

THE FEMININE ANCESTRAL FOOTSTEPS: SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE  
BETWEEN WOMEN IN *THE SCARLET LETTER* AND  
*THE HOUSE OF THE SEVEN GABLES*

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This study examines Hawthorne's use of symbols, particularly flowers, in *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables*. Romantic ideals stressed the full development of the self-reliant individual, and romantic writers such as Hawthorne believed the individual would fully develop not only spiritually, but also intellectually by taking instruction from the natural world. Hawthorne's heroines reach their full potential as independent women in two steps: they first work together to defeat powerful patriarchies, and they then learn to read natural symbols to cultivate their artistic sensibilities which lead them to a full development of their intellect and spirituality.

The focus of this study is Hawthorne's narrative strategy; how the author uses symbols as a language his heroines use to communicate from one generation to the next. In *The Scarlet Letter*, for instance, the symbol of a rose connects three generations of feminine reformers, Ann Hutchinson, Hester Prynne, and Pearl. By the end of the novel, Pearl interprets a rose as a symbol of her maternal line, which links her back to Ann Hutchinson. Similarly in *The House of the Seven Gables* Alice, Hepzibah, and Phoebe Pyncheon are part of a family line of women who work together to overthrow the Pyncheon patriarchy. The youngest heroine, Phoebe, comes to an understanding of her great, great aunt Alice's message from the posies her feminine ancestor plants in the Pyncheon garden. Through Phoebe's interpretation of the flowers, she deciphers how the cultivation of a sense of artistic appreciation is essential to the progress of American culture.

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## INTRODUCTION

During the nineteenth-century, many male authors at best created two-dimensional female characters in their novels, and at worst they failed to include feminine heroines at all. Nathaniel Hawthorne, however, created female characters that became legendary figures in American fiction because of his unique representation of women. The influence women have on their offspring in Hawthorne's fiction is similar to the effect women had on his life. Hawthorne's mother, wife, sisters and aunts had much to do with his success as a writer. Instead of having an oppressive effect on Hawthorne, these women inspired him. Similarly, women in Hawthorne's fiction, such as Hester Prynne and Alice Pyncheon, have a major influence on the success of future generations of women in their families. What determines how a woman's ancestors affect her has much to do with her perception of the female figures in her past. Hawthorne's male ancestors, in particular his Puritan forefathers, have been the focus of much of Hawthorne scholarship—such as Frederick C. Crews's and Edwin Haviland Miller's studies. However, the women in Hawthorne's family, particularly, the women from his maternal side of the family, the Mannings, are the basis of what are, arguably, the most distinguishable, dynamic characters in Hawthorne's fiction.

Although biographical, psychological, and historical studies focus on how readers interpret Hawthorne's fiction, a study that evaluates his narrative strategies and artistic form will allow scholars to evaluate how characters within the text communicate with one another. After evaluating previous scholarship that centers on biography, psychology, and history, this study will consider the myth of women that Hawthorne creates in his fiction. In the last two chapters, this study will focus on the feminine myth in Hawthorne's fiction, in particular how women communicate with one another beyond generational lines through symbols. Hester and Alice

Pyncheon, for example, are symbols; they are flowers and ghosts. Their descendants interpret the lives of these women by coming to an understanding of these symbols. The women in Hawthorne's novels discover that when they interpret the meaning of these symbols, they develop an artistic sensibility. Furthermore, as the women learn to appreciate art, so does the author's audience. Since the interpretation of symbols is a critical component of understanding art, Hawthorne, then, began to cultivate the American art of fiction one reader at a time by creating complex, mythical feminine figures in his novels.

The setting for *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables* is New England in the seventeenth and nineteenth-centuries, respectively. Michael Colacurcio's "The Sense of an Author: The Familiar Life and Strange Imaginings of Nathaniel Hawthorne" and Sacvan Bercovitch's *The Office of The Scarlet Letter* are invaluable studies since they examine how Hawthorne uses New England's history, in particular its theology, in his narratives. Conflicting ideologies between seventeenth-century Calvinism and nineteenth-century Transcendentalism emerge throughout Hawthorne's fiction, particularly in *The Scarlet Letter*. The narrator in this novel shifts between a seventeenth and nineteenth-century perspective. Although this shift may seem unaccountable, Hawthorne intended to create a narrator that would tell this story from two perspectives, as Colacurcio argues. This inaccuracy on the narrator's part, as Colacurcio and Bercovitch conclude, is not a reflection of Hawthorne as a careless author. The aforementioned scholars focus on how Hawthorne makes his narrator appear unreliable to his audience, but Colacurcio and Bercovitch have only a reading audience in mind when they consider Hawthorne's narrative strategy. I am not only concerned with how as a reader of Hawthorne's fiction I interpret the author's narrative, but I conclude that the audience within the narrative—Hawthorne's narrators themselves and his characters—come to their own understanding of the



text. Specifically, I focus on how women read symbols differently from male characters, the narrators, and even the general audience. A woman, for instance Pearl in *The Scarlet Letter*, may see a rose and identify it as her maternal line. Pearl in time learns to take instruction from the symbol of the rose to become a future feminine reformer. When women interpret the symbolic implications of a natural object, Hawthorne illustrates how individuals discover how to develop their artistic sensibilities.

Feminine ancestors influence future generations of women, specifically in reading symbols, without being as imperious as male ancestors. Since the history of New England is riddled with the Hawthorne family name, I examine several historical male figures in the author's life. Traditionally, scholars such as Frederick C. Crews and Edwin Haviland Miller argue that male ancestors had such an overwhelming influence on Hawthorne that the author failed to take an objective approach to his writing. Crews, for instance, believes that Hawthorne's objectivity was compromised by the aura of his male ancestors, and consequently, the author's fiction became a platform for his personal conflicts with the Hawthornes of New England. Hawthorne's does not, I argue, use his fiction to resolve family feuds; instead, his male characters highlight the qualities of his heroines. Where Arthur Dimmesdale is cowardly and hypocritical, Hester Prynne is audacious and straightforward; if Judge Pyncheon's lurid smile captures the audience's attention, Alice Pyncheon's delicate posies become a more significant focal point in the novel. The heroines of *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables* are the heart of Hawthorne's novels. Though Hawthorne may have been influenced by the males in his family, it was his feminine ancestors that inspired his art. Just as women nurtured Hawthorne's creative tendencies, the women in the author's fiction encourage future generations to cultivate their artistic sensibilities.

Critics have also studied the involvement of the Hawthorne males' place in American history, and critics such as Margaret B. Moore in *The Salem World of Nathaniel Hawthorne* reconsider the notorious Hawthorne name. In this study, Moore considers how early Puritan settlers governed the colonies. Although Hawthorne often portrays his forefathers as intolerant, tyrannical figures, there is historical evidence to suggest that Puritans were more lenient than Hawthorne portrays them in his fiction. Vernon Loggins' and Gloria C. Erlich's books on Hawthorne's family from the time of their arrival to the colonies through the lifetime of Hawthorne's children consider how difficult it was for Puritans to establish their fledging colonies in the midst of political and religious rebellions. Loggins, for example, argues that Puritan officials had no choice but to treat Quakers harshly because of the Quakers' passively aggressive tactics against Puritan settlers. Hawthorne portrays male figures as powerful, proud figures, but I argue that these characters are not merely caricatures of the historical Hawthornes the author creates to defend his family's name. If Hawthorne only sought to overcome his family's notorious past, males would be the focal point of his fiction. Instead, the author's heroines make a more significant impression on his readers perhaps because Hawthorne wanted to illustrate how women were the catalyst for change and progress in American culture.

Because the past is a major theme in Hawthorne's fiction, in particular his preoccupation is with his male Puritan ancestors, this study carefully examines what are the seemingly irresolvable internal conflicts Hawthorne had concerning his forefathers. Male ancestry had an overwhelming influence on Hawthorne, as is evident in his fiction. The Hawthorne family name was notorious in Massachusetts Bay because of the Hawthorne men's persecution of witches, Quakers, and other minority groups that did not fall into the Puritan standard of living. Judging by Hawthorne's often-critical portrayal of his male ancestors, the author carried the burden of

shame for his family's past. Yet, his judgment of the Puritan lifestyle, though critical, may not be as reprehensible as it at first appears. Despite the family's infamy, the Hawthorne name is well known in American history. Because of this fact, Hawthorne's judgment of his male ancestors swayed from shame to pride. As a result, Hawthorne highlighted his family's name at times, and he sometimes downplayed his family's guilt. The issue of Hawthorne's portrayal of his male ancestors is thus involved and complex.

Hawthorne's attitude toward women in his novels, however, seems more straightforward than his portrayal of men because the women in his life were not guilty of crimes against humanity, nor did they make great names for themselves in New England. Women did not seek to revolutionize New England or America; they only wanted to become independent within their small communities and encourage a sense of self-reliance within their offspring. Hawthorne's portrayal of female ancestry, therefore, is not as involved with the past, and, more importantly, he shows more sympathy toward the women in his family than he does toward the men. There is little doubt that his first major novel was inspired by his mother, Elizabeth Hawthorne. As a real life figure, Elizabeth was reserved and timid. After the death of her husband, Elizabeth returned to her family home with the Mannings. When Hawthorne wrote to his future wife, Sophia Peabody, about his mother, he described her as a detached, despondent figure. However, there are noteworthy reasons to believe that Hawthorne was inflating his narrative about his mother. Mrs. Hawthorne could not have been as isolated as Hawthorne depicted her because she lived with a large family, and she also took part in certain community functions. Erlich argues that what seems to be most descriptive of her character is not so much her melancholy, but her lack of self-reliance. She was widowed at an early age, and she lacked the ambition to make a more independent living on her own. Instead of attempting to claim some of her husband's assets or

making a living as a seamstress, an innkeeper, or any other profession that would have been suitable for a widow, she chose to become a dependent of her family. Hawthorne, perhaps, hoped for a different destiny not only for his mother, but for women in general. It can be argued that through his fiction he made a name for Elizabeth Hathorne as Hester Prynne, an independent woman who became a legendary figure in American fiction.

Mrs. Hathorne was not the only anonymous name in American history, and because of this, Hawthorne also changed the fate of other women in his family through his fiction. Though the Hathorne men made a name for themselves, the other women in Hawthorne's family also remained unknown throughout American history. It is vital to consider how the women in Hawthorne's life influenced the female characters in his novels because there are countless parallels to be drawn by his readers between real life and fictional characters.

Hawthorne's sisters Ebe and Louisa were also a source of support for Hawthorne. His sisters may be the bases for Hawthorne's dark and light female protagonists. The dark heroine is sensual and outspoken, while the light is virginal and soft-spoken. Ebe was more critical while Louisa was more nurturing. Louisa was supportive of her brother, and her only involvement with his writing process was her encouragement of his endeavors; her feedback was never critical. Hawthorne's elder sister, Elizabeth, or Ebe, fits the profile of the dark heroine in that she was a vocal figure in his life. When it came to his fiction, she was opinionated, and she helped her brother edit his work. Ebe was also an intellectual confidant for her brother; her influence is best depicted in a character such as Zenobia in *The Blithedale Romance*.

Hawthorne's wife was emotionally supportive of her husband's personal and professional life; Sophia's personality, therefore, resembles Hawthorne's light heroines. Mrs. Hawthorne becomes the light heroine in Hawthorne's fiction: she is virginal, domestic, and serves as a

support system for her male partner. There is compelling evidence for this link between Sophia and Hawthorne's light heroine, in *The House of the Seven Gables*. Hawthorne, for example, names his light heroine after his wife's pet name, Phoebe. Also, while Sophia's involvement with her husband's career as a writer is not evident in his fiction, it had much to do with Hawthorne's artistic success since her talent as an editor had much to do with her husband's accomplishments as a writer.

Other, less prominent women in Hawthorne's family life, such as his aunts, also became the basis of female protagonists in his fiction. Characters based on Hawthorne's aunts, Mary, Betsy, Priscilla, and Maria, can be linked to female protagonists in such short stories as the title character in "Mrs. Bullfrog" and Hepzibah in *The House of the Seven Gables*. Hawthorne's treatment of his aunts in real life can be seen through his narrator's approach to Hepzibah, for example. He often jokingly taunted his aunts about their unmarried status just as the narrator mocks Hepzibah. Yet Hawthorne's approach to such women, though facetious, is sympathetic as well.

Women often fall victims to formidable patriarchies, and although his heroines seem powerless, Hawthorne's women lead small revolutions within their own families against powerful male figures that transform their communities and, arguably, the entire American culture. Although Hawthorne has often been criticized for his ambiguity about women's public roles in society—he chastised them for writing fiction that he considered mediocre and criticized activists for women's rights such as Margaret Fuller—he is not a traditionalist in his fiction when it comes to women's issues. Making female protagonists central figures in his fiction alone substantiates his groundbreaking creativity as an artist since dynamic fictional female characters were rare in early American fiction. What is most inventive about these female characters in

Hawthorne's fiction, I propose, is the familial tie between women in *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables*. The bonds between generations of women in Hawthorne's fiction are symbols which guide future generations of heroines to develop an artistic sensibility that will lead to the fruition of their full potential as women.

The focus of this study will shift after a substantial background on biographical, historical, and psychological perspectives in Hawthorne's fiction is established. Hawthorne's intentions as an author are varied and perhaps will never be completely decipherable. Critical perspectives allow the reading audience to interpret textual meaning from different critical angles. However, there is also the question of how characters and narrators within the text interpret meaning from the text itself. This issue will be the focus of the remainder of the study: how female characters communicate with one another within the text, and how these characters come to an understanding of the symbolic implications of their feminine ancestors. Through his narrators, Hawthorne was not only addressing a general reading audience but also an audience within the text that includes female characters.

Studies such as Michael Dunne's *Hawthorne's Narrative Strategies* and Bercovitch's *The Office of the Scarlet Letter* offer scholars a narrative viewpoint through which they can view Hawthorne's texts; they particularly concentrate on the female perspective in the author's fiction. Dunne, for example, analyzes Hawthorne's narrative technique and questions the narrator's perspective in *The Scarlet Letter*. Dunne argues that Bercovitch's evaluation of Hester's return to Boston at the end of *The Scarlet Letter* should be examined "in terms of political thematics" by the reader (87). A more accurate, though simplistic, approach to this point in the narrative is that the reason for Hester's return is simply "because Surveyor Pue's metadiegetic narrative says that she returned" (87). What is also essential to understanding her return is to consider how it is

perceived by the reader, narrator, and the characters in the novel. At this point in the narrative, the audience may take what the surveyor says as hearsay, the surveyor may see Hester's return as a mystery, the townspeople may have been indifferent to her by the end of the novel, or the narrator and the audience might see this as a political rebellion. Some scholars generally focus on how the reading audience interprets Hester's return to Boston, but I argue that critics must also keep in mind what this return suggests to the narrator and the characters within the narrative. While Bercovitch argues that Hester's return shows her defiance to the Puritan community, I narrow my focus on how Pearl perceives not only Hester's actions, but mother's significance as a symbol. Hester, I continue, may have been more concerned with her own daughter's opinion of her mother than with the town's judgment of her. There is a symbolic language among women, I conclude, that Hawthorne utilizes as a means of communication between women. The heroines in *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables* talk to one another through symbols, and it is this symbolic language that reveals to future generations of women how to overpower patriarchies and become self-reliant feminine figures.

The significance of the symbolic language between women within certain family circles in *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables* is the core of this study. Women from previous generations communicate through symbols—Hester reveals herself to Pearl through the “Scarlet A,” and Alice Pyncheon communicates from the dead through the posies in the Pyncheon garden. Younger female heroines come to their own conclusion about their ancestors as they learn to become independent. The study will focus on the meaning of symbols within the text such as flowers—a rose in *The Scarlet Letter* and posies in the *The House of the Seven Gables*.

Hawthorne as a mythmaker left his narratives open to interpretation not only to his audience but also to his narrators and characters within the text. There are countless inferences that can be drawn from the meaning of his myths from all of these perspectives. Existing scholarship focuses on how readers may come to an understanding of his fiction; however, the narrators and characters within the text come to their own conclusions, and there is a lack of scholarship that concentrates on the audience within the text. This study will concentrate on a specific portion of Hawthorne's narrative strategy: how young female characters within a family lineage in *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables* perceive their feminine ancestors.

*The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables* may be similar in how younger heroines read the symbolic clues their ancestors leave behind, but the two novels are dissimilar in tone, and, thus, what Hawthorne reveals about American society appears more dismal in *The Scarlet Letter* than it does in *The House of the Seven Gables*. For instance, while *The Scarlet Letter* appears to have a happy ending for Pearl, the outlook for Hester and her community is not as hopeful. Pearl escapes the community in which she has been reared, but Hester returns to it at the end of the novel. Eventually the community's perception of Hester changes; some people in her community would go as far as describing her as angelic. However, Hester does not escape her prescribed place in society; she returns to Boston and remains isolated from the rest of the world until her death. The end of the novel does not seem to point to the heroine's triumph; instead the letter "A" appears on her tombstone, and thus she cannot escape her stigma even in death. Although Hester does have a minor impact on her community, she does not change it significantly. Hawthorne does not set the story in a time when a woman can make a place for herself within a male-dominated society. His novels perhaps reveal his fluctuating ideas about



women in the nineteenth-century. Hester may not have started a feminine revolution, nevertheless in this novel Hawthorne begins to point out how one individual can be the cause for progress for an entire culture—romantic writers believed the key to changing American society was the individual. Pearl learns to read symbols, thus understanding the art of language. Whereas everyone else in the Puritan community cannot read how the scarlet letter signifies a heritage of feminine reformers that leads back to Ann Hutchinson's time, Pearl deciphers this message. The progress of American society, as Hawthorne reveals, has much to do with artistic sensibility, and in this novel, Pearl's responsiveness to the scarlet letter is an illustration of a new generation of Americans learning to appreciate the art of fiction.

Hawthorne utilizes the beauty of another flower in *The House of the Seven Gables* to teach a young heroine, Phoebe Pyncheon, not only how to liberate herself from the Pyncheon patriarchy, but, more importantly, to develop an appreciation for art. Unlike Hawthorne's young heroine in *The Scarlet Letter*, Phoebe, in *The House of the Seven Gables*, reveals a deeper understanding of the symbolic implications of a posy. Not much is known about Pearl's life as an adult, and thus Hawthorne does not provide a complete picture as to how Pearl's perception of Hester has influenced her. However, in *The House of the Seven Gables*, Hawthorne focuses more on the younger heroine's fate and does not reveal much about her ancestor, Alice Pyncheon. Alice, like Hester, is characterized as a flower—Hester as a rose and Alice as posies—and ultimately a martyr. While in the present time of the narrative not much is known about Alice, Phoebe relates the posies in the Pyncheon garden to her, and Holgrave recounts Alice's life story in one chapter. Yet, as a symbol, Alice represents strength from which subsequent Pyncheon women can draw. She died perhaps a martyr to the cause of women's liberation in the Pyncheon family. She escaped her fate, however, when she died, for she was

released from the hold that Maule's power had over her free will. If she could not maintain her free will in life, she would secure it by any means necessary, even by death. Alice's death could, arguably, be a Pyncheon's woman's first attempt at escaping male-domination that is represented by the house. Holgrave's narrative of Alice is a cautionary tale; it functions as a warning against feminine pride. Phoebe does not sustain the Pyncheon pride; she rejects it completely. When she refuses to accept Judge Pyncheon's kiss, it is not her pride or modesty that causes her action, but her rejection of the Judge's arrogance and dominance. Instead of becoming part of the Pyncheon dynasty, she becomes symbolic of a new democracy. Through her practicality, she helps Hepzibah run an efficient home and cent shop.

The dynamic between Phoebe and Hepzibah is unique in that both work together to manage the shop, take care of Clifford, and eventually escape the house of the seven gables. Phoebe's relationship with Hepzibah is not, however, typical of a younger heroine's relationship with an older female figure. The connection between the two women is not as clear as that between Alice and Phoebe. Hepzibah's life is not emblematic; her character is not symbolic as much as it is real. Thus, she emerges as a unique character, unlike most of Hawthorne's heroines. She is unattractive, with a permanent scowl, and a peculiar resemblance to the Pyncheon chickens. These characteristics of Hepzibah's do little to inspire Phoebe, yet her disposition is more somber by the end of the novel. Hepzibah begins to consider her identity; she is not noble, but part of a more plebian society, relying less on her inheritance and depending more on making a profit from her labor at the shop. The old matron may not have developed a heightened sensitivity for art like her niece, but she does learn how to become self-reliant.

The most exemplary figure of Hawthorne's narrative art in his fiction, I maintain, is Phoebe. Through this character, the author reveals how his character can learn to read symbols,

and through this action, he also illustrates how his audience will come to appreciate his art fully. Hawthorne's representation of women in his fiction is progressive: indeed, women symbolize change. The change Hawthorne reveals in his fiction is that it is women who would become conduits of progress and independency. Perhaps Hawthorne hoped that his heroines would become myths in American culture if he successfully revealed the art of his fiction through his female characters. Women in Hawthorne's fiction are symbols that become art when Hawthorne illustrates how American culture could grow if individuals could understand how the basis for an American literary tradition might perhaps stem from simple, natural objects such as roses and posies.

## CHAPTER 1

### NEW ENGLAND'S HATHORNES AND MANNINGS

History, in particular family history, is arguably Nathaniel Hawthorne's major "character" in *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables*. Hawthorne focuses on his paternal ancestors in these novels because the Hathorne name, despite its notorious connotation in history, is a significant name in early American history. Burdened by his male ancestors' infamous reputations, Hawthorne recounts family history in his fiction often with a sense of guilt. Superficially, Hawthorne reveals a feeling of shame on behalf of his paternal ancestors' actions when he portrays Puritans in his fiction. Yet, upon closer inspection, Hawthorne may have experienced mixed feelings of shame and pride when he recast these historical figures.

The Puritans, despite their severe dogma, were responsible for creating new colonies where they could practice their beliefs freely. Hawthorne's choice of the Pyncheon name in *The House of the Seven Gables* perhaps reveals his conflicting feelings of shame and pride toward his male ancestors. Unlike the Hathornes, the historical Pynchons of the seventeenth-century were unconventional; they became problematic citizens among their Puritan community. The accuracy of Hawthorne's portrayal of historical male figures, consequently, is questionable. He highlights both his sense of honor and shame in his depiction of father figures in his fiction. Hawthorne's fictional portrayal of the women in his family, in particular his mother, is anything but unfavorable. Elizabeth Hathorne suffered the loss of a husband, and her confidence was forever shaken by this event. When Hawthorne created Hester and other strong female heroines in his fiction, he mythologized the women in his family. Hawthorne reflects on his male ancestors, and he questions their actions as powerful figures in history. When he portrays the women in his family, specifically his mother, he cannot judge them since they were relatively powerless;

instead he sympathizes with feminine figures. Mrs. Hathorne's insecure nature is transformed in Hawthorne's fiction as he reveals the life he wished for his mother. Elizabeth Hathorne lost all hope for independence when she went back to her maternal family home, and she never attempted to become head of her own household. When Hawthorne recasts the women in his life into his fiction, he creates new histories for them, and as a result their gentle imprint on American history is clearly discernible in his fiction.

Hawthorne utilizes early American history throughout his fiction; however, his fiction can hardly be categorized as historical. Instead, Hawthorne utilizes history as a narrative device to reveal timeless themes. Alison Easton questions the accuracy of Hawthorne's portrayal of history, and, as she explains, "[c]ritical studies have shown that Hawthorne was concerned with reexamining certain historical personages, events, and issues, but it is through wholly imaginary characters and plots that this is achieved" (191). His view of history, then, allows him to explore the historical implications of people and their actions throughout history by means of a nineteenth-century lens. I propose that Hawthorne takes historical figures such as the Puritans and builds a narrative surrounding their seventeenth-century communities to reveal certain themes about human nature: the corruption of Chillingworth's heart, Hester's isolation and the break from her community, and the burden of guilt evident in Dimmesdale's character.

Though Hawthorne bases *The Scarlet Letter* on the historical Puritan community of Boston, his portrayal of Puritan society is not simply a retelling of early American history. Easton concludes that Hawthorne's "[h]istory turns out to be not a 'truth' simply to be relayed to a contemporary audience; instead, a supposedly factual story turns out to be as much a construction of the human mind as the narrator's first Gothic fictions" (71). Easton points out that the narrator in "The Custom House," for instance, attempts to establish the story's historical

authenticity when he finds the manuscript of the novel and remnants of a red cloth, perhaps part of Hester's scarlet A. This is a clear example of Hawthorne's ironic sense of humor in his fiction. His story is anything but historically accurate; instead it is a "construction" of his mind. Hawthorne's reasons for creating narratives set in history may have much to do with his life during the composition of *The Scarlet Letter*. Upon closer examination, I argue, the novel reveals what was most troubling to Hawthorne at the time he composed it: his narrative is partially a reaction to his dismissal from the Custom House.

Not only are certain times in history significant to Hawthorne, but also certain places. Hawthorne's fiction reflects geographical shifts in his life, for example, as Easton notes, the time between the composition of "The Old Manse" and "The Custom House" represents two times in his life (167). "The Old Manse" is part of what Easton refers to as "the Concord-inspired artist," and when he moved back to Boston, he found himself in "the Salem world to which he has returned—this is the portrait of the artist as Surveyor" (167). During the Concord phase, Hawthorne concentrates on artists and how they are related to their societies. During the composition of "The Custom House," he finds himself in the middle of Salem, what Easton calls "the world of 'custom' in its several meanings: the world of commerce and money, the state and its citizens' obligations, and notions of ordinary daily living values that are commonly accepted" (168). Salem represents pragmatism, and Hawthorne, as an artist, is out of place in such a community. Easton notes that he had not abandoned all of his earlier Concord ideas, but instead Hawthorne found that through "his Concord vision" he maintained his "artistic radicalism," yet while in Salem the stories written there "in some way challenge conventional habits of mind, feeling, or reading" (169). During the composition of *The Scarlet Letter*, I conclude, Hawthorne tended to "challenge conventional habits"; he did consider how the Puritans opposed those who

did not maintain their moral laws, like Hester, and he tends to judge his Puritan ancestors for their shameful condemnation of individuals such as Hester.

Throughout *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne is exploring human behavior through the Puritans of the past, as he transports the past to his present audience. For Hawthorne, reexamining the past, “gives him the necessary detachment to observe the operation of values in any particular society and make generalizations as seem appropriate” (Easton 194). I apply this idea to *The Scarlet Letter* since Hawthorne chooses to “observe” Puritan society’s treatment of someone who is not defined by a specific ideology. As a Democrat, Hawthorne was fired from his position from the Custom House in Salem for having opposing political views from those who came to power, the Whigs, while he was working at the Custom House. His predicament is similar to Hester’s in the novel. She falls from her place within her community for not maintaining the moral values of those who are in power, the Puritan officials. Hester’s case, however, is more severe than was Hawthorne’s. She sinned against God, an obviously higher official than a political party, but I argue that she is judged by a more severe community: seventeenth-century Puritans rather than more liberal nineteenth-century politicians. Hawthorne, furthermore, uses Hester as an example of an extreme case of defiance to test his contemporary audience. Easton explains that *The Scarlet Letter* “is less immediately preoccupied with sitting in judgment on the characters themselves than with observing how others judge” (194). His preoccupation with determining “how others judge” may also be related to an incident in his life during the composition of the novel. Easton compares Hawthorne's current situation as an employee unfairly expelled from his job as a custom’s agent to a similar treatment of an individual in history—Hester—who was also unjustly cast out from her community. What Hawthorne may be posing, Easton argues, to his audience is a moral issue in “The Custom

House": if they can forgive Hester for defying Puritan society, then maybe they will sympathize with him for going against the ruling political party of his time. At this point in his writing career, Hawthorne equated his Puritan ancestors with the Whig party. I contend that Hawthorne was ashamed of how his paternal ancestors used their power because he may have suffered, as did Hester Prynne; they were both powerless victims in the midst of powerful figures within their communities. Hawthorne had a fictional axe to grind throughout this novel based on his personal circumstances. Once he came to terms with his dismissal, Hawthorne did not judge his Puritan ancestors as harshly in his portrayal of them in *The House of the Seven Gables* as he did in *The Scarlet Letter*.

