From 1853 to 1860, Nathaniel Hawthorne lived abroad, away from the accelerating controversy that exploded into the Civil War. His residence there was made possible by the political appointment he received from his friend, Democratic President Franklin Pierce, so that added to the detachment from war hysteria that living in Europe gave him was his commitment to an administration which, most Northerners in 1860 agreed, was one of bungling if not betrayal. The town of Con-
cord, to which he returned in 1860, had, in his absence, grown as a center of intellectual abolitionism; and when Northern rhetoric approached the point of ignition, Concord, with its pasture battlefield, stood as the symbol of Yankee independence and intrepidity. Homecoming presented a most difficult process of repatriation for the seven-year exile.

For more than a year after his return, Hawthorne worked in vain to complete the romance he had set aside in his last years in Europe during which he had turned to *The Marble Faun*; but, as the surviving versions show, the tale wound down at one point, or split in two at another, or took a disastrous turn at a third. Accustomed as the young Hawthorne had been to working within his chamber and letting the world go by, the fifty-eight-year-old author, his powers failing, was severely affected by his alienation from a world preparing for war. His country was entering its life trial while he falteringly attempted a romance about an elixir of youth.

Finally, in March and April of 1862, Hawthorne went to the District of Columbia, there to visit his friend Horatio Bridge and there to come to some terms with the civil conflict. He saw President Lincoln, he visited the army camps, and he inspected the hospital facilities, on the whole, finding the experience invigorating. But his detachment remained, reinforced, when he wrote about his trip, by his lifelong habit of authorial irony so that the *Atlantic Monthly* insisted upon revisions and omissions before the piece was published. Wartime was not a time to be qualified in praise of the president, amused at military commanders, or ironic about patriotic efforts.

Visiting army camps, the romancer of the elixir of youth found that preparation for battle was very much like the youth-giving tonic, but that the potion was fit for neither Hawthorne the rapidly aging man nor Hawthorne the author. In "Chiefly about War Matters," he wrote:
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The enervating effects of centuries of civilization vanish at once, and leave these young men to enjoy a life of hardship, and the exhilarating sense of danger,—to kill men blamelessly, or to be killed gloriously,—and to be happy in following out their native instincts of destruction, precisely in the spirit of Homer's heroes, only with some considerable change of mode. One touch of Nature makes not only the whole world, but all time, akin. Set men face to face, with weapons in their hands, and they are as ready to slaughter one another now, after playing at peace and good-will for so many years, as in the rudest ages.

Young as America might appear when contrasted with the Europe that had held him fascinated, it was regressing rapidly into an even more primitive state.

In his consideration of the Negro and slavery, Hawthorne saw the accumulated force of history at work; and in his war essay he expressed his perception in an image which was, at the time, more fanciful than effective. Read more than one hundred years later, however, the passage benefits from its cool detachment from wartime hysteria and rings within the ear of a reader of American literature with a clearly modern tone—the tone, say, of William Faulkner. Observing the Negroes south of Washington, Hawthorne says:

There is an historical circumstance known to few that connects the children of the Puritans with these Africans of Virginia in a very singular way. They are our brethren, as being lineal descendants from the Mayflower, the fated womb of which, in her first voyage, sent forth a brood of Pilgrims on Plymouth Rock, and, in a subsequent one, spawned slaves upon the Southern soil,—a monstrous birth, but with which we have an instinctive sense of kindred, and so are stirred by an irresistible impulse to attempt their rescue, even at the cost of blood and ruin. The character of our sacred ship, I fear, may suffer a little by this revelation; but we must let her white progeny offset her dark one,—and two such portents never sprang from an identical source before.
The Christian evangelism of the abolitionist movement had long insisted that white men and black were brethren in the eyes of God, their father, but the force of Hawthorne's passage does not lie in this commonplace. God may be the father, but the mother, the "identical source," he notes, is the most hallowed matron in New England, the "Mayflower," that glorious lady whose descendants are the aristocrats of a democracy merely through connection with her. While her character may suffer from the revelation, she did live another life, and as a result of it brought forth a second and monstrous birth, the African in Virginia; the present conflict is but an inevitable step in what was begun two centuries before.

Though based on fact, the conceit here is extravagant. Hawthorne is having fun with the New England aristocracy, a group with which he had long been at war in his fiction though he himself had the necessary qualifications for membership. Time has lent the passage strength, however, for, as the works of William Faulkner so emphatically illustrate, the relationship of white and black in America has both a strong air of fatality and a profound connection with sexuality. Moreover, the central image of the fated womb awakens echoes of Moby-Dick, which, eleven years earlier, had been dedicated to Hawthorne. In that book, men of all races embarked in the fated womb of the "Pequod," and, in the course of their voyage, witnessed a member of one race deliver a member of another from the womb of a whale.

