NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE'S SUBVERSIVE USE OF ALLEGORICAL CONVENTIONS

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Abstract

The literary and socio-political environments of early nineteenth-century America demanded from Hawthorne a new formulation of the allegorical mode, which in turn afforded him means to critique that same historical situation. His metonymic and realistic uses of allegorical techniques invert the emphasis of traditional allegory, permitting him subversively to critique the idealist principles of contemporary historiography and the Transcendentalist movement. Hawthorne's discontent with antebellum historiography's conflation of the Puritan colonists and the Revolutionary fathers, and with Transcendentalism's disregard for the darker side of human nature, led him to critique these idealisms in his fictions. His appropriation of allegorical conventions allowed him to enact this critique subversively, without alienating the increasingly nationalistic American reading public. This subversive program exerts a global influence on Hawthorne's work. The first chapter of this thesis defines my use of the term "allegory." The second situates Hawthorne within the allegorical tradition, the third within the American ideological context. The last two chapters identify and discuss Hawthorne's appropriations of the allegorical conventions of personification and procession as they are found in each of the three forms in which he most commonly wrote: the sketch, the tale, and the historical romance.

Résumé

La situation littéraire et socio-politique au début du 19eme siècle en Amerique exigeat que Hawthorne introduise des changements dans le modalité allégorique, des changements qui lui donnent le moyen de critiquer la même situation historique dont il faisait partie. Ses techniques allégoriques aussi bien métonymiques que réalistes, inversent la direction de la motion figurée de l'allégorie traditionelle, lui permettant de critiquer subversivement les principes idéalistes contemporains de l'historiographie et le Transcendentalisme. Le mécontentement de Hawthorne avec l'association des colons Puritans et pères révolutionnaires dans le projet historiographique et ses objections aux notions de la nature humaine dans le Transcendentalisme, lui menent à critiquer ces idées dans ses oeuvres. La façon dont il utilise les conventions allégoriques, donne à Hawthorne la possibilité de faire un critique subversif, sans offenser le publique Americain, qui devenait de plus en plus nationaliste. Ce program subversif touche d'une façon globale l'oeuvre de Hawthorne. Le premiere chapitre de cette recherche précise la façon dont le terme «allégorie» est utilisé. Le deuxième explique le rôle de Hawthorne dans la tradition de l'allégorie et le troisième lui place dans un contexte idéologique Americain. Les deux derniers chapitres présentent deux conventions allégoriques, personification et procession, tant qu'ils se trouvent dans le formes favorisées par Hawthorne: l'esquisse, le conte, et le roman historique.

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CONTENTS

Introduction

In his introduction to *The Analogy of the Faerie Queene*, James Nohrnberg posits the god Proteus as the mythical correlative to allegory, and indeed the two share a common property in that each is exceedingly difficult to apprehend with any sense of finality.[1] Like Proteus, allegory assumes many shapes. The purpose of this thesis will be more completely to understand one writer's use of the mode; like Heracles, to grasp Proteus if only for an instant.

Any originality to which this study can lay claim results from its synthesis of the insights from two often disparate streams of Hawthorne criticism. A long line of critics has read Hawthorne in terms of the literary modes of symbolism and allegory; another, newer movement in criticism stresses his relations to contemporary ideological, historical, and political formations. The hope here is to show how Hawthorne's particular uses of allegorical conventions have important ideological resonances.

Along with other writers such as Franz Kafka and Thomas Pyncheon, Nathaniel Hawthorne participates in the modern incarnation of a literary mode that was for centuries enabled by the presence of authoritative and culturally shared religious, philosophical, and political configurations. This thesis will explore the ways in which Nathaniel Hawthorne appropriates two

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[1] Fletcher also sees the relation; he terms allegory a "protean device" in the first sentence of the introduction to his *Allegory. The Theory of a Symbolic Mode.*

allegorical conventions, personification and procession, and the degree to which his use of these conventions affects and reflects the climate of his fictional world. I hope to show, finally, how Hawthorne's appropriations of these allegorical conventions are part of his general attack upon the radical idealism characteristic of both contemporary American historiography and the philosophical movement of transcendentalism.

While traditional medieval and renaissance allegories emphasize the disparity between the ideal and real, and tend to move from ground to figure towards a stress on the ideal, Hawthorne subverts this traditional emphasis. By situating many of his allegorical works in actual historical contexts, he highlights temporality, and the realistic ground behind any ideal image, subverting traditional allegorical hierarchies in the process. Redirecting traditional allegorical emphasis from the ideal to the real is perhaps the most ingenious aspect of Hawthorne's attack on mid-nineteenth-century idealism.

Hawthorne's allegory differs profoundly from that of his Puritan predecessors Spenser and Bunyan. Hyatt Waggoner has noted that, although "traditional allegory, whether in prose or in verse, was more help to him than anything else," Hawthorne's contemporary social environment meant that "allegory as it had been known and practiced was impossible to him in any but a limited and peripheral sense" (248). Although both Spenser and Bunyan were Puritan allegorists (and Hawthorne may have envisioned himself somewhat in that lineage), the possibilities afforded by traditional allegory were perhaps too limited for Hawthorne's taste or use. John Becker, though, suggests that Hawthorne was drawn to experiment with allegory for lack of a modern form more appropriate to his literary purposes:

> ...he was faced with the problem of writing allegory in a world which continued to produce masses of written material, all of

> which was almost immediately impertinent and unreadable, except for the realistic flashes of journalism. It is no wonder that he was uncertain, having, as he did, to shape allegory anew in a world whose literature had dried up. (69)

Both of Hawthorne's mentors in the field of allegory are known primarily for one extended allegorical work: Spenser for his *Faerie Queene* and Bunyan for *Pilgrim's Progress*. Hawthorne, however, was, if not more proficient than these two, perhaps more varied in his use of literary forms. He wrote scores of allegorical works in different forms and lengths, including the sketch, the short story, and the historical romance novel.

The sketches are as a whole Hawthorne's most patently allegorical form. Usually based in ahistorical settings,[2] the sketches often involve straightforward, traditional personification allegory, as in works such as "The Hall of Fantasy" and "The Celestial Rail-Road." The short stories comprising Hawthorne's two collections, *Twice-Told Tales* and *Mosses from an Old Manse*, are allegorical to differing degrees, though as a whole more subtly so than the sketches. The short stories, however, generally work with a larger variety of allegorical conventions--including personification, processions, threshold symbols, contagion, etc--than do the sketches. In Hawthorne's romance novels traditional allegory plays even less of a role, or at least a quite different role, than it does in his shorter works. *The Scarlet Letter* and *The Marble Faun* are most often read in terms of allegorical processes. John Becker finds in *Hawthorne's Historical Allegory* that these novels involve what he terms "multiple levels," or "allegories within allegories" (175). In *The Scarlet Letter*, for example, Hawthorne introduces his own allegorical

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[2] Even "The Celestial Rail-Road," one of the most contemporarily allusive sketches, is based upon a dream of the narrator's.

commentary on the Puritan community's dehumanizing, allegorical interpretation of Hester as the living embodiment of adultery.

Many types of discourse can be considered "allegorical," as is noted by Deborah Jones, who suggests that lack of attention to this fact is one of the major problems criticism has confronted in dealing with Hawthorne's allegory:

> many kinds of narrative technique (not just two) assemble under the rubric of allegory. The genre itself is 'mixed' in an exemplary fashion--many kinds of allegorical discourse participate in the genre; which is to say, in any given allegorical text. (153)

Hyatt Waggoner also seems to sense this multiplicity of modality in Hawthorne's work: "what we must recognize is that he wrote different kinds of stories, and created different kinds of characters, often in the same story" (73). Waggoner declares in his next sentence, however, that the critic can in each case categorize Hawthorne's process of composition as belonging to a single mode of writing: "recognizing the range of variation, we may then try to decide what is the typical or normal procedure" (73). The purpose of the present study, however, is not to recognize a "typical or normal procedure" at work in Hawthorne's use of the allegorical mode, but to show how Hawthorne's use of specific allegorical conventions in each of the three forms in which he most commonly wrote is informed by an underlying, subversive ideological program.

The thesis is divided into five sections; a chapter on allegory theory; one situating Hawthorne within the literary tradition of allegory; a chapter situating his work within the ideological context of nineteenth-century America; and two chapters delineating his use of specific allegorical conventions, personification and procession. This analysis will focus on

several Hawthorne texts traditionally regarded from the allegorical standpoint. One novel, *The Scarlet Letter*; two tales, including "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" and "The Minister's Black Veil"; and two sketches, "The Celestial Railroad" and "The Procession of Life," will be analyzed within the context of the two previously mentioned allegorical conventions.

Much recent critical effort has been devoted to the affirmation of Hawthorne as an important modern participant in the allegorical tradition.[3] The last two decades show signs of a significant trend in this direction, culminating in the publication of an unprecedented flood of studies in the mid-1980s that detail various facets of Hawthorne's allegory. Max Autrey, Bill Christopherson, Richard Freed, Beverly Haviland, Deborah Jones, Marcia Marzec and James Walter all contributed articles on aspects of the subject in the years from 1985 to the present. Those most concerned with the rhetorical implications of Hawthorne's allegory, Haviland and Jones, particularly dramatize the fact that this approach participates in a sort of *Zeitgeist*; both arrive at very similar readings of "Rappacini's Daughter" within a year of each other from either side of the Atlantic.[4]

While this renewed interest has resulted in a profusion of allegorical interpretations explicating either a group of the tales or one or two of Hawthorne's romance novels, the most compelling studies in this recent wave of criticism manage to situate the interpretation of a particular tale or novel within the larger context of Hawthorne's unique uses of allegorical discourse. What also emerges, however, upon investigation of this rapidly growing area of Hawthorne studies, is a broad range of definitions, both stated

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[3] Jonathan Arac, for one, describes him as "an allegorist of uncanny power" in 1979 (43).

[4] I have as yet found no studies which specifically are concerned with Hawthorne's use of allegorical conventions.

and implied, which critics use for the term "allegory." I will therefore begin this thesis by defining precisely my own understanding and use of the term, both theoretically and as it applies to the particular case of Nathaniel Hawthorne in mid-nineteenth century America.

Chapter One: Allegory

Theorists of allegory tend to fall into one of two camps: those who stress its metaphorical aspect, and those who stress its metonymic aspect. The former group includes critics who, like Maureen Quilligan, regard allegory as a genre in itself; the latter group includes those who, like Angus Fletcher, see it not as a genre but as a rhetorical mode which can be found in host genres such as the epic, the novel and the romance. The fact that allegory supports both paths of thought leads one to believe that the exclusive use of either term, "genre" or "mode," is insufficient, because each marginalizes much of what is valuable in the other. The generic quality found in allegory is based upon similarities in the meanings and structures of works traditionally regarded as allegorical. This involves a stress on allegory's paradigmatic, metaphoric tendency. Theorists who regard allegory in this manner tend to canonize, excluding works in which the literary forms do not point to a structuring ideal--to a "paradigm" outside of the work itself. Those who refer to allegory as a "mode" are more likely to base their definitions on similarities in the rhetorical mechanics of works, including as examples for their definition works in which allegory is not a primary element. Here, as in all classificatory systems, an either/or situation is confronted: breadth is gained at the expense of precision, and vice-versa.[5]

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[5] Quilligan is aware of and accepts the restrictions of her generic approach to allegory: "What is offered here is not the kind of comprehensive historical treatment of a mode so omnipresent that it can, as Fletcher shows, appear disguised in the robes of such other

Alistair Fowler writes in *Kinds of Literature* that the difference between genre and mode is most manifest in the grammatical category of the terms we use to denote members of each group. Names of genres are most commonly nouns, while modes have adjectival names. Frequently, a genre will have a corresponding mode; i.e. comedy is a genre, and comic is a mode. Moreover, while genres can exist independently, modes require a host genre, because they "have always an incomplete repertoire, a selection only of the corresponding kind's features, and from which overall external structure is absent" (Fowler, 107). Following Fowler's definitions of the terms "genre" and "mode," we find that allegory participates in both: it is a genre, but it can also act modally.

Kinds of literature are defined by Fowler in genetic terms. Just as the members of a family share similar traits and yet look different from one another, so do the members of a literary genre. The key task in defining a genre then becomes to identify the various features through which each genre manifests itself. The degree to which a work of literature participates in a specific genre depends upon the number and importance of the genre's features, or conventions, that are displayed by the work.

Perhaps allegory's most characteristic generic feature is the idea of the paradigm. The sine qua non of allegory as genre is that every element of the work points to a significance not overtly stated in the narrative. This is the "other," the allos of allegory; it generally involves a received body of ideas, a cultural code which structures the work. This alternate significance is the informing and motivating factor behind, in and around an allegorical work;

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genres as romance, novel, drama, epic, or science fiction. Instead I argue that among all the multitudinous works displaying allegorical modalities, there is a pure strain, that is, a group of works which reveal the classic form of a distinct genre" (14-15).

it generates the quality of a work's narrative actions, as well as the nature of its conventional imagery. The importance of this feature is such that all theorists are compelled to address it, though widely varying terms are used: Edwin Honig terms it the "anagoge" and the "ideal"; Quilligan calls it the "pretext"; and for Fletcher it is the "hidden tenor." In order to draw upon aspects of all these ideas, I will use the term "paradigm" to denote this particular feature of allegorical narratives.

Honig observes that this feature undergoes a change when allegory confronts the modern world. His "anagoge" connotes Christian dogma, the anagogical being one of the four levels of Christian exegesis. It is "the sense of over-all purpose" in a work. As Honig traces allegory's evolutionary changes, especially through the Enlightenment, during which Christianity begins to lose its political and cultural power, the term "anagoge" slides into the more abstract, less ideologically loaded term "ideal," which in modern allegory can assume a Protean array of forms:

> The ideal then appears in various forms: as an implied norm from which men have strayed (particularly in satire); as a desired good to which men need to be converted, and hence allied to some social, political, or religious idea (often in allegory and pastoral); as an unattainable state of past or future perfection, and consequently a juridical principle by which everything mundane is measured (in all types of symbolic fiction, including the epic). (Honig, 152)

Quilligan, who, because she defines allegory generically, spends almost a quarter of her book on this concept, names it the "pretext," the character of which will determine that of the resulting narrative. For her, the pretext is "the source that always stands outside the narrative," and is "the text that the narrative comments upon by reenacting" (97). The pretext's function is far more important than a common narrative source, for its influence over the

narrative is global, and actually determines the configuration of imagery and action for the entire work, not just for selected passages or themes. In many cases the pretext is not a text at all, but an idea, a cultural text, or a system of beliefs:

> The pretext is not merely a repository of ideas, it is the original treasure house of truth, and even if that treasure house has been plundered and is assumed to be empty, it still retains its privileged status in guiding not only the interpretation but the possibilities of the allegory. (Quilligan, 98)

In addition to a work's adherence to an extra-textual paradigm, other allegorical conventions would include the following: personification; emblematic imagery and progressions; daemonic agents; cosmic images; main characters who generate subcharacters; significant clothing, places, objects, actions, battles, and journeys; moral didacticism; and threshold images.