During the composition of *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne may have felt the overwhelming influence of the place where he lived: Salem. Yet, his next novel is different in mood, even in time, since it is set in the present. When Hawthorne composed *The House of the Seven Gables*, he had already made the move to the Berkshires, on the opposite side of the state of Massachusetts, far away from the influence Salem held over him. After he left Salem for the Berkshires, perhaps Hawthorne found himself in the middle of "artistic radicalism" when he composed *The House of the Seven Gables* and was in a similar mood to that of his Concord period. His judgment of his Puritan ancestors is not as harsh in this novel, and it is in this novel where Hawthorne questions judging any individual whether they are the oppressor or the oppressed. During this period of "artistic radicalism," Hawthorne is ironically not radical but moderate in his portrayal of the Pyncheons. His attitude and tone shifted from a darker, to a lighter, even more comical portrayal of his ancestors.

The places where Hawthorne composed his novels have a certain effect on his fiction; the people that influenced his writing concern him even more. If Hawthorne embellished when



describing his ancestors, the characters based on his forefathers might also tend to be overstated. Hawthorne's portrayal of his Puritan ancestors is striking because he creates larger-than-life characters based on historical figures. Frederick C. Crews notes that in Hawthorne's fiction "the sense of the past is nothing other than the sense of symbolic family conflict writ large" (60). Much of Hawthorne's sense of identity comes from his fascination with the past. Although his "sense of the past" is based on historical events, much of that past is Hawthorne's artistic re-creation. He creates a grotesque image of his male ancestors to draw attention to the Hawthorne family name. Hawthorne did not attempt to distance himself from this disagreeable image because, as Crews claims, his "evocations of Puritan times gave him *a guilty identity which was better than none*" (38). Their notoriety makes them key figures in early American history, and this fact could be linked to Hawthorne's desire to seek fame for himself as an American author. The Hawthorne name, though notorious, held a notable place in America's past. Hawthorne may have wanted to re-establish his family's prominence in American history. Nineteenth-century society was not as tumultuous as it was in the seventeenth-century; perhaps Hawthorne feared that a man could not make a name for himself during his age, a relatively unruffled, liberal time by comparison. He defamed his ancestors but gained fame for himself as an author, and because of this, Hawthorne's attitude toward his family is contradictory.

Unattractive as Hawthorne's portrayal of his Puritan ancestors may be, Hawthorne's approach to the past consists of diverse attitudes toward his ancestors, as revealed through his characters. While Hawthorne's ancestors are portrayed as cruel and oppressive, Crews notes "Hawthorne never treats his family history without a mixture of shame and pride" (37). Though merciless, his ancestors were powerful figures within their communities. If Hawthorne's ancestors were powerless, this condition might also have instilled a sense of "shame" in him

because he may have believed that he inherited certain weaknesses from his ancestors. During Hawthorne's lifetime, he may also have developed a romanticized sense of "pride" in his ancestry because his family's name had lost its luster by the nineteenth-century and his own family's fortune had dwindled after the death of his father. Elizabeth Hawthorne and her children became dependents of the Manning family, though they had no resources of their own. His mother abandoned her ties with the Hathornes and, consequently, their link to a notable past; thus Hawthorne may have looked to his past for his family's notoriety throughout *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables*. In *The Scarlet Letter* Hawthorne goes back, perhaps with a hint of nostalgia, to a time when his family would have held powerful positions among the Puritan community. The Pyncheon family of *The House of the Seven Gables* may also allude to the Hathornes of the past because of Judge Pyncheon's wealth and prestige.

When Hawthorne's immediate family became dependents of his mother's family, the Hathorne name and fortune were at the lowest point they had been in the family's history. This sudden loss of power may have prompted Hawthorne to reevaluate his place within the Hathorne family line. Hawthorne was aware of his ancestor's William and John's notoriety, and, as Edwin Haviland Miller explains, Hawthorne believed there was a "real rivalry both to excel them and to prove himself worthy of their approval" (22). Hawthorne not only had to make a name for himself, but he felt the need to "excel" as an author to keep the Hawthorne name alive into the nineteenth-century. If he felt only shame toward his ancestors, he would not seek their praise. Miller explains, "there were at least two Hawthornes—the dependent male (the Arthur Dimmesdale and Holgrave of the fiction) and the self-reliant, self-contained artist (the Owen Warland of the tales)" (182). Hawthorne likely related to the "dependent male in his stories" as a dependent of the Mannings. However, his ambition may have been to become a successful "self-

contained artist" and regain his family's honor.

Despite any sense of honor Hawthorne may have gained from recalling his ancestor's past, he was always conflicted by his family's actions. Crews argues that Hawthorne fails to bring to light any issues that are common to his readers; instead, Hawthorne's writing is a more internal, psychological cleansing process. The narrator's attitude toward Judge Pyncheon in *The House of the Seven Gables* is disapproving and ultimately cruel; Hawthorne's morbidity perhaps reveals some of his frustration with his male ancestors. Judge Pyncheon represents a father figure that Hawthorne created to resolve his own psychological issues. Hawthorne loses his objectivity as a writer when he attempts to resolve his own family conflicts through his fiction, and Crews concludes that it is through these father figures that "[f]ilial obsession . . . is beginning to destroy objective characterization and moral interest" (177). One of the most outlandish examples of Hawthorne's brutal attitude toward his father figures is best illustrated in his portrayal of Judge Pyncheon's death in *The House of the Seven Gables*. The narrator mocks the Judge when he has already lost the battle with death and playfully taunts the reader into thinking that Judge Pyncheon may perhaps only be sleeping. Miller accurately describes this chapter when he claims that Hawthorne "dances over the corpse in a virtuoso display of sadism unequaled in his writings" (331-32). There is a reason for such a lavish "display," and Miller concludes that in this death-scene "Hawthorne releases pent-up anger," and that this anger is directed toward present and past male figures in his life (332). Hawthorne externalizes feelings of guilt and remorse for his ancestors in his fiction. Miller concludes that through Judge Pyncheon's character, "Hawthorne takes vengeance on iron-hearted fathers, including his two great ancestors, his father, and Robert Manning and Charles W. Upham, who unseated him in the Custom House fracas" (332). Hawthorne, however, is not simply out for revenge; he is not

exclusively attacking dominant male figures in his past; but, more specifically, he is approaching a more universal theme: breaking free from dominant figures in general. The author may have license for such outbursts, if they do not overtake the fundamental theme of the novel. *The House of the Seven Gables* is a novel more about absolution from the past than one about Hawthorne's unforgiving rage toward his male ancestors.

Because of his vengefulness, Hawthorne is too involved with his narrator in *The House of the Seven Gables*; thus "objective characterization" fails, according to Crews (177). The historical relation of his fictional characters to historical figures has been set aside for Hawthorne's revenge on his male ancestors. Hawthorne's fiction, Crews explains, tends to resolve psychological turmoil rather than focus on plot because "[r]elief, indeed, is the desired end-point of each romance—not a solution to its thematic issues but oblivion to them" (171). His fiction, however, may not have been as appealing to a universal audience if it was so internalized. At times, Hawthorne may be resolving his own internal conflicts, and this is most evident throughout his treatment of Judge Pyncheon's death; it does seem almost therapeutic for the author alone. Crews points to Hawthorne's "clogged passion" and "vindictive pleasure" as evidence of Hawthorne's treatment of a "father figure" (175). The Judge's death may mark a turning point in the novel where the other characters are freed from the Judge's overbearing nature, but they do not particularly rejoice over the death of a family member. Furthermore, there is little reason to believe that any of the characters, even Hepzibah and Clifford, would feel such a "vindictive pleasure" at the death of their family member. Clifford was only accused of murder, but he was innocent because he is incapable of such an act of "clogged passion." The reader, despite his or her disapproving view of Judge Pyncheon, would probably not rejoice in the death of a man whose only crime was pride. This overwhelming spitefulness, then, may only

be attributed to the author himself, who is using his narrator as his medium. Crews points out that “the general task is not to exact justice or to act charitably, but to lift the oppressive weight of the past as it is applied by the figure of Judge Pyncheon” (265). For someone to feel such pleasure at the Judge’s passing, their aversion toward such a character comes from years of bearing such an “oppressive weight of the past” as did Hawthorne.

This passage, furthermore, may be read too literally if the reader equates the killing of Judge Pyncheon with Hawthorne’s killing of his father figures. The death scene should not be read that literally; if it is, the reader will overlook Hawthorne’s ironic tone throughout this death scene. While composing *The House of the Seven Gables*, Hawthorne wrote to James T. Fields, his publisher, about the tone of the novel and insisted that “in writing a romance, a man is always—or always ought to be—careering on the utmost verge of a precipitous absurdity, and the skill lies in coming as close as possible, without actually tumbling over” (Hawthorne, *The Letters 1843-1853* 371). The Judge’s death scene is certainly an example of “precipitous absurdity,” but Hawthorne is not guilty of “tumbling over” as a writer by making this scene dark and sinister. Instead, his satirical approach to the killing of a father figure does not necessarily reveal Hawthorne’s homicidal tendencies, but rather only his sense of humor. The Judge is an embodiment of those overwhelming characteristics that made Hawthorne’s male ancestors such a burden to him throughout his life. Hawthorne is not literally suggesting death to all overbearing patriarchal figures. Instead, he may be eradicating what they represent: oppression, guilt, or shame that these dominant male figures represent. The elimination of a domineering presence is a more universal theme; Hawthorne is not as self-involved in his fiction as Crews construes. Therefore, Hawthorne may write about his personal problems, but he universalizes them, and because of this practice his family dilemmas have appealed to audiences outside of his own age

up until the present.

Hawthorne's family history is a major factor in his fiction, in particular his ancestors from the seventeenth-century. Major William Hathorne (1606/07-1681) sailed with his wife Elizabeth to America in 1630. He came with John Winthrop's Puritans in 1630 (Moore 30). As with most first generation Puritans, William was a devout religious man, and his reason for sailing to the colonies was to seek religious freedom from the Anglican Church. There was one side of William Hathorne, however, that Hawthorne does not reflect in his fiction: While William was a strict Puritan, he was also an asset to his community. Margaret B. Moore explains that one of his duties was to protect his community against Indian attacks (31). Puritan colonists found that their New Jerusalem consisted of a harsh wilderness where strong community leaders, such as William, struggled to maintain their settlements. His efforts to sustain order in Salem as a constable, however, were overshadowed by his harsh character. He kept order by commanding that Quakers be punished; he allowed Ann Coleman, a Quaker woman, to be beaten almost to the point of death (Moore 31-32). Though severe at times, Moore recounts an incident in which he "lashed" a Quaker woman so gently that others questioned his effectiveness as a constable (32). Historically, William appears to be a more lenient man than the fictitious persecutor of Quakers that may have inspired Hawthorne in such short stories as "The Gentle Boy."

The Quakers may have been victims of Puritan persecution, but Hawthorne also reveals that the Quakers may not have been totally helpless victims. Hawthorne's Puritan ancestors may not have had a choice when they punished radical religious groups; they had to treat the Quakers harshly or risk losing control of their communities. For the most part, Hawthorne associates the Puritans with the Hathornes. The Puritans may have seemed intolerant in their persecution of the Quakers, but the Quakers were not as passive as they appeared. Vernon Loggins describes them

as “extreme rebels, critical of all sects besides their own, and of all governments” (57). To a fledgling Puritan colony, they were a major threat. The Quakers fought against the Puritans for religious freedom and, as Loggins expresses, “their main weapons were faith and passive resistance” (57). As radicals, they took this idea of “passive resistance” to extreme measures; they willingly risked becoming martyrs to their cause by not resisting their persecutors’ punishments. Since they passively accepted persecution, the Puritans might have easily squelched their cause. Yet, because of their meekness, other colonists and the British government pitied them. Indeed, the Puritans of Massachusetts Bay had limited control over the Quakers because the British government protected them. On September 9, 1661, King Charles II passed an act demanding that Quakers facing a capital charge would be tried in England (Loggins 63). Puritan officials held little authority over the Quakers since they now had the British government with whom to contend.

In “The Gentle Boy,” Hawthorne offers a more accurate portrayal of the Quakers. In this story, Ibrahim is a young Quaker boy whose mother abandons her son to become a martyr for her cause. Puritans were clearly in power in “The Gentle Boy,” but Hawthorne does not sympathize with either religious group, for both are fanatical and over-zealous. Arlin Turner claims that Hawthorne carefully considered both religious sects and was “striven to assess the error and guilt on each side” (61). Perhaps the ideas in these short stories were precursors for the conflict between the Maules and the Pyncheons in *The House of the Seven Gables*. The Pyncheons are closely linked with Hawthorne’s Puritan ancestors, but there is also a link between Hawthorne and his Quaker ancestors. Though the Pyncheons are wealthier and more powerful than the Maules, the Maules also have control over the Pyncheons. To understand how exactly the Maules are at fault for the turmoil between the two families, a reader needs to

consider Hawthorne's use of the Pyncheon name and how it is linked to the historical Pynchons.

It is difficult to determine exactly why Hawthorne began to reevaluate the male figures in his life at the time he was writing *The House of the Seven Gables*. There are, however, clues in his previous novel as to why he would want to reestablish the male tradition of the Hawthornes in his novels. After losing his position as a surveyor in Salem, Hawthorne defends himself in "The Custom House" introduction to *The Scarlet Letter*, by establishing himself not only as an author, but as a successful man. Miller notes Hawthorne's language when he describes his dismissal from the Custom House: "My head has been chopt off" (267). This phrase can be read as implying castration. To restore his sense of masculinity, he mocks political figures who were involved in his dismissal. Miller explains that "he attacked those who in his perception had deprived him of livelihood as well as of masculinity: Hawthorne had a way of transforming situations into confirmations of lifelong fears" (267). His attempts to establish his manhood, however, do not only pertain to his personal "fears," but to a more universal conflict. Hawthorne's attempt to establish his identity as a man applies to a common struggle: an individual's search for a sense of identity. Hawthorne's dilemma of finding his identity does not stop at "The Custom House," but it continues throughout his career, particularly in his next novel, *The House of the Seven Gables*.

Perhaps Hawthorne's first task when composing *The House of the Seven Gables* was finding names for his characters that would capture his family's involvement in the history of New England. Hawthorne began to reexamine his male ancestors, and it is important to consider how Hawthorne uses historical figures to reveal his ideas about history. Once he defends himself in "The Custom House," Hawthorne comes closer to a sense of identity as a man by establishing the men in the history of his family as dominant male-figures in *The House of the Seven Gables*.



Hawthorne was not proud of the crimes his ancestors committed against individuals during the Salem witch trials, but he is perhaps more forgiving of them in this novel. In his new approach to these historical figures, he does not make a radical shift in his attitude because he is not atoning for his ancestor's sins. Instead, he is attempting to determine the extent of his family's involvement in New England's dark past. Hawthorne's portrayal of the Pyncheon family resembles historical figures in his family and another old New England family, the Pynchons. Although the fictional Pyncheons represent orthodox Puritans like Hawthorne's family, the historical Pynchons had a reputation for being unconventional. It seems unlikely that Hawthorne would misrepresent historical figures like the Pynchons in his novel unless he randomly chose the name "Pyncheon" to represent a more conservative Puritan family. Yet, evidence points to Hawthorne's knowledge of the Pynchon family during an earlier part of New England's history.

The question of whether Hawthorne had a historical figure in mind when he created Judge Pyncheon is complicated. Hawthorne denies having any knowledge of such a historical figure when he writes a letter to Peter Oliver of Boston on May 3, 1851 (*The Letters, 1843-1853* 427). Peter Oliver's grandfather was named Judge Pynchon, and he wrote a letter to Hawthorne in which he objects to Hawthorne's use of his family name because it served to discredit his grandfather William Pynchon (*The Letters, 1843-1853* 427-28). In his response to this letter, Hawthorne assures Oliver that he had no knowledge of his grandfather. He explains to Oliver that he was not living in Salem at the time he was writing the novel, and therefore he did not have access to any records concerning the Pynchon family history. He insists, "I would further say, that I intended no allusion to any Pynchons, now or at any previous period extant—that I never heard anything to the discredit, in the slightest degree, of this old and respectable race—and that I give the fullest credence to your testimony in favor of your grandfather, Judge

Pynchon” (*The Letters, 1843-1853* 427-28). Furthermore, William Pynchon was involved in the legal profession; he was never a judge in Salem (Hawthorne, *The Letters, 1843-1853* 429).

Hawthorne concludes the letter: “I expressly enter a protest, in the preface to ‘*The House of the Seven Gables*,’ against the narrative and the personages being considered as other than imaginary” (*The Letters, 1843-1853* 428). Hawthorne makes a convincing case for his defense in this letter. Yet, he may have only been attempting to pacify Judge Pynchon’s descendant. There is strong evidence to suggest that Hawthorne was aware of the Pynchon family in Salem.

Hawthorne thoroughly studied his family’s history, and he likely knew that during the seventeenth-century the Pynchons lived only a few blocks away from his ancestors (Madsen 312). Also, in 1837 Hawthorne mentions the Pyncheon family in the *American Notebooks* (Madsen 310).

Deborah L. Madsen traces the Pynchon line and their relation to the Hawthornes back to the seventeenth-century, and she claims that “Hawthorne, in fact, knew the history of the Pynchon family, in particular William Pynchon, who was a fur trader, and his son John, of Springfield”(509). According to Madsen, William and John Hawthorne were more conservative than Pynchon; John Hawthorne, for example, was known as a “hanging judge” after the Salem witch trials (509). It seems that the character of Judge Pyncheon was not based on William Pynchon. Unlike Judge Pyncheon in the novel, William was more unconventional, and his liberal tendencies eventually led him to be persecuted for heresy. Madsen concludes that “a more likely model for the grim Colonel Pyncheon of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s novel is rather a composite of John and William Hawthorne than William Pynchon” (509). Furthermore, there were two William Pynchons to whom Hawthorne may have been referring in the novel. William Pynchon was one of the founders of Springfield in the seventeenth-century and belonged to the Massachusetts Bay

Company (Madsen 511). William Pynchon of Salem belonged to the Essex judiciary and had loyalist ties during the eighteenth-century; he was a direct descendent of William Pynchon of Springfield (Madsen 511). Hawthorne, Madsen concludes, is referring to both William Pynchons in *The House of the Seven Gables* because the Pynchon name is associated with rebellious colonists. Both ancestors posed a threat to early colonists who were trying to establish order in a new country. As a royalist, William Pynchon of Salem was interfering with the Puritans of Massachusetts Bay and their attempt to break away from British traditions. The latter Pynchon, according to Madsen, “is of a rather maverick figure, restless in his pursuit of profit, energetic in the development of Springfield and the entire Connecticut Valley region, and something of a thorn in the side of colonial authorities among whose numbers he was counted” (514).

Hawthorne’s ancestors were constantly struggling with colonists like the Pynchons. It appears as though he was attempting to alter history by basing his characters, the Pyncheons, on the Hathorne family of Salem. One explanation for this alteration is that Hawthorne was attempting to shift his family’s stigma as judgmental conservatives to the Pynchons of Salem. In *The House of the Seven Gables*, Hawthorne assigns a reputation for conservatism to a family who, historically speaking, does not deserve such a designation.

Hawthorne may not be excusing his family’s sins, but he is undoubtedly considering their struggle to establish authority during a tumultuous time in American history. Madsen claims that “Nathaniel Hawthorne is able to excuse the sins of his fathers by showing that they were incapable of acting otherwise” (510). In this novel, the historical figures of the Pynchons are more accurately reflected in the rebellious Maule family. Joel R. Kehler asserts that “Holgrave, in his gabled hut, is a symbol of the continuing presence of the Maule-guilt in the Pyncheon mind and a continuing reminder of the anarchic Maule strain” (144). Although the Pyncheons are

responsible for the downfall of the Maule family, the Maules brought about their own demise, to a certain extent, because of their “anarchic Maule strain.” Similarly, though Hawthorne’s ancestors were responsible for the oppression of unorthodox Puritans, defiant colonists may have gone too far in their rebellion against traditional Puritans. Madsen contends “that Nathaniel Hawthorne’s defense of his family lies in the creation of a monolithic Puritanism, in which all figures of authority acted as his own ancestors acted” (510). Although certain characters in Hawthorne’s novels represent his own ancestors, he does not refer to them by name. His family was not the only family involved in the colonists’ struggle to establish a new country during the seventeenth and eighteenth-centuries. Hawthorne is lightening the burden of his ancestors’ sins by having other Puritan families share in their guilt. Another aspect of relieving his ancestor’s responsibility for their actions may come from Hawthorne’s knowledge of two conflicting religious ideologies that came together early in his family lineage.

Although Hawthorne associated his ancestors with Puritanical figures, his lineage consists of an intermingling of two opposing religious ideologies: the Puritans and the Quakers. According to Moore, Hawthorne had a few of Quaker connections in his family lineage on his paternal side. John Hathorne married Ruth Gardner, who was the daughter of Elizabeth Freestone, a Quaker sympathizer (Moore 32). Elizabeth Freestone was exiled from Salem for refusing to attend Puritan meetings in 1669 (Moore 32). Also, his grandmother Rachel Phelps Hathorne had an ancestor named Eleanor who married Nicholas Phelps. The Puritans imprisoned Eleanor and drove Nicholas Phelps away from the Puritan colony (Moore 34). Nicholas eventually helped in getting an order from Charles II to protect Quakers from death by Puritan persecutors (Moore 34). Nicholas Phelps, in particular, represents the dynamic between the Puritans and the Quakers. Although it is not certain whether Hawthorne knew about his Quaker

connections Moore concludes that “the very ambiguity with which he treats the Quakers may spring from his knowledge that his ancestors were not only persecutors but the persecuted as well” (37). This would make Hawthorne’s feelings toward his ancestors even more ambivalent. John Hathorne, in particular, contradicted his loyalty to the Puritan church by marrying Ruth Gardner. William Hathorne, his father, dealt with the Quakers, and one can only imagine his reaction to John’s marriage with the daughter of a Quaker supporter. If Hawthorne was aware of his connection to the Quakers, this would explain his conflicting feelings of guilt and shame even more.

Hawthorne's attitude toward his male ancestors is one of a mixture of guilt and shame; yet his attitude regarding his mother is more forgiving, even encouraging. Since Hawthorne’s removal from the Hathornes at an early age could perhaps explain why he romanticizes paternal ancestors more than he does his maternal ancestors. He did not have a direct link to paternal figures; his father died at sea when he was three, and his mother had little contact with the Hathornes after her husband’s death. This lack of paternal figures can be linked to Hawthorne’s notorious, yet romantic image of his paternal ancestors. The Hathornes are easily distinguishable in Hawthorne’s fiction; they appear as powerful figures, often overbearing Puritanical males. Yet, the Mannings are not as distinguishable in Hawthorne’s fiction, and he particularly focuses on the Manning women instead of the males in the family. He reverses his portrayal of his mother in real life within his fiction, for example. His male ancestors were powerful and they had the ability to choose to live their lives as key figures in their communities. Hawthorne’s opinions about the choices they made are perplexing, but he is more sympathetic toward his mother. Through his fiction he allows his mother to live the life she might have wanted to live after the death of her husband.

Hawthorne had only one living parental influence in his life; the impact his mother had on Hawthorne, thus, was twice as influential. A significant factor that must be considered when evaluating the time in which *The Scarlet Letter* was written is the death of Hawthorne's mother. The book itself may have been a tribute to his mother since much of Hester's character can be traced to his own mother's situation as a single woman who conceived a child out of wedlock. The Puritans, Nina Baym contends, may represent the Hathornes in *The Scarlet Letter* since they judged his mother for having a child only seven months after her marriage and concluded that she was "a female conniver using a woman's age-old trick to entrap a husband" (10). After her husband's death, Elizabeth Hathorne had the option of moving in with her husband's family where she would have been entitled to some of his assets. Yet, she nullified her claim to his possessions, and this might be a sign of why Elizabeth's refused to move in with her husband's family after his death. They may have treated her harshly enough that she opted to become a dependent of the Mannings rather than gain some financial independence as a Hathorne. If Hawthorne's inspiration for Hester Prynne was his own mother, then, Baym concludes, "[t]he Puritans versus a defenseless woman equaled the Hathornes versus his mother" (10). Elizabeth Hathorne's decision to reside with the Mannings could have been a result of the Hathorne's treatment of her. Mrs. Hathorne may have had a better reason for not moving in with the Hathornes than her insecurity; she may have been defenseless to the Hathornes' criticisms.

Elizabeth Hathorne would have been incapable of defending herself from the Hathorne family's attacks on her character because instead of the stoic qualities Hawthorne attributes to his mother in his writing, the dominating trait in Hawthorne's mother was perhaps her insecurity rather than introversion. She married when she was twenty, lost her husband at twenty-eight, and had little life experience by the time she moved in with the Mannings. After her husband's death,

she made the decision to move back with her family instead of attempting to live a more independent life. Such an independent lifestyle would have required a more aggressive spirit, and Elizabeth Hawthorne did not have the strength to live a less secure life. Erlich attributes her weakness “to a lack of vitality and trust in her own competence” (*Family Themes* 63). Her insecurities may not have been the only factor that prompted her over-cautiousness. After losing a husband at such a young age, tragedy may have changed her outlook on her life and her own children. Erlich believes she passed a lack of “basic trust” down to her children, and because of the loss of her husband, “her confidence that all would be well for herself *or* her children” was lost (*Family Themes* 65). This fear might have caused her to be overly attached to her son since she constantly feared that he would want to go away to sea just as his father had. Mrs. Hawthorne was more than likely insecure and passive, yet Hawthorne wrote differently of her in his letters.

There was seemingly a good reason for Hawthorne’s portrayal of his mother as an introvert; it is likely that he was attempting to woo Sophia Peabody with his tales of his emotionally withdrawn mother. Baym considers Hawthorne’s reasons for constructing a mother figure and concludes that “we have to make our way past a legend constructed; it seems, to deny access” (“Nathaniel Hawthorne” 3). Hawthorne, perhaps, attempted to keep his mother’s true nature a secret to protect his image as a strong male. He wanted it to appear that his mother relied on him, and he did not depend on her. Hawthorne, Baym speculates, “seems to have been trying to hide not merely the actual role that his mother had played in his life, but the fact that she had a role at all” (“Nathaniel Hawthorne” 4). His reconstruction of her personage reveals a woman that is disconnected from the world around her, disheartened, and inaccessible; these traits make her appear as though she had little involvement with her family. Hawthorne’s reason for creating such an image of a real life person is as intricate as his fiction. Elizabeth Hawthorne may have

been private, but Hawthorne painted a grimmer picture when he described her as a recluse.

Although Baym makes a strong case for Hawthorne's exaggeration of his mother's feeble character, other critics, such as Crews, view Elizabeth Hawthorne in the way that her son described her to Sophia. Erlich points to critics such as Crews who agree with Hawthorne's description of her, while Baym argues that Hawthorne and Sophia exaggerate her solitary nature. When writing to Sophia, his fiancée at the time, Hawthorne described his life with his mother and sisters, and he made this life seem mysterious. He was perhaps attempting to keep Sophia attracted to him by making his life sound more appealing. Baym imagines that his narratives of his family are "a lover's strategy, to claim that nobody understands him and thereby appear both more needy and more interesting in the beloved's eyes" ("Nathaniel Hawthorne" 4). By seeming "needy," Hawthorne may have had Sophia's nurturing spirit in mind when he recounts these stories about his mother. He may also have wanted to present himself as a strong male figure who supported his weak-spirited mother throughout his life. Furthermore, as Sophia was weak in health and often suffered from headaches, Hawthorne proved himself dependable to fragile women.

It is difficult to make an accurate assessment of Elizabeth Hawthorne's character not only because critics do not agree, but also because even Mrs. Hawthorne's family did not come to the same conclusions about her temperament. Hawthorne and Sophia describe her as being abnormally detached from her family and friends. Ebe, Hawthorne's sister, and Rebecca B. Manning, Hawthorne's cousin, however, maintain that there was a "total normality of both mother and son" (*Family Themes* 66). She did not separate herself from the rest of society, nor did she distance herself from Hawthorne. Erlich speculates that Elizabeth could not have been as isolated as Hawthorne makes her out to be. Elizabeth Hawthorne lived in a bustling environment;



there were a total of fourteen people living in the Manning home at one time (*Family Themes* 67). She also took an active part in her community in her church, and had business affairs to attend to in Salem, and she was part of a Congregational church in 1806 (*Family Themes* 67). There is, then, more evidence in support of Ebe and Rebecca's accounts of Elizabeth Hawthorne. Her detachment from family and community affairs may stem from her passive involvement with them but not from her introversion.