"Echoes of Melville" or "the modern tone of Faulkner" may be vague phrases, but the American reader does find in this passage of Hawthorne dealing with fate, race, and sex an image and an intent which combine to place it in a continuity with which he is intensely familiar, however misty are his formulations of it. The combination which gives the dominant tone to this passage is part of the legacy of Puritanism with
its predestinarian doctrine and its suppression of sexuality as the darker side of existence; and although a discussion of Hawthorne and Puritanism must take into account his genealogy and his explicit use of Puritan history for setting and character, the discussion will come to the core of the matter when it questions why reality impinges on the author’s consciousness in images such as that of the fated womb.

II

So convincingly has Hawthorne dramatized the force of genealogy in The House of the Seven Gables, and so deftly has he played with it in pieces like “The Custom-House,” that the reader must exercise some effort before he can place cause and effect in their proper sequence. Nathaniel Hawthorne was, indeed, a direct lineal descendant of Judge William Hathorne, the unapologetic prosecutor of heretics in seventeenth-century Salem and that town’s number-two citizen, overshadowed only by militant John Endicott. Many a Quaker or Anabaptist or Familist must have cursed him and his progeny privately, and it is most likely that one or another of them did so publicly. Moreover, Nathaniel Hawthorne lost his father when he was a boy of not quite four, and, growing up with a mother and a sister, the sensitive youth had more than the usual inducements to construct for himself from anecdotes and records a virile ancestry. But his mother was from a family of Maine merchants and farmers and the Salem of his youth was a bustling commercial seaport committed to Whig politics and agreeable to the liberalizing of theology. The twenty-one-year-old Hawthorne who returned from his Bowdoin graduation to take up residence in his mother’s house on Herbert Street, Salem, then, needed not to have been deeply concerned about his paternal ancestry. However much he might expostulate about the baleful effects of such a connection and cast over it the air of fateful in-
evitability, he did, indeed, invite it. The Puritan division be-
tween piety and morality—the inward state and the outward
show—and the Puritan conviction of the universality of sin and
the inescapability of its consequences appeared to young Haw-
thorne to be needlessly stern and insensitive when formalized
in book and institution, but, nevertheless, to be far more accurate
explanations of the world around him than were the commercial
economic gospel of the Whigs or the transcendental doctrine
devil as misperceived portions of the seamless fabric of good.

More importantly, Nathaniel Hawthorne was a writer, and
as he began the practice of his art in the Herbert Street chamber,
he had to construct for himself a philosophy, or a religion, or a
mythology—some system of orienting the world which would
allow him to get on with his task. It needed not to be total,
needed not even to be consistent in every last detail, but it had
to account for man's relationship to man and to the deity; it had
to value and order the prolific world about him and make it
accessible to literary exploration. His extended collegiate ex-
cursion into fiction had resulted in *Fanshawe*, a Gothic thriller
striving manfully to adapt itself to the New England landscape
but lacking in an outlook which would place the world of the
fiction into meaningful relation—even if but for the sake of a
thrill—with the world of the reader. As he worked on in his
mother's home, however, Hawthorne came more and more to
see the relevance of the Puritan philosophy to the effects he
desired from his art. He perceived behind the formidable mass
of books and habits which the Puritans had bequeathed to
posterity an account of a reality he, too, saw; and if the older
books of religion were now meaningless, moldering heaps, at
least at one time they had contained some heat, which was
more than he could acknowledge about contemporary works
of religion—they were frigid from the start. Moreover, he con-
tended in "The Old Manse," "Books of religion . . . cannot

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be considered a fair test of the enduring and vivacious properties of human thought, because such books so seldom really touch upon their ostensible subject, and have, therefore, so little business to be written at all. So long as an unlettered soul can attain to saving grace, there would seem to be no deadly error in holding theological libraries to be accumulations of, for the most part, stupendous impertinence." Disrespectful as Hawthorne felt the remark might be, it is strikingly in keeping with the thinking of the original American Puritans who held that the saving word was spoken out of the immediate promptings of grace and that the written word was merely for edification. Sermons printed, they claimed, were powerless to convert however much they might instruct, and even the Bible was but an imperfect reflection of the Spirit and could not work a man's salvation. Hawthorne, in his developing outlook, saw the force of the founders' basic principles and distinguished between the founders and their children. For instance, in "Main Street" he writes, "The sons and grandchildren of the first settlers were a race of lower and narrower souls than their progenitors had been. The latter were stern, severe, intolerant, but not superstitious, not even fanatical; and endowed, if any men of that age were, with a far seeing worldly sagacity." A handle to the world was waiting for him to shape it to his grasp.