In addition to its own features, an allegorical narrative will commonly display features of other genres. When allegorical features predominate the work is categorized in the genre of "allegory"; when another genre's features predominate the work is seen to be operating in an "allegorical" mode. For example, Prudentius' *Psychomachia*, which lacks features of genres other than allegory, is most commonly called an allegory, or a "pure" allegory. *The Faerie Queene*, which incorporates epic and romance as well as allegory, is commonly referred to as an "allegorical epic." *Paradise Lost*, which is referred to solely as "epic," also contains passages of an allegorical modality, particularly in the personifications of Sin and Death.

In Hawthorne's writings, any informing paradigm is often strongly questioned. This leads me to see his works not as allegories in the generic sense, but as sketches, tales, and novels involving allegorical features. As they do in all allegories, these features imply or point to an enabling cultural

or ideological paradigm, and also serve as the tools for self-reflexive analysis of these paradigms. They work to declare, interpret, and/or critique the various belief systems and ideologies that exert an influence over the culture of which the artist is a part.

Allegory is a literary means of investing the forms of this world with structure, hierarchy, and moral purpose. The most fundamental reason why Hawthorne's allegorical writing differs from that of his Puritan predecessors is simply that the worlds of Spenser and Bunyan, or even the world of his own New England ancestors, were far removed from Hawthorne's. He is the first major writer of allegorical fiction in the modern world.[6]

Configurations of belief in Western culture shift radically from the Renaissance to the Romantic period, a shift that necessarily has ramifications for the literature and criticism of Hawthorne's day. One clear manifestation of this cultural shift is the emergence of a hotly-debated opposition between the two dominant modes of figural discourse, allegory and symbolism. During the medieval and Renaissance periods, allegory was used primarily to transmit sacred wisdom and information indirectly, in a sort of code. It was respected as a method for keeping this sacred wisdom and information away from the corrosive influence of the unlearned and their profane interpretations. In these periods, almost all figuration, whether in the verbal or visual arts, was seen to operate allegorically: the presented form was seen to point to a meaning which was not directly present. The symbol's

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[6] Becker finds that "Hawthorne differs from Dante, Spenser, Tasso, and Bunyan, not because he engages the form more loosely, but because a new phase of Western culture had broken down their world of shared cultural values, changed the relationship between artist and society, and made it necessary to reformulate the allegorical mode" (170).

ascendancy over allegory begins early in the Romantic period, during which, as Paul de Man notes, "the rhetorical key-terms undergo significant changes and are at the center of important tensions" (173).[7] These tensions revolve around questions of political and interpretive hegemony. The ascendancy of the symbol is a rhetorical consequence of the greater Romantic agenda which emphasized the individual consciousness and imagination. For the Romantics, dualities such as subject/object, self/other, and consciousness/reality are no longer reconciled, as Honig points out, by "an a priori rationale based on dogmatics," but rather by virtue of the power of the individual creative imagination (49). By the end of the Neo-Classical period, the fundamental relation between Same and Other had been profoundly disrupted. De Man notes that "the secularized thought of the pre-romantic period no longer allows a transcendance of the antinomies between the created world and the act of creation by means of a positive recourse to the notion of a divine will" (190). The specific Christian paradigm that had enabled previous allegories had collapsed.

The most influential English voice on this issue is Coleridge, who finds the rhetorical workings of allegory incompatible with--in fact a dangerous threat to--the workings of the symbol so valued in his philosophy of language. Honig warns that Coleridge's famous attacks on allegory are too often seen in a vacuum, without taking into account the greater agenda that motivated them: we "risk missing his main reason for setting up the symbol-vs.-allegory distinction if we fail to see it within the perspective of his general criticism and his philosophy of the imagination" (47). The Romantic writers'

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[7] For my discussion of the Romantic distinction between allegory and symbolism I am primarily indebted to de Man's article and Edwin Honig's *Dark Conceit: The Making of Allegory*.

distinction between allegory and symbolism is only a "part of the larger campaign they fought to disentangle themselves from all rationalistic predeterminations" (Honig, 3), and so this distinction slides back and forth between a stress on purely linguistic considerations and a more general concern with philosophical issues.

In purely linguistic terms, both symbol and allegory are kinds of signs, but the allegorical sign always has only an indirect, arbitrary, conventional connection to what it signifies, whereas the symbol is seen to have a more direct, intrinsic identification with what it signifies. For the Romantics, allegory is usually attacked as mechanical, while the symbol is seen to be organically linked to its referents. In *The Statesman's Manual*, Coleridge complains of allegory that it is language abstracted to the point of irrelevance: it "is but a translation of abstract notions into a picture-language, which is itself nothing but an abstraction from objects of the senses; the principal being more worthless even than its phantom proxy, both alike are unsubstantial, and the former shapeless to boot" (503). Coleridge then holds up by contrast the "symbol," which speaks for the possibility of a figural language not abstract and insubstantial, but natural and organic. Paul de Man summarizes Coleridge's definition of the symbol as follows:

> The symbol is the product of the organic growth of form; in the world of the symbol, life and form are identical: "such as the life is, such is the form." Its structure is that of synecdoche, for the symbol is always a part of the totality that it represents. Consequently, in the symbolical imagination, no disjunction of the constitutive faculties takes place, since the material perception and the symbolical imagination are continuous, as the part is continuous with the whole. (176-77)

The Coleridgean symbol is exclusively synchronic; notable by its absence in this formulation is the element of time. Thus, for de Man, the

allegory/symbol opposition in the Romantic era can be seen as "a conflict between a conception of the self seen in its authentically temporal predicament and a defensive strategy that tries to hide from this negative self-knowledge" (191). With the symbol, the relation, actually an identification, between substance and representation "is one of simultaneity...in which the intervention of time is merely a matter of contingency" (de Man, 190). On the other hand, in allegory, diachronic sequence must be acknowledged, for "it remains necessary, if there is to be allegory, that the allegorical sign refer to another sign that precedes it" (de Man, 190). With the symbol, the enabling paradigm--which, like the sign itself, is subjectively generated--is contained by and present in its representation, while in allegory the paradigm, usually a cultural heritage, is necessarily antecedent to the images in the work, or foreshadowed by them.

The Romantic "spiritualization of the symbol" actually sees the symbol fulfilling many of the basic functions of allegory:

> The reference, in both cases, to a transcendental source, is now more important than the kind of relationship that exists between the reflection and its source. It becomes of secondary importance whether this relationship is based, as in the case of the symbol, on the organic coherence of the synecdoche, or whether, as in the case of allegory it is a pure decision of the mind. (de Man, 177)

The main difference between the conceptions of allegory and symbol here concerns the element of time. Though both symbol and allegory refer to "a transcendental source," de Man's use of the indefinite article ("*a*" transcendental source) quickly alerts the reader to the possibility that they do not necessarily refer to the *same* transcendental source or paradigm; de Man's formulation also stresses again that in each case the temporal positioning of

the sign in relation to this source is what will differentiate the two types of figural language.

The Romantic celebration of the symbol was influential enough that in the twentieth century, allegory has been exiled to the margins of critical discourse. Paul de Man could write in 1969 that "The supremacy of the symbol still functions as the basis of recent French and English studies of the romantic and post-romantic eras, to such an extent that allegory is frequently considered an anachronism and dismissed as non-poetic" (175). The next chapter will explain how and why Hawthorne disregarded this literary-theoretical tendency in his attempt to open up an allegorical intercourse with nineteenth-century America.

Chapter Two: Hawthorne and the Allegorical Tradition

Influenced by the critical prejudice against allegory, Hawthorne's champions frequently emphasize his symbolist tendencies. We repeatedly arrive at the picture of Hawthorne as master symbolist, inferior allegorist. Beverly Haviland finds it not surprising "in retrospect, that other twentieth-century critics would insist that Hawthorne was a 'symbolist' or 'a mythmaker' when these qualities were required for membership in the canon" (280). When the subject of allegory is approached in reference to Hawthorne's work, it arouses a variety of comments, from complaints about the lack of any didactic content whatsoever in his allegorical works--"What, for instance, is the moral, what the spirit, what the meaning of 'The Great Carbuncle?'" (Cameron, 44)--to mockery of the apparent triteness and simplicity of his stories' morals: "Allegorical messages, in Hawthorne, are commonplaces by definition" (Dauber, 14).

The present is a study not of Hawthorne's work in the genre of pure allegory, but of his use of allegorical conventions, which are the rhetorical elements in his work having recognizable antecedents in previous allegories. Solely by virtue of their repetition in a series of works spanning hundreds of years, these elements are authoritatively called allegorical conventions. Rather than take sides in the long-standing dispute over whether Hawthorne is an allegorist or a symbolist, I will refer to him as an author of allegorical fictions. To assert that Hawthorne was an "allegorist" who wrote "allegories" is less defensible than to say that he was an author who wrote "allegorically."

The former appellation does little to improve our understanding of Hawthorne's art, the very nature of which, in its extreme idiosyncracy, resists such blanket summations.

The best question to ask, initially, may be why Hawthorne chose to write allegorically in the first place. Hawthorne indeed asks himself this question, worrying about the ramifications of his own undeniable tendencies toward allegorical thought and writing. In his preface to "Rappacini's Daughter," published in 1844 under the title "Writings of Aubépine," Hawthorne poses as his own editor to lament the lack of life in his creations, which he attributes directly to his penchant for allegory:

> His writings, to do them justice, are not altogether destitute of fancy and originality; they might have won him greater reputation but for an inveterate love of allegory, which is apt to invest his plots and characters with the aspect of scenery and people in the clouds, and to steal away the human warmth out of his conceptions. (CE 10:91-92)[8]

This is not an isolated instance of self-criticism. Seven years later, prefacing the second edition of his *Twice-Told Tales*, he complains that the works collected therein

> ...have the pale tint of flowers that blossomed in too retired a shade--the coolness of a meditative habit, which diffuses itself through the feeling and observation of every sketch. Instead of passion, there is sentiment; and, even in what purport to be pictures of actual life, we have allegory, not always so warmly dressed in its habiliments of flesh and blood, as to be taken into the reader's mind without a shiver. (CE 9:5)

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8 All quotations from Hawthorne's works are taken from *The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne*. Gen. Ed. William Charvat et al. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1962. 16 Vols.

Following Coleridge, Hawthorne faults allegory for its cold, mechanical rationality which, vampire-like, drains the life from his fictional creations.

Why then, did Hawthorne choose to write what he would later call, in a letter to his publisher James Thomas Fields, "these blasted allegories," especially when in these prefaces to his own works he acknowledges that the mode seemed to have effects more harmful than beneficial to his creations? Of course, Hawthorne cannot truly be taken at face value in his prefaces: he is writing in a self-consciously literary style, taking on the persona of "the Author" or "the Editor."[9] The previous citations suggest, nevertheless, that this is a question he wants his reader to raise, and to ask of him. And, indeed, throughout the history of criticism on his work, his writing is faulted for what is seen as its "allegorical" quality.

One influential factor that probably encouraged Hawthorne to write allegorically is that allegorical interpretation, as a mode of understanding and ordering the world, was a central aspect of his New England Puritan cultural inheritance. Much of the history Hawthorne learned about his New England ancestors was handed down in allegorical form, precisely because of this Puritan habit of perception F.O. Matthiessen notes that the histories of Puritan New England with which Hawthorne was undoubtedly familar, such as William Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation*, were already allegorized versions of actual historical occurrences and situations:

> ...one reason why these events fell so naturally into allegorical form for Hawthorne was that the emphasis of the early historians had already leaned in that direction. In Bradford, for instance, the

[9] Michael Colacurcio notes that "Hawthorne's self-criticisms are by no means insincere, but we should beware of reading them too literally. Everywhere he turned, his irony mocked his earnestness, and for the most part his habits survived repentance and confession" (73).

> settlers = Christ's chosen; the Indians = devils; Morton and his cohorts at Merry Mount = agents of Satan. (272n.)

Matthiessen is not alone in suggesting that the Puritan practice of observing the world allegorically informed Hawthorne's own highly self-conscious literary style. Ivor Winters, in *Maule's Curse: Seven Studies in the History of American Obscurantism,* investigates this phenomenon's influence not only on Hawthorne, but on all New England writers of the nineteenth century: "the Puritan view of life was allegorical, and the allegorical vision seems to have been strongly impressed upon the New England literary mind" (4). Winters blames the enduring Puritan habit of allegorical perception for what he sees as the failure of New England literature. He pronounces its "obscurantism" a "curse," and restricts Hawthorne's successful ventures in allegory to one work, *The Scarlet Letter,* for which, however, he has unreserved praise. He pronounces it "faultless, in scheme and in detail," and considers it "one of the chief masterpieces of English prose" (3), in which the "method of allegorization is that of the Puritans themselves; the substance of the allegory remained in a crude form a part of their practical Christianity in spite of their Calvinism, just as it remained in their non-theological linguistic forms" (16).

Another reason why Hawthorne wrote allegorically is that it was the mode in which his favorite authors had written. The longevity of his appreciation of the great Puritan allegories is evident when one notes that the first book he purchased with his own money was a copy of *The Faerie Queene,* and that he named his first child, a girl, "Una," after the heroine and personification of truth in the first book of Spenser's poem.

To understand his disappointment in the contemporary literary scene is also to understand more fully why he wrote allegorically. Hyatt Waggoner

observes that "no existing form of fiction very closely approached being suitable for his purposes" (248). The only contemporary literature that held fascination for him was journalism, because it seemed to possess some spark of life he found extremely rare in fictional literature. His disdain for literatures, both old and new, that claimed to provide a privileged window to sacred truth is evident in the description of his initial foray into the library of his new home, during the "Old Manse" period:

> The elder books, nevertheless, seemed to have been earnestly written, and might be conceived to have possessed warmth, at some former period; although, with the lapse of time, the heated masses had cooled down even to the freezing point. The frigidity of the modern productions, on the other hand, was characteristic and inherent, and evidently had little to do with the writer's qualities of mind and heart. In fine, of this whole dusty heap of literature, I tossed aside all the sacred part, and felt myself none the less a Christian for eschewing it. There appeared no hope of either mounting to the better world on a Gothic staircase of ancient folios, or of flying thither on the wings of a modern tract. (CE 10:20)

The older works are given a more sympathetic treatment; he imagines that they may at one time have had power to stir the imagination and the soul of contemporary readers. The modern works in the library, however, are so removed from even their writer's own heart that they are pronounced worthless for eternity. The only literature Hawthorne countenances as containing any truth is that which does not pretend to aspire to it. Paradoxically, then, to write for the moment is to write for eternity, and to write for eternity is to write for the moment:

> Nothing, strange to say, retained any sap, except what had been written for the passing day and year, without the remotest pretension or idea of permanence....It is the Age itself that writes newspapers and almanacs, which therefore have a distinct purpose and meaning, at the time, and a kind of intelligible truth for all

> times; whereas most other works--being written by men who, in the very act, set themselves apart from their age--are likely to possess little significance when new, and none at all, when old....A work of genius is but the newspaper of a century, or perchance of a hundred centuries. (CE 10:20-21)

It was not enough for Hawthorne to choose to write allegorically. The contemporary aesthetic climate and the philosophical underpinnings that supported allegory dictated that he reformulate the mode. The major change that takes place in Western culture between the Renaissance and the modern world which has the most impact on Hawthorne's allegory, and on allegory in general, is the shift of dominance in the relation between an ideology based on culturally-shared conventions and one based on subjectively-generated belief. Deborah Jones observes that older, patristic allegories "construct a mystical (and mystifying) epiphanic climax by displacing the narrative's ontological contradictions and epistemological uncertainties into a biblical discourse which is mediated to the narrative through the conventions of the Catholic Church."[10] Any indeterminacy, she continues, "has already been resolved by the normative soteriological context provided by an ecclesiastical interpretation of the Bible" (167). In contrast, Honig finds that modern allegories, which lack such a paradigm, and so cannot rely on a normative context, are characterized by their ambiguity:

> Some explanation for the elusive pattern and the increasing ambiguity in modern allegories may be found in the destruction of the rigid base of cultural authority upon which allegory

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[10] Though Jones is here discussing Catholic allegories such as *Piers Plowman* and *The Divine Comedy*, the same considerations readily apply to the Puritan allegories of Spenser and Bunyan.