In addition to Erlich's speculations, Hawthorne's own tendency to return to his mother's home may reveal something about her character. If she was as removed and indifferent as Hawthorne describes, he may not have eagerly returned to his mother's home after he graduated from college. Erlich notes that his college friends sought to move away from their homes and establish careers, while Hawthorne's decision to move back with his mother is evidence of his "regression" (*Family Themes* 72). Hawthorne moved back home because "[m]other and son missed each other intensely" and this seems to be why Hawthorne did not like college life (Erlich, *Family Themes* 72). Someone more enticing than an indifferent mother must have lured Hawthorne back to Salem; Elizabeth Hawthorne's affection for her son was compelling enough to keep Hawthorne in her home for twelve years of his manhood.

Mrs. Hawthorne supported her son's writing endeavors, though the Mannings did not agree with Hawthorne's decision to become a writer. Perhaps Elizabeth Hawthorne was more involved with her son's success as a writer than Hawthorne would admit. She was not only morally supportive of her son, but some of Hawthorne's writing were made possible through her financial backing. When Hawthorne graduated from Bowden College, his mother supported his fledgling writing career for twelve years. Turner notes that after Hawthorne was dismissed from the Salem Custom House, Elizabeth seemed pleased and "exclaimed that now he could write his

book,” and it is rumored that she offered him money (190). She may have been more enthusiastic about her son’s writing aspirations and life in general than Hawthorne gives her credit for in his construction of her character.

Unlike his perception of his male ancestors, Hawthorne's depiction of his mother is not shameful; he gives her the strength to seek independence in his fiction which was something she could not do in life. Moore notes that the death of a husband was too common in the nineteenth-century as men died at sea or became ill. Women would either seek help from their family or possibly make a living for themselves by “opening shops, taking in boarders, sewing or nursing” (71). Hawthorne’s model for Hester may be based on the ideal life he wished for his own mother as a self-sufficient woman. Hester gains a certain amount of independence when she finds the means of supporting herself and her child as a seamstress. Erlich points to Hester and Catherine, Ibrahim’s mother from “The Gentle Boy,” as examples of “counterimages, negatives of his own mother,” and he gives them certain qualities his own mother lacked: “passion, self-direction, and personal magneticism” (77). Although Hester’s situation as a single mother in *The Scarlet Letter* is similar to Mrs. Hawthorne’s real life circumstance, Hester’s actions are quite the opposite of what his mother did in the fictional character’s position. Another example of a model for female independence is Hepzibah, an old spinster who finds herself alone and desperate for money. In spite of her nearest kin’s offer, she refuses to depend of Judge Pyncheon for financial support. Mrs. Hawthorne’s actions, again, were contrary to Hawthorne’s heroine, since she chose to depend of her maternal family for the rest of her life.

Another attribute Hawthorne may have created for his mother throughout his fiction is self-reliance, though how he went about this, according to Franzosa, may have blurred gender lines. The lack of a father figure left Hawthorne with a masculine image to fulfill. The character

of Hester suits this need to find an influential masculine figure. *The Scarlet Letter* is set in the mid seventeenth century, and Franzosa explains that at this time the Puritans were attempting to separate themselves from English culture, particularly, as Frederick Newberry puts it, the more “gentle’ qualities” (60). Franzosa considers what *The Scarlet Letter* does when it “looks back on what has been lost—whether mother, Salem, Custom House, or Elizabethan gaiety.

Hawthorne finds those ‘gentle’ qualities intermixed with a more disturbing absence, all figured in the ‘man-like’ woman” (60). Because of the loss of his father at an early age, Hawthorne attributed “man-like” qualities both to Hester and his own mother. The loss of his father perhaps prompted him to look elsewhere for a father figure. Instead of turning to the men in the Manning or Hathorne families, Hawthorne perceived single women raising children as having masculine traits. Franzosa explains this further when he claims that Hawthorne created a “fantasy” of an absent father, and by attributing male and female qualities to one parent, he creates this “fantasy” to “allow a boy to identify with his lost father by identifying with a fantasy of his mother somehow embodying his father” (Franzosa 59). Though the story is set in the seventeenth-century, Franzosa considers Hester’s characteristics through a more contemporary audience’s assessment. As a mother figure, Hester has the task of nurturing Pearl, but as a father figure, she has to provide for her. Hester combines a feminine trait with a masculine function when she uses her needle to support her family. Franzosa explains that Hester must “become active and self-reliant—in nineteenth-century terms, ‘manly’” (59). This image of the “self-reliant” female is carried over to *The House of the Seven Gables* with Hepzibah’s masculine endeavor to make a profit from her cent shop.

Whether or not Hawthorne attributed masculine qualities to his mother is questionable, but he did want his mother to be more self-reliant. Mrs. Hathorne lived in the Manning estate in

Raymond, Maine, from 1816-1822 away from the Manning family (Erlich *Family Themes* 62). It was here where Mrs. Hathorne gained power within her household. Her children wanted their mother to gain some autonomy, and she could only do this when she moved out of the Manning house in Salem, where most of the family resided. When Hawthorne was away at college, he wrote a letter to his mother where he entreats her to remain in Raymond in 1821. Hawthorne wrote, "You are now undisputed Mistress of your own House. Here you would have to submit to the authority of Miss Manning" (*The Letters, 1813-1843* 150). "Miss Manning" was Hawthorne's aunt Mary. Hawthorne was attending Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine, at the time he wrote this letter where he was attending school. Though he missed his mother, he knew it was best for her to be away from the Manning family where she was powerless against her own family. She never did gain independence, however; Mrs. Hathorne moved back to Salem the next year after Hawthorne's letter.

Crews points out that Hawthorne looked inward when he wrote about the male figures in his past in an attempt to resolve an inner conflict. When Hawthorne lost his objectivity, he failed as a writer because he neglected to teach his reader any moral lesson or make a statement about his society. As a writer, Hawthorne sought to make a name for himself as a man among his famous line of male ancestors. Yet, ironically, Hawthorne is best known for his strong female characters. Unlike his attitude toward his male ancestors, Hawthorne's approach to the women in his family is anything but self-centered. Instead of taking an ambiguous or even an antagonistic approach toward women, like he did with his male ancestors, Hawthorne is more sympathetic toward the women in his family. Hawthorne was not only inspired by his mother, but by his wife, sisters, and aunts as well. He succeeded as a writer when he made a statement about American society through the women in his fiction. The next step toward understanding his fiction consists

of a closer examination of how all of the women in his family helped him make a name for himself in American literary history.

## CHAPTER 2

### HAWTHORNE'S NARRATIVE STRATEGIES AND SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE

Nathaniel Hawthorne's sisters, Elizabeth and Louisa, along with his wife, Sophia, were the building blocks for his female characters throughout his fiction. Hawthorne arguably applied these real life women to his fiction when creating feminine allegorical figures. Women symbolize change between generations, and the women within the text, concurrently with the reader, come to an understanding about the symbolic implications of their feminine ancestors. When the reader considers the inheritance that is passed on to females from previous generations, it becomes clear that women inherit the sins of their fathers, but they do not repeat the sins of their mothers. Female characters interpret signs differently than do their male counterparts; this presents another perspective from which readers can read *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables*. This chapter explores Hawthorne's narrative technique to illustrate how the feminine perspective in Hawthorne's novels points to a different interpretation of the previously mentioned novels. In the next chapter, I will explain what the narrative perspective is.

Hawthorne's mother may have been the basis for one of his most memorable female protagonists, Hester Prynne, but other women in his family had just as much to do with his penchant for portraying female characters. In Hawthorne's development as an artist he applied to his writing what he learned from his future wife Sophia Peabody, and his sisters because the prototypes for the light and dark heroines from his fiction. Eventually, Hawthorne learned to create some of the most celebrated women in American fiction by mythologizing women in his fiction.

The letters Hawthorne wrote Sophia throughout their courtship have much to do with his development as a writer. Hawthorne often expressed in his letters that he could not put into words what he felt toward his beloved. Leland S. Person notes that this inability to express himself is evidence of Hawthorne's "frustration with the language he had inherited and his desire to discover an alternative. Indeed, it can be argued that he uses the derivative, sentimental language of love, characterized by abstraction, idealization, and euphemism, in order to test and even to subvert its limitations" (*Aesthetic Headaches* 98). Through his letters, Hawthorne was experimenting with language—I add that perhaps he developed his use of symbolism by learning to understand "abstraction, idealization, and euphemism"—and he learned to write about relationships between men and women through the "sentimental language of love." Just as he had during the twelve-year period he spent writing in his room after he graduated from college, Hawthorne developed his writing throughout his courtship with Sophia.

From this intimate relationship with a woman, Sophia, I argue that Hawthorne applied what he had learned to the development of his female characters. His close relationship with Sophia may have prompted him to apply this real-life situation to his writing. Further, Hawthorne appears to have learned to relate his male characters to their feminine counterparts. Person claims that in his relationship with Sophia, Hawthorne perceived "a connection in his writing between male responses to women and the achievement of selfhood and creative power--the way relationships with women can bring a creative male self into being" (*Aesthetic Headaches* 96). I note that women bring out the artist in males such as Owen Warland in "The Artist of the Beautiful," Holgrave in *The House of the Seven Gables*, and Kenyon in *The Marble Faun*. Hawthorne was perhaps transmitting this real life situation of a new relationship with a woman, his development as an artist and writer, to his fiction.

The years of courtship between Hawthorne and Sophia were the basis for the writing that was to come years after their marriage. Throughout the love letters and Hawthorne's subsequent marriage, Person believes "Sophia encouraged him to research the very basis of creativity—the intimate connection between writing and relationship" (*Aesthetic Headaches* 97). Hawthorne may not only have found the "connection between writing and relationship," but I argue that he also may have discovered how by applying a real life situation to his writing he could resolve his own issues with women. His courtship with Sophia was Hawthorne's most serious romantic relationship up until that point in his life. Because of his new perspective as a suitor, he went through a period of growth that tested his writing skills. Person calls this inability to express "facts and feelings of relationship" as "linguistic impotence" (*Aesthetic Headaches* 100). I equate Person's idea of Hawthorne's tumultuous relationship with language to the beginning of a romantic bond; it was an awkward stage for Hawthorne from which he had much to learn as a man and an artist. To get through this stage in his life, Hawthorne applied it to what he knew best\* writing. When he found it difficult to communicate with Sophia, Hawthorne may have resolved his problem through characterization of female and male characters. Person explains how Hawthorne cast Sophia as a character whereby "he invested his heroine with the sort of creative power he had projected in Sophia, while his hero assumed his own largely passive stance as sympathetic spectator of the heroine's creative efforts" (*Aesthetic Headaches* 106). Perhaps it was easiest for Hawthorne to resolve the difficulty of relating to a woman by taking a "passive stance" as a male character in a drama about male/female relationships.

Although Sophia helped in Hawthorne's development as a writer, she caused problems for Hawthorne and the women who had the most influence on him—his mother and sisters--as a writer until he met his future wife. Sophia was unlike the women in his family because, as Gloria



Erlich speculates, his romantic relationship with Sophia, “gave him what mother and sisters could not, of course, provide, which was appropriate confirmation of his manhood as a lover and a father of children” (*Family Themes* 101). He did, however, relate to Sophia just as he had to his immediate family; he was not just a “lover” and “father,” but the association Hawthorne may have made between this new romantic relationship to familial kinship is complicated. Despite his new role as “husband” and “father,” Hawthorne might still have associated the relationship he had with Sophia with his relationship with his mother and sisters. Erlich points to a more general example of how Hawthorne Sophia and the women in his family both idolized Hawthorne. Erlich argues, that Hawthorne “had grown accustomed to and required female adoration as support for his fragile self-esteem, and his sisters, who never looked to other men, had supplied this for far too long” (*Family Themes* 100). Sophia obviously provided the encouragement Hawthorne had known all his life from his mother and sisters. Yet, I argue that not only did the women in Hawthorne’s family support him, but they were just as dependent on his encouragement. Ebe, for example, relied on Hawthorne for her sense of accomplishment since it was she who was Hawthorne’s editor before his marriage to Sophia, and after they were married, Sophia became his new editor.

Hawthorne may have also seen specific characteristics in Sophia that were reflected in his mother and sisters. Mrs. Hawthorne and Louisa were similar in their passivity; they were supportive of Hawthorne, but seemingly never critical. Hawthorne was drawn to such personalities, and Sophia’s personality was “of a natural acolyte” (Erlich, *Family Themes* 101). The associations Hawthorne made between his wife and kin, I argue, are complex since Hawthorne seems to have seen a split personality in Sophia that reflected the women in his family. There was also a side of Sophia that was better reflected in his sister Ebe as a meticulous

editor of Hawthorne's work. Though Ebe was more critical of Hawthorne's work than Sophia, she was an exceptional editor. Sophia, though not as critical, was involved with editing Hawthorne's fiction as well. The rift that came between Hawthorne and his sister after Sophia took over as his editor can be compared to a woman who is scorned by her significant other.

Erlich describes Ebe's behavior "her attempts to prevent his engagement, her lifelong avoidance of Sophia and antipathy toward her" —and claims that such conduct is evidence of "a powerful sexual motive" (*Family Themes* 88). Critics like Philip Young have often noted Ebe's possessiveness toward her brother and have attributed this overprotective nature to incestuous feelings, but Moore claims, "there is little evidence for an erotic attraction or incestuous relation" (6). Ebe, I argue, may not have been jealous of Sophia for taking her "lover" from her, but her behavior may as easily be attributed to her own disenchantment with her love life. Ebe's attitude, Erlich contends, could stem from her work with Hawthorne on his writing projects. Before Sophia took over editing Hawthorne's writing, it was Ebe who was, according to Erlich, Hawthorne's "coworker, partner, and proofreader," and she was "[p]roud and possessive about this collaboration" (*Family Themes* 85). Ebe was intelligent and talented: thus editing Hawthorne's fiction was an outlet for her brilliance. If Ebe is a reflection of Hawthorne's dark heroines, I add, she would have been more concerned with developing her own individuality than obtaining a male partner.

Ebe Hawthorne was the real-life character who was most consistent with Hawthorne's portraiture of the dark heroine. Opinionated, intellectual, and obstinate, Ebe seems a prototype for Hawthorne's famous dark women like Zenobia in *The Blithedale Romance*. Margaret Moore contends that "[o]ne can hear echoes of Hawthornean ancestors—especially the women—in Elizabeth" (5). Besides having certain characteristics like Zenobia, Ebe was similar to Hepzibah

in her lack of domesticity. Ebe was notorious for refusing to do housework; she much preferred reading or writing. Moore notes Mark Van Doren's claim that much of Elizabeth is reflected in Hephzibah's character. Elizabeth resembles Hephzibah not only in her spinsterhood; but also "Hephzibah's pride in family, her reclusiveness, her lack of cooking ability" was part of Elizabeth's traits (Moore 7). This link to Hephzibah can also be established by Ebe's marital status; she was never married, and this may explain her lack of understanding of her brother's marriage.

By nineteenth-century standards, although Hawthorne's light heroines were traditional female figures, his dark heroines were unconventional. Although these light heroines seem simplistic and superficial enough, they are the quintessential nineteenth-century American woman; their purity and nurturing natures make them ideal wives and mothers. Yet, Hawthorne's heroines are more complicated, and they cannot all be classified into one simple category. Hawthorne's light characters best characterize Sophia. Julie M. Norko notes that Hawthorne "emphasizes the two aspects of Sophia's nature—her bodily weakness and the resulting strength of her spirit" (128). Hawthorne expanded this idea to include what Morton Cronin considers the three groups of Hawthorne's women. In the first group, according to Cronin, includes "Alice Pyncheon and Priscilla who are easily dominated by other personalities;" the second group "is made up of bright, self-reliant, and wholesome girls, such as Ellen Langton, Phoebe, and Hilda;" and the final group includes "women whose beauty, intellect, and strength of will raise them to heroic proportions"; two examples of such women are Hester and Zenobia (89). Though Sophia fits into the second group, she is also a light heroine that Norko describes as physically weak, but spiritually strong (128). Sophia, then, embodies both Norko and Cronin's categorization of Hawthorne's light women. In addition to showing Sophia's spiritual strength, I link this

mystification of Sophia's character to Hawthorne's treatment of his mother in *The Scarlet Letter*. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, Hawthorne wanted to create a better life for his mother, making her more heroic through his fiction as Hester Prynne. Similarly, Hawthorne may have been strengthening Sophia's character in his fiction because Hawthorne, to a certain extent, made myths of the women in his life.

Since Sophia best illustrates Hawthorne's concept of a light heroine, I argue that her relationship with Ebe was tumultuous since their personalities were so distinctly opposite—since Ebe best resembles Hawthorne's dark heroines. However disconcerting the tumultuous relationship between Sophia and Ebe might have been, Hawthorne may have found a creative outlet for this dilemma. In Hawthorne's later novels, *The Blithedale Romance* and *The Marble Faun*, the two main characters are light and dark heroines. At the beginning of these novels, his heroines form a friendship, but at some point in the novel they are opposed to each other. Perhaps this relationship among women in Hawthorne's later novels was inspired by the decaying relationship between Sophia and Ebe. The split between the light and dark heroines became greater in Hawthorne's later novels because he began to see more clearly how two dynamic females would eventually work against each other.

Ebe was disapproving about everything in Hawthorne and Sophia's life after their marriage: she hated Concord, the place where Hawthorne and Sophia lived shortly after their marriage; she claimed Hawthorne's writing worsened after the marriage and after Hawthorne's death, and she even implied that Sophia was to blame for his illness and death. When Hawthorne and his family moved to Rome mainly because the art and architecture of the city appealed to Sophia's artistic sensibilities, Ebe claims Sophia forced the family to stay in Rome longer than they wanted to; and as a result of being in a strange country, Rose Hawthorne, Hawthorne's

youngest daughter, caught a fever. Elizabeth blamed Rome for the child's sickness and Hawthorne's death shortly after they returned to the United States. Ebe claimed, "I shall always think that my brother might have been alive and well now if she had not kept him in Rome so long" (Erlich, *Family Themes* 90). Although Ebe did not make a direct reference, the one responsible for detaining Hawthorne from returning to America was Sophia.

Yet Norko notes, the separation between light and dark women may not have been as clear when Hawthorne analyzed Sophia's character. Hawthorne's perception of Sophia as a light heroine is best symbolized through one of his pet names for his wife, the "dove." The dove represents etherealness, and purity, which embodies his concept of the light heroine. Although Sophia's real life persona best fits his concept of the light female character in his fiction, Hawthorne constantly contemplated her nature in his letters to her. Hawthorne sets his romances in a place where the real and imaginary meet; the same can be said of his letters to Sophia where he envisioned her as an ethereal "dove" and a real person he called "naughty Sophie." Norko notes that through the letter, "Sophia enables him to experience fully and therefore create in the letters a world where the actual and the visionary meet, a world that mirrors that of his romances" (127). This place where the imaginary and the real unite is what Hawthorne defines as "romance" in the introduction to *The House of the Seven Gables*. The dynamic characterization that Hawthorne created for Sophia, however, may again be linked to his mystification of female figures in his life. Sophia may have been a soft-spoken mother, but in his writing, Hawthorne saw her as a "dove," or at times she might have illustrated her romantic feelings for her husband, and her husband characterized her as "naughty."

Although the women in Hawthorne's life are reflected in his fictional heroines, they were not directly personified in his writing. Leland A. Person argues that Hawthorne wrote his letters

to Sophia by applying his background as a fiction writer. Hawthorne is not writing in his own voice, but rather, “as a first-person narrator who adopts various personae, he finds himself confronted by a woman (Sophia) who alternates between opposed ‘characters’ (‘the dove’ and ‘naughty Sophie’) while he struggles with the feelings she evokes” (Person, “Hawthorne’s Love Letters” 212). I add that perhaps Hawthorne was exploring Sophia’s character by dissecting it and examining its two components “the dove” and “naughty Sophie.” These two parts that composed this one woman could have been the basis for the light and dark heroine figures that Hawthorne created into complex female characters in his fiction.

Hawthorne also began to learn more about his own identity through Sophia. In Sophia, Hawthorne found what Person calls an “alternative self, a friendly alter ego” (“Hawthorne’s Love Letters” 213). Similarly, Erlich suggests that Sophia was an “ideal anima figure” who was an outlet for Hawthorne’s “sexuality and creativity” (*Family Themes* 100). The most poignant example of a male who does not find an “ideal anima figure,” I find, is Alice Doane’s brother, Leonard Doane. This is a warped tale of a man who finds it difficult to find his sense of identity through a woman. There are undertones of incest throughout the story since this man is in love with the woman who represents him best, his own sister. Hawthorne may have been searching for a woman who complimented his character, not a woman who was a form of his identical self. Person notes male characters such as Dimmesdale and Coverdale where men form “mutual creative relationships” with women (“Hawthorne’s Love Letters” 216). Person notes the difference between Hawthorne’s female characters and other male writers’ female characters; women were often “silenced in order to be reduced to signs and mirrors for men,” but in Hawthorne’s fiction, women did not need to speak because they have “moments of ‘oneness’ and perfect, non-verbal communication—not because he has possessed Sophia’s mind, but because

he shares it” (“Hawthorne’s Love Letters” 216). He saw Sophia as “dove” and “naughty Sophie,” yet he could not see how these two parts of Sophia could exist, and as Person concludes, “while Hawthorne does see double, something in his imagination resists the two images remaining mutually exclusive” (“Hawthorne’s Love Letters” 220). I apply Hawthorne’s difficulty with this dilemma to his two romances, *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables*, since these two images of women, the light and the dark, do not appear in the same novel. Hester is a dark heroine, but there is no opposing light female character, and although Phoebe as a light heroine is starkly different from Hepzibah, Hepzibah is not a dark female; she has no sex appeal.

Another dark heroine, arguably, is Alice since a man enters her mind by force, which suggests that she is a ruined woman. The stories of Alice Pyncheon and Alice Doane also relate to the Salem witch trials in that these fictional characters, like the women who were persecuted for witchcraft, are wrongly accused and judged by men. The women are also subject to a man’s control; so much so that their lives are literally in danger because of how men judge them. Alice’s life ends tragically when she slowly dies after losing control of her senses after Matthew Maule takes control of her mind. Her fate, however, might not have been completely in Maule’s hands. Though Maule caused her illness—Alice lost her mind and became weaker as time passed by—Alice, I argue, took her fate into her own hands and decided to let herself die rather than have a man control her for the rest of her life. Furthermore, she appears in the form of posies and music one hundred years after her death to take vengeance against dominant Pyncheon males. Hawthorne creates powerful female figures perhaps to give the women in his life strength, if only in a fictional setting.

Aside from learning to explore the nature of women through the women in his family, Hawthorne learned to identify with women when he related their experiences to his own as a

writer. Person notes the passage in “The Custom House” where Hawthorne labels himself an “idler,” which is what his Puritan ancestors would have thought of him and his writing endeavors. A writer of fiction would be of not practical use to his Puritan community, unlike a minister or a teacher. In this sense, Person claims that Hawthorne “implicitly identifies with other victims of [Puritans’] scorn and punishment—which means, of course, with the women such as Ann Coleman, the Quaker woman whom William Hawthorne sentenced to whipping, or the witches whom John Hathorne sentenced” (*Aesthetic Headaches* 107). I conclude that Hawthorne might have identified with anyone who did not fall into the realm of the Puritan way of life. In particular, Hawthorne more than likely identified with women who chose to defy Puritans, and this connection to these characters may have given him the inspiration to write about them in his fiction. Women become for Hawthorne freedom from his past, through them he is free to create fiction that defies his Puritan ancestors. Hester is an example of such a woman.

Person notes that Hawthorne applies the idea of men seeking freedom through women to Dimmesdale in *The Scarlet Letter* during his Election Day sermon. He delivers the sermon the day following his meeting with Hester in the forest. In that forest, Hester reveals herself to Dimmesdale, in particular, she reveals her love for him. Norko notes that “The power of love and its connection with freedom that Sophia and the author feel reappear in the moment when Hester frees her hair from the weight of her cap and her bosom from the weight of the letter, and in the motion, liberates herself and Dimmesdale from his spiritual imprisonment” (130). Hester is symbolically liberating both of them from this “spiritual imprisonment,” and it is through symbols that women convey their messages to the men in Hawthorne’s fiction. As a result of seeing Hester unbind by her cap and the letter, Dimmesdale sees this as a spiritual liberation



which enables him to prepare for his sermon the next day. Pearson quotes one particular passage that reveals Dimmesdale's heightened ability to relay his message to his audience when the narrator claims that, "Heaven should see fit to transmit the grand and solemn music of its oracles through so foul and organ-pipe as he" ("Hawthorne's Love Letters" 226). Through Hester, I conclude, Dimmesdale learns to communicate just as Hawthorne learned to write through his new understanding of women through the letters he wrote to Sophia. Similarly, the reader learns the meaning of symbols as the women within the text understand them. Puritan officials may have perceived the removal of the scarlet letter may symbolize an act of rebellion, but at this moment, the audience experiences this act from Hester's standpoint. It is through women, then, that readers can gain a more thorough understanding of the signs Hawthorne uses throughout his narrative.

When Hawthorne's protagonists speak to males, the males in narratives often learn from these women, and I argue that similarly, when women communicate with each other within narratives, Hawthorne perhaps learned from them. Person notes one of Hawthorne's letters to Sophia in which Hawthorne wrote: "How I should delight to see an epistle from myself to Sophie Hawthorne, written by my Dove!" ("Hawthorne's Love Letters" 224). Hawthorne imagined two images of Sophia, "the dove" and "naughty Sophie," as two parts of her personality communicate with one another. From this, Person concludes that Hawthorne "fantasizes surrendering his imagination to these two female characters so that their correspondence can reveal truths within his heart that he can recognize but not express" ("Hawthorne's Love Letters" 224). Women need only speak, whether their audience is male or female makes no difference since they "reveal truths within [Hawthorne's] heart."

The bond that women share with one another, I contend, is not only relevant to the male in the story, but also the female. A good example of this is Holgrave's retelling of the Alice Pyncheon story in *The House of the Seven Gables*. Alice is speaking to Phoebe through Holgrave's narrative, and both Holgrave and Phoebe learn of Alice's pride. They also learn to recognize Maule's sin of violating Alice's heart—the violation of the human heart was one of Hawthorne's major themes throughout his fiction. The beginning of this theme is revealed in his correspondence with Sophia. He did not want to change her in any way, as Person claims earlier, Hawthorne did not want to “possess” Sophia's mind, and he only wanted to “share” it.

Throughout his writing career, there are traces of Hawthorne's development as a man and a writer. Although Sophia's influence over Hawthorne was immense, his Puritan past, relationship with his mother, and countless life experiences are all part of Hawthorne's artistic representations of life in his art. Hugo McPherson contends, “the coherence of an artist's work may depend as much on his personal mythology or ‘life of allegory’ as on any rational scheme of ideas, aesthetic theory, or external social or religious framework” (5). This “life of allegory” is determined not only by the artist's outward life—his family, where he lives, and his time—but also by his or her inner psychological workings. McPherson outlines how Hawthorne might have constructed his personal myth: “the young artist-hero ‘Oberon,’ menaced by his aged ‘fathers,’ goes on a twelve-year quest in an illusive world of specters, and finally returns to claim his place and marry a ‘princess’” (8). This mythologized life story may help us determine the prospective from which Hawthorne wrote his fiction. Hawthorne's writing, however, is not simply an attempt on the writer's behalf to work through psychological issues, as I mention in the previous chapter. Hawthorne's writing reveals more about the human condition. Instead writing his own life story

as a struggling artist and a married man, Hawthorne may have been attempting to work out the issue of the artist's place within American culture through his characters.

Owen in "The Artist of The Beautiful," would be consistent with this universal need of the artist to make a place for himself in a society that does not appreciate artistic accomplishments. By the end of this short story, Owen, an artist, creates a butterfly that is crushed by a young boy. The work of art which Owen creates is not appreciated by the woman he loves, and it is of little significance to her son or anyone else in the story. Keeping in mind Hawthorne's "mythologizing habit of mind and his personal legend," McPherson believes will bring the critic "closer to the spirit of his art than interpretations which stress Freudian psychology, Christian theology, or New-Critical analysis of image patterns" (13). Though Hawthorne may have had a Christian upbringing—more precisely, a Puritan background—his fiction is related more to his own art than to the Christian faith. Freudian and New-Critical approaches to Hawthorne, I argue, may be too narrow in scope since Hawthorne's fiction does not easily fall into one category of critical theory. What is most relevant, therefore, to Hawthorne studies is simply Hawthorne's approach to fiction. McPherson explains that in place of "Oedipus or Electra," that would be relevant to Freudian criticism, Hawthorne creates his own characters: the "mercurial heroes, dark ladies, and tyrannical materialists whose stories have to do with the discovery of self, the problem of evil, and the brotherhood of man" (108). There is a pattern among Hawthorne's fiction; he develops themes and characters that became part of his myth throughout his writing career. McPherson, then, encourages critics to decipher the Hawthornian approach to fiction instead of Freudian. What that approach is, I argue, has much to do with Hawthorne's approach to art in general. He illustrates the development of his own art, his

writing, through his own writing, and at the same time, Hawthorne emphasizes the worth of art in nineteenth-century culture.

