

Nathaniel Hawthorne and the Concept of Evil

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Introduction

It seems a consensus of most of Hawthorne's critics that despite the deceptively simple dichotomy of light and darkness he employed to set forth his moral scheme, the overall picture this light and darkness weave through his major novels and short stories is extremely complex as well as ambiguous, and like the pattern of ancient Persian tapestries, presents us with an aura of mysticism.¹⁾ The great variety of light and the numerous shades of darkness emerge from the unique worlds of individual works in which Hawthorne tried to catch the essential nature of moral dilemma posed in a particular place on a particular time.²⁾ It is my ever-growing impression, however, that it is not too difficult to discern the general pattern of this picture. It seems to be composed of two lights and one darkness, although darkness tends to show two or three strong elements in most of the instances. Light is of course a symbol of moral goodness, while darkness is that of moral evil. One of the two lights is that of innocence, that exists prior to the introduction of darkness, and that is embodied in the biblical Eden or the classical Arcadia; and the other light is the beam shot through darkness as in a flash of lightning, which is essentially of heavenly nature. In Hawthorne's view, man is already expelled from the first light,

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- 1) A notable example of this dichotomy of light and darkness could be found in Richard Harter Fogle's *Hawthorne's Fiction: the Light and the Dark* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1952).
- 2) For a detailed analysis of the symbolism of light and darkness, see Hyatt Waggoner's *Hawthorne, a Critical Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955).

and the second light shines only from beyond mortality ambiguously, though sometimes dazzlingly. In the meantime, all we have to do in our mortal life is to deal with the ever-present darkness as best as we can.

For all the scathing criticisms against the narrowness of Puritanism and the consistent indifference toward the formalized religion, Hawthorne's central conception of evil seems to support the generally accepted assertion that he was essentially a religious writer.³⁾ The moral landscape so graphically sketched in his fiction is in basic agreement with the biblical conception that where the sin is great, so is the grace, and also with the cosmic drama of man's soul in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, where Dante's soul is led to the Paradiso through the center of the earth, which is the Inferno. It seems convenient to envision man's moral entity conceived by Hawthorne as the figure of a circle, the outskirts of which is enveloped by innocent light; the color darkens as we go deep into the interior of the heart; the center of the circle, however, is not blackness, but the ultimate light, in spite of the suggestion of a bottomless pit. Here is the essential mystery of Hawthorne's moral vision. In order to reach the final destination of ultimate light, man has to pass through this trail of evergrowing darkness, and this is the main rationale in Hawthorne's works of the recurrent motif of the night journey.

Thus, it is not surprising that Hawthorne's entire corpus of fictional works is strongly characterized by the preponderant presence of evil. To begin with, the actual darkness, often staged in the night, as a symbol of evil, hangs over most of his major works. The obvious examples that come to our mind are "Young Goodman Brown," which excepting the short introductory and concluding passages, presents an incident that occurs during the night; "My Kinsman, Major Molineau," which shows us a country boy, by the name of Robin, blundering through the street of Boston during the early part of a night; and "The Hollow of the Three Hills," in which a forlorn and irrevocably damned woman confers with a witch at dead of night. The two of the major novels are strongly tinged with darkness: *The Scarlet Letter* is a tale of ever-growing darkness, and the Pyncheon house in *The House of the Seven Gables* is darkened by time and evil memory. When darkness is not presented as the symbol of evil, other prominent symbols of the dark interior of human heart, such as forest, garden, hollow, dell, cave, secret chamber, night street are performing as effectively as darkness does. So potent are the meanings these symbols suggest, and so pervasive are their influences in the works of Hawthorne that at times evil appears to be the sole entity. So, it would not be amiss to assert that the proper study of Hawthorne amounts to an investigation into the essential nature of this all-important evil.⁴⁾

3) One of the most explicit treatments of Hawthorne as a religious writer is Randall Stewart's *American Literature and Christian Doctrine* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1958.)

1. Attribute

One of the most strongly and prevalently expressed attributes of evil in Hawthorne's works is certainly its universality. Although it is debatable whether to confer the name of a Christian or a Puritan on Hawthorne—we know for a fact that he was not a churchgoer nor an endorser of much of church's creed—he was a firm believer of one of Christianity's premier doctrines, namely the doctrine of original sin. On this point, Hermon Melville's review of Hawthorne's collection of short stories and sketches, *Mosses from an Old Manse*, is very revealing. Melville thought that Hawthorne's originality and importance as a writer rested mainly on the blackness of his works, which he thought was directly derived from the much-antiquated doctrine of original sin Hawthorne inherited from his puritan ancestors.⁵⁾ There are a few innocent or saintly characters, notably Hilda in *The Marble Faun* and Rev. Wilson in *The Scarlet Letter*, but through certain rigidity and near-sightedness, even they are not exempted from the associations of evil.

Human nature, that is to say, man's natural instinct of passion, in Hawthorne's system of value, is incapable of attaining the highest standard of moral goodness. In the forest scene of *The Scarlet Letter*, where the long-estranged lovers are once again united under the thick-leaved trees and on the moss-grown dale, Hester emphatically reaffirms that their erstwhile illicit love had the sanctity of its own, but as the conclusion of their rekindled love clearly shows, passion is not sufficient to ensure them ultimate happiness and salvation. In Hawthorne's mostly gloomy atmosphere of fictional world, nature, as in the case of a rose-bush in front of the prison-house in *The Scarlet Letter*, is sympathetic toward human frailty and gives a momentary releaf from its tragic path, but nature's most conspicuous trait of wildness appeared to Hawthorne to indicate her intractability in being properly disciplined and her incapability of being illuminated by divine revelation.⁶⁾

Nor is human reason exempted from the contamination of evil in Hawthorne's estimate. His works are full of intellectual monsters, such as Aylmer of "The Birthmark" or Rappaccini of "Rappaccini's Daughter," who with the power of reason aspire to imitate the task of the creator. Considering the close relationship between Hawthorne and Melville, it

4) This conclusion is in basic agreement with that of Hermon Melville's "Hawthorne and His Mosses," *The Literary World*, August 17, 1850. A copy of this essay can be found in *The Shock of Recognition, The Development of Literature in the United States Recorded by the Men Who Made It*, ed. Edmund Wilson. New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1943, pp. 187-204.