While such passages indicate the attraction Puritan philosophy held for Hawthorne as a vocabulary for his own view of life, the incomplete tale, "Alice Doane's Appeal," which he in all likelihood began as early as 1830 and which he reworked around 1835, captures very well the surface fascination, at least, which Puritan materials held for his art and dramatizes his shift into this area. In that tale, a young romancer takes a stroll on Gallows Hill in Salem with two female companions and employs his gloomy surroundings in telling them a story of guilt and murder tinged with incest. He wishes it to be moving Gothic romance
at its best, but the young man is chagrined to receive a muted response from his companions; they are not touched by the plight of the persecuted heroine. Salvaging the afternoon, he chats with them about the route of their walk and falls into a description of how the procession of innocent witchcraft convicts and guilty accusers must have looked as it mounted the hill to the place of execution, crowning his impromptu sketch with a vivid picture of the hateful Cotton Mather riding in triumph. With amazement, he notes that his companions are crying; he has found an affecting subject matter. In the fragment, the young romancer’s conclusion is somewhat disconnected, dealing with the hill rather than with what he learned about his art; but as the story is a reflection of Hawthorne’s gathering interests, it has its pertinence: “We build the memorial column on the height which our fathers made sacred with their blood [Bunker Hill], poured out in a holy cause. And here, in dark funereal stone, should rise another monument, sadly commemorative of the errors of an earlier race, and not to be cast down, while the human heart has one infirmity that may result in crime.”

“Alice Doane’s Appeal” captures a double discovery. First, the would-be American writer learns that his most potent materials are to be drawn from the life once lived on his native landscape and that his most effective settings are those which still exist and carry with them storied associations. Next, he learns that woe or horror, pity or fear, cannot be made to arise so effectively from invented escapades as they can from a view of life which consistently remembers that the root of dread is in man because evil is his inheritance. For every Bunker Hill there is a Gallows Hill, and their meaning comes not from separate sources but both are made significant by the human heart, capable of courage and tainted by sin.

While both discoveries obviously arise from Hawthorne’s growing fascination with historical Puritanism, they are also, of
course, his particular solutions to the problem faced by all romantic artists. Irving and Cooper before him had realized the difficulty of producing an American fiction in the absence of surroundings rich in associations. The former had, in effect, invented a history for his native city, and, in his better tales, artfully transplanted European legends to the Hudson River Valley soil. The latter had explored a variety of historical themes and was achieving his masterpieces by projecting the struggle of the new nation to be both civilized and natural into the myth of a natural man who could not, nevertheless, dissociate himself from the destructiveness as well as the benefits of civilization. Any ambitious American author in that period would see the need to discover and create the history of his land. But for Hawthorne that discovery was, finally, more than a discovery of political history or of quaint customs; it was the discovery of a way of thinking which deepened his art well beyond the skimmings of Irving and disciplined it to a unity which forever escaped the rambling Cooper.

The Puritanism which Hawthorne first learned by observation in his native town and later broadened by conscious study of records and histories was the way of life of the seventeenth-century settlers of Massachusetts. Holding the Calvinist doctrine of man's relation to God, they had, nevertheless, differed from many of their Calvinist brethren as to the proper ways of institutionalizing this relationship and had migrated to Massachusetts where, they believed, they could establish the proper institutions relatively free from interference by civil or ecclesiastical authorities. In the isolation of the wilderness, both their doctrines and their institutions hardened well beyond the flexibility they would have had to retain for survival in European surroundings, and by the time opposing forces succeeded in wearing down doctrine and institution, a habit of mind had been established.

The doctrine of predestination very strongly influenced Haw-
Hawthorne's search for a rationalized structure which embodied his perception of reality. The primary principle was that the world was made up of saints and sinners predestined to salvation and damnation since eternity, and totally powerless, therefore, to affect their ultimate status. This is a condition, in its broadest outline, of such appalling absoluteness, presenting the artist, as it does, with a *fait accompli*, that as central as it is for metaphysicians it was not exploited by the writer. While many a sinner turns up in Hawthorne's pages, he is, more often than not, directly related to the devil rather than to a class of men incapable of escaping the evil into which they were born. Roger Chillingworth and Ethan Brand, for example, are acutely conscious of the universality of sin and human frailty, but they have no theological class consciousness. The strong Puritan sense of evil as an active principle was more serviceable when personified than when used to set up two rigid classes of men.

Hawthorne found more serviceable the tenet that followed from the principle of predestination—the belief that man could do nothing to affect his own salvation. All men were born in sin and those who were saved were those who were predestined to have Christ's righteousness attributed to them, not those who behaved well on earth so as to deserve heaven. To be sure, none who was truly saved would behave immorally, since the salvation experience brings with it the power to act in a sanctified fashion. But while piety argued morality, it was not necessarily true that morality demonstrated piety, the gracious state which marked the saint. There were more seeming saints than real ones, and only the Lord could detect the archhypocrite (a persistent theme in Spenser and Milton). Moreover, none could be totally sure on this earth that he was saved, though certain well accepted signs of a gracious state, the steps of the salvation experience, were recognized; and since the eleventh-
hour laborer was paid equally with him of the first hour, even the worst man need not despair utterly of detecting the workings of grace within himself.