Hawthorne was meticulous in creating his own approach to fiction; he clearly details, for example, his concept of “romance” throughout his fiction. McPherson points to the prefaces of *The Scarlet Letter*, *The House of the Seven Gables*, and “The Snow-Image” where Hawthorne defines romance. Throughout these three works of fiction, Hawthorne reveals the “two major doctrines” of the romance: “first, that a moral tale is its own meaning, and second, that this meaning is revealed through picturesque mistiness of setting, Gothic exaggeration, and romantic heightening of lights and shadows” (McPherson 133). There are definite patterns of “meaning” throughout the romances and the environment Hawthorne created. Such “meaning” is not only part of his fiction, I argue, since Hawthorne may have also created “meaning” when he wrote about his personal life in his letters. He created a character, furthermore, for his mother through his letters to Sophia, which is an example of how he creates myth to define his life, and then he created a character of his mother in *The Scarlet Letter*, which is exemplary of how he creates a myth that applies to his fiction.

Despite Hawthorne’s dark sensibility throughout his fiction, McPherson notes that “Hawthorne’s ‘ideal’ myth is optimistic in tone: each new generation of heroes brings back to the world of things an imaginative power which enables him to become a king—a benefactor of his race” (17). Since his family was a major factor in his fiction, part of Hawthorne’s personal myth naturally relates to them. McPherson concludes that his “ideal myths, then, reveal how the hero’s quest ought to end: he ought to supplant his aggressive, materialistic relatives and restore his benign, passively sunny parents to honour” (19). I suggest that the most relevant examples of “aggressive, materialistic” family members are Hawthorne’s male Puritan ancestors. In *The*

*Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables* Hawthorne's "aggressive, materialistic relatives" are best represented by respected Puritan leaders in *The Scarlet Letter* and the powerful Judge Pyncheon in *The House of the Seven Gables*. Although these male characters are powerful figures throughout most of these novels, by the end of the novels, their power is questioned, and in their place, Hawthorne repositions another set of little-known, more "benign, passively sunny parents" to a place of "hono[r]." This set of relatives, I conclude, includes those family members who had little power over their male relatives and their own communities: women. By the end of *The Scarlet Letter*, the burden of sin proves unbearable for Dimmesdale and Puritan officials are not able to make the stigma of Hester's shame a permanent part of the Puritan community, while Hester instead of being chastised by her community is thought of as an "angel" or "able." Pearl gains wealth from Chillingworth and lives happily in a far off place. Similarly, the last overbearing male Pyncheon ancestor dies at the end *The House of the Seven Gables*, and the women, Hepzibah and Phoebe, gain control of the family's wealth.

Placing women in powerful position, I argue, is perhaps Hawthorne's greatest contribution to American literature. Though Richard Harter Fogle also sees allegory in Hawthorne's fiction, Hawthorne's idea of allegory is not as traditional because he does not "assume that allegory subordinates everything to a predetermined conclusion" (7). Instead, Hawthorne's concept of allegory is more "organic" since he will "find spiritual meaning in all things natural and human" (Fogle 7). This idea of finding allegory in nature is concurrent with Romanticism; I note, more specifically, transcendentalism. In Hawthorne's fiction, then, the reader finds there is no standard moral barometer, such as religion--more specifically Puritan religion--by which to measure morals; but instead, morality is more "organic" and subjective.

Hawthorne goes about relating allegory to his audience through two opposing dichotomies that Fogle has designated as “the light” and “the dark” qualities in Hawthorne’s fiction (11). Nothing is clear-cut in Hawthorne’s fiction, instead Fogle posits that “Hawthorne’s effects of light—his shadows, his mirror images, his masquerades—all examine the relationships of appearance and reality” (11). I apply Fogle’s concepts to transcendentalist ideas, specifically Emerson’s noble doubt where he questions the appearance of what seems real to the senses. Hawthorne takes a closer look at how “appearance and reality” are linked, and according to Fogle, “[a]s light it is the means of seeing through opacities; as darkness it is the difficulty of seeing” (11). This understanding of Hawthorne’s use of light and dark images is central to studying his mythology. The message is encoded throughout his use of literary devices such as allegory and symbolism. Yet, I argue, there is another layer to his mythology. What makes Hawthorne’s mythology even more complex is the idea that it is not only directed at the audience, but it is also directed at the characters within the text and the reading audience at the same time.

Since characters within Hawthorne’s fiction are symbolic, when Hawthorne uses symbols in his fiction, his intended audience consists not only of his readers, but characters within the text as well. I further argue that, the characters who are more prone to interpret the underlying meaning behind these symbols are the women within Hawthorne’s fiction. How male and female characters interpret symbolism has much to do with their approach to existing ideologies. Male characters follow preexisting ideologies, such as Puritanism or family traditions as found in *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables*. Dimmesdale and Chillingworth, for example, follow more institutionalized moral standards while Hester and Pearl, because they are forced out of a moral institution—their Puritanical community—do not. Thus, when Chillingworth notes

the red scar on Dimmesdale's breast he does not attempt to interpret it from a subjective point-of-view, and he sees it only as evidence of his sin. When Pearl views the symbol of Hester's sin, she does not define it completely in Puritan terms. She identifies her mother with the letter A, but she does not necessarily associate sin with the symbol. There is definitely a difference between how male and female characters perceive other characters in Hawthorne's first two major novels. I argue, therefore, that in Hawthorne's fiction, female characters are more independent thinkers than males since they do not depend on preexisting ideologies to define themselves or their offspring.

I propose that an understanding of how Hawthorne developed his literary technique from the women in his life is only half of the story. From such a study, an audience may come to some conclusion about Hawthorne's ideas concerning women throughout his fiction by understanding how he transforms them in his writing. However, there is also another layer of meaning within the text; the women within the text see one another separately from how the audience perceives them. How women affect generations of offspring begins with Hawthorne's portrayal of relationships between ancestors and their offspring in his short stories. Hawthorne begins to explore this relationship when he creates fathers who have an overbearing influence on their daughters. Although the audience is influenced by how characters see one another, making meaning of his symbols is something characters do independently from the audience. Female characters must perceive symbols in a closed environment within a text; they communicate with each other while not knowing exactly how to read the language of symbols that are presented to them. Pearl does not, for example, know how to interpret the scarlet A; she only knows that it is somehow associated with her mother. The influence of the past on future generations is a major theme throughout Hawthorne's fiction. How his ancestor's history is transformed into fiction is

telling of the bonds that offspring share with their ancestors. The relationships between fathers and their children, however, is different than the bond between mothers and their offspring.

Fathers have an overbearing influence on their offspring; King Midas in Hawthorne's "The Golden Touch" is an early example of such a domineering father. Gillian Brown uses Hawthorne's "The Golden Touch," as an example of a dysfunctional relationship between a father and his daughter. In this short story, King Midas kisses his daughter and turns her into gold. This story is significant in that Hawthorne often portrays previous generations transmitting certain characteristics to future generations. In much of Hawthorne's fiction, Gillian Brown notes that "the younger generation bears the physical marks of the character and actions of an ancestor" ("Hawthorne's Endangered" 327). The message Hawthorne is conveying is mixed, the narrator considers the transformation of his daughter into a golden object, and he claims that this transformation "was really an improvement," yet in Rappaccini's daughter, as Brown notes, Rappaccini's antidote kills his daughter, thus "[g]eneration thus appears a process fraught with danger for offspring" ("Hawthorne's Endangered" 327). In both these cases, the relationship between fathers and daughters is emblematic of the destructive nature of male inheritance—Midas turned his daughter into an inanimate object and Rappaccini was responsible for his daughter's death.

I argue that fathers are not as concerned with passing down their fraudulent personal traits to their daughters since daughters do not maintain their family name when they are married. Because of this, fathers are free to literally test the extend of their personal desires for power—Rappaccini uses his daughter to test his scientific theories—without worrying about how these traits will affect their family name. Men's legacies, in other words, will remain intact since their daughters do not carry their fathers' names any further than their natural lifespan. Brown



notes how fathers have complete disregard for their daughters' lives; daughters are used by their fathers, as "canvasses for their father's experiments in self-portraiture" ("Hawthorne's *Endangered*" 328). Furthermore, I note that fathers have little concern with the results of such "experiments in self-portraiture" since their daughters are of a different sex, and they are not a direct reflection of their fathers. If a daughter is sacrificed for the sake of their ideals, fathers are more willing to give up their daughters than they are their sons.

Richard Brenzo interprets "Rappaccini's Daughter" as a story that "concerns the exploitation of one person by another, for love, for revenge, for science, or simply for curiosity" (152). The tale's title, Brenzo observes, "emphasizes that Beatrice is her father's 'creation' she springs from him. She is dependent on him, and is his unwitting tool" (161). The title emphasizes not the main character, Beatrice, but her relationship to her father as his "dependent." What this draws the reader's attention to is not Beatrice's poisonous nature, but her relationship to her father. Though Beatrice is portrayed as a dark, threatening feminine force, her nature is not what is central to the story. Brenzo concludes that the moral of the story is that "one must look beyond such femmes fatales to the hommes fatals who make them deadly" (164). Giovanni is obsessed with his scientific creations--so much so that he jeopardizes his own daughter's life—that this is quest for knowledge is, as Brenzo suggests, "subservient to his need for power" (162). He wants to control his scientific experiment, not because he seeks to learn from them, but because he desires to restrain that which would pose a threat to the world, a woman who is unconstrained. Brenzo notes that "[b]y isolating her, he has kept her ignorant, dependent on him, and therefore weak" (162). Though her nature is dangerous—it is literally poisonous to her father—her father maintains complete control of her.

Brown maintains that “Hawthorne’s young heroines regularly suffer for the sins and manias of their fathers (or husbands, who similarly control women),” their fathers, furthermore, pass down their own sins to future generations of women. At the root of the “sins” of the fathers, I argue, is pride. Men are proud of their “manias,” Rappaccini is egomaniacal obsession with science, and Gervase Pyncheon’s greed and need to acquire more fortunes for his family. Beatrice is the byproduct of her father’s scientific experiments—he literally poisons the gene pool when he creates daughter that is poisonous to humankind. Beatrice, Brown further points out, is unique in that “Beatrice’s metamorphosis into a flower literalizes the daughter/heir’s condition as the organic representation of paternal obsessions and habits” (“Hawthorne and Children” 93). Though Rappaccini’s intent was to further his studies as a scientist by creating a human much like his poisonous plants, his “obsessions and habits” caused him to be so proud, I use the term again, of his work that his science became so detached from humanity that it was actually harmful to humans. What makes Beatrice an interesting case is that she has no maternal influence, and as a result “Beatrice represents only her father” (“Hawthorne and Children” 94). The men in these novels, I maintain, do not see how their pride becomes a sin since they are so blinded by their egos that they do not realize that their children will transmit their fathers’ transgressions to future generations.

Daughters, then, inherit their father’s vices and self-centered objectives. Brown concludes, “[t]o be a daughter, in Hawthorne’s fictional world, is to be the heiress of the effects of paternal desire and behavior” (“Hawthorne’s Endangered” 328). The “effects” of such “paternal desire and behavior” are evident in their daughters since their intentions are egomaniacal, nothing good can come of their experiments. Fathers use their daughters to test the limits of their vices, and these vices become more apparent by the end of the narrative—Midas’s

daughter becomes a lifeless object and Beatrice is poisonous. Hawthorne carries the theme of daughters as the inheritors of vice through to *The House of the Seven Gables* where Brown notes Alice Pyncheon is a victim of “her father’s greed,” and Midas’s daughter is a “moral transformation of Midas’s love of gold” (“Hawthorne’ Endangered” 328). It is interesting to note, I contend, that daughters inherit only damaging traits. The women in *The House of the Seven Gables* gain such an inheritance; women have no wealth or prestige in the novel; however, Judge Pyncheon, despite his overbearing nature, is wealthy and reputable. Though Clifford is an exception to the rule, Brown argues “that Hawthorne usually figures subjection as a female experience, or that it is an experience represented as a feminization” (“Hawthorne’s Endangered” 328). Clifford, though a male inheritor, is effeminate, while Judge Pyncheon does not inherit “subjection” because he is a dominant masculine figure in the novel.

Though Midas’ daughter and Alice have no control over their fathers’ manipulations, Beatrice’s fate is not the same since she controls how far she carries her father’s freakish experiments. Brown argues that in this tale, Hawthorne “dramatizes and preserves the importance of intentionality in inheritance in order to undo the limits implied by the process of representing intentionality which inheritance entails” (“Hawthorne’ Endangered” 331). Brown further concludes that a daughter can “terminate or transcend” her father’s desires, which is exactly what Beatrice does (“Hawthorne’s Endangered” 331). When Beatrice drinks the antidote, she sacrifices her life to end her inheritance. Beatrice actively sacrifices her life to put to an end to the physical manifestations of her father’s desires. Fathers pass down vices, their influence on their children is overbearing, and children do not learn from their father’s mistakes. Brown argues that this tale is empowering to the female protagonist, but, considering Hawthorne’s narrative transformation of this tale, it becomes clear that “Rappaccini’s Daughter” may also be

symbolic of Hawthorne's struggle to become a successful author. The tale has less to do, again with inner psychological conflicts and has more to do with becoming more individualistic, perhaps more artistic.

Though Rappaccini is ultimately successful in creating a child in the image of his own scientific experiments, Beatrice has a choice to refute her inheritance. A female offspring's determination to not only challenge her parental inheritance, but to overcome it is a strong statement in this short story. Beatrice is so resolved against her father's scientific endeavors that she destroys his most valued experiment, herself. Brown considers how this story of sacrifice for one's freedom relates to Hawthorne's search for identity as an author. Hawthorne wrote a sketch about "Aubepine" before "Rappaccini's Daughter," where, as Brown informs, he "ironically describes the story as a translation, clearly a translation of Hawthorne himself by himself" ("Hawthorne and Children" 101). Because Hawthorne recasts himself as an author from story to story, "Rappaccini's Daughter" becomes "a fictional narrative of authorial identity" which "serves to identify authors with children, the inheritors and reformers of culture" (Brown, "Hawthorne and Children" 101). That Beatrice takes such an extreme position among "the inheritors and reformers of culture" when she risks her own life to detach her destiny from her father's, I contend, is telling of how strongly Hawthorne believed in this need for the individual to take control over his or her own fate. Hawthorne's short stories are a step to what he ultimately achieves in his novels: creating mythical feminine figures.

Alice Pyncheon in *The House of the Seven Gables* is an example of a narrative within a narrative; the narrative is twice removed as Hawthorne tells the story of the Pyncheon family, and a fictitious character within his narrative, Holgrave, tells the story of Alice Pyncheon. Though Alice's character is not as clearly defined as Beatrice's—it is set in the past rather than

the present, and Alice has no speaking parts throughout his narrative, and there is one more narrator to contend with than in Beatrice's story—Alice's death, I observe, is also related to Beatrice's. Beatrice has no control over her physical being; her father has made her into a poisonous substance. Alice, similarly, loses control of her own body when her father allows Mathew Maule to put her under his trance. At the end of the narrative, Alice also dies, though it is unclear whether she chooses to allow her body to cease living when Mathew Maule casts a spell over her and gains control of her body. Her involvement with her own demise is not as active as Beatrice—Beatrice drinks an antidote that she knowingly knows might cause her death. While Alice's approach appears to be more passive, she loses the will to live without control of her own body. The end of these narratives are similar in that they both would rather sacrifice their own lives rather than be controlled by another man for the rest of their lives.

When Hawthorne writes about a father's involvement with their child's fate, I argue, the child's reaction is unyielding. Fathers pass their names down to subsequent generations, and their reputations as noteworthy men within their communities is attached to that name. Female ancestors, however, see their offspring much differently; they do not maintain pride, but are instead put in a situation where they fall from a better position among their communities—Hester is ostracized from her community for committing a sin in *The Scarlet Letter*, and Hepzibah has to work for a living in *The House of the Seven Gables*. They become much more humble, are able to see the mistakes of their past, and are concerned with not passing down their own unfortunate fates to their offspring. Hester's name is ruined when she has an illegitimate child, and she does not want her child to inherit the reputation attached with her name. In truth, she would rather her child be completely detached from her character; this gives Pearl freedom. The

freedom from parental domination is what Hawthorne gives younger generations of women in *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables*.

I conclude that women are more nurturing to their offspring; a father's influence is overbearing while mothers are subtler in their approach to their daughters. One example of this subtlety is Hester in *The Scarlet Letter* who fears that Pearl may have inherited her corrupt nature, yet she does not express this to Pearl. Hester wears the scarlet A not knowing how Pearl will read it. Pearl can also fear inheriting her mother's sin; she rebels against her mother and does not associate herself with that symbol, or she can completely miss the symbol's meaning. When Hester removes the letter from her chest in the forest, Pearl knows that she is somehow linked to it and the letter is as much a part of Hester as she is, yet the narrator does not clearly relate how Pearl interprets this symbol. The narrator is not specific enough through Hawthorne's fiction, I argue, because this ambiguity is part of his narrative technique.

Just as Hawthorne fictionalized his mother in his letters to Sophia, he creates a character of himself in his fiction. G.R. Thompson considers Hawthorne's narrative technique and finds Hawthorne's fiction is difficult to interpret because of the narrator and "the fictionalizing of the authorial self" (2). Although critics often find parallels between the author and the narrator, these connections are not as straightforward as some interpret because Hawthorne was so keenly aware about the separation between the author and narrator that he was flippant about this separation in his fiction. Hawthorne in particular was concerned with American history, and in his early fiction Thompson notes "[t]he themes of naïve earnestness versus aesthetic distance in these so-called provincial tales are intricately involved in the relation of ethics and irony in Hawthorne and the major opposition posed in Hawthorne studies of *history* versus *romance*" (4). In writing historical fiction, Hawthorne's narrator is "naïve" in his portrayal of history from a historical

mind frame, the narrator relates seventeenth-century history from a seventeenth-century perspective. The problem becomes more evident, however, when the narrator re-tells seventeenth-century history to a nineteenth-century audience in terms that are relative to an audience that expects “aesthetic distance” from the narrator. Thompson agrees with Michael Colacurcio’s answer to this problem: “Why could not Hawthorne be both the American Calvinist and the aesthete?” (8). Not only is Hawthorne fully aware that his narrator is an “American Calvinist and the aesthete,” but he makes this awareness overtly obvious in his fiction to stress the idea that a text is fluid and is not limited to a set period of time in American history. Thompson explains Hawthorne’s approach in “poststructuralist terms” where “the question is one of being contained or imprisoned within one’s culture, within its concepts of history and categories of valuation,” and he concludes that “Hawthorne not only acknowledges the ‘iron cage’—the inside view; he also emphasizes it” (9). The narrator from a seventeenth-century culture tells the narrative from within the “iron cage” of Puritan culture, and he also narrates the story of the Puritan past from a nineteenth-century perspective. Ultimately, Thompson concludes that “through the art of romantic narrative, Hawthorne suggests that one can attain the liberating outside view too. And, what is more liberating, both simultaneously” (9). What Hawthorne ultimately achieves is a portrayal of multiple perspectives from different narrators.

Similarly David Stouck and Janet Giltrow notice that readings of Hawthorne reflect movements in literary criticism. Instead of focusing on criticism, they look at Hawthorne’s style, in particular, “language in its very wordings” (560). The narrator in Hawthorne’s fiction, for example, uses language that is indirect; Stouck and Giltrow conclude that the narrator, then, will “say that things seem to be, rather than that they are so” (563). Not only does this allow an audience little insight into the interpretation of the text, but also the narrator’s perspective is

never clear. The narrator is ambiguous about his approach to the text and constantly makes mistakes throughout the narrative; thus, as a character, the narrator has little authority over the text because he or she is ambiguous, and because of mistakes the narrator makes within the text. For example, the narrator in *The Scarlet Letter* tells the story of Hester Prynne from both a seventeenth and nineteenth-century perspective, as will be discussed further in the next chapter. Not only is the narrator's perspective vague, but also the characters' intentions are never clearly revealed.

Linguistic style In Hawthorne's fiction is Stouck and Giltrow's main concern, and they focus on "the linguistic materials constituting, first, the reader's contact with ambiguity and, secondly, the particular character of that ambiguity" (560). When the narrator loads the text with "ambiguity" it is not only the readers but also characters within the text who have to make meaning of the open-ended language used by the narrator. Determining the meaning of the text for the reader alone would not be enough to analyze the text, I argue, since scholars also need to interpret the text's meaning for the characters within the text. The reader and the characters within the text may come to completely different understandings of the same text. Another complication that arises from such an ambiguous text is that the characters within the text must make meaning of this "ambiguity" and the reader may rely on these characters' interpretations of the narrative to base their own understanding of the text.

The symbols may be ambiguous to the characters since they react similarly to these symbols, and this may bring critics closer to an interpretation of recurring themes in Hawthorne's fiction. I link Beatrice's symbolic representation as a poisonous flower in "Rappaccini's Garden" can be linked to Alice Pyncheon's depiction as a posy in *The House of the Seven Gables* in that they are both associated with a nascent love. Beatrice and Giovanni are



kept apart by a poisonous flower, yet Phoebe and Holgrave come together since, according to Alfred J. Kloeckner, Hawthorne “is particularly careful to associate the blooming of what are called Alice’s Posies with the romance” (325). Beatrice inhales a flower’s poisonous scent in the story, and she in turn becomes poisonous. The flower was a result of her father’s scientific experiments, and Beatrice has become one of her father’s experiments as well. The two are linked throughout the story; however, the significance of the flower can be viewed from different perspectives. Alfred J. Kloeckner links the flower and the fountain in the story as symbols of isolation. Kloeckner notes Beatrice’s loneliness and concludes “that love, a love of mutual respect, would have been if not a solution, at least a melioration of the isolation of Giovanni and Beatrice” (326). The flower’s effect on Beatrice is the cause of her loneliness; it has, indirectly, caused the two lovers from coming together and remaining in isolation. Kloeckner concludes that “the situation in ‘Rappaccini’s Daughter’ is one of incipient love prepared for by isolation and associated with a flower” (326).

Although Kloeckner interprets the meaning of the flower for the reader as a symbol of an “isolation” and “love,” I argue that for the reader, the meaning of the flower itself is not clear since the characters do not fully understand the symbolic implications of the flower either. Ultimately, the flower, Kloeckner contends is “[t]he symbol of love, the Flower of Eden, which comes full to bloom in *The House Of The Seven Gables* is made to bloom perversely and indeed falsely in Rappaccini’s garden” (335). The flower represents an unnatural love, so unnatural in fact, that it is harmful to both lovers in the story. The reader may perceive this flower as a representation of a harmful love or a symbol of isolation. Yet Beatrice, I argue, may come to a different conclusion about the flower—she, like Pearl, have difficulty in interpreting a symbol they are so closely linked to.

Kloeckner notes that Beatrice claims that “her father *created* the shrub,” and this is significant to her perception of her father’s involvement with the plant. A scientist may not create a natural object, a plant, but he can manipulate plants through hybridization to create a poisonous flower. Beatrice does not mention such a manipulation; she only expresses that her father “created” a flower without knowing how he came about this which, as Kloeckner claims” is proof of “her general innocence and her particular ignorance of her father’s craft” (329). Kloeckner explain that as a scientist, Rappaccini more than likely “*found* the products of nature” rather than “created” them (329). Beatrice knows she came from somewhere, her father, just as the flower has. The narrator implies that both are sisters, she knows the same poison runs through their organisms, therefore, they are related to one another.

Hawthorne has his characters constantly searching for meaning throughout the text, and they encounter various symbols throughout the narrative. I note where in *The House of the Seven Gables*, for example, Phoebe encounters Alice Pyncheon’s posies in a weed-ridden garden. Alice’s posies can be compared to her place among the Pyncheon weeds or what they represent—the Pyncheon dynasty—yet the reader and Phoebe come to their own conclusions. These flowers are a mystery to both Phoebe and the reader; both must come to individual conclusions from Hawthorne’s symbolic use of flowers and weeds in a garden. These encounters are, according to Stouck and Giltrow” “[r]elevant as much to the experience of the reader as to the fictional experience of Hawthorne’s heroes, these findings map not only the site of mystery but also the site of the romance mode” (561). Aside from uncertainty, romance “is used to indicate a mode of narrative, a pattern of story-telling that illuminates the individual life as an identity quest” (562). Neither the narrator, the character, nor the reader know exactly how to interpret what the character encounters throughout this “identity quest.” Hawthorne’s narrative

technique individuality, the narrator, character, and reader are all individuals who come to different conclusions, therefore, the interpretation of his romances from these three perspectives are supposed to be varied.

Sacvan Bercovitch notes in *The Office Of The Scarlet Letter* how Hawthorne's audience and characters within *The Scarlet Letter* perceive Hester's return distinctively. Whether *The Scarlet Letter* had served its purpose—punishment for Hester's sin—depends on narrative perspective. From Hester's point-of-view, the letter had not fulfilled its purpose; I propose that for the reader, however, the scarlet letter has served its purpose depending on how the reader chooses to interpret the text. Critics, perhaps, generally focus on the reader's response because it is more fluid. The reader can come to his or her conclusions and not view the scarlet letter as Hester does, or they may agree with Hester's perspective. Readers, characters, and narrators—I will discuss both the seventeenth and nineteenth-century narrators in the next chapter—come to different understandings. It is the characters within the text, the women in particular, who come to their own understandings of the symbolic implications of the feminine myths Hawthorne creates in *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables*.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE ROSE AND FEMININE REFORMERS IN *THE SCARLET LETTER*

The narrator in *The Scarlet Letter* is the lens through which the reader interprets the narrative. A reading of the novel, however, becomes complicated since there are, arguably, different narrative perspectives. The novel is set in the seventeenth-century; therefore characters cannot see beyond the religious ideology of the time, Puritanism. Yet, *The Scarlet Letter* was written in the nineteenth-century; thus the narrator in the novel tells the story from a perspective two hundred years ahead of when the “manuscript” for the novel was found. Hawthorne perhaps created “The Custom House” as a narrative technique that summons his readers to consider how the two perspectives create meaning throughout the novel. Since Hawthorne had two centuries to contend with, however, the narrative became even more complicated since language and meaning change significantly over the course of time as he shows us in the narrative, throughout different centuries. As a solution to this issue, Hawthorne, I argue, created a fluid narrative device that would communicate to the audience within and without the narrative, from one generation of characters to another, from author to characters, and from one narrator to another. Hawthorne, I argue, perhaps understood that only a visual symbol could communicate the ideas from one generation to the next. Ann Hutchinson, Hester, and Pearl, as characters in Hawthorne’s fiction, therefore, communicate to one another through the rosebush that Hester encounters in the first chapter of the novel. The roses that blossomed under Hutchinson’s feet unite two new generations of New England women, Hester and Pearl, both of whom encounter the symbolic implications of the roses throughout the novel.

Two narrative voices describe Pearl throughout *The Scarlet Letter*; one narrator portrays her from a seventeenth-century Puritan perspective and the other sees her from a nineteenth-

century Transcendentalist point of view. David Van Leer takes these two narrative perspectives and argues that the novel is “not really ‘narrated’ at all,” but instead “it has a more general narrative context - a mix of the characters’ interpretations and the narrator’s own” (69). One of the best illustrations of such “a mix” of narrative perspectives, I argue, is the shift within the narrative’s frame when Hester views Pearl from a seventeenth-century perspective instead of a more contemporary nineteenth-century perspective, one that embodies romantic ideas. Hester reads evil into the child’s nature, and, as is consistent with Puritan beliefs, she believes that Pearl is not sanctified; she perceives that Pearl’s evil nature is evidence of her moral corruption. Through Hester, the narrator describes Pearl as a potentially evil creature who, like her mother, is condemned to live a life of sin. The narrator explains how Hester’s perception of Pearl is based on how she sees herself:

Hester could only account for the child’s character—and even then, most vaguely and imperfectly—by recalling what she herself had been, during that momentous period while Pearl was imbibing her soul from the spiritual world, and her bodily from its material of earth. The Mother’s impassioned state had been the medium through which were transmitted to the unborn infant the rays of its moral life; and, however white and clear originally, they had taken the deep stains of crimson and gold, the fiery luster, the black shadow, and the untempered light, of that epoch was perpetuated in Pearl (*SL* 91).

