

HAWTHORNE'S 1850'S ROMANCES:  
POLITICAL AND PERSONAL APOLOGIA AND ACCOMMODATION

by

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A thesis submitted to the Department of English of the State University of New York  
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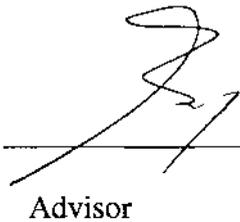
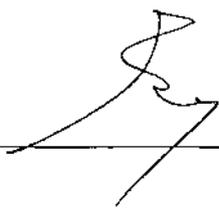
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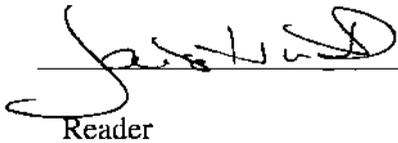
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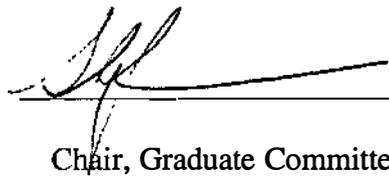
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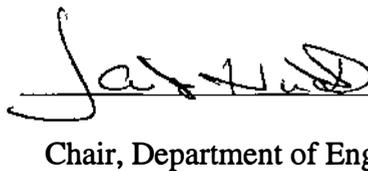
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## Abstract

Nathaniel Hawthorne was one in a long line of American scholars, politicians, statesmen, and writers who created a national mythos. By creating, or recreating, a national past wherein every American would share, at least in myth, a common New England beginning, it was hoped that Americans would share a common view of America as the city set on a hill which the Puritans believed they had established. This was to accomplish many objectives: glorify America's Puritan beginnings, make heroic the Puritan forefathers, and remind every American of the brotherhood of all Americans. In addition to this, Hawthorne undertook to examine and explain American history, and to work through a very complicated national and personal accommodation. On a national level, Hawthorne needed to show his readers the Puritan character as both the manly hero who served as a noble warrior for liberty and as a harsh bigot who persecuted those with whom he disagreed. In doing so, he was able to aid in the creation of the national mythos while providing his contemporaries with the idea that they were yet more noble than their Puritan forebearers. Additionally, Hawthorne sought a personal accommodation. The Puritans whom he calls his forebearers were not mythic ones; they were his ancestors. He was both repelled by and attracted to Puritanism and felt that he had inherited from his ancestors "strong traits of their nature" (Hawthorne "The Custom House" 13). As a result, he sought to come to terms with these ancestors by exploring not only the history of the Puritans themselves, but also the succeeding two hundred years, to examine how the Puritan attitudes and ideals emerged in consecutive ages.

## CHAPTER ONE: A CITIZEN OF SOMEWHERE ELSE

“I am a citizen of somewhere else,” ( 43) Hawthorne famously remarked in “The Custom House,” the preface to The Scarlet Letter. In saying this, asserts Brenda Wineapple, Hawthorne is declaring his intent to re-enter his “realm of quiet” (42) and become (again) a literary man, rather than the man of commerce he had endeavored to be as Surveyor of the Port of Salem. Hawthorne’s purposes in writing “The Custom House” were manifold. A political appointee whose job and much-needed livelihood both disappeared when his Democratic party lost and Whigs took office, he took aim at the appointment system itself. This system, which gave him his job, also put him initially at odds with the other Custom House employees. His subordinates were appointees of other, by-gone political powers and believed him to be, like so many political appointees before him, vindictive towards those whose political will in any way opposed his. They assumed that his position quite probably meant the loss of theirs. Oftentimes that assumption was correct, as is evidenced by the fact that Hawthorne is writing about his position in retrospect, having been removed from his job when his Democratic party lost an election to the Whigs. He also meant to have a last word, a very public last word, with regard to the Whigs who, by removing him from office had reintroduced him to his realm of quiet, which was, unfortunately, an impoverished kingdom. Finally, he wished to take his readers on a tour of his home town, his Salem.

Through this tour he meant to link the Salem of his day with Salem at her height as a powerful port and with Salem in her youth. Hawthorne's Salem was a dying seaport of crumbling wharves and sleepy custom house employees. The contrast between the Salem of Hawthorne's day and Salem when she was at her height is evidenced in the contrast between the dilapidated wharf and the brick building that is set at its base. This large edifice, built of brick for longevity, and crowned by banner and eagle, symbolic of the Republic it serves, looks out on sidewalks through which grass grows due to lack of foot traffic, wharves which are rotting and virtually unused, and a harbor which is now largely bypassed in favor of others. But there was a time when Salem was in her heyday, when "King Derby" reigned and Salem was a thriving, important seaport, plying her trade with India, a vital seaport for the young country. There was an even earlier time for Salem, when she was a city in a small colony, part of the New England nucleus around which the new country was formed. It was to this small Puritan colony that the first Hawthorne, paternal ancestor of Nathaniel Hawthorne, came from England. Stern Pilgrims, he and his descendents walked the Salem streets, imposing their Calvinist will on all who shared the colony. The many generations of Hawthornes who inhabited Salem and are now buried there enable Hawthorne to declare that the very dust of the place holds an attachment for him.

Just as the physical space that is Salem holds a powerful attachment for Hawthorne, whether he wishes it to or not, so too does this hold have a "moral"-- Hawthorne's term--counterpart. Generations of Hawthornes have, since boyhood, so

peopled his consciousness that he has, he says, a “home-feeling with the past” (“The Custom House” 12). So deep is this feeling that Hawthorne, who fancies that his ancestors may view him across the gulf of years separating them and condemn him, still asserts that while they may scorn him, “strong traits of their nature have intertwined themselves with mine” (13). Although he has often tried to leave and make a life elsewhere, he inevitably returns as if, he says, “Salem were for me the inevitable centre of the universe” (14-15). Just as he returns to Salem, his ancestral home, he returns to the territory his ancestors staked out: the Puritans, their history, and their nature, which was so much a part of him.

Finally, Hawthorne wishes to establish links between the Salem of his present, the affluent and commercially prominent Salem of the fairly recent past and the long ago Puritan Salem. He does this by means of an elaborate fiction involving a heavily embroidered, large, red letter “A” rediscovered by him in the attic of the Custom House. This device was initially discovered by his fellow Custom House employee and amateur historian, Mr. Surveyor Pue, and becomes the controlling motif in the story he proceeds to relate. In this instance, he creates and uses the physical device, a heavily embroidered letter A in the color significantly associated both with damning sin and Christologically redemptive blood, to link him to earliest New England, a time period and mind set which is at the heart, I believe, of everything substantive he produced, and inarguably, at the heart of the three romances that are examined in this paper.

The three works of literature that I chose to examine in this paper are Hawthorne's three American Romances: The Scarlet Letter, House of the Seven Gables and The Blithedale Romance. These three romances were written and published within the time period between which Hawthorne lost his political appointment as Surveyor of the Custom House in Salem (1849) and the time when Hawthorne's political star was again on the rise, the result of the election, in 1852, of Franklin Pierce, Hawthorne's friend from his college days. The three literary works, when taken together, encompass America's socio-political history to that time and thus serve as an excellent vehicle with which to examine Hawthorne's beliefs about America, her past and present values, and his familial and personal place within that history.

Many critics have written extensively about this same subject matter. I have chosen to examine at length the work they have done on the subject, including, but not limited to the work of Michael Davitt Bell, Richard H. Brodhead, Frederick Crews, Michael Colacurcio, Sacvan Bercovitch, and Catherine Zuckert. Crews looks at Hawthorne through a psychological lens, which, although I believe it is on the mark as far as it goes, is far too narrow in scope to explicate Hawthorne's literary work thoroughly, especially the American Romances. Most of the critics, however, in particular Brodhead, Bercovitch and Colacurcio, used historicism as the critical lens through which to view Hawthorne and his works. Zuckert looks specifically at the political thought of Hawthorne, although of course that in itself is historicist in nature. While Bell looks at Hawthorne's work, again, as a historicist, he does so

with a special eye towards its religious typography. Although he uses different terms, he does advance the theory common to most of these critics that Hawthorne contributed to making of the myth of American history.

Michael Davitt Bell looks with some interest at the term “romance” and what Hawthorne’s declaration of his works as romance may have said about Hawthorne. He also explores Hawthorne’s reasons for his defining romance as he did. Romance was a popular form of literature in the antebellum United States, but even then romances and their writers were looked at with a certain amount of distaste. As early as 1818 Thomas Jefferson wrote that fiction “destroys its (the mind’s) tone and revolts it against wholesome reading. Reason and fact, plain and unadorned, are rejected... The result is a bloated imagination, sickly judgment, and disgust against the real businesses of life” (Bell “Arts of Deception” 43). Bell notes that when Melville declared himself to be a writer of Romances, in the process of writing Mardi, his then-current publisher declined to print the book. Romances, so in vogue in the American pre-war years, were completely out of fashion in the post Civil War years. Hawthorne, says Bell, kept his audience and reputation in these years because he had engaged in a great deal of literary subterfuge when he defined his writing of romances more by what they do not do than what they do. He never associates his works with fantasy or even fiction. Hawthorne ties his romances to real, or supposedly real, events that become the lynchpin of the romance. Hawthorne, Bell states, engages in a kind of comic performance in his prefaces which mask the intent and authority of his fiction.

In Hawthorne and the Historical Romance of New England, Bell also asserts that nineteenth century American historians and writers of romances were actively applying typology to history. This typology, instead of applying Old Testament events to foreshadow New Testament ones, sought types to prefigure not the coming of Christ but the triumph of liberty. Therefore, the Puritan founding fathers were particularly well suited to the literary typology undertaken by the writers of American historical romance. They had, after all, begun the struggle for American liberty when they defied English tyranny and established democracy in New England. Thus, the Puritan migration from England can be regarded as a type of the American Revolution.

Bell also notes that one significant problem in applying this typological reading of Puritan history is that the Puritans were not champions of universal liberty at all. They expelled Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson as heretics. They persecuted Quakers and those they termed “witches.” They did not, he states, object to the union of church and state, but only to the union of the state with the wrong church. The nineteenth century writer who was intent upon writing historical romances was then put in the position of somehow resolving the tension between their “patriotic impulse to idolize the founders as heroes and the romantic impulse to criticize them as enemies to independence and individual liberty” (Hawthorne and the Historical Romance of New England 14). Bell sees Hawthorne as taking this view of Puritans and Puritanism a step farther. Often, Hawthorne did not see the Puritan as being either narrow or noble but as both. Thus, when he writes about

Endicott in “Endicott and the Red Cross” Hawthorne is working from a realization that for Endicott “the qualities of courage and bigotry were not contradictory, and thus to understand such a man (and what he represents for America) one must *accept* the combination of these qualities” (110).

In like vein, Richard H. Brodhead says of Hawthorne that he is “one of our great investigators of tradition.” His chief subject is the way the past invisibly invests itself in the present, and the way the present alternately struggles against the past’s weight and seeks to renew its embrace” (8). Brodhead sees Hawthorne as being significant at least as much for the amount of influence he has had on his own and successive generations of authors as for the substance of his writing itself. He actively disagrees with Melville’s reading of Hawthorne’s personality and writing persona. While Melville viewed Hawthorne as a solitary traveler on life’s journey and a writer whose persona was that of “the heroic nonparticipant – the man with no baggage, the affirmer of no social affirmations” (48), Brodhead views Hawthorne as the “most perfectly domestic of all American writers, the one most devoted to the family as the scene of fulfilling relation” (48) who simply reserved full intimacy for the home and as a writer whose work was, in the 1850’s, at “its most ingratiating” (48). Having gained the reputation as “America’s greatest novelist” (48), Hawthorne then became the inspiration and guide to not only Melville, but also William Dean Howells and Henry James, among others.

In The Province of Piety, in addition to several essays I consulted, Michael Colacurcio carefully examines Hawthorne’s work from a historical point of view

and, having examined Marion Kesselring's list of Hawthorne's borrowings from the Salem Athenaeum, concludes that "...we ought to begin to accept the obvious explanation: Hawthorne wanted to know about American origins – because he wanted to write about them accurately and well" (75). Colacurcio maintains that Hawthorne concerned himself with the Puritan aesthetics, politics and piety. Furthermore, Colacurcio believes that, in The Scarlet Letter, Hawthorne took specific historical events and, in several instances, altered them to fit his tale. He did this in order to make commentary about our Puritan forebearers and the mores of the times. I will address this more directly and in greater length in my section on The Scarlet Letter.

Sacvan Bercovitch views Hawthorne as one author of a line of authors who, much as did Sir Walter Scott with his Scottish romantic histories, contributed to the myth of America. By that I mean that, very early on, there was an acceptance of the hegemony of the Puritan forefathers and their new England roots, such that, as early as 1835, Tocqueville was able to write, in his Democracy in America, that the "whole destiny of America is contained in the first Puritan who landed on these shores as that of the whole human race in the first man" (Rites of Assent 31). Bercovitch notes that, while the Puritans were "an unruly lot" (33) they developed a series of control mechanisms which transformed their religious doctrine from one whose policies called for rebellion to one of a call for control, which linked private and public identity, and which respected both individual freedom and external discipline.

The Puritans viewed their errand into the wilderness as a journey into the New Israel. To Bercovitch, the unifying vision of the Puritan extended beyond New England “to a chosen nation in progress – a New Israel whose constituency was as numerous, potentially, as the entire people of God, and potentially as vast as America...It was that larger, American vision which the Puritans bequeathed in the culture” (Rites of Assent 35).

In the postrevolutionary Northern United States the sense of intermediate identity ...entailed a *mythical* mode of cultural *continuity*: Hawthorne’s Endicott, the iron-breasted harbinger of the Revolution; the hero of Franklin’s *Autobiography*, whose success story at once recapitulates the nation’s past and predicates its future; Natty Bumppo on the prairie, transcending all contradictions of race and culture because, as *our* representative American, he synthesizes the values of nature and civilization. These cases are very different from one another, but all three confirm American selfhood as an identity in progress, advancing from prophecies performed towards paradise to be regained...The myth of America is the creation of the New England Way. ( The Puritan Origins of the American Self 143)

Politicians and scholars were also helping to create this American mythos. Timothy Dwight, grandson of Jonathan Edwards, signer of the Declaration of Independence, and President of Yale, finished his epic poem, The Conquest of Canaan, in 1774, in which he developed a link between the battle for Canaan and the

developing battle for liberty of the young colonies and revealed Washington to be the Christlike “Benefactor to Mankind.” Twenty-odd years later, John Adams declared that the motives for the Revolution could be traced back to the Pilgrims and does so in terms which smack strongly of religiosity, a signal that the identification of the American people as one being on a mission to complete the Israelites’ covenant with God and build a nation which functions as a city set on a hill still existed, fully two hundred years after the Massachusetts Bay Colony began that mission.