5) Hermon Melville, op. cit., pp. 187-204.

6) Not all critics are of this opinion. For instance, nature is rated as a superior value compared to the rigid spiritual discipline of the puritans in Michael Davitt Bell's *Hawthorne and the Historical Romance of New England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971.)

is not surprising to observe that the genesis of this type of evil is very similar to the origin of the blasphemous adventure of Captain Ahab, who attempted to transcend the limitation of humanity in *Moby Dick*. The course of free thinking, largely followed by Hester Prynne after she is ostracized by the community, is charted by the author as a maze in the moral wilderness which is incapable of providing the wanderer with a hope of getting out of it. As will be dealt with more extensively later, Hawthorne seems to have thought that there is something fundamentally sinister about the human intellect.⁷⁾ For him, the original sin which brought about the human fall is definitely the knowledge of good and evil transformed to the modernistic form of scientific mind.

Ahab's evil may be the sin of human will as much as of human intellect. The presumption of human will is no less condemned in Hawthorne's works. This aspect of Hawthorne's view is most effectively demonstrated in the shocking treatment given to the ministers in his works, who notwithstanding their heart-rending desire to do good, are obliged to grope in the thick shadow of evil. Ministers are supposedly the holiest beings on earth, and by employing them to be the fit examples of sinners, Hawthorne seems to essay to prove the justifiability of St. Paul's desperate remark that while he desires goodness, what is done is inevitably evil.⁸⁾ One of the most important causes preventing Arthur Dimmesdale from confessing his sin to the people of the community could be this contamination of human will, which tends to produce the ironic results of man's honest endeavour.

Thus Hawthorne tries to convince us of the universality of evil by demonstrating that human passion, reason, and will are fundamentally flawed, and either incapable of attaining the ultimate goodness, or actively antagonistic toward it. Hawthorne's vision of moral phenomenon is picturesque rather than descriptive, and is given more often than not in a flash of illuminative symbols which surpass ordinary understandings. Appropriately enough, Hawthorne employed three extraordinary symbols to represent the limitations of humanity in the three vital functions of man. There can be no argument respecting the scarlet letter, A, embroidered on the bosom of Hester and carved on the bare chest of Arthur Dimmesdale, representing the symbol of the guilty nature of human passion. Another strong, though delicate, symbol in the tiny shape of a human finger imprinted on the otherwise perfect face of Georgianna in "The Birthmark" could be regarded to suggest the limitation of human intellect with which her husband, Aylmer, strives to eliminate it.⁹⁾ "The Minister's Black Veil" introduces another memorable symbol of the

7) Rudolphe Von Abele, "The Scarlet Letter: A Reading," *Accent*, XI (Autumn, 1951), p. 227. Reprinted in *A Scarlet Letter Handbook*, ed. Seymour L. Gross.

8) *The Letter of Paul to the Romans*, 7: 19

9) See Randal Stewart, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-89.

universal sinfulness of humanity in the strange black veil Father Hooper wears on his face throughout his entire life from one Sunday morning, and this may be a symbol of degradation of human will.

It is easy to notice that when Hawthorne employs the word, heart, in a broad sense, he often makes it imply the whole spectrum of human faculties including passion, reason, and will. Then he depicts this heart as grimly as he could, utilizing all the paraphernalia of his symbolic methods. The result is often the most characteristic and extensive of all the symbolic expressions devised by Hawthorne. I mean his forests, gardens, and hollows, and in these symbolic sketches, the essential human nature of evil in man's moral landscape is graphically and conclusively expressed. Perhaps, Hawthorne's most representative symbol of human heart is forest, which becomes the scene of Goodman Brown's night journey taken for the purpose of attending the devil's black mass. In "The Hollow of the Three Hills," the human heart is etched as a hollow place surrounded by three hills, where a wretched fallen woman moans in vain her unfulfilled obligations to her husband and children, and her irrevocable estrangement from them. A magnificent and apparently beautiful tree in the midst of Rappaccini's garden is no less vivid symbol of original sin in the works of Hawthorne. Every object which is drawn to, and makes contact with, it is without exception poisoned and invested with mortality, and it is the underlying assumption of the story, "Rappaccini's Daughter," that no human being is exempt from the eventual contact with this deceptive fatal tree.¹⁰

Hawthorne's evil is not only horizontal but also vertical. It reaches out to the farthest corners of the earth to cloud the mind of the most innocent-looking persons, and at the same time plunges into the innermost center of the human heart to find its time-honored seat. Considering his prominent reputation as a psychological writer, the quality of intensity in the attribute of evil must be considered as having drawn more attention from Hawthorne than its quality of prevalence. It is an easily verifiable fact that most of the central events in Hawthorne's works occur in the veiled hearts of solitary individuals, and Hawthorne's usual practice as a writer could be said to have been typified in the metaphor employed by himself for the purpose of elucidating Chillingworth's endeavour in discovering the source of evil imbedded in the deep recess of Dimmesdale's heart. It is the image of a miner digging into the interior of the earth rich with mineral resources, which in turn symbolize evil natures of humanity.

10) The symbolic meaning of evil in trees and flowers that appear in "Rappaccini's Daughter" is extensively dealt with in Charles Boewe's "Rappaccini's Garden," *American Literature*, XXX (March, 1958), 37-49.

Many of Hawthorne's familiar images, such as dismal chambers, thick forests, secluded gardens, and shadowy hollows, attest to the profundity of evil chiefly by dwelling on their remoteness from the scenes of broad daylight and on the darkness of their surrounding. Since these images are designed to represent the human heart, we can reasonably conclude that the deeper the characters like Goodman Brown or Arthur Dimmesdale go into these places, and the darker their environment becomes, the more profound their evil nature is revealed to be. The most graphic instance of this truth would be the description of the forest scene in "Young Goodman Brown." Every step made by Brown in the direction of the center of the forest reveals more shocking evidences of evil, and when he reaches the heart of the forest, the devil's altar and the devil himself await him.