> traditionally depended, and in the relatively greater stress put upon the autonomy of the artist since the Reformation. (87)

Writing specifically about Hawthorne's allegory, Waggoner echoes Honig's sentiment, though he feels the beast has changed shape so much in the modern world that to call it by the same name is misleading. Intuitively, he is reticent even to use the generic term "allegory" in relation to Hawthorne's work, and when he is compelled to do so it is within quotation marks:

> ...Hawthorne's "allegories" are more subjective, more complex, and more ambiguous than anything in *Pilgrim's Progress* or *The Faerie Queene.* If these tales are allegory, they are allegory in a new mode which it might be less misleading to call a highly intellectualized form of symbolism. (99)

In the post-Cartesian world, the paradigm (Honig's "rigid base of cultural authority") ceases to be the major generator of allegorical narratives, which in turn devote themselves to exploring subjective themes rather than to the tautological task of verifying shared beliefs. Quilligan notes that as configurations of knowledge and belief (what she terms the "pretext" in allegorical forms) change in time, so must the allegorical method, which reflects the status of language in the society out of which it issues:

> it is primarily the status of the language in the pretext [paradigm] which determines the development of the allegory; if its language can name truth, then the language of the allegorical narrative will be able to. If its language is not felt to have special powers for revealing reality, then the language of the allegory will have a corresponding difficulty in articulating the truth of the human condition. (98)

The absence of a culturally-shared paradigm that informs and generates narrative is what distinguishes modern allegory from traditional allegory, and is largely what separates Hawthorne's writing from, say, that of Spenser.

As Waggoner notes: "the one thing most obviously demanded by allegory, a clear, fixed, publicly accepted scheme of values, was not available to Hawthorne" (248). Hawthorne was deeply ambivalent about his Puritan theological inheritance, and, as we shall see in the next chapter, he was equally ambivalent about many of the prominent philosophical and religious movements of his own era. Also, Hawthorne wrote for and entertained an audience far different from that of Spenser and Bunyan. His was a nineteenth-century American audience that did not take time to sit back and meditate upon "fairyland." It was an audience that hungered for tales of national history and for more pragmatic forms of writing. Becker contrasts this American audience to the "European audiences of the great allegorists," who "were willing to accept the validity of comments on life made within the setting of a fictitious narrative world" (8):

> Because the medieval allegorist, and the Puritan later, shared a set of accepted values with his readership, author and audience could watch together as the allegorical hero proved once more the worth of those accepted values. By the time of the romantic era, however, the last vestige of this shared structure of values had dissipated. (Becker, 83)

Allegory adapted to this major shift in configurations of belief and knowledge by de-emphasizing its paradigmatic aspect. With the waning power of culturally shared ideals in Western culture came an emphasis on the temporal element of the allegorical equation. In the modern era, allegory's atemporal "verticality" becomes overshadowed by the "horizontal" sequence of its images and plot action, which implicates it further, as de Man has shown, in the temporal domain.[11] Hawthorne's allegory exhibits this

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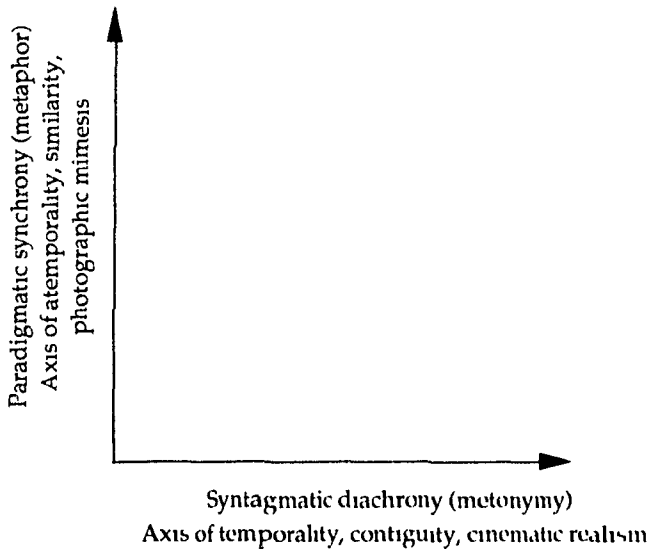
[11] Fineman's definitions of the vertical and horizontal aspects of allegory are discussed at the end of this chapter.

very adaptation, which, as we shall see, is rhetorically reflected in his heightened use of the trope metonymy. To understand this, we need to refer to the foundational work of Roman Jakobson on metaphor and metonymy.

Roman Jakobson states that "a combination between both devices, metonymic and metaphoric, is manifest in any symbolic process" (126). The difference between the two tropes, metonymy and metaphor, is not one of kind, but of degree. The main point of difference between kinds of tropes concerns the nature of the relation between entities undergoing comparison. In metaphor the relation is discovered or created; in metonymy it can be mutually assumed by both artist and audience; and in synecdoche, often seen as a form of metonymy, the relation is actual (that of a part to a whole). Metonymy stresses comparisons of contiguity between elements both present in an actual scene; metaphor, on the other hand, stresses relations based upon perceived similarities between objects which are recognized as different and separate.

Though both metonymy and metaphor are present in all verbal discourse, one or the other is usually privileged as the result of cultural, generic, or individual stylistic influences. For instance, Jakobson maintains that metonymy is the more prevalent device in realistic literature of the later nineteenth-century. Joel Fineman bases his definition of allegory on Jakobson's matrix, defining it in terms of the following graph as

> the poetical projection of the metaphoric axis onto the metonymic, where metaphor is understood as the synchronic system of differences which constitutes the order of language (*langue*), and metonymy as the diachronic principle of combination and connection by means of which structure is actualized in time in speech. (31)



The difference between the two axes might be understood by analogy to the distinction between the photograph and the motion picture--the latter involving the conscious introduction of time or narrative sequence into representation. Within Fineman's general definition of allegory, he allows for different strains that privilege metonymy or metaphor to differing extents; he includes non-narrative, metaphorical allegories that are primarily vertical or photographic in orientation, such as the emblem and certain versions of pastoral; and horizontal, filmic, primarily metonymic aspects of allegory "such as picaresque or quest narrative in which figurative structure is only casually and allusively appended to the circuit of adventures through time" (31).

John Dolis notes that by stressing metonymy, Hawthorne emphasizes the horizontal, temporal, filmic aspect of allegory: "Unlike the photograph, for example, which fixes its content by virtue of a single and constant external horizon, Hawthorne's description subjectively unfolds in time" (367):

> Hawthorne's gaze reveals his habitual inclination toward contiguous relationships, relations which "logically" digress from a continuously uniform setting in space and time. Like the cubists, his gaze transforms the object into a set of synecdochic oscillations

> (arms/hands/legs/feet) whose visual orientation strives toward a determinate whole. It obtains only in so far as the reader-perceiver "completes" it himself. (Dolis, 366)

Hawthorne's use of allegorical conventions implies paradigms, but then allows him to work with and critique these ideals. Thus, Hawthorne's metonymic, realistic use of allegorical conventions enable him subversively to critique the idealism characteristic of some movements in the social and political thought in his day, as we will see in the next chapter.

Chapter Three: Hawthorne and American Ideology

The Puritans understood themselves and their migration to the new world as the fulfillment of Christian prophecy. The degree to which this belief informed the works of Puritan historiographers such as John Winthrop and William Bradford is described by Sacvan Bercovitch in his introduction to *The American Puritan Imagination:*

> [The Puritans'] summons from Europe was an evangelical call, their Atlantic crossing was tantamount to conversion, their hardships in settling the country were the temptations of Satan, the blossoming New World "garden" made tangible, as it were, the *hortus conclusus* of the redeemed soul. (11)

This typological vision is representative of the Puritan tendency to read history and daily life allegorically. It sets the tone for later historiographers,[12] who, in Hawthorne's era, appropriated the typological vision for political purposes, as a way of justifying America's Manifest Destiny.

The election of Andrew Jackson in 1828, the first federal election to be decided largely by popular vote (in which the populace, not the legislature, determined the electoral college), marked the end of oligarchy and the rise of democratic rule in America.[13] Hawthorne was involved in the direct party politics and party patronage of his day, and was, as is noted by Johnson, a

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[12] Bercovitch notes that "the importance of their vision to subsequent American thought can hardly be overestimated" (12).

[13] Jackson's election broke a 32-year pattern of two-term Presidents who were succeeded by their own Secretaries of State; Jefferson to Madison, to Monroe, and finally to John Quincy Adams (Johnson, 905).

supporter of Jackson's populist campaign (937).[14] Frederick Newberry remarks that Hawthorne wrote most of his tales during this "predominantly jubilant, nationalistic period of Jacksonian democracy, which marked the culmination of American efforts to legitimize the Revolution by establishing a cohesive democratic tradition in colonial history" (59). The task of establishing the national myth was accomplished through the efforts of "political and cultural spokesmen [who] venerated the Revolutionary fathers and linked them to the Puritan founders, giving the prophetic tradition a decidedly political cast" (Newberry, 59).[15] The Puritans' religious conception of themselves as the divinely ordained fulfillment of Christian prophecy (evidenced in Winthrop's phrase "wee shall be as a Citty uppon a Hill, the eyes of all people are uppon us") metamorphosed into the new Republic's conception of itself as the divinely ordained epitome of truly egalitarian self-government, an example to all nations.

Appropriating and politicizing the Puritan myth of America as the promised land enabled the new Republic to transcend latent contradictions in its ideology. Indeed, the Puritan vision enabled the Puritans themselves to transcend their own contradictions, as is noted by Sacvan Bercovitch: "the Puritans denied the very fact of invasion by investing *America* with the meaning of progress and then identifying themselves as the people peculiarly destined to bring that meaning to life" (*Ends*, 183). Theorists of myth tend to see this as one of myth's primary functions. Robert Clark explains that myth is best understood as the "methodical translation of the dominant social codes

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[14] Johnson finds that "Apart from Ralph Waldo Emerson, most of America's writers seemed to have backed Jackson at this time" (937).

[15] One consequence of the contemporary juxtaposition of these two periods in American history was the establishment of Thanksgiving Day as a national holiday.

which can occur whenever their political and ideological features are repressed. The main cause of this repression would seem to be the discovery that dominant ideology is inadequate" (21). Myth sublimates history into metaphor, invoking in the process what Richard Slotkin calls "the authority of the dominant ideology, the givens that shape cultural and political discourse" (77). Myth, Slotkin observes, is used as "a means of deriving usable values from history, and of putting those values beyond the reach of critical demystification. The language of myth reflects the conditioning of socialized minds to accept as true or valid certain metaphoric renderings of history" (83). The American myth of progress and Manifest Destiny, for example, allowed the country to transcend the fundamental ideological contradiction of westward expansion; namely, that a nation based upon the premises that "all men are created equal" and are "endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights," would actively engage in the slaughter of indigenous peoples for the purpose of expropriating land.

While the northern Whigs wanted a slower, more controlled pace of development, the Democratic south needed rapid westward expansion to further its land-based economy, which required the immediate and continued expropriation of indigenous lands. The question was not one of *whether* to commence with further land acquisition, but of *when* to do so. Both parties believed in the moral rectitude of America's civilizing mission. As Clark notes:

> ...only by expropriating the original inhabitants could America fulfill its promise of being a superior form of society. Neither of the two dominant political persuasions opposed territorial expansion on ethical grounds, rather the reverse. Both Whigs and Democrats believed that because the United States was white,

> civilised, democratic and technologically advanced, it had a self-evident right to dispossess the Indians. (3)

In the years preceding his political career, General Jackson gained notoriety and even popularity as a particularly tough Indian fighter, thereby earning himself the nickname "Old Hickory." The contradiction of Jackson the Indian fighter championing the cause of egalitarian democracy was surmountable because of the contemporary belief that America was destined to set an example for the rest of the world. What Jackson the political idea was, Jackson the man was not. It is most probable that Hawthorne was a supporter of the political idea--though he recognized that it, too, had its own contradictions in American practice.

The American myth also allowed the transcendence of an ideological contradiction within its very own structure; that the Puritans, with their hierarchical social structure and intolerance of heterodoxy, were the pioneers of egalitarian, democratic ideals in the new world. Acting against this emergent mythology, Hawthorne refused to join those representing the Puritan settlers as the genesis of democratic practice, let alone democratic ideals, in America. As Colacurcio points out, he "became and remained compelled not so much by 'origins' as by stories *about* origins; and, whoever *actually* invented America, the Puritans had evidently got the drop on the American imagination" (159). Hawthorne's knowledge of Puritan history prohibited him from accepting the myth as reality. Puritan society had been too hierarchical and intolerant of heterodoxy to be representative of democracy. Newberry observes that Hawthorne

> knew too much about [the Puritans'] intolerance and self-righteousness to view them as seminal democrats. Anyone reasonably interested in New England history for its own sake had to view such figures as John Endicott and Thomas Dudley as

> antipathetic to democratic ideals, and, less extreme, leaders such as Winthrop and Bradford as theoretically opposed to egalitarianism. (60)

Beverly Haviland suggests that Hawthorne's use of allegory acted as a challenge to the unchecked optimism contained in this emergent national mythology: "his choice of allegory was aesthetically anachronistic, to be sure, but more important, it went against the spirit of every message of hope for a better world that the audience of the utopian 1840s yearned for and devoured" (279). Clark suggests that Hawthorne used his considerable knowledge of American history to bring the antinomies fogged over by the American myth back into focus:

> ...his belief that the crimes of the past were transmitted into the present by the very act of denying their existence...prevented any simplistic agreement with the prevailing optimism about the regeneration of human nature and the inherent perfection of the United States which dominated social thought in his day. (54-55)

Although historical circumstances prevented Hawthorne from writing allegorically in the exact tradition of his Puritan forebears, his own adaptations of elements of the form enabled him to critique the world around him as he saw it. The allegorical mode, used by writers both to declare and to critique the belief systems (or paradigms) exerting an influence on their culture, allowed Hawthorne to confront the rampant "idealisms" of his day, a word I will use as an umbrella term to denote the unchecked optimism that prevailed in a number of political and intellectual movements of the period, including progressivism, utopian reformism, Transcendentalism, and the nationalist mythology of Manifest Destiny; the last of which informing to some extent all the rest. I feel it is important to clarify here that Hawthorne's critique of contemporary idealisms does not encompass a critique of the democratic ideal *as* an ideal. To even imply such an assertion would be to

portray him as somewhat of a nihilist, and actually strip away any motivation he might have to write subversively in the first place. Rather, the purpose behind his subversive program seems to be to alert his readership to the all-too-frequently unrecognized *discrepancy* between ideal and practice--a phenomenon with which his stay at Brook Farm would undoubtedly have left him familiar.

