HAWTHORNE AND METAFICTION

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE AND METAFICTION

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ABSTRACT.

This thesis approaches the work of Nathaniel Hawthorne from a narratological paradigm, arguing that metafiction is one of the primary elements of Hawthorne's style and literary project as a Romantic author. Metafiction informs his themes, characters and aesthetics as Hawthorne is majorly concerned with bridging the gap between author and reader, text and physical book, and ultimately, the imaginary and the real. Hawthorne is incessant in his assertions about his work being authored works of fiction, and becomes concerned about readers properly receiving his fiction as authored literary surface. Engaging with and incorporating the work of major literary theorists such as Frye, Booth, Genette and Todorov—as well as new, emergent critics of Hawthorne—this study carefully examines his major novels, a number of his tales and sketches, and his paratextual materials. Metafiction is rarely considered in much of the scholarship discussing Hawthorne's style, and is a convenient way of unifying many aspects of his style that have been previously fractured, including the distance and delicacy of his narration and voice, his experiments in genre, and his techniques of framing and diegesis.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS.

DECLARATION OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT.

The following thesis is the result of my cumulative research concerning many different facets of literary theory surrounding Nathaniel Hawthorne. The thesis and its major arguments, including the idea that Hawthorne's works are primarily metafictional in nature, are the result of original ideas and thinking upon Hawthorne's writing, unless where otherwise specified and cited. The thesis also includes ideas developed in discussion with Professor Joseph Adamson (supervisor) and Professor Jeffery Donaldson. The thesis incorporates and engages with criticism from many major theorists, and credit has been given in those instances.

The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms defines metafiction as follows:

> Fiction about fiction; or more especially a kind of fiction that openly comments on its own fictional status. In a weak sense, many modern novels about novelists having problems writing their novels may be called metafictional in so far as they discuss the nature of fiction; but the term is normally used for works that involve a significant degree of self-consciousness about themselves as fictions, in ways that go beyond occasional apologetic addresses to the reader.

This definition of the term highlights the importance of metafiction's having to go beyond the depiction of an author having trouble penning their tales into a larger dissemination of sources and embodiments; this definition, oddly enough, also seems to focus on how metafiction should involve an extension beyond what typifies the technique at these lowest levels, without exploring what such a process might include. Doubtless, though, the gem of metafiction's core is this idea that it is "fiction about fiction". The writing of Nathaniel Hawthorne—his novels, his short works, and his paratexts—provide the most fascinating ways of showing the multitudinous methods in which fiction may become metafiction. For at their most basic, these works cannot escape being fiction that actively ruminates and comments upon their own status as fiction, as authored existences; at the most complex, they become explorations of ideas that become immediate physical material, of the contexts separating the imagined and the real, of characters and how readers observe them, of genre and its effects upon individual epistemologies, and, most importantly, how the author is aware of his own responsibilities, and how he might

always be manipulating, transforming them, appropriating them in the name of authorship and artistic license.

Thus, this study works to detail and account for these manifold ways in which the oeuvre of Nathaniel Hawthorne is metafictional above anything else. Rarely can the reader escape from the fact he or she is reading an *authored work of fiction* in any given Hawthorne text; the immersion of the reader entirely into an imagined world is never completely allowed, at least without a minimal filter of epistemological awareness. Under the spell of Hawthorne, this complete immersion into the imagined is nary a desired process, either. We readers must always be aware that the book we hold in our hands is the threshold that separates the imaged and the real world at the same time is takes on the qualities of both, and intermingles them. For Hawthorne, the ideal piece of fiction lives resting perfectly on the dividing line, absorbing and disseminating a simultaneity of romance coloured by its inherently artificial, aesthetic nature as created, artistically-wrought work. The contexts of reality and the imaginary must always be in harmonious operation, and it is metafiction that best asserts this aesthetic truth.

The first chapter of this study, "Hawthorne and the Art of the Paratext", introduces the metafictional world of Hawthorne by looking closely at two of his most famous paratexts: "The Old Manse" from *Mosses From an Old Manse* and "The Custom-House" from *The Scarlet Letter*. Interacting heavily with the theories of Gérard Genette regarding paratexts, their definitions and the ends they often achieve, this chapter opens the topic of Hawthorne's recurrent concern about books as physical objects. Hawthorne is delighted by the idea that the imaginary can manifest itself physically through books;

the result is the echoed theme that fiction has surface. A book's physicality can speak to its interiority, and vice versa. This chapter also explores Hawthorne's autobiographical impulses inherent in his paratexts, accounting for how readers may properly receive his fiction via these prefatory materials. Hawthorne here additionally opens the topic of "authorial veiling"—how an author must never speak truly of himself at the same time he tries his best to guide the reader into an orderly reception of the texts at hand. This chapter also discusses the important process of reflection between paratext and main text that must be achieved by the author.

The second chapter, "Hawthorne and the Contexts of the Literary", explores how Hawthorne creates two spheres of existence within his writing and his representational worlds, the imaginary and the real. Through the tale "Rappaccini's Daughter" and the rarely-considered "Night Sketches", I show how these two texts are informed by a flurry of oppositions: real and imaginary, subject and other, light and dark. These oppositions are ultimately configured by Hawthorne in terms of readerly perception, becoming an allegory of romance versus realism, and how the operation of both works upon reader, author and character alike, ultimately hinging upon the interdependence of both spheres.

The third chapter, "Hawthorne and the Delicacy of Observation", steps into *The House of the Seven Gables* to analyse Hawthorne's characteristic "distance" of voice and style. The novel is really about observation—both how the author and the reader observe the characters and their world. This observation becomes a delicate process in which the author has the onus of treating his characters both as real individuals with real interiority (that must not be infringed upon), and as fictional characters who inhabit a world defined

by generic oppositions and aesthetic countercurrents. Characters observe each other, either correctly or incorrectly, in a New England where gothic and romantic conventions furnish the novel's tension. Simultaneously are they observed by the author himself—Hawthorne—who constantly must present only as much as necessary for the reader. Using the idea of the "negative romance", I show how this theme of observation becomes a generic concern that involves the sophisticated manipulation of generic conventions by the author.

The fourth chapter, "Hawthorne, Genre and the Fantastic", further explores Hawthorne's manipulation of genre, this time in the crumbling world of Italy that makes up his final novel *The Marble Faun*. The novel is a metafictional discussion of art itself, as its four central characters struggle with the dangerous and sinister influence the Eternal City seems to be exuding upon them. Hawthorne tactfully transforms these goings-on into a subconscious highlighting of diegesis and how it operates within novels. Using a multiplicity of narratives and genres that seem in contest with each other (as in *The House of the Seven Gables*), Hawthorne implies the reader's individual epistemology, quietly inserting the belief that good readers must be aware of genre and narrative within novels in order to receive them properly. The chapter ends with what is the true, defining genre of the novel, what Tzvetan Todorov calls the "fantastic".

The fifth and final chapter, "Hawthorne and the Narratology of Nature", details a recurrent theme in Hawthorne: the idea that nature is informed by processes of narratology itself. Returning to "The Old Manse" and three specific chapters of *The Scarlet Letter*, what I call the "forest chapters", I explore how nature is the process of

story-telling itself, and how the processes of narratology and authorship might in fact be proper mimetic acts of human beings trying to capture both nature and human nature at once.

Lastly, I must account for a certain tendency of this study that might seem erroneous to some, and that is how I constantly refer to the narrator not as "the narrator" but as Hawthorne himself. This is because, in the majority of Hawthorne's writing, the author *is* himself—not a first-person account of a witness who was involved in these narrative proceedings, but as the author who penned the tale. For this reason, I see no reason to use distancing terminology like "the narrator", or even "the author", without referring to the man himself. For, if we remove the *real* author from the equation, the texts lose a portion of their metafictional atmosphere. Hawthorne clearly wants us to read the texts as penned works of fiction, with an extremely present author—an author as present as the reader who skims the page. Though there certainly are exceptions in Hawthorne's canon with actual narrators (*The Blithedale Romance*, a number of tales), the texts studied herein are all texts where the author is the stage-director, the person responsible for the narrated events, and who actively wants to watch the reader as they receive these fictions.

I. "No novel, even": Hawthorne and the Art of the Paratext

"At the time of writing this article, the author intended to publish, along with 'The Scarlet Letter,' several shorter tales and sketches. These it has been thought advisable to

defer" (156)—so reads a note found on the bottom of one of the final pages of Hawthorne's "introduction" to *The Scarlet Letter*, "The Custom-House". As it ended up being published, however, we have received only *The Scarlet Letter* and "The Custom-House" within the printed pages of the book. Judging from this note that resides at the bottom of a page, almost as if wary of being seen, Hawthorne had not intended for *The Scarlet Letter* to be the sole narrative of the volume. If *The Scarlet Letter* had been published alongside a number of his tales and sketches, would it now be considered differently in the context of its neighbours, its collected whole—would it now be termed a novella, or possibly explained as a lengthy tale?

Whatever the case, Hawthorne establishes with this note, and through the various facets of his strange and lush introductory to *The Scarlet Letter*, the complicated importance of paratexts within his writing, including the remarkable effect they have in readers' reception of the main text. Each of Hawthorne's novels contains a preface (and in the special case of *The Marble Faun*, a postface), as well as each volume of his collected tales and sketches. These prefaces have manifold functions: they are a way for the author to establish his voice and authorial identity to his audience; they are a way of providing a unity for the published works, drawing connections between individual pieces, and establishing what worth they have as a whole; they are a method of indicating and detailing genre, something especially important within Hawthorne's novels; they account for the author's endeavours in writing, explaining the various experiences and associations that went into its creation, and as such, also create associations for the reader in and amongst the paratexts and main texts; they are a way of accounting for the author's

sources and providing a historical blueprint for the work; and, uncommonly amongst most authors but common with Hawthorne, they are a way of manipulating tradition, and dodging the predictable course of pedestrian prefaces under a deceit of modesty and apology. These functions of the paratext are all derived from Gérard Genette's seminal *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, and the following chapter will be a careful examination of two of Hawthorne's paratexts (both prefaces)—"The Old Manse" (from his collection *Mosses From an Old Manse*) and "The Custom-House" (from his second novel *The Scarlet Letter*).

Genette begins his study with the following definition of the paratext:

> [a] text is rarely presented in an unadorned state, unreinforced and unaccompanied by a certain number of verbal or other productions, such as an author's name, a title, a preface, illustrations. And although we do not always know whether these productions are to be regarded as belonging to the text, in any case they surround it and extend it, precisely in order to *present* it, in the usual sense of this verb but also in the strongest sense: to *make present*, to ensure the text's presence in the world, its 'reception' and consumption in the form (nowadays, at least) of a book. (1)

No doubt, this original description of the paratext resonates with a high number of the themes and concerns expressed by Hawthorne within his prefaces, his notes, and in certain instances, his titles.

Beginning with "The Old Manse", Hawthorne has imbued this autobiographical preface with a discussion of literature where the physicality of books, and physicality's

relation to a book's worth as literature versus artifact becomes an overarching theme. He also discusses the value (or lack thereof) of reading his tales, and ruminates upon the authorial process itself, at the same time creating a preface that does not fulfill the traditional functions of its genre as authorial paratext. "The Custom-House", on the other hand, seems at once more traditional as a "citing sources" introduction for the reader in which Hawthorne adds credibility to the main narrative through its paratext. Engaging with a few pieces of scholarship concerning "The Custom-House" and its complex nature, it will also become evident that the work is about associations: connections both Hawthorne and the reader draw between paratext and main text. How these two prefaces are similar—and how they are both metafictional—is to be found in how they are about a certain kind of interaction. Genette calls paratexts thresholds, and this is because they exist between the interior of a narrative and its exterior, between author and reader, between the text and the reader's reception thereof. Each of these two prefaces are pieces of writing about writing; places in which we see a Hawthorne preoccupied in explaining, detailing and puzzling over his own authorial processes and fulfillment of literary expectations, intrinsic and extrinsic. They are texts that place demands upon the reader's reading, at once telling us how to receive (and feel about) the paratexts and main texts at hand and coyly escaping (or in Genette's terms, "dodging") preconceived notions of what prefaces should accomplish, implying the reader in more subliminal ways. Hawthorne's simultaneous emphasis on the physical world in "The Old Manse" and the imaginative world in "The Custom-House" paint a picture of two spaces at odds with each other; the successful completion of literary art is always something that is dependent upon the gray

space that emerges between the two. These Hawthornean paratexts are his way of letting his readership know he is concerned with the processes of literature—not only literature's genesis, but its reception; not only its point A, but its point B. These paratexts are the gray spaces necessary to metafiction where author-to-reader interaction occurs.

"The Old Manse", the 1846 preface to Hawthorne's second collection of tales (not including those written for children) *Mosses From an Old Manse*, is the first-person narration of the time Hawthorne spent at the Massachusetts house where Emerson also once stayed, and as Hawthorne remarks, "wrote 'Nature'" (1124). The preface is a slow-moving autobiographical wandering in which Hawthorne describes his arrival, the manse itself, his projects in writing, and his ventures into the surrounding natural scenery. Here is one of the first extended passages from "The Old Manse":

> I took shame to myself for having been so long a writer of idle stories, and ventured to hope that wisdom would descend upon me with the falling leaves of the avenue; and that I should light upon an intellectual treasure in the old Manse, well worth those hoards of long-hidden gold, which people seek for in moss-grown houses. Profound treatises of morality;—a layman's unprofessional, and therefore unprejudiced views of religion;—histories, (such as Bancroft might have written, had he taken up his abode here, as he once purposed,) bright with picture, gleaming over a depth of philosophic thought;—these were the works that might fitly have flowed from such a retirement. (1124)

What is remarkable about this initial passage of Hawthorne's is that he has viewed the house as a structure rich with literary, narratological potential; the house seems to be bursting at the seams with potential *texts* the moment he has set foot within it. Hawthorne does admit this to be an ideal—after all, these are the works that "might fitly have flowed" from a stay within the old manse's walls. But even so, the old manse is a structure that gets immediately aligned with the literary—within it, Hawthorne wishes naught but to find histories that are like long-hidden intellectual gold. This is but a single instance to be found within the preface in which Hawthorne configures histories, treatises and other such texts in terms of metaphors of treasure and the precious. To go treasure-hunting in the old building would be, ideally, to light upon texts—and these are as good as gold according to the colour of Hawthorne's metaphors.

He continues: "In the humblest event, I resolved at least to achieve a novel, that should evolve some deep lesson, and should possess physical substance enough to stand alone" (1124). Hawthorne goes on to find that within the manse, there is a room extremely conducive to such literary endeavours: "In the furtherance of my design, and as if to leave me no pretext for not fulfilling it, there was, in the rear of the house, the most delightful little nook of a study that ever afforded its snug seclusion to a scholar. It was here that Emerson wrote 'Nature'" (1124). The old manse is now not only a structure rife with potential texts, but with *Hawthorne's* potential text—a novel, hopefully. Here is a physical locus in which he may work towards that potential text; and not only that, but it a space imbued with literary precedence, the remarkable intertextuality of Emerson's *Nature*. Surely if Emerson was able to pen his substantial literary work in this little nook,

so too will Hawthorne be able. From the very beginning of the preface the house is aligned via metaphor, actual physical space and intertextuality as a literary structure. The house's physical structure itself is hiding texts, and is conducive to not only the discovery of them, but the production of new ones. As such, "The Old Manse" is an account of Hawthorne's literary efforts in a literary space.

The preface continues to detail some of his wished-for literary discoveries as well, as we watch Hawthorne wander into the dusty garret, finding a veritable trove of old tomes: "The old books would have been worth nothing at an auction. In this venerable garret, however, they possessed an interest quite apart from their literary value, as heirlooms, many of which had been transmitted down through a series of consecrated hands, from the days of the mighty Puritan divines" (1135). Although Hawthorne is mostly displeased with the primarily religious content of the tomes in the garret, this does not matter so much; the books, in the context of the old manse (not an auction), have high value as heirlooms—that is, they have high value as physical artifacts passed down from common ancestral history. In this case, the books' (at least subjectively) uninteresting literary contents are not what determine their worth; it is their existence as objects of history. Further to this is Hawthorne's witty observation about a holy folio: "Then there was a vast folio Body of Divinity; too corpulent a body, it might be feared, to comprehend the spiritual element of religion" (1136). Hawthorne, with this short sentence, has accomplished a fairly complex idea. On a level plainly seen, it indicates that Hawthorne believes overly-verbose religious treatises cannot make any claims to profound spiritual understanding. On a more abstract level, Hawthorne has laid out the

idea that a book's physicality can be an indicator of its interiority. Here is a religious folio that is too thick; as such, it cannot contain worthwhile contents. The observation also has a strangely moral tone, if one ventures to consider corpulence as being irreligious and excessive, and thus not conducive to spiritual understanding. This three-fold interpretation of Hawthorne's quip about a folio succinctly presents the idea that books have interiority that manifests itself in the physical world, and this physicality of a book is an indicator of its literary contents and, even further, its literary worth. Books can have worth simply as physical heirlooms; books can have physicality that in turn devalues their interiority.

Hawthorne eventually chooses to leave the scene:

> Lightly as I have spoken of these old books, there yet lingers with me a superstitious reverence for literature of all kinds. A bound volume has a charm in my eyes, similar to what scraps of manuscript possess, for the good Mussulman. He imagines, that those wind-wafted records are perhaps hallowed by some sacred verse; and I, that every new book, or antique one, may contain the 'Open Sesame'—the spell to disclose treasures, hidden in some unsuspected cave of Truth. Thus, it was not without sadness, that I turned away from the library of the Old Manse. (1138)

He has considered that books without literary value can have different kinds of value; he has also considered that a book's physicality can tell of its literary value. His final observation here is that all physical volumes are potential in which he wishes to find "Truth", as one would discover treasure. Hawthorne's continued metaphor of book as

treasure, and thus text as treasure, shows the importance of texts as they manifest themselves into the world where humans live, the physical world. It is a world that has, through these initial passages, become anchored in the structural and the architectural. On top of this, humans ascribe different types of "value" to different types of books: economical, ancestral, aesthetic/moral. Spaces can be literary ones with precedence, provided by his instance of intertextuality with Emerson, and as such this is a naturally metafictional process, as it refers to a real text that exists outside of the current autobiographical paratext of Hawthorne's. Texts manifest themselves into the physical world, and their resultant physicality can either correctly tell of their worth (the religious folio) or become valuable *only* for their physicality (the Puritan tomes). This sense of a text's eventual physicality is driven home by Hawthorne's original proposition that he wants to write a novel with enough physical substance to be able to stand on its own (and the two-fold implication of this being a book to have enough of a literary reputation to hold its own, and enough physical bulk to achieve the *literal* feat in physical reality). As such, a text's status as being a substantial, worthwhile thing is anchored in its physicality; this is a theme that pervades "The Old Manse". A book's contents must be Truthful, of course, to be a real treasure, as Hawthorne points out; but its worth is also attested for in its resultant physicality. To think that physicality can be an indicator of a book's interiority whatsoever is a metafictional supposition: texts, being read, exist in the mind; books, being read, exist in the physical. The inseparable connection that Hawthorne draws between these two modes of existence for texts is one that crosses the void of the purely fictional.