One is struck with the sense of evil's bottomless qualities when the characters wander through the maze of ambiguous moral wilderness. Hester is caught in this endless dilemma when she has lost the solid ground of her life in the puritan community, but this ambiguous visage of evil is most vividly and horrifyingly displayed in the nightmarish adventure of Robin into the night scenes of Boston on the eve of the revolutionary uprising, in "My Kinsman, Major Molineux." When this Robin's nightmarish wandering is transformed into the somnolent groping of Rouben Bourne in his intricate web of subconsciousness, the aspect of evil becomes even more sinister, for there seems to be no longer any vestige of control by man over his own destiny. Here, evil takes a form of psychological compulsion beset by the sense of elusive guilt. In a word, this is a haunted mind.¹¹⁾

How deep evil is rooted in human nature is most conclusively demonstrated in Aylmer's experimentation with his wife, Georgianna's one tiny flaw on her cheek in "The Birthmark." Investing this emblem of humanity with all the implications of human woes and frailties, he launches on the superhuman task of delving into the deepest source of its existence with the purpose of eliminating it. But as the story tells us, the source extends to the farthest limit of humanity so that when the root of this birthmark is eliminated, Georgianna's life is also terminated. Hawthorne's evil is as deep as man's mortality itself.¹²⁾

A sort of a footnote on the profundity of evil is given in an allegorical story titled, "The Celestial Railroad," in which a group of modern pilgrims attempt to reach the heavenly city by means of railroad. This is of course a modern version of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* envisioned by Hawthorne, who deplored the foolish naivete of his contemporary people with regard to the profound nature of evil. It is Hawthorne's grim warning that

11) In a story called, "The Haunted Mind," Hawthorne lifts the lid of this unconscious mind to show us all the guilt feelings buried in it.

12) A similar religious interpretation of "The Birthmark" could be found in R. B. Heilman's "Hawthorne's 'The Birthmark,' Science as Religion," *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, XLVIII (October, 1949), pp. 575-783.

the inability of apprehending this vital aspect of evil leads the pilgrims not to the heaven they hope for, but to hell. For in Hawthorne's religious conception, as in the biblical doctrine, man's salvation begins with a proper understanding of the profound nature of evil.

Evil endures inveterately and menacingly in Hawthorne's fiction. The seed of evil, once implanted, never dies, however deeply it sinks, and however long it lies there rotting, but eventually shoots up its bud and makes it grow to be an enormous tree which will cover the entire house with its ominous shadow. This is exactly what happens in *The House of the Seven Gables*, where Maule's curse incurred by the evil of Colonel Pyncheon several generations ago comes to bear its fruit when the most representative of his descendants is struck by the sudden, horrifying death blow of apoplexy. Again, it is a biblical passage that this fictional theme of Hawthorne reminds us of; one of the backbones of Mosaic law is that the sins of the fathers will be visited on his descendants to the third and the fourth generations.¹³⁾ All the biographers attest that Hawthorne's overriding concern with the existence of evil is partly stemmed from the fear of the consequence of the evil perpetrated by one of his ancestor, the notorious Judge Hathorne of the Salem Witchcraft Trials almost two centuries before.

This is all reminiscent of the concept of original sin; the apparently irrational doctrine insisting that because of Adam's single act of disobedience, all his descendants must bear its consequence, is seriously endorsed by Hawthorne. Hawthorne's fictional world would have provided a congenial soil to Milton, if he had ever been allowed to visit it, whose masterpiece, *Paradise Lost*, set down the premise that once Adam fell to the temptation of Satan, the host of fallen angels banished to hell succeeded in constructing the enormous bridge over the vast tract of chaos linking once for all the hell with the earth. It is characteristic of Hawthorne, who is much more interested in the vicissitudes of the individual heart rather than the universal outcome of the spiritual warfare, that the archetypal fall of man is repeated again and again in the heart of every individual. Describing the tortuous internal struggle of Arthur Dimmesdale after his initial fall, Hawthorne illustrates Dimmesdale's heart as a castle which, once breached, never regains its wholeness, with mortal enemies lurking constantly beside its ruined walls.

And be the stern and sad truth spoken, that the breach which guilt has once made into the human soul is never, in this mortal state, repaired. It may be watched and guarded; so that the enemy shall not force his way again into the citadel, and might even, in his subsequent assaults, select some other avenue, in preference to that where he had formerly succeeded. But there is still the ruined wall, and near it, the stealthy tread of the foe that would win over again his unforgotten triumph.

13) *The Second Book of Moses Commonly Called Exodus*, 20: 5.

The strongest testimony with respect to the perpetuity of evil can be found in Arthur Dimmesdale's tremulous admonishment to Hester on the scaffold that having once broken the god's law, they are not to expect a complete happiness, not even in eternity.

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

Perhaps, this is a vital point in comprehending the nature of Hawthorne's evil, that his evil transcends human mortality and boldly steps into the realm of eternity. For Hawthorne evil is essentially a spiritual entity, and the solution of its problem properly belongs to the prerogative of divine providence. What man can and ought to do is a complete surrendering of self to that providence, without reservation, and with fearful heart, resulting from his acute sense of enormous distance between the absolute sanctity of god and the abject nature of man's degradation.

In the final analysis, what Hawthorne envisioned regarding this transcendental power of evil is essentially a conception of evil that admits no function of saving grace embodied in Jesus Christ. This conception is strongly indicative of the rigid and austere atmosphere of Puritanism of which the most characteristic writer, Jonathan Edwards, eloquently amplified on just such a situation as Dimmesdale found himself in, in his famous sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of the Angry God." His tone is definitely that of the condemning prophets of the old testament, with little tempering grace of the new testament. As some critic mournfully said, Hawthorne's conception of evil only clarifies one side of truth and leaves the other side untouched.¹⁴⁾ For in his unredeemed world, Christ is yet to be born.

2. Component

We have a general impression concerning Hawthorne that he was a solitary and unsociable man mostly confined in his "dismal chamber," communicating with the outside

14) This passage becomes the nucleus of the perceptive analysis of *The Scarlet Letter* in Frederick Crews' *The Sins of the Fathers: Hawthorne's Psychological Themes*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1966. pp. 136-153.

15) George Woodberry, E. "*The Scarlet Letter*," *Nathaniel Hawthorne* (Boston, 1902), pp. 199-203.

mainly through his dark, somber stories. And there is ample evidences in his biographies to back up this impression.¹⁶⁾ We can find even stronger indications of his unsociability in his literary works. In a memorable sketch titled, "Sunday at Home," Hawthorne records his complete isolation from the world around him. Coverdale in *The Blithedale Romance*, who is regarded by most critics to be a spokesman for the author, is so disinclined to mix in with the other members of the community that he prepares for himself a hiding place the wood, from which he observes the activities of the others, himself unobserved.