The extension of this mythos building and its concomitant building of a theoretical homogeneity in America was that, according to Bercovitch, “‘American’ identity obviates the usual distinctions of national history – divisions of class, complexities of time and place – because the very meaning of ‘American’ involves a *cultural*, not a national, myth of consensus” (The American Jeremiad 155).

Bercovitch notes that because of the theoretical homogeneity of the American people, Henry James could complain about the lack of diversity in America, and Cooper could note, in Notions of the Americans, (1828) that he had “never seen a nation so much alike” in his life (155). Again, in The American Jeremiad, Bercovitch notes that because of the creation and acceptance of these myths regarding the beginning of America resting solely with the Pilgrim fathers and the resulting apparent homogeneity of the American people, Hawthorne, in The Marble Faun, could describe America in 1860 as “a commonplace prosperity, in broad and simple daylight” (155).

It is not that James, Cooper, and Hawthorne were ignorant of the vast differences among the people of the United States. Rather, Bercovitch continues, “in terms of the myth which Cooper and Hawthorne shared, such differences did not count. *Nation* meant *Americans* for them, *Americans* meant *the people*, and *the people* meant those who, thanks to the Revolution, enjoyed a *commonplace prosperity*: the simple, sunny rewards of American middle-class culture” (The American Jeremiad 155). These were not the views of just Cooper and Hawthorne, but can be found throughout the popular literature of the time.

Catherine Zuckert’s interest in Hawthorne is in his political thought. Although Hawthorne was the biographer of Pierce and a several-times political appointee, he was not particularly a political animal. However, as Zuckert notes, “all three of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s American novels are of political interest since they are concerned with the founding of a new community. Hawthorne’s works relate particularly to the foundations, limitations, and possibilities of American democracy” (163-164). She continues to note that the three American romances represent “three fundamentally different democratic alternatives” (164). The Scarlet Letter illustrates the attempt by the Puritans to establish a republic based on legislated morality, The Blithedale Romance looks at the establishment and failure of an egalitarian community, and The House of the Seven Gables “shows both the inability of would-be aristocrats to establish hegemony through force and fraud and the destructiveness of plebian reactions” (164). Zuckert notes that in calling his works romances, Hawthorne implicitly states that he will not attempt to provide the factual detail of

the novel and therefore does not detail Puritan institutions or provide a historically accurate picture of either Brook Farm or Salem. The circumstances of Hawthorne's own choosing that presented their truth were, Zuckert says, "emphatically political" (165). She says that "he is concerned with the principle guiding the attempt to found a new community, its animating force... Thus he presents us, not with political history, but with a special kind of political thought" (165).

Zuckert's theory is that by looking at the three American Romances and their interconnections, the reader may come to understand his political thought.

Hawthorne prefaces The Scarlet Letter with "The Custom House", thereby linking the times in which he lived with those of the Puritans. Through this introduction, Zuckert writes, "he not only suggests that there may be more continuity than first appears between Puritan and modern America, but he also raises questions about ...the meaning of freedom in republican America" (166). Zuckert believes that Hawthorne criticizes the undifferentiated severity and accompanying publicity of punishment. The continued ferreting out of sin that is forced by Puritan mores destroys the private, destroys the heart and produces the pride it attempts to dissolve. The socio-spiritual climate of the times produced in the Puritan a necessary hypocrisy. That, reasons Zuckert, is why Dimmesdale perfectly embodies the Puritan regime: his secret sin is masked by a saintly persona. While Puritan practice suggests that men can be saints, Hawthorne understands and makes evident from his first passage that in a community of men there will always be the twin manifestations

of the hypocrisy of the Puritan nature: sin and crime, thus necessitating the establishment of a prison.

The Scarlet Letter closes with Hester Prynne's wish for a future for mankind profoundly different from her present. Hawthorne's Blithedale seems the answer to Hester's dream of a future in which men and women can freely love each other. The residents of Hawthorne's fictional Blithedale were depicted as seeing themselves as the spiritual descendents of the Puritans, leaving the world that they knew and attempting to create a better one. The fictional Blithedalers, much like many of the Utopian societies they were partially patterned after, believed that in the absence of social constraints, they could live in harmony. Blithedale fails, states Zuckert, because no community is possible if individuals assert themselves. Community can only be formed "on the basis of a recognition of self, one's own limits and desires as well as the desires and limits of others" (176). Puritan society, as Hawthorne saw it in The Scarlet Letter on the other hand, flourished expressly because of the social constraints foisted upon its citizens and the need for the sublimation of self for the good of the community.

The House of the Seven Gables examines the long-term effects of an injustice perpetrated on one family by another stronger one during Puritan times. These effects are continued through the greediness of the Pyncheons and the rebelliousness of the Maules. The descendent of the Maules, Holgrave, is meant to represent, asserts Zuckert, American potential. Phoebe represents the dissolution of the

Pyncheon's economic and social status. It is only when they marry that their family differences are resolved and a new community is built.

Zuckert thus sums up the political thought of Hawthorne as she sees it set out in his three American Romances. American history constitutes a series of new beginnings. Americans continue to attempt to escape past error by moving to a new place and organizing a new community. However, because people bring their passions and errors with them, no new community can succeed unless it recognizes the source of its previous errors and chooses to limit the aims of the community itself. "The liberal political order depends upon the recognition of the value of human life as well as man's limitations. In reaffirming the foundations of American political life, Hawthorne also recognizes and responds to the difficulties of the regime in which he wrote" (Zuckert 183).

Frederick Crews had no interest in developing his criticism along religious, political, or historical lines. Instead, he views Hawthorne as a writer "emotionally engaged in his fiction, and the emotions he displays are those of a self-divided, self-tormented man" (Sins of the Fathers 7). Hawthorne's ambiguity is "a sign of powerful tension between his attraction to and his fear of his deepest themes" (8). Crews makes the assumption that in examining our common nature he was drawing largely upon his own. Further, he asserts that the more Hawthorne speaks of his intention to "keep the inmost Me behind its veil," "the more certain we may be that he is uneasy with the self-revelatory aspect of his work" (12). Much like Brodhead, Crews views Hawthorne as essentially domesticated after his courtship of Sophia

beginning in 1838 and his marriage in 1842 to her, at which point, his art apparently gave way to the moral influence of his “Phoebe.”

As regards Hawthorne’s interest in the nation’s past, Crews asserts that “we find that Hawthorne’s interest in history is only a special case of his interest in fathers and sons, guilt and retribution, instinct and inhibition...the history of the nation interests him *only* as it is metaphorical of individual mental strife” (The Sins of the Fathers 28-29). It is Crews’ belief that, when Hawthorne states in “The Custom House” that “strong traits of their (his Puritan ancestors) nature have intertwined themselves with mine,” these traits referred to are a morbid fascination with guilt. Time and again Crews asserts that the nature of Puritanism is prurience and that Hawthorne simultaneously exercises it and condemns it; odd thinking considering that he sees Sophia (inarguably a part of his life at the time of the writing of his greatest romances), who judiciously edited his journals prior to releasing them in an attempt to sanitize them from any possible sexual reference, as a moral influence.

When Crews references “Main Street,” he does so to note Hawthorne’s intense interest in the activities of his Puritan ancestors, including William Hathorne’s sentence of a young Quaker wife to be stripped to the waist and whipped as she walked through three towns. Crews declares that there is significant ambiguity about identity of “the persecutor” who will need divine mercy; the true persecutor being, not the sergeant who actually performs the whipping, but William Hathorne who ordered and took sadistic pleasure in it. Crews further states

“Hawthorne is both an outraged spectator of the scene and, as its narrator and as Major Hawthorne’s heir, a vicarious participant in its indecency” (36). Crews goes on to suggest that Hawthorne clung to the Hawthorne legend and legacy in large part as a result of his impoverished youth and all but equates him with Jaffrey Pyncheon in the attraction that both manifest regarding the familial myth of their respective family’s land-holdings in Maine.

It is obvious that many of the major critics view Hawthorne in very similar ways. Bell, Brodhead, Colacurcio, Bercovitch, and Zuckert all view him, essentially, as a writer of fictionalized histories and a perpetuator of the myth of America. Clearly, it is impossible, given his body of work, to deny that the American past holds a formidable attraction for him. It is also true, and, given Marion Kesselring’s exhaustive search through Hawthorne’s personal library borrowing habits, impossible to deny, that Hawthorne read American history both widely and deeply. One must assume, as does Michael Colacurcio, that Hawthorne did so in order to write well and accurately on the subject. Bercovitch, who seems most inclined to work as a historian in his critical look at Hawthorne and his work, holds a critical opinion of Hawthorne and what he did that is much like my own. A myth of America was firmly established, almost from the establishment of America as a country. Politicians, scholars, and writers were united in the particulars of this mythos. America was the result of the Puritan errand into the wilderness, the realization of the Puritan’s dream of a New Jerusalem. All progress was forward, and all forward progress was a step further towards the fulfillment of the Puritan

dream of the city on a hill. The purpose of this mythic recreation of America as an extension of New England and the American people as spiritual descendents of the Puritans was to homogenize the country and her people; to make the obvious differences in a country which was rapidly changing both in terms of varied land mass and varied ethnic populations dissipate. Through the establishment of Puritan hegemony, a sort of homogenization of Americans took place, so that Tocqueville, James, and Hawthorne were all equally able to look upon Americans as a people lacking in diversity, and enjoying a common prosperity. Hawthorne's work, then, is to continue the national myth of America: to look at, and help Americans of the mid 1800's come to terms with, their mythical common national past and to establish the links between it and our (or at least his) present.

While I agree with Catherine Zuckert's view that the three American romances are inextricably linked (as, it appears, does virtually everyone who has an opinion on Hawthorne and his work) and that all three involve an examination of democratic alternatives within the framework of America, I am not sure that Hawthorne's argument, ultimately, was that all three communities were failures or that American history consists of a series of new beginnings in which Americans continue to attempt to escape past error by moving to a new place and organizing a new community. I also disagree that Hawthorne argued that these communities can only be successful when they narrow the scope of their aims. It would seem to me that two of the three of these communities are continuations of an older community: the community represented by the Puritan community of The Scarlet Letter. The

mythos articulated by Dwight, Adams, Tocqueville, Cooper, James, and Hawthorne (and countless others) argues that the community of America began with the Puritan forefathers and continues still. There were no failures and no new beginnings. While I do not see the allure or the necessity of such a blatant subjugation of the truth of the history of America, I recognize that I live in a very different age, one in which diversity is celebrated and desired. It is also true that America is an older nation now, one that has weathered difficulties and continued on as a united nation. As a nation, perhaps, we do not feel the same urgency as did Hawthorne and others of pointing to our similarities to hold what was in the mid 1800's a foundering nation together.

Although Frederick Crews is not, I am reluctant to make assumptions relative to Hawthorne and his personal belief system. First, let me say that I think it is somewhat dangerous to attempt to discern, at a distance of well over a century removed from us, the truth of a man's heart, particularly a man who seems as disingenuous as does Hawthorne. Therefore, I would much prefer to deal exclusively with the works themselves and the author's possible purposes for writing them as opposed to assuming that Hawthorne is, indeed, the narrator of his own works and therefore either espouses or eschews the beliefs of his narrator. If I had to address Hawthorne the man, I would say that the word best describing him is "ambivalent" and that he seems naturally disposed to be more a spectator than a participant in life.

That statement, of course, brings me to Brodhead. While there is no hard evidence to suggest that Hawthorne's domestic life was unhappy, one only has to look to Wineapple's biography to suggest that there is anecdotal evidence to stop short of enthusing over it. After a multi-year courtship, no one, including his own family, was aware that he was even courting Sophia. His intentions were so ambiguous that Sophia's own sister Elizabeth believed for an extended period of time, really until the impending wedding was announced, that she was the object of his interest. He did not tell his family until three weeks prior to the marriage that it was to take place and, despite his close relationship with his mother and sisters, none of them was in attendance. As to his "solitary traveler" status, I think that it is clear that Hawthorne enjoyed a number of apparently close friendships extending back to his college days. Certainly, there was never a shortage of people prepared to help the ever-struggling writer, both financially and on a personal level. However, if we are to read Hawthorne the man into his books at all, we see that all his narrators hold the books' characters at arm's length. Particularly in The Blithedale Romance, which he acknowledges is a fictionalized account of his own time at Brook Farm, we see a narrator who is more an observer, often in a voyeuristic manner, than a participant. In any case, Hawthorne himself informed his readers that if they wanted to see beneath the veil he acknowledged he wore, they should look at the sum of his works. All that being said, I find what Hawthorne's works have to say about our national mythic past and his attempts, as a citizen two centuries removed from them, to come to terms with the events of that past and his family's part in them to be infinitely

more interesting than speculating about his ability to be either a good friend or a good spouse.

Throughout this examination of the 1850's works of Hawthorne, I will use the terms "apologia," "national accommodation" and "personal accommodation." For the purposes of this paper, I intend apologia to mean an explanation. Simply put, Hawthorne's historical romances may be viewed as an explanation of American history; a look at the earliest beginnings of the collective American past and an intent to explain them, Hawthorne's mythic history of America. But of course they are much more than that. They are also both national and personal accommodation.

By accommodation I mean to make room for or accommodate, to adjust and to adapt. For Hawthorne, this had both national and personal significance. As I have already stated, many American authors, politicians, and scholars of his time, and indeed, from the early 1800's began to attempt to create, or recreate, a past for America which could be at least ideologically shared by all Americans. By mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, Bercovitch notes in The Office of the Scarlet Letter, Choate's call for an "expressive mode" to convey "the truly sacred nature of America's political institutions" and urged that a "Series of Romances" be written to illustrate our mythic New England beginnings.

It is time that literature and the arts should at least cooperate with history...Reminded of our fathers, we [will] remember that we are brethren...merged in an expanded, comprehensive, constitutional sentiment...all tending toward one...final, grand, complex result [and

thereby] reassembling, as it were, the people of America in one vast congregation (71).