The reader sees Pearl through Hester’s “impassioned state,” and such a state does not allow for an objective portrayal of Pearl. There are two filters by which the reader may see Pearl: one is “white and clear” and the other is riddled with “stains of crimson.” This is a clear indication by the narrator that Hester’s portrayal of Pearl is clearly muddled by Puritan beliefs.

One narrative voice sees Pearl as do the characters in the seventeenth-century—Pearl, Dimmesdale, and Puritan officials—while another narrative voice reveals his nineteenth-century perception of Pearl. Hawthorne makes these two drastically different views of Pearl more apparent to reveal two sides of the child’s nature. When Pearl throws “prickly burrs” at

Dimmesdale, the adults look at Pearl with dread, and the child laughs and merrily runs off, “like a creature that had nothing in common with a bygone and buried generation, nor owned herself akin to it. It was as if she had been made afresh, out of new elements, and must perforce be permitted to live her own life, and be a law unto herself, without her eccentricities being reckoned to her for a crime” (*SL* 134 ). Puritans see the “eccentricities” of a child as a “crime,” and the narrator clearly explains how this perception of her is ridiculous. The narrator clearly reveals nineteenth-century ideals that elevate a person’s individuality instead of condemning an individual’s peculiarities. The narrator contrasts two starkly different images: the Puritans are decayed, “bygone and buried” while Pearl is “made afresh, out of new element.” The narrator captures Pearl’s youth and novel approach to life.

Since the reader must consider both seventeenth and nineteenth-centuries perspectives when reading *The Scarlet Letter*, there naturally arises a comparison between both a conservative and a liberal point of view. Van Leer argues that “Hawthorne does not see the interpretive shift from Puritan typology to Transcendentalist symbolism as an improvement, or even a change,” since, he continues, “both views are “a dangerously mechanistic model of the continuity between world and mind, body and soul” (85). Although the nineteenth-century narrator does seem naïve, perhaps overly-optimistic in his hope in a new generation of Puritans such as Pearl who are more natural than judgmental, this view is less “[dangerous]” than a rigorous, judgmental Puritan perspective. Where a child such as Pearl would perhaps grow to know that despite romantic ideals, there is a limit to the “soul,” Puritan notions would have kept such a child as Pearl from believing anything other than that the soul was destined to eternal damnation. Had Pearl conceded to seventeenth-century doctrines, she would have perhaps remained in Boston, convinced she was destined to repeat the sins of her mother. Instead, I contend that Pearl is

viewed from two perspectives because Hawthorne reveals how damaging a seventeenth-century ideology is to the characters who cannot see beyond Puritan ideals—the entire community, Dimmesdale, and Hester. Although females view Hester as a threat because of her sexuality, the authority figures in Puritan society are males, and, therefore, are the most detrimental figures toward social progress. This perspective men had of women as dangerous to the community is obviously damaging to women because Puritan society was so male-centered. Males were heads of the church and the state; therefore women had no power within the Puritan culture.

Hawthorne plays on the fear of female sexuality to make a statement about the domineering patriarchy in Puritan society. Michael J. Colacurcio claims that instead of complying with the traditional view of woman as a stable, “safe and conserving social force,” in Hawthorne’s fiction “female sexuality seems, in its concentration and power, both a source for and a type of individualistic nullification of social restraint” (472). Women in Hawthorne’s fiction break through their social roles as a grounding force for Puritanical social values and instead assume an opposite characterization. Hawthorne’s characterization of women perhaps reveals his idea that even the most powerless figures in society are also “individualistic” in nature because they refuse to abide by their positions within their socially constructed place in a patriarchal community.

Hester alone, as a powerful female character, draws attention to the idea that women can make a break from “social restraint”; but in conjunction with an equally powerful historical figure, Hawthorne solidifies the vision that women can be independent. In *The Scarlet Letter* he invokes Hutchinson’s name perhaps to reveal what an artistic account of the antinomian controversy reveals about history. There is a definite link between Ann Hutchinson and Hester Prynne, but the narrator in *The Scarlet Letter* is doing more than merely basing his fictional

character on a historical figure. Hawthorne artistically links both women; the most obvious symbol being the rose-bush that Hester passes by in front of the prison that perhaps did “spring up under the footsteps of the sainted Ann Hutchinson” (*SL* 48). Colacurcio explains that an audience is “free to ignore this critical invitation,” but the reader may miss Hawthorne’s link between history and myth that allows him and his audience an artistically detached view of history. This view of history allows Hawthorne to include seventeenth and nineteenth-century perspectives and play them against one another.

Hawthorne created an artistic view of Hutchinson in his sketch “Mrs. Hutchinson” where he portrays Hutchinson at her trial in 1638. In this sketch, Hawthorne equates sex with power in his characterization of Hutchinson because this sexualized view of women by the narrator throughout the narrative demonstrates Hawthorne’s attempt to denounce Hutchinson’s opponents’ theology. Her opponents believed that sanctification was visible, and if they perceived that a seductive woman could logically argue Calvinist theology, her ability to understand scripture would prove that her outer-appearance did not reflect her inner-character. Colacurcio concludes that within Hutchinson’s argument in support of her theology “as Hawthorne well knows—lies a series of far less drastic attempts to affirm that the Spirit does not always obey the laws of ordinary moral appearance. And even though she has moved from the dangerous to the intolerable, the weight of Hawthorne’s subtlest moral judgment falls no more heavily on her head than on those of her judges” (471). The fact that males can focus on nothing but “the woman’s” sexuality reveals that they are just as guilty of immorality. Similarly, Hawthorne’s female character in “Alice Doane’s Appeal,” is passive; she has no speaking parts, the male characters around her create the action since they are sexually attracted to her, and, as a result, her sex appeal is a psychological construction of the male characters’ mind. Similarly, the



narrators in Hawthorne's sketch "Mrs. Hutchinson" and in *The Scarlet Letter* are actively creating a perception of female characters, and they are reflecting their engrossment with sex. This idea, I wish to suggest, is a reflection of nineteenth-century thinking, and despite what an individual sees, there is always a "noble doubt" about what someone perceives. The natural world exists because an individual creates it to a certain extent. Hutchinson and Hester may not be evil and seductive women, they may simply be perceived as such by their male opponents. To a Puritan, Emerson's idea that individuals doubt what they perceive is non-existent, and this lack of exposure to Emerson's ideas is reflected in the narrator's perception of Hutchinson as a sexual object. Hawthorne, however, creates a narrator who is so obsessed with the idea of women as sexual objects that the reader can easily determine that his obsession may skew his judgment of women. The narrator can only perceive a fictional female character who is attempting to seduce her male protagonists, when in reality the historical figure of Hutchinson was more than likely attempting to persuade them with her logic.

Hutchinson and Hester—one an orthodox Calvinist and the other a more moderate Puritan, respectively—are both concerned with the idea that individuals are either part of the elect who are granted God's free-grace, or they are not. Yet, Hester's view of herself and Pearl may reflect both sides of the debate during the antinomian crisis. Like Hutchinson, Hester believes that individuals are justified and, because of her belief in this Calvinist idea, she fears that she and her offspring may not be part of that elect. Hester, however, also perceives that she and her offspring may show through their actions that they may not be part of the elect; her ideas may reflect the ideas of Puritan ministers who believed that individuals proved their justification through their actions. Colacurcio concludes that "Hester passes through a phase of antinomianism comparable to (though no identical with) that of the historical Ann Hutchinson,

only to emerge as a version of the sexual reformer already ‘typed out’ in Hawthorne’s ‘figure’ of Mrs. Hutchinson as independent and reforming ‘female’” (468). The narrator gives a changing perspective of Hester throughout the novel and, unlike Hutchinson, the community eventually perceives her as more than a sexually promiscuous woman. This change in the community’s perception of Hester arguably makes her a stronger female-reformer than Hutchinson.

The only apparent similarity between Hutchinson and Hester appears to be that both were expelled from their Puritan communities. Since both women took a different approach toward social reform—Hutchinson was more aggressive and vocal when she challenged Puritan officials, while Hester does not seem to object to her punishment and suffers in silence—they affected their communities differently. Yet the issue of Hutchinson’s effectiveness as a social reformer, I maintain, is not as simple as may first appear. To understand why Hawthorne links two women with such different perspectives of the Puritan religion, the reader must closely examine Hutchinson’s religious ideals.

Hutchinson followed Calvinist and Lutheran doctrines closely, specifically the doctrine of free-grace. She, along with the Reverend John Cotton, believed that God would grant his grace freely and there was nothing an individual could do to change God’s judgment. Before an individual is born, according to the doctrine of free-grace, God decides who is justified, or saved, and who is damned. Even if individuals appear to be morally depraved, their outer-immoral acts do not reveal whether or not these individuals are internally justified. Amy Schrager Lang quotes an Englishman who best illustrates this belief: “‘in all your acts Christ acts, and in all Christ acts within you, you act . . . and in your lowest acts Christ acts as well as in your highest’” (7). Yet, Puritan ministers and governors determined that this doctrine could potentially cause serious chaos among the Puritan community. Individuals would decide not to abide by laws and commit

immoral acts because their actions, whether moral or immoral, did not guarantee their salvation. Citizens within the community would discover that they were not to be held accountable for their actions. To put a stop to what could potentially become social anarchy within the Puritan community, ministers began preaching the doctrine of sanctification. Individuals would show through their good moral behavior, or sanctification, that they were indeed justified. Justification was then no longer internalized, and an individual had to prove through his or her good works that God granted him or her free-grace.

Several parallels can be drawn between Hutchinson and Hester. First of all, they were both female figures who were barred from their Puritan communities. Hutchinson was expelled from her community since she was a major female participant in the antinomian controversy, while Hester was barred from Boston for conceiving a child out of wedlock. Secondly, both women can be labeled as “adulteresses.” The antinomian controversy arose as a result of this adulteration of Calvinist doctrines. John Cotton preached a doctrine of free-grace, unlike other ministers in Massachusetts. Hutchinson, a devout Calvinist and Lutheran, one of his followers, held meetings in her home, and eventually gathered support for Cotton’s ideas and claimed that sanctification was not evidence of justification. Puritan ministers, who were proponents of the tenant of justification, brought her, and they found guilty of heresy and was excommunicated from her Puritan community. Therefore, Hutchinson and Cotton commit a more nonfigurative adultery of Puritan beliefs while Hester and Dimmesdale not only adulterate Puritan ideals when they have an extra-marital affair, but they literally commit adultery.

Although Hawthorne evokes the historical figure of Hutchinson in *The Scarlet Letter*, he also creates a fictional character based on Hutchinson that may bring to light why he chose to mention her name in the novel. Hawthorne may not only be alluding to the historical figure of

Hutchinson, but also his fictional account of her, "Mrs. Hutchinson." Hawthorne takes a closer look at Puritan history in his sketch of "Mrs. Hutchinson" and *The Scarlet Letter* and, I propose, he links sanctification, justification, and Transcendentalism. Since individuals have more control over their salvation when they feel they have to display their sanctity, they are, as a result, held accountable for individual acts of morality. This idea, I note, is more attuned with Transcendental ideologies which put individuals in control of their beliefs; it takes authority away from God and the church and places it on the natural world and the individual. Despite the polarity between the doctrines of free-grace and self-reliance, the essence of antinomianism, challenging a consensus ideology as an individual, is closely related to nineteenth-century beliefs in individualism. Hawthorne has this idea in mind and creates irony in his writing by linking antinomianism, a belief in God's free grace which does not involved an individual's involvement in his or her salvation whatsoever, to the liberal Christianity of the nineteenth-century, which places the individual in control of his or her own free will and moral judgment and does not hold that God is directly linked with an individual's salvation.

Hawthorne, I argue, most clearly reveals the link between Hutchinson's Calvinism and Transcendentalism when he reveals Hester's anxious thoughts about Pearl's nature. Hester and Hutchinson are dissimilar in their perception of an individual's outward appearance. Hutchinson argued that an individual's outward acts could not reveal whether or not that individual had inherited God's grace. Hester, on the other hand, is constantly worried that the evil nature she perceives in Pearl is evidence of her child's damnation. Though, ironically, Hutchinson is the more orthodox Calvinist of the two women, her approach to an individual's nature is more liberating. Hutchinson believed that an individual's actions were irrelevant when it came to revealing their sanctification. If Hester shared this belief, she would not have been convinced

that her adulterous relationship with a minister was evidence of her lack of God's grace, nor would she attempt to redeem herself from this sin by wearing the scarlet A since these actions would do nothing to assure her salvation. Though Hester refers to Pearl as an "elf child," she would not have been convinced that Pearl was damned, because she appeared evil, had she agreed with Hutchinson's orthodox Calvinism.

Though Hawthorne may ironically link two conflicting ideologies, the relationship between the two should not be over-simplified. Lang explains that this link between two apparently conflicting ideologies "has encouraged scholars to generalize the problem of antinomianism into one simply of authority, of how the claim of the individual is to be balanced against those of the community" (14). Ann Hutchinson as a historical figure does challenge dominant Puritan ideologies of her time, yet she is not simply a Transcendentalist because she is an individual thinker. Hutchinson was a proponent of a previous consensus ideology, Calvinism. She was, I argue further, not an independent female reformer since she was following the ideas of Cotton, a powerful male figure.

Lang's argument that scholars tend to over-simplify the link between Calvinism and Transcendentalism should be noted when scholars consider what Hawthorne reveals about how conflicting ideologies reveal two sides of the issue of moral development. Why Hawthorne chose to play these two ideas against each other, however, may have more to do with an individual's cultural rather than spiritual development. James F. Ragan observes the physical appearance of Puritans in Hawthorne's novels and notes that they are described as "coarse, rude, or gross" (420). Their bodies represent what Ragan calls their "moral state" (420). I apply this idea that a Puritan's physical appearance reflects his or her moral state to their belief that individuals could gain God's grace by exhibiting outward signs of sanctification. When these Puritans condemned

Ann Hutchinson, they did so because she argued that individuals could not outwardly exhibit any signs of having God's grace. Puritan officials argued that individuals could, through good works, show that they might not be depraved and would be in a position to receive this grace.

Hawthorne's sketch of "Mrs. Hutchinson" illustrates the idea that an individual's physical appearance can reveal the state of his or her moral condition. In *The Scarlet Letter*, however, I argue that Hawthorne seems to be looking at the Puritans' outward appearance more to gauge their lack of artistic sensitivity, and I apply this to the scene outside the prison doors when Hester is first seen by a group of Puritan women. These women see Hester holding Pearl in her arms. A Puritan would not see that the narrator's suggestion of this first vision of Hester holding her infant echoes the image of the Madonna and her babe. The narrator claims that "[t]he age had not so much refinement, that any sense of impropriety restrained the wearers of petticoat and farthingale from stepping forth into the public ways". The narrator focuses on how much cultural "refinement" the women lack rather than emphasizing the fact that these matrons, despite their strict moral values, are committing a sin by gossiping. The narrator does not care so much for the women's immoral action as much as he does for their lack of sophistication

The narrator highlights the rude appearance of these women when the daylight "shone on the broad shoulders and well-developed busts, and on round and ruddy cheeks, that had ripened in the far-off island, and had hardly yet grown paler or thinner in the atmosphere of New England" (SL 50-1). The Puritan women who are chastising Hester are stout women and the narrator claims that "in six or seven generations American women will be more frail than their ancestors" (Ragan 420). I argue, then, that Pearl represents such future generations since her appearance is refined, especially compared to other Puritan women. The narrator often describes Pearl as "bird like," for example, and there is a quality about her that is natural to emphasize how

Pearl is far more advanced in her physical and intellectual development. When Puritans refused to look to other cultures, particularly those associated with Catholicism they became not only closed-minded to other religious beliefs but also to other cultures. The significance of cultural awareness is related to how Puritans thought; if they were not attuned with the aesthetic impact of art, then they could not read into the significance of symbols.

Why Hawthorne chose to focus on the idea that individuals must appreciate the aesthetic significance of symbols may be because he wanted to emphasize the impact that visual symbols have on individuals in contrast to the spoken language. Allan Lloyd Smith considers why the letter penetrates the community; it is personified in Pearl, appears on Dimmesdale's chest, in the sky, on a grave, and finally as a piece of material that survives two centuries (70-1). The letter takes different forms because it is seen from various perspectives by the characters. Smith argues that Rousseau and Hawthorne might make the same assumptions when "Rousseau fixes the distinction between speech and personal gesture (immediate sign) since Rousseau posits that language "is easier and depends less upon conventions" yet, "more things affect our eyes than our ears," and, furthermore, "visual forms are more varied than sounds, and more expressive, saying more in less time" (74). Dimmesdale communicates with the Puritan community through speech. As a minister, he is a pillar in his community, and his sermons do communicate to a large Puritan audience. I argue that the meaning of Dimmesdale's words is not as "varied" as the letter A because this symbol is less abstract and more direct than Dimmesdale's sermons. Sermons are didactic, a minister would interpret scripture in such a way that his community could take instruction from Puritan beliefs. The letter is supposed to remain abstract; the narrator never spells out what it stands for; Hester can be an adulteress just as much as she can be an antinomian or angel. I also maintain that Dimmesdale's sermons do not change the community

as does the letter since his spoken words are not as open to interpretation. The scarlet A in stark contrast to Dimmesdale's spoken words is fluid within the text: at the beginning of the text, the A signifies "Adultery"; by the end it comes to mean "Able" or "Angel," and eventually it survives two centuries as a piece of cloth that can be interpreted from different perspectives, as Hawthorne illustrates from the two narrative voices he uses throughout the text.

I point to the narrative for evidence of Dimmesdale's ineffectual speech. The day after Dimmesdale met Hester and Pearl on the scaffold the night Governor Winthrop died, he speaks to his congregation. Dimmesdale "preached a discourse which was held to be the richest and most powerful, and the most replete with heavenly influences, that had ever proceeded from his lips" (*SL* 157). The narrator, however, does not give the reader any specific insight into this speech "replete with heavenly influences." If the discourse was as moving as the narrator claims, why, then, does he not repeat some of the words spoken by Dimmesdale? The sermon only has an immediate effect on the audience within the minister's congregation; his words do not live past the text itself since the reader never reads any of his words in the narrative. Again, I contrast the lost meaning of the sermon with Hester's letter. Hawthorne assures the letter's immortality within and without the narrative since it becomes a written work that has survived two-hundred years and will live as a narrative for his reading audience; and for the characters, it will survive as an artifact--the A on Hester's tombstone.

The letter does not only speak to the audience within and without the text, but it should also be noted that the letter interchangeably links the author, narrator, a historical figure, and Hawthorne's characters, thus illustrating how fluid a visual symbol is. Bercovitch points to an instance in the "Custom House" in which the narrator picks up what is left of the scarlet letter and puts it on his chest. This point in the narrative, Bercovitch argues, links Hawthorne and



Hester because it “amounts to an emblem play of authorial identification, balancing distance and empathy”. This action literally unites the narrator, who arguably represents Hawthorne, and Hawthorne’s fictional character; the cloth, and then it survives two centuries to symbolically link the seventeenth and nineteenth-centuries. Ideologically, there is also a link between Hawthorne and Hester since, as Bercovitch continues, Hawthorne “returns with Hester to colonial Boston and transforms himself—as writer, as victim of party politics, and as a son of the Puritans –into a symbol of continuity” (73-4). The “symbol” of the scarlet letter is an indication in the narrative of a link between two figures, Hester and a real life character—Hawthorne as writer and narrator. When the narrative brings writer and character together, it links life and fiction at the same time.

I propose that if Hawthorne links himself to Hester through the symbol of the scarlet letter, then Hawthorne again uses this technique in the narrative itself when he directly refers to Ann Hutchinson. The rosebush becomes a “symbol of continuity” between Hutchinson and Hester. The action that literally unites a real-life character to a fictional character in this case occurs when Hester passes the rosebush that is said to have blossomed under Hutchinson’s feet. Both women, who are excommunicated from their communities, are Puritan daughters, and both leave behind living symbols. Hutchinson’s roses continue to blossom as Pearl grows into a woman by the end of the narrative. The symbol of the rose, then, is poignant in this respect since the roses and Pearl are capable of remaining “symbols of continuity.” As the roses blossom every season and Pearl gives birth to another living symbol at the end of the novel, Hutchinson and Hester become immortal symbols.

The rose additionally links those outside the narrative and those within, and what makes the symbol more dynamic is how there are different readings of it, first of all by the Puritan community within the narrative. After “The Custom House,” the first impression the reading

audience has of Hester comes from the Puritan community's point of view. The narrator, then, describes her in terms of a biblical figure of whom Puritans were well aware. Erlich posits that Hawthorne's narratives are essentially about the Fall and that Hester "is really a very complex version of Mother Eve" ("Deadly Innocence" 164). Since the narrative begins after this new version of "the Fall," then the setting of the story is no longer in a Puritan Eden. By ostracizing Hester, the community is not only punishing her for her transgression, but it is also purifying itself from her sin. This cleansing process can also be interpreted as the Puritans' attempt to rid themselves of original sin. Erlich astutely observes that the Puritans are "guilty of heresy" because in their "attempt to establish a Utopia" they are "denying the concept of man's depravity when they condemn Ann Hutchinson and Hester" ("Deadly Innocence" 166). These two women are symbols of one of the Calvinist five points, mankind's depravity. Since the fall of man, man is expected to be morally; Puritans lived in constant anxiety because they knew they were doomed to be naturally degenerate for the rest of their lives. These wanton women represent mankind at its most natural state, according to the Puritan religion; therefore, it was only natural that were part of the Puritan community. I add that because two women are symbolically associated with a red rose and a red letter, these images may also indicate that they are a stain on an otherwise white and pure Puritan Utopia.

The symbol of the flower is also pertinent, I observe, to the Puritan community throughout *The Scarlet Letter* because flowers were considered frivolous to Puritans. The image of the rose is used in conjunction with the characters of Ann Hutchinson, Hester, and Pearl. Since these women were not part of the Puritan community, flowers are used to represent how intolerant Puritans were of frivolity in their communities. Puritans cultivated plants that would be useful; fruit-bearing trees and herbs were not considered luxuries since they were essential to the

community's well being. There was, however, no practical use for the flower; it represented vanity, pride, and was, therefore, a frivolous plant. Hester and Pearl visit the Governor's hall, and it is here where the narrator reveals insight into how these women saw their communities differently. When Hester and Pearl visit the governor's abode, Hester tells Pearl to look at the flowers in his garden since they were unlike the ones they saw in the woods (*SL* 106). Once Pearl sees these flowers, she insists on having one of the red roses in the garden. Why the child is so persistent is not immediately recognizable, unless she somehow understands the symbolic implications of the rose.

That there is a link between these three female characters is evident in the narrative; it is most evident through Hawthorne's narrative tool, the rose. The relationship, however, between the three women is not simply about how each was somehow unfit for their Puritan communities. Each woman took a different approach to her expulsion from their society. I argue that each woman took a step further in their liberation from a patriarchal society.

The connection between Hester and Hutchinson does not simply involve Hester's reliving Hutchinson's past throughout the novel. There are obvious parallels between Hutchinson and Hester, yet Colacurcio claims that their "relationship is not one of 'identity'"; and although on the surface the relationship between the two appears to be allegorical, "*The Scarlet Letter* is probably not intended as an allegory of New England's Antinomian Crisis" because, Colacurcio continues, "Hawthorne's historical tales never work quite that simply"(461). Hester's story does not simply parallel Hutchinson's; it takes it one step further. The most obvious similarity between the two women is their relationship to men. Cotton influenced Hutchinson to acknowledge that sanctification was not evidence of justification. In a sense, she is "adulterating" the Puritan community and the church in her belief that justification could in fact

be physically perceived in individuals through their moral actions. Hester's story, however, was not only influenced by her minister's words, for she was literally in an "adulterous" relationship with Dimmesdale. Both men also stand by and fail to defend the women whose reputations they have ruined; as Colacurcio puts it, the story of their lives may be entitled "'Seduced and Abandoned in Old Boston'" (462). Yet, Hawthorne does not reveal the effects of Cotton's offense on his character's conscience in "Mrs. Hutchinson"; Cotton is only characterized as a weak male figure in the narrative. Dimmesdale's suffering, on the other hand, is meticulously characterized throughout the narrative; his guilt is so immense that it appears to eventually kill him. Each character, even if they do closely resemble characters that Hawthorne created in his past fiction, does not parallel other characters; this illustrates how dynamic every one of Hawthorne's characters is. There is no template for his heroines or heroes, they each have a different perspective which the reader must learn to interpret.

Hawthorne does not simply take the story of Hutchinson a step further by creating a fictional character based on her. Rather, he comments on seventeenth-century Puritan society and perhaps proposes that antinomianism can only take an individual so far; but when Hester adopts a more individualistic approach to her life than did Hutchinson, she is capable of changing her community. Hutchinson leaves her community never to return after she is excommunicated. While Hester and Pearl leave after Dimmesdale's death, Hester eventually returns. Hester comes back to the place of her shame because, as the narrator explains, "[h]ere had been her sin; here, her sorrow; and here was yet to be her penitence" (SL 263). Although the narrator perceives that she returns to serve out the remainder of her sentence within the community, when she comes back she does so because she personally chooses to return. Hester's reasons for returning are not clear; the narrator only reveals that her return was her own decision but never explains what

prompts her to return. The reader, again, is left with the responsibility of determining whether Hester is submissive or passive-aggressive.

One interpretation of Hester's decision to return is that she remains a passive female character, and this punishment she dutifully accepts until the end of her life. Hester's passivity would, however, make Hester's character seem weaker than Hutchinson's since she takes no further steps to reform her community after she is sentenced to live isolated in the forest with Pearl. Yet, there is another view of Hester, one that perhaps reveals her passiveness as a different approach to social reform than Hutchinson's.

Bercovitch sees Hester's intentions as self-serving, and accuses her of "martyrdom," suggesting that a more appropriate name for *The Scarlet Letter* would be "The 'Martyrdom' of Hester Prynne'" (6). Bercovitch's contention, I argue, is too narrow since Hester's character, according to individual readers, may see her return differently. Bercovitch argues that since the letter is a symbol, Hester controls what it means for her; it might not demarcate her disgrace, but it reverberates with her self-defiance. Bercovitch also takes a closer look at the function of the letter and comes to the conclusion that "the basic symbolic opposition in *The Scarlet Letter* is that between self and society" (29). Hester's quest, then, becomes heroic; she alone defies an entire "society." Hester may not have been attempting to change the community's perspective on her. I argue that if Hester was too concerned with what her Puritan community thought of her; if she is rebelling, her actions may be more self-centered; it is just as likely that Hester does not care for a community who has disowned her, her intentions may instead be directed at Chillingworth, for example. The reader must not simply insist that Hester is rebelling against Boston, but an audience should also be open to the idea that she may just be trying to get back at her ex-husband by showing him not only that she can stand on her own and successfully make a

living for herself and her child without the help of Pearl's father. The reader must consider multiple readings of Hester's character since the letter takes on a personal meaning for Hester that is independent from what the sign implicates to any other character within the narrative.

Pearl eventually leaves Boston and settles somewhere else, Hester joins her for a while, but then returns by herself. According to the narrator, Pearl would have gladly had her mother by her side, a fact which makes Hester's reason for her return to the community that ostracized her even more incomprehensible. Bercovitch sees this return, on Hester's behalf, as proof of her insolence. Hester, therefore, has not returned to live in shame and atone for her sins, which was what her original sentence demanded of her. Baym explains that, "her return is not entirely a penitent's return, for ultimately, though quietly, she forces the community to admit that the scarlet letter is, after all, a badge of honor and not a token of shame" ("Passion and Authority" 216). This act proves her individuality, and she has changed her community to such an extent that they appear to evolve from a Puritan frame of mind to a more liberal mindset. The Puritan community's new attitude, I add, may not be an accurate portrayal of an anxiety-ridden ideology that never forgets original sin, let alone a sin that Hester committed only a few decades before. This inconsistency may reflect ideas from the nineteenth-century because at its core, Michael Kearns concludes, "*The Scarlet Letter* embodies a belief in the moral value of sympathy that was more familiar and acceptable to Hawthorne's actual audience than to the spectators at Hester's public humiliation" (36). The author again is placing Hester's judgment in the hands of his audience, and his audience makes the final decision, whether to believe Hester should be penitent for her sins, or that she has every right to change the entire town of Boston's beliefs.