However, the dusky, imaginative world he habitually inhabited was rather a trying one to Hawthorne, who seemed to have felt acutely the imaginary censure coming from socially active ancestors, and who actually thought *The House of the Seven Gables* superior to *The Scarlet Letter* on the ground of the former's more realistic rendering of the society. He called the human society "the magnetic chain of human sympathy," and thought that life is virtually dead outside this inviolable chain; that it ought to be the greatest desire and obligation for those who are estranged from this circle to essay to return to the fold.¹⁷⁾ Wakefield in "Wakefield" casually steps aside one day from the routine works of everyday life to rest a while in the outside of human circle, and it costs him twenty years of lifeless life to get back to the normal life which he slighted so groundlessly.

This magnetic chain of human sympathy which Hawthorne likens to human artery seems to be grounded, for Hawthorne, firmly on the premise that human blood is essentially and universally tainted with evil.¹⁸⁾ Everyman is contaminated with original sin, and all men are burdened with tragic life of agony and suffering. Thus the natural and rightful feelings of a man toward his fellowmen should be in Hawthorne's view compassion based on the affirmation of brotherly bond. The ignoring or want of this compassion always result in dire consequences in Hawthorne's works. Goodman Brown in "Young Goodman Brown" is a case in point. He goes to the forest and is given a horrendous revelation that all men are given over to evil, and he comes back to the village with the distrustful and antipathetic eyes toward the people because of their newly-discovered evil hearts, but he fails to reflect that he himself is in the same quandary, making him an integral part of the sinful com-

16) Mark Van Doren sketches Hawthorne's secluded life in Salem in the chapter called, "This Dismal Chamber," from *Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Critical Biography*. New York: William Sloane Associates, American Men of Letters, 1949. pp. 23-60.

17) This theme of an individual's estrangement from and return to his community in Hawthorne's works is perceptively dealt with by R. W. B. Lewis in "The Return into Time: Hawthorne." From *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955. pp. 110-126.

18) For a detailed explanation of the special relevance that the "Chain of Being" system has to *The Scarlet Letter*, see James W. Mathews' "Hawthorne and the Chain of Being," from *Modern Language Quarterly*, XVIII (Dec., 1957), pp. 282-294.

munity. Naturally he isolates himself from the community, and his life and death are without hope.

Wilful sequestration from fellow sinners, it is apparent in Hawthorne's works, is not the only form of manifesting the lack of concern for the universal brotherhood of sinfulness. Self-righteous persons, erroneously excluding themselves from the bond of evil, are not always content with the passive withholding from mixing with others, but often seek actively to persecute others who do not conform to their concept of righteousness. A great admirer of the Puritans' zeal for the God's work and of their hatred of evil as he was, Hawthorne was harshly critical of their rigorous and intolerant attitudes toward those who follow other forms of faith, free thinkers, or plain evil doers. As a general practice, Hawthorne was lenient or even sympathetic toward those who was evil because of the frailty of human mind, but he considered it a greater evil for a man to condemn mercilessly the fellow men who committed evil acts. His attitude was somewhat similar to that of Jesus toward the Pharisees who attempted to stone a woman caught in an act of adultery, although while Jesus put greater emphasis on hypocrisy, Hawthorne was more concerned with intolerance. The spectators in the first scaffold scene of *The Scarlet Letter*, not excepting the magistrates and the ministers, are evil in this sense. The more radical form of this evil is expressed in the characterization of the people of the Puritan communities in "The Gentle Boy." But the representative figure of this evil in Hawthorne's works is undoubtedly the iron-minded captain of the Puritan soldiers who becomes a definite symbol of self-righteousness and intolerance both in "Endicott and the Red Cross," and "The Maypole of Merrymount." "We are not, Hester, the worst sinners in the world. There is one worse than even the polluted priest! That old man's revenge has been blacker than my sin. He has violated, in cold blood, the sanctity of a human heart. Thou and I, Hester, never did so!" says Arthur Dimmesdale in *The Scarlet Letter* after he has known from Hester that Chillingworth, her lawful husband, deviously wreaked all kinds of subtle, psychological torture on him in order to lead his soul into perdition and eternal damnation, pretending to care for his physical well-being. What does it really signify to violate the sanctity of a human heart? Why does Hawthorne say that a human heart is sanctified? Have we not seen that he insisted again and again that a human heart is universally, essentially, and eternally polluted with evil? We will explore a little later this positive aspect of a human heart illuminated or intimated amidst the overwhelming evidences of blackness of human nature amassed by Hawthorne in his works. At any rate, despite the fallen state of a human heart, it is quite plain, Hawthorne emphatically asserts that it ought not to be an object of abhorrence or disdain, but of compassion and brotherly love. Chillingworth is often regarded as a figure of devil. Since a devil is an exact opposite of

god, it is not surprising that instead of imitating the divine love for a sinful soul, Chillingworth is inflicting the devilish hatred on the degraded heart. The lack of compassion makes him an instrument of the evil spirit.¹⁹⁾

It must have been nightmarish torments for Hawthorne to reflect about his own mode of activity which seems to have largely been that of an objective spectator whose vitality is mainly supplied by voracious curiosity. In this respect, he seems to have had a serious doubt about the moral ground for a writer's function. Chillingworth, who has a touch of Hawthorne in this sense, begins to dig into the anguished heart of Arthur Dimmesdale with only the scientific curiosity for the elusive pictures of psychological phenomenon. And we observe subsequently how this turning a sacred human heart to an instrument for the experimentation of unsympathetic and coldly curious mind leads to the double tragedies of transforming the experimenter into a veritable devil and of irrevocably ruining the soul of the experimented. Perhaps, the most graphic example of this phenomenon would be the life and death of Ethan Brand in a story with the title of the same name. His unbounded curiosity compels him to set out to search for the only unpardonable sin this world can offer, and after walking all over the world, he finally finds it in experimenting in cold blood with the innocent, tender heart of a girl, with the result that it is hopelessly destroyed. The source of this dire tragedy is revealed in a typically Hawthornesque symbol of a marble in the shape of a heart which remained in the limekiln after all the other parts of Ethan Brand's body are turned into so much of lime.