The Puritan beginnings of the country were resurrected and the Puritans were envisioned as mythic fathers of the American nation. This literary typology was meant to provide a way for all Americans to view the first Puritan colonists, who came to America to find liberty, as a prefiguration of the American Revolution and the liberty that most nineteenth century Americans enjoyed. There ensued among literary men a sort of debate, launched through their fictional accounts of those early times, about how to view the mythos of the Puritan beginnings of the United States. Some chose to view the Puritan societies as striking a blow for independence against both the papacy and the monarchy (both hierarchies), and thus moving the country towards a celebration of, and appreciation for, individual freedom. Others viewed the Puritan community as a largely interdependent society whose strength was, not in the individual, but in the community itself.

There was also a kind of corollary to this literary debate enacted through the literary with regard to how to view individual Puritans. Were they manly heroes or narrow bigots? Some authors, such as John Lathrop Motley, chose to view them as both, peopling the historical romance with two stock character-types: a narrow Puritan representing the harshest figures of Puritanism and the Puritan as manly hero, who demonstrates the more noble characteristics of Puritanism. Nineteenth century New England authors, such as Nathaniel Hawthorne, chose and needed both examples of Puritanism in order to satisfy two divergent impulses: the need to view

the New England forefathers of America as noble warriors for liberty and at the same time to provide their United States readers with the idea that they were in fact more noble than the Puritans who lived in an unenlightened age. This was the national accommodation of writers of nineteenth century historical romances.

For Hawthorne, there was also a matter of personal accommodation, a sort of corollary to national accommodation. Our national Puritan forefathers were his natural ones. The Puritans who walked the streets of his Main Street, and who were buried in the Charter Street burial ground are his ancestors. Of the first Hawthorne, he says,

He was a soldier, legislator, judge; he was a ruler in the Church; he had all the Puritanic traits, both good and evil. He was likewise a bitter persecutor; as witness the Quakers, who have remembered him in their histories, and relate an incident of his hard severity towards a woman of their sect, which will last longer, it is to be feared, than any record of his better deeds, although these were many. Hawthorne saw himself as inheriting “strong traits of their nature.” (“The Custom House” 13)

For him, then, it was not enough to find a way to view the spiritually common ancestor of all Americans, the Puritan, as both noble warrior of freedom whose cause against the English prefigures the freedom fight of the Revolution and the expansionist, Manifest Destiny of Hawthorne’s time. He also needed a way to

come to terms with a set of ancestors whose conduct simultaneously attracted and repelled him.

As previously noted, Nathaniel Hawthorne was widely read in the history of Puritan New England. According to the records of the Salem Athenaeum, he read voraciously, including histories, journals, and religious writings of the period. Additionally, he read the more recently published, revisionist history written by George Bancroft. In addition to these sources which informed his views, Hawthorne's attitudes toward the Puritans were shaped by his personal feelings. Hawthorne's father, a ship's captain, died when Nathaniel was quite young. At that point, his nuclear family was completely rejected by his father's family and Nathaniel, his mother and his sisters were forced to rely completely upon his mother's family, the Mannings, for support. Hawthorne seems to have never gotten over this rejection. Additionally, while he was morbidly attracted to the darkest elements in Puritanism, he simultaneously rejected those black days of persecution over which the Hawthorne family held sway. Thus, the national mythos which Hawthorne attempted to help shape was, in effect, a two-edged sword: a past bright with promise in which the strength of the community was its cohesiveness and one which worked together for the good of all its members, but simultaneously rejected and punished any who were viewed as openly defying the community's mores.

Nathaniel Hawthorne published three romances in the early 1850's: The Scarlet Letter in 1850, The House of the Seven Gables in 1851, and The Blithedale Romance in 1852. Hawthorne's 1850's romances, like much of the popular fiction

of the time, were a call to the nation to remember its symbolically collective national past, and to appreciate those original national values that served as the foundation for the nation's policies and politics. Read together, Hawthorne's 1850's romances function as a tapestry depicting the years from the nation's distant beginnings to its present; a reminder to all Americans of the national past which, by virtue of the mythos of America discussed earlier, each American held in common and a look at America's difficult yet still glorious present in the 1850s which, while troubled, also included, among other things, a number of utopian movements designed to improve the lot of the most unfortunate. Hawthorne sets all three romances in New England, America's mythic birthplace.

As much as Hawthorne's 1850's romances served as national apologia, they were also a personal apologia, apology, and self-examination as well. Hawthorne grew up understanding the place in history of his paternal ancestors, and the pride the Hawthorne family took in that place. Much like the Pyncheon family, the Hawthorne family fortune had slowly dissipated until the Hawthornes of Nathaniel's day existed in a sort of genteel poverty, looking with longing on a past wherein the family held sway as leaders of the community. It was understood that the early Hawthornes were Calvinists of the first order. One ancestor had served as a judge at the Salem witch trials, another had been instrumental in the persecution of Quakers. Appalled by their conduct and concomitantly both attracted to and repelled by their belief system, Hawthorne used his fictional works to examine his personal family history, weigh it,

and use it as a vehicle to locate both himself and his ancestry within the stream of American history.

To A. N. Kaul, Hawthorne viewed the past as the “moral fountainhead from which issued the stream...whose deepest current his sensibility recorded at various points along its course down to his own time” (The American Vision 142). Hawthorne’s Blithedale narrator might have been metaphorically describing the history of America from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries when he noted,

Often, however, in these years that are darkening around me, I remember our beautiful scheme of a noble and unselfish life; and how fair, in that first summer, appeared the prospect that it might endure for generations, and be perfected, as the ages rolled away, into the system of a people and a world! (The Blithedale Romance 216)

Read this way, The Scarlet Letter can be read as the story of America’s and Hawthorne’s past, Coverdale’s metaphorical first summer; The House of the Seven Gables as the bridge between the past and the present, and The Blithedale Romance, Coverdale’s darkening years, as a look at the glories of Hawthorne’s modern America, although it too has its own nod to Hawthorne’s and America’s Calvinist beginnings.

## CHAPTER II: PURITAN BEGINNINGS

“The Custom House” introduces The Scarlet Letter, and it is within this piece that Hawthorne links his familial past to his present and in doing so, reminds all 1850’s Americans of their mythical links to a common New England past. Hawthorne begins “The Custom House” by admitting that he is, once again, venturing into autobiographical territory, he had previously done so in 1846 with Mosses from an Old Manse. Hawthorne next introduces us to the Custom House itself and then widens his authorial lens to allow his reader to view Salem. “This old town of Salem – my native place..... – possesses, or did possess, a hold on my affections.” (11) Although he has spent more of his life in other places and, he admits, has been happier elsewhere, he has an emotional connection to Salem, for this is where his forefathers lived. “I seem to have a stronger claim to a residence here on account of this grave, bearded, sable-cloaked, and steeple-crowned progenitor, -- who came so early with his Bible and his sword...” (12) This was the case for many Americans of the 1850’s. In calling Salem his “native place” because it was the home of his ancestors, he reminds many Americans of his time that Salem, or at least New England, is their native place as well. It is their native place for the same reason that it is Hawthorne’s: it is the place that the ancestors of many Americans called home. Although by 1850, that was no longer strictly true, again, the mythos that was argued by authors, statesmen and scholars was that the first

Americans were the Puritans and it is from them that each American at least philosophically descends.

So many of his ancestors lived, died, and were buried in Salem that Hawthorne feels that he can say that he has a kinship with the very soil of the place. This was the case for many, although not all, Americans of the 1850's; by remarking on the long-forged links of the sturdy mythic chain that pulls us all homeward and binds us to New England in general as it did Hawthorne to Salem in particular, Hawthorne makes a case for the myth of America's common heritage, and a case for New England's importance, at a time when the region's pre-eminence was largely gone, the result of the shifting American population.

Hawthorne continues his commentary in "The Custom House" with an explanation of how he came to work at the Custom House, and the dread with which many of the elderly workers regarded him. Surely Hawthorne would replace them with younger, better men to "serve our common Uncle" (16). Again, Hawthorne reminds his reader that they are meant to believe that all Americans possess common philosophical progenitors, certainly at least Uncle Sam.

Hawthorne introduces us to two characters in "The Custom House" which when taken together may be seen to represent, in 1850, the best of America's past and present. In the Old General whom Hawthorne tells us has achieved or nearly so his threescore and ten, we see America's past at its finest. We might even consider that Hawthorne views and encourages his reader to view him as a personification of the United States. Nearly as old as the nation itself, he has served her on the

battlefield, followed her progress along the expanding frontier to rule the Western territories, and finally, old and spent, returned home to serve her again at the Custom House. He is compared to Fort Ticonderoga, a fortress begun by foreigners but made American during the revolution. Hawthorne speculates that he may have led the bayonets at Chippewa or Fort Erie, battles significant not only in historical importance but also in that they were Revolutionary frontier battles. By citing such battles, Hawthorne again seeks to remind America of her common ancestry and past. The American Revolution was not fought to create a nation out of New England; it was fought simply to create a nation and made Americans of all of us. Of course, what Hawthorne meant by that was all residents of America who were white and hadn't too recently immigrated (his answer to the slavery question was either to repatriate or to allow things to take their natural course, and he disliked the most recent wave of immigrants, the Italians). However, we must remember that Hawthorne was continuing a long standing tradition of myth making and was arguing for a unified nation whose spiritual and physical beginnings were in New England. To openly admit that Americans weren't alike and shared no common past and clearly not much in the way of a common present would have debunked the myth of America, so carefully crafted by so many and would serve to further fracture rather than to seek to mend a country well on its way to potential dissolution.

Hawthorne also introduces us to the man of business, the modern American man. He is a creature of the Custom House, and bred from boyhood in it; he

“perfectly comprehended” the “intricacies of business” (25). If the Old General can be said to be the personification of Fort Ticonderoga and thus representative of America’s past, the man of business is certainly meant to be the personification of the Custom House and the representation of America’s present. In both cases, the characters Hawthorne creates were meant to remind his 1850’s American readers that they at least mythically share a common past and a common present. This was his national accommodation, exploration and apologia; the next character he introduces also introduces personal accommodation, familial exploration and apologia.

In the attic of the Custom House, he has discovered a worn red letter “A” which shows evidence of skilled needlework. Continuing to search the parcel in which he found the needlework, he finds writings concerning Hester Prynne, whom it seems lived in Massachusetts during the late 1600’s; in essence, these fictitious writings become the manuscript for The Scarlet Letter. Hawthorne situates Hester Prynne in Massachusetts in the late 1600’s and tells his readers that this is the account of a real individual, authenticated by an older surveyor whose lifespan is the bridge between the times of Hester and Hawthorne’s narrator. Hester Prynne and her times are those of the nation’s common past. Hester Prynne and her persecutions are those of Hawthorne’s familial past. As early as the first chapter, Hawthorne begins to link the two.

There is, begins Hawthorne, a rose bush outside the prison door. This rose bush, Hawthorne says, sprang up where Ann Hutchinson walked. Initially through

this rose bush, Hawthorne links Hutchinson with Hester Prynne. In “Footsteps of Ann Hutchinson: The Context of the Scarlet Letter,” Michael Colacurcio notes that both women fell afoul of the Puritan theocratic and male-dominated society.

Hawthorne had previously written what Colacurcio, in “Footsteps of Ann Hutchinson” terms a “well informed sketch” of Mrs. Hutchinson and notes that for “the man who created the one and memorialized the other ought to be in a position to know” there was a relationship between the two women. Hutchinson, of course, is famous for having defied America’s Puritan forefathers and for following her own moral compass by preaching, an activity that was deemed unacceptable for women. By thus linking the two, Hawthorne achieves two purposes: he again reminds us of our mythic common national past by linking his fictional Hester with a real, highly regarded, national figure of this common past and he shows his reader how he wishes Hester Prynne to be viewed. Like Ann Hutchinson, Hester Prynne is to be seen as one who may be regarded as a heretic by her contemporaries but should be viewed by Hawthorne’s readers as one whom, like Ann Hutchinson, lived her life according to her own moral compass.

In The Province of Piety, Colacurcio notes that “in a remarkable telescoping of history...Hawthorne daringly compresses into a seven-year span in the critical 1640’s a process of relentless theological self-criticism and of expanding moral insight which would require nearly two centuries of actual New England experience to unfold” (32). This was, for Hawthorne, both personal and national apologia. In effect, Hawthorne created an allegory as a way of examining and explicating

Calvinism in America. In order to effectively do so, however, he had to, as I have already noted, condense and concatenate Puritan history.

As I have already stated, Hawthorne begins The Scarlet Letter by explicitly linking Hester with Ann Hutchinson. If Hester is Hutchinson, then we cannot doubt that Dimmesdale is meant to be looked at as John Cotton, Hutchinson's pastor, who, having led Hutchinson astray (albeit in only a spiritual sense), then abandoned her, allowing her to be tried and condemned by herself. If likenesses in the relationship between the two couples aren't obvious enough, Hawthorne also links Dimmesdale and Cotton through the spiritual superior of each: John Wilson, the head of the church from which each of them ministers. Additionally, Hawthorne uses historical events to link the two couples. Hester's punishment at the scaffold echoes a case "in which John Wilson and John Cotton joined together publicly to urge public repentance upon a woman who had killed an illegitimate child" (Colacurcio "Footsteps of Ann Hutchinson" 465). Finally, there is the matter of the "A" in the sky, for Hawthorne at the death of Winthrop, although in reality it was said to have appeared at the death of Cotton. I will deal with this in more detail later in the paper.

Part of Hester's punishment is to stand on the scaffold in view of her fellow citizens and be openly condemned by them. While standing there, she is encouraged by the Puritan elders to name the man who has sinned with her. Urged on by John Wilson, the head of the Boston church of which Hester is a member, Arthur Dimmesdale, her pastor and fellow sinner, quietly encourages her to name the man. The protection Hester provides Dimmesdale by refusing to name him as the father

echoes the conduct of Ann Hutchinson, who, Colacurcio notes, like Hester Prynne, spared her pastor from denunciation. The problems of both Anne Hutchinson and Hester Prynne, Colacurcio notes in "Footsteps," began with an unusually close relationship with a pastor who is acknowledged to be an intellectual and spiritual leader of the Puritan society. Ann Hutchinson's pastor was John Cotton, and just as Hester Prynne protected Dimmesdale by refusing to name him, so John Cotton was protected by Ann Hutchinson.