Having thus opened the topic of a text's literary "value", it is now timely to move from the literary versus the physical ramifications of texts to see what sort of larger values the preface has in itself, as a piece of literature—that is, what functions it serves as a paratext. Genette introduces the larger function of the original preface (one written by an author, as an author, to his or her audience):

> The original assumptive authorial preface, which we will thus shorten to *original preface*, has as its chief function *to ensure that the text is read properly*. This simplistic phrase is more complex than it may seem, for it can be analyzed into two actions, the first of which enables—but does not in any way guarantee—the second (in other words, the first action is a necessary but not sufficient condition of the second). These two actions are *to get the book read* and *to get the book read properly*. (197)

There is no doubt that Hawthorne had in mind, while writing his prefaces, that he wants his audience to receive his works correctly—and as such, he must touch upon some sort of directive, some sort of passage that will explain to the reader the value of the text (in this case, Hawthorne's collection of tales and sketches) and how the reader should receive it.

To establish this, Hawthorne appeals to the function of unity, just one of the many paratextual functions Genette outlines:

> One theme of value-enhancement which, for an obvious reason, is characteristic of prefaces to collections (of poems, novellas, essays) consists of showing the unity—formal or, more often, thematic—of what is likely to

seem *a priori* a factitious and contingent jumble of things that end up together primarily as a result of the very natural need and very legitimate desire to clean out a drawer. (201)

Thus a latter portion of "The Old Manse" is dedicated to serving such a function, and Hawthorne describes the unity of the tales that appear in *Mosses From an Old Manse* as follows:

With these idle weeds and withering blossoms, I have intermixed some that were produced long ago—old, faded things, reminding me of flowers pressed between the leaves of a book—and now offer the bouquet, such as it is, to any whom it may please. These fitful sketches, with so little of external life about them, yet claiming no profundity of purpose,—so reserved, even while they sometimes seem so frank,—often but half in earnest, and never, even when most so, expressing satisfactorily the thoughts which they profess to image— such trifles, I truly feel, afford no solid basis for a literary reputation (1149).

Hawthorne's unity—one of the only places in "The Old Manse" where he mentions the tales that make up the collection, the main text itself—is one of obvious humility and careworn modesty. To receive *Mosses From an Old Manse* properly, a reader should not have expectations of a work that has achieved for its author a grandiose and powerful literary reputation. The reader must take them for what they are—old pressed flowers of varying nature, never quite being sincere and never quite being devoid of sincerity; being so reserved, though they may seem so frank. Once again Hawthorne has created a gray area where something (an idea, a physical object) can never quite exist in one extremity,

in one polarity. The tales are thus defined by an ironic existence—they profess to be profound expressions of thought, but are not. Like pressed flowers, they are taken from the natural course of their existence (withering) and preserved into extended physicality by literally being pressed into a book where they will take upon a form neither natural nor completely artificial. As pressed flowers, the tales are invocative of being between two states at all times; this is what unites them, thematically and formally, and this also speaks volumes to Hawthorne's stylistic voice. The reader must accept the pressed bouquet as is, without expectations of fresh roses or more vibrant, fragrant flowers. Hawthorne has provided the unity of the work, and expressed the wish that the reader be kind with their expectations of it—this is, for this collection, the way in which the reader will hopefully receive the text. As Genette points out, the author can never ascertain this, unfortunately enough.

This idea of humility and backing away from any notion of pomposity or self-worth ties in with another of Genette's prefatory functions—what he calls "dodges". These are prefaces that have an overwhelming sense of self-inadequacy:

> We must also note…the revealing frequency with which many preface-writers express a kind of reservation, sincere or pretended, about the obligation to provide a preface…an exercise that yields a text too tiresome to read even when the author…has, nevertheless, devoted himself to it with obvious pleasure, though a pleasure he deems perverse. In all these (and perhaps some other) cases of bad conscience, the most appropriate and most

productive compromise consists of expressing the sense of unease in the preface itself, in the form of apologies or protests. (230)

At the end of "The Old Manse", we do receive Hawthorne contemplating the nature of the preface he has just written:

> How narrow—how shallow and scanty too—is the stream of thought that has been flowing from my pen, compared with the broad tide of dim emotions, ideas, and associations, which swell around me from that portion of my existence! How little have I told!—and, of that little, how almost nothing is even tinctured with any quality that makes it exclusively my own! Has the reader gone wandering, hand in hand with me, through the inner passages of my being, and have we groped together into all its chambers, and examined their treasures or their rubbish? Not so. We have been standing on the green sward, but just within the cavern's mouth, where the common sunshine is free to penetrate, and where every footstep is therefore free to come….So far as I am a man of really individual attributes, I veil my face; nor am I, nor have ever been, one of those supremely hospitable people, who serve up their own hearts delicately fried, with brain-sauce, as a tidbit for their beloved public. Glancing back over what I have written, it seems but the scattered reminiscences of a single summer. (1147)

It is fitting that Hawthorne has looked back upon his autobiographical paratext as "scattered"—it is perhaps why this passage is followed by his explanation of the collection as a bouquet of dried flowers, some old and some new. Both paratext and main

text are thus marked by an unkempt nature of which the reader might have difficulty grasping the value (after all, as Genette points out, prefaces are all about guiding the reception of a text, and attesting for its value). Returning to the idea of "dodges", though, Hawthorne has done as much here in the final pages of the preface—he has looked back upon what he has writing, and begun to apologise, in a roundabout method, for its scattered and ostensibly superficial nature. He has written little, and the implication is that he should have been filling up the prefatory space with something else—something that would have been more revealing of the author's true intent in writing the paratext and the main text (as is it is important to point out—Hawthorne is apologising for both the rambling autobiographical content of the paratext and the humble content of the main text). Hawthorne here expresses great guilt for not leading the reader properly through the chambers of his inner being (as if this is the proper mode of prefaces), and for not alighting upon any treasure therein (a reapplication of his earlier metaphor concerning searching the manse for texts). He has not done justice to the real sentiment and ideas that have been welling up from his experience in the summertime manse; he has not even been showing his face to the reader! And yet, this comes as no surprise in terms of Hawthorne's shyness, and it becomes a thankless task to consider whether or not he is here sincere or ironic—as Genette has mentioned, this sort of paratext (the dodge) is not dependent on whether or not the author is being ironic.

Genette goes on to explain "Another sophisticated evasion: preterition. This is the art of writing a preface by explaining that one is not going to write it, or by conjuring up all the prefaces one could have written….The last evasion is truly a way out: it consists of

speaking squarely of something else" (235). Hawthorne has indeed put a great amount of effort in that lengthy passage to describe what his preface *has not* been like; he *could* be one of those authors who does not veil his face, and offers his entire heart on a platter to the reader. Like the bouquet of pressed flowers, the reader is forced to accept the preface as-is. It has been the author and the reader standing at the foot of the cavern of Hawthorne's interiority—between the green sward and the dank mouth. As such, readers have been led through the green scenery of nature, up to this glimpse of what is inside the cavern; once again, the image is defined by a threshold, being neither completely here (the sward) or there (the cavern of authorial treasure). Hawthorne has spent the entirety of the lengthy preface up until this point speaking "squarely of something else"—his autobiographical experience in the manse; his endeavours in reading, his endeavours in writing. Nowhere before this point has he really been discussing the content of the main text, the tales to follow. And now that he is apologising for and regretting the content of what he has written, he ends the preface:

> Let the reader, if he will do me so much honor, imagine himself my guest, and that, having seen whatever may be worthy of notice, within and about the old Manse, he has finally been ushered into my study. There, after seating him in an antique elbow-chair, an heirloom of the house, I take forth a roll of manuscript, and intreat his attention to the following tales:—an act of personal inhospitality, however, which I never was guilty of, nor ever will be, even to my worst enemy. (1149)

With this little bit of humour, Hawthorne dodges the idea he was setting up even within the very paragraph—to offer someone his tales (and thus the main text) is an act of inhospitality that he would not wish even to his worst enemy; in fact, he will never be guilty of such action, and in what is perhaps the ultimate dodge, refuses to present them.

Even as such, readers have already absorbed the initial idea that they have been through the old manse, and to be good readers, they should have received and interpreted worth out of whatever they could in the various interiors and exteriors they have been lead through throughout "The Old Manse"—human and architectural. The final paragraph is an application to the reader's own reading—they have to make their own sense of the preface; the author has dodged the onus of writing one that thoroughly explains the main text, instead offering this extended autobiographical rumination of the authorial and inspirational process—one that ultimately failed to produce any novel. All it has to show for is the bouquet of pressed flowers that sprang up from the study in the manse; readers have to take what they will, or be, essentially, improper readers. Through this "dodge" of a preface, Hawthorne has spent a few pages apologising and speaking of what the preface was not like—but after reading that, a reader must now turn to what the preface *has been*, for Hawthorne is reluctant to put in a word about that.

"The Old Manse" has been the journey of reading (and its worth) and writing; it has been the collected scenes of a season important to the author's recollection. For Hawthorne, "the book will always retain one charm, as reminding [him] of the river, with its delightful solitudes, and of the avenue, the garden, and the orchard, and especially the dear old Manse, with the little study on its western side, and the sunshine glimmering

through the willow-branches while [he] wrote" (1149). While he wrote, these things were his important surroundings and sentiments; the resultant texts, no doubt, will be infused with the highly-documented processes of literary inspiration and genesis. The preface has served its primary function if it gets the book read; it has really succeeded if it gets the book read properly (as a bouquet of flowers with intrinsic worth). I maintain that the smart reader will recognise Hawthorne's own estimation of the preface (and the tales) as works of literature, both physical and imagined, that sprang from a lovely season, and their status as a remembrance of a spent temporality; in the midst of a "dodgy" preface, the reader should account for this golden autobiographical, "literature for literature's sake" value as they read the main text that immediately follows. Hawthorne's final reluctance in presenting his tales to the reader is the irony of offering only his autobiographical experience—*he* finds it to be enough value-provision for the main text.

"Providence took me by the hand," Hawthorne writes near the end of "The Old Manse", "and—an oddity of dispensation which, I trust, there is no irreverence in smiling at—has led me, as the newspapers continue to announce while I am writing, from the Old Manse into a Custom-House! As a storyteller, I have often contrived strange vicissitudes for my imaginary personages, but none like this" (1148). Thus, Hawthorne presages the preface (if we may call it such) of his 1850 novel *The Scarlet Letter*, "The Custom-House". Similar to "The Old Manse", "The Custom-House" is an autobiographical sketch of the time the author spent in a certain locale—his employment at a custom house (note also that these two paratexts are named after structures, and have structures at the heart of their discussions and considerations). Unlike "The Old Manse", "The Custom-

House" has a number of distinctly different prefatory functions, as outlined by Genette. The first way in which the functions of "The Custom-House" are unique

> is the indication of sources. This is typical of works of fiction that draw their subjects from history or legend, for 'pure' fiction in theory lacks sources, and strictly historical works indicate their sources, instead, in the detail of the text or in the notes. The indication of sources thus appears especially in the prefaces to classical tragedies and historical novels. (211)

Because *The Scarlet Letter* is an historical novel of Salem's past, Hawthorne is in perfect accordance with this tradition of citing sources for a novel that is neither pure fiction (as we might say *The Marble Faun* is) nor historical fact. I argue that the most important scene (and function) of this preface is that in which Hawthorne uncovers the documents along with the scarlet letter itself:

> I chanced to lay my hand on a small yellow package, carefully done up in a piece of ancient yellow parchment. This envelope had the air of an official record of some period long past…There was something about it that quickened an instinctive curiosity, and made me undo the faded red tape, that tied up the package, with the sense that a treasure would here be brought to light….But the object that most drew my attention, in the mysterious package, was a certain affair of fine red cloth, much worn and faded. (144-145)

Continuing his motif of treasure-hunting, Hawthorne finds in the Surveyor's "official" documents a faded old scarlet letter. The primary function of "The Custom-House" is in this pivotal scene; the author has found the artifact and historical documents that directly

legitimise the main text (*The Scarlet Letter*). Genette remarks that the citing-sources process is a method by which authors obliquely enhance the value of the work that follows (212)—and such is what Hawthorne does with the "discovery" scene of the scarlet letter. But this scene also works towards legitimising the main text in a perhaps more subliminal way.

The autobiographical elements of "The Custom-House"—Hawthorne's time spent working there and his documentation of its actual employees—are factual; as such, Genette would term this an original authorial preface. However, the preface also contains fiction—Hawthorne's lighting upon the scarlet letter and the historical accounts of Hester Prynne. In *Paratexts* Genette does consider fictional prefaces, but these are only prefaces in which the entirety of the preface is a fictional narrative, or penned by a fictional author (i.e., an author pretending to be a character who wrote the narrative). This point at which Hawthorne blends fiction with an authorial preface is immediately problematic. Further divergence from Genette's idea that the citing of sources should contain a *cum grano salis* statement with the "double function of protecting the author from the potential consequences of the 'applications' [of fiction] and, inevitably, of setting readers in search of them" (218) comes when Hawthorne presents two conflicting ideas about his own narrative, the first of which is to be found in his admission that *The Scarlet Letter* is exaggerated:

> I must not be understood as affirming, that, in the dressing up of the tale, and imagining the motives and modes of passion that influenced the characters who figure in it, I have invariably confined myself within the limits of the old

>Surveyor's half a dozen sheets of foolscap. On the contrary, I have allowed
>
>myself, as to such points, nearly or altogether as much license as if the facts
>
>had been entirely of my own invention. (147)

Here is such a *cum grano salis* statement as Genette details—the main text that follows "The Custom-House" is a dressed-up, fanciful thing, and Hawthorne's statement that he has "nearly or altogether" invented the facts of the story makes one undeniably verge towards belief of the latter.   What is confounding is when Hawthorne asserts the following:

>it should be borne carefully in mind, that the main facts of that story are
>
>authorized and authenticated by the document of Mr. Surveyor Pue.   The
>
>original papers, together with the scarlet letter itself,—a most curious relic,—
>
>are still in my possession, and shall be freely exhibited to whomsoever,
>
>induced by the great interest of the narrative, may desire a sight of them.
>
>(146-147)

Unlike Genette's consideration of facts, Hawthorne does not guard himself against the potentiality of readers coming in search of the legitimising sources of a narrative—on the contrary, he blatantly welcomes the action. The divide that occurs here is reminiscent of the physicality of texts discussed in "The Old Manse". Hawthorne has chosen to legitimise the facts of *The Scarlet Letter* through his scenes with the Surveyor's documents, but ultimately yields to an admission that the characters and events are influenced by his own imaginative license. However, he refuses to ever admit to the falsity of the documents and the scarlet letter as they exist as actual, physical artifacts.

And although it is likely that not many readers believe the scarlet letter to be real despite this artifice of the author, he has nonetheless attempted to make fiction manifest itself into materiality. Here is a common link between paratext and main text—a "physical" piece of embroidery that exists in each. It is an image that ties the two separate pieces of writing together; a locus to which the author has highlighted the importance of receiving as a believable, tangible object. Thus, when readers migrate from the world of actual, original authorial experience to the world of fiction and romance, they receive the fictitious scarlet letter as a previously encountered object, an object the author has in his possession, whether or not this is believable.

Hawthorne has tried to make a connection between paratext and main text as legitimising as possible for his fiction, and the length to which he goes is to try as he might to apply the physical and the actual to the fictional. As such, the office of the scarlet letter here is to bridge the gap between two genres readers receive differently: authorial preface (received as truth and actual experience) and fictional narrative (received as fancy). "The Custom-House" has done its traditional prefatory function as a citation of sources for the historical novel; this adds value and lustre to the piece. It also has, uniquely Hawthornean, bridged a gap between the real and the imagined that firmly argues for the value of the imagination: Hawthorne knows very well the reader may not believe him, but this is not a deterrent to his efforts in prefatory writing. His continued attestation that the physical artifacts of the narrative are real shows his ambition in (irreverently) legitimising the imagined as much as is possible, for if "The Custom-

House" has successfully argued anything, it is that fiction matters in the light of a dull, functionalist world.

"The Custom-House" and *The Scarlet Letter* thus have this persistent and fictional "physical" common thread of the letter as artifact. Another common thread can be drawn between the ways in which the two texts mirror each other thematically. Claudia D. Johnson argues as much in her *The Productive Tension of Hawthorne's Art*, claiming that

> If *The Scarlet Letter* in itself is the only one of the novels not containing an artist as a major character, it is at the same time so inextricably tied to the custom house sketch that one must view both thematically as part of one encompassing vision of the narrator's calling as an artist. The novel is the first fruition of the reborn storyteller whose artistic side has known the dark night of the soul. (55)

Johnson places an emphasis on Hawthorne's personal and vocational transformation throughout her chapter on "The Custom-House", arguing that Hawthorne at first believes a job there will legitimise his professional identity as opposed to being a writer of idle fiction. However, Hawthorne soon discovers that the custom house is such a dreary and lifeless place that it is stifling to the creative spirit. Johnson summarizes:

> In "The Custom-House" the narrator has an "A" that he feels on his own breast just as "A's" are worn by his two characters; further, the dead world he describes himself struggling against in the custom house has much in common with the community of Puritans in the novel; finally, his own

profound problems of vocation, guilt, isolation, self-deception, creation, and

survival are identical to those that plague Dimmesdale and Hester. (60)

As such, Johnson devotes a number of pages to drawing connections between the

Hawthorne readers see in "The Custom-House" and the characters that populate the

romantic Puritan world. Johnson thus effectively points out additional ways the two texts

mirror each other—regarding the larger thematic concerns of both works, and the way in

which the characters of the main text mirror the author in the paratext.

Further to this development of Hawthorne's authorial persona, as I would now

like to offer on top of Johnson's drawn parallels between the author's vocational

autobiography and the themes and characters of the narrative, is Hawthorne's famous

"moonlight scene":

Moonlight, in a familiar room, falling so white upon the carpet, and showing

all its figures so distinctly,—making every object so minutely visible, yet so

unlike a morning or noontide visibility,—is a medium the most suitable for a

romance-writer to get acquainted with his illusive guests. There is the little

domestic scenery of the well-known apartment; the chairs, with each its

separate individuality; the centre-table, sustaining a work-basket, a volume or

two, and an extinguished lamp; the sofa; the book-case; the picture on the

wall;—all these details, so completely seen, are so spiritualized by the

unusual light, that they seem to lose their actual substance, and become things

of intellect. (149)

This scene, as noted in Johnson's chapter, can be read as a way in which Hawthorne is establishing his identity as an artist and as an author, but I read it as in accordance with another of Genette's prefatory functions, that of genre definition/indication:

> [The] concern with genre definition does not show up much in areas that are well marked out and codified, like the classical theatre, where a simple paratitular indication (*tragedy*, *comedy*) is thought sufficient; rather, it appears in the undefined fringes where some degree of innovation is practiced, and particularly during 'transitional' periods (224).