When the community no longer reads the implied meaning of the letter, "adultery," and comes to interpret it as representing Hester's true character as an "angel," or "able," she has won

her battle against society. The meaning of the letter, then takes on its opposite implied meaning, and according to Bercovitch, “[n]ot doing its office almost comes to define the function of the symbol” (90). As a result of Hester and community’s reinterpretation of the letter, in the end the “helpless” Puritan woman wears the symbol with a sense of pride rather than shame. Though the letter may come to be interpreted differently by the Puritan community, Hester, and even the reading audience, I argue that different characters may come to see the letter differently within the text, specifically, Pearl.

Pearl, as the living symbol of the letter, does not come to represent Hester’s self-serving purposes. Hester does not communicate what the letter means to Pearl, even when her daughter directly asks her mother what the letter means. It is important that Hester does not directly communicate her sorrows to her child. If Pearl felt as Hester did about the scarlet letter, as a symbol of her retribution, then she too, as a living symbol of the letter, would take on the somber aspect of the symbol’s meaning. Hester does not use the letter didactically; she never warns Pearl not to act as her mother did or else her daughter would be destined to a life a solitary life. Because Hester does not directly instruct her daughter, Pearl can choose what lesson to take from this symbol; Pearl, therefore, does not let it affect her nature. Since other Puritan children were raised to believe in their depravity, their parent’s beliefs are passed down to them. Yet Pearl was not raised according to Puritan ideologies; therefore, “she had not the disease of sadness, which almost all children, in these latter days, inherit, with the scrofula, from the troubles of their ancestors” (*SL* 184). Critics such as Bercovitch and Baym have interpreted the meaning of the letter as Hester, the narrator, and even the reader may see it. Pearl, however, is not raised within a seventeenth-century Puritan mindset; she exists in a world of her own, and as a result, she is an interesting case study in nineteenth-century ideologies. If a child was raised in isolation among

the natural world, would that individual become an ideal figure of Transcendental ideals? Pearl, if she has learned to read the symbols of her past, understands that she is as individualistic as her feminine ancestors. Pearl has lived a life of isolation among the natural world and has learned, as a result, to interpret moral instruction from nature since she understands the meaning of roses.

I have discussed how the narrator describes Pearl through the seventeenth-century lens of Hester and her community. There are instances, however, when the reader encounters a different view of Pearl. From a nineteenth-century perspective, all individuals are not born morally depraved, but are instead virtuous; the individual only need to take moral instruction from nature to become good.

I propose that Pearl cannot simply be categorized as “good” or “evil”; rather, she is natural. Pearl has not been brought up by strict Calvinist ideals that categorize individuals as either “good” or “evil,” “sanctified” or “damned”; the reader must then see Pearl from a nineteenth-century point of view. I conclude that Hawthorne created Pearl’s character with nineteenth-century perspectives in mind. One of these perspectives during the 1850’s, at the time of Hawthorne’s composition of *The Scarlet Letter*, as Barbara Garlitz explains, was “the cult of the sinless child.” Because of this “cult”, Pearl’s “naughtiness was omitted” in *The Scarlet Letter* (690). I apply the idea of an innocent child to changing religious attitudes during the nineteenth-century. Calvinists held that man inherited original sin and thus children were immoral as well; whereas liberal Christians believed the individual was born sinless. Garlitz also notes such an attitude from Margaret Forster, a critic of the time, who observed Pearl is ““angelic sweetness and purity”” who stands out among a somber Puritan environment (690). Hawthorne may have had this attitude about innocent children in mind when he created Pearl, yet Garlitz concludes that “[t]here is evidence that Hawthorne deliberately made Pearl not innocent” since he described



“a devil” revealed “in the eyes of a young child”(692). This characterization of Pearl is more consistent with Hawthorne’s multi-faceted female characters; though his light heroines may have maintained virtuous qualities, they were not completely innocent. I apply Hawthorne’s ambiguous portrayal of light heroines to Priscilla in *The Blithedale Romance*; though a light heroine, she is not without fault; she indirectly brings about Zenobia’s death, counters Zenobia’s more progressive ideas about women, and impedes Hollingsworth’s development as an individual.

When an individual acts “naturally,” as does Pearl; they may appear to be untamed, but not immoral. Garlitz, furthermore, sees Pearl as “a symbol of Hester’s wild passion.” Pearl is often characterized as being a part of the natural world, as Hester is a creature of “wild passion” Pearl is a “wild” creature from the natural world. Pearl’s “difficulty in feeling sympathy” is evidence, according to Garlitz,” of her wild nature (696). Pearl does not neglect to remind Hester that the letter cannot be removed from her gown in the forest--she asks Dimmesdale to hold her hand along with her mother and claim them as his--yet this may not be a sign of her lack of “sympathy.” If she is a child of the natural world, completely separate from an artificial Puritan community, then she is beyond Puritan standards. Pearl may not understand that if Hester and Dimmesdale admit to their affair, they must face consequences posed their Puritan community. In Pearl’s natural world, her parent’s transgression is not a sin, it is only an expression of Hester’s “wild” nature. Their characters are not, as critics often interpret, a living representation of Hester’s sin: mother and child are not malicious creatures; rather they are better characterized as untamed in the expression of their individual selves.

Garlitz also interprets Hester as a rebellious Puritan and maintains that there is a “fundamental parallel between Hester’s chief sin, which is not lust but a radical defiance of

society” (697). Hutchinson, Hester, and Pearl do show a “defiance of society,” yet Pearl’s fight against her oppressors is not as difficult because her feminine ancestors made Pearl’s search for independence less problematic. What makes her road toward fully developing as an individual journey different is that Pearl was helped by her ancestors, in particular, she was able to interpret the natural world around her, and the narrator best illustrates this through the rosebush that Hester passes on her way out from prison. I suggest that this rosebush represents Hester and Pearl’s lineage in a history of New England’s women. Hester, though not a direct descendant of Hutchinson, is symbolically related to her. She passes the rosebush, perhaps planted by Hutchinson, and is one of its descendants, a flower. The narrator then declares to his audience, “we could hardly do otherwise than pluck one of its flowers and present it to the reader” (*SL* 48). The narrator (or narrators) is symbolically linking Hester as a descendant of Hutchinson since she is the offspring of the rosebush. The mention of the rosebush in the first chapter links Ann Hutchinson, Hester, and Pearl physically. Hester walks over the roses that first bloomed under the feet of Hutchinson, and she carries the child with her. At this moment, all three women are directly linked. The roses that grow from the rosebush originate with Ann Hutchinson, and, symbolically, Hester and Pearl are her direct descendants. If Hawthorne chose to use a specific historical figure in his fictitious account of Hester and Pearl, then he perhaps highlights the possibility that there is a direct link between the life of Ann Hutchinson and these two fictional characters. Since Pearl was capable to taking instruction about female reformers of the past from a natural symbol, she truly captures what American romanticism of the nineteenth-century believed nature could do for the individual’s spiritual development; Pearl learned to become self-reliant by observing the divinity of the natural world.

The rosebush has linked Hutchinson, Hester, and Pearl as feminine ancestors since the beginning of the novel. They are all related, and I propose that each feminine ancestor has done something to advance the place of new generations of women. Hutchinson began this move by standing firmly behind her Calvinist ideals. She represents the first generation of women who attempted to liberate herself from existing male-centered ideologies and communities. When Hutchinson was excommunicated from her community, however, she no longer had an impact on her community since she never returned. Although Hester is also removed from her community, she has a significant impact on it because she does not leave.

The narrator describes “a wild rose-bush” that perhaps might have “sprung up under the footsteps of the sainted Ann Hutchinson” (*SL* 48). Although the rosebush is “wild,” the passage implies that it was perhaps planted by Ann Hutchinson; it miraculously “sprung up” under the ground she walked on when she was also put into prison. When the narrator describes the garden at the governor’s house, he mentions “apple-trees” that were “probably the descendants of those planted by the Reverend Mr. Blackstone, the first settler of the peninsula” (*SL* 107). The apple tree is associated with a Puritan official and the Puritan ideology since it is a useful plant, its fruit is nourishing. The rosebush is a symbol of the woman who attacked Puritan officials, Ann Hutchinson; she was not useful to her community and was as frivolous a rose in the Puritan mindset. Pearl is drawn not to the sweet fruit of the apple tree, but to the red rose in the garden. Why Pearl suggests that her parentage can be linked to the rosebush may perhaps be because she is simply drawn to the red roses; they are beautiful, she has observed them out in the forest, or she perhaps links the color red with the letter on her mother’s chest. These are possible explanations, yet if the reader accepts Hawthorne’s idea of the romance, a place between the real

and the imaginative and can engage in a suspension of belief, then there is a possible explanation for Pearl's suggestion.

That suggestion might be implied by Pearl's observance of the rosebush, and it is overtly stated in the next chapter. Mr. Wilson asks her, "[c]anst thou tell me, my child, who made the?". Instead of answering "her Heavenly Father" as one would expect a child who had been raised in the Puritan religion would reply, Pearl has interpreted her symbolic lineage. She takes it upon herself to say that she "had been plucked by her mother off the bush of wild roses that grew by the prison-door." The narrator offers a more plausible explanation for this answer and suggests that the child's "fantasy" had been prompted by the rosebush in the governor's garden. Yet, true to Hawthorne's use of the romantic tradition, the narrator proposes a more implausible suggestion when he claims that Pearl remembered the rose bush from her encounter with it as an infant upon leaving the prison (*SL* 111-12). If Pearl does remember the rose bush from her infancy, then, she interprets the symbolic representation of the rosebush. She is the offspring of Hutchinson, a woman who did not fit into her Puritan society, and, as her direct descendant, she is also destined to become a woman who will not inherit Puritan ideologies.

Hester cannot, however, understand that Pearl reads symbols and understands them clearly. Hester directly approaches Pearl and asks her if she knows what the letter signifies when she asks "Dost thou know, child, wherefore thy mother wears this letter?" (*SL* 178). Pearl has interpreted the meaning of the letter and knows where else it appears when she says "It is for the same reason that the minister keeps his hand over his heart!" (*SL* 179). Hester is testing the child at this point. She wants to know if Pearl is consciously aware of her trespass against the community. Pearl does indeed reveal that she has made meaning of this symbol, and Hester does not understand her capability for reading symbols.

Pearl also tests her mother similarly when she later asks Hester what the significance of the letter is. Hester does not answer the question, but instead fibs when she does not admit to noticing Dimmesdale putting his hand over his heart and that her mother “wear[s] it for the sake of its gold thread!” (SL 181). Hester does not communicate directly with Pearl, and although the narrator suggests that Hester had been “false” with her answer, it is likely that she has never communicated directly with Pearl through language, but only by symbols. Pearl, again, is a product of a model transcendental upbringing in that she does not adhere to standard, orthodox religious institutions, and she is brought up in isolation among the natural world.

The difference between how Hester and Pearl read one another has to do with these two competing beliefs. Hester’s view of Pearl is more traditional, she reads her child as an individual who has had a strict Puritan upbringing. Pearl’s view of Hester, is what a reader would expect of a child who is not brought up under the Puritan faith. Pearl illustrates freethinking, and she knows how to interpret the symbolic world around her. Hester and Pearl are, therefore, constantly interpreting their surroundings differently. Hester is more interested in reading Pearl’s nature because she, along with her Puritan community, thinks that individuals are capable of receiving God’s grace if they display virtuous acts.

I again draw attention to the rosebush in the Governor’s mansion as the best illustration of how Hester and Pearl differ in their religious upbringing, rather than in a lack of religious upbringing on Pearl’s part. The Governor asks Pearl who her maker was when he is contemplating whether it is the child’s best interest to remain with her morally corrupt mother. As a child raised in the Puritan tradition, Pearl should automatically have known that the answer to that question was her “heavenly father.” Pearl, however, shows her lack of knowledge as far as social institutions are concerned, and she reverts to the natural world for an answer to this

question. The rosebush is part of her natural world; she has seen roses in the forest, and now she associates something familiar, a rose from the natural world, when she finds herself in an unfamiliar setting, the governor's home, to find an answer to this question.

Pearl is capable of reading symbols, gestures, anything that is unspoken because she has, first of all, been denied a clear explanation for her mother's banishment from the Puritan community, and, secondly, because Hawthorne creates an aura of magic around the child. Pearl has a heightened sixth-sense that allows her to read into the hearts of men. Her interactions with Dimmesdale showcase her heightened intuition; she realizes first of all that he is her father, and secondly that his guilt is physically hurting him. Though she never speaks of Dimmesdale's failure to acknowledge her as his child, she has other means of identifying him as her father. Indirectly, Pearl communicates her knowledge of Dimmesdale as her father when she asks if she, along with him and her mother, will join hands the night they find themselves on the scaffold. Her knowledge of this transgression between Dimmesdale and Hester shows us that she is not naïve and wholly childlike. When Pearl tests her father and her mother, she, perhaps, is attempting to communicate to them her heightened intuition and her capability to read symbols.

Hutchinson, Hester, and Pearl, I have argued, are related as women who were forced to become individualistic when they were forced out of their Puritan communities. I have also illustrated how each took a different approach toward changing their communities. One point, however, remains to be argued: which feminine reformer was the most successful? Though Pearl's heightened sensitivity to the symbolic world gives her insight into Dimmesdale's heart, it is difficult to determine whether she will follow in the footsteps of Hutchinson and Hester as a reformer. Hutchinson, may not have changed the course of Puritan religion of her time, yet the strength of her character survives beyond her lifetime. Hutchinson represents a strong feminine

character who dared to challenge a consensus male ideology, and Hawthorne immortalizes her in *The Scarlet Letter*. Hutchinson was the starting point in a revolution of strong female characters in Hawthorne's fiction. Hester, who represents the next generation of capable feminine characters, surpasses what Hutchinson accomplished through her trial during the antinomian controversy. Hester, as a character within the novel, does more to change her community than does Hutchinson, and therefore she represents feminine progress.

Hester's character, from the community's perspective, eventually evolves from an adulterous woman to a more saintly one. Although Hester is guilt-ridden, her guilt does not keep her from becoming a more saintly-figure within her Puritan community. She eventually is involved with helping other women and eventually becomes a reformer in her own time because she changes her community's perception of her. Her actions are completely arbitrary, and because of this fact, the townspeople "refused to interpret the scarlet A by its original signification. They said that it meant "Able; so strong was Hester Prynne, with a woman's strength" (*SL* 161). Hester has gained a sense of morality by the Puritan community's standards. Yet she has no one to answer to, and she has no reason to be charitable because she has already lost her place as a respectable woman in the Puritan community. Hester has no moral authority to answer to because she is a fallen woman in the eyes of the Puritan community and God. Yet, she acts because of her own free will, and she has nothing to gain from helping the poor but her own self-respect.

Not only does Hester change her community's perception of her at the end of the novel—the letter no longer implies she is an adulteress but instead a holy figure, an angel—, but Hawthorne ends the novel with a more hopeful message about the empowerment of females through Hester's offspring. Hutchinson's legacy dies at the end of her life. When Hutchinson

developed an abnormal pregnancy, or as Emery Battis technically explains, a “hydatidiform mole” she developed a growth in her uterus which made her miscarry (346). Though such a medical condition can be linked to several factors such as Hutchinson’s age, the stress she had been put under throughout her trial, and her pregnancy during the beginning of menopause, Puritan society saw Hutchinson’s “monstrous birth” as evidence of her evil nature (346). Her life ended when she and her family were attacked during an Indian raid on their community; not only did her offspring die, but her legacy as well. The lives of Hawthorne’s fictional characters end more hopefully than the historical figures on which Hester and Pearl are arguably based—Pearl can be equated with the “monstrous birth,” or her stillborn child. Although her own mother and the Puritan community perceive the child to be evil, the narrative ends with Pearl living a content life as “the richest heiress of her day in the New World”(SL 261). Because Hester’s legacy lives on, through a female offspring, it may be a powerful message on Hawthorne’s behalf that women were the driving force of change in society. When Pearl causes Dimmesdale’s confession at the end of the novel, she also succeeds as a reformer since she changes one male’s Puritan ideologies.

As a character, Pearl has often been overlooked as what Anne Marie McNamara refers to “a link” or a “static symbol” between Hester and Dimmesdale; she is a “static symbol of their sin” (538). There are two overt signs throughout the narrative—the scarlet A and Pearl—that point to the narrative’s main conflict, Hester’s and Dimmesdale’s affair. However, Pearl is not “static” in that she is actively involved in the narrative since characters read different representations of her nature which cause them to act according to how they perceive Pearl. McNamara illustrates how characters affect other characters differently; in Dimmesdale’s case, Pearl is “the efficient cause of the dénouement and thus provides the motivation for



Dimmesdale's final act" (538). Dimmesdale is reluctant; throughout the narrative in the first scaffold scene he asks Hester to confess his name, yet does not take the initiative to condemn himself. The second scaffold scene occurs at night when no one is present to see him take Pearl's hand and claim his transgression. It is only after his encounter with Pearl in the forest that he takes the initiative in the last scaffold scene to accept her as his own child.

Typical of Hawthorne's narrative technique, his message about the progress of women from generation to generation is unclear. Hester does not escape the clutches of male ideologies since she returns to Boston at the end of the novel, yet she makes her mark as a female reformer in her community. Pearl successfully escapes male-centered Puritan ideologies when she leaves Boston, yet she does not create a stir in her Puritan community, aside from Dimmesdale's confession. The narrator, therefore, reveals more of Hester's accomplishments as a reformer of a community than he does of Pearl. The reader then has to decide whether women have made progress from Hutchinson's to Pearl's generation by the end of *The Scarlet Letter*. Hawthorne may perhaps be questioning ideologies in the seventeenth or nineteenth-centuries through his female characters. Romantic thinkers focused on the importance of the individual's development throughout the nineteenth-century—Emerson for example—held that only when individuals stop conforming can they develop as freethinking individuals.

Hawthorne portrays female characters as antinomians, reformers, and prophetesses in *The Scarlet Letter*. Although Hester may not have drastically changed the course of history, she makes a significant impact on her Puritan community. The narrative begins with the townspeople judging her harshly and going as far as to say that she should have been executed for her offense. In the end, however, they eventually adopt a more sympathetic attitude; they have almost forgotten her original sin. Hawthorne, however critical he may be of women, has personified

them as a strong force within their own communities, be it the seventeenth-or nineteenth-century. As a result, Hester takes Hutchinson's rebellious spirit a step further, and in return Hawthorne sets the stage for future women who will continue to follow the trail of Ann Hutchinson's footprints.

CHAPTER 4  
POSIES, GHOSTS, AND ARTISTIC SENSIBILITY IN  
*THE HOUSE OF THE SEVEN GABLES*

Hawthorne's women in *The Scarlet Letter* communicate through the language of symbols. Furthermore, throughout *The House of the Seven Gables* Hawthorne uses a similar device for the Pyncheon women when he creates an ancestor who communicates with future generations through symbols. Alice Pyncheon, Phoebe's great, great, great-aunt, reveals the necessity of an artistic sensibility through the music of her harpsichord and her posies. Alice's posies in *The House of the Seven Gables* are related to the roses in *The Scarlet Letter* since flowers are a medium by which a previous generation can communicate with the next. Though both novels are similar in that women communicate to future generations through symbols, the women of *The House of the Seven Gables* are more assertive in the ways they convey their message. Whereas Ann Hutchinson and Hester Prynne passively accepted their punishments to a certain extent, the women of the house of the seven gables boldly resist male oppression. Alice does not imply her message as Ann Hutchinson does since Alice actively warns Phoebe about the importance of reading symbols. Where Pearl learns to read the symbolic implications of the rose that represents Ann, Alice's symbols are more overt—Alice's harpsichord is heard on occasion throughout the house, and her posies bloom when the judge dies. Just as the women of *The Scarlet Letter* represent feminine reformers, so do the women of *The House of the Seven Gables*—Alice, perhaps, dies a martyr's death, Hepzibah does not passively resist male domination, and Phoebe actively changes her own community instead of leaving it, as does Pearl. What makes *The House of the Seven Gables* distinct from *The Scarlet Letter* is how artistic sensibility becomes a major theme of the novel, and Hawthorne exposes this issue when Phoebe

learns to read the symbols that represent her ancestor Alice, and, more literally, when she marries an artist. It is only when the audience focuses on Phoebe's interpretation of her ancestor's symbolic language that the reader discovers this hidden message, or warning, in Hawthorne's novel. American culture had yet to develop an art of its own; therefore, they lacked a national identity. As American culture became more democratic, it would also have to develop an appreciation for art. Hawthorne stresses this idea through Phoebe's process of reading symbols. It is equally as important for the characters to understand the meaning of symbols in the narrative as it is for the reader to be conscious of art's purpose in American society, in particular, the art of fiction's function as a means of cultural sophistication.

Hawthorne communicates to his audience through his narrators, but what he communicates depends on which perspective we consider as readers. When the reader encounters the symbol of the rose, he or she must consider that this symbol is not only directed at his audience, but also at other characters within the narrative. The governor in *The Scarlet Letter*, for instance, may have seen the roses as only ornaments in his garden. Hester, however, links them with the roses she sees in the forest, though to Pearl these roses offer her perspective on her position as heir to a dynasty of female reformers, including Ann Hutchinson and her mother. Again, it is the audience's responsibility to consider the different symbolic implications of the rose; what makes Hawthorne's use of symbolism much more complicated is that these symbols may be void of meaning considering certain perspectives.

Though a reader, along with certain characters, may dismiss symbols, he or she may completely miss what these signs point to an appreciation for art through an examination of the artistic value of Alice's music and her flowers. The multiple perspectives of Hawthorne's narrators and characters will point the reader into his or her own interpretation of Hawthorne's

narratives. Each heroine gains independence by being true to her individualism; therefore, the reader must consider every heroine's perspective. Each heroine has her part as a reformer of American society in *The Scarlet Letter*, and this again occurs in *The House of the Seven Gables*. Once the reader deciphers how the characters in *The House of the Seven Gables* guide the following generation toward independence from male domination, then, just as in *The Scarlet Letter*, the reader will discover which woman was most successful in changing American culture.

The premise of *The House of the Seven Gables* and *The Scarlet Letter* is similar in that both novels are set in a community that is overrun by dominant male figures. Both novels also portray individuals struggling to escape the heavy-handed hold such dominant figures have on repressed individuals within a community. In *The House of the Seven Gables*, Hawthorne creates an outlandish display of how a subjugated individual becomes liberated from a strong male ancestor through the death of a dominant male figure. Hawthorne makes a strong statement in *The House of the Seven Gables* about how individuals may gain independence. As in *The Scarlet Letter*, individuals find that they are subject to patriarchal control, but in *The House of the Seven Gables*, Hawthorne offers a more extreme means of eliminating dominant males. Part of the solution to the problem of domination by powerful males is that the most powerful patriarch within a community has to die; so Judge Pyncheon, the dominant male figure in the novel, mysteriously dies at the end of the novel. The death of the Judge may perhaps have symbolized freedom for a repressed individual, and Hawthorne may have also been symbolically liberating himself from strong male figures within his own community.

As I mentioned in Chapter 1 of this study, Hawthorne involves history in his fiction, but he is not a historian; Hawthorne's lack of historical accuracy is evident in *The House of the Seven Gables*. Hawthorne does not mistakenly represent history, but he distorts it for certain

purposes. Perhaps he was attempting to shift the burden of his family's sin—the persecution of women and Quakers—when he misrepresents the historical Pynchons in *The House of the Seven Gables*, and he may also reinvent the history of the Salem witch trials by casting wizards in his novel instead of witches. Louise DeSalvo notes that in *The House of the Seven Gables* Hawthorne reinvents the persecution of witches in Salem when he “shifts the legend from being woman-centered to being man-centered,” and consequently he “effectively obliterates from his version of the legend all of those women who were persecuted for witchcraft in Puritan New England” (80). Hawthorne, arguably, changes New England's history of oppressing women, as discussed earlier in this study, because he may have been attempting to shift the burden of guilt for the Salem witchcraft trials away from his family. Hawthorne may have been trying to make a better name for his male ancestors in *The House of the Seven Gables* because of a written history of his family that was circulating at the time.

Though Hawthorne may seem to be discrediting prominent male ancestors in *The House of the Seven Gables*, since not only creates an obnoxious character, the smiling Judge Pyncheon, but he kills this symbol of the patriarchy, the author may have been using the novel as a medium to criticize one of his political opponents while at the same time elevating name of the Hathornes. Hawthorne's unpleasant characterization of the powerful Judge has much to do, as DeSalvo explains, with a history Charles Wentworth Upham wrote in 1831 about the witchcraft trials in which Upham emphasized John Hathorne's involvement and concluded that “John Hathorne was largely responsible for the excesses of that period” (82). DeSalvo further explains that Upham was largely involved in Hawthorne's dismissal from the Custom House as well. According to DeSalvo, if Hawthorne does use the character of Judge Pyncheon to counterattack Upham's portrayal of his ancestors, then the narrative does “act as antidote to Upham's damning

portrait” (83). DeSalvo notes James R. Mello’s biography of Hawthorne where Mello describes Upham as “the smiling and unctuous Charles Wentworth Upham” and concludes that Hawthorne created Judge Pyncheon’s character in the image of Upham. DeSalvo further notes that “the novel also contains a character assassination of the man promulgating those views” which Upham held (84). Judge Pyncheon similarly hides his overbearing and judgmental nature with a spurious smile, just as Upham hid his true character behind a false facade. Upham explains what Hawthorne was attempting to do in his “assassination” of a tyrannical male figure in the novel, and I add that Hawthorne’s attitude toward Upham seems even more malicious when the narrator maliciously describes the Judge’s dead corpse and rejoices in the idea that the Judge will be unable to attend his own party that night because he is dead. In Hawthorne’s novel, the narrator not only shows how overbearing males affected Hawthorne, but more generally, Hawthorne displays how dominant males cause hierarchies to control entire communities. Powerful males were the only figures who held back entire populations, and Hawthorne illustrates to what extent the Judge dominated not only the Pyncheon family but the entire town since after the Judge’s death, the Pyncheon family no longer has a place within the community. Debunking powerful male figures, however, does not liberate less powerful individuals. Hawthorne, in *The House of the Seven Gables*, shows that progress for American society during the nineteenth-century depended on individuals having an understanding of how a culture develops through its appreciation of art.

Though the remaining Pyncheons move to the Judge’s country home and remain dependent on Judge’s economic holdings, they have learned to understand the value of self-reliance and progressive ideas since Hepzibah is not inhibited by her family pride and learns the value of self-reliance, Clifford is free from the Judge’s torment and finds happiness in the simple

pleasures in life, and Phoebe and Holgrave learn the value of art in American culture. Yet, the heroines' success in this novel can best be measured by what they accomplish, though they may still indirectly depend on the Judge, Phoebe has learned to understand why an artistic sensibility, such as her partner Holgrave's, is necessary for the development of a distinctive American culture. If Phoebe did not understand how to read symbols, she would not understand art, and if she did not understand art, she would have been influenced by the Pyncheon family pride. Holding on to tradition is what keeps American culture from flourishing; if the reader can understand the Pyncheon family's mistake, then they can see how they may be mistaken in not valuing the artistic value of fiction. Hawthorne creates a parallel situation between his character Phoebe and his reader's development of an appreciation for art, and compares them to the Pyncheon family's lack of cultural refinement and America's lack of refinement. If the reader fails to understand the message Hawthorne conveys through his character, then they miss to understand the value of Hawthorne's art.

Aside from the economic hold the Judge may have over the family, it is his position as head of the Pyncheon dynasty that keeps the rest of his family oppressed since he maintains his powerful position because he is the successive dominant male heir. Ancestry is at the core of *The House of the Seven Gables*; it is in this novel that Hawthorne most clearly highlights how the past is constantly mired with the present. Marcus Cunliffe further explains how the past influences the present when he proposes that there are three main categories of "family and heredity" that Hawthorne explores in *The House of the Seven Gables*: "Evil, Lineage, and Impermanence" (81). According to Cunliffe, "Evil" is passed down from generation to generation, family "Lineage" depends on "family pride and acquisitiveness," and lastly, the "Impermanence" of the Pyncheon's pride no longer has a place in a democratic American



society. (81). I, in turn, were to suggest that heredity in a more democratic society is not linked with economic progress by evaluating Hepzibah, for the longer she holds onto her pride, the more economic damage she does to herself. The first day she opens the cent shop, she still refuses to accept that American society is becoming more democratic, as Cunliffe argues, when she does not allow Holgrave to pay for a biscuit because she wants to remain “a lady” for as long as she possibly can (*HSG* 46). Yet, Hepzibah’s resistance to change, her hesitancy to accept the fact that she can be an independent businesswoman, may not be solely based on pride; she may simply be unable to think outside of a patriarchal mindset. This patriarchal mindset, however, is not limited solely to the Pyncheons and Maules; Hawthorne perhaps implies that American society during his lifetime held too firmly to traditions.