As Hester stands on the scaffold, scenes from her life appear to her and it is through those that Hawthorne again links his reader, and his reader's experience, with Hester and her personal experience. Hester, like the ancestors of many of Hawthorne's readers, was a native of England, who had left her native land, ultimately making her home in the colony that would one day become a founding part of the United States.

Hawthorne did not view the purpose of his romances as national accommodation only, but also that of a personal nature. That is, he uses them to explore the part his paternal ancestors played in the religious persecutions of the Puritans and to come to terms with that past. We see this exploration in Hester's time on the scaffold when, in response to the demands of a Puritan religious elder, she refuses to name the father of her child and thus be allowed to remove the scarlet letter, emblem of her shame, claiming that it is too deeply branded to come off. Following her time on the scaffold, Hester's moral and emotional agony is examined through the physical pain undergone by her innocent infant, Pearl, whose physical

pain mirrors her mother's emotional agony. One of Hawthorne's paternal ancestors had been a judge at the Salem witch trials and as such, was responsible for the physical and emotional pain of his fellow citizens. By examining the pain of both, and the long-lasting effects of the pain of the mother, Hawthorne could examine, and make commentary and judgment on, the part his forebearers played in the early history of America.

Hawthorne openly argues for the continuation of the United States as she stood in 1850 when he comments on Hester's continued presence in Boston. She could go back to England or to anywhere else on earth and affect a new identity that would allow her to live without her public shame. There were, however, chains that bound her here and although they were "galling to her inmost soul" (72) they "never could be broken" (72). She must remain in New England and "work out another purity than that which she had lost" (73). So, too, America of 1850 must not give in to forces threatening to fragment and destroy the young nation but work through its problems to achieve another purity, another national unity. Like America, too, Hester's chosen home stood on the shore of the sea and faced west. 1850's America was also looking west. Hester, like 1850's America, must look beyond her current situation towards the future. Heading the call of Rufus Choate, Hawthorne had indeed produced a work wherein "literature and the arts should at least cooperate with history" (Bercovitch The Office of the Scarlet Letter 71).

As I have said, Hawthorne uses his romances as a way of examining his familial past as well as that of America. Thus when Hawthorne's narrator calls Pearl

“imp of evil...infants,” he is simply positing Calvinist doctrine, a doctrine that had been practiced by his forebearers. As the narrative unfolds, the narrator speaks of the type of play available to Calvinist children, play in which they pretended to worship and to persecute those who were considered in some way outside of the community. He is in fact speaking of them playing at the everyday behavior of their parents, behavior shared by Hawthorne’s ancestors, who demonstrably led their fellow Puritans in persecution of Quakers and at the Salem witch trials.

Hester’s journey to Governor Bellingham’s home is another way in which Hawthorne examines Calvinism. She undertakes her walk to the mansion in order to plead with him to allow mother and daughter to remain together, contrary to the will of the Calvinists who believed that both Hester and her Pearl would be better served spiritually by being separated. By writing this confrontation, Hawthorne is able to examine Calvinist desire to sublimate the will of self to the will of the group. This desire was necessary, if one held the belief that the need of the group outweighed the need of the individual. However, in the American Transcendentalist times of Hawthorne, the needs of the individual were seen to be paramount. For Hawthorne, who wanted to espouse romantic ideals but had such a strong attraction to Puritanism, this contradiction weighed deeply.

Just as Hawthorne uses Dimmesdale to make commentary on the morality of Calvinist ministers, he uses Bellingham in order to comment on the morality of the Puritan civil authority. In order to do this, he has to alter history slightly. When Hester is judged and condemned in 1642, it would have been Winthrop’s job to have

done that, having won the election which ousted Bellingham the month previous to Hester's trial. However, Hawthorne needed to use Bellingham instead for several reasons, and thus removes Winthrop from this part of his American allegory.

Winthrop existed as a sort of Washingtonian, Father of the Country figure.

Hawthorne's choice was to allow Winthrop to retain for his readers that elevated position and not involve him in a judgment which would call attention to the sexist nature of that judgment which labeled a woman an adulteress but left her male counterpart unscathed. Additionally, Bellingham's failure to be re-elected stemmed from his own unseemly sexual conduct in which he, as a widower, chose to remarry and decided to simply declare himself married to a young woman who was already promised in marriage to a friend of his. Colacurcio, in "The Woman's Own Choice" notes that Winthrop, in his journals, writes of two other charges against Bellingham in the matter: he "would not have his contract published...contrary to an order of court," and that "he married himself, contrary to the constant practice of the country." The real Bellingham was tried on sexual conduct charges, although, in Colacurcio's words, "the attempts at prosecution ...proved ineffectual." The fictitious Bellingham, as governor, sentences Hester on explicitly sexual charges. Colacurcio believes that Hawthorne, in altering a history with which he was doubtlessly very familiar, created a tale that "goes well out of its own fictional way to remind us" of a largely forgotten case ("The Woman's Own Choice" 110).

Bellingham's home itself is representative of Calvinism. The outer walls of the Governor's mansion were covered over with stucco mixed with broken glass. In

the sunlight, Hawthorne relates, the home glittered and sparkled. It shone then, much like the city set on a hill to which the Puritans wished to liken themselves. But what made it shine was broken glass; beautiful, but, in Hawthorne's view, like the Puritans themselves, hazardous and with the potential to cause pain and injury.

Hawthorne wished to take every opportunity to remind Americans of their mythic common past. We see this again when he speaks of the apple trees planted in Governor Bellingham's garden. They were, he asserts, no doubt the descendants of apple trees planted by Boston's earliest settler, The Reverend Mr. Blackstone, "who rides through our early annals" (95). Blackstone, then, in this mythology is not only part of the past of Bostonians, or even of New Englanders, but of all Americans who would have been aware of him.

As much as Hester is representative of Calvinist guilt and the ramifications of sin within the confines of Calvinist society, Pearl is, for Hawthorne, the personification of both the sin and its result. The dress sewn for Pearl by her mother and worn by her to Governor Bellingham's home is red velvet, "of a peculiar cut, abundantly embroidered with fantasies and flourishes of gold thread" (90). It was, Hawthorne says, "the scarlet letter in another form; the scarlet letter endowed with life!" (90). In her plea to keep Pearl with her, Hester asserts that "Pearl keeps me here in life! Pearl punishes me too! See ye not, she is the scarlet letter, only capable of being loved, and so endowed with a million-fold the power of retribution for my sin" (100). Dimmesdale, too, argues that Pearl's nature is indeed the scarlet letter personified: "a retribution too; a torture, to be felt at many an unthought of moment;

a pang, a sting, an ever-recurring agony, in the midst of a troubled joy! Hath she not expressed this thought in the garb of the poor child, so forcibly reminding us of that red symbol which sears her bosom?" (101).

Hawthorne renders judgment and damns the Calvinists most completely when contemplating the attributes of clergymen of Dimmesdale's day. Many were scholars. Others had great minds. Others were truly saintly. None, however, he notes, had the gift given the Apostles at Pentecost: the gift of tongues. By this, Hawthorne says, he does not mean the ability to speak in foreign languages, but rather the ability to speak to the human heart. "They would have vainly sought – had they ever dreamed of seeking – to express the highest truths through the humblest medium of familiar words and images. Their voices came down, afar and indistinctly, from the upper heights where they habitually dwelt" (124). They are not, in any substantive way, part of their communities; they are held above others and because of this, not truly part of the community, only judge and jury over it.

Dimmesdale's secret sin causes him great pain. Despite his many pulpit confessions, which only serve to make him seem to be more saintly in the eyes of his parishioners, and despite his attempts at physical mortification through his use of the scourge, his guilt is never assuaged. He attempts to seek a sort of expiation through the means by which Hester is forced to advertise her guilt: the scaffold. He does so at night, though, so that despite the musings of his fevered imagination, he does so at no real peril to himself. It is clear that he understands that while on the scaffold, he does not really reveal either his guilt or its nature. Seeing Hester and Pearl coming

home from the death bed of Governor Winthrop, he invites them to stand with him. In doing so, he aligns himself with them in their common sin. When, however, invited by Pearl to stand with them at noon the following day, he demurs. He will stand with them, he says, not tomorrow, but rather, not until the judgment day when presumably he will have no choice. Hawthorne concludes his condemnation of Dimmesdale through Pearl, the physical manifestation of Hester's and Dimmesdale joint sin, who tells him "thou was not true!" (137) and damns him with those words.

Hawthorne concludes the scene with an event which again links New England Puritans with his literary ones. Upon the death of John Cotton, legend has it, a great red "A" lit up the sky, much as happened in The Scarlet Letter at the death of Governor Winthrop. According to Colacurcio, however, Hawthorne wishes us to link John Cotton, not with Winthrop, but with the cleric of his imagination, Dimmesdale. In "Footsteps of Ann Hutchinson," Colacurcio states that "Hawthorne cannot *make* the transference without having Cotton in mind; and that the reader who knows the facts will make the application, especially when, standing on his midnight scaffold, Dimmesdale applies 'Cotton's' sign to himself" (465). Of course we know Dimmesdale to be outwardly pious but in truth a sinner. Worse than his sin itself is his choice to allow another to shoulder the burden of public sin and guilt alone.

Just as Dimmesdale is linked to John Cotton, Hester, as has been previously said, is linked to Ann Hutchinson. Hawthorne initially linked the two in the first chapter of his book, "The Prison-Door," when he identified both with the roses growing outside the prison that had housed both women. He links the two again

when he suggests that, had it not been for the birth of Pearl, Hester “might have come down in history, hand in hand with Ann Hutchinson as the foundress of a religious sect” (144) and would “have suffered death from the stern tribunals of the period, for attempting to undermine the foundations of the Puritan establishment” (144).

Hawthorne speaks to 1850’s Americans and their difficulty in maintaining a single national identity when he examines the final choices of Dimmesdale and Hester. Continuing to live a life of outward sinlessness and to be held up as an example for all is untenable to Dimmesdale. Seeing this, Hester encourages him to leave both Salem and his name behind and affect a new identity in another place. They resolve to do this together and decide to abandon their home and return to England. This becomes impossible, both because their plan is discovered and because Dimmesdale in effect becomes maddened at the possibility of leaving his self-castigation behind. Both Dimmesdale and Hester remain in their adopted home: Dimmesdale to die there and Hester to live into old age, ultimately taking a place of honor among her fellow citizens. In crafting this ending to the first of his 1850’s romances, Hawthorne does several things as an author. Drawing a parallel between Americans of the 1850’s and the protagonists of his romance, one might consider that Hawthorne tells his countrymen that they could choose to abandon their chosen home, as Hester and Dimmesdale considered doing, but that course might be ill-advised. Remain as did Hester and things over time will improve, as they did for her. Dimmesdale, held up as an example of sinlessness, but one who harbored secret

sin that he did not possess the courage to make public, died as a result of that sin and in doing so left a questionable reputation. We are meant to see Dimmesdale as a fictional representation of Puritan ministers, whose lives may have been, like Dimmesdale, outwardly spotless but marked by secret sin.

Finally, there is the character of Hester. For Hawthorne, she is the symbol of both personal and national apologia. She initially came to a tiny colony to carve one sort of life for herself. Failing to do so, her conduct causes her to be shamed in the eyes of her contemporaries. Over the years, as all members of the community, including Hester, work to create a nation, Hester's shame and the life she meant initially to create were forgotten by both Hester and her countrymen, and she becomes someone else. Ultimately, she is accorded a place of honor among her countrymen for the life she chose to have and carves out for herself. Hawthorne's countrymen were struggling with great adversity, as did Hester. If they, like Hester, could cling to their chosen homes and continue to build the lives that, like Hester, they may not have originally imagined they would have had but had made in this country, they might, like Hester, build a life worth having.

In like fashion, Hester's once honorable existence is made dishonorable by actions undertaken by both Dimmesdale and herself. Hester bears the brunt of public sin and is judged to be a sinner because of outward appearances while Dimmesdale, equally guilty, is held up by his Puritan community as an example of a holy man. Both are equally guilty, but the Puritans' inability to accurately judge guilt combined with Dimmesdale's desire to keep his earthly place of honor despite the damage his

knowledge of his guilt did to him, ultimately destroy Dimmesdale. Hester, on the other hand, whose life has been lived, at least on the face, more honestly and, as Hawthorne appears to judge, in a more saintly way, is ultimately accorded a place of honor long after Dimmesdale's guilt has driven him to an early grave.

However, Hawthorne notes in a remarkable, single sentence paragraph, that "The scarlet letter had not done its office" (145). In The Office of the Scarlet Letter, Bercovitch suggests that Hawthorne is saying much more than what he appears to be saying. It is obvious that he sees Hester as largely unrepentant of her sin; she says, after all, that the act undertaken by Dimmesdale and Hester had "a consecration of its own" (The Scarlet Letter 170). For Bercovitch, Hawthorne uses the scarlet letter as a symbol which, when he touches it to his chest in the Custom House and feels the heat of it to be burning him, much as it did Hester, connects a number of political events. Externally, 1850's America was watching the political upheaval of many European countries, most of which began with great hope for a newly democratized society and ended, sadly, in a movement towards socialism. Internally, America had passed the compromise Kansas/Nebraska Act in an attempt to prevent the growing hostilities between the north and south. It was increasingly evident that the Kansas/Nebraska Act, like the revolutions in Europe and the scarlet letter itself, had not done its office. The scarlet letter, states Bercovitch,

amounts to an emblem play of authorial identification, balancing distance and empathy, pointing backward from Hawthorne to Hester and forward from her cottage threshold to his customhouse office.

Hawthorne uses the moment of contact to assert his sense of difference, even as he 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. Ideologically, that symbol joins the novel’s two time frames: first, the fictional time frame, 1642 – 49, with its implied contrast between models of revolt (recurrent violence in the Old World, organic progress in the New); and second, the authorial time frame, 1848 – 52, with its ominous explosion of conflict at home and abroad. ( The Office of the Scarlet Letter 73-74)

As much as Hawthorne creates characters, he creates representations meant to allow his reader an opportunity to consider the situation or behavior each represents. Thus, Hester Prynne becomes as much an example of a Puritan dissenter as a fully-developed character, Dimmesdale is the outwardly correct secret sinner, and Cotton, Wilson and the Governor are meant to represent the Puritan conscience. By Hawthorne doing this, we can better study the behavior and the thought patterns of the individual. By creating types, Hawthorne in fact developed a way to Puritan behavior in general and, through that behavior, the part his ancestors played in the early history of New England.