This portion of "The Custom-House" that Hawthorne dedicates to describing the climate in which he tried (ultimately in vain) to write a romance is really indicative of my earlier estimations of what Hawthorne cannot seem to get away from when describing authorship and genre—that is the physical as it bisects and infiltrates the imaginative (and, like the books in the garret of the old manse, the opposite process). Here is a cataloguing of physical objects as they are transformed from the merely physical to objects of the intellect; the moonlight is the neutralising force that accomplishes this: "Thus, therefore, the floor of our familiar room has become a neutral territory, somewhere between the real world and fairy-land, where the Actual and the Imaginary may meet, and each imbue itself with the nature of the other" (149). Of course, the process Hawthorne is describing is that of his own writing, of romance; romance incorporates the singular essence of the real world and "fairy-land", the Actual and the Imagined, the physical and the intellectual, and lets them mingle and begin to affect each other mutually, becoming gray space. The

result is no doubt the idealised romance—the thing Hawthorne tried to write while in the custom house.

Thus, "The Custom-House" as a paratext also has this function of establishing the romance, how romances get written, and how romance should be explained to a reader; it is this poetic, fantastic process which Hawthorne wants to get across, for his texts are markedly unrealistic (by which I mean not belonging to realism) at the same time they do not easily fall into already-extant and traditional notions of the romantic. So what Hawthorne does in "The Custom-House" along with expressing his struggle with vocational identity and growth as an author (as Johnson has explained and accounted for) is indicate the genre of the text that follows, and the metaphysical ingredients that make up such a piece of writing.

Hawthorne summarizes his encounters with the dull people, objects and realities of the custom house, and his failure to produce a novel:

> It was a folly, with the materiality of this daily life pressing so intrusively upon me, to attempt to fling myself back into another age; or to insist on creating the semblance of a world out of airy matter, when, at every moment, the impalpable beauty of my soap-bubble was broken by the rude contact of some actual substance. The wiser effort would have been, to diffuse thought and imagination through the opaque substance of to-day, and thus to make it a bright transparency; to spiritualize the burden that began to weigh so heavily; to seek, resolutely, the true and indestructible value that lay hidden in the

petty and wearisome incidents, and ordinary characters, with which I was now

conversant. (150-151)

For Hawthorne, romance is compromise: the mediation of reality with the "airy" nature of the imagination; the diffusion of romance through the ordinariness of the commonplace and the material. If he had realised during his employment at the custom house the importance of this conciliation of extremes, he would have successfully written a novel; sadly, the last few passages of "The Custom-House" are filled with regret, as Hawthorne notes that the novel that would-have-been has slipped away from him instead of "turning to gold" on the page (151). Nevertheless, Hawthorne's vocational growth as an author throughout his time in the custom house has shown him the status and vagaries of the genre of romance; as such, the impact this paratext has as vocational autobiography is that of a complex indication of genre, not only for the reader but for the author. Romance is a genre in flux; "The Custom-House" tries to account for it in the face of a world seemingly inconducive (inaccurately so) to the growth of the imagination. As a paratext subordinate to a rich and deeply imaginative historical romance, "The Custom-House" is a romantic manifesto of the singular artist learning about his genre.

The last function of the Hawthornean paratext is the most historical and perhaps the most theoretical, in the sense that it engages with literary theory Hawthorne was likely aware of in his own time: association theory. Melinda M. Ponder argues that Hawthorne's writing is a reflection of association theory:

Because the association process was understood to be integral to the creation

of great art, the nature of a writer's imagination came to be seen as the

determining factor in his efficacy. The writer began to be perceived less as a painter reproducing a visual scene in verbal terms and more as an artist whose own imagination enabled him to set off a similar responsive process in the imagination of his reader….Taken to its extreme, [association theory] centered the writer's activity in the creation of a symbolism…It encouraged a literature based on the referentiality of language to extra-literary events (114).

Ponder is here describing the eighteenth-century theories set forth by Hobbes, Locke, Alison and Addison that uphold the idea that most images and symbols have pre-set historical associations that are immediately invoked by those images, and in addition to this, a writer brings his own associations to the images and symbols within his writing, thus imbuing the described object with his own associations and, by extension, offering them to the reader to be included in their own imagination: "the associations in the writer's imagination change our view of the object as they give us new and unexpected glimpses of ordinary objects. Just as the moonlight changes the appearance of objects, the associations in the imagination which 'adhere' to objects also change the way the objects appear to us" (142). Ponder, who spends much of her time summarizing the works of Archibald Alison in great detail, thus uses this deceptively simple way of viewing the author's psychological processes and associations while writing to show how Hawthorne was informed by these ideas (as Hawthorne's library holdings show an extensive laundry list of books by all of these philosophers), and may owe to these theories his awareness of the narrator's voice as the most important element of fiction

(148), because it plays a major role in introducing and establishing the author's associations to the reader.

The goal of forming such associations for the reader has to do with the attainment of the sublime and the beautiful (Ponder paraphrasing Alison): "The work of the artist thus becomes that of creating emotions of taste—the sublime or the beautiful—by means of the additions he makes to the objects or images he represents. The number and nature of his own associations will determine the quality of the sublime or beautiful experienced by his reader" (127). Ponder ultimately argues that through this method, Hawthorne highlights the hefty moral questions of his works through the associations of the sublime and beautiful he has wrought throughout his narratives, and by the strained importance of an highly-present narrative voice.

While believing this all to be true, I maintain that we can see Hawthorne's supreme awareness of the power of associations in a much more extratextual way. Hawthorne was not only aware of the associative power in creating moral images and symbols, but also in the ordering and presentation of his texts. When readers receive "The Custom-House" as a preface to *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne has slyly acknowledged the power of reading in creating associations; that is, many of the themes, characters and items (as described earlier in this chapter) in "The Custom-House" will be recorded as associations for the reader as they continue on to read the main text. When a reader again encounters the scarlet letter, they will have the association of Hawthorne putting it upon his breast and feeling the burning sensation; when Hawthorne mentions the disapproving glares of his ancestors in the paintings hanging on the wall, they will

draw a parallel between them and the moral gaze of the judgmental Puritans within the fictional narrative. Further to this, Hawthorne becomes self-referential, or rather, intertextual for a moment in "The Custom-House":

> And here, some six months ago,—pacing from corner to corner, or lounging on the long-legged stool, with his elbow on his desk, and his eyes wandering up and down the columns of the morning newspaper,—you might have recognized, honored reader, the same individual who welcomed you into his cheery little study, where the sunshine glimmered so pleasantly through the willow branches, on the western side of the Old Manse. (125)

How strange for an author to not only introduce himself in the third person, as if a character in a narrative rather than an author penning an autobiography, but also to provide intertext for one of his own pieces of writing—not that of a novel or a larger work, but that of a previous paratext! Hawthorne is also shyly intimating that the reader may have read his previous publications, and as such, is acknowledging the power of readerly associations: some readers will already have the associations needed to understand what sort of authorial persona inhabits "The Custom-House" if they have read "The Old Manse". Either way, Hawthorne is making it clear that the two works are similar in nature (autobiography) and character (that of the author himself). Thus, Hawthorne's knowledge of readerly associations runs not only in the way he crafts his images and symbols, and his evocative moral tone—it goes beyond the immediate text into extratextual territory.

In addition, Hawthorne's paratexts set up the reader for many important tasks—the proper interpretation of the text's value, the indication of its genre, and the drawing together of themes that may be important to the main text (as Genette writes, paratexts are always subordinate to the main text: "the paratext in all its forms is a discourse that is fundamentally heteronomous, auxiliary, and dedicated to the service of something other than itself that constitutes its raison d'être. This something is the text…the paratextual element is always subordinate to 'its' text" [12]). Hawthorne's paratexts are perhaps the most straightforward handing-over of associations to the reader; they are the most efficient, distinct way in which an author can be sure readers have access to all the associations he finds critical to the reception of the main text. Perhaps with an author as shy and careworn as Hawthorne, with an anxiety that his texts will be abused and critisised by those who do not understand his brand of romanticism, Hawthorne's paratexts are the ultimate in self-assurance that he has done everything possible to guide the reader into the proper reception of his narratives. Although Hawthorne never is completely clear as to the apparent relation between paratext and main text, the proof is often in the pudding of his autobiographical prowess, and what those efforts achieve.

Both "The Old Manse" and "The Custom-House" end with a rumination upon the failure to produce a novel. In "The Old Manse", he pines: "The treasure of intellectual gold, which I hoped to find in our secluded dwelling, had never come to light. No profound treatise of ethics—no philosophic history—no novel, even, that could stand, unsupported, on its edges" (1148). Both prefaces are thus pieces of writing about writing—Hawthorne has, through his autobiography, tried to track his inspirations and

34

literary efforts, perhaps to see where he went wrong (as he successfully realises by the end of "The Custom-House"). Both prefaces are titled with physical structures; they are rooted in the architectural, as physical structures subliminally inform the way Hawthorne understands textuality and the literary (the Old Manse births and hides texts; The Custom-House is the dull work-a-day world through which the imagination must necessarily be fantastically filtered). They are instances of intertext; "The Old Manse" continues chronologically into "The Custom-House", and within their walls we encounter the same authorial persona. Returning to Genette, he writes:

> the paratext is what enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers and, more generally, to the public. More than a boundary or a sealed border, the paratext is, rather, a *threshold*, or—a word Borges used apropos of a preface—a "vestibule" that offers the world at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back. (1-2)

So much of the content of Hawthorne's paratexts is defined by thresholds—generic, thematic, metaphoric. Inside of Hawthorne's paratexts, the physical and the imagined interact; autobiography and fiction blur; sincerity and irony go hand-in-hand; the veiled author welcomes the reader to sit down. Through these pieces of writing about the failure of writing, Hawthorne has nevertheless *made present* his main texts through the paratexts that preface them: he has accounted for their worth by always discussing gray areas, and in effect, the paratexts have become thresholds themselves in which the author indicates his genre, attests for the work's value, and ruminates upon what it means to be an author; texts that are about the nature of texts. Taking the reader by the hand at the same time he

will not let them into the cavern of true authorial intent, the paratext is the threshold in which the reader gages the intersection of the romantic and the realistic—the real world and the imagined. As much as they contain autobiographical narrative, metaphors and themes informed by the meeting of two polarities of an opposition, the paratexts themselves are the limit by which a main text, conceptually and physically, is defined. Hawthorne always directs our attention (and our associations) to what goes beyond the purely imagined world; his is a style that is always bridging the literary and extraliterary with a worried fervor.

II. "Beneath an umbrella": Hawthorne and the Contexts of the Literary

1844's tale "Rappaccini's Daughter" likewise contains a preface that is like a paratext, although not in a pure sense, as the preface and the body of the tale itself are not separated by headings or alternate titles. We do get a subtitle for the story, "From the Writings of Aubépine", but this in turn refers to the story itself, not the prefatory material. Alas, not even into the story itself have readers already encountered a major problem within the deciphering of this strange tale—the issue of who is the initial narrator of the preface. The jolting movement from extraliterary observation of the tale as a piece of writing from a foreign author to the actual piece of fiction itself ultimately reveals the major thematic concern of "Rappaccini's Daughter", and that is perception, or, more specifically, the reception and processing of data worldly and otherwise. Any cursory look at scholarship on "Rappaccini's Daughter" works to detail the way in which this

theme operates, and its varying outcome for readers of Hawthorne; to say the tale is about fantasy versus reality will in fact furnish no surprise. Instead, this chapter will work to reveal how the tendency of "Rappaccini's Daughter" is to represent the expectations of romance and realism as literary genres themselves; in true Hawthornean style of course, this is to be a resultant vindication of romance as the superior genre (though he would, obviously, never say this without first veiling himself). "Rappaccini's Daughter" is a depiction of two opposite ways of receiving the world, one realistic and one unrealistic, one destructive and one heavenly. The story is rife with intertextual and allegorical precedent (as Miller details), and with the help of Frye and Booth I will show how this battle goes beyond fictionalised Padua into the world of authorship and writing itself.

To add an additional dimension to this reading I will also include a close reading of the little-read and under-appreciated "Night Sketches". This hidden gem of Hawthorne's treasury is a delicious depiction of the author as he ventures out from his fire-warmed room into the cold New England night. It is a sketch of dazzling lights and undermining shadows, and, like "Rappaccini's Daughter", it has at its core a tension of extremes; Hawthorne, under the protection of his umbrella, sets out to record the polarities of all he comes across out in the New England town, and this is a tension that is about the authorial process of "sketching" extremes that become reflections of each other and, ultimately, mutually-reliant interactions within each other. Hawthorne highlights how the world of the imagination and fancy, despite being an inherent nuisance to those living real lives, actually becomes a space that changes colour when put in context with "real" and empirical experience, and, rightly in addition, so too does reality begin to

realise fantasy and allegory. As shown within the previous chapter and continually throughout those that will follow, I will highlight the importance of these themes always being anchored in the authorial and the literary; not simply in terms of usual fictional (and heavily romantic) devices such as allegory, narrative and metaphor, but also in terms of the actual processes of reading and receiving texts, of an author's hand setting ink to paper. The contexts of realism and romanticism that these two texts explore in detail have ramifications that extend beyond their depicted worlds into the realm of how one goes about constructing pieces of fiction, and how they should be regulated and understood in terms of reader reception and literary theory.

"Rappaccini's Daughter" begins by introducing the dwelling place of its focal character, Giovanni Guasconti, in terms of literary precedent: "The young stranger, who was not unstudied in the great poem of his country, recollected that one of the ancestors of this family, and perhaps an occupant of this very mansion, has been pictured by Dante as a partaker of the immortal agonies of his Inferno" (976). This is indeed not a singular incident within the tale, as John N. Miller points out. Miller writes that it is not only Giovanni who is connected to the literary (his being a student of letters, of course, sets up this theme), but Beatrice as well, maintaining that "she derives from too many literary predecessors, none of whom leads to a clear understanding of her. Not only Dante's Beatrice and Beatrice Cenci lie somewhere behind her, but also the Garden of Eden, Milton, Spenser, Keats, Ovid, and Hoffmann. None of these allegorical allusions, however, clarifies Hawthorne's title character" (226). Miller has a fairly anti-climactic view of the intertextuality of "Rappaccini's Daughter", arguing that these allusions are

confusing instead of helpful in constructing its characters, resulting in no great end or use for the tale (226); but just as with the ghost of Emerson's literary efforts that haunt the little study in the old manse, so do these instances of intertexuality work to construct a Hawthornean world where things are defined by literary history and antecedent. If nothing else, the intertextuality of this tale's Padua provides ways of bringing in preset expectations of character and setting. When we learn Giovanni is residing in an apartment in which a character (or, personage? The line does get blurred here) once lived, the literary history of Italy comes alive and begins to interpenetrate the "reality" of the tale. When Giovanni steps inside the Edenic garden of the Rappaccinis, we are in immediate anticipation of a "fall", one that does manifest itself at the end of the tale as Beatrice drinks the antidote instead of eating an apple. As such, "Rappaccini's Daughter" opens and ends as a world informed by a chaotic but nonetheless effective multiplicity of literary expectations and referents, one that mirrors, at least somewhat, the narratives and characters of the intertexts represented therein. As I showed in the previous chapter, intertextuality is inherently metafictional; fiction about fiction cannot avoid engaging with the texts they represent, and in doing this, Hawthorne is deliberately using fiction as a tool to enliven and add depth to his own work.

Miller continues his discussion of "Rappaccini's Daughter" by stating the undeniable major theme of the tale, and that is perception and the battle between fancy/allegory and rationalism/empiricism: "Time and again we find the same apparent ambiguity in Giovanni's perceptions, which turns out to be no ambiguity at all. In light of the story's plot, what Giovanni sees or 'fancies' is what happens or exists, as confirmed

by Beatrice or by the author (his narrator)" (228). Though readers will likely realise that Giovanni's suspicions of an overactive imagination are in themselves fallacies—perhaps by the point at which a drop of dew from a flower falls upon a poor lizard's head, felling it, and thus proving the really poisonous nature of the garden—Giovanni himself is not so savvy in finalising his own perceptions. In fact, in "Rappaccini's Daughter" and repetitively within Hawthorne's writing, we see light as the determining context for one's perceptions of reality:

> there is an influence in the light of morning that tends to rectify whatever errors of fancy, or even of judgment, we may have incurred during the sun's decline, or among the shadows of the night, or in the less wholesome glow of moonshine. Giovanni's first movement on starting from sleep, was to throw open the window, and gaze down into the garden which his dreams had made so fertile of mysteries. He was surprised, and a little ashamed, to find how real and matter-of-fact an affair it proved to be, in the first rays of the sun, which gilded the dew-drops that hung upon leaf and blossom, and, while giving a brighter beauty to each rare flower, brought everything within the limits of ordinary experience. (980)

Readers of "The Custom-House" will immediately recall the "less wholesome glow of moonshine" that is the true soil in which fancy (romance) may grow; here, the daylight has what seems like the positive, realistic effect of rectifying misgivings of the mind, although Giovanni is "surprised" and "ashamed" to find out how matter-of-fact the surely unpoisonous garden appears in the morning. Once again Hawthorne has shown light (and

time of day) to be an allegorically decisive factor for human perception; as such, this also means that human perception is extremely susceptible to context, going as far as to change its reception and acceptance of reality and surreality as either false or valid depending on what degree of light is present.

Indeed, when it comes to Giovanni's acceptance of Beatrice as either unpoisonous, normal human girl, or some sort of real and horrific Frankensteinesque experiment, he

> knew not what to dread; still less did he know what to hope; yet hope and dread kept a continual warfare in his breast, alternately vanquishing one another and starting up afresh to renew the contest. Blessed are all simple emotions, be they dark or bright! It is the lurid intermixture of the two that produces the illuminating blaze of the infernal regions. (987)

Unlike the passage in "The Custom-House" in which the intermixture of the moonlight with the commonplace furniture of the room creates the ideal and neutral fairy-land of romance, here the intermixture of two different types of light (and thus the two different types of contexts, realistic and fanciful) becomes Giovanni's nuisance, the blaze of his "infernal regions" (those regions, of course, left up to the reader's inference). Hawthorne here implies that the tale—had it decided to live within one of the "simple emotions", dark or bright—would have had no dramatic tension or climax whatsoever. If Giovanni had decided to completely live within the dark emotion—the acceptance of Beatrice as an experiment, and the reality of his own increasingly poisonous nature—or completely within the light emotion—his total belief in empiricism, which would have rightly

brought him to "quit his lodgings and Padua itself, at once" (986)—then the story would have perhaps a happy ending, Giovanni living within the corrupt garden of Eden with his Beatrice forevermore, or alternately, his escape from Padua, and the psychological misgivings that burnt him so. But, unfortunately for both Giovanni and Beatrice, as it turns out, Giovanni's perception never rests on one side of the fancy/empiricism opposition, even when Beatrice begs him to abandon his calculating sensory bias: "'Forget whatever you may have fancied in regard to me. If true to the outward senses, still it may be false in its essence. But the words of Beatrice Rappaccini's lips are true from the depths of the heart outward. Those you may believe!'" (992) Poor Beatrice's appeal here is not an appeal to the senses but an appeal to fancy (despite her wording as she asks Giovanni to abandon what he "fancied" about her); in these few words, she reveals the core of the tale's moral, and that is how there are truths that exist beyond the skepticism of sensory data—and that the reliance on empiricism can indeed manufacture falsehoods just as easily as fancies themselves. And of course, Hawthorne has no interest in weaving a tale that completely lives within the "blessed" simplicity of one side of an opposition; it is only Giovanni who finds the intermixture to be infernal.