The American audience, trying to build a sense of national identity and culture on the basis of a limited history, did not look kindly upon social critique. This growing nationalism, however, was not without its beneficial effects for writers like Hawthorne; it led to a bigger market for American writers, who had perennial trouble competing with famous English writers whose works were not yet subject in America to international copywrite laws. In pointing out the inconsistencies in the American myth, though, Hawthorne had to tread lightly, because, as Clark points out, the reading public wanted verification of the myth: "in the United States the belief that America was the *telos* of world history engendered a restrictive attitude towards the critical intellect" (22). Hawthorne, therefore, had to find a mode that would allow him to walk the tightrope, one that would allow him to say one thing and mean another. Allegory, with its mystification of the literal and promise of some unnamed moral pretext, afforded him just this opportunity.

Reynolds recognizes in Hawthorne's fiction the use he makes of allegory's promise of a moral pretext, writing of *The Scarlet Letter* that "the very capacity of the letter and other allegorical elements to radiate meaning, the very *suggestiveness* of these elements is an assertion of value when contrasted with the flat sensationalism Hawthorne detested" (268). The

conventional hints at morality in Hawthorne's works sugar the ideological pill.

Deborah Jones shows that the allegorical mode not only enabled Hawthorne to critique contemporary political and philosophical configurations, but it also allowed him to create what Jones calls an "autodeconstructive" narrative, one capable of criticizing its own modality:

> "Rappaccini's Daughter" violates the laws of allegorical discourse in order to evoke and to deconstruct these very laws which are the enabling conditions of the narrative. Hawthorne plays upon the *deja lu* by establishing an intertextual framework of reference, only to disappoint the semantic expectations created. (168)

Indeed, several critics suggest that Hawthorne uses the allegorical mode even against allegory itself--which is only logical, since the genre of allegory tends to promote a sense of hierarchy that is antithetical to egalitarian ideology.

Sharon Cameron, for one, notes that "Hawthorne seems to turn conventions of allegory back upon themselves" (80). The Puritans, with their habit of allegorically interpreting even the most mundane occurences, are a natural target for this type of "autodeconstructive" narrative. In his discussion of *The Scarlet Letter*, Ivor Winters suggests that "Hawthorne turns his instrument of allegory, the gift of the Puritans, against the Puritans themselves, in order to indicate the limits of their intelligence" (15). Becker sees the same process at work throughout Hawthorne's fiction, claiming "Hawthorne is an allegorist who uses the techniques of the form to attack one of its basic imaginative requirements" (58). Speaking of *The Scarlet Letter*, he also finds that Hawthorne "uses the literary form of allegory with devastating accuracy against the whole tradition of thought, exemplified in an extreme way by Puritanism, which tries to control reality by imposing an allegorical interpretation on it" (Becker, 59).

Hawthorne's historical situation demanded from him a new formulation of the allegorical mode, and this new formulation enabled him reflexively to critique that same historical situation. For the purposes of this thesis, it is enough to identify these elements at work in Hawthorne's fictions, without going into the grey area of trying to ascertain relations of intentionality or causality between these two notions. In many ways his writings work as an inversion of traditional allegory's (in the generic sense) program of solidifying shared cultural values. Looking around at the intellectual and political scenes of his day, he recognized a gap between professed ideal and actual practice. As Beverly Haviland notes, he drew attention to this gap through his use of allegory:

> Hawthorne made allegory do...what none of his illustrious predecessors had done when he valorized the real world, ambivalent about it as he might have been. Thus, he irritated many of his readers because they recognized allegory, but could not make sense of it according to the tradition in which the ideal was by definition a better world. (280)

The manner in which specific allegorical conventions enabled Hawthorne to accomplish his specific critiques of contemporary idealisms, including those of the American nationalist myth and the Puritan allegorical viewpoint, will be investigated in the next two chapters, in a variety of Hawthorne's works.

Chapter Four: Personification

Hawthorne's published assessments of his own literary output consistently touch upon his habit of allegorical characterization. Dissatisfaction with his characters' allegorical stiffness is evident in the extracts from prefaces previously quoted in the second chapter, wherein he laments that his characters have the aspect of "people in the clouds," that there is a "human warmth" lacking in his "conceptions," and that his allegory is "not always so warmly dressed in its habiliments of flesh and blood, as to be taken into the reader's mind without a shiver."

What Hawthorne here describes is the inherent problem of allegorical personification: a tension between having a character represent an abstract concept, thereby delimiting its possibile range of action, and having the character hold dramatic interest for the reader by investing it with mimetic elements. Just as in the case of a sign's relation to its referent (excluding the special case of onomatopœia), personifications, even in "pure" allegories, are never equivalent to the abstractions they represent. Because their range of possible significance is narrowed by their determined relation to a static concept, allegorical characters do not evolve or grow as will mimetic characters, except to further define themselves as representations of static concepts. Having said this, successful allegorical personifications may retain a sense of plausibility that engages the reader, encouraging further, more complex interpretation of the character's relation to the paradigm.

The more mimetic/realistic an allegorical personification becomes, however, the more it loses its allegorical dimension. Whitman defines the

problem as "giving dramatic flexibility to an abstraction without undermining its logical consistency" (115), observing that "compositional allegory has not yet learned how to control sophisticated action, how to finesse the old narrow correspondence between the meaning of a character and the activity ascribed to it" (90).[16]

Carolynn Van Dyke describes this movement from abstraction to manifestation in grammatical terms: "whenever an abstract noun [becomes] the subject of a transitive verb, it thereby becomes less abstract: *faith* is static, and *faith enters the conflict* is already something of a personification" (39). Van Dyke then vertically plots the tension between ground and figure: the allegorical character operates in "a vertical space, dominated at the top by the abstract noun that designates its essence and grounded in an embodiment that engages in the action" (40). Such a tension manifests itself in many of Hawthorne's more allegorical works through his introduction of historical detail, the ostensible purpose of which is to balance the synthetic core of personified characters by introducing a veneer of realism. When overdone, however, this type of detail will undermine any allegorical content indicated by the use of thematic characterization. Honig finds that Hawthorne's allegory often suffers from just this sort of overcompensation:

> A good allegorist tends to strip his narrative of the accidentals, partly to achieve greater symbolic intensity, partly to make evident the identification of the event or character with its function in the story. But, if the device is revealed, the identification will seem arbitrary and the fiction will cease to convince. Hawthorne...often obscures the very substance of moral credibility he is trying to

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[16] Whitman finds evidence of the problem as far back as the *Psychomachia*, in which "the moment a Prudentian abstraction diverged too much from its definition, it tended to undermine its very meaning" (90).

> create through coincidence and foreshadowing, by continually surrounding them with mountains of historical and verisimilar details. (Honig, 126)

Was Hawthorne simply an inept allegorist, trying vainly to surround cardboard characters with the appointments of reality, or does his overt introduction of realistic and mimetic elements into allegorical narrative serve another purpose? If we take his public self-deprecation seriously, and not as conventional authorial modesty, then the answer is likely the former. My own reading of his work, however, points toward the latter explanation: his infusion of realism and the mundane into allegorical narrative serves as the vehicle for a critique of contemporary idealisms, which include historiographies both uncritical and nostalgic, utopian reform movements, and a transcendental optimism blind to the problematics of moral behavior. The emphases in Hawthorne's allegory on temporal historicity and realism are a direct inversion of traditional allegory, which privileges, because it is generated from, the ideal and eternal.

R.W.B. Lewis, in *The American Adam*, finds in Hawthorne's work a recurring character-type that reflects this temporal bent: an "Emersonian figure, the man of hope, who by some frightful mischance has stumbled into the time-burdened world of Jonathan Edwards" (113). Honig casts his net a little wider on this issue, judging that Hawthorne's unique modal inflection of allegory is manifest in his ambivalent personifications as a whole, which seem

> to measure the distance that exists between the world of appearance, chance, and self-deception, and the world of reality, order, and truth. With them the contradictory nature of experience springs from just this sense of what the distance signifies: a self-embattled condition which develops when the

> rupture between "worlds" is recognized in every human action. (Honig, 117)

Hawthorne employs three methods of inverting traditional allegorical characterizations, each of which assists his subversive program. In his more traditional allegories, he inverts the function of conventional allegorical characters, an example of which is the guide who assists the protagonist on the quest for salvation--e.g., Spenser's Una (a personification of Truth), and Bunyan's Evangelist and Faithful. This method of inversion, as found in the character of Mr. Smooth-it-away from "The Celestial Rail-Road," facilitiates through its irony a critique of contemporary idealisms. The second and third methods by which Hawthorne effects this inversion are more subtle, and apply more to his portrayal of the individual in Puritan society. He either shows the process by which an individual becomes allegorized into a representative entity by that society, as in the case of Hester Prynne, or he simply allows a character to allegorize him or herself right out of normal, healthy social relations, as in the case of Reverend Hooper. The latter instance demonstrates the manner in which Hawthorne uses allegorical elements in a critique of the genre itself and the role it plays in American history, especially as it finds contemporary expression in the typological doctrine of Manifest Destiny.

One example of Hawthorne inverting a conventional allegorical character is found in "The Celestial Rail-Road," a parodic re-telling of *Pilgrim's Progress* situated in the context of nineteenth-century America. Mr. Smooth-it-away leads the passengers of his railroad on an inverted

pilgrimage, not to salvation, but to perdition.[17] Hawthorne here inverts the conventional guide character, and in so doing shows how the American nationalist myth has been betrayed. Conventional guide characters, such as Spenser's Una, or Dante's Beatrice, normally function to help the protagonist attain, or at least gain a greater insight into, a religious ideal. By inverting this character Hawthorne critiques the way in which the American typological paradigm of Manifest Destiny is appropriated for materialist purposes.

The passengers of the Celestial Rail-Road are pilgrims who unwittingly fall under the rubric of Easy Faith. They believe that obstacles to their moral progress are swept aside by the tide of scientific progress. In doing so, they personify a confusion between two types of progress, moral and scientific. As defined by the citizens of the newly industrializing America of Hawthorne's day, the rail-road came to symbolize the notion of "progress." Leo Marx remarks that "in the popular culture of the period the railroad was a favorite emblem of progress--not merely technological progress, but the overall progress of the race" (27). The conflation of the two kinds of progress is actually a confusion of the two. The notion Hawthorne felt to be prominent in his day is evident in the title of his work, "The Celestial Rail-Road," in which only the modern notion of progress is presented. Any mention of human moral agency, that of the pilgrims themselves, has significantly been omitted from the story's title.

Mr. Smooth-it-away is an excellent example of the economy of Hawthorne's art, for here the author personifies both the manner in which

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[17] Other of Hawthorne's inversions of the guide-character are the ferryman and the Old Citizen of "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," and the devil who leads Young Goodman Brown into the forest.

modern technological progress is achieved and the moral attitude that facilitates this kind of progress. In traditional moral allegory, the protagonist's virtue must be tested before it is acknowledged. For instance, in the *Faerie Queene*, Una must lead the Red Crosse Knight through a series of battles and tribulations before he is fit to enter the House of Holinesse. Because of Mr. Smooth-it-away's efforts, however, the modern pilgrims of Hawthorne's tale undergo no such testing. The railroad removes all labor and inconvenience from the pilgrimage to the Celestial City; for instance, a baggage-car serves as a repository for the considerable burdens the pilgrims would normally have to carry upon their own backs.

In building the railway line to the Celestial City the railroad corporation, under the guidance of its director and largest stockholder, Mr. Smooth-it-away, has literally smoothed away all major physical obstacles the pilgrims normally would have to encounter and surmount. The Slough of Despond is now traversed by means of a bridge, the foundation of which, explains Mr. Smooth-it-away, is fabricated of

> some editions of books of morality, volumes of French philosophy and German rationalism, tracts, sermons, and essays of modern clergymen, extracts from Plato, Confucious, and various Hindoo sages, together with a few ingenious commentaries on texts of Scripture--all of which, by some scientific process, have been converted into a mass like granite. (CE 10:187)

The ideas contained in these books are irrelevant; all that matters is the material substance of the books themselves. The Hill of Difficulty remains difficult in name only, because the railway corporation has dug a tunnel "of most admirable architecture, with a lofty arch and a spacious double-track" that pierces "through the very heart of this rocky mountain" (CE 10:192). The narrator then learns that "the materials from the heart of the Hill of Difficulty

have been employed in filling up the Valley of Humiliation; thus obviating the necessity of descending into that disagreeable and unwholesome hollow" (CE 10:192), giving him further cause to marvel at the builders' ingenuity. The debris from smoothing away one obstacle establishes a means of smoothing away the next, and this technological notion of progress begins to assume the dimensions of a moral cancer. Even the dread Valley of the Shadow of Death is crossed by means of a "causeway here constructed," causing the narrator to exclaim that "it were unjust to withold the highest encomiums on the boldness of its original conception" (193). It is worth noting here an irony in the term "boldness," a variant for the sin of Pride, commonly used in conjunction with Satan. There is also something almost blasphemous in the narrator's reference to the causeway as an "original conception."

The reader of "The Celestial Rail-Road" begins early on to entertain notions as to what the character Mr. Smooth-it-away really represents, and the real destination to which his train is taking the passengers. The reader is further led to question the identity of Mr. Smooth-it-away when asked to choose between Bunyan's description and the railway director's own version (inversion) of hell. Passing what Bunyan describes as "the mouth of the infernal region," Mr. Smooth-it-away finds occasion to comfort the narrator, remarking that

> Tophet has not even a metaphorical existence. The place, he assured us, is no other than the crater of a half-extinct volcano, in which the Directors had caused forges to be set up, for the manufacture of rail-road iron. Hence, also, is obtained a plentiful supply of fuel for the use of the engines. (CE 10:194-95)

The narrator chooses to believe Mr. Smooth-it-away's story because it is comfortable, which is the very same reason he has chosen to take the rail-

road in the first place: "whoever had gazed into the dismal obscurity of the broad cavern-mouth...would have seized upon [his] comfortable explanation, as greedily as we did" (195).

The railroad's passengers eventually arrive outside the gates of the Celestial City; but like Satan himself they will never gain acceptance. In fact, the tale abruptly ends before they get the chance to enter. The purpose behind the moral pilgrimage, which is concerned with the quality of action as much as with the result, is not merely to arrive at the desired destination but to get there in a certain manner. Because the tribulations of the pigrims' journey here have been completely effaced by the railroad line, so have their chances of salvation.

The sketch's epiphany occurs when Mr. Smooth-it-away's real identity is made explicit in the very last paragraphs of the story. Boarding the steam ferry-boat to cross the river to the Celestial City, the narrator turns around his guide still on shore: "Looking back to the shore, I was amazed to discern Mr. Smooth-it-away, waving his hand in token of farewell!" (CE 10: 205). Asking whether he will proceed with him to the Celestial City, Smooth-it-away answers, "Oh, no! I have come thus far only for the sake of your pleasant company. Good bye! We shall meet again." (206). The railroad director's true identity is then betrayed through his infernal laughter:

> and then did my excellent friend...laugh outright; in the midst of which cachinnation, a smoke-wreath issued from his mouth and nostrils; while a twinkle of lurid flame darted out of either eye, proving indubitably that his heart was all of a red blaze. The impudent Fiend!" (CE 10:206)

The narrator for the first time realizes that the pilgrimage he has undertaken is an inversion of the one he thought he was on. His guide is no Beatrice or Una, and has led him to the gates of the Celestial City only to tantalize him.