The creation of types, allowing us to look at Puritans, their behaviors and their beliefs, allowed Hawthorne to provide, and was in itself, an apologia or explanation of Puritanism. It was also national accommodation in that Hawthorne

provided a vehicle through which his reader could view both positive and negative Puritan behavior. Hester sinned, was judged, and was punished through Puritan law. Many of the women who surrounded the prison door as she was released urged the penalty of death be imposed, which was certainly a possibility by Puritan law. However, mercy prevailed and Hester was condemned simply to wear the “A,” emblem of her sin. Hester’s “A” itself evolved over time from a symbol of her sin to a sign meaning “able,” the result of her long hours spent ministering to her suffering fellows. Certainly the behavior of both Dimmesdale and Bellingham was negative and representative of Puritanism at its worst. Wilson, however, was both fictionally and historically considered to be above reproach. The scarlet “A” arching through the night sky upon his death was seen as a representation of his status as an angel. Finally, The Scarlet Letter serves as a work of personal accommodation through Hawthorne’s examination of Puritan persecution, evidenced by the women calling for Hester’s death; Puritan judgment, as evidenced by Hester’s time on the scaffold and the letter “A” she is condemned to wear; and Puritan duplicitous nature, as evidenced by Dimmesdale and his failure to honestly and publicly confess the nature of his sinfulness.

### CHAPTER III: THE BRIDGE BETWEEN HAWTHORNE'S TWO WORLDS

Hawthorne's 1851 romance, The House of the Seven Gables, is a sort of bridge between the Puritan New England of Dimmesdale and Hester and the New England of Hawthorne's day. Although much of the story takes place in what would have been, for Hawthorne, modern day New England, the genesis of the story -- its seminal events -- take place during America's earliest days, during colonial times. Again, Hawthorne uses his story for apologia and both national and personal accommodation. Of The House of the Seven Gables, Wineapple says that Hawthorne "shook the family tree, this time to confront his paternal legacy: class, heredity, and the all but incestuous business of living in one spot for generations, tyrannies and injustice handed down generation after generation like a congenital disease" (Hawthorne 232).

The incipient event of the story is, of course, the struggle for control of a parcel of land owned by Matthew Maule, a common laborer, and desired by Colonel Pyncheon, who had fought in the Revolution and was a powerful and politically well-connected man. Hawthorne leads us to understand that there is nothing particularly noteworthy about this parcel and that, if this land has any particular value, it is largely because of the effort Maule put into clearing it. The only other thing that made it in any way valuable is the spring which flowed to the surface of the property, around which Maule had created a well.

Hawthorne's ancestor, John Hathorne, was one of the seven judges who presided at the Salem witch trials, so when Maule, an innocent man, is pronounced guilty and hanged, in large part due to the efforts of Colonel Pyncheon, the one who stands to gain the most by the death of Maule, we understand, of course, that this is Hawthorne condemning the trials and the part his ancestors played in them. Hawthorne chooses to curse Colonel Pyncheon and his family itself in two separate ways. First, at the hanging of the innocent Mathew Maule for the crime of witchcraft, Maule looks at Pyncheon and curses him saying, "God will give him blood to drink" (8). When Colonel Pyncheon is found dead, on the day his home was first opened to visitors, he is found with his beard and ruff drenched in blood, as if God, indeed, has carried out the curse of Matthew Maule.

The second curse concerns Maule's well, from which flowed the spring of fresh water which gave this land, in part, its value. The water, pristine during the life of Matthew Maule, has become brackish and is "productive of intestinal mischief to those who quench their thirst there" (10). It appears that Hawthorne wishes us to understand that it is as if the earth itself protested being taken from an innocent man and given to one of his persecutors.

Hawthorne's characters often have real-life antecedents through whom he can examine the deeds and misdeeds of his ancestors. In his notes on the text, Seymour L. Gross examines the individuals who have certainly contributed their names and events in their lives and serve as prototypes for characters. The son of Matthew Maule, Thomas, becomes the architect of the Pyncheon home, built on the land for

which his father gave his life. The historical Thomas Maule was, in fact, a Quaker and an architect who built the first Quaker church in Salem. With one character, Hawthorne ties together his personal past with that of his characters. Hawthorne's ancestors persecuted both witches and Quakers. Thomas Maule, the character, is the architect of a home built for a Puritan who persecuted witches on land formerly owned by Thomas's father, condemned for witchcraft; his historical counterpart built a church for Quakers, a group often persecuted by Puritans, in Salem, the setting for, arguably, The House of the Seven Gables itself, and the setting for what was certainly the most infamous persecution of witches.

Likewise, another minor character, the Reverend Mr. Higginson, had a real life counterpart in early New England. The fictional Reverend Higginson was to have given the prayer on the day of the opening of Colonel Pyncheon's new home. Reverend Mr. Higginson's real life counterpart was a violently anti-Quaker pastor. As a result of his protest of the historical Higginson's sermons, the historic Maule was whipped.

Yet another minor character again links Hawthorne's fiction to the real past of America. Hawthorne tells us that John Swinnerton is one of the physicians who examines the dead body of the Colonel. His real life counterpart was also a physician in Salem whose stepson married the daughter of Thomas Maule.

Just as Hawthorne examined the American past through the lens of The Scarlet Letter, his romance of the American past, Hawthorne looks at the changing (1850's) present of America in The House of the Seven Gables, one of his romances

of her present. One way in which he does this is to examine the changing face of the American economy, an economy in crisis of catastrophic proportions, so severe that the economic crisis was a prominent factor in the near destruction of the young country. Hawthorne uses the change in fortune and economic evolution of the Pyncheon family as a metaphor for the changes America experienced during the 1850's. Much like America, the Pyncheon family acquired a great deal of land during colonial times. The wealth and importance of the family, already great, became greater with their large land acquisitions. As the years passed, however, the Pyncheons' wealth and position declined and, as America changed to a market economy, the Pyncheons, who were still at least on paper, land rich, if their claims could be proven, began their economic slide into a genteel poverty so that, when the modern Pyncheon story begins, it is with Miss Hepzibah Pyncheon going about the business of setting up a cent shop in her home in order, simply, to survive. William Dillingham notes, in his "Structure and Theme in The House of the Seven Gables" that this is an indication of the decline of the Pyncheon aristocracy.

Hepzibah is the essence of old New England gentility, a true daughter of her Puritan forebearers. As such, she looks more for her economic salvation to lie in the final resolution of the land claims of the long-dead Colonel Pyncheon rather than in any commercial venture, especially one that brings her into direct contact with her fellow citizens, whom she clearly views as beneath her. In stark contrast to Hepzibah is the young woman Phoebe, a country cousin who has entered Hepzibah's life unbidden and unannounced. Hepzibah, educated to be a lady and thus without

any real practical purpose herself, cannot see any in Phoebe. Yet Phoebe, when questioned, informs her cousin that she has served as a schoolmistress, has engaged in commerce, and was capable of the manufacture of yeast, beer, and cakes.

Hepzibah appears to admire Phoebe's abilities but sees that they are proof that Phoebe takes only after her mother and not the Pyncheons, for no Pyncheon was able to do any of them. Indeed, it is these abilities, in Hepzibah's mind clearly gotten from her mother's side of the family as opposed to that of the Pyncheon's, make it impossible to consider Phoebe a lady.

If Hepzibah is representative of Puritan New England sensibilities, Phoebe is the 1850's New Englander and, more broadly, representative of many Americans of the time. She has ventured beyond her original home soil in an attempt to better her outlook and understands that commerce may be the source of her economic success.

Holgrave, too, is representative of 1850's America, and, to Dillingham, the "strong representative of democracy" (97). It is in Hawthorne's characterization of him that we find Hawthorne's commentary on his modern age, indeed, on nearly all of the history of America for it seems that Holgrave's life itself represents a concatenation of the history of the country. Born in New England in humble beginnings, he received only a few months' formal education. Self-dependent and self-educated since his early youth, he had served successively as a country schoolmaster, then as a salesman in a country store, then the political editor of a small newspaper. He next became a traveling peddler; then studied and practiced dentistry, chiefly in small factory towns which had risen up along America's

streams. After traveling, he spent time in a community of Fourierists, a Utopian group popular in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, then worked as a lecturer on Mesmerism, and was at the time of the story employed as a Daguerreotypist. Holgrave was very like the America that Hawthorne knew: expanding his horizons, exploring new territory, new vocations and new systems of belief. Holgrave's means of making his living reflect increasingly modern trends. Similarly, Holgrave's exploration of Fourierism is Hawthorne's way of introducing the Utopian movements which became so popular during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Just as Holgrave's early roots reflect those of the country, so does his succession of occupations reflect the increasingly global, rather than local, outlook that was endemic at the time. Through both the characters of Phoebe and Holgrave, Hawthorne reminds his readers again that they share a mythic past and a present.

Placing both Phoebe and Holgrave within the setting of the House of the Seven Gables, with its violent beginnings caused by the struggle for the property and the deaths caused by it allow Hawthorne another opportunity to explore his familial past. Much like Hepzibah's view of Phoebe's mother, the 19<sup>th</sup> century Hawthornes did not look upon Nathaniel's mother as suitable. When young Hawthorne's father died at sea, his family was rejected by the Hawthorne family and forced to live in the Manning family home, in essence as a charity case. Brenda Wineapple notes that it was the Mannings who paid to have Nathaniel educated and they who provided him a job clerking at his uncle's stagecoach office. Much like his father's family, Hepzibah's rigid manner, her choice of genteel poverty, and her unwillingness to be a

substantive part of the modern world, and especially her sense of family pride in a family about which, at the time of the story, there seems little of which to be proud are all a part of Hawthorne's sense that he must explore his family past in order to make sense of it.

In many ways Holgrave seems like Hawthorne, experimenting with careers and belief systems, part of the household and yet removed from it. Holgrave's commentary about the nature of the world might well have come directly from the mouth of Hawthorne. "...this is such an odd and incomprehensible world! The more I look at it, the more it puzzles me; and I begin to suspect that a man's bewilderment is the measure of his wisdom" (178). Much as Hawthorne did, Holgrave became an observer more than a participant in the society into which he is thrust and can thus aid Hawthorne in his commentary regarding the lives of both the Puritan and modern Pyncheons.

Holgrave knows well the story of Alice Pyncheon, daughter of the first Jaffrey Pyncheon and chooses to tell the tale of Alice to Phoebe. Jaffrey was the grandson of the late Colonel, the stern Puritan who clearly stole the property from Matthew Maule. It was Jaffrey as a young child who found his grandfather dead, his collar band soaked with blood, the blood of the curse of Matthew Maule. Jaffrey grew up, married well and had lived abroad for much of his adult life. Then, widowed and in diminished circumstances, he returned to his family home with his only child Alice. In need of money and remembering the unresolved land claim of his grandfather, he turned to the Maule family since it was believed that either

Matthew or Thomas Maule had taken the one document which was the key to the resolution of the claim. Pyncheon therefore summoned Matthew Maule, grandson of the original property owner and son of Thomas Maule, who had built the House of the Seven Gables. Maule agreed to help Pyncheon on condition that, with the Pyncheon acquisition of the land claim, Maule would take possession of the House of the Seven Gables, Pyncheon's patrimony but, perhaps, more justly Maule's. Pyncheon believed that the acquisition of the land would far outweigh the worth of the original family home and so agreed. In response, Maule requested an audience with Alice, whom he said he could use as a medium to ascertain the whereabouts of the required document. According to Holgrave's story, Maule then took possession of the conscious will of Alice and continued to periodically exercise his hold over it until the time of her death.

Alice Pyncheon, as the only heir to the grandson of Colonel Pyncheon was, in effect, a personification of the House of the Seven Gables. In a sense then, Maule took possession of the house when he began to exercise control over her will. In the same sense, because he had a hand, however inadvertent, in her death, he destroyed the House of the Seven Gables which, after the death of Alice, became more haunted and gloomy than before and became more a mausoleum than a home for the living.

Alice is further linked to the House of the Seven Gables through Alice's posies, flowers that grew in the angle between the two front gables. These flowers were believed to have grown from seeds that Alice had long before brought with her from Italy. Like the rose bush blossoming next to the prison door in The Scarlet

Letter, they serve as reminders. In the case of The Scarlet Letter, they serve, for the prisoner, as a reminder of the deep heart of nature and to Hawthorne's readers as a reminder of Ann Hutchinson, from whose footsteps they had sprung. So too are Alice's posies a reminder of someone both innocent and proud whose life the flowers celebrate and memorialize. By linking motifs of flowers with these two women, Hawthorne, by choosing similar metaphors for their lives, has linked the women themselves and, through them, the time periods in which they lived.

While Jaffrey Pyncheon could not be looked upon as a Puritan, if only because of the time period in which he lived, he was clearly both the physical and spiritual heir to the Colonel. Although he distrusted and feared the purported abilities of the wizard's namesake and grandson, he professed to believe that his presence in the room will keep her from harm, and thus, in effect, placed the acquisition of land above the life of his only child. When it appeared to him that Maule was engaging in some sort of witchcraft, he still did nothing to stop the proceedings other than protest, a protest overruled by Alice herself, presumably because, as Hawthorne intimates, she viewed her will as being superior to that of Maule. When Pyncheon was finally aware that something substantive and seemingly evil has been done to his daughter, he was unable to voice a protest against what Maule had done. He was only able to manage a gurgle within his throat. Thomas Maule, hearing this, remarked that he, too, had old Maule's blood to drink. This remark, so clearly reminiscent of the original curse, draws another parallel between

Jaffrey Pyncheon and his grandfather, the Puritan Colonel. Of course, as we later discover, his manner of death is the final link between Jaffrey and the Colonel.

In the character of Judge Pyncheon, we find the current generation's personification of the Colonel. Both Phoebe and Hepzibah have noticed a strong physical resemblance between the Judge and the portrait of the Colonel which hangs in the room he had used as a study. When, following the departure of Phoebe, the Colonel attempts to see to the health of Clifford and is stopped by Hepzibah, the resemblance becomes much more pronounced. After Hepzibah tells him that Clifford has been in bed since the day previous to his visit, Pyncheon momentarily loses the smile with which he has cloaked his true self. "Is he ill?" exclaimed Judge Pyncheon, starting with what seemed to be angry alarm; for the very frown of the old Puritan darkened through the room as he spoke" (226). As Joseph Schwartz notes in "Three Aspects of Hawthorne's Puritanism," Hawthorne compares Judge Pyncheon directly, in looks and actions, with his Puritan ancestors.