As Puritan records abundantly show, the great drama of life was transferred from the public world in which man could not act vitally to the inner world in which man saw his impulses and his beliefs at war and which he examined scrupulously, anxious to detect a sign of God's disposition toward him—to confirm a tendency he had seen developing or to check a passion which he believed to be blurring his perception. Even after the theological terminology had been diluted or had disappeared, the struggle within the consciousness was still the great drama for the New Englander, and this consequence of Puritan theology attracted Hawthorne strongly. In his fiction, psychological happenings are central happenings, and the disconnection between man's private condition and his public appearance is a constant burden. Puritanism suited well his habit of mind and supplied it with a rationalized structure.

A writer committed to the vitality of the private drama and the ineffectuality of the public one, however, has little action for his plot so far as the nineteenth century is concerned. But Hawthorne was so committed. Indeed, the commitment became so habitual that in The Blithedale Romance, he scoffed openly and long at any who could believe that man's actions affected reality. However ridiculous the reader might find Hollingsworth, the notion of rehabilitating criminals at what is today called a “half-way house” is not far fetched. Yet to Coverdale, the idea presents itself in Chapter XV as “a great black ugliness of sin, which he proposed to collect out of a thousand human hearts . . . that we should spend our lives in an experiment of transmuting it into virtue!” And in Blithedale, nothing so clearly shows the villainy of Westervelt as his remark, in Chapter
XXIII, that the alleged powers of the Veiled Lady are the fore­runners of a new era which will "link soul to soul, and the present life to what we call futurity, with a closeness that should finally convert both worlds into one great, mutually conscious brotherhood." In the world of Hawthorne's fiction, such a notion is tommyrot.

Without the primacy of the private drama, a representation of life appeared meaningless to Hawthorne. His forebears produced histories which were either journals of their souls' excursions or allegorical readings of New England history which shaped a voyage across the Atlantic or a raid on the Indians to conform to the central biblical myth as analogues to Abraham's exile or Joshua's battles. Hilda, Hawthorne's sanctimonious nineteenth-century Puritan lass, conveys the same theory into art. What her positive aesthetic is, is rather difficult of discovery and fuzzy when found. But what it is not is made clear in the best passages dealing with her, those in which her chilly confidence becomes temporarily upset and she wanders about Rome seeking to unburden herself and, meanwhile, because of her de­rangement, sees things diabolically, which is to say, sees things in an opposite fashion from what she had believed and to which she will, with some slight modification, return at the ending. The demon of weariness who haunts great picture galleries controls her in her upset condition and she becomes bored with the repetitiousness of the old masters, concerned eternally with Christian or mythological themes, "Virgins and infant Christs, repeated over and over again." The same old story everywhere: "Magdalens, Flights into Egypt, Crucifixions, Depositions from the Cross, Pictas," etc., etc. On the other hand, we learn in this same section of Chapter XXXVII, for the first time she comes to admire the earthly realism of the Flemish school: "an earthen pipkin, or a bunch of herrings by Teniers; a brass kettle, in which you can see your face, by Gerard Douw; a furred robe,
or the silken texture of a mantle, or a straw hat, by Van Mieris; or a long-stalked wine-glass, transparent and full of shifting reflection, or a bit of bread and cheese, or an over-ripe peach, with a fly upon it, truer than reality itself." For a brief time, Hilda appreciates a world of things unconnected with the Christian myth or with any philosophy of the relation of the material world to the human spirit, an art which appeals because it takes joy in the physical existence of things, be their meaning what it may. But her derangement is temporary.

And for Hawthorne, too, the view is only temporary. "A better book than I shall ever write," he says of the Custom House in "The Custom-House," "was there; leaf after leaf presenting itself to me, just as it was written out by the reality of the flitting hour, and vanishing as fast as written, only because my brain wanted the insight and my hand the cunning to transcribe it." He went instead to the attic of the Custom House, according to the fiction he sets forth, and found there a tale of human frailty more fit for his talents.

If enduring Puritan habits rendered Hawthorne incapable of a serious consideration of any drama other than the private, they also provided him with a means of dramatizing it, with a way around the lack of material for a plot. Spenser and Bunyan vividly illustrate the utmost a Protestant literary art dedicated to the exclusive reality of the inner struggle can achieve—allegory; and, indeed, Hawthorne's first serious literary preoccupations with Puritanism led him in the same channel. Frequently, in his early tales and sketches, he is concerned with one or another allegorical representation, and he composes interesting, but brittle, little wood-cuts illustrative of certain moral tenets, softened, from time to time, and generally weakened also, by the intermixture of nineteenth-century religious sentimentalism. What escapes allegory is often turned into a morality piece, the author unshirkingly chiming in with the explicit moral however
adequately the reader may deem it to have been developed already.