Male characters in *The House of the Seven Gables* are lost within American society unless they are dominant male figures. According to progressive thinking in the nineteenth-century, America needed to break from tradition for social progress to occur. Uncle Venner is an ineffectual character, and Joel R. Kehler further explains how this character represents one facet of American culture at the time because he “is Hawthorne’s symbolic representation of the rootlessness of American culture since the decline of the Puritans” (147). Uncle Venner, as an uneducated beggar, may perhaps be naïve to the fact that he is part of the degeneration of American society. Holgrave, we would expect should be aware of his station in life, as an artist; he is capable of making educated observations about the Pyncheon family and be aware that they represent outdated hierarchies that still exist in modern society. Kehler compares Holgrave to uncle Venner; where uncle Venner represents what can happen to individuals who do not hold to old ideas of hierarchy, Holgrave’s character is more progressive since he does not believe in an establishment, and consequently he “locates ‘home’ in the insubstantial integrity of the

individual mind and conscience and objects to the very idea of a house as anything more than a functional object, a shelter. The anarchical impulse in old Matthew Maule lives on in Holgrave in a more modern guise” (Kehler 148). Holgrave, though he lives in the house of the seven gables, perhaps does maintain enough distance from the Pyncheon dynasty to allow him to observe the inhabitants of the house and how Judge Pyncheon maintains dominion over his family and the entire town. When Phoebe arrives, however, his involvement becomes more intimate as he takes interest in the young girl. Since Phoebe’s well-being depends on establishing herself within the house, she is subject to the Judge’s rule as long as she lives in the house. Holgrave begins to think of a “home” in a more traditional sense when he encounters Phoebe, and by the end of the novel, he is part of the Pyncheon dynasty. Neither traditional nor progressive ideas, furthermore, can accurately depict the idea of progress in American society. Individuals should not be homeless and aimless in their individualism, like Uncle Venner and Holgrave, nor can they pride themselves on traditional ideas of society and home as does Hepzibah. The development of an American culture during the nineteenth-century could not be based on theories alone; this is why the women of *The House of the Seven Gables* were the missing element that would lead both men and women toward progress because they represent reformers who would take action throughout the course of the novel.

Change had not occurred in the house of the seven gables because its inhabitants accepted the idea that to progress meant the family had to stop believing in the prestige of the Pyncheon family name. Not only do the Pyncheons represent tradition, but, more importantly, as long as they maintained pride in their family name they also represent conformity. Although the novel is set in the nineteenth-century, the Pyncheon family is still haunted by their Puritan ancestors; they have failed to accept progressive ideas of democracy and individualism. With the exception of

Phoebe, Hawthorne's portrayal of the Pyncheon line is anything but flattering. Hepzibah and Clifford are recluses who do not know how to function in the world, and Judge Pyncheon is an ambitious tyrant just as his male ancestors were. The less powerful inhabitants of the house of the seven gables and the entire community are all controlled by one man. Why the Judge maintains his power has much more to do with the community rather than with the Judge's overbearing nature. Kehler explains that, "[t]he seven-gabled house of the Pyncheons stands for more than the social ambitions of a single family; it betokens an entirely new kind of consciousness in the community. Hawthorne is careful to note that the entire community shares the responsibility for the wrong done to Matthew Maule" (145). Members of the community allowed the Pyncheons free reign of the community when they allowed this family to maintain such a position of power. Kehler notes two excellent examples the community's acceptance of the Pyncheon dynasty through "the eulogizing of the Colonel after his death and the paying of formal tribute to the piety and respectability of Judge Pyncheon" (145). The community needs figures like the Pyncheons and a structure like the house of the seven gables because these static symbols stabilize the community. The traditional image of a hierarchy is essential to the community. *The House of the Seven Gables*, however, illustrates how the patriarchy has kept the most powerless members of the community, women, under male rule. The patriarchy has also continued, in the Puritan tradition, to ignore the vitality of art to the development of an American culture.

The Pyncheon line of women in *The House of the Seven Gables* begins with Alice Pyncheon, who lived one hundred years before the setting of the novel. Alice, like her successors, is also subject to the control of one man, her father Gervase. Gervase wants Maule to tell him the location of a land deed, and uses his daughter as a means of obtaining this

information. Since Alice had no say in the matter, she is rendered powerless. Her character is often seen as oppressed not only by her father, but by Matthew Maule when her father, though unwillingly, emphasizes how dominant males exploit members of their family.

One hundred years after Alice's time, Hepzibah Pyncheon has also been living in a society where she is powerless. The story is set at the beginning of Hepzibah's venture out into the world when she opens her cent shop. This starting point marks the end of a patriarchal rule over the house and its occupants. She was as well as financially ruined when she undertook her own business venture because in a patriarchal society she was expected to be supported by a prominent male figure in her family. Since she was rendered powerless when she refused Judge Pyncheon's financial support, the Pyncheon patriarchy had been her demise, and the audience first encounters Hepzibah at her lowest point in life. At the beginning of *The Scarlet Letter*, Hester is also forced into the lowest point of her life, and it is at this nadir when we encounter the women in these two novels. Hepzibah and Hester, then, were both financially and morally ruined when they became independent female figures. The audience is introduced to both female figures not only at a pivotal time in their lives but at a turning point in a patriarchy. Hester becomes a seamstress to support herself and her child, and once Hepzibah is rid of a male's control—she refuses the Judge's help—she becomes independent. Once these women gain freedom from dominant male figures, they change their patriarchal communities by the end of the narrative.

Though the Pyncheon women seem to be completely subject to the Pyncheon patriarchy at first—Alice is put in danger when her father bartered her for information, Hepzibah is left penniless, and Phoebe is essentially left homeless when her mother tells her she has to make a place for herself among her relatives—the women of *The House of the Seven Gables* become more independent with each passing of a generation. Nina Baym looks at two trends in

Hawthorne's fiction as he expanded his female characters: his light characters turned into "mature, lonely, brilliant, intense, passionate women," and the author emphasizes "the effect *on women* of the ways in which men perceived and treated them" ("Hawthorne's Women" 251). Phoebe is an example of a light heroine who develops from a sunny girl to a woman with gloomier, more "mature" characteristics. I argue, however, that it is the women in Hawthorne's novels, not men, who have a strong "effect *on women*" and men. Hepzibah directly affects Phoebe by giving her a place to live and a job in her cent shop, but the strongest effect a woman has on another only comes when heroines can read the symbolic implications of other women. Phoebe understands her ancestor, Alice, through her deciphering of the symbols used to depict her feminine ancestor—Alice's posies and her ghost. The youngest of the Pyncheon women only understands the signposts Alice provides to guide her successor because Phoebe develops her artistic sensibilities throughout the novel.

Although Baym correctly points to Hawthorne's emphasis on how men affect the women in these novels, I add that women also have a lasting effect on other women. Hawthorne uses Phoebe to incite change because she is the one female character who is the least vulnerable of the women in the novel. Since she has none of the Pyncheon pride and is capable of supporting herself in plebian society, she is the one woman who is most capable of living independent of the Judge's rule. The narrator emphasizes Hepzibah's desperate state the first day she opens the shop, so much so that he makes her attempt to make a living for herself a failure from the beginning. By comparing a more capable pragmatic individual like Phoebe—who seems to work at the shop and do her household chores happily—to Hepzibah, an impractical noblewoman, Hawthorne highlights how old values and new democratic tendencies came into conflict during the nineteenth-century. Phoebe, then, gains as much power as she should in a patriarchal society

by being the head of her household. There is, however, only a limited amount of power that Phoebe might acquire within the home; outside of the house of seven gables she has no means of supporting herself. She cannot go home again since her mother has asked her to seek a living elsewhere, and this makes her powerless outside the home.

The situation for Hepzibah and Phoebe seems grim throughout the beginning of the novel when Judge Pyncheon is still alive. When Judge Pyncheon is found dead, the narrator's portrayal of his corpse is eccentric, and perhaps, as I mentioned in an earlier chapter, Hawthorne may have been venting "pent-up anger," as Edwin Haviland Miller claims (332). Yet, aside from this display of anger, I propose that Hawthorne may have found a solution for freeing himself from the oppressive force his male ancestors held over him. Hawthorne, perhaps, gave women power to reflect on how an oppressed individual, such as himself and his mother, could overcome dominant male figures.

In *The Scarlet Letter*, Hester and Pearl gained power, to a certain extent, when they leave a male-dominated society and made a life on their own in the forest. Hester and Pearl, furthermore, are never under direct rule of Puritan authorities after Hester is cast off into the forest. In this novel, then, Hawthorne gives women complete control over changing their patriarchal society, and Hester does so to a certain extent by the end of the novel. Pearl finally disowns her Puritan upbringing when she moves away from Boston. The women in this novel, then, appear to have found independence by the end of the narrative.

The ending of *The Scarlet Letter*, as I concluded in the last chapter, is complicated. Although Hester does change her community to a certain extent, she is never free from Puritan oppression. Pearl, on the other hand, breaks from her Puritan upbringing, but her effect on her Puritan community is minimal. The struggle for autonomy from a deep-rooted Puritan past, I

argue, is not a battle of the sexes. Though women may have felt the oppressive force of male Puritan ancestors more strongly than men did, men also endured a long history of male-domination in New England. The women of *The House of the Seven Gables* also struggle for independence, but the narrator adds depth to these female protagonists in his portrayal of them as unlikely heroines. What makes these female protagonists problematic is how the narrator characterizes them; Hepzibah and Alice Pyncheon are arrogant.

Though Hepzibah is a heroine who gains independence from the Pyncheon patriarchy, the narrator's portrayal of her is anything but heroic; the narrator elicits sympathy from his audience in his depiction of her at times, but periodically he viciously attacks her. The morning she opens her cent shop offers a good indication of such contrasting views of her character. The narrator portrays Hepzibah as a mock heroine when he explains that on Hepzibah's first day of work in her shop "this born lady, after sixty years of narrowing means, is fain to step down from her pedestal of imaginary rank" (*HSG* 37-8). She seems almost a queen on "her pedestal," yet this is only how she envisions herself. Other characters within the novel and the audience will more likely notice her unattractive "scowl" which, the narrator explains, "had done Miss Hepzibah a very ill office" (*HSG* 34). Internally, Hepzibah is a matriarch, but to the rest of the world she is an old maid. Though Hepzibah holds firmly to her "imaginary rank," and perhaps has been forced to come down from "her pedestal," she is not to be judged simply as a foolish old spinster. Hawthorne reveals how the audience should read his fiction in his characterization of Hepzibah; if the audience can see beauty in an unattractive old maid, then his readers will understand how the author's characterization of her is evidence of his narrative art. The narrator closes the chapter with his final judgment of Hepzibah:

Life is made up of marble and mud. And, without all the deeper trust in a comprehensive sympathy above us, we might hence be led to suspect the insult of

a sneer, as well as an immitigable frown, on the iron countenance of fate. What is called poetic insight is the gift of discerning, in this sphere of strangely mingled elements, the beauty and majesty which are compelled to assume a garb so sordid. (*HSG* 41)

Hawthorne uses different points of view to describe Hepzibah, and she is a different character depending on whether she be examined within or without of the text. Hepzibah, may see the Pyncheon dynasty from her “marble” pedestal, the public who walks by her shop and the audience may only perceive her “immitigable frown”; while it is the artist with “the gift of discerning” her true character who may see “the beauty and majesty” of this old, decrepit matron. Hepzibah, however, is not a noble character though the narrator claims that there is “beauty and majesty” to be discovered within her. Hepzibah is cruel in her judgment of her niece because her logic is so outdated. As long as she maintains her Pyncheon family pride she remains subject to the Pyncheon patriarchy and is incapable of progress since it is the past that keeps individuals from becoming self-reliant.

The reading audience cannot help but judge Hepzibah as she herself judges a woman she thinks is beneath her rank, Phoebe. When Hepzibah holds her family in high esteem when she compares herself to her impoverished niece, the old matron is most susceptible to her male ancestors who made the Pyncheon name prominent. Hepzibah looks at Phoebe’s “nice little body” and thinks “[i]f she could only be a lady too” (*HSG* 79). Though Phoebe is a blood relative by her father’s side, Hepzibah sees more of her mother in her since Phoebe has been brought up as part of the lower classes. The narrator immediately comments on Hepzibah’s judgment of Phoebe when he claims, “[a]s to Phoebe’s not being a lady, or whether she were a lady or no, it was a point, perhaps, difficult to decide, but which could hardly have come up for judgment at all in any fair and healthy mind” (*HSG* 80). Hepzibah’s pride, then, is the cause for her false judgment of her niece. In turn, it is difficult for the reader not to maintain a negative



view of a character who harshly judges her niece because Phoebe is not part of the elite Pyncheon family. Hepzibah, however, does not understand that Phoebe is more capable of becoming an independent, powerful woman than her aunt because she is not subject to the Pyncheon family name; Phoebe does not value her name, therefore she is free from her past.

Hepzibah comes from a proud heritage of women, as she illustrates when she boasts about her ancestor Alice Pyncheon. Pride binds Alice and Hepzibah to the past; they are controlled by the Pyncheon males mostly because they admire the family's reputation among their community. She tells Phoebe that her great, great, great aunt Alice was "beautiful and accomplished, in her lifetime, a hundred years ago" (*HSG* 83). Phoebe also learns about Alice's story from Holgrave, but in his narrative he emphasizes Alice's pride. Alice's accomplishment was her talent for playing the harpsichord, and it was perhaps her love of music and beauty—specifically her love of music and flowers—that made her proud. Since she "was of foreign education, and could not take kindly to the New England modes of life, in which nothing beautiful had ever been developed," Alice was unhappy when she moved to the house of the seven gables (*HSG* 92). Such was her resentment for the New England lifestyle's lack of sophistication that she perhaps became even more arrogant with her "accomplishments," and so Holgrave claims that "[s] he was very proud" (*HSG* 203). Alice, as Holgrave implies, believed her "foreign education" gave her insight into a more culturally advanced place than New England, and she seems to have thought that New England was inferior to Europe. America had neglected to create its own art; what is most ironic about Alice's criticism of New England culture is that she was part of early American culture's lack of sophistication. As long as Alice maintained her pride in her family name, she added to the problem of established patriarchies in America who on maintaining their power by becoming economically successful and politically

powerful rather than realizing that there was a need for a young country to develop its own art and identity.

The message Hawthorne has relayed through Alice's narrative is that fiction is an art form. Hawthorne illustrates how significant a force fiction could be when Holgrave mesmerizes Phoebe through with his account of Alice's story. Holgrave may have intended his account of Alice to serve as a moral for Phoebe, warning her against feminine pride. Holgrave mentions his wish to publish his narrative in *Godey's* because Hawthorne may have wanted to allow his readers insight into Holgrave's narrative intentions. During the nineteenth century, *Godey's* and *Graham's* were two popular women's magazines. According to Jane Bernadete, the stories in *Godey's* were "like moralized fashionplates" (230). These magazines were written with the intention of instructing women. Women who read these magazines were advised "not to indulge in personal display for its own sake" (230). In general, men, during the nineteenth-century, would not approve of a woman's vanity and pride. Similarly, if Holgrave intends to publish his story in a woman's magazine such as *Godey's*, he may perhaps been advising Phoebe to avoid becoming as vain as her ancestor Alice. He may also observe that Hepzibah is equally as proud of her heritage and may see that this might have a strong influence over Phoebe. There is, however, more that Phoebe can learn from her feminine ancestors than to avoid inheriting the Pyncheon pride. Phoebe discovers Alice's attraction to artistic expression. Alice cultivates flowers and plays her harpsichord not because she is proud, but because she may perhaps find that American society lacks the cultural sophistication of Europe. Phoebe can also nurture her artistic sensibilities as long as she appreciates beauty by maintaining Alice's posies and also by learning to understand the art of fiction when she, from Holgrave's narrative and the symbols Alice has left behind, deciphers Alice's concern for America's lack of art.

Though the narrator and Holgrave's accounts of Hepzibah and Alice seem severe, these women are more assertive than they may have been portrayed. Hawthorne, in creating three generations of Pyncheon women offers his readers a wide array of feminine virtues. Hepzibah is strong-willed, Alice was culturally sophisticated, and Phoebe is hard working. Yet, the audience may judge Hepzibah and Alice harshly because they are proud, while Phoebe remains humble throughout the narrative.

Hepzibah, despite her character flaws, leads the battle against overbearing Pyncheon men when she faces Judge Pyncheon throughout the novel. First of all, she does not accept his economic support when he tries to prevent her from opening her cent shop. Secondly, when Hepzibah protects Clifford from the Judge, she more strongly resists the Judge's authority. When the Judge comes to see Clifford, Hepzibah does not allow the Judge to see him. The narrator describes her heroic defense: "She now issued forth, as would appear, to defend the entrance, looking, we must needs say, amazingly like the dragon which, in fairy tales, is wont to be the guardian over an enchanted beauty" (*HSG* 126). In this scene, Hepzibah appears prepared for battle against Judge Pyncheon. If the narrator has mocked her masculine traits before, it is in this scene where the audience is fully aware why her brawny figure is indispensable when she protects Clifford.

Hepzibah's masculine appearance, aside from making her appear more assertive, also gives her characteristics that help her and Clifford overcome the Judge's domination since males in *The House of the Seven Gables* are equally as susceptible to oppression as are women. Clifford needs protection, and to a certain extent Holgrave is also powerless against overbearing figures such as the judge. The women, therefore, are not the only ones who suffer under the Judge's patriarchal reign over the Pyncheon family and his own community. Clifford and

Holgrave hold little power; Clifford has physically deteriorated, and Holgrave has no personal wealth. The patriarchy that both males and females are subject to is, therefore, a problem that unites both sexes.

The quest for freedom from a dominant patriarchy is not a woman's, but men are also subject to the overbearing influence of their male ancestors. It is up to every individual to first free him or herself from the patriarchy then develop a sense of self-reliance. What is most interesting is that both sexes are working together in this novel, while in *The Scarlet Letter* Hester and Pearl were left on their own without Dimmesdale to help change their overbearing Puritan community. Hepzibah and Clifford have both masculine and feminine traits, respectively, because Hawthorne perhaps wants both sexes to unite when they attempt to break from the Judge's rule. Holgrave and Phoebe, although they are not described as having traits from the opposite sex, are also forced to break free from the rule of the house of the seven gables.

In his characterization of Hepzibah and Clifford, Hawthorne equalizes men and women since Hepzibah looks manly and Clifford is effeminate. When Hepzibah is looking at Clifford's miniature, she notices, "[f]eminine traits, moulded inseparable with those of the other sex!" (HSG 60). The blending of the two sexes may equalize the problem of living under such a patriarchy as the Pyncheon men have created. It is difficult, at times, to determine why Clifford is so feminized and Hepzibah is given a crude, masculine appearance. Hawthorne may have been making a statement about the progress of women when he has Hepzibah and Phoebe initiate social change with the running of the cent shop, for in this novel, women strongly influence other women and men. To make social progress, Hawthorne perhaps creates a situation where men and women are affected by a woman's initiative to change her community to show the results of social change.

Hawthorne was perhaps beginning to reconsider whether his male ancestors were as notorious tyrants as they seemed and may have been going as far as rewriting history. In place of the oppressive force his male ancestors held over Hawthorne, he seems to create a female line of ancestors who do not hold such an overwhelming influence over their descendents. Hawthorne also mixed feminine and masculine traits when he created Hepzibah and Clifford, and I propose that this mixture may imply that both women and men are equally oppressed, and, furthermore, both sexes must find a solution to this powerful hold that the dominant Pyncheon men have held over both families. Also, that there was a need for social change in *The House of the Seven Gables* is clearly illustrated by Hawthorne's blurring of gender lines; however, what exactly needed to be changed in a patriarchal society is unclear unless the characters looked to the romantic aspects of the Pyncheon family for guidance. Hepzibah may have began the revolution for change among her relatives, but Alice Pyncheon, I argue, was in charge of relating to future generations of Pyncheons and Maules what that change should be.

Alice's story ends tragically when Matthew Maule takes control of her mind, and she eventually catches a cold and dies. Holgrave ends by saying, "[f]or Alice was penitent of her one earthly sin, and proud no more!" (HSG 210). Alice may have been "penitent" for her "earthly sin" of pride; however, the audience cannot be sure of her atonement because the narrator of the story, Holgrave, subjectively retells Alice's story. Holgrave's contention that Alice was remorseful for her pride, however, would mean that Alice passively accepted her punishment by allowing Maule to control her body and essentially dying of a broken spirit. If again, as readers, we accept Hawthorne's definition of a romance and believe that Alice's spirit returns in the form of music and flowers, her spirit, is likely not as passive as Holgrave depicts it in his narrative. Alice's death could arguably be a martyr's death; she would rather die than

allow another man to possess her spirit. Also, when she does die, Alice communicates to future generations of Pyncheons throughout a time of critical power struggles for control between the powerful Judge Pyncheon and Hepzibah.

Alice seems to be conveying her message that America needs to cultivate its own art through several mediums: her posies, the harpsichord, and, arguably, Holgrave's narrative. Whatever Holgrave's narrative intentions may have been, he could have communicated some of Alice's message to future Pyncheon women throughout his narrative. Alice's message, furthermore, may at first be implied by her music and posies, but it is solidified through Holgrave's narrative. Phoebe is reminded of her great, great, great aunt throughout the narrative because she needs to decide what the symbolic implications of the posies in the Pyncheon garden are. Alice may be warning her kinswoman about the power Maule men have over the Pyncheon women, or she may even be, as Holgrave may intended in his narrative, warning Phoebe not to be proud. If Phoebe can interpret Alice's message through her music and her love of flowers, then she, like Alice, has developed the artistic sensibility Phoebe may have lacked when she first arrives to the house of the seven gables. The chain of communication, hence, has successfully relayed a message to future generations of women through symbols when Phoebe understands Alice's message.

The question of refinement that Hawthorne may have been raising in *The Scarlet Letter* may be appearing again in *The House of the Seven Gables* when the narrator makes an interesting comparison between a light, lively woman and her Puritan ancestors. The narrator describes Phoebe as "a bird in a shadowy tree" (HSG 76). This comparison resembles the image of flowers among the weeds in the garden; Phoebe as a merry "bird" seems out of place among its surrounding of "a shadowy tree." Her bird-like spirit appears carefree despite her domestic

responsibilities of cooking and cleaning, as well as the added toil of her work in the shop. Her exuberance, according to the narrator, “betokened the cheeriness of an active temperment, finding joy in its activity, and, therefore, rendering it beautiful; it was a New England trait, —the stern old stuff of Puritanism, with a gold thread in the web” (*HSG* 76). Phoebe’s “temperament” would hardly seem related to “Puritanism.” The narrator associates her penchant for hard work with her Puritan ancestors, but the comparison between the “stern” quality of the Puritans in the seventeenth century still seems unconnected with Phoebe’s free and pleasant nature in the nineteenth century.

This seemingly misrepresentation of Phoebe may be related to how the narrator describes Judge Pyncheon. Ragan’s ideas about the Puritan women in *The Scarlet Letter* also relate to the unwieldy characteristics he creates for Judge Pyncheon. The narrator describes the Judge:

quicker mobility than the old Englishman’s had possessed, and keener vivacity, but at the expense of a sturdier something, on which these acute endowments seemed to act like dissolving acids. This process, for aught we know, may belong to the great system of human progress, which, with the very ascending footstep, as it diminishes the necessity for animal force, may be destined gradually to spiritualize us, by refining away our grosser attributes of body. If so, Judge Pyncheon could endure a century or two more of such refinement, as well as most other men (*HSG* 121).

Though the Judge’s “quicker mobility” may have something to do with his character’s ability to seize opportunities that have gained him wealth and notoriety, he has gained these “at the expense of a sturdier something.” The Judge’s appearance may seem domineering, but it is also boorish and crude. However much wealth and notoriety the Judge may gain, he will always appear uncultured. In a community where hard work and wealth are commended, there is little room for the cultural awareness Alice longed for in New England after being educated in the old world. The Judge’s “grosser attributes” and Phoebe’s lack of sophistication are common among “most other men” in their communities. Hawthorne, again, may be drawing on the New

Englander's general lack of cultural sophistication to highlight. What is also interesting to note is that despite Hepzibah and Judge Pyncheon's inherited pride, they did not possess "refinement," that might have belonged to the elite class in Europe. Alice Pyncheon may have been proud, but she may have just been fulfilled with her foreign education and appreciation for beauty and art. The fulfillment of a society depends as much on its art as it does on its politics or economic stability; European culture acknowledges the importance of a society's aesthetic qualities, and because Alice comes from Europe, she understands this idea.

The older generations, Judge Pyncheon and Hepzibah, can then be compared to a younger generation, Holgrave and Phoebe, in order to judge whether new generations of New Englanders were heading in the right direction toward gaining "refinement." Yet, if each generation was moving in the direction toward cultural sophistication, Alice's characterization as "beautiful," does not seem to follow this shift from generation to generation if what the narrator is talking about is the New Englander's tendency toward a ruder, sturdier physical appearance. Again, Hawthorne may be playing with the Puritan belief that an individual's outer appearance gives insight into his or her true character. Hawthorne may not be referring to how an individual's appearance reveals his or her moral nature, but rather whether the true nature of his character's physical traits reveal something about their refinement. Alice, though Hepzibah's ancestor, was not as crude in appearance as Hepzibah and her scowl because she was more culturally sophisticated. Alice, in her appearance, also seems to be symbolic of artistic sensibility. If Phoebe pictures Alice's sophisticated physical attributes, then she is closer to understanding her ancestor's appreciation for beauty and her admiration for art.

The narrator's characterization of Phoebe and Hepzibah seems to function as a test to the theory that each generation will slowly "spiritualize." The narrator claims that Phoebe's



“spiritual force” was strong since she “found a place for herself, amid circumstances so stern, as those which surrounded the mistress of the house; and also by the effect which she produced on a character of so much more mass than her own.” Hepzibah’s frame and the Pyncheon family dynasties were greater than Phoebe’s small frame, yet she refused to be intimidated by them. The two women standing side by side also made an impression since “the gaunt, bony frame and limbs of Hepzibah, as compared with the tiny lightness of Phoebe’s figure, were perhaps in some fit proportion with the moral weight and substance, respectively, of the woman and the girl” (*HSG* 137-38). Despite the enormous “moral weight” that hung over the Pyncheon family, Phoebe was capable of changing the effects of the Pyncheon curse with her “spiritual force.” Phoebe, furthermore, may appear less substantial in her appearance because she might, through her appreciation for beauty, be capable of developing an artistic sensibility. Clifford, though part of Hepzibah’s generation, is more like Phoebe and Alice in his appearance because he also appreciates beauty. A love of beauty is what leads individuals to cultivate their unique artistic sensibilities.

An appreciation of natural beauty leads an individual to spiritual and intellectual development, according to romantic ideals, and Clifford illustrates how one can become cultivated when he becomes interested with hummingbirds in the garden. This simple pleasure makes him seem happy in a sense, but it is not exactly as it appears. “The more Clifford seemed to taste the happiness of a child, the sadder was the difference to be recognized. With a mysterious and terrible Past, which had annihilated his memory, and a blank Future before him, he had only this visionary and impalpable Now, which, if you once look closely at it, is nothing” (*HSG* 149). Clifford may be a tragic character, yet he does understand the symbolic implication of the natural world. He is like Alice and Phoebe in that he can see what the natural world

communicates to him about the past and present. When individuals take instruction from nature, according to romantic ideals, then they become spiritually fulfilled and culturally sophisticated.

Most of the members of both the Pyncheon and the Maule families are not characterized as refined because they could not appreciate art or beauty, and this idea reoccurs in *The House of the Seven Gables*. Holgrave, as a daguerreotypist, is an artist, and his daguerreotypes allow access into his subject's natures. Also, he is capable, despite his intention of moralizing Alice's tale, of portraying a symbol, in this case Alice's flowers, in such a way that Phoebe can read meaning into Alice Pyncheon's true nature, and her belief in artistic sensibility.