Like the Puritans, he looks to the prosperity he enjoys as evidence of Heaven's blessings on him, and looks to his public duties of dispensing justice and protecting the welfare of society as superior to his family duties. Hawthorne considers the ways that the Judge believes himself to be a man "of eminent respectability" (228). All are ways that the Puritans would gauge respectability. His respectability was acknowledged by the church, the state and society. The order that Hawthorne, through the thoughts of the character of the Judge, places those entities which acknowledge his respectability are significant, because they follow the order

of importance placed on those same entities by Puritans. Hawthorne uses the Judge to examine Puritans and Puritanism and, by extension, his familial past. People like the Judge, Hawthorne notes, publicly gather up both possessions and good deeds. These possessions and deeds translate, both to society and to the individual himself, into his character and ultimately, into his person. They become his symbolic palace. But, Hawthorne cautions, somewhere in that palace is a locked closet or stagnant water puddle and within it lies a corpse. No one notices the smell of the decaying body because it is masked. However, it is the decaying body, and not the beautiful palace, that is the measure of that man's soul.

How should we then measure Judge Pyncheon? We can look at his palace, his accumulation of works and possessions. He is president of the Bible society, treasurer of the Widow's and Orphan's Fund; he has developed two types of pear and bred the Pyncheon bull. We can look to his unsullied moral deportment or to the evidence of an iron will and his perfect sense of morality in casting off his son, forgiving him only when the young man was on his death bed. We can look to his championing of the temperance cause and his own much reduced consumption of sherry. We can look to the fine clothes he wears and the way in which he greets his fellow man, even those whom he considers to be his inferiors. But what decaying body, wonders Hawthorne, hides in a closet of this palace? A man such as the Judge, or the Puritan Colonel he has come to represent, posits Hawthorne, doesn't search for this decaying body in the hidden closet in palace he has built for himself. Hepzibah, however, does as she both measures him and links him to the Colonel when she says,

“...this hard and grasping spirit has run in our blood, these two hundred years! You are but doing over again, in another shape, what your ancestor before you did, and sending down to your posterity the curse inherited from him!” (237). The measure of the Judge, like that of the Colonel, has been taken and found wanting. Puritanism, when practiced by Hawthorne’s ancestors, as it was practiced by Colonel Pyncheon, inflicting torment on the innocent to improve the lot of the tormentor, had done so much harm to their fellow men. The spirit of it, when practiced within Hawthorne’s family, as it was practiced by the Judge, building up a palace of riches and the appearance of good works to hide the decaying corpse of sin of the inner man, had harmed both his mother and Hawthorne himself.

Finally, we can look on the entire narrative of The House of the Seven Gables and its characters as a sort of allegorical representation of America and her history, taking its rather contrived ending as Hawthorne’s plea for national unity. Consider that the two families, the Pyncheons and the Maules, may represent the North and the South. The House itself represents the nation. Both families have a claim to their homestead. Both have shed blood for it. The homestead represents untold riches to each family. Hepzibah and the Colonel represent the Puritan element, as Hawthorne sees them. Each of them is proud of his family line. The Colonel is a patriot, having fought for his country. He is a grasping, cold man, who is willing to profit at the expense of others and persecutes what he doesn’t understand. Hepzibah, like the flock of chickens who so resemble her, is the apparently sterile, largely reduced remnant of the family’s blood line. She is as proud as was her forebearer,

with far less right to be so. She is reduced in circumstances, reduced in vigor, reduced in scope. The homestead is falling down around her and she can do nothing to save it, or it seems herself. She makes an attempt to become self-sufficient through commerce, but she is too much the Puritan lady to be skilled at commerce, or even to acknowledge a need to make money at this venture (witness the first encounter with Ned, when she refuses to take money for the gingerbread cookie she has sold him).

Phoebe Pyncheon, who is not a direct descendent and is barely acknowledged as a Pyncheon by Hepzibah at all, comes to live in the homestead. Phoebe is more the epitome of the modern American, capable of a variety of occupations. She both excels at and enjoys the commerce that Hepzibah has undertaken and at which she has nearly failed. In her more capable hands, too, the homestead is less gloomy, more habitable. However, even given her skills, she cannot overturn the financial ruin of the house alone.

Holgrave, a young man currently working as a Daguerreotypist, has come to board at the homestead. Like Phoebe, he has succeeded in a number of occupations. Holgrave espouses a number of views that Hepzibah questions. His friends aren't genteel enough for Hepzibah, and he has an unfortunate tendency to rush to judgment on matters. However, he improves the garden as Phoebe works to improve the house.

Although Phoebe and Holgrave spend a great deal of time together, it is only after Phoebe has returned to the house and Phoebe and Holgrave are alone in the old

homestead with the dead body of Judge Pyncheon, the last great link to the original Colonel and the Maule curse, that Holgrave confesses his love for Phoebe. With the death of the Judge, Hepzibah, Clifford, Phoebe and, through Phoebe, Holgrave are rich and prepare to retire to the Judge's country house.

One of Holgrave's beliefs had been that homes should be built for the use of a single generation and should then be destroyed. The past should not enslave the present. However, prior to the group's departure to the country house, he muses that he is surprised that the Judge built his home of wood, rather than of stone, since he had reason to expect that he might have left the house to his descendents. Each succeeding generation to occupy it could alter the interior to meet the standard of taste of that time and the exterior would remain the same, "giving the impression of permanence" (315). Holgrave explains his reversal of opinion by saying that he has become a conservative.

He then proceeds to potentially extend the family's riches when he triggers a secret spring which, if it still worked, would have released the Colonel's portrait from the wall, exposing a recess in which the deed, so long sought by so many, was hidden. Of course we understand that this deed, so long sought after and the source of so much of the tragedy of the modern Pyncheons was, in fact, worthless. How did he know about the spring, or for that matter, the tragic story of Alice Pyncheon? The answer is, of course, that he is really a Maule.

It is in large part Holgrave's choices that alter the course of the tale. When Holgrave tells Phoebe the tale of Alice, Phoebe comes under his control, just as

Alice had done with Holgrave's ancestor. However, instead of taking advantage of this control as his ancestor had done, Holgrave chooses another path. When he might have chosen to use his knowledge of the secret compartment and take the Pyncheon lands for himself, he chooses another path.

In "The House of the Seven Gables: New Light on Old Problems," Joseph Battaglia notes that when Holgrave falls in love with Phoebe, he stops seeing the house and gardens as old and declares that they are new and Eden-like. For Battaglia, this is simply proof that, contrary to the belief of many critics, Hawthorne had foreshadowed his ending in some depth. For me, while this may be true, I believe that it is another case of national accommodation coming into play. It is when Phoebe and Holgrave, warring factions as it were, unite that the world becomes Eden-like again. It is only when the Pyncheons and the Maules have chosen to unite that their best success comes. These two families had nourished enmity towards each other for generations, far longer than the factions of the United States had. This ending, by far the most hopeful of the three 1850's romances considered, certainly must be considered to be a direct appeal by Hawthorne for national accommodation.

Just as House of the Seven Gables is clearly national accommodation, so too is it apologia or explanation. Thus, House of the Seven Gables becomes, in itself, a history of the United States. According to William Dillingham, in "Structure and Theme in The House of the Seven Gables," "The real theme concerns the necessity of man's participation in what Holgrave terms 'the united struggle of mankind'" (96). Dillingham states that the first six chapters of the romance "stress the

desirability of a democratic way of life over an aristocratic one” (96) and notes that it is the conflict between the “aristocratic Colonel Pyncheon and the plebian Matthew Maule” which “sets the state for the strong antithesis of aristocracy and democracy that remains in the foreground for six chapters” (97). While I am not sure that a Puritan would appreciate the term “aristocrat” being linked to his name, certainly a class structure based on wealth and position was, and continues to be, part of the American life. That this class structure became, in some ways, a lineage was clearly part of the Salem with which Nathaniel was familiar, according to Wineapple.

“Pedigree counts as much as money, frequently more; history furnishes a hierarchy of descent not to be gainsaid: who had come to America when and, of course, with whom, which mattered almost as much as what these ancestors did and whose interests – besides the Almighty’s – they served” (14). Kenneth Marc Harris, in “Judge Pyncheon’s Brotherhood” calls The House of the Seven Gables “Hawthorne’s most narrowly Calvinistic novel in its treatment of the crucial issue of salvation and damnation” (154-155). By this, Harris says, he is not saying that he believes that Hawthorne himself was a Calvinist, but rather agrees with the theory that there is a kind of “literary Calvinism” (155) such as is suggested by Gene Bluestein in his article “The Brotherhood of Sinners: Literary Calvinism.” Again, I call the reader’s attention to the fact that Hawthorne suggested that, speaking of his ancestors “strong traits of their nature have intertwined themselves with mine” (“The Custom House” 13). It seems likely that Hawthorne was, in some ways, Calvinist, or at least that the belief system attracted him to at least the same degree that it repelled

him. However, like the Calvinists his ancestors were, he feels compelled to examine their souls for traits of the hypocrisy which would have kept them from the invisible church, if not from the visible one.

Finally, House of the Seven Gables clearly serves as personal accommodation. Wineapple notes in Hawthorne that William Hathorne “sailed from England to America, some say on the *Arbella*, with fifty servants in tow. Or so his descendants heard. Hathorne settled in Dorchester Massachusetts, and arrived in Salem in 1636, induced to relocate in part by the promise of a 200-acre land grant provided he quit the church of Dorchester” (14). Later, Colonel John Hathorne, Salem magistrate during the 1692 witchcraft trials “brought down a curse on subsequent Hathornes, hurled at him by one of the dying witches” (16). Clearly, Hathorne family history is echoed by that of the fictional Pyncheons when Maule curses Colonel Pyncheon as he dies, saying that God would give him blood to drink. The portrait of the Colonel is also in itself a sort of echo to a Puritan Hathorne. In “Main Street,” Hawthorne describes an early Salemite from whom he descended, walking the streets, Bible in one hand and broadsword in another. He might have been the model for the Pyncheon portrait, or indeed, for Colonel Pyncheon himself. Later, Hawthorne would hear another family tale which would figure in House of the Seven Gables. Wineapple relates the story of Susanna Ingersoll’s house on Turner Street in Salem, a house which had once had seven gables. According to Wineapple, after the death of her parents, Ingersoll had to “outfox her uncle John Hathorne, who tried to seize the place, insisting it belonged to him...Ingersoll kept the house by

never leaving it and ever afterwards remained ensconced under its dark ceilings, as if afraid her uncle might, in her absence, snatch away what she loved best” (143).

In “Judge Pyncheon’s Brotherhood,” Kenneth Marc Harris notes that while discerning the true nature of the self was of great importance in nineteenth century literature, it was also important in Puritan society, who believed it was important to see hypocrites as such and keep them from the church, in order to keep the visible church an accurate reflection of the invisible church. John Cotton, Harris tells us, divided hypocrites into two kinds: swine and goats. Swine are the grosser kind of hypocrites; they will renounce their ways and then make their way back to them “as a Swine when he cometh where the puddle is, will readily lye down in it” (149). Goats, however, present “a much knottier problem for the zoologist of hypocrisy: ‘these are the clean Beasts such as chew the cud, meditate upon Ordinances, and they divide the hoofe, they live both in a generall and a particular calling, and will not be idle; they are also fit for sacrifice; what then is wanting?’ In other words, how can you tell them apart from the sheep?” (149). By examining the characters of Colonel and Judge Pyncheon, as well as Jaffrey Pyncheon for hypocrisy, Hawthorne is able to examine the characters of his ancestors, upon whom at least the Colonel was modeled. Additionally, of course, he is, in effect, examining one part of the dark side of Puritanism, about which, as I have said, he was ambivalent. Thus, national apologia and accommodation is mixed with personal accommodation in this most Puritan of books.

## CHAPTER IV: THE NEONOMINIAN

The final romance of Hawthorne's 1850's apologia and accommodation is The Blithedale Romance. It is in this work that Hawthorne looks most directly at America of his time, with far fewer immediate links to Puritanism to filter it. In The American Vision, Kaul notes that

if Brook Farm became to him the most significant offering of his times, it was because he could see in it an interesting parallel to the venture of the American Puritans themselves. Here again was the American theme of exodus: a determined band of people separating from a corrupt society to form a regenerate community, and expecting thereby to light the beacon flame of new hope for the rest of the world. (146)

Just as Puritans founded America and put their stamp on it through the ideals and mores handed down to successive generations, so did the reformers of Hawthorne's day intend to revitalize and re-form the country through their ideals and mores. The Blithedale Romance looks in particular at three of the more idealistic reform movements of the time: prison reforms, such as the Separate and Congregate systems, the women's rights movement, which was an offshoot of the anti-slavery movement, and the Utopian community movements, such as Brook Farm and the Fruitlands community.

Each of the characters in The Blithedale Romance can be viewed as representative of an important reform movement of the 1850's. Hollingsworth, one of the members of the Blithedale community, is a prison reformer of some repute. He is a prayerful man who seems brusque and ill at ease in polite society, yet is gentle and protective when necessary to the frightened and weeping Priscilla or the ill Coverdale. Priscilla and Zenobia are the two women of the romance and are as opposite to each other as is possible. Zenobia is likened to the hothouse flower she wears in her hair as she begins her life at Blithedale. Coverdale muses that Priscilla and her mystery might be symbolized by the silk purse she nets as she begins her life at Blithedale: a purse which appears unable to be opened to the uninitiated, but for those who understand the purse's workings, opens as wide as might be wished. Priscilla then is an enigma; a sad, wan, ghost of a person who, when compared to a flower is compared to a plant which has had inadequate sunshine. Zenobia, too, is also a kind of an enigma, presenting a vivid beauty to the world, behind which, Coverdale believes, hides a formidable intellect. Taken together, these women allow Hawthorne some latitude to explore several movements of the American 1850's, among them women's rights and metaphysical studies. Finally, there is the narrator himself, the character of Miles Coverdale. Coverdale is the unreliable narrator, the observer, sometimes even the voyeur in the text. He is a self-indulgent town dweller who does not appear to have the hardihood to be physically able to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, yet chooses to be part of a movement which almost insisted upon the physical labor of its proponents. It had, at its base, a desire to make human

life more pure, to strip away the non-essentials of life. Utopian communities were widely divided about what sorts of things were unnecessary and what would perfect human existence. In Blithedale, it seems that the guiding principal may have been egalitarianism, especially interesting in light of the budding women's movement. At any rate, it is through the character of Coverdale that we view the unfolding of these movements through the other characters.