To fully explore this concept, certain ideas from Northrop Frye's *The Secular Scripture* will be useful. Frye begins by discussing the polarities of realism versus romanticism:

> In the fiction writing of the last four or five centuries there has been a kind of reversible shuttle moving between imagination and reality…One direction is called 'romantic,' the other 'realistic.' The realistic tendency moves in the

> direction of the representational and the displaced, the romantic tendency in
>
> the opposite direction, concentrating on the formulaic units of myth and
>
> metaphor. (26)

As such, Frye sets up the differences between the realistic and the romantic as a movable

shuttle, and continues to describe the movements of the two genres throughout several

centuries of European literature. By exploring the terms "displaced" (and later

"undisplaced") in *The Secular Scripture*, Frye notes how displaced explanations of events

are those justified in realistic terms, while undisplaced events are highly allegorical,

abstract events without any sort of anchoring in reality or realistic understanding. An

element of this idea that is immediately enlightening for an analysis of "Rappaccini's

Daughter" is his discussion of the explained supernatural:

> the real effect of the device is to put the undisplaced and displaced versions of
>
> the same event side by side. Its significance, then, is not in any child-and-
>
> adult value judgment about beliefs, but in the fact that undisplaced versions
>
> present the narrative structure more abstractly, just as a cubist or primitive
>
> painting would present the geometrical forms of its images more directly than
>
> straight representation would do. (29)

The explained supernatural lets two representations of the same event exist hand-in-hand

in the narrative—the original possibility of something being really and truly otherworldly,

and then the displaced recounting of that event. "Rappaccini's Daughter", under these

terms, is in fact an extended example of displaced versus undisplaced explanation. What

Giovanni is struggling with mentally is which version to accept—he can either vouch for

Beatrice's poisoned nature as being a flight of his distempered fancy, and live in displacement, or he can accept her nature as being true and real, and accept undisplacement.

On a higher level, then, because displacement is a technique of realism and undisplacement of romanticism, Giovanni is a character caught between either perceiving the world (albeit the fictional world) in terms of realism or in terms of romanticism; "Rappaccini's Daughter" is a narrative in which the narrator cheekily suggests Giovanni should be using his head (and senses) to think through these implausible events at the same tame it is depicting a world in which these otherworldly possibilities are reality. Under Hawthorne's pen, things end horribly for Beatrice because Giovanni's psychology never mitigates the surreality of the affairs around him—he never lets go of his realist paradigm, and Beatrice drinks the antidote, killing herself in what is the effective inversion of a life-giving substance becoming a death-granting one. All the while, the grating possibility of Giovanni and Beatrice living together in an Edenic setting had only Giovanni accepted the undisplaced reality of the romantic tale looms around the final scene; it is one that is never allowed: "To Beatrice—so radically had her earthly part been wrought upon by Rappaccini's skill—as poison had been life, so the powerful antidote was death. And thus the poor victim of man's ingenuity and of thwarted nature, and of the fatality that attends all such efforts of perverted wisdom, perished there, at the feet of her father and Giovanni" (1005). The romantic world here is one in which nature (and possibilities for displacement) has been "thwarted", and where life has taken on the efficacy of death. Frye continues:

the prestige of 'realism' in the nineteenth century reflected the prevailing

fashions of that culture, nearly all of which emphasized some form of

correspondence, the paralleling of mental structures with something in the

outer world. It was an age of representational painting and realistic fiction,

and of analogical, or, as I generally call it, allegorical criticism, approaching

works of literature as historical or psychological documents. The reason for

such an emphasis in criticism is that the more displaced a work of fiction is,

the easier it is to see it in terms of its social function rather than its structure.

(32)

Because the technique of displacement is a realist one, a narrative which sees its outcome

entirely in the hands of undisplacement is a romantic one, and accomplishes the opposite.

Instead of existing outside of itself in historical, psychological and social

explanation/function, it exists wholly inside of itself, relying on the importance of self-

evident truths of the heart (as Beatrice begs Giovanni to venture), and relying on its own

structure as a piece of writing. This ideology presented by Hawthorne, who clearly has

an axe to grind regarding the important and special place of romanticism in the context of

other genres (see the preface to *The House of the Seven Gables*), is strangely and perfectly

represented in the plight of Beatrice and Giovanni.

Thus, this is the first reason Hawthorne has decided to include that ever-puzzling

prefatory spiel: this is the story of the undisplaced as victim to unfeeling

displacement/realism, and as such, we should be thinking about its structure, and not any

sort of meaning to be found in displacement and explanations that rely on outward

thinking. Hawthorne then decides to include a preface that discusses this story, a translation of "M. de l'Aubépine's" original. Hawthorne (or whoever has discovered the original story of M. de l'Aubépine) comments:

> Our author is voluminous…His first appearance was by a collection of stories, in a long series of volumes, entitled *"Contes deux fois racontées."* The titles of some of his more recent works (we quote from memory) are as follows—: *"Le Voyage Céleste à Chemin de Fer,"* 3 tom. 1838. *"Le nouveau Père Adam et la nouvelle Mère Eve,"* 2 tom. 1840. *"Le Culte du Feu,"* a folio volume of ponderous research into the religion and ritual of the old Persian Ghebers, published in 1841. *"La Soirée du Chateau en Espagne,"* 1 tom. 8vo. 1842; and *"L'Artiste du Beau; ou le Papillon Mécanique,"* 5 tom. 4to. 1843. Our somewhat wearisome perusal of this startling catalogue of volumes has left behind it a certain personal affection and sympathy, though by no means adoration, for M. de l'Aubépine; and we would fain do the little in our power towards introducing him favorably to the American public. The ensuing tale is a translation of his *"Beatrice; ou la Belle Empoisonneuse,"* (976)

Here Hawthorne has set up an obvious veil between himself and whoever is reading "Rappaccini's Daughter", as he is wont to do, although the method of veiling is nowhere as direct and contrived as it is in this "preface". Anyone who has read the previous Hawthorne tales herein mentioned and holds a dilettantish knowledge of French will recognise these are all pre-existing Hawthorne pieces; Aubépine is a translation of

"hawthorn". Thus, the entire "preface" becomes a running deceit, or even joke, for his "isolated clique" (975) of readers. Those who do not have the requisite knowledge of French or have never encountered the Hawthorne tales mentioned will, if not for the heavily ironic tone, receive the text as a real translation of a foreign author. But this is of course not Hawthorne's concern—returning to Genette's ideas, for a moment, to affirm how most authors know directly what sort of audience they have, and only wish to reach that audience ("Guiding the reader also, and first of all, means situating him, and thus determining who he is. It is not always wise to cast one's net too wide, and authors often have a fairly specific idea of the kind of reader they want, or the kind they know they can reach" [212]"). Hawthorne's artificial veil thus determines the reader: those outside of Hawthorne's readership will likely not receive the "preface" as a deceit; those inside his readership, or with knowledge of some of his titles, at the very least, immediately identify the prefatory material as the author talking about himself as he wears a humourous and poorly-painted mask.

Now, of course, we must ask *why* he has chosen to present himself as M. de l'Aubépine, and we can find the answer immediately within the passage itself:

> As a writer, he seems to occupy an unfortunate position between the Transcendentalists (who, under one name or another, have their share in all the current literature of the world), and the great body of pen-and-ink men who address the intellect and sympathies of the multitude. If not too refined, at all events too remote, too shadowy and unsubstantial in his modes of development, to suit the taste of the latter class, and yet too popular to satisfy

> the spiritual or metaphysical requisitions of the former, he must necessarily find himself without an audience; except here and there an individual, or possibly an isolated clique. His writings, to do them justice, are not altogether destitute of fancy and originality; they might have won him greater reputation but for an inveterate love of allegory, which is apt to invest his plots and characters with the aspect of scenery and people in the clouds, and to steal away the human warmth out of his conceptions. (975)

Because any smart, informed reader will recognise this passage as the author writing about himself, Hawthorne has chosen to entirely conform himself to his own aesthetic. His writing is shadowy, remote, made of "people in the clouds"; to adhere to this self-realised conception of his own style, he decides to render his discussion of his works into an artificial, once-removed identity that altogether mimics the qualities he is discussing— a fictionalized authorial identity. It is a singular technique with the function of purity and coherence of style; it is also a way of communicating with the audience that he knows understands his intentions and his natural inclinations to an unapologetic mode of "neutral-territory" romance, that can never be here nor there.

The question of *why* he has chosen to represent himself as a foreign author has thus been answered, and to be quite honest, the technique is a simple one in the light of Hawthorne's usual themes and aesthetics. The bigger question is to ask why he has chosen to preface "Rappaccini's Daughter" with an authorial spiel whatsoever, and what sort of relation it has to the narrative itself—a question that can be best answered with some assistance from Wayne Booth's nuanced, always thought-provoking *The Rhetoric*

of Fiction. Discussing moments in which authors communicate with their readers *as authors*, he writes:

> If direct appeals to the reader's moods and emotions have been thought
> objectionable, direct appeals for his admiration should seem even more so.
> Not only do they have no immediate relationship to other elements in the
> story, but they frequently call the reader's attention explicitly to the fact that
> he is reading just a story….Any kind of praise of one's work for its artistry
> implies, it might seem, a lack of reality in the world with which one's artistry
> deals. And certainly any direct self-praise by the author, however wittily
> disguised, is likely to suggest that he can do as he will with his characters.
> (205)

It might be more useful to interpret this concept in light of Genette's ideas that prefatory materials are more often than not about value-enhancement (humility included), since Hawthorne is not really (or directly) praising himself in his spiel about his own works, but even so, in a Boothian sense, this preface's major work lies in highlighting the following things: "Rappaccini's Daughter" is a story, Hawthorne's writing is working within unreality, and he has the right to do what he will with his characters (and, ultimately, his tales). Amending his statements somewhat, as he often does, Booth continues:

> But to argue in this way is again to substitute general ends for that kind of
> particular study which makes technical conclusions possible. There may be
> some fictional effects which are always ruined by any suggestion of the

author's direct presence, though I can discover none. It is only certain kinds

of authors who must not be present at certain kinds of events. (205)

Considering the sort of themes we have uncovered about the tension of displacement/undisplacement in the world of "Rappaccini's Daughter", it is clear that it is realist authors who must not make themselves present as Hawthorne has in his prefatory passage. Hawthorne, however, in the context of the romantic tale that proceeds it, has every right to discuss his own writing, to an effect that does not spoil anything—in fact, it greatly adds value to the tale. Through a long catalogue of his own publications—*real* publications that exist outside of "Rappaccini's Daughter", and the assertion of the tale as a found document of foreign literature (however insincere), we see once again Hawthorne's signature move of perpetually vouching for his works as literary surface, as authored works of fiction. But the deliberate pairing of this prefatory passage with the actual story is the assertion of authorial right to work within unreality, to present a tale in which the undisplaced representations of psychology, humanity and reality are the righteous and victorious ones versus the cold realism that earns Hawthorne no great popularity and no place within either the Transcendentalists or the "great body of pen-and-ink men" who appeal to the masses. The "preface" is once again a depiction of an author shyly defending his style and tastes in his own fiction, albeit a much more tongue-in-cheek one in comparison with "The Old Manse". It has the double function of being a mirror which reflects the themes and the result of the dramatic—the literary—tension in "Rappaccini's Daughter", extoling the interpretation of the tale as a structured piece of fiction and aesthetic design instead of realistic, extrinsically "relevant" fiction. The

prefatory passage is a context that draws all of these ideas from the fanciful story that follows; what better way to highlight the undisplaced by including a preface that discusses literary structure?

"Night Sketches", what is best described as a sketch rather than a tale, predates "Rappaccini's Daughter" by five years and is also about contexts, psychological (i.e. to do with perception) and literary. Subtitled "Beneath an umbrella", the sketch documents Hawthorne as he ventures out on a dark and rainy winter's night into the surrounding New England scenes. A 1964 essay by Hyatt H. Waggonner entitled "Art and Belief" is one of the sole examples of scholarship on "Night Sketches"—a shame considering how much this short piece has to say and how deftly it describes the author's intent in writing sketches themselves. It is useful for summary work on the piece: "Its subject is nothing less philosophical than the relations of dream and reality, and the light and the dark in the world, including false lights and true; nothing less, finally, than being and nothingness" (179).

It is easy to see at first glance that, like so much of Hawthorne's fiction, the sketch is concerned with the operation of oppositions, and the exploration thereof. What is fascinating about "Night Sketches" is that this exploration takes the form of a very literal probing of the New England scenes as Hawthorne takes a walk into the foreboding night armed only with an umbrella. He begins the sketch:

> Pleasant is a rainy winter's day, within doors! The best study for such a day, or the best amusement,—call it what you will,—is a book of travels, describing scenes the most unlike that somber one, which is mistily presented

> through the windows. I have experienced, that fancy is then most successful
> in imparting distinct shapes and vivid colors to the objects which the author
> has spread upon his page, and that his words become magic spells to summon
> up a thousand varied pictures. (549)

The sketch is immediately concerned with the literary; Hawthorne notes how imaginative reading material constitutes the best activity for a rainy winter's day, and even specifies a genre for us. Reading and the operation of the imagination changes in quality depending on the *real life* context that surrounds the reader—someone who reads a travel narrative on a dreary day will read a much more worthwhile text than someone reading a travel narrative, say, while travelling.

Almost with a single stroke, Hawthorne connects the real and the unreal, positioning them as two separate yet interdependent spheres. Hawthorne has more to say about the unreal sphere:

> the rain-drops will occasionally be heard to patter against my window-panes,
> which look forth upon one of the quietest streets in a New England town.
> After a time, too, the visions vanish, and will not appear again at my bidding.
> Then, it being nightfall, a gloomy sense of unreality depresses my spirits, and
> impels me to venture out, before the clock shall strike bedtime, to satisfy
> myself that the world is not entirely made up of such shadowy materials, as
> have busied me throughout the day. A dreamer may dwell so long among
> fantasies, that the things without him will seem as unreal as those within.
> (549)

Hawthorne has now established the errant world of imagination as having overstepped its boundary—he has spent too long in reading, too long in the world of fantasy, and the scale of the real and the unreal has been knocked out of balance in favour of the latter, the unreal colouring the real until everything comes up ephemeral. It is this tipping of the scales that provides his reason to be spurned outdoors into the terrible weather:

> When eve has fairly set in, therefore, I sally forth, tightly buttoning my shaggy over-coat, and hoisting my umbrella, the silken dome of which immediately resounds with the heavy drumming of the invisible rain-drops. Pausing on the lowest door-step, I contrast the warmth and cheerfulness of my deserted fireside, with the dread obscurity and chill discomfort, into which I am about to plunge. (550)

Oppositions are palpable in the sketch, extending from the real versus unreal, the worldly versus literary, to now include cold versus warmth, and, what constitutes the major opposition within the sketch, dark versus light: "I look upward, and discern no sky, not even an unfathomable void, but only a black, impenetrable nothingness, as though heaven and all its lights were blotted from the system of the universe" (550). This initial observation, as he steps outside his home, hides a fairly important idea—and that is how the subject's perception comes to define his context.   Because Hawthorne cannot see heaven for all the impenetrable black clouds of the stormy night sky, it is as if it and its lights do not exist. This, too, unbalances a scale—darkness has seemingly completely taken over. These early passages of the sketch show how the sketch is defined in terms of unbalance.

The adventure must continue:

> Onward I go, deriving a sympathetic joy or sorrow from the varied aspect of
> mortal affairs, even as my figure catches a gleam from the lighted windows,
> or is blackened by an interval of darkness. Not that mine is altogether a
> chameleon spirit, with no hue of its own. Now I pass into a more retired
> street, where the dwellings of wealth and poverty are intermingled, presenting
> a range of strongly contrasted pictures. Here, too, may be found the golden
> mean. (553)

Hawthorne is now becoming almost addicted to the witnessing of oppositions, "varied
aspects" and "contrasted pictures", deriving pleasure from their joy or their sorrow, much
like a reader of the romantic genre might take delight in the picturesque or the sublime
and terrible. He configures the town in term of design—as if the sympathetic overtones
of contrasts are something ruled by aesthetics.

Peeping through a window at a familial scene, Hawthorne continues in his
increasingly voyeuristic train:

> Through yonder casement I discern a family circle,—the grandmother, the
> parents, and the children,—all flickering, shadow-like, in the glow of a wood-
> fire. Bluster, fierce blast, and beat, thou wintry rain, against the window-
> panes! Ye cannot damp the enjoyment of that fireside. Surely my fate is
> hard, that I should be wandering homeless here, taking to my bosom night,
> and storm, and solitude, instead of wife and children. Peace, murmurer!

> Doubt not that darker guests are sitting round the hearth, though the warm
>
> blaze hides all but blissful images. (553)

Unlike the Hawthorne we see at the threshold of his home, despairing at the total darkness of the sky and the erasure of heaven (and thus the eruption of an important opposition, light versus dark), here he argues with himself, at first wondering how one scene of warmth and light could be totally unaffected by the gloomy context of the outdoors, and then reassuring himself that no, this is simply one side of that opposition—the forms of the happy family are casting "shadow-like" flickerings, and surely some sort of foreboding or misfortunate reality will come to prey on them, despite the warm scene visible to the observer now.   Hawthorne is now beginning to mitigate the unbalanced contexts of the first half of the sketch, realising that no portion of what he observes is a complete unbalance; likewise, he has corrected his initial mode of perception, where he doubts the existence of heaven because of the complete darkness of the sky.   The subject's perception does not, then, define total reality; one must think outside of what is visible (and depicted, in the case of this sketch).

He now reaches the end of his foray:

> Onward, still onward, I plunge into the night. Now have I reached the utmost
>
> limits of the town, where the last lamp struggles feebly within the darkness,
>
> like the farthest star that stands sentinel on the borders of uncreated space. It
>
> is strange what sensations of sublimity may spring from a very humble
>
> source. Such are suggested by the hollow roar of a subterranean cataract,
>
> where the mighty stream of a kennel precipitates itself beneath an iron grate,

and is seen no more on earth. Listen awhile to its voice of mystery; and fancy

will magnify it, till you start, and smile at the illusion….But first let me gaze

at this solitary figure, who comes hitherward with a tin lantern, which throws

the circular pattern of its punched holes on the ground about him. He passes

fearlessly into the unknown gloom, whither I will not follow him. (554)

He has reached the town limit—the very end of the light and the totality of darkness of

"uncreated space", where imagination—"illusion"—takes over the observer's perception.