But intermixed with these pieces are stories about Puritans set in Puritan times; and here another technique begins to emerge, because the world of the seventeenth-century American Puritan was a world in which, with probability, the private condition could be symbolized in public gesture without dissipating its personal significance. The Puritan occupied a world which was spiritually vocal, in which sunning snakes and falling stars carried their messages about the soul’s condition, and in which the spirit of the community could publicize itself by attaching a letter to a bodice or felling a Maypole. These became more than police actions; they dramatized the spiritual struggle and stood as symbols. The ease and probability with which the private became public in the Puritan world offers a particularly rich, if narrow, field to the writer. Arthur Miller, who exploited it in *The Crucible*, said he went to seventeenth-century Salem because: “People then avowed principles, sought to live by them and die by them. Issues of faith, conduct, society, pervaded their private lives in a conscious way. They needed but to disapprove to act. I was drawn to this subject because the historical moment seemed to give me the poetic right to create people of higher self-awareness than the contemporary scene affords.”

So, in “Endicott and the Red Cross,” after reconstructing a colonial Salem street scene, Hawthorne warns: “Let not the reader argue, from any of these evidences of iniquity, that the times of the Puritans were more vicious than our own, when, as we pass along the very street of this sketch, we discern no badge of infamy on man or woman. It was the policy of our ancestors to search out even the most secret sins, and expose them to shame, without fear or favor, in the broadest light of the noonday sun. Were such the custom now, perchance we might find materials for a no less piquant sketch.” Working
within a Puritan setting, then, Hawthorne could check the icy
inward turning of his allegory and pursue his themes of common
guilt in a world which would resound to the inner vibration.
To be sure, he would never rid himself of the often tedious
habit of insisting upon a set symbol and attaching to it a coy­
ness its obviousness did not justify—the hissing bosom serpent
and the unmeltable heart of stone recur in the letter on Dimmes­
dale's breast and the gurgle in the Pyncheon throat. But the
Puritan world gave scope to the symbolic habit and led it out
of the rigidity of strict allegory. Psychological states could there
be dramatized without excessive recourse to personification since
there consciousness was forever finding its public counterpart.

The fundamental influence of Puritanism upon Nathaniel
Hawthorne, then, is to be seen in his insistence upon the
primacy of the psychological drama and in his characterization
of happiness or the integrity of the personality in moral and
spiritual terms. It is to be seen also in his choice of the Puritan
world as the setting for much of his fiction since that world
supplied him with an environment in which he could, with
probability, make the private public. Together with these, of
course, Hawthorne rang a number of variations on basic tenets
of the Puritan theology. "Fancy's Show Box," for example, takes
up the difference between piety and morality in a modernized
setting; "Young Goodman Brown" deals with universal guilt
and cautions about keeping it in perspective; "John Inglefield's
Thanksgiving" hinges on the irrevocable consequences of overt
sin. Other stories deal with the same tenets in other ways, and
the romances are built on them.

But this is not to say that Nathaniel Hawthorne was the
expounder of a systematic Puritan theology. He was a man of
his times as well as of his inheritance, and his moralizing habit
was frequently at work about a nineteenth-century common­
place. In "The Great Stone Face," for example, he preaches
about the superiority of the simple life; for all his distrust of philanthropy, he offers his redeemable sinners (Hester and Donatello) good works as a road back to righteousness; and his sketches sometimes glorify aspects of life which cannot but appear to be sentimental trivia to any reader removed from the fashions of Hawthorne's day.

Moreover, Hawthorne recognized the difference between Puritanism as a way of life and Puritanism as a scheme for dealing with reality so that it might be shaped into art. Hawthorne's home life was not puritanic, and Hawthorne's fiction builds on the Puritan system but is not used by it; the author was a creative writer, not a theological illustrator. Nothing shows the literary control he exerted over his Puritan themes more clearly than "The May-Pole of Merry Mount," which begins by setting up a contrast between the pagan revelry of the Maypole celebrants and the gloomy grind of life of the Puritan settlement. It is clear that the author endorses neither view of life, but it is equally clear that in the absence of a third alternative—an absence which was not necessarily felt in the world in which Hawthorne ate his breakfast and took walking trips in the Berkshires—the Puritans' way is preferable. The trouble which comes to Merry Mount is inevitable, not because the Puritans will eventually strike, but because the revelers are men and carry their sinfulness with them regardless of whether they are afflicted from without or within. The note of doom is struck in advance of the Puritan raid by the very nature of the Lord and Lady of the May: "Alas, for the young lovers! No sooner had their hearts glowed with real passion than they were sensible of something vague and unsubstantial in their former pleasures, and felt a dreary presentiment of inevitable change. From the moment that they truly loved, they had subjected themselves to earth's doom of care and sorrow, and troubled joy, and had no more a home at Merry Mount." John
Endicott’s onrushing band, then, is but a public confirmation of an inner change and seals the lovers’ recognition that they were born, like all humans, to an inheritance of sin.