As we have seen in the previous passages, Hawthorne's concept of evil in the form of lack of compassion is the sin against man. However, the second component part of evil discernable in Hawthorne's fiction is primarily the sin against god. Next to the violation of the sanctity of the human heart, what appeared to Hawthorne's mind as the most flagrant form of evil in human nature is the intellectual arrogance of the superior persons who overreach themselves toward the absolute and eventually overstep the human limitations. They mostly rely on the head, which generates boundless imagination, and forget the heart, which is laden with the burden of sin and sorrow.²⁰⁾ This evil in the form of intellectual pride, though chiefly offensive to the divine prerogative, is also linked with the lack of compassion in the sense that it is a negation of human fellowship. Ethan Brand's vast development of intellectual faculties induces him to challenge the authority of god by searching for the unpardonable sin, but at the same time his strong sense of

19) A view of Chillingworth as a devil is expressed by Darrel Able in "The Devil in Boston," *Philological Quarterly*, XXXII (Oct., 1953), pp. 366-381.

20) Hawthorne's distinction between Heart and Head is noted by Richard Harter Fogle in *Hawthorne's Fiction: The Light and the Dark*, pp. 136-137.

superiority makes him disdain the fellowship of the village people with whom he was formerly associated with.

It is the general tenor of this paper that evil comprises by far the greater portion of human nature and experience in Hawthorne's fiction, although he seems to acknowledge the orthodox doctrine of christianity that man is essentially a composite creature of good and evil. The negation of either of these two indispensable components are equally monstrous in the eyes of Hawthorne, but judging from preponderant number of those who negate the existence of evil, that is, the human imperfection, it is conceivable that Hawthorne thought that this form of evil is much more sinister than the other. For it ultimately amounts to the negation of god. Waggoner comments: "In writing *The Scarlet Letter* Hawthorne let his genius take its course, and death and sin turned out to be more convincing than life and goodness."²¹ The power and privilege of creation, Hawthorne emphatically testifies throughout his works, belong to god, and the scientific presumption which rivals god's function in this respect constitutes a serious form of evil. Partially extolled though they were for their high principles and meritorious industry, Hawthorne's scientists are ironically doomed to self-destruction. Thus high-minded Aylmer pays the price of seeking the perfect beauty with the precious life of his loving wife, Georgianna; likewise, sure-handed Rappaccini's attempt to immunize his dear daughter, Beatrice, from the poisonous effect of evil results in the death of Beatrice. Though as much a scientist as Aylmer or Rappaccini, Chillingworth's career is somewhat different in the nature of evil he represents. Instead of attempting to create, he essays to destroy what is created by god, namely, the guilt-laden heart of Arthur Dimmesdale. Hawthorne thinks Chillingworth's endeavour as great a sin as the enterprises undertaken by Aylmer or Rappaccini.

Hawthorne's concept of pride, it is clear, is not confined to intellect, but is extended to all faculties of man including heart and will. When Hester proudly declares, in the forest scene, that their illicit passion has the sanctity of its own, she clearly demonstrates the pride of heart by making it the center of her life. It is a mark of Hawthorne's greatness that with all the moral restrictions imposed on Hester by the Puritans and the author, he makes her so attractive that many critics emphatically approve her romantic revolt against the Puritan community.²² Stuart P. Sherman extols her: "She is a free spirit liberated in a moral wilderness."²³ John Erskine is even more effusive in his admiration of Hester and her lover.

21) Hyatt H. Waggoner, op. cit., p. 129.

22) Mark Van Doren's estimate of Hester as a tragic heroine in *Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Critical Biography* (pp. 150-153) is a classic example.

23) See Stuart P. Sherman's "Hawthorne: A Puritan Critic of Puritanism," *Americans* (New York, 1922), pp. 150-153.

She has sinned, but the sin leads her straightway to a larger life. . . . Hawthorne . . . lets the sin elaborate itself, so far as Hester's nature is concerned, into nothing but beauty. . . . Since her love for Dimmesdale was the one sincere passion of her life, she obeyed it utterly, though a conventional judgment would have said that she was stepping out of the moral order. There is nothing in the story to suggest condemnation of her or of the minister in their sin. . . . The passion itself, as the two lovers still agree at the close of their hard experience, was sacred and never caused them repentance.²⁴⁾

Since it is an unshakable conviction of Hawthorne that the human nature is radically imperfect, whatever human faculty presumes to be perfect is suspect, and the conclusion of the novel shows Hester voluntarily taking up the life of repentance in order to expiate this sin of heart. On the other hand, the evil that results from the pride of will is more subtle and surreptitious. It is not even admitted by the culprits themselves, not to speak of not being openly declared. Hester is again a sinner in this sense when without really repenting her sin of adultery, she sought to gain the approval of the community by the admirable works of charity. In spite of these works, which gain for Hester the title of "Able," Hawthorne declares summarily that "the scarlet letter has not done its office," that is to say, that Hester is not recovered from her evil state. It would be hard, however, to associate the long, tortuous, and hypocritical life of Arthur Dimmesdale with the sin of pride, but there can be no viable explanation of his long delayed confession unless the pride of will is imputed. It is quite reasonable to suggest that by dedicating himself entirely to the life of penance and devotion, Dimmesdale may have hoped that his sin would somehow disappear. This constitutes the principle of salvation by works, not by grace, and this negation of divine grace is another form, perhaps the most tricky form, of evil in the moral system of Hawthorne.

In the chapter called, "The Vision of Evil" from his *American Renaissance*, F. O. Matthiessen argues:

Tragedy does not pose the situation of a faultless individual (or class) overwhelmed by an evil world, for it is built on the experienced realization that man is radically imperfect. Confronting this fact, tragedy must likewise contain a recognition that man, pitiful as he may be in his finite weakness, is still capable of apprehending perfection, and of becoming transfigured by that vision. But not only must the author of tragedy have accepted the inevitable co-existence of good and evil in man's nature, he must also possess the power to envisage some reconciliation between such opposites, and the control to hold an inexorable balance. He must be as far from the chaos of despair as he is from ill-founded optimism.

24) John Erskine, *Cambridge History of American Literature*, II, pp. 26-27.