Mr. Smooth-it-away functions as a personification of America's growing materialism. His satanic characterization, specifically as the director of a railroad, suggests Hawthorne is critiquing the way the country's quest for material gain, partially manifested in an insatiable hunger for land, has diverted the country away from the moral and political ideals of Manifest Destiny and toward a more materialist appropriation of the doctrine. Which is of course not to say that Hawthorne was avidly supportive of the national myth in the first place. Rather, what seems to motivate Hawthorne's entire subversive program is the intent to illustrate the frequent discrepancy between ideal and practice, especially in cases where moral and political ideals are twisted to justify questionable practices.

Another subversive personification in this sketch is Hawthorne's allegorical caricature of the Transcendentalist, the description of whom draws attention to the movement's lack of definition:

> He is a German by birth, and is called Giant Transcendentalist; but as to his form, his features, his substance, and his nature generally, it is the chief peculiarity of this huge miscreant, that neither he for himself, nor anybody for him, has ever been able to describe them. As we rushed by the cavern's mouth, we caught a hasty glimpse of him, looking somewhat like an ill-proportioned figure, but considerably more like a heap of fog and duskiness. He shouted after us, but in so strange a phraseology that we knew not what he meant, nor whether to be encouraged or affrighted. (CE 10:197)

In "The Old Manse," Hawthorne explains his attitude toward the founder of the Transcendental movement: "I... admired Emerson as a poet of deep beauty and austere tenderness, but sought nothing from him as a philosopher" (CE 10:31). Matthiessen notes that the main difference between the two men is not so much that Hawthorne lacked Emerson's sense of

optimism, as that he managed to retain a tragic sense that tempered it. Hawthorne had a

> widening sense of the gulf between the ideal and actuality, between the professions and practice of both democracy and religion. This sense was what separated him...from the transcendentalists, who bridged the gap between the infinite and the Absolute by their assurance of "the infinitude of the private man." (270)

This "widening sense of the gulf between the ideal and acutality" is what most characterizes his use of allegorical conventions. His critiques of contemporary idealisms are not so much targeted against the ideals themselves as against the naïve belief that they are, or even can be, realized.

In addition to inverting the function and import of otherwise traditional allegorical characters, Hawthorne subverts the convention of personification either by having his characters consciously define themselves as personifications during the course of a narrative, or by having them consciously rebel against the imposition of an allegorical meaning from without. Such self-determination is a radical departure from traditional allegorical characterization, in which characters are agents of a priori concepts. The Spenserian mode of characterization, for example, begins with a concept and then finds ways of expressing that concept in terms of the character's name, appearance and interactions with other personifications.

The Hawthorne characters who define themselves as personifications most commonly do so by their obsessive behavior. Both the Reverend Hooper and Hester Prynne behave obsessively, though each for a different reason. Hooper loses himself in his mission to represent secret sin to his community. Hester's goal is the exact opposite; not to define herself as an abstraction, but to redefine herself as an individual in light of the official

Puritan interpretation of a sin that she officially symbolizes to her society. Because these characters begin as mimetic personages, their names are a less reliable index to their allegorical functions than is their behavior. In each case, the character becomes a personification within the historically mimetic world of colonial New England, which enables Hawthorne in these cases to critique the Puritan allegorical mode of thought that finds continued expression in the national mythology.

In his rhetorical study of characterization entitled *Reading People, Reading Plots,* James Phelan proposes that all fictional characters contain a mixture of three parameters: the mimetic, the thematic, and the synthetic (2-3). The mimetic component refers to a character's plausibility, the thematic to its representativeness, the synthetic to its artificiality. Allegorical personifications differ from other types of characters in their foregrounding of both the synthetic and thematic components. These characters are representative entities before they are individuals. Honig observes an emphasis on these two components in the allegorical hero: "before we know *who* he is we discover *what* he is" (81). The importance of personification to allegory, which is unique to the mode and one of its defining elements, is such that it can be considered a convention.[18]

Synthetic and thematic components reinforce each other in personified characters. A character with an overtly synthetic cast forces the reader to incorporate him/her thematically into the narrative: "When I construct a narrative in which Smoothtalk meets Bumpkin on a bustling boulevard in Urbia, then I am inviting my readers...to regard the characters as constructs designed for some thematic purpose" (Phelan, 14). As this example shows,

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[18] Quilligan calls personification "one of the most trustworthy signals of allegory" (42).

the first indication to the reader that a character is allegorical is often the name. To confront a character named "Smoothtalk" is immediately to call into question the narrative's mimetic aspirations. The addition of "Bumpkin" and the city "Urbia" effectively abrogates any mimetic interpretation of the narrative. When a character's name is overtly synthetic (e.g., Hawthorne's Monsieur du Miroir, Man of Fancy, and Oldest Inhabitant), the reader is clearly directed to pursue interpretation more in terms of thematic than mimetic significance.

In addition to their names, personifications are also identified by talismanic objects associated with them. Honig notes of the allegorical hero that we "recognize him first by physical signs: his clothing, his burden, the paraphernalia he carries. And the sense of these, the hero's credentials, is frequently epitomized in some talismanic object belonging to him" (81). Hester's scarlet letter, Robin's cudgel, and the Reverend Hooper's black veil are all talismanic objects, or credentials, that further define them for the reader and for other characters with whom they interact in the narrative.

Becker observes that allegorical characters "are representative figures and follow the laws of the concept or class which they represent" (37). As the narrative progresses, these characters are further identified and defined by the way their obsessive behavior appears to be determined from without. Angus Fletcher, whose theory of allegory draws upon both Freud and the anthropological work of James Frazer,[19] explains this obsessive behavior in terms of daemonic possession:

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[19] Although Frazer has been all but disowned by modern anthropologists in favor of the more scientific, "objective" school of Malinowski, James A. Boon suggests a renewed look at Frazer, reading *The Golden Bough* as "an allegory of a sensational tragic theme that underlies basic religious and political institutions....the only thing that is whole in *The Golden Bough*, eventually thirteen volumes long, is the allegory itself" (10).

> If we were to meet an allegorical character in real life....it would seem that he was driven by some hidden, private force...that he did not control his own destiny, but appeared to be controlled by some foreign force, something outside the sphere of his own ego. (40-41)[20]

Obsessive behavior is frequently a trait of Hawthorne's characters: we might, here, think of Aylmer's obsession with his wife's birthmark, Dr. Rappaccini's obsessive desire to cultivate his daughter in the garden, and the Reverend Hooper's insistence on wearing the black veil.

"The Minister's Black Veil" details the Reverend Hooper's sudden, mysterious obsession with the sins people hide from each other and from themselves. Hooper exhibits several dimensions of the allegorical personification: his obsessive behavior suggests daemonic possession by a single idea; his personality narrows into the static representation of a single meaning so that he becomes more synthetic and thematic than mimetic; and the result of this transformation is his isolation from his community.

As has been previously noted, compulsive behavior is characteristic of the allegorical agent. It is a function of the author's need to limit the range of possible action for a character, so as to render his/her allegorical meaning unmistakable, or at least decipherable. Fletcher compares the restricted range of possible actions available to the allegorical agent to "the type of behavior manifested by people who are thought (however unscientifically) to be

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[20] Brodhead notes that "In Hawthorne, daimonization as a form of character is inextricably linked to symbolic allegory as a form of expression. As their obsessions descend on them, Hawthorne's heroes typically exit into allegory: they give up the individuating complexities of a whole human self to take on the expressive flatness of emblematic signs" (184).

possessed by a daimon" (39), which suggests why these characters fail to exert self-control or free will.

Hawthorne inverts this practice in "The Minister's Black Veil" by allowing the Reverend Hooper to possess his own self of a daimon, to render his *meaning* unmistakable. By mysteriously refusing ever to remove the veil, Hooper invites interpretation and turns his life into an allegory. Both within the fictional world of the tale and in the reader's experience of it, he reverts from a mimetic, plausible character to a synthetic, thematically determined allegorical representation.

Hooper differs from traditional allegorical characters for a number of reasons. He is situated in a historically mimetic fictional world: he doesn't inhabit fairyland, doesn't interact with other equally allegorical characters, and unlike most allegorical characters, he has an inferable history. His initial decision to wear the veil is an example of self-determination, something of which any traditionally allegorical personification (excepting perhaps one of Self-Determination) would be incapable. Though the minister consciously initiates his own function as a "abstracted man,"[21] the remainder of his life is lived under the daemonic tyranny of the veil, as Colacurcio notes:

> the veil itself--which began as a mere symbol and then became the occasional cause of inadvertent behavior in a life of severe, ironic discipline--has now become the sort of *idée fixe* which by itself orders the entire experience of a mind otherwise out of control....the obsessive object has become the sole measure of sanity; madness and common sense have perfectly changed places. (345)

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[21] Hawthorne seems to pun on the minister's function as a personification when he writes that after the sermon at which Hooper introduced the veil to his congregation, he "walked onward, at a slow and quiet pace, stooping somewhat and looking on the ground, as is customary with *abstracted men*..." [emphasis mine] (CE 9:38).

The reader is introduced to Hooper on the first day he decides to begin wearing the veil. Through the remaining narrative, he is remarkably consistent and forthcoming in giving his reason for wearing the veil, from the first sermon he delivers after donning it--"the subject had reference to secret sin, and those sad mysteries which we hide from our nearest and dearest, and would fain conceal from our own consciousness, even forgetting that the Omniscient can detect them" (CE 9:40)--to his last, dying words:

> When the friend shows his inmost heart to his friend; the lover to his best-beloved; when man does not vainly shrink from the eye of his Creator, loathsomely treasuring up the secret of his sin; then deem me a monster, for the symbol beneath which I have lived, and die! I look around me, and, lo! on every visage a Black Veil! (52)

Horror and sorrow at the prospect of the ubiquity of secret sin have attained the dimensions of an obsession in Hooper's mind, one that finds its material fixation in the object with which he chooses to represent it to the world. Hooper's compulsion to represent his obsession with the veil is so great that he loses his identity to the symbol. The daemonic obsession begins to control him, as is evidenced in the way he shys away from confrontations with even the visual image of his identity: "his own antipathy to the veil was known to be so great, that he never willingly passed before a mirror, nor stooped to drink at a still fountain, lest, in its peaceful bosom, he should be affrighted by himself" (CE 9:48). Fletcher's general description of the allegorical personification's "daemonic agency" serves as an exact diagnosis of Hooper's mental state, in which

> there is no such thing as satisfaction in this world; daemonic agency implies a *manie de perfection*, an impossible desire to become one with the image of unchanging purity. The agent seeks

> to become isolated within himself, frozen into an eternally fixed form, an "idea" in the Platonic sense of the term. (65)

Hooper's fixation upon the idea of secret sin causes him to remain a static character throughout the portion of his life encompassed within the narrative. Colacurcio points out that the minister's "spiritual life does not seem to grow or advance. From his initial donning of the black veil straight through to his final deathbed speech, his insight bears only repetition. It may deepen, but it does not lead on to anything else. Indeed it seems to trap him" (330).

In deciding to wear the veil incessantly, Hooper sentences himself to a life of isolation. From the first service he performs while wearing the veil he is exiled from the fellowship of his community. After the service, no one in his congregation is quite sure how to react to him:

> None, as on former occasions, aspired to the honor of walking by their pastor's side. Old Squire Saunders, doubtless by an accidental lapse of memory, neglected to invite Mr. Hooper to his table, where the good clergyman had been wont to bless the food, almost every Sunday since his settlement. (CE 9:41)

His betrothed, Elizabeth, learns in a private interview that she too is banished from ever seeing his face again. He explains the "veil is a type and a symbol, and I am bound to wear it ever, both in light and darkness, in solitude and before the gaze of multitudes, and as with strangers, so with my familiar friends. No mortal eye will see it withdrawn" (46). He ends by assuring her that "even you, Elizabeth, can never come behind it!" (46). The significant phrases he uses in this interview are "I am bound to wear it ever," and "no mortal eye will see it withdrawn," which suggest the totality of his rejection of the temporal. Hooper is so obsessed with the perfection of the ideal, the divine glimmer of wisdom with which he alone is invested, that he rejects

the imperfect temporal reality around him. Speaking generally of the minister's mental condition, Colacurcio notes that "the man who will accept nothing less than God's truth, and who finds that such truth is embodied in no human institution and validates no human relationship, is evidently doomed to solipsism and rejection of life..." (317). Colacurcio also observes that "Hooper's crucial distinction" is "between time and eternity, or the superficial view of man and the insight of God....to be truly awakened is merely to know that no power on earth can ever violate the ineluctable moral secrecy of our sinful subjectivity" (338-39). Hooper's isolation from his community will last until his dying day. The narrator describes this isolation in diachronic terms: "all through life that piece of crape had hung between him and the world: it had separated him from cheerful brotherhood and woman's love, and kept him in that saddest of all prisons, his own heart" (50).

Paradoxically, Hooper's obsession is not only with what the veil represents, but with the material object that signifies it. Refusing ever to take off the veil, it becomes a part of him. By contiguity and contagion, it infuses him with its power to represent while simultaneously divesting him of his human individuality. The problem with his obsession is the way it is fixated on the sign, not the signified,[22] suggesting an unhealthy confusion of the spiritual and the material.

It is tempting when reading this tale to fix our attention upon the veil's mysterious significance and the power it exerts over the Reverend Hooper and his congregation. The problem with this focus is that the reader ends up

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[22] Colacurcio notes that Hooper "develops a kind of symbolic literalism which actually resembles the congregation's own persistent reduction of his message to its medium" (331).

treating the veil exactly as Hooper himself treats it. Staring unblinkingly into the eternal Truth that the veil represents, it is all too easy to lose perspective on the absurd actuality of a situation that affects not only Hooper, but his betrothed and his entire congregation. Colacurcio's excellent reading of the tale is predicated upon this viewpoint: "to see Hooper adequately, we must remember the community--or, rather, the failure of community--in which he is involved" (379). Hooper's complete valorization of the ideal and eternal, mirrored by that of allegory, is attacked by Hawthorne to show how this obsession adversely affects the communal and personal relationships that the Reverend becomes less and less interested in pursuing.

The importance of the community in the tale is evident from the very first paragraph, which describes not a band of unrepentant sinners wickedly laughing around a maypole, but a perfectly normal-seeming congregation making its way to a Sunday's service. The disruptive effect of the black veil forces the congregation to consider explanations for its presence, but not necessarily the one Hooper would desire for them to have. Their interpretations are based upon supernatural forces, ghosts, spirits, or gossip about his relationship with Elizabeth--almost anything but the idea of individual sin that Hooper wants them to see in it, as he himself does. Even the town's physician is surprised to feel that the veil "though it covers only our pastor's face, throws its influence over his whole person, and makes him ghost-like from head to foot" (41).

The community's myriad of interpretations subverts the enabling condition of allegory, which is the establishment of a hierarchical and authoritative mode of interpretation. The failure of Hooper's attempt to restrict the number of interpretations of the veil to his community signals the presence of a community in which meaning is shared, not delegated.

