entitle himself to a foremost place among the doers of
eccentric deeds?\(^{54}\)

His "cold but not depraved nor wandering heart" is, I
think, the key to Wakefield's character. Hawthorne reveals that
an aura of quiet selfishness had "rustled into his inactive mind,"
which inclines Wakefield to craftiness that "had seldom produced
more positive effects than the keeping of petty secrets hardly
worth revealing."\(^{55}\) Wakefield is in several ways a miniature
Ethan Brand. Ethan, it is true, is the introverted man of the
mind on a grand scale. Yet, Wakefield possesses most of Brand's
characteristics in miniature, down to the master's demoniac
laugh.

After the door has closed behind him, she perceives it thrust
partly open, and a vision of her husband's face, through the
aperture, smiling on her, and gone in a moment. . . . But,
long afterwards . . . that smile recurs; . . . if she dreams
of him in heaven, still his blessed spirit wears a quiet and
crafty smile.\(^{56}\)

Once Wakefield has left his wife to begin his self-im-
posed alienation from his wife, home, and fellowmen, the role of
the crowd becomes apparent. "We must hurry after him along the

\(^{54}\) Hawthorne, Twice-Told Tales, 154. \(^{55}\) Ibid., 155.
\(^{56}\) Ibid., 155-56.
street, ere he lose his individuality, and melt into the great mass of London life." It is interesting to note that Wakefield seeks to lose himself among the humanity from which, in a sense, he seeks to escape. One also detects Hawthorne's characteristic concern about the loss of individuality incurred by too deep an immersion into the "great mass of human life." Nevertheless, the author evidently realizes what Wakefield does not understand: "It is perilous to make a chasm in human affections; not that they gape so long and wide—but so quickly close again!"

This story recounts in part the author's distressing realization that humanity is indeed fickle. On several occasions the persona openly chides Wakefield for fearing that a "concerned" populace is watching his every move in order to report back to Mrs. Wakefield. "Poor Wakefield! Little knowest thou thine own insignificance in this great world! No mortal eye but mine has traced thee." Soon Wakefield sadly realizes that even the one person who does care for him gradually recovers from the sense of loss, that her heart is perhaps sad, but quiet, and that it will never be feverish again. Here the author suggests that a man must cling to humanity not for the good which he can do for mankind, but for what men can do for him. A man needs to retain his connection with humanity, or he eventually looks to himself for fulfilment, an act inherently doomed to failure.

57 Ibid., 156. 58 Ibid., 157. 59 Ibid., 156.
Dimmesdale, Chillingworth, and Ethan Brand provide examples of the validity of Hawthorne's doctrine. Because Wakefield lacks the intellectual and, incidentally, dramatic stamina of these others, he returns to the fold.

Just as the throng has helped Wakefield effect his escape from human responsibility, it now helps to activate, or at least suggest, his return to human involvement. One Sabbath morn, ten years after leaving her, Wakefield again meets his wife.

Just as the lean man and well-conditioned woman are passing, a slight obstruction occurs, and brings these two figures directly in contact. Their hands touch; the pressure of the crowd forces her bosom against his shoulder; they stand, face to face, staring into each other's eyes. After a ten year's separation, thus Wakefield meets his wife. 60

Wakefield begins to realize the tragedy of his situation, for his wife does not recognize him until some time later, after he returns home.

He was in the bustle of the city, as of old; but the crowd swept by and saw him not. . . . It was Wakefield's unprecedented fate to retain his original share of human sympathies, and to be still involved in human interests, while he had lost his reciprocal influence on them. 61

What Wakefield has accomplished through his self-imposed banishment is the realization of how totally insignificant he is.

Once again the throng is manipulated to depict Hawthorne's greatest perplexity regarding the individual's role in society. Hawthorne provides a succinct statement of the problem.

60 Ibid., 161. 61 Ibid., 162.
to close his strange tale.

Amid the seeming confusion of our mysterious world, individuals are so nicely adjusted to a system, and systems to one another and to a whole, that, by stepping aside for a moment, a man exposes himself to a fearful risk of losing his place forever. Like Wakefield, he may become, as it were, the Outcast of the Universe. 62

62 Ibid., 164.
CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

The primary purpose of this dissertation has been to investigate a particular aspect of the basic problem of the individual and society in selected novels and tales of Nathaniel Hawthorne. The author's views regarding the broad concept of man's responsibility in maintaining the bond of humanity have been analyzed in numerous works; the aspect studied in this dissertation has not. Hawthorne's use of the crowd has many ramifications. I have attempted to analyze his throngs primarily from two points of view: their psychological attributes and their aesthetic application to the theme, structure and imagery of Hawthorne's fiction.