The lack of light in the space would throw everything off-kilter, but Hawthorne is smart

enough now to recognise the darkness' erasing force as fallacy; and, with expert timing, a

man with a lantern appears, bringing back light to the scene and restoring order, letting

Hawthorne know that, since he has reached the utmost extreme the town has to offer, he

has nothing left to observe, nothing to accomplish but the return trip: "This figure shall

supply me with a moral, wherewith, for lack of a more appropriate one, I may wind up

my sketch. He fears not to tread the dreary path before him, because his lantern, which

was kindled at the fireside of his home, will light him back to that same fireside again"

(554). This moral of the story, an epiphany supplied by the innocent man and his lantern,

is one that finalises Hawthorne's building idea throughout the latter half of the sketch—

that is, that contexts are always dependent on each other. One needs a lantern to light the

darkness, and, because that light was kindled via the fire at home, it is a reminder that all

extremes are tempered by the inseparable operation of both sides. The stars still exist

beyond the dark clouds; misfortune will plague the happiest of families; imagination and

the enjoyment thereof is dependent on, and heightened by, the real and the mundane. The

initial reason for Hawthorne's journey into sublime extremes is a literary one—Hawthorne was disturbed by the interpenetration of imagination and reality; how his reading became somehow dependent on the inclement weather, and this destroyed his spirits. But the epiphany at the end is that the interdependence of extremes, of reality and imagination, is actually comforting, as Waggonner summarizes: "'Night Sketches' begins in a way Sartre ought to approve, by contrasting bright subjective daydreams with dark external reality, but it ends by rejecting the dichotomy it began with. The hearth is as real as the storm, and not all dreams are false" (186).

Thus, the confusion of contexts literary and real has been sorted and reconfigured with the help of Hawthorne's nighttime journey. On a larger level, though, the sketch has commented on what the genre of sketches ought to do—Hawthorne is himself a reader in this sketch, and his journey into the various scenes of the New England town (and his probing of opposing extremes) mimics the process of readers of sketches themselves. He comes across three scenes (the classically-proven number of success)—the lovers fallen into a puddle, the lady stepping out to a ball, the family sitting around the hearth—and realises that these are governed by an all-pervasive sense of design (the "Golden Rule") that includes both highlights and undertones, like a well-executed painting. He, with the help of the man carrying the lantern, comes to the epiphany that observation is not dependent on the perception of the subject, but is always the government and interpenetration of extremes that at once balance and cancel each other, independent of observation. Like a reader, he comes across these things, and as Waggonner writes, rejects his initial distrust of fiction determining reality. For in fact, sketches are things

that represent reality in terms of the literary. Contexts are always defining each other, and one always proves useful in the heightening of the other, just as a rainy day is best for reading a travel narrative. This is no doubt why the sketch has been subtitled "Beneath an umbrella"; this very subtitle itself recognises the importance of describing position. Hawthorne's umbrella was what shielded him from the "invisible raindrops"—the thin cloth membrane separating man and weather.   And like an umbrella, Hawthorne the observer, as we encounter him is this sketch, has also acted as a membrane—the point of observation at which scenes are received and interpreted, where the positioning of extremes has taken place and been filtered. He is both allegorical reader and actual author; he is the hand that penned the sketch, a sketch that is the depiction of a man coming to terms with how depictions operate in light of varying contexts of perception. The introduction of observation as a major device of romance is something that becomes of critical importance within *The House of the Seven Gables*, and will accordingly be explored within the following chapter.

Both "Rappaccini's Daughter" and "Night Sketches" are about contexts that are remarkably literary, the former being a well-disguised vindication of the undisplaced within fiction, decorated by a blithe misidentity of authorship and infused with a number of intertexts, the latter a sketch that is ultimately about the process of literary sketching, one that radiates outward from the problem of how one reads and receives fiction. "Rappaccini's Daughter", if we go by Frye's idea that works that focus on their structure are romantic, is now doubly romantic, as it is really two structures—a veiled preface that discusses the literary, and a story about the perception of surreality—both of which mirror

each other in a process inherently metafictional in nature. And since metafiction is fiction that looks at fiction—a genre that looks intently at its own structures and goings-on—it is the genre most conducive to romance, and it is no surprise Hawthorne aimed to become its tongue-in-cheek master. Likewise, "Night Sketches" is about an observer of scenes, just as a reader of scenes is like an observer going on a walk through the constituents of a text. Both stories show that the contexts of the realistic and the literary are interdependent on each other—and sometimes the unreal really does determine our perception of the real.

III. "The threshold of our story": Hawthorne and the Delicacy of Observation

In the second chapter of *The House of the Seven Gables*, "The Little Shop Window"—what is arguably the first chapter of the novel's main narrative—we encounter Hepzibah making herself up at her toilet for her first day of work in the Pyncheon cent-shop. Hawthorne narrates: "The maiden lady's devotions are concluded. Will she now issue forth over the threshold of our story? Not yet, by many moments" (377). The chapter is written with a strange sense of immediacy; what we see are Hepzibah's efforts at her toilet as if unfolding in real-time, according to Hawthorne's observations. What, exactly, does Hawthorne mean by the "threshold of our story"? What is the nature of that threshold, where does it exist, in the suggested physical space of Hepzibah's chamber, or in a demarcation of place in the narrative events, or in the larger space of our reading, our interaction with the text? These are all plausible

constructions easily gathered from such a delicate, succinct phrase as Hawthorne has written here: its ramifications seem to resonate throughout the rest of the novel, as the narrative can only begin once Hawthorne and the reader have seen Hepzibah issue forth from her toilet.

Such is the nature of most of the observation of character in Nathaniel Hawthorne's third novel *The House of the Seven Gables*, defined by a simultaneity of genuine interest in the given character's thoughts and feelings, their inner world, and an authorial drawing-back from that world. One opinion on the nature of this observation is supplied by Edgar A. Dryden in his *Nathaniel Hawthorne – The Poetics of Enchantment*: "Hawthorne's detachment, in other words, is at once imposed on him and willed by him. The result is that he wishes to live neither within the realm of interior space nor in that occupied by other people" (27). This rather antisocial view of Hawthorne's authorial voice is, actually, in accordance with much of the criticism that has been written on the subject, and justifiably so—Hawthorne in *Seven Gables* never does quite accomplish either side of the observational scale introduced by Dryden; that is, he never fully defines, or explains, any character's inner thoughts and opinions in absolute detail, nor does he ever fully withdraw into the realm "occupied by other people", perhaps a space in which intimate observation of character is not possible, or not ventured, due to the practical inability to enter into the consciousness of others. Hawthorne is at once interested in the characters, but more often than not feigns a lack of complete knowledge of their psychology and their heart, or withdraws his process of observation on presentiments of

moral objection. What is it that this detachment accomplishes within the space of the novel? Dryden argues:

> The act of distancing, then, suddenly is seen as a disruption between man and total reality, a disruption which deprives him of the life-giving warmth of other people. That perspective which originally had seemed to purify the world and to free man from the burden of facticity has instead estranged him from his fellow man and made him a foreigner in his land. (34)

Authorial detachment from the described events and characters of the narrative, then, is a technique employed at first to add a purity of authorial observation, and remove the onus of facticity implied by realist narration—the result of which is the implication of estrangement, both for the author who creates (and observes) and the reader who internalises. When readers are not given the complete view of the scene (or a character's inner world), does it completely alienate?

Let us return first to Hepzibah's introductory scene in the novel, for what might be the most satisfying instance of the delicacy of observation Hawthorne employs in *Seven Gables*. He exclaims:

> Far from us be the indecorum of assisting, even in imagination, at a maiden lady's toilet! Our story must therefore await Miss Hepzibah at the threshold of her chamber; only presuming, meanwhile, to note some of the heavy sighs that labored from her bosom, with little restraint as to their lugubrious depth and volume of sound, inasmuch as they could be audible to nobody, save a disembodied listener like ourself. (377)

This passage introduces and accomplishes a number of things: it establishes the author and the reader as members of the same observatory group—together with Hawthorne, a reader observes only what is offered to both party's senses, in this case, sound; it only "presumes" to note these empirical events of the narrative, and as such, has an amplified layer of delicacy; it notes the disembodied state of the author and the reader (a strange oxymoron, considering one without a body cannot be subject to empirical sensations like sound); and, it stresses the status of the scene as part of a story. The reader and the author in this passage seem to be together at once outside of Hepzibah's chamber, pressing an ear to the door—but this is an image that Hawthorne, in the empirical space of this passage, ultimately disallows by his assertion that "ourself" are disembodied observers, partaking in a scene from what is a story. This accomplishes a fairly unified effect, then: here what we observe with is our imagination alone. The only facility with which a reader (and the author himself) might hear without the organs of perception is the writing that is taking place; the actual written document of the story. The passage is at once living within itself, with the qualities of a narrative in which events recorded have a deceit of being real transpired events—because Hawthorne narrates immediately, empirically, as if the events are taking place and recorded as they happen—and living outside of itself, as a *story*, a story that can only *presume* to hear the sighs of its own character, and not in any actual sense of physicality, veiled or otherwise. Those sighs, importantly, are exclusively audible to a disembodied listener. Hawthorne implies that an embodied listener would not be able to perceive Hepzibah's heartfelt sighs, and as such, the imagination is privy to a knowledge higher than the realist and the physical.

He continues:

> Truly! Well, indeed! Who would have thought it! Is all this precious time to
> be lavished on the matutinal repair and beautifying of an elderly person, who
> never goes abroad—whom nobody ever visits—and from whom, when she
> shall have done her utmost, it were the best charity to turn one's eyes another
> way! Now, she is almost ready. Let us pardon her one other pause; for it is
> given to the sole sentiment, or we might better say—heightened and rendered
> intense, as it has been, by sorrow and seclusion—to the strong passion of her
> life. (378)

This passage accomplishes another layering of delicacy. Hawthorne begins his famous
process of moral postulation. What he has been describing suddenly becomes slightly
appalling to himself—why should an elderly lady, who rarely has the opportunity of
being observed, spend so much time in the narrative readying herself at her toilet? This
not only shows a sudden presentiment of moral judgment being passed on Hepzibah's
character, but it also foreshadows the pure importance of *observation* within the novel.
Observation lives and breathes at its very core, and the novel (or more directly,
Hawthorne) spends much time and effort describing and commenting on how it works, in
ways both explicit and implicit. The passage also accomplishes an intimation of action—
Hawthorne's moralizing is cut short by his realisation Hepzibah has finished her
matutinal preparations while he was narrating. He decides to pardon her "one other
pause"—this time, for a reason that is completely morally justified in the remainder of the
passage. This pause of Hepzibah's is not for superficial reasons of making-up, but for "a

strong passion of life", that is, a moment reserved for gazing at the Malbone miniature of Clifford. The passage is decidedly two-sided in nature; Hawthorne is at once deriding Hepzibah for holding up the narrative flow, and for reasons he finds morally pointless; and at the same time, the passage allows for that hold-up, because it is justifiable in the realm of sentiment.

How Hawthorne employs and establishes sentiment in *Seven Gables* will also be of ultimate importance, but to further illustrate this developing delicacy of observation, it is useful to turn to Hawthorne's reflection upon Clifford's nature, much further into the novel: "It is—we say it without censure, nor in diminution of the claim which it indefeasibly possessed on beings of another mould—it is always selfish in its essence; and we must give it leave to be so, and heap up our heroic and disinterested love upon it, so much the more, without a recompense" (445). Hawthorne is extremely sensitive of his own characters' inner worlds—so much so that he dares not fault Clifford for being selfish, despite making the observation in the first place. He would much sooner describe Clifford's character, then withdraw, but not without accepting his faults for what they are, and recognising the need to heap love upon those faults. The exaggerated "heroic" love, which is heaped "without a recompense", is like a gushing outflow of authorial sympathy, and as such it denotes a need for human flaw to be treated with affection, and more importantly, sensitivity. This passage shows that Hawthorne's process of character development is the recording of his own observations, observations that show the need for the characters to be treated with delicacy and reserve in regards to the ugly truths of human nature those observations might uncover for the extremely present reader.

Joseph Adamson, originally discussing *The Scarlet Letter*, comments on this quality Hawthorne has imbued his characters with, "the ultimate wish of all human beings perhaps: to *be recognized for what one is*, by a loving eye from which the need to hide or cover oneself, with all one's flaws and defects, imagined or otherwise, is absent, without the fear of judgments or shame." (73) This includes a detachment that is not impersonal but extremely personal; it withdraws because it understands and loves. Whenever Hawthorne seems morally offended by his characters, at least in *Seven Gables*, it is never a moral judgment that is completely explored; especially when it comes to acts of sentimental value or truths too pitiful to discuss, Hawthorne is quick to make his departure to the next scene. As Clark Davis writes in *Hawthorne's Shyness*, "Hawthorne, it seems fair to say, approaches truth with greater delicacy, with conceptions that seem designed to keep him away from all reductive tendencies" (43). Hawthorne never provides finality to the sentimental self of his characters. Phoebe seems to readily summarise this idea of how characters are constructed and observed within the novel: "'A daguerreotype likeness, do you mean?'" she responds when offered the daguerreotype of Jaffrey Pyncheon from Holgrave, "'I don't much like pictures of that sort—they are so hard and stern; besides dodging away from the eye, and trying to escape altogether. They are conscious of looking very unamiable, I suppose, and therefore hate to be seen'" (430). Hawthorne's observations themselves seem wary of this concept—his characters, namely Hepzibah and Clifford, are aware of their hard and stern make-up, their gloomy interiority and their tragic situation—or at least, Hawthorne is very aware of this, and as such, he is careful with how much he observes about them, and how much he reveals to the reader.

His narration is the careful, active consideration of how much he should say, sometimes erring on the judgmental, but also thoughtfully amending itself at every turn.

Observation as a broader theme within the novel seems more thoroughly disseminated in the characters of Phoebe and Holgrave than it does Hepzibah and Clifford. What is remarkable about *Seven Gables* is that Hepzibah and Clifford often become the observed, while Phoebe and Holgrave exist in a world exterior to their inner gloom—and as such, they become increasingly concerned with the health, mental and physical, of the older couple. Holgrave's very character is set up as a detective within the novel, as Phoebe wonders: "He was too calm and cool an observer. Phoebe felt his eye, often; his heart, seldom or never. He took a certain kind of interest in Hepzibah and her brother, and Phoebe herself; he studied them attentively, and allowed no slightest circumstance of their individualities to escape him" (505). Combine this with his current profession as a daguerreotypist, and he is immediately aligned with accurately capturing and portraying people as they appear. Phoebe's earlier argument against the accuracy of daguerreotypes positions her as having an incredible insight pertaining to the sensitive, emotional world of whomever is beheld—she is aware of the subject's desire not to be seen, and as such, has acknowledged the same truth about the sanctity of human interiority that Hawthorne has acknowledged with his narrative technique of delicacy. Holgrave, on the other hand, is the manifestation of a no-holds-barred facility of observation:

> 'Most of my likenesses do look unamiable; but the very sufficient reason, I
> fancy, is, because the originals are so. There is wonderful insight in heaven's

broad and simple sunshine. While we give it credit only for depicting the merest surface, it actually brings out the secret character with a truth that no painter would ever venture upon, even could he detect it. There is at least no flattery in my humble line of art.' (430)

Holgrave's trade is an observation that seeks and reveals those truths upon which Phoebe and Hawthorne would rather not dwell concerning their fellow humans, and it is one that does so with an incredible, natural facility of ease that comes to define the sort of character he is within the novel, and what his function might be for the larger narrative, especially closer to the conclusion. Compared to Hepzibah, who has to strain her near-sighted eyes into a scowl that betrays her interiority, and Clifford, who has lost the ability to perceive and observe the world around him with any sort of accuracy ("'I remember how I used to prize this flower—long ago, I suppose, very long ago!—or was it only yesterday? It makes me feel young again! Am I young? Either this remembrance is singularly distinct, or this consciousness strangely dim!'" [446-447]), Holgrave combines his cool, factual and interested observation (being, as it turns out, Maule's descendant) with his "art" of the daguerreotype to penetrate the gothic world of the House, a world caught in its foreboding reminiscences of the past.

The opposition of Hepzibah and Clifford versus Phoebe and Holgrave in the novel operates on Hawthorne's particular literary technique of framing, as Thompson describes:

the term *frame* means more than one thing: it can mean cultural paradigms and expectations; it can mean dominant linguistic categories; it can also mean an explicit formal literary frame….These naturally interpenetrate, and in the

works of a writer like Hawthorne the existence of framing as a constituent of

cognition itself (conscious or otherwise) is foregrounded. (38)

Hawthorne overtly establishes the frames of the novel in the tension that exists between

the original Pyncheon history (what Davis refers to as "the secret story") and the

contemporary, unfolding one of the central characters. This frame, as Thompson

mentions, includes cultural expectations that I argue are largely informed by the

traditional gothic elements Hawthorne has included—to gloss over these indexically, Jane

Lundblad's *Nathaniel Hawthorne and the Tradition of Gothic Romance* is extremely

helpful: the novel begins with a crime (17), an ancestral, patriarchal one, to hit the nail on

the head of gothic literature; the eventual epiphany of that crime hinges on the discovery

of documents (17); there is an element of magic in the implied witchcraft of the Maules

(20); there is a painting at the centre of the narrative (22), as well as the castle-like

structure of the house; and, perhaps the most simple of the many gothic tropes employed

by Hawthorne, blood is a central image (23), not only in the accusatory prophecy of the

Maules, but in the common thread of how the Pyncheon patriarchs die, blood having

gurgled in their throats and then spilt onto their collars. Hawthorne has sewn these simple

and time-honoured conventions into the fabric of this novel, and these are all conventions

that would have been extremely identifiable for readers of fiction in the nineteenth

century, perhaps moreso in Europe where Hawthorne's novels were favourably received.

As such, the frame that exists here is one of cultural expectation. However, these tropes

have only been wrought into the frame of the "secret story"; they are the gothic elements

that define the original ancestral story of only the first chapter. Hepzibah and Clifford

struggle with the lasting vestiges of ancestral horror for the duration of *Seven Gables*, but Phoebe and Clifford are less concerned with them, Phoebe at one point likening the idea of the House's curse to a tragedy acted in "the hall of a country-hotel" (539). Holgrave, on the other hand, has the power of keen observation and the knowledge of the documents behind the Pycheon portrait. As asserted earlier, the novel begins with the second chapter, and this is because Hawthorne himself stresses the unimportance of the first, which describes only the original story of the House: "We have already hinted, that it is not our purpose to trace down the history of the Pyncheon family, in its unbroken connection with the House of the Seven Gables" (368). The secret story of the Pyncheons "would fill a bigger folio volume, or a longer series of duodecimos, than could prudently be appropriated to the annals of all New England, during a similar period" (355). Hawthorne's seeming disinterest in narrating these events in full is not only out of his particular authorial interest, but a metafictional one: there is simply not enough physical space for such a history, or rather, the narrative would increase in bulk, and this change is undesirable both as a literary effort for the author and for readerly interest—Hawthorne's conceptions of books and their physicality readily echoes from "The Old Manse" and its garret. The uniform effect of the first chapter acts a frame, culturally, metafictionally— everything that follows afterwards is an inlaid narrative, separated from the frame of the secret story by the passage of time, authorial interest, and conventions of genre itself, for the gothic elements are conventions that only impinge on the characters' lives as a destructive, corrosive nuisance, as if from another realm altogether. Hawthorne stresses, moving on from this preliminary chapter, that the narrative opens with the second, the

scene that establishes Hepzibah's position in the shop (376). This is what constitutes "our narrative".