One way of looking at Hawthorne's commentary on his times is to examine what he has to say about each of the movements he presents in his romance, first separately and then taken as a group. Let us first, then, consider what he chooses to show his readers with regard to prison reform. The lens through which we view prison reform is that of the character Hollingsworth, a gruff bear of a man who, prior to venturing into the arena of prison reform had been a blacksmith. As such he has had little formal schooling. There is no indication that he is part of a formal group of reformers, or that he has, at the onset of the romance, any financial backing for his enterprise. It appears that prior to the onset of the Blithedale community, Hollingsworth lectured and published pamphlets on prison reform, presumably both as a means of support and to gain followers. It has often been suggested that Hollingsworth is actually based on William Lloyd Garrison, the noted abolitionist. Hawthorne, who believed personally that the slavery issue would resolve itself in time, was repelled and appalled by the views of Garrison. Not only was Garrison an abolitionist, but because of his radical views, which included succeeding from the

slaveholding south, he divided the movement itself. Much like Hollingsworth, Garrison was left nearly devoid of supporters due to his radical views.

When we meet Hollingsworth, it is as a late arrival to Blithedale. He has been “accidentally delayed” (45) it appears, by Mr. Moodie’s request that he convey the young woman Priscilla to Blithedale. She appears sickly and depressed and arrives without any formal letter of introduction. Further, she is unwilling to tell even her surname. All her interest is given to Zenobia. His gentle treatment of Priscilla and insistence on her immediate inclusion in the group without regard to whatever secrets she might wish to keep is followed by his gentle nursing of the sick Coverdale. The impression formed by Coverdale with regard to Hollingsworth, and presumably meant to be formed by Hawthorne’s readers, is that he is a man whose gentle side is almost equal to that of a woman. In time, Hollingsworth and Coverdale work the land at Blithedale together, and Hollingsworth seems a committed participant in the Blithedale community. But Hollingsworth is always sketching his proposed prison. Although on the face of it he is committed to Blithedale, he is apparently content to build only one castle: his prison. But Coverdale remarks that his prison is built only in the sky.

Hollingsworth begins to cultivate a special friendship with Zenobia. They are seen together so much, and at one particular location on the side of a hill so often, that it is assumed by the company at Blithedale that the location is where they intend to build their own cottage to live together while continuing to remain part of the general community at Blithedale.

Hawthorne, through Coverdale, begins to show his reader that there is another side to Hollingsworth. Initially we see that other side at Eliot's pulpit. Coverdale explains that on Sundays it has become the habit of Hollingsworth, Coverdale, Zenobia, and Priscilla to spend Sunday afternoons at a rock commonly known as Eliot's pulpit. It had been so named because of the tradition that the Puritan John Eliot preached to his Indian converts from that rock. It has become the habit of the group that Hollingsworth would mount Eliot's pulpit and preach or talk to the others. When finished speaking, he would descend from the pulpit and lie face downward in the grass while the others would discuss the subjects he had brought up. On the face of it, this seems innocuous. However, several things make it clear that as readers we cannot accept this innocuous appearance as all there is to this. First there is the fact that Hollingsworth is the only speaker to mount the pulpit. We understand that Coverdale is a poet of some note. Zenobia regularly entertains the group at Blithedale with a variety of dramatizations. It is said about her on several occasions that she could have had a career on the stage if she had chosen it. While it seems natural that Priscilla may choose to be a spectator rather a presenter, it is clear that both Coverdale and Zenobia are capable of providing material for presentation on these Sunday gatherings. Yet neither does. It is evident that, despite the apparent desire of the participants at Blithedale to create a society based on equality, Hollingsworth has made himself a leader of at least this small group.

The second reason to believe that there is more at work here than just a man expounding to his friends is that this is *Eliot's* pulpit. Whenever Hawthorne links

anything to a Puritan beginning, it has significance. In this case, John Eliot, a Puritan missionary, came to this rock in order to minister to a group of Indian converts. We must consider that we are meant by Hawthorne to see a parallel between the two men and the two sets of events. Like Eliot, Hollingsworth is a missionary whose greatest desire is to convert everyone he can to his belief system. In Eliot's case, the belief system was Puritanism. In Hollingsworth's case, despite what he may choose to expound upon in the course of a given Sunday, the belief system that is paramount in Hollingsworth's mind and heart, and to which he wishes to convert his listeners, is the need for prison reform, specifically, his type of prison reform. And, for Hollingsworth, like the Puritans, if a potential convert failed to be converted, he is simply cast off.

Hawthorne continues, through Coverdale, to show us additional glimpses into Hollingsworth's other side. As Coverdale and Hollingsworth work together building a stone wall, Coverdale muses on the appearance of the community in the future. At some point, they will be called by terms of respect as befitting those who began the community. Their portraits would be hung in common areas of the community. At some point there would be births and deaths. Hollingsworth then informs Coverdale that the entire Blithedale experiment, while potentially fodder for Coverdale's poetry, is full of irremediable defects and is of no substance. His plan is to purchase the land upon which the Blithedale community exists. He plans to do this without any discussion whatsoever among the brotherhood with whom he has been living and working. Indeed, he intends to make the purchase without informing them.

When Coverdale replies that these actions could not stand the scrutiny of an unbiased conscience, Hollingsworth demands that Coverdale make a choice.

“‘Be with me,’ said Hollingsworth, ‘or be against me! There is no third choice for you.’” (137).

This exchange speaks to several serious flaws in the personality of Hollingsworth. Although he purports to be a philanthropist, he has no moral compunction with regard to the actions he is about to undertake. His intent is to purchase the property on which Blithedale sets. In doing so, he would definitely undo all the hard work of the participants, of which he was one, and possibly destroy the group itself. That he is able to even contemplate this particular action calls into question his philanthropic nature altogether. Coverdale loves Hollingsworth, and the force of Hollingsworth’s personality sways him. However, “I fortified myself with doubts whether his strength of purpose had not been too gigantic for his integrity, impelling him to trample on considerations that should have been paramount to every other” (136).

When Coverdale refuses to take part in Hollingsworth’s plan, it is clear that the friendship between the two men is over. Hawthorne had foreshadowed this end as early as “The Convalescent” chapter of The Blithedale Romance. Even at that point, Coverdale speculates that Hollingsworth’s closest friend, closer than anyone else could be, is his philanthropic theory, to which he had become a bond-slave. He wonders if Hollingsworth’s devoted nursing while Coverdale was ill was “only for the ulterior purpose of making me a proselyte to his views” (78).

The next incident which speaks to the character of Hollingsworth again takes place at Eliot's pulpit, upon Coverdale's return to Blithedale. Uncertain of his welcome, Coverdale has crept along the edge of the woods in an attempt to find a single inhabitant of Blithedale so as to better judge his reception back into the group. He comes upon a large group of them, reveling in costume in the woods. In an attempt to flee them, he happens upon the pulpit, where he finds Zenobia, Priscilla and Hollingsworth. There has obviously been a conflict between Hollingsworth and Zenobia. Hawthorne, through Coverdale, then describes Hollingsworth.

"I saw in Hollingsworth all that an artist could desire for the grim portrait of a Puritan magistrate, holding inquest of life and death in a case of witchcraft..." (194). Of course, the allusion here is to John Hathorne, the Hawthorne ancestor who presided over the Salem witch trials. McWilliams, in his Hawthorne, Melville, and the American Character, states that "Hollingsworth's male dominance is closely associated with his inherited, but unreformed, Puritan character... The accusation of witchcraft here is linked with a judging male's higher purpose, punitive acts, and prurient desires" (119). In addition to the clear familial commentary and within it, personal accommodation, we are again brought back to the reasons behind Hawthorne's machinations with regard to time in The Scarlet Letter wherein Hawthorne is able to call attention to the sexual peccadilloes of a high ranking Puritan and make commentary on the unfair and unequal judgment of the Puritan fathers, another foray for Hawthorne into national accommodation.

Throughout Hawthorne's literary career, he came back time and time again to the subject of Puritans and their dealings with those whose conduct they deemed sinful. While the subject clearly attracted him, the conduct of his Puritan fathers created in him a sense of horror and revulsion. In placing Hollingsworth twice at Eliot's pulpit and in equating him with two such famous Puritans, both of whom damaged or destroyed many lives, Hawthorne clearly reveals how we are meant to view Hollingsworth. Clearly, his single-minded sense of purpose, however initially noble, has so altered his ability to interact with others who don't completely share his zeal that he has become, Coverdale believes, mad. If he is not mad, this single-minded zeal has certainly rendered him unable to deal honestly and fairly with other members of society.

Grim Puritan that he is at heart, he casts off Zenobia, who had loved him and utterly committed herself and her fortune to him. The timeline of the story suggests that he only casts her off after he has discovered her history and her part in the abuse of Priscilla becomes apparent. However, it is also true that he casts off Zenobia and declares his love for Priscilla only when the true relationship between the women and the nature of their inheritance becomes known. That is, once it is obvious that Priscilla, rather than Zenobia, actually holds the pursestrings, it is Priscilla, rather than Zenobia, who also holds the heart of Hollingsworth.

How then do we view the subject of prison reform? Initially, Zenobia feels that Hollingsworth's powers are wasted on the "positively hopeless object of the reformation of criminals" (53). She feels that he should "try to benefit those who are

not already past his help” (53). Coverdale feels that the only reason for Hollingsworth’s being at Blithedale at all is that the Blithedale community has in effect estranged itself from the world, which his single minded pursuit has already done for him. Coverdale doesn’t characterize the plan for prison reform or the desire to make reform. He simply believes that the single mindedness which characterized Hollingsworth’s pursuit of his dream had both cut him off from humanity and changed him into a ruthless individual who put his dream above all else, including people who loved him and whom he had loved. This may be less a commentary, however, on the prison reform movement than on the nature of reform and reformers in general.

The next group of reforms/movements were centered around the female protagonists of the romance, Zenobia and Priscilla. These were the women’s rights movement and the spiritualism movement.

Zenobia is largely the proponent of the women’s movement and was clearly modeled on the life of Margaret Fuller. Like Zenobia, Fuller wrote and lectured on the rights of women and, like Hester Prynne and Ann Hutchinson, too, followed her own path. Also like Zenobia, Fuller died from drowning.

On the first night at Blithedale, when Coverdale asks Zenobia if they have been assigned jobs within the community, Zenobia states her case for the rights of women. The “softer sex,” she says, have been assigned the indoor tasks, as “a matter of course” (48). The tasks to which Zenobia refers were, of course, the traditional roles of women. However, she adds, it may be that at Blithedale (a community

where presumably the rules of the world might not apply) there may be a point when duties are assigned by skill and those who are weaker will take the place of the women while the women go into the fields. Just as Hollingsworth wrote tracts supporting his particular cause of prison reform, so too did Zenobia write in defense of women. Coverdale observes during his convalescence that the stories and tracts written by Zenobia don't do her intellect justice, but as a woman, she lacks other, "fitter" avenues. In his musings about the nature and substance of Zenobia's life, he wonders whether or not she has been married, and calls marriage "the great event of a woman's existence" (70).

In a later conversation with Zenobia, Coverdale suggests that of the sexes, women are the happier. Zenobia replies that a grown woman cannot be happy, "after discovering that fate has assigned her but one single event, which she must contrive to make the substance of her whole life? A man has his choice of innumerable events" (80). Clearly to Zenobia, this "great event" which is to serve as the base of her life-long happiness in the eyes of Coverdale, does not. It is not, however, the event itself that is the source of women's unhappiness, according to Zenobia. It is the lack of other choices.

This debate on the choices, or lack thereof, for women, is taken up again in the "Eliot's Pulpit" chapter of *Blithedale*. Zenobia states that the world wrongs both women and itself by preventing them from exercising a wider liberty. Coverdale replies that he would happily be ruled by women. When Zenobia suggests that Coverdale would only be ruled by women if they were young and beautiful, as

opposed to old and unattractive, Coverdale replies, suggesting that women might serve as the medium through which religious worship is achieved.

It is then that the voice of Priscilla is first heard in this conversation. She disapproves of the suggestions on the part of Zenobia and Coverdale as to the place in the world of women. Not only does she not believe it to be true, she does not wish it to be true. Many women of the time would have echoed Priscilla's sentiments. Many men, and women, of the time would have echoed the sentiments of Hollingsworth as well. He believes that the proper place of woman is at the side of man as the helpmate and believer in what he does. Actions taken separately on the part of the woman are doomed to failure and those women who take them have either "missed woman's peculiar happiness" (128) (by which I take Hollingsworth to mean marriage), or have been created by nature as neither man nor woman. Coverdale then comments that Priscilla is the very picture of the woman Hollingsworth has pictured: "the gentle parasite, the soft reflection of a more powerful existence" (128).

Those words speak to the reader about Hawthorne's true feelings about the women's movement. Who would choose to be a parasite, a being which feeds on another and relies wholly on that other being for sustenance, and who would die without the presence of that other being? Who would choose to be merely a reflection of the existence of another? Who would choose to have one's entire existence defined by a single event and have no other choices open to her? When we consider the substance of the characters defining these sentiments, we have additional clues to Hawthorne's feelings. Coverdale and Zenobia are both worldly

and well educated. Coverdale is a well-received poet who, until his Blithedale experience, lived in the city where he would have enjoyed the company of others, equally well educated, as well as the other advantages of city living including forums for discussing the vastly divergent views regarding movements of the time. Zenobia is a woman of the world whose intellect and ability, as assessed by Coverdale, far outpace what she has been allowed by society to contribute. Hollingsworth, on the other hand, is characterized as uneducated, whose occupation was, until he was moved to involve himself in the prison reform movement, a blacksmith. It is clear from the first that Priscilla is virtually a stranger to society. It is made clear in the course of the romance that Priscilla is the daughter of Moodie and his second wife, a woman who is characterized as a pale, timid seamstress who died, leaving Moodie to care for the child. That child, Priscilla, is brought up in poverty. Unschooling and so nervous as to shrink from the portion of the society into which she was born, Priscilla has had, it appears, almost no contact with anyone except her father prior to her arrival at Blithedale.