Hawthorne rhetorically reinforces this point of view by making sure that the narrator never pretends omniscience, but draws on the testimony of all the members of the community. On the first day of his metamorphosis, the Reverend presides over a funeral, bending over the deceased to "take a last farewell." As he does so, a "superstitious old woman," sees that "at the instant when the clergyman's features were disclosed, the corpse had slightly shuddered, rustling the shroud and muslin cap..." (42). During the funeral procession, another woman is compelled to turn around because she has a feeling "that the minister and the maiden's spirit were walking hand in hand" (43); her partner admits that he had the exact same feeling at that moment. As Hooper's obsession with the veil endures, the community's rumours begin to accrete and settle into myth. His "customary walk, at sunset, to the burial ground" is explained in supernatural terms: "A fable went the rounds, that the stare of the dead people drove him thence" (48). Behind the black veil, it is rumoured "that ghost and fiend consorted with him there" (48). A supernatural type of communion is supposed to have been achieved: "Even the lawless wind, it was believed, respected his dreadful secret, and never blew aside the veil" (48-9).

In "The Minister's Black Veil," Hawthorne subverts the convention of personification by letting the minister allegorize himself, allowing Hawthorne to illustrate the danger of an idealism that fails to take into consideration its own practical limitations. As in "The Celestial Rail-Road," Hawthorne calls attention to the gulf between the ideal and real, the eternal and the temporal. Hooper's obsessive idealism exiles him from the sphere of normal interpersonal relationships. We again encounter the problem of allegorical personification, for, as Colacurcio indicates, to be a symbol is to cease to be a human being: "the basis for some sort of spiritual unity turns

instead into the impelling cause for a whole series of painful separations according to the flesh"--for "as long as the prophet must bear the sign of his function everywhere in the ordinary world, the ordinary world will always react pretty much as we see it here" (334).

Although *The Scarlet Letter* is subtitled "A Romance," it has been treated allegorically several times throughout its critical history. Many of these readings assign particular allegorical meanings to the novel's main characters. In 1938's *Maule's Curse*, Ivor Winters finds the novel to be the finest expression of an author who is "essentially an allegorist; had he followed the advice of Poe and other well-wishers...and thrown his allegorizing out the window, it is certain that nothing essential to his genius would have remained" (4). Winters' reading of the book evinces a traditionally allegorical interpretation of the characters as agents of specific concepts: "Hester represents the repentant sinner, Dimmesdale the half-repentant sinner, and Chillingworth the unrepentant sinner" (16). Characters attain significance only when their essence is abstracted from the mimetic part of their constitution, as in Winters' interpretation of Governor Bellingham, who, "in his combination of legal training with military prowess, is representative of his fellow colonists, who...mastered moral difficulties not by undertsanding them, but by crushing them out" (13). Almost fifty years after Winters, Richard Freed brackets the entire novel and reads it as a psychomachic allegory of the compositional process having its focus in the character of Pearl, who "is a representation of the work in progress" (33):

> By investing the figures of Hester, Dimmesdale, and Chillingworth with aspects of himself and by analyzing their motivations and relations, he will analyze his own thought and the enigmatic

> process of artistic production, for by incorporating his thoughts in fictional creations, he can see himself thinking and more readily examine his thoughts. (36)

Each of these allegorical readings passes over (and unwittingly participates in) a fascinating aspect of the novel, which is the way Hester resists her community's allegorization of her. It is within this allegory contained in the narrative itself that Hester acts as a subversive. She certainly is not content with the Puritan community's official interpretation of her, with their reduction of her to a type and pure representation. She refuses to be imprisoned within the scope of the scarlet letter. There is simply more to her life than serving as the representation of any single concept, be it a negative (Adultery) or positive (Angel, Able) one.

From the very beginning of the novel, we are given hints that Hester has an interest in appropriating the meaning of the symbol she is sentenced to wear. She has fashioned it herself, "in fine red cloth, surrounded with an elaborate embroidery and fantastic flourishes of gold thread" (53):

> It was so artistically done, and with so much fertility and gorgeous luxuriance of fancy, that it had all the effect of a last and fitting decoration to the apparel which she wore; and which was of a splendor in accordance with the taste of the age, but greatly beyond what was allowed by the sumptuary regulations of the colony. (53)

She manages express herself even within the limits to her freedom imposed from without: "her attire, which, indeed, she had wrought for the occasion...and had modelled much after her own fancy, seemed to express the attitude of her spirit, the desperate recklessness of her mood" (53). Becker notes that Hester "has taken the symbol which was to make her another allegorical figure in the Puritan allegorical world and, by the force of an almost violent art, has turned it into an expression of her own defiant individuality" (94).

The end of Hester's prison term is significantly two beginnings: it is the beginning of the narrative, and the beginning of her career as a socially-determined representation of sin. The letter she is forced to wear transforms her from an individual into a sign. Its daemonic possession of her entire being brings on the isolation so characteristic of the allegorical agent: "It had the effect of a spell, taking her out of the ordinary relations with humanity, and inclosing her in a sphere by herself" (54). One observer at the scene of her release from prison expresses satisfaction that she will henceforth be regarded not in humanistic terms, but in textual ones, as "a living sermon against sin" (63). Once her life outside the prison commences, she must learn to take on her new role in the community as the sign not only of the sin of adultery, but of sin in general:

> giving up her individuality, she would become the general symbol at which the preacher and the moralist might point, and in which they might vivify and embody their images of woman's frailty and sinful passion. Thus the young and the pure would be taught to look at her, at the scarlet letter flaming on her breast...as the figure, the body, the reality of sin. (79)

The next information we are given concerning Hester's standing in the community occurs after she has spent seven years living the life of a true penitent, in the chapter titled, significantly, "Another View of Hester." During this interlude of seven years she has managed to change the popular (if not the official) interpretation of the letter on her breast: "a species of general regard had ultimately grown up in reference to Hester Prynne....the blameless purity of her life, during all those years in which she had been set apart to infamy, was reckoned largely in her favor" (160). Through her actions, the letter comes to signify to the people of the community not Adultress, but Able:

> She was self-ordained a Sister of Mercy; or, we may say, the world's heavy hand had so ordained her, when neither the world nor she looked for this result. The letter was the symbol of her calling. Such helpfullness was found in her,--so much power to do, and power to sympathy,--that many people refused to interpret the scarlet A by its original signification. They said that it meant Able; so strong was Hester Prynne, with a woman's strength. (161)

This new unofficial interpretation of the letter and the penitent behavior that has brought it about leads the Puritan officials to consider allowing Hester to remove the letter from her breast, thus ending her punishment. Hester refuses this offer, replying "It lies not in the pleasure of the magistrates to take off this badge....Were I worthy to be quit of it, it would fall away of its own nature, or be transformed into something that should speak a different purport" (169). The question is not one of whether or not she will represent a particular sin to the community, but of whether any magisterial body possesses the authority to assign and delegate meaning for an entire community. A similar refusal is expressed by Hester at the beginning of the novel, when the Reverend Mr. Wilson tells her that if she divulges the identity of her partner in sin, she may not have to wear the letter. She replys "It is too deeply branded. Ye cannot take it off" (68). Carton indicates that Hester's response to this question "is openly revolutionary....Taking her punishment more radically to heart than her judges could have anticipated or intended, Hester subverts their sentence by her very faithfulness to it" (195-96).

Carton compares Hester to Hawthorne himself, for he sees that "like Hawthorne, Hester is both a representative and a deviant, a product and a subversive reproducer of her community's meanings" (193). Hester's subversive role within the narrative is appropriated by Hawthorne to

illustrate the tyrannical side of the interpretive hegemony possessed by the Puritan elite. Just as Hester opens up the scarlet letter to different interpretations, Hawthorne uses her character in *The Scarlet Letter* to present his own, historically informed awareness of Puritan intolerance. Hawthorne, in *The Scarlet Letter*, turns allegory back upon itself, and critiques it as an American tradition of thought that informs both religious typological interpretations of the Puritan mission and contemporary teleological interpretations of America's role in the evolution of political institutions.

Becker notes that "the movement of a character from real to allegorical in a work of fiction is a meaningful event within the fiction. Hawthorne makes it a crucial event within his own allegory when a character is transformed or transforms himself into an allegorical figure" (98). In both "The Minister's Black Veil" and *The Scarlet Letter*, mimetic characters transform into allegorical characters. Reverend Hooper brings this transformation upon himself; Hester has it ascribed to her from without. Each narrative subverts the Puritan mode of discourse that proscribes an official allegorical signification to objects, events, and even people, and delineates the failure of a reductive allegorical interpretation in which a single meaning is fixed to the allegorical agent. The Puritans' authoritarian mode of discourse has little in common with the democratic ideals celebrated by Hawthorne's nineteenth-century American audience. This is a point he subtly makes in each story, thereby putting the lie to the contemporary notion that the Puritans were somehow harbingers of democracy to the new world.

The tragedy of "The Minister's Black Veil" is that Hooper loses his human relationship to a community that is prepared to accept his new identity as a force or idea to be aware of, but not to be lived with persistently.

The presence of the black veil on their minister's face supports numerous interpretations as to its significance, not only or even primarily the one which the minister would have them believe. From the singular truth we are led to a diffusion of interpretations, in which the veil itself represents the multiplicity of the sign/sin.

Hester Prynne uses the sign's multivalent properties to her own benefit, as a way of freeing herself from the single allegorical meaning imposed upon her by the magistrates. Asserting her free will to live penitently and act as a symbol of moral rectitude, she drives a wedge into the allegorically constrictive meaning of the scarlet letter, and after several years succeeds in re-humanizing herself through the community's reinterpretation of the symbol she insists upon wearing. Her function as a subversive allegorical character is carried on at the level of the narrative itself (Puritan society), and from there radiates outward into the world as a reflection of Hawthorne's own political and moral sensibilities.

Chapter Five: Procession

Processions function allegorically because they rhetorically reinforce the authority of an established social hierarchy or dominant ideology, a function Hawthorne considers "a violation of the community of human sympathy" (Becker, 58). Writing in the Jacksonian era, Hawthorne subverts this type of conventional episode to attack historical and contemporary ideologies that incorporate hierarchy. In the case of the Puritans, this entails a subversion of their allegorical habit of thought. The present chapter will treat ways in which Hawthorne's allegorical processions subvert established social hierarchies and ideologies, drawing attention to the gap between social ideals and their practice. He does so most often by offering an alternative hierarchy within the narrative, or by ironically undercutting the one presented. More subtly, he rhetorically subverts a sense of hierarchy in his inflection of allegory by abandoning the traditionally paratactic syntax of allegory that, in its droning and hypnotic effect, evokes a sense of hierarchy.[23]

In literature, allegorical processions function allegorically because of their emphasis on ritual. Processions are instances of ornamental imagery that, because of their disruption of proairetic narrative, signal to the reader

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[23] Fletcher defines parataxis as "a structuring of sentences such that they do not convey any distinctions of higher or lower order. 'Order' here means intensity of interest, since what is more important usually gets the greater share of attention. In parataxis each predication stands alone: 'They ran He wept They ran again.' Or else predications are joined by conjunctions of equality: 'He ran, and they wept, and he ran again'; or 'He walked, but the people ran.' This means that paratactic sentences do not attempt modification by relative clauses, subordinating conjunctions, phrases in apposition, and the like. When such subordinating devices are employed, we have what is called *hypotaxis*, of which the style of Henry James [and Hawthorne] would be an extreme example" (162).

the presence of thematic content. Outside the purely discursive sphere of human communities, ritual serves to define society:

> [Ritual] is a social event in which the members of society step aside from their normal social activities and appraise themselves and their values as a society. Everything tends to become symbolic. The people are more than a crowd. They represent, by the presence of their leaders in ritual dress, with their attributes of office, an ordered hierarchy, the very structure of their society. (Becker, 95)

In narrative as well, ritual initiates rhythm and orders movement, evoking a sense of hierarchical structure. Angus Fletcher writes that ritual "in effect communicates a sense of plan, of metric design, of formula" (178).[24] In the great Puritan allegories Hawthorne read, this deference to structure is the rhetorical mirroring of authorial allegiance to the ideological (religious and/or political) status quo.

Marrying form to content, conventional allegorical processions describe ritual in a ritual manner. This is achieved rhetorically through the use of paratactic syntax in the description of the procession, and symmetrical portraits of the procession's participants.[25] Though parataxis is a syntactic mode by definition ahierarchical, the rhythmic effect it produces evokes ritual at a level other than that of the syntactic. Even overly hypotactic syntax, suggests Fletcher, will produce the same ritualistic droning, and therefore function allegorically: he finds that exaggerated hypotaxis "goes so far in the direction of involuted, defensive complexity that it almost ceases to be a

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[24] It is perhaps with this effect in mind that Fineman calls allegory "an inherently and therefore religious trope...because in deferring to structure it insinuates the power of structure, giving off what we can call the structural effect" (32-33).

[25] Fletcher refers to these elements as "steady propulsiveness and exact symmetry" (162), though in the case of the latter he chooses to focus upon anaphora rather than symmetrical description.

modifying style and comes full circle into parataxis" (163).[26] The practice of isomorphically describing the participants of an allegorical procession forces the reader to incorporate each image into the larger ideological context of the entire procession. Each illustration attains full significance only when considered in its relation to the other participants.

To fully appreciate Hawthorne's subversions of this convention, it will be helpful to juxtapose them to a traditional example. One of the most celebrated instances of allegorical procession is found in the first Book of *The Faerie Queene* (iv.13-38), during which Red Crosse Knight witnesses a procession of the Seven Deadly Sins led by Lucifera, who personifies the sin of Pride Descriptions of the Sins in the procession are completely isomorphic: each occupies three stanzas, in which the sin/counsellor is named, seated upon the appropriate animal, fitted with relevant clothes, is shown holding a talismanic object and suffering from a disease brought on by the sin they represent. Gluttony, for example, is pictured seated "on a filthie swyne," wearing "greene vine leaves" and "an yvie girland," holding "a bouzing can," and suffering from "a dry dropsie" (iv.21-23).

In addition to the thematic significance invested in each individual portrait, the entire procession is ritually and thematically constructed. Hughes finds that the Sins are presented "in that order in which the vices they represent naturally produce and follow each other" (Spenser, i 217). In *The Pilgrimage of Life*, Samuel Chew notices the order of the sins is schematically structured according to their relative natures: "Sins of the Flesh

[26] It should be mentioned here, however, that I do not consider Hawthorne's style to be so exaggeratedly hypotactic that it evokes this ritual sense.

(Sloth, Gluttony, and Lechery), then the Worldly Sin (Avarice), and finally the Devilish Sins (Envy, Wrath, and Pride)" (72).

Spenser's procession is stanzaically, metrically, and syntactically paratactic. While stanza form and metre are constants throughout the poem, the rhythmic effect is further enhanced during the procession as syntax becomes even more rhythmic. Caesuras all but disappear and anaphora appears more often, shown in this extract from the description of Avarice:

> Most wretched wight, whom nothing might suffise,
> Whose greedy lust did lacke in greatest store,
> Whose need had end, but no end couetise,
> Whose wealth was want, whose plenty made him pore,
> Who had enough, yet wished euer more (iv.28)

The remainder of this chapter will discuss how Hawthorne's use of the convention of procession allows him to illustrate and critique different hierarchical structures exhibited by American society in the Puritan, revolutionary, and contemporary periods. In the two historical works to be discussed in this chapter, "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," and, again, *The Scarlet Letter*, he uses the convention to circumvent idealistic, unrealistic notions promulgated by the national myth concerning the country's heritage of personal freedom and egalitarianism. By presenting historically veridical depictions of ritual processions which emphasize social hierarchy, Hawthorne again draws attention to the gap between the national myth and the historical verity. In the *The Scarlet Letter*, these ritual processions are allegorical because they represent and even arise out of the Puritans' own allegorical outlook. In "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," allegorical procession is the structural principle behind a narrative that calls into question the feasability of democratic rule in the context of the human capacity for evil. In the sketch to be discussed in this chapter, "The Procession

of Life," the convention of procession is used to suggest an alternative mode of social structure, one without hierarchy at all. The relevant irony is that the participants in the new procession are depicted in an ideally democratic manner which the socio-economic entity of America fails to achieve.