The Puritan community in the works of Hawthorne, as “The May-Pole” shows, serves as a metaphor of the corruption of man. To be sure, man’s inherited sinfulness is not the whole of his makeup, but no life can be understood without taking it into account. The Puritan community in Hawthorne’s fiction is consistently revealed as an unduly severe and undesirable residence, one which has exaggerated the sinful part until it dominates the whole. But it is a symbolic realization of the inescapable portion of life which those who would live life as if men were perfectible and evil an error in calculation must accept. The realization cannot be escaped, for instance, by Hester Prynne, and so she cannot escape the Puritan dwelling place. Phoebe Pyncheon achieves her maturity only when her residence in the house of the Puritans brings her an awareness of her share in the universal woe. In the romance farthest from explicit Puritan themes, Hollingsworth, too, learns that love and life follow upon his recognition of his fallibility although for him the message has come too late. But while the theme remains consistent, the later novels drift from a Puritan setting, and, in doing so, it may well be argued, become enervated because deprived of strong symbols for the private struggle. Hilda can say, as she does in Chapter XXIII of The Marble Faun, “Your deed, Miriam, has darkened the whole sky!”, but this is just a way of speaking. The sun over seventeenth-century Boston can behave in a way impossible for the sun over nineteenth-century Rome.

III

To notice the dissipation of force in the later romances is to notice the negative as well as the positive influence which
Puritanism had on Hawthorne. It enabled him to deal with a great psychological drama, but one for which the setting was limited and within which but a restricted play of personality was possible. The Puritan view of reality was narrow as well as deep; and even though Hawthorne, in his later works, attempted modern settings, he compensated for the uncertainty of launching out into the contemporary scene by keeping a tighter grasp on his system than he had in the earlier romances. So the reader is asked to accept the precipitous downfall of Hollingsworth or to sympathize with the priggishness of Hilda although neither setting nor action adequately support them. Hawthorne's view of life stands forth somewhat awkwardly in these romances because he is displaying it in a world which denies him his characteristic vehicles. In *The Scarlet Letter*, he could make the antinomianism of Hester sympathetic, even if it was to be punished eventually, because an intolerant society was holding it in check for him. But Zenobia and Miriam are not afforded this sympathy and are restrained not so much by elements in their environment as by the authorial hand.

The literary ancestor of this Hawthorne heroine is Anne Hutchinson, about whom he had written one of his earliest published pieces. Relatively unconcerned about the particulars of Anne Hutchinson's theology or with the legal niceties of her case, in his essay Hawthorne emphasized three points, all of them startlingly in keeping with the presuppositions of her actual judges. First, he pointed out, Anne Hutchinson was a woman, and, he stated unequivocally, "Woman's intellect should never give the tone to that of man: and even her morality is not exactly the material for masculine virtue." The division line of nature yields absolute psychical as well as physical differences, he argues, and the rules of life are, therefore, naturally in the keeping of men. Second, he makes clear that Mrs. Hutchinson's activity, regardless of the rightness or wrongness of what she
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said, was destructive of the integrity of the community and therefore imperiled the colony’s future. If Massachusetts was to have a significant history, it had to continue along the lines laid down by its male citizens and repress tangents such as hers. And finally, Mrs. Hutchinson committed the sin of separation from her fellows; she claimed for herself extraordinary powers, and, by implication in Hawthorne’s version, denied her share in the common guilt of mankind. “She declares herself commissioned to separate the true shepherds from the false,” as he paraphrases her, “and denounces present and future judgments on the land, if she be disturbed in her celestial errand.” This commission, she claims, comes to her in the form of a purer light than others enjoy.

A feminist, gifted with powers beyond those of her fellows and following them regardless of the consequences to her community and unmindful of history or her share in human fallibility, this is the Anne Hutchinson an unsympathetic young Hawthorne constructed. Years later, his Hester Prynne was to bear a strong resemblance to her. Now, indeed, she was called the “sainted” Anne Hutchinson, and Hester was created with sympathetic understanding, but, as Hester’s career showed, what Anne Hutchinson stood for was still untenable.