25) F. O. Matthiessen, *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1941, p. 180.

Whereas pride arises from the negation of evil, despair results from the negation of good. The artificially transparent perspective of those who see nothing but goodness and infinite possibility propels them to arrogance and insolent sacrilege, but the opaque perspective of those who see nothing but evil in all directions sinks them into despair and lethargic inaction. A trio of eminent figures were pointed out as representing the first category of the mistaken idea with regard to human nature, and it would satisfy our sense of balance to introduce another trio of pathetic figures who seem to personify the second category of the miscalculation in the mathematics of morality. They are Brown of "Young Goodman Brown," Father Hooper of "Minister's Black Veil," and Giovanni Guasconti of "Rappaccini's Daughter." After the night journey into the heart of the forest, Brown is so overwhelmed by the vision of evil that it becomes as if he were struck blind by a lightning, that is, a lightning of evil, and he goes about seeing nothing but evil, and despairing.²⁶⁾ Even the pink ribbon which flutters on the head of his wife, Faith, symbolizing the hope of eventual salvation, has no effect on this dejected young man. It is significant that while men of intellectual pride are still permitted to retain some vestige of admirable qualities, Brown is depicted as a person with no redeeming qualities.

This estimation of character could also apply to Giovanni Guasconti. The poisonous quality of Rappaccini's daughter, Beatrice, with whom he is in love, surprised, enraged, and then disappointed him so much that he is willing to sacrifice her entirely unless the poison, which by the way symbolizes natural evil in human nature, be removed completely. However, in the dying moment, Beatrice accuses Giovanni with a penetrating remark that greater evil could be discovered in the heart of Giovanni, who cannot discern that although her body is contaminated with poison, her soul is illuminated by heavenly light. He is obsessed with the poisonous flower in the center of Rappaccini's garden, but it is his fatal flaw to be blind to the existence of the shattered fountain from which still flows the living water.

Compared to the previous two young men whose negative qualities are all too apparent, Father Hooper's black veil remains ambiguous up to the very end. He is apparently not a man of shallow character as in the case of the other two, and there is little doubt that his mysterious veil emanates the meaning of original sin, which must have been losing its potency at the time when the minister lived. But somehow, we cannot shake off a feeling that there is some morbid quality in the life of Father Hooper who refuses all light, including the heavenly one, to penetrate into the soul of others as well as of himself. It is

26) Concerning the devastating vision of evil illuminated in "Young Goodman Brown," Matthiessen reminds us of the fact that "Melville believed it no exaggeration to call it as 'deep as Dante' in its penetration into the mystery of evil." *American Renaissance*, p. 191.

more of the feeling of despair rather than of hope that his veil and the agony of his soul beneath this veil evoke, and it is not surprising that not a few critics view Father Hooper as a negative character. In this respect, Frederick Crews' estimate of him is particularly penetrating: "He is a pathetically self-deluded idealist who, goaded into monomania by a certain incompleteness in his nature, ends by becoming the one obvious exemplar of the vice he rightly or wrongly attributes to everyone else."²⁷⁾

This feeling of despair that emanates from a vision of over-abundance of evil, it seems fair to say, is a natural result of the Puritan trait of having a distorted view of evil, of giving it an unwarranted enlargement. Hawthorne's symbolic expression is raised to its highest pitch when he attempted to embody this seminal characteristic of the Puritans in a concrete object; when Hester visits Governor Bellingham's mansion in order to plead for the right of keeping Pearl with her, her figure is reflected on the convex mirror in the breast plate of armor in such a fashion that the scarlet A on her bosom is magnified excluding all the other parts of her figure.

3. Consequence

According to not a few critics, evil's effect on human heart, rather than its general attribute or its essential nature, seems to have been Hawthorne's primary concern, as we have already noticed in examining the psychological implications of evil in human nature. The subtle origin of evil in the heart of Rouben Bourne in "Roger Malvin's Burial" is deliberately made ambiguous, and the major concern of the story is largely directed to to the rare product of psychological phenomenon created by this ambivalent vision of evil.²⁸⁾ One of the main ingredients of this rare subterranean product is suffering. (Another important ingredient is of course isolation, which will be dealt with in the next chapter.) Even though the suffering compels Rouben Bourne to seek out the way of expiating the supposed act of evil, much of our and Hawthorne's interest is rested on the agonizing course of suffering the unhappy man has to endure. Likewise, all his major novels could be regarded as the records of suffering hearts burdened with the sorrows caused by their unexpected or unintentional surrender to evil. In this respect, *The Scarlet Letter* is the history of the agonized hearts of Arthur Dimmesdale and Hester Prynne; *The House of the Seven Gables* records the pathos of tribulation that the Pyncheon House has to undergo after the inhuman treatment of Maule by Colonel Pyncheon; *The Blithedale Romance* draws a picture of suffering hearts in experimental community of brotherly love destroyed

27) Frederick Crews, op. cit., pp. 106-107.

28) Ibid. pp. 80-95.

by the egocentric idealism of Hollingsworth; and *The Marble Faun* illustrates the tragic aftermath of the fatal sins committed by Miram and Donatello.

The concept of initiation into evil which produces suffering and which Hawthorne holds to be the typical course of individual life is quite consistent with the major tenor of the Christian doctrine with which he is in basic agreement. Although his moral perception has come largely from his introspective search of his own soul and objective or imaginative analysis of other people's behaviors, he could have endorsed whole-heartedly the biblical myth of Cain, who was exiled to the east of Eden to live a life of toil and tribulation after he had committed an act of evil by slaying his own brother, Able. As is illuminated in the *Book of Job*, the biblical teaching is that suffering does not necessarily come from evil of human heart, but it seems to endorse the idea that the consciousness of evil always produces suffering and sorrow. After denying his discipleship of Jesus just before his crucifixion Peter agonized and wept bitterly, as Judas must have done when the enormous consequence of his betrayal dawned on his consciousness. Hawthorne would not have had it in any other way.