The allegorical procession that constitutes Hawthorne's sketch "The Procession of Life" differs from conventional processions in a number of ways. Rather than illustrating and supporting an existing hierarchy, the occasion for the sketch is the provisional, hypothetical reorientation of that hierarchy, based upon an egalitarian ideal. Contrary to the materialist practice that is carried out in actuality, the narrator organizes the new procession according to strictly egalitarian ideals in his aim to represent the gap between the American democratic ideal and its actual practice.

The narrator assumes marshallship of the procession, calling humanity to take their positions according to his newly proposed categories, which are frequently so broad that they tend to preclude any real distinctions between people. Yet this seems to be the point. The deputy marshalls of the actual procession, the herald's office and tax-gatherers, have arranged the procession according to "invariably mistaken principles" (207), in which "the accidents and superficial attributes, with which the real nature of individuals has least to do, are acted upon as the deepest characteristics of mankind" (221). In direct opposition to this, the narrator proposes to arrange his procession according to internal criteria shared by people regardless of their external circumstances. The new procession is based on egalitarianism rather than hierarchy. When the narrator finds that a proposed category introduces hierarchy, he immediately withdraws or changes the category so that any sense of stratification is removed. In the end, the only hierarchy that obtains

in the sketch is the supremacy of abstract categories such as Providence, Disease, Grief, Love, and Death over external, arbitrary ones such as economic standing and social rank. These abstractions turn out to be the real marshalls of the procession.

The first group called together are those people who suffer from similar diseases. Upon further pondering the ramifications of this categorization, the narrator chooses to define it more narrowly, because in general form it continues to reflect the economic status of the various afflicted members, thereby maintaining the previous, externally based hierarchy:

> Our first attempt at classification is not very successful. It may gratify the pride of aristocracy to reflect, that Disease, more than any other circumstance of human life, pays due observance to the distinctions which rank and wealth, and poverty and lowliness, have established among mankind. (208)

He decides to limit the members of this category to people who have been struck by more indiscriminate diseases, ones that attack without regard for economic status or rank: "We might find innumerable other instances, where the bond of mutual disease--not to speak of nation-sweeping pestilences--embraces high and low, and makes the king a brother of the clown. But it is not hard to own that Disease is the natural aristocrat" (210). The example of the king becoming brother to the clown, repeated throughout the sketch in various permutations, is representative of the dialectical, socially levelling function served by this new procession.

The next classification is based on those who possess similar intellectual gifts, because, as the narrator observes, "this is a reality, before which the conventional distinctions of society melt away, like a vapor when we would grasp it with the hand" (210). Even though this category would seem to introduce a hierarchical element into the procession, because not everyone is

equally endowed with intellectual ability, it is defended on the grounds that the possession of a good intellect is "but a higher development of gifts given to all" (211). Furthermore, once the afterlife is achieved, this distinction will be of no import: "though we suffer the brotherhood of intellect to march onward together, it may be doubted whether their peculiar relation will not begin to vanish, as soon as the procession shall have passed beyond the circle of this present world" (212).

Those who suffer from grief are then called to take their places in the procession. As in the case with the category of disease, the narrator finds it necessary to restrict the category, to those who feel a strong level of grief: "Grief is such a leveller, with its own dignity and its own humility, that the noble and the peasant, the beggar and the monarch, will waive their pretensions to external rank, without the officiousness of interference on our part" (213). After this, he classifies together all those who are guilty of some crime. This is yet another levelling category, because each member of the group is "entitled to grasp any other's hand" (214-15).

Discovering that he has yet called together only those who are bound together by evil traits, he begins to call upon those who are related through different premises. The classificatory strategy of dialectically levelling the members of the procession continues on in basically the same manner: e.g., for those who are related because they "have lost, or never found, their proper places in the world" (218), he suggests the example of "Quakers with the instinct of battle in them; and men of war who should have worn the broad-brim" (219). The last proposed classification is a greater leveller than any previous, whose members include anyone who has ever and will ever live. This category is those who are subject to Death, which "levels us all into one great brotherhood" (221). Death, it turns out, is the Chief Marshall of the

procession, for "who else could assume the guidance of a procession that comprehends all humanity?" (221).

More nearly an "allegory" in the generic sense of the term than any of the other works addressed in this study, "The Procession of Life" is a sketch in which Hawthorne subverts the convention of procession in order to call into question the materialist paradigm that he saw predominating in contemporary American society. He imagines an alternate procession that manages to live up to the egalitarian, idealistic impulses of the national myth--in which people of all economic standings and societal ranks finally are collapsed into the one ultimate category of humanity. The fact that this new procession is unlikely ever to take place in reality is finally irrelevant. What Hawthorne is mostly concerned to point out, yet again, is the gap between the ideal and the actuality; in this case, the hypocritical practice of a society that professes one paradigm (egalitarianism), and acts upon another (materialism).

Two critics, Arthur Broes and Marcia Marzec, have suggested that one of Hawthorne's earliest historical tales, "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," contains a procession of the Seven Deadly Sins, such as the aforementioned example from *The Faerie Queene*. Even if Broes' and Marzec's readings do not exactly form a critical consensus on the issue, their arguments are compelling enough that the present study takes for its point of departure the assumption that the tale's structure is at least informed by such conventional processions. Hawthorne uses the convention of procession in this tale to subvert the popular notion of the Revolution, and, as Marzec suggests, to project "the philosophical discrepancy between the theories of innate depravity and modern liberal democracy" (274).

The tale is a basic allegorical quest narrative: a young country lad named Robin journeys to the city in hope of attaining furtherance through the influence of his established relation, Major Molineux. Inquiring as to the whereabouts of his relation among various representatives of the populace, Robin is treated with hostility whenever he mentions the name of his relative. The climax of the tale is the procession at the end, during which Robin learns the true standing enjoyed by his relative in this community. Late into the night, he is told to wait on the street if he wishes to see his relative pass by. A frenzied procession passes through the street, in the midst of which he recognizes his relative the Major, "in tar-and-feathery dignity" (228). As in Spenser's procession, the sins are each illustrated before the entire train is put into motion at the end of the episode.

Arthur Broes, working from the premise that a resurgence of interest in the tale in the 1950s failed to reach consensus as to its "general nature or particular merit" (171), reads it as "essentially an eclectic work, made up of traditional allegorical episodes and patterns borrowed from Dante, Spenser, and Bunyan" (172).[27] While Broes' argument as to the tale's structure is sound, his article as a whole is not geared toward addressing its historicity. He spends the better part of his article delineating Hawthorne's representations of the Seven Deadly Sins. The ferryman represents Avarice; the old man Robin meets in town represents Pride; the tavern keeper, Gluttony; the young woman in the scarlet petticoat, Lechery; the tired watchman, Sloth; the two groups of men, Wrath. This adds up to six sins;

[27] With regard to the procession from *The Faerie Queene* , Broes finds it improbable that "[Hawthorne] could have written 'Major Molineux' without this procession in mind, for the strange creatures who pass before Robin's uncomprehending eye are nothing less than thinly veiled, if not always fully developed representatives of these vices" (175-76).

curiously missing from the pageant is a representation of Envy. Broes manages to calculate seven when he identifies the friendly stranger who stops to witness the procession with Robin as a personification of Ruin. De-historicizing the tale, Broes reads it as pure moral allegory. This is evident from his reticence to take the imaginative leap that associates the Major with the governors mentioned in the tale's opening paragraphs. He suggests that the Major does not represent the scapegoat in a localized political disturbance so much as "a symbol of moral good and order in a world from which these virtues seem to have largely disappeared" (182-3).

Even though Broes' Procrustean matching of characters to Deadly Sins is not entirely convincing, there still remains at the climax of the tale a procession made up of allegorical characters who Marzec describes as "flat, lifeless caricatures" (274). The question of what this allegorical procession is meant to illustrate may be in part answered if the tale is more thoroughly considered from the historical perspective.

Michael Colacurcio posits the most compelling historical reading of the tale, situating it within the ideological context of early nineteenth-century America. He notes that Hawthorne, instead of presenting the Revolution in an heroic light, subversively conflates the tale's culminating event with the Revolution in general:

> Compared, from the outset, to a rum riot in the 1730's, and discovered, throughout, to be a thoroughly plotted and stage-managed affair, the entire episode is revealed, at the end, to amount to nothing more than one or another form of utterly local unruliness. (149)

The reason for this, suggests Colacurcio, is that Hawthorne was "striking back at the flagrant idolatries of America's pseudo-Puritan civil religion" (136),[28] and, vying for publication in this ideological climate, chose for recourse a "deflationist" strategy: "in the face of a nearly overwhelming national consensus in favor of the holy-historical significance of 1776, Hawthorne is studying the majestic Revolution in terms of a minor outbreak of provincial unruliness, a mob scene" (136). Hawthorne's motivation in painting such an unflattering picture of the Revolution is not fueled by anti-patriotic sentiment, but by a desire to present an accurate portrayal of historical events. The mode of allegory, which consists of saying one thing and meaning another, was the only way for him to express this subversive history without alienating his readership. As Colacurcio notes, the American audience had specific nationalistic expectations when it came to even fictional representations of the national history:

> What one evidently wanted, evidently, was "majesty." *No one* loved to hear of mobs or broils in the street. And nearly everyone wanted to hear that the Revolution had been a major event in Holy History. It would overstate the case only slightly to say that in 1826 (Hutchinson himself to the contrary not withstanding) all one could discover about the Revolution was that, in the Cosmic Progress toward a Universal Salvation in Holy Liberty, it figured as only slightly less important than the Birth of Christ and the Protestant Reformation, whose libertarian meaning it essentially fulfilled. (136)

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[28] That John Russell in 1967 buys into exactly the teleological historiography that Colacurcio claims Hawthorne is subverting is evident in the former's characterization of the townspeople, who represent young America: "they are a rough-and-ready lot, reeking of self-sufficiency and, though menial or of otherwise questionable breeding, obviously are not to be trifled with where their independence is concerned" (434). He also claims, without further qualification, that Hawthorne "is of course partial to the final revolution and evolution of America" (438).

Marzec is the first to see the subversive implications of Hawthorne's allegory in this tale. She picks up the thread of historical readings of the tale, combining it with an updated version of Broes' reading of the tale as a procession of the Seven Deadly Sins. Her matching of characters to Sins differs from Broes primarily in that she uses definitions of the Seven Deadly Sins from *The Book of Vices and Virtues*.[29] As is the case with Broes' article, however, the matching of characters with Sins is the weakest part of her article; what is really valuable is her identification of the ideological purpose that motivates Hawthorne's use of allegorical elements in the tale. Marzec notes that the tale illustrates the intersection of Calvinist and democratic philosophy: "Hawthorne presents us with the dilemma: if man is innately depraved, does this then preclude the capability--and concomitantly the right--of self-rule? (274-75). That the tale is allegorical, Marzec is certain, for "only allegory can explain the procession of flat, lifeless caricatures we encounter in the city...who do not advance the action, who appear only to illustrate a single facet of the city's evil" (274). Not only is the story a moral allegory, as so many critics have previously shown, it is historical allegory as well. Marzec indicates that Hawthorne is "reacting to that theory of democracy grounded on a philosophical optimism concerning the nature of man," which "entailed the belief in man's innate goodness and reason, in a Deistic God who created man capable of interpreting divine law manifest in Nature, which was constructed according to a rational plan" (285).

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[29] This is a fourteenth-century translation of *Somme le Roi*. Though Hawthorne would most likely not have derived his personifications directly from this medieval source, Marzec assumes that its influence is felt indirectly through the Puritan allegories that Hawthorne held in such high esteem.

The characters in the procession at the end of the tale represent, if not the Seven Deadly Sins, at least a side of the Revolution that Hawthorne's audience was not prepared to accept. They certainly are not represented as moral exemplars The resounding, contagious laughter at the end of the tale is reminiscent of Mr. Smooth-it-away's infernal laughter at the end of "The Celestial Rail-Road," and introduces the same unsettling sense of evil into the revolutionary proceedings. That Hawthorne was able to get away with this subversive portrayal of the Revolution is in part due to the way it is overshadowed by Robin's quest for his relative, the aspect of the tale most often given critical attention.

The opening and climactic scenes of *The Scarlet Letter* (not including The Custom-House) are structured around ritual processions, which suggests the integral role this convention plays in the novel. Both processions are allegorical primarily within the level of the narrative. The Puritan allegorical mode of thought finds expression in these processions, which illustrate the hierarchical structure of their society. Hawthorne subverts this hierarchy through ironic undercutting. The first procession, which brings Hester to her public punishment upon the scaffold, is used by Hawthorne to depict the severity and intolerance of Puritan society. The second, in which the populace celebrates the accession to power of the colony's new governor, enacts through Dimmesdale's almost instantaneous triumph and downfall the latent hypocrisy of this hierarchy.

The occasion for the novel's opening procession is the sentencing and public punishment of Hester Prynne for committing the sin/crime of adultery. Becker remarks on the allegorical nature of this scene:

> Hester's punishment...is an allegorical celebration of the Puritan way of life. In public punishment, the culprit is the representative of forces which are undermining society. The people assemble into a hierarchically structured group in order to accomplish a ritual destruction of the criminal force. (95)

Hester is first led out of the prison by the town beadle,[30] who, holding talismanic objects of his authority, a sword and staff of office, "prefigured and represented in his aspect the whole dismal severity of the Puritanic code of law, which it was his business to administer in its final and closest application to the offender" (52). The beadle's lack of any personal identity renders him a personification, as Becker observes: "All that the beadle is, is his office. His individual personality is unimportant, hidden behind the gestures and attributes of his position in Puritan society" (94).

Dismal and severe as this Puritanic code of law may be, the crowd of women gathered for the opening procession are initially more harsh in their judgment of Hester than even the magistrates.[31] By mentioning several other crimes warranting punishment similar to that received by Hester, including public drunkenness and the practice of witchcraft, the narrator indicates that gathering to witness public punishment was a common occurence in the Puritan era, and indicates something of the severity and intolerance of Puritan society. Even heterodox religionists were run out of town; a practice which, in light of the religious freedoms guaranteed in the

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[30] Jones notes that the wild rosebush next to the prison door acts as an allegorical threshold symbol which "contains and initiates an investigation of the relation between signs and significances" (156).

[31] Walter notes of this same passage that "A literalist attachment to traditional texts--'Scripture and the statute-book'--insures that the Puritans interpret existential experience in the manner of simple allegory, arbitrarily seeing complex images only as tokens of clear and simple ideas. If they find room for interpretive play between signifier and signified, it is only to defer to the language of a more authoritarian text; thus one woman finds fault with the magistrates' lenient revision of a scriptural text that prescribes whipping or death as the punishment for adultery" (38).