Hester Prynne perceived that the moral code in which her community formalized the relation of man to God and man to man was as artificially related to the actualities of her nature as the stark dwellings of her fellow townsmen were to the forest on which they bordered. The Puritans were at war with nature, privately viewing its impulses as reminders of their sinful state and, therefore, openings for the devil, loopholes to be firmly shuttered. The nature of the forest about them was chaotic and cruel; it was the dwelling place of the beast and the heathen, the home of the devil. It was, then, the dangerous nature within them writ large and, like it, was to combatted—approached
with ax and gun. But the shade of the trees and the sun on the flowers seemed to be beautiful to Hester Prynne and to be organically connected with her existence. Nothing natural was ugly—this was her special perception—and, therefore, when the love in her nature led to her intercourse with Arthur Dimmesdale, it received its own consecration from the harmony it formed with the whole natural world.

The Puritan community found it possible to punish Hester for behavior against its code, but it could not reach to the antisocial doctrine which was at its source. Hawthorne reached to that doctrine and gingerly developed its attractions even as he noted its dangers. Such a doctrine would have to come from a woman because, by nature, she, like the earth, bore life and because she, deprived of the world of affairs, was free to develop a sensibility which was naturally more delicate and idealistic so that the world became organized around her special weaknesses and her special strength. With Hester Prynne, Hawthorne saw beyond the Puritan system and realized its ultimate artificiality, but unlike her, he also believed that as long as human nature is inherently sinful, it must guard against the anarchy which results from placing personal impulse above socially regulated behavior. Perhaps some day a less artificial system of restraints would come about, but it would never arrive as the result of the violation of a law; if it came, it would come as the result of sinful man’s learning how to live harmoniously with his failings. In the battle between the community’s legalism and Hester’s antinomianism, Hawthorne gave the prize to neither. The community failed to break Hester, but Hester was made to accept the fact that what she did had inevitable dire consequences.

As the romances moved from the repressive environment of colonial New England, however, Hawthorne himself provided the legalism that that milieu had once supplied. Zenobia’s femi-
ninism meets with little sympathy from him, and Miriam's doctrines, when Kenyon agrees to listen to them, are met with mild horror. Kenyon does, nevertheless, at two points essay a watered-down retelling of them to Hilda, only to be told both times to hush, and only to respond, "Forgive me." The system which had been developed as a means of capturing and exploring life, and which, in *The Scarlet Letter* and some of the stories (notably, "My Kinsman, Major Molineux"), had been used not only to explain the mysteries of human behavior but to point to a reality beyond that which it accounted for, had shut down. Whereas Hester made her impression on Boston, Zenobia and Miriam were abandoned to the commonplaces of their culture once they had acknowledged their fallibility and the irrevocable consequences of sin.

**IV**

With the exception of Anne Hutchinson, an exception which indeed proves the rule, American Puritan history reports no prominent woman. Woman's subjection to man in institutionalized affairs was all but complete, as total, at least, as the community's suppression of sexuality. Unchecked, her particular powers would lead to antinomianism—the substitution of rule by private impulse for rule by public law—even as unchecked sexuality would lead to the overthrow of the family. Meanwhile, the male principle, unchecked, led through legalism to the capitalistic ethic of business being the world's business.

A considerable part of the general Puritan influence on Hawthorne's environment, therefore, was the scorn attached to the profession of belles-lettres. One so engaged appeared to the busy fraternity of Judge Pyncheons to be practicing the trivial and unmasculine occupation of entertaining women, even as the young romancer of "Alice Doane's Appeal" practiced on female companions. The original Puritans, too, would have scorned him
as an idler—as he testifies in "The Custom-House"—if they had not punished him as a presumptuous breaker of the second commandment and a heretic who professed to know what the Lord alone knew, the secrets of another's spiritual condition. The young storyteller in "Passages from a Relinquished Work" temporarily abandons his art when he receives a letter from his Puritan guardian. He does not need to open the message from this ministerial counselor to be "affected most painfully," and he equates his guardian with his good fate and his art with his evil fate.

To practice the profession of letters, then, was a very distinct break from a respected ethic which Hawthorne's mind symbolized as Puritanism. But if his inheritance was powerless to stop him, it retained, as has been seen, enough potency to leave its mark on what he wrote. Also, through its influence on his society as well as upon him, it heightened the uneasiness with which he pursued his craft and extended it to the brink of guilt. A majority of the creators in Hawthorne's fiction, be they artists, scientists, or craftsmen, are diabolic figures, meddling with what God alone has the right to touch. Although Hawthorne could lash out against the insensitivity to art of the capitalistic heir of the Puritans, as he did in "The Artist of the Beautiful," he more frequently described the dire consequences of initiating a new nature or tampering with the existing one as Rappaccini and Aylmer (of "The Birthmark") attempted to do. At best, the artist, like the painter of "The Prophetic Pictures," could but foretell a dark fatality. To separate art from morality, from some form of social utility, was to be anti-human.