Just as Hawthorne made an important symbol of, and linked The Scarlet Letter to, The House of the Seven Gables through the use of flowers, he continues this symbol in The Blithedale Romance. As the reader will remember, Hawthorne places a rose bush as the front step of the prison, through whose doors Ann Hutchinson walked, as did Hester Prynne. In doing so he ties the two controversial figures together, the better to examine Puritan times. His flower motif in The House of the Seven Gables is Alice's posies, flowers that grew in the angle between two

gables and came from seeds brought back to the house by Alice Pyncheon. Alice, whose story is told by Holgrave, lived in the house some thirty years after the builder and original occupant of the house, Colonel Pyncheon, died. She is the instrument through which her father believes he will be able to acquire the land deed, lost since the Colonel's time, which would restore the wealth of the family. She is linked to the Colonel through the man who bewitches her, Thomas Maule, builder of the house and son of the original land owner and accused witch, Matthew Maule. She is the link, too, to the present time through her flowers, which continue to blossom on the roof of the house, and through her tale's teller, Holgrave, who, it is revealed, is actually Holgrave Maule, descendent of Matthew and Thomas. In "Mythopoesis in The Blithedale Romance" Peter Murray notes that in The Blithedale Romance, the flowers are both literal and figurative. Zenobia and Priscilla and both representations of flowers: Zenobia as a hot house flower and Priscilla as a New England anemone. Prior to her death, Zenobia removes her flower and gives it to Coverdale to give to Priscilla. Regarding Priscilla, Murray notes that she is often referred to "as having been closed up somewhere, or as a plant which has been growing in the shade" (108). Zenobia is presented as daily flinging away her hot house flower; Priscilla is often represented as the one flung away. Indeed, Murray notes that the

daily death of her exotic flower symbolizes Zenobia's ultimate fate, as Coverdale so clearly sees: each day is for the talismanic flower what the summer is for Zenobia. And Priscilla, the pale flower, is related to Zenobia though the flower symbols: as the fortunes of Zenobia

rise, Priscilla seems to droop, and the ambiguity of reference of the flower leaves us uncertain which of them the final catastrophe will befall. (110)

It is the view of McWilliams that another link between the second and third of the American Romances is the way in which we are meant to see the two sets of couples and how their relationships are to be considered. It is his view that “in one crucial respect Hawthorne cannot resist reaffirming continuity of character. Like Holgrave and Phoebe, Hollingsworth and Priscilla embody a chastened form of New England Puritanism upon which any viable future must rest” (122). Much like Hester and Dimmesdale, it is only when our other couples accept a certain Puritan tone to their relationships that they are able to enjoy a successful future. Of course, for Hester and Dimmesdale, that means only that Hester will live to an honored old age while Dimmesdale is able to die with the weight of his sin finally removed from him. For Holgrave and Phoebe and Hollingsworth and Priscilla, I take McWilliams’ idea of “a chastened form of New England Puritanism” to mean more of a conformation to societal mores than at least the male partner seems to originally have in mind.

In The Blithedale Romance, the spiritualism movement, so popular at the time, centers on the Veiled Lady. From the onset, it is obvious that Hawthorne has no belief in this movement, for he dismisses the phenomenon out of hand. The presence of the Veiled Lady was, he says, an indication of “the birth of a new science, or the revival of an old humbug” (40). He continues, contrasting the

demonstrations of spiritualism at the time of the writing of the romance with those of the time of the Veiled Lady, purportedly over a decade earlier. Earlier demonstrations, such as that of the Veiled Lady, were more theatrical and artistic than those of the “today” of the author, when the medium attempts to create a scientific atmosphere. Additionally, there is the evidence of the character of Professor Westervelt. He meets and has a conversation with Coverdale regarding Zenobia and then Hollingsworth. After having described Hollingsworth and his cause, Westervelt laughs.

...he opened his mouth wide, and disclosed a gold band around the upper part of his teeth; thereby making it apparent that every one of his brilliant grinders and incisors was a sham...I felt as if the whole man were a moral and physical humbug; his wonderful beauty of face, for aught I knew, might be removable like a mask; and, tall and comely as his figure looked, he was perhaps but a wizened little elf, gray and decrepit, with nothing genuine about him, save the wicked expression of his grin. (107)

When next we meet Westervelt, it is as Professor Westervelt, on stage, with the Veiled Lady. He is bearded and wearing Oriental robes. Commanding the Veiled Lady to make her entrance onto the stage and from there, to her chair, he proceeds to comment on the many abilities of the Veiled Lady and his control over her, so great that nothing except his command could move her from her chair or induce her to remove her veil. When Hollingsworth, then, mounts the stage and calls

the Veiled Lady to him, telling her she is safe, and in response she removes the veil and comes to him, this moves the Veiled Lady from seer to fraud. It is evident, then, that Hawthorne viewed the spiritualism movement with a similar degree of skepticism.

The final reform movement we will look at is the Utopian community movement. In The Sins of the Fathers, Crews states that “the book is Hawthorne’s *apologia* for leaving Brook Farm and scorning its visionary ideas... What we in fact find in The Blithedale Romance is not so much a theoretical refutation of utopianism as an implied confession that the Hawthorne-Coverdale temperament is unsuited for real enterprises of any sort, whether spiritual or practical” (198). As is always the case with Crews, he has taken an interesting and probably appropriate critical approach to the work of Hawthorne and simply overstepped. The romance is clearly in part Hawthorne’s examination of his own time at Brook Farm, his explanation for having left, and his disillusionment with the utopian ideals espoused there. I do not believe that there was inherent scorn so much as sadness at losing his own belief in what had begun with such great hopes. Clearly, part of his reason for leaving had more to do with his inability to write and his fear that this would make it that much more difficult to make a life with Sophia than a belief that a community such as Brook Farm was simply unworkable. Coverdale, Hawthorne’s narrator, repeatedly likens his time within the community of Blithedale to similar events which might have taken place in the time of the Puritans. On his first night before the fire in the farmhouse kitchen at Blithedale, Coverdale considers that a family of Pilgrims might

have sat around a fire just like the one around which his Blithedale “family” was sitting. Again, at the opening of the “Eliot’s Pulpit” chapter, Coverdale notes that Sundays were not spent in such rigid religious observances “as might have befitted the descendants of the Pilgrims, whose high enterprise, as we sometimes flattered ourselves, we had taken up” (123). In writing this, Hawthorne again likens the Blithedale community, as a representation of one of the many Utopian communities springing up at that time, to the Puritans. Again, Hawthorne is continuing the mythos of America when he attempts to link all Americans through the Puritan forefathers. Clearly by the mid 1800’s, many Americans were not descendents of Puritans; indeed many were not even of Anglo-Saxon heritage. The attempt was being made to create a perception of a homogeneous American society and the mechanism by which this attempt was made was to create a fictitious link between 1850’s Americans and the Puritans who settled in New England. Thus, Hawthorne is using this mythos to remind his reading public of a fact that was really a fiction: that, like his fictional Blithedale community, they, indeed, all Americans, were spiritual or literal descendents of the Puritans. Like the Puritans/Pilgrims, all immigrants to America had entered their new land as pilgrims, seeking brighter, more promising shores on which to dwell. Like the Puritans and the members of the Blithedale community, they may have faced hardships, but they also believed that their lives would be improved through success in their undertaking in their new circumstances. John McWilliams, in his book Hawthorne, Melville, and the American Character, states that “only Hollingsworth has the strength and the will to bring a better way of

life into being. Able to instigate change by forcing crises, he has the solid stature of Hawthorne's Puritans an "inflexible severity of purpose" (43), and the most ironlike of callings" (117-118). It is thus fitting that Hollingsworth is the one who preaches at Eliot's Pulpit, the boulder from which the Puritan Missionary Eliot attempted to convert the heathen Indians, and that he is the one who ultimately condemns Zenobia.

Hawthorne chooses again to link the Puritans with the Blithedale inhabitants in the "Leave-Takings" chapter. When Silas Foster suggests that Coverdale, upon leaving the community, is entirely done with it and will never come back, Coverdale retorts that he will indeed be back, and is so resolute as to be willing to die in a ditch for Blithedale. Foster's reply indicates that he cannot imagine many reasons to cease to labor: among those reasons would include an annual Fast, a custom begun by Puritans in the 1600's. The date is, of course, a reminder of the earliest days of America; the people, the earliest Americans Hawthorne wishes us to remember. By tying Foster to the Puritans, Hawthorne again ties Blithedale to them, and thus reminds his readers, again the maker of myth, of every American's common ancestry.

Coverdale characterizes the purpose of those in the community as both generous and noble. Of their capacity for generosity he says, "to give up whatever we had heretofore attained, for the sake of showing mankind the example of a life governed by other than the false and cruel principles, on which human society has all along been based" (51). He sees the nobility of his fellow Blithedalers and their

attempt, noting that "... if we built splendid castles...and pictured beautiful scenes, among the fervid coals of the hearth around which we were clustering – and if all went to rack with the crumbling embers...-- let us take to ourselves no shame....I rejoice that I could once think better of the world's improbability than it deserved" (51). However, it is important to note that for Hawthorne's alter-ego, Coverdale, this nobility of purpose comes with a convenient escape clause. "Though we saw fit to drink our tea out of earthen cups to-night, and in earthen company, it is at our own option to use pictured porcelain and handle silver forks again, tomorrow" (55). This is an option taken by all four of the main characters, among them Coverdale. Because Coverdale is already gone from Blithedale at the time that the other characters leave it, we don't know how they affect their departure. With Coverdale, we see exactly how he leaves. He simply appears at the dinner table dressed in clothes fit for the city and announces that he is going on vacation for a week or two. When Silas Foster complains, Coverdale's response is that Foster must allow him to take a little breath. This cavalier response, with no thought to what it might do to the workload of others is indicative of Hawthorne's feelings regarding the Utopian movement. Like the Pilgrims, those who removed themselves from the world to become part of a Utopian community did so in the belief that they could improve the world. However, unlike the Puritans who had moved a world away and could not easily take up their former lives if their new life didn't suit them, the Utopians could simply, with the change of an outfit, do as Coverdale had done and change his life.

Coverdale may in fact sum up his time at Blithedale and his feelings about the experience when he muses that “the greatest obstacle to being heroic, is the doubt whether one may not be going to prove one’s self a fool; the truest heroism is, to resist the doubt” (44).

## EPILOGUE

Nathaniel Hawthorne was a conflicted individual living in conflicted times. He was proud of the position his ancestors held, especially in light of his own family's diminished circumstances. Yet he was horrified by their actions. He was fascinated by the Puritans and their ethos, which appealed to his intense, fundamentally Calvinist nature. Yet at the same time he wanted to believe in the Transcendentalist beliefs of the day and the Utopian movements those beliefs engendered.

The United States of his day was anything but united. Long a country whose locus of power was at the local, rather than the national level, the United States was becoming too large and unwieldy for that to be practical. Transportation systems, such as the canal and railway systems, were rapidly becoming interstate in nature and necessitated federal control. The banking system was also more local than national and was so unstable as to bring the country to the verge of complete financial collapse. A new and large immigrant population altered the ethnic makeup of the country, and emigration into the new states and territories diminished the relative importance of the original group of states. The northern and southern states were increasingly at odds with regards to the very nature of government itself, with the southern states preferring a states' rights government and the northern states advocating a strong central government. Reformers, in large part living in the northern states, came to advocate manumission and the abolition of slavery as an

institution, along with establishment of women's rights and temperance. All of these things contributed to the near collapse of the country.

Into this milieu, a number of writers, including Hawthorne, began to assiduously celebrate America and Americans. Hawthorne's contribution was what was termed by Colacurcio as "The American Novels," published in 1850, 1851, and 1852; The Scarlet Letter, The House of the Seven Gables, and The Blithedale Romance. These novels functioned for Hawthorne in two major ways: they became for him a way to examine and explain both the nation's and his familial history.

He did this by creating, in essence, three novels spanning and revisiting a period of 200 years, during which the land that would become America was initially colonized, achieved its freedom and became a country, and struggled to expand.

He chose to employ the form of a romance for each of his three works. He chose that form, he said, in order to tell the "truth of the human heart" more than to adhere to the "probable and ordinary course of man's experience." (The House of the Seven Gables Preface) This allowed him to work with characters who were more type than actual persons, so he could examine their actions and the results of those actions. This allowed him, also, to in effect tell morality tales. He articulates the moral of the middle of these three "American Novels" as "the truth, namely, that the wrong-doing of one generation lives into the successive ones, and, divesting itself of every temporary advantage, becomes a pure and uncontrollable mischief..." (The House of the Seven Gables Preface) It is my belief that this moral is the controlling

thesis of most, if not all, of Hawthorne's works, certainly that of his romances of national and personal accommodation and apologia.

A. N. Kaul, in The America Vision, stated,

"Hawthorne was more interested in the continuities of tradition, of underlying principles, of hopes and frustrations than he was in the contrast of ages or even social development in the ordinary sense. For his interest in the past was of the utmost importance in his work, but it was not an antiquarian interest. In his artistic vision the seventeenth century was decisive in fostering the essential American attitudes, character types, and ideals; and his fiction focused on the recurring type in historically altered situations rather than on any basic alteration in society itself. To him the past was the moral fountainhead from which issued the stream, pure or addled, whose deepest current his sensibility recorded at various points along its course down to his own time. If the nineteenth-century subject which he chose to dramatize in The Blithedale Romance admitted a kinship with the American experience of the seventeenth century, the seventeenth century itself was explored for clues helpful to the understanding of the future. Whatever their historical or sociological accuracy, these explorations provide thus an imaginative response to American civilization which is, in spite of the severe limitation of

Hawthorne's subject matter, remarkably inclusive on the one hand and admirably unified on the other. (142)

A middle-aged Coverdale voices what might have been Hawthorne's own judgment of America: his apologia in response to Choate and all the others who sought to recover for all Americans a sense of their own gloried past and present. "Often, however, in these years that are darkening around me, I remember our beautiful scheme of a noble and unselfish life; and how fair, in that first summer, appeared the prospect that it might endure for generations, and be perfected, as the ages rolled away, into the system of a people and a world!" (The Blithedale Romance 216).

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