Biographers like Julian Hawthorne and Randall Stewart verify what his novels and tales imply—namely, that Hawthorne was very much concerned with the role of the individual in a democratic society. Quite simply the problem might be stated thus: How is an individual, particularly an artist, to maintain his individuality while at the same time fulfilling his responsibility to keep the bond of humanity intact. As critics like Marius Bewley point out, the problem is essentially a dilemma; the novels and tales substantiate this theory.

For artists like Hawthorne, the Emersonian doctrines of
self-reliance, individualism, and transcendental idealism were purely academic considerations with little or no basis in reality. Nathaniel Hawthorne, like Emily Dickinson, for example, felt too strongly the connection with his New England, Calvinistic ancestors to disregard "outmoded" ties of time and place in the face of a new democracy and a new morality. It was, in fact, largely the central doctrine of original sin that bound humanity into a unit which no amount of transcendental self-deification could unloose.

In Hawthorne's works the conflict between the individual and society is often dramatized through the opposing demands of the ego, or the mind, and the heart. Thus Hawthorne depicted in many of his works individuals intellectually superior to the mass of men, who engage in an egotistical search for self-realization and greatness. Such undertakings, because they fail to take into consideration man's indisputable and irrevocable bond with humanity—a bond admittedly based upon proclivity to sin—must fail. As Robert P. Cobb indicates in his Ph.D. dissertation (University of Michigan, 1955), fascination for the solitariness of the individual and repugnance for the grossness of the crowd did not lessen Hawthorne's belief that the solitary quest brings tragedy.

In depicting the problems inherent in man's relationship with his fellow men, Hawthorne used many devices, but few as effectively as the assembled throng, or crowd. The author used
the crowd not only to portray the affinity of the individual towards society but also the kinship of one man to another. The crowd is not a stock character in the sense that Chillingworth, Miriam or Coverdale is. As a character, it is amorphous and essentially innocuous. It often represents the actual or theoretical evil or goodness of the beholder. For example, in *The House of the Seven Gables*, while the Salem throng is portrayed as an ignorant accomplice of the villainous Judge Pyncheon, Clifford sees it as the agreeable, productive humanity from which he and Hepzibah have too long been alienated.

Essentially the crowd provides an ever-present symbol which reminds Hawthorne's characters, as well as his readers, of the humanity from which no one has the right to turn, regardless of the nobility of his intentions. This role is exemplified by the gathering of "half-sinners" to which Ethan Brand returns after completing his quest for the Unpardonable Sin. It is also apparent in the Perugian throng in the midst of which Donatello and Miriam return to the world after a period of self-imposed seclusion.

Hawthorne often utilizes the crowd to depict the Calvinistic doctrine of mankind's brotherhood in sin. In "Young Goodman Brown" all walks of life are represented in the Walpurgisnacht ceremonies during which the young Brown is baptized as a member of the diabolical confraternity. Within the same framework of man's propensity toward sin, the throng occasionally pro-
vides a sympathetic confessor through whom the sinner can expiate his wrongdoings. The noonday marketplace throngs of both The Scarlet Letter and The Marble Faun fill this role.

In addition, the throng is utilized to accentuate isolation or involvement, depending upon the thematic need of the moment. Hester seeks and achieves isolation from Chillingworth in the midst of the Boston community while she stands upon the pillory. Clifford, on the other hand, consciously seeks immersion among the Salem throng to facilitate a much needed, because long-neglected, involvement in human affairs.

Occasionally the sympathetic exhilaration or depression of the throng is felt by an individual and directs his actions. Donatello's reaction to the mood of the Perugian throng and Robin's response to that of the midnight assembly are cases in point. In this sense, the protagonists seem to respond to what sociologist Edward Strecker calls the pervasive crowd-mind.

As the crowds perform various thematic functions in the novels and tales, so, too, do they assume different forms in performing their roles. Occasionally, as in the opening chapter of The Scarlet Letter, the crowd appears much like the classical chorus of Sophoclean tragedy. The throng may be a grim, gray assembly—as in The Scarlet Letter—which furthers the novel's serious thematic implications while accentuating the somber tone and imagery of the work through its mood, sounds, appearance and activity; or the group may be colorful and jolly—as in "The May-
Pole of Merry Mount" and The Blithedale Romance—thereby adding to the splendor of the occasion in which it participates. In The Marble Faun, The Blithedale Romance, "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," and other works, Hawthorne utilizes masquerading throngs to illustrate ephemeral moments of happiness, to provide a sharp contrast with preceding or succeeding events, and to impart the ambiguity that often obviates the author's commitment as to the reality or unreality of an incident or series of incidents.

In short, Nathaniel Hawthorne has made the crowd an indispensable element in his art, an element which, surprisingly, has received practically no attention from students of Hawthorne. The crowd is more than a mere device of plot and imagery; the throng is integrally woven into the very fabric of the novels and tales.
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