Compared to the frame of the secret story, what characterises the inlaid narrative (or contemporary narrative) are largely more romantic concerns, concerns that I argue do not include the gothic elements (as Lundblad argues, wielding the term "gothic romance") but are in direct opposition with them. This can be seen in two different places: Hawthorne's preface to the novel, and his construction of character within it. As I have already shown, Hepzibah/Clifford and Phoebe/Holgrave are set largely in opposition with each other, both in how they observe and receive the world around them, and in how they bring about the conclusion of the narrative events. To conclude upon how the characters function respectively to bring about the eventual close of the narrative, I must briefly introduce the idea of negative romance—an idea that will prove more important in the following chapter concerning *The Marble Faun*, but for now will do in a more simplistic summary from Thompson: "The term is meant to suggest, not an outright denial of romantic values (nor a gothic point-for-point inversion), but an indeterminate or shifting balance between the positive and the negative within an ironic form tending toward some degree of self-reflexivity" (83). In *Seven Gables*, this inversion works on a number of levels: the inlaid narrative negates the framing one, through Hawthorne's intent of showing truths of the human heart, not a tedious history—and the narrative events themselves, that is, the gothic world of Hepzibah and Clifford gets directly negated by the marriage of Phoebe to Holgrave. Even before this shift occurs, Phoebe acts as a negatory force within the novel, as described in the scene where Phoebe sings for Clifford:

It is perhaps remarkable, considering her temperament, that Phoebe oftener chose a strain of pathos than of gaiety. But the young and happy are not ill-pleased to temper their life with a transparent shadow. The deepest pathos of Phoebe's voice and song, moreover, came sifted through the golden texture of a cheery spirit, and was somehow so interfused with the quality thence acquired, that one's heart felt all the lighter for having wept at it. Broad mirth, in the sacred presence of dark misfortune, would have jarred harshly and irreverently with the solemn symphony, that rolled its undertone through Hepzibah's and her brother's life. Therefore it was well that Phoebe so often chose sad themes, and not amiss that they ceased to be so sad, while she was singing them. (471)

Phoebe arrives at the House and brings with her all the cheer and beauty of her youth; her presence is an adaptive force that seeks to exorcise the corrosive effects the framing story (or secret story) is having on Clifford and Hepzibah. Phoebe implicitly recognises this all-pervasive generic gothic force, and the method of negating it is by channeling it into a form that takes both its inherent gloom and pathos and infuses them with a "golden texture" that negates its outflow. Phoebe's presence in Hepzibah and Clifford's lives functions as Hawthorne's authorial presence and aesthetic romantic project does—a gothic tale that is not whole-heartedly gothic; a romance that discusses the indelible mischief of history, but is not concerned with that history. Phoebe's function as a character is to excise that mischief, and this is achieved through her observational skills that are all *heart* and no knowledge—she does not have access to the historical

knowledge that Holgrave does, and Holgrave in contrast has observation that is all *knowledge* and too little heart, as Phoebe mentioned in the daguerreotype scene. It is only through their coming-together like the adding of sums in marriage at the end of the novel that the tensions of the secret story get entirely debunked: Holgrave reveals the documents behind the picture, restoring Clifford's innocence and providing the family with a rich, hopeful posterity.

Holgrave remarks at the close of the novel:

'But I wonder that the late Judge…should not have felt the propriety of embodying so excellent a piece of domestic architecture in stone, rather than in wood. Then, every generation of the family might have altered the interior, to suit its own taste and convenience; while the exterior, through the lapse of years, might have been adding venerableness to its original beauty, and thus giving that impression of permanence, which I consider essential to the happiness of any one moment.' (622-623)

Here, Holgrave's cool observation and Phoebe's instinctually sensitive inversions of ancestral misery combine to comment on the truth the end of the narrative achieves: the idea that every generation should amend the former to their taste and sensibilities, never losing the sense of its having a set origin, ancestry and presitigious history, but re-purposing those effects so that they linger while not turning to hurtful mischief. Houses should be rendered in wood, not stone, a material much more suited to the ooze of the human heart Hawthorne paints the beginning of the narrative with (374), and also much

more characteristic of the world of New England, not that ancestral, markedly gothic world of stone-built European castles.

The sphere of Hepzibah and Clifford is exorcised but forgiven, as they are morally absolved by their society, and remove themselves along with Phoebe and Hepzibah to live in their romantically negated sphere. Davis details the process:

> Indeed, there is very little structural difference between Holgrave's potential revenge and the Pyncheon's reclamation of the lost ancestral claim. Each contrasts the present to the limits of the secret story. The historical drama of the novel thus hinges upon the capacity of the individual to relinquish a hidden history, to escape its narrowed perspective and reengage the world outside of its limits. (124)

The explicitly narratological framing technique employed by Hawthorne intermingles the defunct knowledge of the secret story with the humanistic concerns of the actual narrative of a family in distress. This is concerned both with the method in which the two frames have been interacting to reveal knowledge as it pertains to progression of plot for the reader, and the larger generic categories of the two narratives—the gothic versus Hawthorne's unique brand of negative romance. This highlights what Hawthorne set out to accomplish in the preface: "[The narrative] is a Legend, prolonging itself, from an epoch now gray in the distance, down into our own broad daylight, and bringing along with it some of its legendary mist, which the Reader, according to his pleasure, may either disregard, or allow it to float almost imperceptibly about the characters and events, for the sake of a picturesque effect" (351). The secret story has been but an origin that floated

around what we must now presume is the main concern of *The House of the Seven Gables*, and Hawthorne's authorial project in writing it: the all-important truths of the human heart, and the delicacy with which they must be transformed into narrative.

Recalling the images Hawthorne gives his audience of the Pyncheon-garden, he reasons that "The author needs great faith in his reader's sympathy; else he must hesitate to give details so minute, and incidents apparently so trifling, as are essential to make up the idea of this garden-life" (481). Because most of the novel has proceeded with such details, there now must be an assumption that a reader's role in reading *Seven Gables* must be one of open, available sympathy. Joseph Adamson details the importance of this sympathetic observation:

> What happens when observation is not combined with sympathy is, of course, one of Hawthorne's great themes. The fate of the scientist or healer— Aylmer, Rappaccini, Ethan Brand, Chillingworth—whose wish for disclosure and knowledge is perverted in the service of power, control, and revenge, is a constant in Hawthorne's work. Ethan Brand is the model of this perversion. The unpardonable sin sought throughout the world by the protagonist turns out to be his own unholy prying into the human soul to find the unpardonable sin; it has been turned into a violation and manipulation of others and the most intimate aspects of their inner lives. (68-69)

To read the novel without this sympathy is to spend one's time in the moral questions of its bipolar spheres—or even to become like one of Hawthorne's trademark villains, all observation and no heart (Holgrave does begin this way; his union with Phoebe ultimately

works to prevent his villain status in the novel). What a reader needs to look for to successfully live within the House is that brand of delicate, observational sympathy Hawthorne has demonstrated. Thus, when Hawthorne withdraws from Hepzibah's chamber, detachedly noting we must not intrude upon her sensitive longing over Clifford's miniature—is it an effect one that alienates both Hawthorne from the private sphere of man, and the reader from the interior world of the novel's characters? This reluctancy, in fact, accomplishes the opposite. Together the reader wonders with Hawthorne when Hepzibah will issue forth over the threshold for the sake of narrative progression, but the novel in fact is concerned only with thresholds. The novel exists generically on the threshold of the gothic and the romantic, choosing instead to negate both. It presents us with frames—the stern secret story, that is like a painted, ornate physical frame around the rosy, delicately painted scene of the current Pyncheon family—one that seems to get crowned by the actual Pyncheon portrait in the drawing-room of the House of the Seven Gables, and similarly works to conceal the documents— the truths—that exist behind. Characters have been observed with both a heavy sideways glance and an apology for its intrusion; Phoebe and Holgrave have represented the idealistic possibility of a generation that negates the historical miscarriages of the past. All of these things are concerned with thresholds; the ubiquitous technique of Hawthornean delicacy. Thompson states "Hawthorne not only acknowledges the 'iron cage'—the inside view; he also emphasizes it. And yet, through the art of romantic narrative, Hawthorne suggests that one can attain the liberating outside view too. And, what is more liberating, both simultaneously" (9). What Thompson describes is the

simultaneity of the threshold; something that exists on the limits of two sides. Hawthorne's delicacy of observation is a threshold that is fictional and metafictional in character, at once pointing out the novel's status as creative, literary surface, and also a story made up with constructed characters that simultaneously highlight their possibility as representatives of the inner worlds of human beings—worlds that are violable and sacred. We must not step over that threshold, lest we intrude, but this does not alienate us; the imagination can chance to presume what is happening on the other side of the door.

IV. "Tremble at them, in a suitable place": Hawthorne, Genre and the Fantastic

Like *The House of the Seven Gables* some nine years before it, *The Marble Faun*, Hawthorne's final novel, delights in setting the gothic in opposition with the romantic. Herein are numerous symbiotic, mutually-affective narratives, at times counterproductive to each other; but unlike *Seven Gables*, these are not inlaid narratives but those that are surprisingly more deceptive in their operation, having more to do with aesthetics and hermeneutics. Again we find a discussion of art as it accurately depicts truth, as was the case with Holgrave and his daguerreotypes; in *The Marble Faun* we now find not one but three artists in a setting far more conducive to an active exploration of art forms and the various methods with which an artist goes about their process of depiction. As such, *The Marble Faun*, like its working title, is about *transformation*. How does art ultimately represent truth and reality? How does the aesthetic in turn inform reality? And—reading

between the lines—how do differing spheres of diegesis operate, reflect, and deflect each other while living together in a single novel? *The Marble Faun* is another example of the negative romance, as defined by Thompson, but the combination of the multiple narratives and the ultimate balancing of the scales we see by the conclusion work to bring the novel into the sphere of an entirely new literary technique and genre, that of Tzvetan Todorov's "fantastic". *The Marble Faun*, with its gothic and romantic conventions and character oppositions, is really a complex exercise and experiment in genre in which Hawthorne mixes the two as an alchemist does, bringing to a boil that results in a surprisingly stable, fantastically lustrous ingot. With its never-abating countercurrents of genre, character, theme, convention and aesthetics, *The Marble Faun* is a concoction in which the reader is ultimately implied to make generic and narratological decisions about "truth", becoming the ideal reader that Hawthorne so wishes for. As it turns out, truth does not matter as much as the representation; aesthetic means more than reality.

The Marble Faun tells the story (more accurately, the *stories*) of three artists—Miriam, a painter; Hilda, a copyist; Kenyon, a sculptor—and Donatello, a man with an uncanny resemblance to a work of art, the faun of Praxiteles. Thus, art and artistry are at the core of the novel's concerns. Through the extended descriptions of each character's technique—usually with an individual chapter devoted to describing each—it quickly becomes apparent that each character's art reveals their interiority. As Jonathan Auerbach pithily comments, in *The Marble Faun* "people gain identity through works of art, and works of art are transformed into human beings" (104). Each character's artworks have varying significances when put in relation to what they reveal about his or

herself, and one of the earliest instances is when Donatello is introduced to Miriam's studio, and is shown her depiction of Jael:

> It was dashed off with remarkable power, and showed a touch or two that were actually lifelike and deathlike; as if Miriam had been standing by, when Jael gave the first stroke of her murderous hammer—or as if she herself were Jael, and felt irresistibly impelled to make her bloody confession, in this guise. Her first conception of the stern Jewess had evidently been that of perfect womanhood, a lovely form, and a high, heroic face of lofty beauty; but, dissatisfied either with her own work or the terrible story itself, Miriam had added a certain wayward quirk of her pencil, which at once converted the heroine into a vulgar murderess. (887)

The passage is undeniably a foreshadowing of Miriam's character development—her transformation from a "lofty beauty" into a murderess disgusted by the developments of her own life story (albeit an implied murderess, since it is really Donatello who commits the murder of the Model). Here Miriam's art foreshadows the events of the plot itself and her own fate as a character within the gothic narrative of the novel—peering into this picture is peering into a later event of the narrative's linearity. Later in this chapter, Miriam reveals a self-portrait to Donatello, asking him who it is; he immediately recognises the likeness as Miriam herself, and Hawthorne narrates "we forebore to speak descriptively of Miriam's beauty earlier in our narrative, because we foresaw this occasion to bring it perhaps more forcibly before the reader" (892). A description of Miriam's painting of herself is a more forcible method in which to present her physical

actuality to the reader; as such, both Donatello and the reader stand in front of her self-portrait, receiving her full beauty. Hawthorne has thusly used art to enhance "reality" (insofar as Miriam's appearance is part of the fiction's reality); a painting does more justice in representing things as they exist rather than a simple description of Miriam's appearance. Miriam's appearance has the double-filter of her own artistry and how Hawthorne has chosen to present it to us in forcible words and the positioning of a character observing another character. Donatello likewise has an identity that is formed with the help of art, though through the opposite process—instead of art representing his appearance, his appearance gets represented in art, as the rest of the artists wonder at his perfect likeness to Praxiteles' faun throughout the novel. This, of course, is the ultimate question of the novel, including its final chapter, and will be returned to in an analysis of the postscript.

Hilda and Kenyon, the other side of the character opposition within the novel, also have individual understandings and methodologies of art, which reveal different things about their character. Hilda, being a copyist, has not the gift of original vision, but a vision that penetrates art and thoroughly understands it, rather an all-seeing vision:

> She saw—no, not saw, but felt—through and through a picture; she bestowed upon it all the warmth and richness of a woman's sympathy; not by any intellectual effort, but by this strength of her heart, and this guiding light of sympathy, she went straight to the central point, in which the Master had conceived his work. Thus, she viewed it, as it were, with his own eyes, and hence her comprehension of any picture that interested her was perfect. (898)

Hers is thus a vision that becomes a sympathetic understanding of the original artistic intent. Being a copyist, she can do naught but reproduce the feelings intended in the original. This not only indicates Hilda's characteristic position as a sympathetic sponge who ends up absorbing the tragic narrative proceedings of Rome, but also sets up her naivety as someone who lacks critical understanding and vision, letting herself eventually be kidnapped (so to speak) by the Roman church. By the end of the novel, her artistic eye is described with remarkable change:

> Hilda's despondency, nevertheless, while it dulled her perceptions in one respect, had deepened them in another; she saw beauty less vividly, but felt truth, or the lack of it, more profoundly. She began to suspect that some, at least, of her venerated painters, had left an inevitable hollowness in their works, because, in the most renowned of them, they essayed to express to the world what they had not in their own souls. (1133)

Her dulled perceptions have the advantage of a deepening in another regard, as a blind person's other senses become heightened; her gift is now the capability to understand truth in art, and also to detect when there is a lack. She is despondent because the paintings of the Masters now fall short of truth; when an artist has not the truth of their depictions within their soul, then the resultant art is always hollow. The message here—and we learn it through Hilda's character—is that interiority is something that should be accurately passed onto art. It is possible for one to lie about that interiority, or to create a deceit, but this will be ultimately visible. In the sense that Miriam's artworks are all interpreted narratives—tales of heroines and murderesses and dark-eyed beauties—at the

same time they are foreshadowings of the narrative currently in front of *our* eyes, the narrative of *The Marble Faun*, then Hilda's artworks are the depictions of individual sympathetic understandings. Indeed, Miriam's artwork seems to embody ethos, a conscious enactment and vindication of the narrative at hand, an attestation to her own character and what she will become, narratologically and metanarratologically; Hilda's are pure pathos, transformations of the original feelings of the artist.

Thus, it is natural that we have the third element, logos, within Kenyon's sculptures. His artistic endeavours are described from the start as having an inseparable intellectual, philosophical quality, as Hilda complains: "'Is this the penalty of refinement? Pardon me; I do not believe it. It is because you are a sculptor, that you think nothing can be finely wrought, except that it be cold and hard, like the marble in which your ideas take shape. I am a painter, and know that the most delicate beauty may be softened and warmed throughout'" (940). Hilda's harsh assessment of Kenyon's art, and the concept that Kenyon's artworks hinge on "ideas" taking shape, is in accordance to Kenyon's position in the novel as being the true voice of New England, the ultimate countercurrent to the strange, corrupting world of undead antiquity, and the only character who remains immune to the gothic happenings of plot throughout the entire course of the novel. His status as the character most effectively embodying ideology and logic in the novel is further demonstrated in his bust of Milton: "In another style, there was a grand, calm head of Milton, not copied from any one bust or picture, yet more authentic than any of them, because all known representations of the poet had been profoundly studied, and solved in the artists's mind" (950-951). Unlike Hilda, Kenyon needs no singular visual reference

for his art, being able to collate the gestalt of Miltonic representations in his mind, and unlike Miriam, his artwork has no function to foreshadow narratological events, or tell stories. His artworks are tempered via ideas—being "solved" in his mind, and springing outward from that force of his psychology.

Hence, we see three very different ways in which art speaks to the artist in *The Marble Faun*, and can rightly attribute them to Aristotle's three appeals: Miriam being ethos, Hilda pathos, and Kenyon logos. What this reveals about the novel at large is that art is always made up of transformations of the artist's interiority and psychology; an artist's product is a referent to his or herself. The metafictional extension we inevitably make from this concern about artists and their artworks to Hawthorne and his novel cannot be seen by these treatments of character alone, but it is a necessary element in accounting for the novel's ultimate operation as a piece of generic metafiction. This novel is Hawthorne's playground of genre, and he has chosen to populate it with artworks that are extensions of each of his individual artists, operating via so many distinct disseminations. And, to be quite sure, a discussion of artists, as represented by their art, being filtered through art (albeit a verbal, not pictorial art), is an elementary metafictional veiling of Hawthorne's, the first step in understanding the work as such.