Hawthorne says of Clifford, in Chapter VII of *The House of the Seven Gables*, "An individual of his temper can always be pricked more acutely through his sense of the beautiful and harmonious than through his heart." The heart was the seat of the moral, not of the beautiful, which, for Hawthorne, was
finally related to an intellectually acquired taste. He could be guiltless only so long as he remembered this and remained a moralist. He says further of Clifford that if he "in his foregoing life, had enjoyed the means of cultivating his taste to its utmost perfectibility, that subtile attribute might, before this period, have completely eaten out or filed away his affections." The purgatory of the prison had saved Clifford from the hell his aesthetic appetite would have driven him into. Hawthorne's acceptance of this view is explicit in the banality of his remarks about art and artists in *The Marble Faun* and implicit in the directness with which he carves away much of the profusion of life when creating his fictions. The "heart," not the "taste," must be his guide.

The shadow of Puritan attitudes toward the writer's unlicensed meddling in private affairs lies over the characters who most closely represent the authorial viewpoint in the romances. They are, on the whole, a hesitant, secretive trio, unwilling to engage themselves in the affairs of others, and, in their unwillingness, often denying themselves life itself. They record life, but they dislike the appearance of pretending to affect it. Holgrave is so detached an observer that the first thought Judge Pyncheon's corpse presents to him is that he must photograph it, while Coverdale so scrupulously avoids human entanglements that his view of life is figuratively and, at several points in the book, literally that of a Peeping Tom. Kenyon is more ambitious in his relations with others, although, from one point of view, he sets the catastrophe going by repelling Miriam's confidence on the grounds that friendship should not be required to carry the burden of intimate knowledge of the friend.

In his non-fiction, Hawthorne analogously characterizes himself as an outsider, a peeper. He sits at the window of his house and looks out (and usually down) at the world in his early sketches; he represents the Hawthorne who labored at Brook
Farm as a ghost of the real self who was elsewhere observing the apparition; and he characterizes his consular experiences as those of a “Double Ganger.” This, doubtless, is an all but generic characteristic of authors and other basically sedentary people, but the steely passiveness in which the Hawthorne of his self-portraits and his fictional spokesmen hold themselves reflects a cautious view of the artist’s role.

In opposition to these chilly figures are the women who are at home as sensitive reactors, who can speak from outside an ethic to which they are confined but to which their natures do not contribute, and whose doctrines tend to the disturbance of the male social system even as the strong sexuality of their presence causes uneasy stirrings within the male physical system. They are never the spokesmen for Hawthorne, in one sense, for they are quick to commit the sin of meddling with the established bases of society, but they are the logically inevitable voices of their creator’s alter ego. If the practice of art, according to the ethic of his society, is mere woman’s play, then art’s function is to shake the complacency of the male world and to restore society to a view that will recognize a fuller life than it pursues.

The final effect of Puritanism to be noted, then, is in the complex way in which Hawthorne regarded his profession. Art was the outlet for the female values of vitality above law, and beauty above business, and, as such, was infinitely dangerous and infinitely worthwhile. The figure of the dark lady fascinated because in her strong sexuality and her antinomian doctrines, she was like the creative impulses which had led him to writing. But in her denial of fallibility and her disregard for history, she was far too destructive. “Woman’s intellect should never give the tone to that of man;” and the dark lady became the alter ego while the moral male maintained conscious control. A son of the Puritans, this moral male restrained himself from excessive mingling in the private affairs of others, and he strove to
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bring a regulation to life that would insure its steady continuity. Never far from his side, however, was his opposite, the beautiful lady whose presence was an insistence that love was above law and art above morality.

The guarded observer and his female companion are metaphors of their creator's mind, characters in the allegory of the Puritan as nineteenth-century romancer. Judge Hathorne might not recognize them in such garb as they wore, but he knew their opposition as well as he knew that there was a minister in the meetinghouse and a serving girl who had run wild with the Indians.

v

The dark lady was not to be given control, and Nathaniel Hawthorne, wearier than his years in 1862, struggled with the fictional possibilities of the elixir of youth even as he noted that the call to arms was rejuvenating his countrymen. Detached now from the potent sources of his art, he cast about in melodrama, as he had done at the outset in Fanshawe, searching for the mode which would attach his tale to life. But when he observed the Negroes of Virginia, then his imagination slipped along familiar grooves and called forth his ironic powers. The "Mayflower," that lady as pure and proper as Hilda, had, after all, had escapades worthy of Miriam. She had brought forth the black man as well as the white, destroying the social balance and compelling her first child to come to the aid of the second. It was their fate, for they were children of the same womb. And none should be surprised at the situation, for there is no Bunker Hill without a Gallows Hill, no Hilda without a Miriam, no cargo of freedom without a cargo of slavery. The imagination that held forth such a reality had been marked by the Puritans.