Constitution, puts a decided crimp in the analogy promoted by many historiographers contemporary with Hawthorne, that "relegated the colonial immigrants...to the role of *ur*-fathers" (Bercovitch, *Ends*, 183). As the procession makes its way toward the scaffold, Hester is preceded by "the beadle, and attended by an irregular procession of stern-browed men and unkindly-visaged women" (54).

The procession reaches the scaffold, which is looked down upon by a group of eminent personages, consisting of "men no less dignified than the Governor, and several of his counsellors, a judge, a general, and the ministers of the town; all of whom sat or stood in a balcony of the meeting-house, looking down upon the platform" (56). Here, as is often the case in Hawthorne's fiction, spatial positioning has symbolic connotations. The group of men who sit in judgment on Hester have taken high ground literally and morally. Their elite status in society also is emphasized by the fact that they do not take part in the actual procession, which sets them not only above but apart from the other members of the community. Their stationary, fixed position signifies their monolithic power. The gravity of their manner has a contagious effect upon the rest of the assembled townsfolk:

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

Hawthorne's subversive intent becomes evident at this point in the processional scene, when the narrator alludes to Hester holding her child upon the scaffold as an image of the Madonna: "Had there been a Papist among the crowd of Puritans, he might have seen in this beautiful woman,

so picturesque in her attire and mien, and with the infant at her bosom, an object to remind him of the image of Divine Maternity..." (56). Honig notes that "the kind of allusion a writer adopts discloses the tonal or ideational quality of his indebtedness to some tradition of thought or belief; and the way he uses the allusion also discloses his degree of dependence on that tradition and something of his total aim" (116). By introducing into the reader's consciousness a point of view that is alternative to the Puritans' collective interpretation of Hester, Hawthorne here engages in a subtle subversion of the Puritans' unquestioning, literalist view of her as the personification of her transgression.

Hawthorne's description of the first procession functions to illustrate the hierarchical structure of Puritan society through the spatial positioning of the magistrates and religious leaders. The severity and intolerance of the society is suggested through the list of crimes punishable by that society, in which is included mere religious heterodoxy. These aspects of Puritan society, hierarchy, severity, and intolerance, are all antithetical to the American ideal of liberal democratic government, and put the lie to the contemporary historiographical notion ascribing to the Puritans the genesis of that ideal. Once the procession reaches its destination, Hawthorne introduces another subversive theme. By here introducing what in a later chapter he calls "another view of Hester," he wrests interpretive hegemony out of the hands of the Puritan theocracy, foreshadowing the same occurence within the narrative itself, during the latter half of the second procession.

The second procession, a celebration of election day, sees the erosion of the Puritan hierarchy reach an advanced state. Because this is a festival day, the severity characterizing the earlier procession is accordingly replaced by a mood of levity on the part of the community. Nevertheless, the crowd is

occasionally more at liberty than the Puritanic code will admit. Of note among the games unofficially commemorating the day's event is a display of sportsmanship: "two masters of defence were commencing an exhibition with the buckler and broadsword" (231), on the very scaffold reserved for public punishment. Desecration of such a public symbol, however, oversteps the bounds of decency; and the exhibition is "broken off by the interposition of the town beadle, who had no idea of permitting the majesty of the law to be violated by such an abuse of one of its consecrated places" (231-32). The incident is very important, because it points to the community's growing disposition to appropriate such official symbols for their own purposes.

Two stops are scheduled for this procession. The first is the church, where Dimmesdale is to give the election sermon. The second is the town hall, "where a solemn banquet would complete the ceremonies of the day" (250). The two stops symbolically indicate the Puritan conflation of the powers of church and state. In contrast to the first procession, this second is characterized initially by its orderliness--although this order will be thrown into chaos by Dimmesdale's interruption and confession during the second half. The procession consists of four parts: first, the musicians; then, a company of military gentlemen; then, the civilian elite; and, finally, Dimmesdale, who is to deliver his election sermon.

The august nature of the procession, and the reverence with which it is received by the populace, is subverted throughout by the narrator's ironic description. Indeed, the prevailing principle of description in, and subversive characteristic of, this second procession is irony. The music emanting from the head of the procession, which the narrator notes is "played with no great skill" (236), just barely succeeds in performing the function of "attaining the great object for which the harmony of drum and clarion addresses itself to the

multitude,--that of imparting a higher and more heroic air to the scene of life that passes before the eye" (236). The effect on the reader, however, is more in the vein of mock-heroic, as is the effect of the military company that follows. Serving as honorary escort, the military company is characterized more by a seriousness of demeanor than any real martial ability. Although "some of them...by their services in the Low Countries and on other fields of European warfare, had fairly won their title to assume the name and pomp of soldiership" (237), the remaining majority, "clad in burnished steel, and with plumage nodding over their bright morions" (237), are set into comic relief by the "rough-looking desperadoes" from the Spanish Main who form part of the procession's audience (232).

The ironic commentary on the procession continues as the narrator describes the second half. After the military escort comes a group of magistrates, the civilian elite. Their social rank is described as stemming less from any superior ability--"these primitive statesmen...seem to have been not often brilliant, but distinguished by a ponderous sobriety, rather than activity of intellect" (238)--than from the populace's vestigial need to revere those of a higher rank in the political hierarchy:

> In that old day, the English settler on these rude shores,--having left king, nobles, and all degrees of awful rank behind, while still the faculty and necessity of reverence were strong in him,--bestowed it on the white hair and venerable brow of age; on long-tried integrity; on solid wisdom and sad-colored experience; on endowments of that grave and weighty order, which gives the idea of permanence, and comes under the general definition of respectability. (237-38)

Following the magistrates is Dimmesdale, whose part in the procession is most ironic of all. As the community's minister, he is exalted even above those in political office: "His was the profession, at that era, in which

intellectual ability displayed itself far more than in political life" (238). Moreover, as spiritual leader he receives "the almost worshipping respect of the community" (238) The irony is, of course, that the most revered member of the community and perhaps its greatest sinner are to be found in the same individual

At the church, Dimmesdale delivers his election speech,[32] which in its subject and theme of parallels much of the antebellum historiography of Hawthorne's own day:

> His subject, it appeared, had been the relation between the Deity and the communities of mankind, with a special reference to the New England which they were here planting in the wilderness....it was his mission to foretell a high and glorious destiny for the newly gathered people of the Lord. (249)

The religious notion of the Puritan colony as an elect community, destined to become the antitypic fulfillment of biblical prophecy, was appropriated and politicized in Hawthorne's day to justify the Revolution as an expression of America's own Manifest Destiny. These myths, as noted in chapter three, allowed for the transcendence of contradictions contained within the actual ideologies of Puritan New England and nineteenth-century America. Dimmesdale's election sermon, in which he says one thing and the tone of his voice indicates another, is really an allegorical commentary on the Puritan myth. As Dimmesdale recites his election speech, which reflects the community's belief in its glorious destiny, the narrator points out that the tenor of the minister's voice subverts the moral righteousness of this myth, sounding instead "the complaint of a human heart, sorrow-laden, perchance

[32] For an analysis of the significance of spatial location to the auditors of this speech, see Walter, 45

guilty, telling its secret, whether of guilt or sorrow, to the great heart of mankind..." (243). Dimmesdale, at one and the same time his community's most revered member and its greatest sinner, is uniquely able to understand the contradictions of his society's ideology, because he in fact lives those contradictions.

After the election sermon, the procession regroups and moves toward the town-hall for the celebratory feast. Dimmesdale, "apotheosized by worshipping admirers" (251), is the triumphant center of public attention, when suddenly he loses all strength. He comes to a halt in front of the scaffold, where Hester stands with Pearl, and then ascends the scaffold with them. The suddenness of his action wrenches the interpretive faculty completely away from the theocracy, who

> were so taken by surprise, and so perplexed as to the purport of what they saw,--unable to receive the explanation which most readily presented itself, or to imagine any other,--that they remained silent and inactive spectators of the judgment which Providence seemed about to work. (253)

Dimmesdale's shocking public admission of guilt on the scaffold calls into question the Puritan theocracy's interpretive hegemony, leading Becker to observe that "as Dimmesdale ascends the scaffold, Chillingworth is defeated. But the Puritan hierarchy, too, is defeated. Its world of clear meanings is upset and at a loss" (142). While Becker's statement is a bit over the top in its suggestion that this scene is a watershed in colonial history, Walter, too, suggests that Dimmesdale's confession at least calls into question the entire community's interpretive hegemony:

> When Dimmesdale...finally achieves a spiritual triumph that is completely at odds with any conventional understanding of political or secular success, he reveals the inadequacy of the Puritan

> idea His life makes clear that it is presumptuous for any person or public body to claim to possess with absolute certainty the meaning of the divine spirit operative in human affairs. (49)

At one moment, Dimmesdale enjoys the highest hierarchical position in the community--that of Pastor and official interpreter for the community--and in the next, he reveals himself to be, along with Hester, his partner in sin, at the lowest point on the social hierachy. He disables the Puritan myth by revealing his own status as the embodiment of contradictions within the Puritan ideology Walter remarks that Dimmesdale's election sermon, because it is limited to conventional Puritan rhetoric, prevents him from revealing the truth about his sinfullness to his parishioners:

> What the minister's words could not do, because they were limited to the language of Puritan self-fashioning, his action, because it is the visible historical truth, does: it overturns, at least temporarily, the obdurate preconceptions of the Puritan congregation and forces them to reconsider the nature of goodness and its actual relation to moral imperfection in their representative, the minister. (Walter, 47)

Although his election speech fails to communicate his personal guilt convincingly, Dimmesdale's spontaneous act of confession during the second half of the election procession clearly delivers the subversive message of his sinfulness to the majority of his congregation.[33]

The second processional scene, which, like the first, allegorically illustrates the hierarchy of Puritan society primarily within the level of the

[33] It is worth noting the tenacity of the Puritan mode of allegorical interpretation, which finds expression in the inability of certain witnesses of the final scaffold scene to believe the literal truth of Dimmesdale's confession. Hawthorne, however, firmly disallows this interpretation of the event, which is clearly held by a minority of the witnesses: "we must be allowed to consider this version of Mr Dimmesdale's story as only an instance of that stubborn fidelity with which a man's friends--and especially a clergyman's--will sometimes uphold his character; when proofs, clear as the mid-day sunshine on the scarlet letter, establish him a false and sin-stained creature of the dust" (259).

narrative itself, is subverted *as* an illustration of that hierachy not only by the narrator's ironic commentary throughout, but also by the citizenry's appropriation of the scaffold, and, most importantly of all, by Dimmesdale, who ironically enjoys a privileged status within that hierarchy. Dimmesdale not only subverts the procession, he disrupts it entirely. He especially represents, in the combination of his role as the community's religious leader and his status as its greatest sinner, the discrepancy between the Puritan religious antitypic ideal and the actual moral fallibility of even the community's most revered member.

In two of the works discussed in this chapter, *The Scarlet Letter* and "The Procession of Life," Hawthorne uses the convention of allegorical procession to illustrate and refute hierarchical structures in the societies of Puritan New England and contemporary nineteenth-century America, respectively. In *The Scarlet Letter,* Hawthorne uses processional scenes both to illustrate the hierarchical structure of Puritan society, and to undercut this structure through ironic commentary and the presentation of viewpoints alternative to official, communally shared ones. At the level of proairetic narrative, the processional scenes trace the disintegration of the Puritan hierarchical structure by portraying in almost emblematic fashion the community's growing liberation from interpretive hegemony.

Hawthorne's use of the convention of procession is just one method of articulating a subversive program that finds expression in other ways as well, as is noticed by Walter, who suggests that by linking "The Custom-House" and *The Scarlet Letter,* Hawthorne went as far as to invert the contemporary historiographic practice of identifying the Puritans with the genesis of democracy and liberty in America:

> Clearly, in combing "The Custom-House" and *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne implies a consistency of national character between the seventeenth-century Puritan and the nineteenth-century capitalist epochs. The materialism of the latter was prepared in the literalism of the earlier epoch and its belief that worldly success is the sign of divine approval. Hawthorne's imaginative return to national origins, thus, is also a search for causes of contemporary failure. (50)

In "The Procession of Life," Hawthorne highlights the discrepancy between the theory and practice of a nation devoted to the egalitarian--though admittedly, from the 20th-century standpoint, sexist and even racist--premise that "all men are created equal." The narrator suggests, as an alternative to the contemporary American materialist categorization of humanity (in which social hierarchy and self-definition are based on external circumstances, such as the economic attributes measured by tax collectors), a procession founded on more egalitarian premises. Although the narrator is motivated to create the new procession by a utopian impulse, the sketch as a whole subversively positions itself in the gap between the nation's idealist mythology and its materialist ideology.

In "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," Hawthorne employs the convention of procession to indicate, as Marzec shows, the problematic discrepancy between Calvinist and liberal democratic assumptions as to the fundamental character of human nature. Not only is the climactic scene of "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" a procession, but the entire tale derives structurally from conventional allegorical processions. By representing the revolutionary mob as a procession of vigilantes and moral reprobates, he points out, as Marzec indicates, the problematic intersection of Calvinist theory concerning humanity's post-lapserian moral decrepitude and the liberal ideal of the innate right to self-government.

Conclusion

The preceding study has hopefully shown that Hawthorne appropriated allegorical conventions in a variety of ways, but that these appropriations are consistently informed by a single subversive impulse. He subverts the convention of personification by inverting the function of traditional allegorical characters, or by investing his personifications with a self-determinism that departs radically from traditional allegorical characterization. Conventional allegorical processions are subverted by stripping them of their hierarchical structure, ironically undercutting them when such a structure is allowed to remain, or by having characters subvert the hierarchical structure a procession symbolizes within the level of the narrative itself.

The reformist impulse behind all of these appropriations is Hawthorne's consistent desire to expose the discrepancies between his society's ideals and its practices, between its mythic history and its actual history. He historicizes the American myth to point out latent contradictions therein. The effect of this historicizing tendency on his inflection of allegory is that it produces an emphasis on the temporal, metonymic aspect of allegory, which is a direct inversion of traditional allegory's privileging of the ideal and eternal. For this reason, critics who understand allegory only from the traditional, generic standpoint tend to have trouble with Hawthorne's use of the mode.

In two of the historical fictions addressed in this study, "The Minister's Black Veil," and *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne uses allegorical conventions

to portray the severity and intolerance--religious, political, and even hermeneutic--that characterized Puritan society. This revisionist approach to the national history is also evident in "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," in Hawthorne's portrayal of the procession of revolutionary citizenry. The sketches here discussed, "The Celestial Rail-Road" and "The Procession of Life," tend to point out the discrepancy between professed ideals, such as egalitarianism, and actual materialist/hierarchical practice.

The critiques of contemporary idealisms contained in Hawthorne's uses of allegorical conventions do not constitute a critique of idealism in general. Rather, he uses this critique to point out the discrepancy between theory and practice. He rehistoricizes the national myth, and brings latent contradictions covered up by it back to the surface where they can be recognized and, hopefully, effect social change. Hawthorne seems to be saying that if America really is the chosen democratic nation, as the contemporary doctrine of Manifest Destiny implies, its antitypic fulfillment surely is yet to be realized, and further vigilance warranted.

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