As in *Seven Gables* (but perhaps to an even further extreme in *The Marble Faun*), what will immediately be made present in the minds of readers familiar with the gothic novel is that this novel is absolutely bursting at the seams with its conventions. First and foremost in the gothic laundry-list is the Italian setting; a central crime around which the plot circulates; documents (the sealed package Hilda must deliver, and which cultivates

her being kidnapped); grottoes (the subterranean tour); works of art (the obvious Faun, the works of each character); Catholicism; narratives of ancestry/aristocratic descent (for both Miriam and Donatello); and, to an extent, supernatural phenomena. Unlike the structure-centric, "haunted house" gothic of *Seven Gables* in which the house itself becomes a concentration of the ancestral horrors of the New England setting, *The Marble Faun* is decidedly more exotic, taking place in Italy, a locale

> affording a sort of poetic or fairy precinct, where actualities would not be so
>
> terribly insisted upon, as they are, and must needs be, in America. No author,
>
> without a trial, can conceive of the difficulty in writing a Romance about a
>
> country where there is no shadow, no antiquity, no mystery, no picturesque
>
> and gloomy wrong, nor anything but a common-place prosperity, in broad and
>
> simple daylight, as is happily the case with my dear native land. (854-855)

Any reader of *The Scarlet Letter* or *Seven Gables* will feel the palpable tinge of inaccuracy in this statement—both of which being New England novels tainted with the shadows of ancestry, sin, personal and public crime and gloomy, fatalistic aesthetics. At any rate, what Hawthorne is intimating is the freedom of movement Italy will afford him in *The Marble Faun*. As suggested in the previous chapter, the horror of the gothic in *Seven Gables* radiates from its incompatibility with the New England world of romance and free will, in comparison to the shackles of antiquated ancestry and patriarchal curses that are likely to dissipate as soon as blinds are drawn, putting things in broad daylight (to use a veritably Hawthornean metaphor). Here we see the same process take place,

although this time with incompatible Americans placed within the inherently and truly, extensively, dangerously gothic world of Rome, and to a markedly different affect.

As has been insisted upon, and as in *Seven Gables*, we have two distinct generic character oppositions within the novel: Miriam/Donatello, the gothic couple (as with Hepzibah/Clifford), and Hilda/Kenyon, the romantic couple (Phoebe/Holgrave). In the early chapters of the novel, the four characters embark on a "local color" tour of some catacombs, the affair being entirely informed by the gothic—descriptions abound of crumbled bones, grotesquely smiling skulls, and the inestimable reaches of dusty grottoes. From the first, Hawthorne positions Donatello and Miriam as somehow linked to the locale:

> Donatello had shown little appetite for the expedition; for, like most Italians, and in especial accordance with the law of his own simple and physically happy nature, this young man had an infinite repugnance to graves and skulls, and to all that ghastliness which the Gothic mind loves to associate with the idea of death. He shuddered, and looked fearfully round, drawing nearer to Miriam, whose attractive influence alone had enticed him into that gloomy region. (872)

Donatello has no appetite for the gothic, and has a sense that he has cause to fear the catacombs; Miriam, interestingly, has this to say in response:

> "I also believe in ghosts…and could tremble at them, in a suitable place. But these sepulchers are so old, and these skulls and white ashes so very dry, that methinks they have ceased to be haunted. The most awful idea, connected

with the catacombs, is their interminable extent, and the possibility of going

astray into this labyrinth of darkness, which broods around the little glimmer

of our own tapers." (872)

Just as her paintings accomplish, Miriam perfectly foreshadows what happens to herself

immediately after this scene—that is, her becoming lost in the catacombs, as the group

desperately tries to discover her whereabouts. The irony of the passage is that Miriam has

remarked upon a generic context within the novel itself, the sphere of the gothic that seals

her and Donatello's fate.

She inaccurately feels that the space of the catacombs holds no real threat to her,

but alas, from the depths of the catacombs emerges her Model, the evil force that haunts

her for the remaining duration of the novel (here referred to as "the Spectre of the

Catacomb"):

It was the further singularity of this affair, that the connection, thus, briefly

and casually formed, did not terminate with the incident that gave it birth. As

if her service to him, or his service to her, whichever it might be, had given

him an indefeasible claim on Miriam's regard and protection, the Spectre of

the Catacomb never long allowed her to lose sight of him, from that day

forward. He haunted her footsteps with more than the customary persistency

of Italian mendicants, when once they have recognized a benefactor. (877)

Hawthorne's strange way of describing the Model's reunion with Miriam suggests that,

after running into each other in the catacombs, the relationship would not have continued

with Miriam's reemergence into the above-ground world of Rome—rather, a spectre can

only haunt a "suitable place" such as the catacombs, as Miriam puts it, and the affair would likely have been terminated after "the incident that gave it birth". But the spectre, becoming the Model, follows her out of the catacombs into the streets of Rome, and pursues her for the rest of the novel, including after his murder (in the form of guilt). Hawthorne's reasoning and verbal colouring of the affair implies surprise at an event that is not matching its context, just as Miriam remarked about the catacombs.

The catacombs exist within *The Marble Faun* as a locus of the gothic itself—not a space with the quality of the gothic, but a space that *is* the genre of the gothic. From it is birthed the indelible link to Miriam's ancestral past, a flesh-and-bones spectre. Even the supplication of many possible narratives Hawthorne brings up to account for Miriam's past—all of them to do with aristocracy and transgressions of lineage—has her marked as a character who radiates the gothic, who pulls those around her into the gothic (as is what happens with Donatello). The characters themselves, who see no potency in the benign, crumbling space of the catacombs, and down to Hawthorne himself, who does "not particularly seek to interest [the reader] in this scene" (874), are remarking upon a generic space which has long since crumbled within literature itself. By 1860, these conventions left over from the eighteenth-century gothic craze are indeed relics of the past—conventions concerned with ruins and ruinous in themselves, they nonetheless become the dust of Rome that "inevitably settles on our page, and mingles with our ink" (937). *The Marble Faun* is a novel concerned with indelible traces of the past, after all, and the best way to execute this is to include time-honoured traditions of horror literature. Concerning Miriam and Donatello, they become trapped body-and-soul in the gothic, unable to

escape. As Michael Dunne comments about the Model, "Although *The Marble Faun* does not establish that this character is a demon, or the ghost of an ancient Roman, he might as well be in terms of his evil influence on Miriam. We should recognize, however, how much we have been suborned into the narrator's strategic narrative plan even as we proceed toward our favored interpretation" (42). What that narrative plan is has to do with the complex movement of Miriam and Donatello into the gothic, a generic pocket that stems from this singular event in the narrative.

But, as Hawthorne makes painfully clear, this is doubly tragic for Miriam and Donatello. Counteracting the subterranean chapters (and taking place only a few chapters afterwards) are those that take place in the Roman suburbs and forests. The setting is a throwback to antiquity, but in an entirely different mode than in the catacombs (which also throw the characters back into lost ages, and Miriam into her inescapable past). Here Miriam and Donatello joyfully run a foot race together,

> side by side, with shouts and laughter; they pelted one another with early flowers, and gathering them up again, they twined them with green leaves into garlands for both their heads. They played together like children, or creatures of immortal youth; for (so much had they flung aside the somber habitudes of daily life) they seemed born to be sportive forever, and endowed with eternal mirthfulness instead of any deeper joy. It was a glimpse far backward into Arcadian life, or, farther still, into the Golden Age, before mankind was burthened with sin and sorrow, and before pleasure had been darkened with those shadows that bring it into high relief, and make it Happiness. (922)

Donatello seems native to this Arcadian setting, running freely, appearing from a treetop when Miriam least expects it, and here Hawthorne narrates with a deep pity that intimates Miriam and Donatello's rightful place within this highly romantic, sylvan mode of existence. Antiquity has been recalled, like in the catacombs, but this time in the genre of the romantic and the precedence of Arcadian tropes instead of the gothic. Donatello—being aligned with the faun, a typical resident of Arcadia—is doubly implied as being a creature in his rightful sphere here in the forest. Alas, Miriam's Model appears, ruining the scene (934); Donatello murders him midway through the novel, and immediately loses his sylvan likeness: "In this dismal mood, bewildered with the novelty of sin and grief, he had little left of that singular resemblance, on account of which, and for their sport, his three friends had fantastically recognized him as the veritable Faun of Praxiteles" (1019). The gothic black-hole of Miriam and her narratologically unstable past transforms Donatello from his natural existence of the faun, and introduces him to the typically Hawthornean paradigm of sin and guilt.

The entire process is recognised and summarised by Kenyon, with an earth-shaking accuracy, much further into the novel:

> But, here, Miriam, is one whom a terrible misfortunate has begun to educate; it has taken him, and through your agency, out of a wild and happy state, which, within circumscribed limits, gave him joys that he cannot elsewhere find on earth. On his behalf, you have incurred a responsibility which you cannot fling aside. And, here, Donatello, is one whom Providence marks out as intimately connected with your destiny. The mysterious process, by which

> our earthly life instructs us for another state of being, was begun for you by her. She has rich gifts of heart and mind, a suggestive power, a magnetic influence, a sympathetic knowledge, which, wisely and religiously exercised, are what your condition needs. (1120)

Kenyon configures the situation (ignorant of the fact that it is inculcated by a gruesome murder) in hopeful, almost Calvinistic terms. Beseeching the two to stay together for the rest of their days, "'Not, for earthly bliss, therefore…but for mutual elevation and encouragement towards a severe and painful life'" (1121), he is the persuasive force that sees their situation on the most part clearly and correctly, and alters their path towards something mutually productive for the two, ensnared in their gloomy world. Kenyon ultimately applies a remarkable "New World" methodology of advice, which the pair do take, but he has also recognised the subsconscious tragedy of their situation, Donatello being torn from his native Golden Land into something terrible by the "magnetic influence" of Miriam. Miriam and Donatello were thus characters born for the genre of romance, intended to be happy and gleeful in the sphere of Arcadia forever, but end up sliding into the second sphere of the novel's world, the gothic. Even at the very end of the novel, when Hilda receives a bridal gift of a bracelet, secretly left for her by Miriam, Miriam is still irreparably aligned with the gothic:

> It had been Miriam's; and once, with the exuberance of fancy that distinguished her, she had amused herself with telling a mythical and magic legend for each gem, comprising the imaginary adventures and catastrophe of its former wearer. Thus, the Etruscan bracelet became the connecting bond of

a series of seven wondrous tales, all of which, as they were dug out of seven sepulchers, were characterized by a sevenfold sepulchral gloom; such as Miriam's imagination, shadowed by her own misfortunes, was wont to fling over its most sportive flights. (1237-1238)

This final mention of Miriam and her character within the novel is configured in terms of the gothic narratives with which her past was described, credibly or incredibly, at the beginning—a never-ending recounting of sepulchral tales, gloomy and tragic, dogged by inevitable misfortune. The strange narrative-birthing power of the gothic remains, and colours Miriam forever, perpetually a character who was born from a series of narratives, fantastical or otherwise. And even unto this final description of Miriam, on the final pages of the novel, does Hawthorne hint at the compulsive nature of the novel itself: its tendency to overlay narrative with narrative.

Of course, Hilda is not without her own troubles, and becomes involved in what is probably the most outlandish gothic trope of the novel: its fear of Catholicism. Whether or not Hawthorne was aware of the convention as a gothic one (as Ponder writes in her chapter on association theory, Hawthorne's library holdings indicate he was a reader of Ann Radcliffe [76]), it can be read either as a trope included in his intention to play with the conventions of the gothic, or as a symbol of the Americanist feelings that hover over much of the novel, especially as they are concentrated in the figure of Kenyon. Hilda, a simple New England girl, gets drawn into the treachery of the Roman church, expressing a naivety of feeling towards how churches should be run: "'Do not these inestimable advantages,' thought Hilda, 'or some of them, at least, belong to Christianity itself? Are

they not a part of the blessing which the System was meant to bestow upon mankind?

Can the faith, in which I was born and bred, be perfect, if it leave a weak girl like me to

wander, desolate, with this great trouble crushing me down?'" (1147) Her thinking about

Christianity—obviously deemed incorrect by Hawthorne, as the implications of her

giving herself over to Confessional create the ultimate havoc and climax of the novel's

final sections—is much critisised by Kenyon:

> "Hilda, have you flung your angelic purity into that mass of unspeakable
>
> corruption, the Roman Church?....You were a creature of imagination, and yet
>
> as truly a New England girl as any with whom you grew up in your native
>
> village. If there were one person in the world, whose native rectitude of
>
> thought, and something deeper, more reliable than thought, I would have
>
> trusted against all the arts of a priesthood—whose taste, alone, so exquisite
>
> and sincere that it rose to be a moral virtue, I would have rested upon as a
>
> sufficient safeguard—it was yourself!" (1156-1157)

Kenyon once again emphasises the inherent naivety of Hilda's vision, an overly

sympathetic mode of viewing the world, which gets her into trouble in treacherous Rome

and the terrible goings-on of the gothic plot, which so far have been operating only

against Miriam and Donatello. Of course, after this point, Hilda becomes wiser, now

seeing the feigned reality and subtextual emptiness of the masterworks she so loved at the

beginning of the novel, and explains her reasoning for giving herself over to the church:

"'I shall never go to the Confessional again; for there can scarcely come such a sore trial

twice in my life. If I had been a wiser girl, a stronger, and a more sensible, very likely I

might not have gone to the Confessional at all. It was the sin of others that drove me thither; not my own, though it almost seemed so.'" (1157-1158) Like Kenyon, who has seen through the machinations of the novel's two spheres—his clairvoyance in recognising that Miriam's fate has tainted Donatello forever, and driven them into severe and perpetual tragedy—Hilda recognises that it was Miriam and Donatello's sins, the infection of their guilt and the gothic aesthetics of Rome, that drove her to the church, and not anything within herself.

As Kenyon remarks earlier in the novel, America and Rome are terribly different places: "'In that fortunate land [of America], each generation has only its own sins and sorrows to bear. Here, it seems as if all the weary and dreary Past were piled upon the back of the Present. If I were to lose my spirits, in this country—if I were to suffer any heavy misfortune here—methinks it would be impossible to stand up against it, under such adverse influences!'" (1104) Hilda and Kenyon are both now in the unique position of understanding the two genres that interpenetrate the novel—romance and the gothic. They are apt in recognising the misfortune of Miriam and Donatello, being forever flung from their native happiness and original dispositions, into a life of penitence and gloom. Milton Stern comments how

> In the largest political effect upon point of view in *The Marble Faun*, at the conclusion Hawthorne places Hilda and Kenyon in the position of supreme perspective, overseeing all of Rome from the dome of St. Peter's. For their Olympian view they stand atop a church they disclaim, commenting

downward upon a human situation in which they have struggled to remain uninvolved. (110)

There have essentially been two plots within *The Marble Faun* that move amongst the two spheres of genre: Miriam and Donatello's fall from Arcadia into gothic tragedy, and Hilda and Kenyon's escape from the gothic back to their native land, another sort of Arcadia. They marry, and resolve to flee: "And, now that life had so much human promise in it, they resolved to go back to their own land; because the years, after all, have a kind of emptiness, when we spend too many of them on a foreign shore" (1237). Their lives are imbued with the human promise Miriam and Donatello lost within the short sylvan scenes of their existence, and they must change locus to a place more conducive to that promise. As Stern notes, the ending of *The Marble Faun* is Hawthorne's ultimate love letter to his native country (107), having shown the grotesque and gloomy proceedings of Italy, albeit not without a touch of enjoyment in what its antique aesthetics had to offer, and their aptitude towards producing rich narratological outpourings.

Dunne is again extremely helpful in accounting for Hawthorne's multiplicity of narratives within *The Marble Faun*, pointing out that Hawthorne's "notebook entries" (27), some "brief essays on art and history" (27), and his authorial asides all constitute separate heteroglossic genres within the novel, alongside the "main story" and the gothic one:

> other dialogical forces enter the plot by means of metadiegetic narratives-within-narratives….metadiegetic narratives may also be used to introduce Gothic marvels onto the page without compromising the diegetic narrator's

> authority….[the Gothic subplots] shadow the principal narrative in some way. Miriam does have some sort of obligation to the model, and she seems both oppressed by and unable to terminate the bond. Although these metadiegetic narratives do not really account for what has happened to these characters previously, they are, then, not totally false or unrelated to the narrator's principal diegesis. (41-42)

Dunne argues that these heteroglossic, metadiegetic (to use his own terminology) differences are not jarring in the novel—at least not for smart readers:

> stylistic hetereglossia is likely to occur between an incorporated genre and its diegetic context, and the conflict is likely to demand the reader's acceptance and/or rejection of fictionality. Readers can perhaps find confirmation of their interpretive theses on one side of the stylistic dialogue or the other. Especially ingenious readers may even negotiate some sort of thematic unity between the two and thus identify evidence of Hawthorne's organic stylistics. (28)

Dunne does not end with this conclusion, instead arguing that the novel should be read as least monologically as possible, vouching to accept its heteroglossia as the benchmark of what *The Marble Faun* achieves.

Another way of acknowledging the heteroglossic technique of the novel would be to return to Thompson's interpretation of the negative romance, as I touched upon while discussing *Seven Gables*. For ultimately, the negative romance takes into account heteroglossia:

> The negative romance included countercurrents to an upper surface of idealized character, motive, and theme. Beneath ringing phrases of the right, the true, the noble, the eternal, and the providential were—apart from the horrific, the disgusting, the degraded—unresolved inconsistencies and contradictions, meaningless or confusing paradox—and not merely at the level of the gothic tale, but also at the level of national epic….The phrase [negative romance] has several advantages, one of which is suggesting forcibly the tension between idealized romantic elements and negating countercurrents deliberately embodied in the same text. (11-12)

The negative romance is thus the perfect way of explaining what Hawthorne has been working to achieve during the complicated course of *The Marble Faun*. We have the "noble" and "true" characters Hilda and Kenyon, and the "horrific" and "degraded" pair Miriam and Donatello. The novel has two generic spheres in contest with each other— the purely romantic and the gothic—between which the two pairs of characters travel. It is an Italian setting always longing for America, always ruminating upon its differences; it is a playground in which narratives birth narratives, and where details of plot are rarely concretised (what was Miriam's true past; which story do we choose? What was in the sealed packet? Why, truly, was Hilda kidnapped?); it is a stage in which art defines reality and art becomes reality, although we never get a definitive statement as to Donatello's furry ears. But unlike in *Seven Gables*, the characters' individual lives go seemingly unexploded—no one generic sphere or "side" emerges victorious, although it is easy to judge the American happiness of Hilda and Kenyon as such. Really, the

characters have moved from one sphere to the other, in what seems to balance the generic scales once more. Miriam and Donatello were once destined for Arcadia, but have fallen into the pithole of the gothic, where they must live penitently and miserably, albeit with each other's devoted love; Hilda and Kenyon were struggling to remain untainted by the gothic, but emerge from it mostly unscathed, destined for their rightful locus of New England once more. As Dunne says, the countercurrents of the negative romance in this novel do not create a tension or irony, but rather an organic unity that emerges into an entirely new sphere. To highlight this affect at the end of the novel, Hawthorne employs what Thompson calls negative closure: "By *negative closure* I mean that technique of abrupt, truncated, inconclusive denouement by which dreaming and waking, the imagined and the actual, are left ambiguously blurred in a narrative form that undercuts the reader's preconceived (generic) expectations" (13). This is, after all, what the postscript achieves.

