

THE DARK JOURNEYS OF NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

A THESIS

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PREFACE

Having noticed that Hawthorne's characters often undertake journeys in which the protagonist conducts a search or quest, I began to investigate the purposes of the journey in Hawthorne's fiction and the relationship of the journey to the quests of his characters. At the suggestion of Dr. Dean Bishop, I looked into the concepts of myth criticism and discovered two archetypal patterns in Hawthorne's fiction related to the journey: quest and initiation. While many critics have called attention to the frequency of the archetypal journey-search plot in Hawthorne's works, no study has traced Hawthorne's use of the journey throughout the tales and romances. This thesis examines the journeys and quests of Hawthorne's characters in two of his earlier tales, "Young Goodman Brown" and "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," in a later tale, "Ethan Brand," and in one romance, The Scarlet Letter.

I wish to express my appreciation to each of the three members of my thesis committee: to Dr. Charles Bruce for his guidance, encouragement, and suggestions for improving the content of my thesis; to Dr. Turner Kobler for advising me on matters of style and for suggesting the title; and to Dr. Lavon Fulwiler for her careful reading of my thesis and for her helpful comments.

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CHAPTER I

THE JOURNEY OF SELF-DISCOVERY IN HAWTHORNE'S FICTION

Nathaniel Hawthorne uses the journey to convey the theme of quest in his fiction. The protagonists in Hawthorne's fiction undertake symbolic journeys, journeys which represent the main character's quest for self-knowledge and self-understanding. The journey provides the basis for the plots of many Hawthorne stories--"Ethan Brand," "Young Goodman Brown," and "My Kinsman, Major Molineux"; characteristic of each journey is a search or quest. For example, Ethan Brand undertakes an eighteen-year journey in search of the Unpardonable Sin; Young Goodman Brown journeys into the dark forest in quest of the knowledge of evil; and Robin Molineux travels to the city in search of his kinsman, a quest resulting in his emergence into maturity and his insight into the nature of evil. In addition to the recurrence of the journey in his tales, The Scarlet Letter, Hawthorne's most famous romance, employs journeys, beginning with Hester's initial journey to the scaffold as she dons the symbol of her sin and ending with Dimmesdale's final tortured journey to the

scaffold as he reveals the secret sin which has tormented him for seven years. Between these two structurally important journeys Hawthorne develops the interrelated moral quests and searches of each of his four characters, Hester Prynne, Arthur Dimmesdale, Roger Chillingworth, and Pearl. These journeys, all of which occur in seventeenth- or eighteenth-century New England, reflect Hawthorne's interest in interpreting America's past.

Two terms in myth criticism are helpful in interpreting the journeys of Hawthorne's characters: "quest" and "initiation." As his characters undertake their outward journeys, they are symbolically pursuing inner quests which bring them to a growing awareness about themselves and the nature of their worlds. This growing awareness is the protagonist's initiation into experience, his passage from ignorance to knowledge, from immaturity to maturity, a process composed of three stages: the separation, the transformation, and the return.¹ The protagonist's quest and initiation represent two archetypal patterns in Hawthorne's fiction.² Thus, the journeys are not just limited to the Puritan New England in which they are set but have universal

¹Wilfred L. Guerin, et al., A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), pp. 120-121.

²Ibid.

or archetypal significance. This thesis will examine possible functions of the journey in three tales, "Young Goodman Brown," "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," and "Ethan Brand," and in one romance, The Scarlet Letter: its symbolic function, its relationship to the archetypal patterns of quest and initiation, and its relationship to imagery, structure, and characterization.

Just as the characters of Hawthorne's fiction search for self-understanding and a resolution to their moral and intellectual conflicts, so also did Nathaniel Hawthorne search for his identity as a writer in America. After graduation from Bowdoin in 1825, Hawthorne returned to Salem to live with his mother and sisters. In Salem Hawthorne began his twelve-year quest, the object of his quest being to develop his abilities as a writer.³ A letter to his mother while he was in school at Bowdoin indicated his decision to become a writer:

I do not want to be a doctor and live by men's diseases, nor a minister to live by their sins, nor a lawyer and live by their quarrels. So, I don't see that there is anything left for me but to be an author.⁴

³Randall Stewart, Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Biography (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), p. 27.

⁴Arlin Turner, Nathaniel Hawthorne: An Introduction and Interpretation (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1961), p. 6.

Thus, Hawthorne rejected the two main professions of his time, the ministry and the law, and undertook the uncertainty of a literary career. Having made his decision to become a writer, Hawthorne, in the twelve-year period from 1825-1837 referred to as "the solitary years," dedicated himself to reading, writing, and critically analyzing his own work, frequently destroying the fruits of his labor as did the artist Oberon in "The Devil in Manuscript."⁵ Not only was he personally dissatisfied with much of his literary work, he met with little encouragement to publish a volume of tales, although he had published individual stories such as "The Gentle Boy" and "The Ambitious Guest" in The Token and The New England Quarterly.⁶ Despite his failure to publish a volume of tales and despite the poor pay and lack of recognition for his work, Hawthorne adhered to his commitment to become an author.