Puritans in *The Scarlet Letter* were characterized as incapable of artistic sensibility in the seventeenth-century because their culture was so religiously stern that they lacked artistic sensibility. This perception occurs again in *The House of the Seven Gables* where a plebian society in the nineteenth-century also lacks artistic sensibility since it is primarily concerned with economic progress. This drive toward wealth and power has also made the Pyncheon family closed to an appreciation of art. The closest the family comes to aesthetic appreciation are the paintings of several intimidating Pyncheon men in the house. Hepzibah is clearly not aware of the symbolic implications of Alice's music. She tells Phoebe that whenever a member of the Pyncheon family passed away, her harpsichord could be heard throughout the house (*HSG* 83-4). Hepzibah only briefly mentions Alice to Phoebe, and she thinks the music that can be heard throughout the house is sad, but she does not analyze it further. Hepzibah also does not tend to the Pyncheon garden; perhaps she does not see the beauty of flowers as well. There, again, are multiple perspectives from which the symbols in the novel can be read. To Hepzibah, the garden is of little significance, the reader may or may not appreciate the symbolic implications of the garden, but to Phoebe and Holgrave the garden is a thing of beauty they can both understand.

Phoebe and Holgrave, then, represent a generation of Pyncheons that has gained a sense of self-reliance and has become culturally sophisticated.

Hepzibah also fails to understand why, perhaps, Alice might have played her harpsichord when one of the Pyncheons died. Alice, according to Hepzibah, played a sad tune when a relative died, but her harpsichord may have been a warning sign as well. Before Judge Pyncheon comes for his final visit to the house of the seven gables, Alice's harpsichord is playing. Hepzibah thought that perhaps it was Clifford and the narrator also supposes that it could have been Clifford who was playing the instrument. If the audience accepts Hepzibah and the narrator's contention that the music could have been played by Clifford, then the sound of the harpsichord could be a narrative device Hawthorne uses to create suspense. If, however, the audience accepts that the novel is a romance, the harpsichord could have been coming from Alice's spirit, and it could have been warning Hepzibah of another death in the family. The harpsichord's music and the posies in the garden are symbols that lead the characters in the narrative to develop their sensitivity for art, and at the same time, these symbols are a literary device Hawthorne uses to show his audience how his fiction should be approached as an art form, specifically, a romance.

Hepzibah overlooks the possibility that the music comes from Alice at this point and this shows the audience how Hepzibah has misunderstood Alice's spirit throughout her life. Alice may not be mourning the death of another Pyncheon family member, but she may be warning future generations of a turning point in the family's history. The Pyncheon men in the family had ruled completely because others did not take heed to Alice's message. It is the youngest woman in the Pyncheon family who finally takes on the opportunity and changes her fate at the passing of a Pyncheon patriarch.

If her music was not loud enough for the Pyncheons to understand, Alice more

assertively conveys her message when her posies are “crimson spotted” after the death of the Judge. The narrator more specifically implies what the meaning of this symbol is since the flowers “were flaunting in rich beauty and bloom to-day, and seemed, as it were, a mystic expression that something within the house was consummated” (*HSG* 286). If Phoebe does understand the symbolic implications of Alice’s posies and music, she understands that there had to be a major change in the Pyncheon family history for her fate to be different than her previous ancestors’ fate. The “something” that Alice implied must be “consummated” was the love between Holgrave and Phoebe. The chapter that follows Alice’s final warning sign is entitled “The Flower of Eden,” and at this point in the narrative Holgrave and Phoebe confess their love for each other. The chapter is perhaps entitled “The Flower of Eden” because it is a new beginning for the women of the house of the seven gables. Where flowers in the previous chapter represent the death of Judge Pyncheon, in this following chapter they represent a new beginning, a garden of “Eden.” The symbolic implication of flowers in *The House of the Seven Gables* is what ultimately reveals how the Pyncheon and Maule family lines will undergo a transformation that will lead to the liberation of the characters in the novel from a long line of male oppressors.

Part of the house’s dark mystique comes from the plants growing in the Pyncheon garden and around Maule’s well. The narrator describes the ground surrounding Maule’s well: “[t]he black, rich soil had fed itself with the decay of a long period of time; such as fallen leaves, the petals of flowers, and the stalks of seed-vessels of vagrant and lawless plants, more useful after their death than ever while flaunting in the sun.” The decayed state of the plants reflects the dilapidated condition of the house. The narrator is not only setting the mood for the novel, but may also be developing the symbolic implications of the physical appearance of the inside and outside of the house. The speaker continues; “[t]he evil of these departed years would naturally

have spring up again, in such rank weeds (symbolic of the transmitted vices of society) as are always prone to root themselves about human dwellings” (*HSG* 86). If the inhabitants within the house have, to some extent, taken on the aspect of the cursed family line, the inhabitants outside the house must similarly reflect “the transmitted vices” of the Pyncheon and the Maule family lines. Why the narrator chooses to focus on the plant life may have to do with the Pyncheon family’s lack of artistic sensibility.

Alice, through her posies in the garden, still exists as a living symbol. There is also, however, evidence of her within the house “as a dried rosebud scents the drawer where it had withered and perished” (*HSG* 83). Alice’s posies are outside of the house where they flourish and bloom. When Alice is characterized as a living posy, a blooming flower is not as accurate a portrayal of her character after living within the house. A flower living within the house of the seven gables would no longer flourish, but instead it appears as “a dried rosebud.” This symbol of Alice as a dry flower is similar to how the narrator characterizes Phoebe while living in the house. The narrator explains how living things are affected in such an oppressive environment:

But the sympathy of magneticism among human beings is more subtle and universal, than we think; it exists, indeed, among different classes of organized life, and vibrates from one to another. A flower, for instance, as Phoebe herself observed, always began to droop sooner in Clifford’s hand, or Hepzibah’s, than in her own; and by the same law, converting her whole daily life into a flower-fragrance for these two sickly spirits, the blooming girl must inevitably droop and fade, much sooner than if worn on a younger and happier breast. (*HSG* 174)

Hawthorne may have used flowers to symbolize Alice’s life, and in this passage he more clearly appears to make the connection between living things, flowers and women, within the house.

Also, if we accept the romantic notion that “magneticism among human beings” exists though we cannot perceive it, then the connection between Alice, Phoebe’s long-deceased great, great, great aunt, still exists between the two women. If Phoebe, then, can still smell the hint of “a dried

rosebud” within the house, perhaps Alice is communicating with her. Alice, as a young woman, could not maintain her youth and beauty because the house and Matthew Maule’s influence proved too oppressive. Similarly, Phoebe as a young woman might also suffer the same fate as her great, great aunt. Alice and Phoebe’s lives are linked through Hawthorne’s symbol of a flower, and he again links them through Holgrave’s narrative of Alice.

When Holgrave first introduces Alice, she appears as “the figure of a young lady, an exotic, like the flowers, and beautiful and delicate as they” (*HSG* 191). At this point in his narrative, Alice appears as Phoebe does at the beginning of Hawthorne’s own narrative. The narrator explains how living in the house took its toll on Alice: “The fair Alice bestowed most of her maiden leisure between flowers and music, although the former were apt to droop, and the melodies were often sad. She was of foreign education, and could not take kindly to the New England modes of life, in which nothing beautiful had ever been developed” (*HSG* 192). The flowers during Alice’s lifetime would “droop” just as they did in Phoebe’s; likewise, both young women will eventually be worn out after living in the house. Phoebe might perceive how her fate might be linked to Alice’s if we consider what Holgrave might be implying through his narrative.

There are several references to Phoebe and flowers throughout *The House of the Seven Gables*, to emphasize how flowers symbolize Phoebe’s character. Richard C. Carpenter notes that the flowers not only represent Phoebe, but “flowers are to be equated with the Pyncheons” (66). Contrary to the Pyncheons, according to Carpenter, the Maules are best represented by the weeds around Maule’s and are “noxious and detestable” (67). Hawthorne uses flowers and weeds to outline two contradictory images to make his ideas more discernable. Carpenter claims that the novel “derives its thematic energy from antinomies.” Carpenter notes that plant imagery cannot be overlooked in the novel since Hawthorne draws these parallels himself; “[t]he weeds

are, he tells us ‘symbolic of the transmitted vices of society’; the flowers ‘aristocratic,’ and the vegetables ‘plebian.’” The Maule curse, then, is associated with their family; the Pyncheons represent the Pyncheon family pride; and vegetables represent the democratic society in which the story is set. Carpenter continues, “the weeds and flowers are most patently in opposition; yet the real struggle in the tale is less between them than between the two different types of corruption of nature which they represent and the wholesome fertility of the vegetables” (66-7). Although Carpenter’s observation concerning the weed and flower imagery is representative of the conflict between the Pyncheon and the Maules, I argue that these two divergent images represent the conflict between a cultureless and refined society. The two families, then, are in opposition in the garden, the weeds and flowers fight for control, yet the reader must not overlook that American society was also in conflict outside of the family—aristocratic against plebian and uncultured versus those who maintain artistic sensibilities. Meanwhile the outside world is changing around them; it is becoming more plebian, which is represented by the “vegetables” in the garden. This change represents progress, but it does not only represent a move toward democracy, but also cultural sophistication.

The youngest generation of Pyncheons understands why the Pyncheon garden is a means of developing one’s appreciation for art; however they must work together to cultivate the garden and refine their artistic sensibilities. Hawthorne creates a female character, Hepzibah, with masculine traits, and her counterpart, Clifford, is effeminate. Hawthorne melded both masculine and feminine traits when he created these characters to illustrate how both women and men were responsible for changing American culture during the nineteenth century. Carpenter similarly observes the intermingling of characteristics between Phoebe and Holgrave. Phoebe and Holgrave are responsible for tending to the Pyncheon garden, and “[e]ach is, through this

enterprise, bringing forth a less dominant side of the other's nature. Phoebe is fundamentally a practical little body, while Holgrave is a dabbler; but here their roles are partially reversed (68-9). What Hawthorne emphasizes here is that both families are intermingling and at the same time they are becoming more enriched individuals in the process. Carpenter notes how both characters become more like one another, but there appears to be a purpose for this change within Phoebe and Holgrave; indeed, they may well represent how men and women will work in the future to maintain a balance between a plebian and artistic American culture. I discern a parallel between Carpenter's claim and one of Holgrave's statements in the novel to capture how America was in need of progress during the nineteenth century.

The idea that a family name should be muddled is captured by Holgrave. Hawthorne, through Holgrave, reveals that a family's past should perhaps be uncertain because if too much emphasis is placed on tradition, then there is no hope for progress. Holgrave has been observing the Pyncheons for some time and concludes that they should let go of family pride and consider starting over. Because they have failed to merge themselves with the rest of society, they keep repeating the same mistakes. Consequently, they continue to pass down certain defects in their characters to countless generations. There is only one solution to this problem. Holgrave claims that "once in every half-century, at longest, a family should be merged into the great, obscure mass of humanity, and forget all about its ancestors. Human blood, in order to keep its freshness, should run in hidden streams, as the water of an aqueduct is conveyed in subterranean pipes" (*HOSG* 185). Holgrave's words reveal what the garden symbolically represents: to make progress in a plebian society, both Pyncheons and Maules had to work together to converge with the egalitarian world outside the house of the seven gables.



Carpenter notes that eventually, Holgrave cultivates bean flowers, and with this act, “his character as radical thinker—has brought to fruition both usefulness and beauty” (69).

Hawthorne’s message in *The House of the Seven Gables* then is that there is a happy medium that can exist in a progressively egalitarian society. Hawthorne, through a creative stroke of genius, finds a symbol that represents both beauty and functionality. Perhaps nineteenth-century society was becoming more practical in its progress, but if it did not maintain a sense of culture, then modern American society might revert to its old ways at some point. I allude again to the Puritan emphasis on plants that were useful to the community. If nineteenth-century society emphasized utility too much, then it could perhaps move backward instead of forward.

Alice, Hepzibah, and Phoebe are the driving forces behind change in *The House of the Seven Gables*. What these women change, however, is not apparent unless the reader considers that the novel is a romance and Hawthorne perhaps did intend Alice to be the link between reality and romanticism. The reader may take a more realistic approach to reading Hawthorne’s novel and still come to the conclusion that living female heirs to the Pyncheon dynasty were a strong force throughout *The House of the Seven Gables*. The reader, however, may conclude that Alice had as much to do with the feminine revolution that the women lead against the Pyncheon patriarch. The novel ends with Alice’s “farewell touch of a spirit’s joy upon her harpsichord,” and it is the reader who decides how to interpret Alice’s final tune (*HSG* 436). If the characters in the novel learned to understand the symbolic implications of the harpsichord, then the audience can too; thus, the reader is capable of cultural sophistication through an appreciation of Hawthorne’s narrative art.

## CONCLUSION

American romanticism, according to writers such as Emerson and Thoreau, is based in part on the idea that reality can emerge from own perceptions. Romantic writers, then, emphasized the point that to develop fully as individuals, not only intellectually but spiritually, people had to intuit nature's "discipline." Hawthorne applied this romantic concept by having natural elements such as roses in *The Scarlet Letter* and posies in *The House of the Seven Gables* allowing his characters insight into why the development of an individual's artistic sensibility is so crucial. He also used women in these two novels to suggest that, if some of the lowest ranking members of American society could overcome established patriarchies, others might do so as well.

The women in Hawthorne's first two major novels did not seek to change institutions; they wanted only to change their own place within their communities. During the seventeenth-century, women did not hold positions of power within their Puritan communities; they were neither judges, governors, nor, with some exceptions, ministers of the gospels. Hawthorne recreated a time and place in historic America where a woman was be subject to a man's control; in the case of Hester Prynne, Hawthorne created a character whose situation was desperate because even her very name was discredited. In *The Scarlet Letter*, Hester became a symbol for how a "disreputable" individual in Puritan terms, with the least amount of hope for redemption, could gain a sense of individuality and emancipation for herself. Hepzibah, in *The House of the Seven Gables*, similarly became a symbol for the transformation of a downtrodden individual rising from poverty to the position of a strong feminine figure who is able to reevaluate her identity. As a result, Hepzibah disinherited herself in a sense: though she had the status of a noblewoman through the Pyncheon dynasty; she gained autonomy as a common shopkeeper,

thus overcoming centuries of domination by prominent male figures in the Pyncheon family. These women in Hawthorne's fiction represent core romantic beliefs, especially that of the full development of the individual in society in nineteenth-century America. Romantic writers such as Emerson and Thoreau presented the idea that the individual is capable of overcoming, or transcending, religious and political authorities and that the development of a national identity begins with the individual; yet it was Hawthorne who, in his fiction, first put these ideas into practice—especially in *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables*. He created female characters such as Hester and Pearl who defeat a powerful religious institution. Moreover, Hawthorne illustrated through Phoebe's interpretation of Alice's artistic sensibilities that Americans could create a national identity for themselves through a mingling of art and democracy.

Hawthorne's heroines are powerful feminine figures because they have become symbolic of the individual reaching his or her fullest potential, which was a major element of nineteenth-century ideology. Yet, Hawthorne's readers come to a more intimate understanding of the symbolic implications of his heroines because he captures the process of self-actualization for each one of his female characters in his first two novels. Hester Prynne, for example, does not seek to denigrate the entire Puritan faith when she chooses to live outside her community and begins to sew to make a living for herself. She sews because she needs to provide for her daughter, but also to give purpose to her life. Her work infiltrates the Puritan community, and with it so does Hester's spirit. Hester does not seek to change a woman's lot radically in life during the seventeenth-century; rather she merely wants to help fellow women in need. Hester's good works in her community make her seem saintly, a "sister of mercy," by the end of the novel. Neither does her daughter Pearl seek revenge on her father or those who banish her from

her community. When she and her mother visit the governor, Pearl appears to be misguided when she cannot tell Puritan officials that her “Heavenly Father” made her. Instead she answers that the rosebush “fathered” her, for she is a child of nature. Puritan officials allow her to remain with her mother, accepting the fact that as an untamed, natural being, she need not adhere to Puritan ideologies.

In *The House of the Seven Gables*, Hepzibah finds that her place as a noblewoman in her community’s past does not transfer to a new democratic American society. When Hepzibah finds that she is trapped by her Pyncheon name and is destined to remain a dependent of the male Pyncheon dynasty, she seeks self-sufficiency by opening a cent-shop. In the case of Phoebe, she has few expectations when she arrives at the house of the seven gables as she finds that she has no home of her own and lives only as a dependent of her wealthier Pyncheon relatives. She does not seek to help Hepzibah change hundreds of years of history; however, she does help Hepzibah with the housework, assists her in running a more efficient shop, and becomes a vital link between the Pyncheon past and the family’s place in a democratic America. Phoebe learns to understand the value of appreciating culture from Alice Pyncheon and she knows how it is a part of a modern American democracy; artistic sensibility is appreciating beauty, such as Alice’s posies and her organ music.

The strongest movement for change on the part of the women in Hawthorne’s first two major novels, however, stems from the past, which Ann and Alice represent. These two characters may not be major characters in *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables*, respectively, but they became powerful symbols for new generations of women. Without guidance from their feminine ancestors, future generations of women might have not been guided in the proper direction, and they might have missed how critical an understanding of

aesthetics is within a culture. These two novels involve three generations of women because each generation represents the past, present, and future. Ann and Alice, as feminine figures of the past, do not ignite change during their lifetimes. Ann is banned from her Puritan community and does nothing to change the new direction in which the Puritan religion was heading. Alice could perhaps have begun the progression of developing her family's artistic sensibilities, but instead her life ends early and with it hope for the change in American society that Hawthorne foresaw in *The Scarlet Letter*—that is, development of America's potential to produce its own art.

The involvement of the past with the present is a subject Hawthorne often alludes to in his fiction. His male ancestors, in particular, frequently cast an ominous cloud over the present; the Puritan past appears to restrict characters within his novels: Hester is contained by Puritan officials and Hepzibah's livelihood is subject to the conservative figure of Judge Pyncheon. Nevertheless, the influence women of previous generations hold on future generations is quite the opposite. They do not restrict, but instead free the heroines in Hawthorne's novels. The influence of the past on the present, when women are concerned, is what leads to progress in the future.

A woman's past may be riddled with shame or guilt, even so, they do not pass their infamy to future generations of women; their offspring, in fact, seem to live significantly different lives than their feminine ancestors. Hester finds she is ostracized from her community just as her feminine ancestor, Ann Hutchinson, had been banned from her town. Rather than accept her ancestor's fate and, defeated as a fallen woman, leave her community behind, Hester makes a place outside of Boston for herself and influences her community through her artwork—her needlework—and her good deeds as she becomes a caretaker for downtrodden women in her community. Neither does Hepzibah inherit her feminine ancestor Alice's fate. Though Hepzibah

and Alice first appear as proud noblewomen in the novel, Hepzibah changes before it is too late for her and rises above centuries of male domination while Alice holds to her family pride until her death. Hepzibah, then, influences the social structure of her town by becoming a merchant in an increasingly consumer-driven American society.

The most significant measure of female progress through the generations that Hawthorne depicts, however, comes from the youngest female characters in *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables*: Pearl in the former and Phoebe in the latter. Pearl disinherits herself from Puritan traditions and becomes a natural woman who eventually liberates herself from her community when she leaves Boston. Phoebe is straightforward about her rejection of Pyncheon male domination when she refuses the Judge's kiss and leaves the structure that had kept all of her family prisoner for centuries, the house of the seven gables. She has discovered that the Pyncheon name was not prestigious in a democratic society, but what was significant was her understanding of the value of art in nineteenth-century America.

In this dissertation, I have focused on *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables* for two reasons; how Hawthorne created a vision of a more liberal American society—by giving women power over men—and what the author felt was the right direction for American culture—the development of his country's art, in particular, the art of fiction. These two novels show the progression of feminine figures over the span of several generations. It is this familial bond that unites the women in the novels to gain one common goal: a full development of their individuality.

Hawthorne also illustrates how it is possible for an individual to come into their full potential whether spiritually, intellectually, or artistically, through the women in his fiction. Where the men do not change and remain content with their positions of dominance, the women

have to change to gain power in a society where they are helpless. What makes the women in *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables* most dynamic is the transformation of each woman from the beginning of the novel until the end. Hester, for example, early in the novel may be categorized as a dark female figure who is morally corrupt according to the mores of her society; but by the end she becomes an angelic figure: the townspeople even believe the “A” stands for Angel. Of course, this categorization of a dark female figure does not appear to be a fitting category for Pearl: she is neither light nor dark, damned nor saved; she is just a natural child whom the narrator describes as a “bird,” a creature of the natural world. The reader also sees the progression of her character from a curious girl to a woman who achieves independence from her past and who becomes a wealthy woman outside of the confines of Boston. Hepzibah is not one of Hawthorne’s dark heroines since she is not sexually appealing or morally corrupt, but she still proves a threat to the patriarchy. The reader is first introduced to Hepzibah as she hesitates to open her shop out of shame; she is a noblewoman who thus, according to mores of the time, should not involve herself in commercial ventures. By the end of the novel, however, she opens her shop and overcomes centuries of male domination. Phoebe also changes significantly; she begins her personal expedition as an optimistic, yet naïve girl and can be best categorized as one of Hawthorne’s light heroines. When she involves herself with the dark past of the house of the seven gables and its occupants, however, she develops darker characteristics herself that make her a stronger, more compelling character.

It is curious why, after the composition of these two novels, Hawthorne in his last two novels, *The Blithedale Romance* and *The Marble Faun*, failed to create such dynamic female characters. Rather, in these last works, Hawthorne seems to delineate narrow pathways for his heroines: his women appear to be stereotypically light and pure or dark and corrupt!

I must explain, then, why *The Blithedale Romance* and *The Marble Faun* are not part of this study, aside from the fact that these two novels did not cover the lifespan of several generations of women. I see Hawthorne's women in his final two novels as being typecasts: they are either light or dark; these two forces are obviously always diametrically opposed to each other. Though Hester might best be categorized as a dark heroine, Pearl is anything but "light," and women are not in conflict with each other, but rather they oppose their societies. Similarly, while Phoebe may be categorized as a light heroine, Hepzibah is not truly dark, and both women unite to run their shop and make a living for themselves without the Judge's financial help. After *The House of the Seven Gables*, however, Hawthorne's feminine figures become progressively dissimilar, seemingly more archetypal, and thus less dynamic.

I detect a shift in Hawthorne's portrayal of feminine figures occurring between the end of *The House of the Seven Gables* and the composition of *The Blithedale Romance*. The first two novels, *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables*, were the beginning of a dream Hawthorne had for women in American society. In these two novels, Hawthorne emphasized the romantic elements of his fiction. The figures of Hutchinson, Hester, Pearl, Alice, Hepzibah, and Phoebe became mythical in American literature because Hawthorne created an epic crusade against patriarchal figures in their communities. Hawthorne also created heroic battles for his women in his last novels; but Zenobia, Priscilla, Miriam, and Hilda in *The Blithedale Romance* and *The Marble Faun* fought amongst themselves and thus lost the war against dominant male figures.

In *The Blithedale Romance*, Priscilla, as the light heroine, and Zenobia, as the dark, dispute not only what a woman's place in society should be, but they also strive for the love of the same man, Hollingsworth. The difference between these two women is best illustrated by an



argument they have concerning a woman's rightful place in modern society. At one point, the characters consider powerful feminine figures, particularly the Virgin Mary. Coverdale uses the Virgin Mary as an example not only of a woman's spiritual capabilities, but also of the extent of her power within certain cultures; she is as powerful as a deity. The idea of a powerful feminine figure, however, is immediately rejected by the light heroine of the novel, Priscilla. She thinks that Coverdale gives women too much credit and power; and, being one who is accustomed to her powerless position, Priscilla cannot accept the fact that this potential for authority is part of her nature when she denies her capacity for developing into a stronger feminine figure. By contrast, Zenobia agrees with Coverdale's view that women are capable of gaining power within a culture. She also adds that American culture does not progress because women such as Priscilla prevent males from viewing women differently. Zenobia claims that Priscilla "is the type of womanhood, such as man has spent centuries in making it. He is never content, unless he can degrade himself by stooping toward what he loves. In denying us our rights, he betrays even more blindness to his own interests, than profligate disregard of ours!" (*Blithedale* 122). Priscilla is valued for her inferiority in a patriarchy and does nothing to help either men or women reach their full potential. The end of *The Blithedale Romance* is drastically different from that of *The House of the Seven Gables* in which both women work together to help each other hopefully create a better place for both women and men within a male-dominated society.

*The Blithedale Romance* ends dismally because Priscilla appears to have won the battle between her more traditional outlook on the place of a woman and a radically unconventional view of women, such as Zenobia's view of women in the nineteenth-century. By the end of the novel, Priscilla marries Hollingsworth, while Zenobia ends her own life in a mood of desperation. Women remain subject to male dominance and their place in American culture is set when light

heroines overcome their dark rivals. Though Hawthorne may appear to discredit radical feminists in the novel when he has Zenobia end her own life, Priscilla's life is also tragic since she does not gain a privileged place in a male-dominated society by the end of the novel. It is difficult to determine whether Priscilla ever attains happiness. What becomes of the lives of Hawthorne's heroines by the end of these last two novels is of little significance. What Hawthorne appears to focus on instead is creating a more distinct divergence between his light and dark heroines, they work against each other rather than working toward a the goal of progress for women, and this conflict between traditional and progressive female figures reflects how little hope there was for women in American society.

By the time Hawthorne composed *The Marble Faun*, he depicted his women as being so clearly light or dark that they appear to be set stereotypes rather than depictions of individualistic women. Miriam also lacks depth as a character, and it appears that her only function in the narrative is to be the stereotypical fallen woman since her lover, Donatello, murders a man for her, and she thus becomes a symbol of sin. Hilda, though an artist, is also a flat character since the extent of her artistic talent is to copy other great works of art. She does not represent progress or change; but rather embodies the idea prevalent during the nineteenth century that a woman is destined to a lower status. As a result of their vastly dissimilar light and dark characteristics, Miriam and Hilda become rivals when Hilda believes she is Miriam's moral superior. Hilda attempts to separate herself completely from Miriam by locking herself up in a tower after she discovers that Donatello killed another man for Miriam. Hilda, then, lives a life of moral uprightness, becoming so saintly that the narrator suggests she is a reflection of "the Virgin Mother."

*The Marble Faun* ends tragically for the dark woman, Miriam. She can never be with Donatello again since he is sentenced to remain in prison for murder, and she must remain hidden because she is wanted by the law in Rome for being linked with a plot against the government (*MF* 465). All that is known about the outcome of Hilda and Miriam's lives by the end of the novel comes from a vague postscript in which the "Author" feels it is his responsibility to explain briefly what was to become of these two women (*MF* 63). Hawthorne's treatment of the lives of these women as the "Author" is short and indifferent. This shortness on the author's behalf again is an example of what little significance the lives of his light and dark heroines were in nineteenth-century culture. Miriam was a dark, mysterious fallen woman and Hilda was a light, virginal figure; that is essentially all that the reader needs to understand about these two female figures.

Why the shift in Hawthorne's portrayal of women occurred from dynamic, individualistic feminine figures in *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables* to formulaic typecasts in *The Blithedale Romance* and *The Marble Faun* would constitute another study. Perhaps as the nation moved closer to a civil war, romantic writers like Hawthorne grew more pessimistic about the direction in which the nation was moving. Though Hawthorne's later heroines may have suffered at the expense of Hawthorne's pessimism, the female characters he contributed to American literary tradition in his first two major novels became mythical female characters.

I conclude that Hawthorne may have wanted us to find that as readers we should believe in magic roses and ghosts because, in the romantic tradition, he believed in them too. Hawthorne gave us natural symbols such as flowers and the supernatural symbol of a ghost because he realized that it is the reader's responsibility, as well as that of his characters within the narrative, to discover their own interpretation of the insight nature allows individuals. Romantic American

writers wanted to create art that was uniquely American. If *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables* represent the hope early American writers had for American literature, then the women in these two novels successfully represent the fruition of an American literary tradition during the nineteenth-century. Hawthorne's focus may have shifted during his lifetime when he created his heroines; but his earlier novels represent the fulfillment of the hope romantic writers had of developing a genuine American literary tradition. Thus Hilda, as a virginal white figure in her tower, is forever greatly overshadowed by the compelling image of "the letter A, Gules" on Hester's tombstone.

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