Hawthorne makes the uncanny move of inserting himself into the narrative during these final pages, conducting a casual interview with Kenyon and Hilda in order to address some of the details the novel left fairly unexplored—however, attentive readers will realise he does not really light upon any information not found within the novel proper, outside of a (slightly) more explanatory detailing of Miriam's secret packet, and what happened to Hilda during her Catholic internment. Coming upon the question of whether or not Donatello was really the faun come to life, Hawthorne explains:

> The idea of the modern Faun…loses all the poetry and beauty which the
> Author fancied in it, and becomes nothing better than a grotesque absurdity, if
> we bring it into the actual light of day. He had hoped to mystify this

anomalous creature between the Real and the Fantastic, in such a manner that

the reader's sympathies might be excited to a certain pleasurable degree,

without impelling him to ask how Cuvier would have classified poor

Donatello, or to insist upon being told, in so many words, whether he had

furry ears or no. As respects to all who ask such questions, the book is, to that

extent, a failure. (1239)

In this prescient fit of describing his own authorial technique within *The Marble Faun*,

Hawthorne almost perfectly summarises what would, over a century later, become

Tzvetan Todorov's theory of the "fantastic", defined as follows:

The person who experiences [a strange] event must opt for one of two

possible solutions: either he is the victim of an illusion of the senses, of a

product of the imagination—and the laws of the world then remain what they

are; or else the event has indeed taken place, it is an integral part of reality—

but then this reality if controlled by laws unknown to us….The fantastic

occupies the duration of this uncertainty. (25)

Hawthorne ending *The Marble Faun* with the problematising, unspoken assertion that his

characters are living people and the ultimate denial of finalising Donatello's status as real

man with peculiar ears or veritable faun come to life is a firm act of negative closure.

The final lines of the novel include Hawthorne asking Kenyon for certainty as to this

phenomenon of Donatello: "'Only one question more,' said I, with intense earnestness.

'Did Donatello's ears resemble those of the Faun of Praxiteles?' 'I know, but may not

tell,' replied Kenyon, smiling mysteriously. 'On that point, at all events, there shall be

not one word of explanation'" (1242). "There shall be not one word of explanation", the final sentence that resonates in the blank space of the final page, is the powerful act of Hawthorne's negative closure, as if slamming a door. However, Hawthorne is simultaneously revealing the true genre of *The Marble Faun*, the fantastic, precisely as Todorov describes it—for it is a genre as well as a technique. The fantastic is a genre inherently, blazingly metafictional in nature, because it alerts us to epistemology; not only the epistemologies of the author in his laying out of the imagined world, but our personal epistemologies (how should I determine whether or not Donatello is really a faun? What side do I believe?) and also other, possible epistemologies (I can believe that Donatello *was* a faun, or I can maintain that fauns are nonexistent; these are my choices). However, these questions are naturally self-cancelling; as Dunne writes, "Passages of this sort certainly encourage interpretations of the book as epistemological game-playing. And yet, these revelations have as much narratological as thematic value since they remind readers that they are encountering fiction, not life" (37). If we question whether or not Donatello was a faun—and the reality of the narrative in the first place—we are the sort of readers that Hawthorne mocks in the postface. Todorov comes up with a truly shining phrase: "'*I nearly reached the point of believing*': that is the formula which sums up the spirit of the fantastic. Either total faith or total incredulity would lead us beyond the fantastic: it is hesitation which sustains its life" (31). This is precisely how *The Marble Faun* adds a third dimension to its generic experiment. The novel has been the alternating gravitational pulls of two genres not in direct competition with each other, but living mutually within a text conducive to multiple dimensions of narrative, character, theme,

and epistemology. It is the fact that the novel hesitates to ever live within one genre, one diegesis, that makes it definable in terms of the fantastic. As readers, we *nearly reach the point of believing* Donatello is a real faun; we *nearly reach the point of believing* that we hold in our hands a gothic novel; we *nearly reach the point of believing* that otherworldly forces or, on the other hand, humanistic explanation rule the lives of the characters. Hawthorne does not allow us, or want us, to ever conclude anything about Donatello, or the narratologically duplicitous nature of the novel. Reality itself is negated within the novel, both in its content and its execution and reception; we never reach a conclusive statement about what is real and true in these spheres, and the novel wants us to stay within the gray, strange space of its aesthetics of the uncertain and its enjoyable surreality; we stay within (literary) Italy, where no actualities get insisted upon. For true romance—Hawthornean romance—is the poetry and beauty of hesitation.

The novel is thus concerned with experiments of genre and metanarratological epistemology. This was truly echoed in the novel's preface, as Hawthorne considers whom to address with his paratext:

> The antique fashion of Prefaces recognized this genial personage as the 'Kind Reader,' the 'Gentle Reader,' the 'Beloved,' the 'Indulgent,' or, at coldest, the 'Honoured Reader,' to whom the prim old author was wont to make his preliminary explanations and apologies, with the certainty that they would be favourably received. I never personally encountered, nor corresponded through the Post, with this Representative Essence of all delightful and desirable qualities which a Reader can possess. But, fortunately for myself, I

never therefore concluded him to be merely a mythic character. I had always

a sturdy faith in his actual existence, and wrote for him, year after year (853).

Does Hawthorne not see the ideal reader as the fantastic itself? He has never encountered

the ideal reader, but he does not give up on believing they exist; his belief remains,

despite contradictory evidence, and amongst real doubt that nobody receives his romances

quite properly. The ideal reader sits idly in the gray space where they do not exist, but

must exist, holding in their hands the physical product of Hawthorne's literary

endeavours. *The Marble Faun* begins with the reader and ends with the reader.

V. "Speaking of summer-squashes": Hawthorne and the Narratology of Nature

It is now worthwhile to return from Italy and step once more into the old manse,

and momentarily backwards in time into the Puritan world of *The Scarlet Letter*. Just as

in *The Marble Faun*, and most of Hawthorne's oeuvre itself, both of these texts contain

worlds in which subconscious discussions of narrative take place, but this time, these

discussions are configured in a symbology far removed from the artistry and aesthetics of

Italy. Reading Hawthorne reveals a delightful and perplexing pattern of natural imagery

and scenes that seem contrived in terms of telling stories. Natural settings are rapidly,

frequently and eerily personified with humanistic characteristics; trees become

personages with archetypal personalities, forests whisper prophecies, vegetables become

works of art, and quiet streams babble sadly, burdened with tales of guilt and loss. These

images and motifs, part and parcel of Hawthorne's regularly metafictional writing,

become reflections of the narratological process; an active mirroring of Hawthorne's authorial motives.

The Scarlet Letter contains three chapters ("A Forest Walk", "A Flood of Sunshine" and "The Child at the Brook-Side") that see Hester and Pearl taking an excursion into the deep New England forest. Plagued with her incessant shame, the forest at first "seemed to argue so wide a diffusion of her shame, that all nature knew of it; it could have caused her no deeper pang, had the leaves of the trees whispered the dark story among themselves,—had the summer breeze murmured about it,—had the wintry blast shrieked it aloud!" (191). The verdant gloom acts as a proper pathetic fallacy; her shame becomes projected onto her surroundings. On another level, though, the threat of the forest, and the alternative threat of its delivering a hefty pang to Hester's interiority, lies in its potential to speak of her shame—to deliver its message in the form of telling the story. But as the first "forest" chapter of *The Scarlet Letter* proceeds, it becomes clear that the forest is not without its own dark secrets.

Hester and Pearl take a moment to sit by a little brook:

> All these giant trees and boulders of granite seemed intent on making a mystery of the course of this small brook; fearing, perhaps, that, with its never-ceasing loquacity, it should whisper tales out of the heart of the old forest whence it flowed, or mirror its revelations on the smooth surface of a pool. Continually, indeed, as it stole onward, the streamlet kept up a babble, kind, quiet, soothing, but melancholy, like the voice of a young child that was

> spending its infancy without playfulness, and knew not how to be merry
>
> among sad acquaintance and events of somber hue. (278)

This passage introduces the brook, who, in good time, gets so personified, and has enough recurring allusions, that it becomes a veritable character within its in own right in the forest chapters. The passage also makes the metaphorical leap of association with Pearl, as their shared characteristics are obvious—although Hawthorne does make the concrete connection until a few paragraphs later ("Pearl resembled the brook" [279]). Pearl, with her own letter—emerald instead of scarlet, comprised of herbs instead of thread—becomes an embodiment of nature; nature is now functionally a reflection both of Hester's guilt and Pearl's essence and existence; nature has appropriated and successfully mimicked the human patchwork of Hester's letter, and all of its earlier narratological associations.

The forest ultimately becomes the scene of Hester's interview with Arthur, as he eventually makes an appearance; Hester begs of him to make a new life with her overseas, and casts off her letter, where it lands just beyond the grasp of the little brook. This ground-breaking suggestion of Hester's, and what is really her decision to alter the guilty, fatalistic path of the entirety of *The Scarlet Letter*'s narrative, gets dissolved fairly easily, however, in such an uncanny process: "Seen in the brook, once more, was the shadowy wrath of Pearl's image, crowned and girdled with flowers, but stamping its foot, wildly gesticulating, and, in the midst of all, still pointing its small forefinger at Hester's bosom!" (299) Hester immediately affixes the scarlet letter back onto her person. What is interesting is how it is not the image of Pearl *herself* demanding that Hester reaffix the

scarlet letter, but the reflected image of the flower-crowned Pearl in the little brook, the melancholy resident of the forest. Pearl and brook get effectually conflated in the process that concretises her status as a natural and wild being within the novel; it simultaneously personifies nature itself as a force that drives the narrative of *The Scarlet Letter*, that is, another facet of the fatalistic, shame-based course of the novel's world. Even from their immediate lighting upon the brookside does the brook foreshadow events of the plot, as Miriam's paintings do: "the little stream would not be comforted, and still kept telling its unintelligible secret of some very mournful mystery that had happened—or making a prophetic lamentation about something that was yet to happen—within the verge of the dismal forest" (280). It is no coincidence that Arthur appears soon after, and the couple's efforts to escape their fate are as easily exploded as they are formed. "The Child at the Brook-Side" ends with that dissolution of their talk:

> And now this fateful interview had come to a close. The dell was to be left a solitude among its dark, old trees, which, with their multitudinous tongues, would whisper long of what had passed here, and no mortal be the wiser. And the melancholy brook would add this other tale to the mystery with which its little heart was already overburdened, and whereof it still kept up a murmuring babble, with not a whit more cheerfulness of tone than for ages heretofore. (302)

Thus the brook, a pathetic reflection of Hester's guilt and a manifestation of Pearl's being, has become in addition an agent of narrative within *The Scarlet Letter*. Its path before was not only the natural winding of a geographical feature one might rightly find

in a forest; it was also a symbol of the mysterious and brooding narratological course of the novel itself, a foreshadowing of immediate developments of plot, and a symbol of Hester and Arthur's fates.

Deep within the New England scenery—at the core of its darkness—lies the brook, which is really the narratological heart of the novel itself. Human sin, human life, and also literary characterisation are smoothly projected onto nature itself; nature is a reflection of those proceedings, of those narratological plots. Robert Milder comments that

> Consciously or not…New Englanders like Hawthorne were shaped by the polarities of their climate or came to project upon it or symbolize through it their constitutional ambivalence toward nature, human nature, and the prospect of a natural religion: churchless, undeformed by notions of sin, and dedicated to the soul's fulfillment within time rather than beyond it. (168)

Although Hawthorne's transformation of nature into narrative here is certainly not "undeformed by notions of sin" (Milder writes only about Hawthorne's later works which he maintains are thematically different), it is certainly the useful symbol through which we see Hawthorne's deep-seated themes of guilt and its inherence in human nature develop. New England literature, as Milder explores, is often informed by this induction of natural imagery and metaphor into ideology and epistemology. Here, nature is not "natural"; it is the literary and the human, the narratological and the civilised.

This process, surprisingly, undergoes somewhat of a transformation in Hawthorne's "The Old Manse". Milder explains how a difference in theme and style

might typify this new period of his writing: "the dialectic of Hawthorne's career, the Manse period—with its emphasis on contemporary rather than historical subjects, on themes of reform rather than confinement and psychic compulsion—represents an antithesis to the guilt-obsessed writings of the late 1820s and early 1830s" (169). As will be shown, the way in which Hawthorne constructs nature and the narratology of nature becomes somewhat inverted in comparison to how it was constructed within *The Scarlet Letter*.

Hawthorne's wanderings around the Manse call back to life historical narratives; not only the story of the fallen soldier at the river and the military battle as reconstructed by the surroundings in Hawthorne's errant imagination, but also images of native Americans, as he discovers some arrowheads on his forest walk: "Such an incident [as finding the native artifacts] builds up again the Indian village, amid its encircling forest, and recalls to life the painted chiefs and warriors, the squaws at their household toil, and the children sporting among the wigwams" (1129). To take a forest walk is to recall historical narratives; the forest is veritably alive with past events and accounts of what once was. The irony of Hawthorne's inability to produce a novel while spending time in the manse—and his idea of curing that writer's block by taking a forest walk to clear his head—lies in how such a nature walk is rife with narratives.

The forest is not the only locale that reveals itself as literary in nature; the orchard nearby brings interesting reflections to Hawthorne's mind:

An orchard has a relation to mankind and readily connects itself with matters of the heart. The trees possess a domestic character; they have lost the wild

nature of their forest-kindred, and have grown humanized by receiving the care of man, as well as by contributing to his wants. There is so much individuality of character, too, among apple-trees, that it gives them an additional claim to be the objects of human interest. One is harsh and crabbed in its manifestations; another gives us fruit as mild as charity. One is churlish and illiberal, evidently grudging the few apples that it bears; another exhausts itself in free-hearted benevolence. The variety of grotesque shapes, into which apple-trees contort themselves, has its effect on those who get acquainted with them; they stretch out their crooked branches, and take such hold of the imagination that we remember them as humorists and odd fellows. (1130)

Hawthorne here has configured trees as individuals—actually, they function more like "characters". His idea that each tree has unique and caricaturistic qualities creates the overall aesthetic of his figuring them not only like human beings, but also like characters out of a book. Their "variety of grotesque shapes" echoes the sort of the dark and gothic tales Hawthorne is wont to weave; they take a "hold of the imagination", not the senses or empirical reality, hopefully leaving a colourful remembrance in their wake. The orchard trees speak to Hawthorne like fictional creations, the sort of creations that he is having trouble inventing during his stay in the manse.

And, after the apple trees, we have the famous summer-squashes:

Speaking of summer-squashes, I must say a word of their beautiful and varied forms. They presented an endless diversity of urns and vases, shallow or

deep, scalloped or plain, moulded in patterns which a sculptor would do well

to copy, since Art has never invented anything more graceful. A hundred

squashes in the garden were worthy—in my eyes, at least—of being rendered

indestructible in marble. If ever Providence (but I know it never will) should

assign me a superfluity of gold, part of it shall be expended for a service of

plate, or most delicate porcelain, to be wrought into the shapes of summer-

squashes, gathered from vines which I will plant with my own hands. As

dishes for containing vegetables, they would be peculiarly appropriate. (1132)

Hawthorne's necessary speech on the subject of these squashes' beauty is the wish to take

something from nature and transform it, as best as possible, into art. Since "Art has never

invented anything more graceful", they are artifacts of nature that would serve as a

furtherance to some sculptor's craft (perhaps forming a thematic precedent for *The

Marble Faun*); Hawthorne admires their beauty to such an extent that he wants their

natural form, their varied and sumptuous aesthetics, to be rendered into the permanence

of an objet d'art (such as the delicate porcelain plates). Hawthorne's final statement in

the passage above is ironic to the point of hilarity when we consider the metaphysical

process this would become—his inspiration of the squashes' beauty causing him to

commission their recreation in fine plate, in order that their brethren might be served in

them. The artistic process that immediately comes to his mind during his wanderings in

the orchard and his alighting upon these numerous squashes is one that summons up

directly an artistic application; one that eventually would turn full-circle back upon itself

to the consumption of said squashes.

Throughout "The Old Manse", Hawthorne has been applying aesthetics of the artistic *onto* nature itself. The forest scenes became subsequent reenactments of history; the orchard apple-trees became memorable characters; the squashes would do well to become objets d'art. Unlike *The Scarlet Letter*, in which nature is an inherent symbol of the narratological process, an embodiment and natural extension of the craft of story-telling itself, in "The Old Manse" Hawthorne actively projects narrative and artistry onto nature, seeing and interpreting everything in terms of the literary and the aesthetic. In *The Scarlet Letter*, nature became narrative, not only on the microscopic level of being a reflection (and foreshadowing) of the novel's characters and plot, but also on the macroscopic level of being story-telling itself—the forest breathes stories; the brook whispers, in immense concentration, Hawthorne's stylistics and the novel's moral tone. In "The Old Manse", nature is not an inherent embodiment of narrative until it has that process applied to it by the wandering aesthete. *The Scarlet Letter* is narrative concentrated into nature; in "The Old Manse", nature is expanded into narrative. Hawthorne has configured nature as a mirror in which both processes are reflected in equal measure—fictitious representations of humanity rendered into romance and the natural world both play off of each other, at first in one direction, and then in the opposite. To Hawthorne, nature has a distinct narratological order—and, quite on the other hand, perhaps narrative and story-telling is a surprisingly organic act of mimesis that has roots in the natural world; the logical extension of humans trying to capture the world in words. What we have glimpsed in these two texts is a fracture of Hawthorne's unique brand of naturalism, and the idea that every form of his symbology, subject

matter, theme and characterisation is informed by narratology and the active exploration thereof.

Nathaniel Hawthorne's metafiction includes those initial facets of the genre—an author writing about the difficulty of writing—but has also showed the many ways metafiction extends beyond them. From almost every angle imaginable has he imbued his writing with metafictional technique: authorial voice and persona, characterisation, subject matter, imagery, symbology, genre, aesthetics, diegesis and epistemology—all of them dependents of the authorial process, and all of them reflective upon that process.

His works are defined by thresholds and the contexts that exist on either side: this is the quality that most unifies them all. He has shown how romance is the gray moonlit space in which the Actual and the Imaginary may meet and colour each other; he has shown how warm literary imaginings and a cold rainy night interact, and really hold the same aesthetic truths, holding hands in mutual betterment; he has shown how the physical and the fanciful might not be as distinct as one might think.

His work—his romantic project—lies in the wish to bridge the imaginary and the real, so that the darkness of one side does not unbalance the other. The bridge that can actively work towards this is literature; fiction itself. To hold a romance in one's hands is to lessen the gap between the two, to deepen the shadows of fancy without losing touch of reality, the sphere of real perception and experience. The ideal romance self-reflexively recognises this, and remains working steadfastly toward the acknowledgment that fiction

is fiction—and this is positive, not derogatory; for fiction is what draws that line between

reality and pure fancy, and nourishes itself on the best qualities of both.

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