Though sufferings are prevalent in Hawthorne's fictional world, none could be comparable to those harrowing experiences given to the shares of Arthur Dimmesdale and Donatello. Dimmesdale's suffering is especially made trying because the original act of evil compels him to live a life of deception while truth is his only joy and salvation. Donatello's suffering, on the other hand, originates not from the excess of consciousness as in the case of Dimmesdale, but from the previous lack of consciousness. His original state is, like the carefree life of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, so free from all association of evil that the shock of recognition of its existence is the complete overhaul of his life as he knows it. With the introduction of evil, all the sunny disposition of his has vanished, and the brooding temper of a sinful man takes over its place. Thus, Donatello is transformed from an animal into a man, that is, a suffering man.²⁹⁾

We have considered how initiation into evil leads to suffering, and it is quite natural that this consideration should immediately bring up the problem of isolation, for in Hawthorne's works, most of the suffering which is the direct result of a personal contact with evil is presented in the atmosphere of solitude or isolation. Hester Prynne, who violates the communal as well as the divine law, is ostracized by the community through the tribunal decision forcing her to wear the scarlet emblem of sin on her bosom. Attractively though it is embroidered in her desperate state of mind, the emblem is said to have efficacy

29) Fogle equates innocence with Eden or Arcadia, and fallen state, that is, evil, with Rome in *Hawthorne's Fiction: The Light and the Dark*, pp. 190-211.

so potent that no human sympathy could penetrate it. It is also symbolic of her alienated moral position outside the magnetic chain of human sympathy that she is obliged to reside on the outskirts of the Puritan settlement from which she has to draw her subsistence spiritually as well as materially.

Although the Puritan authorities are also faulted by the author for the lack of charity toward Hester, her isolation seems justified by the very nature of evil of which she has become a party.³⁰⁾ First of all, through passion, she has broken a human law estranging herself from the moral system which is the mainstay of the communal life; then, through the exercise of free thinking, she knowingly wanders through the maze of moral wilderness, forsaking the creed to which she has pledged her allegiance; and finally through the momentous act of will, she once again embraces her illicit lover deciding to sever herself irrevocably from the community, which is the moral center of her life.

Hawthorne's most representative and persistent symbol dealing with moral nature of human heart is, perhaps, the symbols of light and darkness.³¹⁾ It is a common knowledge of man that evil is vitally connected with darkness, and good with light, but Hawthorne's evil seems to have a special quality of affinity with darkness on the strength of the great number of solitary characters walking noiselessly through the twilight shadows, or groveling in the pitch-darkness of midnight. The most illuminating scene in this respect would be the midnight vigil of Arthur Dimmesdale, who driven by the acute sense of remorse and compunction, goes through the thick darkness of the night to the scaffold and climbs and stands on it all by himself unobserved by anybody. In the distorted imagination of the minister, he is closest to the broad daylight of revelation of his secret, but in reality he cannot be more isolated from his fellow men than at this moment, and this isolation is a typical pattern of Hawthornesque evil.

However, the principle of causation in the relationship between evil and isolation, we find, works in both directions; accordingly, aside from the non-voluntary isolation as an aftermath of evil, there is also the voluntary isolation, which is a cause of evil, the sin of pride, counted as one of the cardinal sins in Hawthorne's system of moral values. Dimmesdale, Donatello, Hooper, and Rouben Bourne are all unwilling victims of the inborn frailty in human nature, and as such, the sufferings of these tender consciences could be salutary in the ultimate sense, as will be argued more fully a little later. We can be reasonably certain, on the other hand, that Hawthorne's sympathy does not extend to those

30) For the balanced guilt shared equally by Hester and the Puritan community, apart from R. W. B. Lewis's *American Adam*, see Marius Bewley's "Hawthorne's Novels," *The Eccentric Design* (New York, 1959), pp. 166-172.

31) For the analysis of the symbols of light and darkness, see Fogle's *Hawthorne's Fiction* (pp. 132-135) in addition to Waggoner's *Hawthorne*.

who indulge in another kind of isolation, namely, the self-righteous exclusion of others from the narrow confine of their lives. Hawthorne portrays them as the characters of especial gloom and coldness, and it is a measure of his special concern with this form of evil that we can find so many characters in his fiction who from either a sense of self-supremacy or that of self-righteousness, willfully refrain from the life-giving contact with their fellow men. To name a few conspicuous ones, they include Ethan Brand, Lady Eleanore Rochcliffe in "Lady Eleanore's Mantle," Richard Digby of "The Man of Adamant," Catharine, Ibrahim's mother in "The Gentle Boy," a group of six disillusioned people in "The Canterbury Pilgrims," and Goodman Brown, whose isolation is unique in the sense that it is a result as well as a cause of evil. Professor Randall Stewart's remark maintaining that this theme "bears a closer relationship than any other to (Hawthorne's) own life" can also apply to Hawthorne's fictional works.³²⁾

If the consequences resulting from man's contact with evil are exhausted in suffering and isolation, Hawthorne would surely deserve to be called a pessimistic writer, which he was not, in spite of all the gloomy atmosphere and preponderance of evil in his work. There is always in Hawthorne's characters a clear sign of nervous tension, an irrepressible sense of restlessness, which does not allow them to resign themselves to the fate of groping eternally in the dark. They seem to be convinced that every hour of agony, every step of suffering will somehow contribute to making themselves stronger to meet the challenge of far greater tribulation, which they are sure to confront when they cross over the extreme boundary of this mortal life. It is quite possible, judging from the evidences of his works, to suppose that Hawthorne thought this world primarily as a vale of sin and sorrow, and that in order to be admitted into the shining gate of the eternal world, man, like Christian of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, has to have his soul chastened through all kinds of sufferings and tribulations.³³⁾

In this sense, the initiation into evil is regarded in Hawthorne's fictional world to be a necessary first step in the direction of ultimate truth. The hero of a story, if he is not already steeped in evil, approaches the outer skirt of evil territory, having taken leave of the land of innocence and delusion, as Robin does in "My Kinsman, Major Molineux." After being thoroughly confused and intimidated by the enigmatic and hideous visage of evil among the turbulent night scenes of the prerevolutionary Boston, Robin is finally

32) Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The American Notebooks*, ed. Randall Stewart (New Haven, 1932), p. lxciii.

33) Another version of the relationship between the night journey into the region of evil and the problem of expiation could be found in Rudolph von Abele's "The Scarlet Letter: A Reading." op. cit. 214-222.

face to face with his mentor of two faces, one red and one black, representing the ambiguous nature of evil, which is reality for Hawthorne. Robin's country house is transformed into Donatello's ancestral country seat, and the street of colonial Boston is enlarged that it may appear as the nineteenth century Rome with memories of the glorious Roman empire strong among its ruins and galleries, in *The Marble Faun*. Like Robin, Donatello, whose faun-like features and gestures are too obvious a symbol of innocence, is compelled by circumstances to grapple with the overwhelming presence of evil in himself as well as in others, and though the ultimate efficacy of evil is deliberately veiled in ambiguity, the general conclusion of the work leaves us with no doubt about the author's sentiment that the experience of evil has greatly strengthened Donatello's judgment, matured his perspective, and finally humanized his overall personality.

Another pair of agonized souls, Rouben Bourne in "Roger Malvin's Burial," and Arthur Dimmesdale in *The Scarlet Letter* open up a new dimension for us in the positive consequences of evil. Their initial contract with evil, the authenticity of which is at times doubted by the principals, is nevertheless a preestablished or presumed fact, and all the parties concerned including the main characters, the author, and the readers are mainly interested in the ultimate influence of this evil on the soul of the initiated. What transpires from the sacrificial death of Rouben Bourne's only son and the final confession of Arthur Dimmesdale before his ignominious death on the scaffold is the author's unambiguous conviction that soul is purified through tribulation occasioned by evil.³⁴⁾

The wholesome and salutary qualities of this evil-oriented discipline are amply suggested by the conclusively directed fingers of the author in the juxtaposed communities of innocence and experience. The Shaker community and the outside world are critically balanced for the young lovers, Miriam and Josiah, although heavily tipped on the side of the isolated and morally innocent community for the discouraged pilgrims, but in the end, the lovers bravely opt for the outside world full of evil experiences. This vital choice between the innocent Eden and the experienced Rome is not voluntary but is enforced by the party of harsh experience on another pair of young lovers, Edith and Edgar in "The Maypole of Merrymount." Although the seminal, chart-like antithesis between the Anglican settlement of Merrymount and the Puritan settlement of Plymouth is interpreted in various ways according to the viewpoints of the critics, in the archetypal moral point of view, Merrymount stands for Eden and its innocence, while Plymouth represents Rome and human experience. Thus, Edgar and Edith are naturally expelled from the paradisaical Merrymount by the flaming swords of Endicott and his Puritan soldiers, who could be

34) Evil becomes investment in time and society, which generates suffering and expiation, in Roy R. Male's *Hawthorne's Tragic Vision*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1957.

interpreted as messengers of god. As we have already seen in a previous chapter, the shallowminded passengers of "The Celestial Railroad" are not mindful of this time-honored precept with regard to the journey of human soul and come to a tragic end of ultimate destruction.

Conclusion

So far, we have examined Nathaniel Hawthorne's concept of evil with some detailed analyses, which for convenience's sake is divided into three categories of attribute, component, and consequence. The major attributes of evil in Hawthorne's fiction seem pretty much exhausted in the three lines of investigation we have made, namely, the universality, profundity, and perpetuity of evil. Even with a touch of cruelty, Hawthorne points his finger at a mark of evil in the most unlikely places, such as the interior of a minister's heart or the pink ribbon of an innocent wife. Evil is found to have a firm grip on the unconscious level of human heart. Once admitted into the heart, we have to bear its effect to the end of this mortal life, and often its stain threatens to extend into eternity. The power of evil almost seems absolute in Hawthorne's fiction. The analysis of the second category—that of component—is rather eclectic, emphasizing a few distinctive elements in numerous possibilities. The failure of love, which constitutes the first component part of evil, comes from the inability of comprehending the universality of evil, and the intellectual pride, which is described as the second component part of evil, arises from the unwillingness to acknowledge the profundity of evil. As for despair, the third component part of evil, too much of evil, which shuts out the spiritual light of goodness, plays the havoc. Hawthorne was as much interested in the third category of evil—that of consequence—as in anything else. He is most skilled in leading the readers through the secret chambers of agonized souls who suffers from the double consequences of suffering and isolation resulting from the initiation into evil. It is, however, a strong characteristic of Hawthorne that he on principle makes this suffering and isolation contributive to the maturation and the hope of ultimate salvation.

The overall impression that we get from Nathaniel Hawthorne's works is that he invariably equates the human experience on earth with some dealing with evil, whether it be the actual commitment of an evil act or the acute perception of universal evil. In spite of the superficial labling of him as a romanticist, it is convincingly clear that Hawthorne founded his truth on a solid ground of reality, and that he found this reality steeped in evil. It is a well known fact that this particular attitude toward reality was in direct opposition to the transcendentalistic view of Ralph Waldo Emerson, who philosophized that evil in essence does not exist, and that there is an infinite possibility of goodness

of man. It is not surprising that Hawthorne criticized the transcendentalists as those who a mirage and purported to grab a fleeting cloud. As we have already observed, instead of soring up to heaven through the cloud, as Emerson and his followers did, Hawthorne strived to get to heaven through the center of the earth, which he thought was the solid basis of human experience.

A word about the often-talked about doctrine of the “fortunate fall” seems in order, although I do not presume to have exhausted all the considerations about Hawthorne’s concept of evil. I think it a presumption on the part of man, who has fallen irrevocably, once for all, to talk about such a complacent concept, and there is no real evidences either in the Bible or in Hawthorne’s works to substantiate it. As far as I can see, Hawthorne would have gladly stayed in Eden, if such an impossible supposition had been allowed to stand, but it was his unshakable conviction that man has forever lost his innocence, and that he is obliged to make the best of his fallen state.³⁵⁾ A few symbolic figures such as Hilda in *The Marble Faun* notwithstanding, Hawthorne couldn’t really believe the absolute innocence in the heart of man, and the unwillingness of these supposedly innocent persons to face the naked figure of evil connotes a certain blindness of their spiritual perspective. Hawthorne definately thought evil salutary and educative, but that is because evil in his opinion is the human reality. He did not really care about the probable state before the fall, and he didn’t presumed to know much about the possible state after death, for evil in the present state is sufficiently potent to engage all his energy and attention.

35) Fogle’s following estimate of human predicament seems apt in this respect: “This is the dilemma: human beings by their natures must fall into error and yet it would be better if they did not.” *Hawthorne’s Fiction*, p. 132.