Hawthorne encountered other difficulties in his personal quest to become a writer. One difficulty was the attitude of nineteenth-century America toward the writer. New England in Hawthorne's time did not look favorably upon one seeking to be a writer, viewing such a quest as having

⁵Stewart, p. 27.

⁶Ibid., p. 31.

no substance.⁷ The attitudes of nineteenth-century America had not changed much since the time of Hawthorne's Puritan ancestors, who, Hawthorne says, would have viewed him as an "idler," a mere "writer of storybooks."⁸ Commenting on the difficulty of Hawthorne's pursuit, Hugo McPherson indicates the status of the writer in America:

[Hawthorne] understood equally well that though his society yearned for a national art which would give it status in the eyes of Europe, its real values were a self-regarding philistinism and materialism. In post-revolutionary New England the artist was at best a Coverdale, a minor entertainer or dilettante for whom men of affairs had small respect.⁹

Yet despite the low status of the writer in America, Hawthorne persisted in his twelve-year quest.

Another difficulty of Hawthorne's quest was his twelve-year seclusion. Although, as Randall Stewart suggests, "the solitary years" were not "a hermit's withdrawal from the world,"¹⁰ Hawthorne did realize that a writer's role as observer requires that he isolate himself from society.¹¹

⁷F. O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941), p. 200.

⁸Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter in The Complete Writings of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Old Manse Edition, VI (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1900), 11.

⁹Hugo McPherson, Hawthorne as Myth-Maker: A Study in Imagination (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), p. 7.

¹⁰Stewart, p. 27

¹¹McPherson, p. 7.

Although he viewed such detachment and seclusion as essential to his craft, Hawthorne experienced anxiety related to his seclusion. Viewing his twelve-year isolation in retrospect, as recorded in his notebook on December 25, 1854, Hawthorne reports the recurring dream that he was still in college, that he had been there "unconscionably long" and had "failed to make such progress as my contemporaries have done," and that a "feeling of shame and depression" overcame him upon meeting them; this dream Hawthorne attributed to "that heavy seclusion in which I shut myself up for twelve years after leaving college, when everybody moved onward and left me behind."¹² When he dedicated the Snow Image to his college friend Horatio Bridge, Hawthorne said that in his twelve years of seclusion he had been "like a man under enchantment, and a shrubbery sprang up around me, and the bushes grew to be saplings, and the saplings became trees, until no exit appeared possible, through the entangling depths of my obscurity."¹³ Such an analogy is reminiscent of the dilemmas of Hawthorne's characters--Goodman Brown caught in the heart of the dark wilderness, entangled in his moral dilemma over

¹²Matthiessen, note 6, p. 237.

¹³Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Snow Image and Other Twice-Told Tales in The Complete Writings of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Old Manse Edition, III (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1900), xxi-xxii.

the nature of good and evil, and Arthur Dimmesdale, "the minister in a maze," entangled in the depths of his secret guilt. Like his characters Hawthorne searched for a resolution to his dilemma.

Having ended his twelve-year seclusion when his Twice-Told Tales was published in 1837, Hawthorne, feeling that the result of his quest was that he had opened "an intercourse with the world,"¹⁴ emerged a writer of fiction, a highly conscious artist who had carefully developed a literary theory that would convey his particular vision. The realm of the human heart, the inward, psychological conflicts of man, was to be his emphasis. Hawthorne felt that the best medium for presenting "the truths of the human heart"¹⁵ was the romance. Whereas, as Hawthorne states in the preface to The House of the Seven Gables, the novel aims "at a very minute fidelity, not merely to the possible, but to the probable and ordinary course of man's experience," the romance presents the truth of the human heart "under circumstances, to a great extent, of the writer's own choosing or creation."¹⁶ According to Mary Rohrberger,

¹⁴McPherson, p. 13.

¹⁵Nathaniel Hawthorne, The House of the Seven Gables in The Complete Writings of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Old Manse Edition, VII (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1900), xxi.

¹⁶Ibid.

Hawthorne's method of writing is "to present facts, but filtered, so to speak, through a medium that will take them out of the immediate context of life and into a realm where imagination can have full sway."¹⁷

In addition to distinguishing between the novel and the romance and asserting his preference for the romance, Hawthorne found the past, especially the Puritan past, appropriate for conveying the truths of the human heart. For Hawthorne the past provided the basis for presenting spiritual truth. Hawthorne's own difficult quest to become a writer in America motivated him to interpret the individual's plight in America, and he looked to the Puritan past as a basis for interpreting the America of his day.¹⁸ He saw that the Puritans had made a long journey from England in quest of a better life in America, but he felt that the Puritans had not taken full advantage of the opportunities the New World presented.¹⁹ Looking to the individual's quest in seventeenth-century America, Hawthorne saw the Puritan's quest ending in isolation and alienation rather than in the

¹⁷Mary Rohrberger, "Hawthorne's Literary Theory and the Nature of his Short Stories," Studies in Short Fiction, III (Fall, 1965), 24-25.

¹⁸McPherson, p. 9.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 21-22.

brotherhood of man because the rigid Puritan theology rejected the truths of the heart.²⁰ Thus, Hawthorne wrote about Ethan Brand, whose intellectual quest causes him to lose his hold on humanity and his reverence for the human heart and results in isolation from mankind, and Roger Chillingworth, whose inhuman probings into Dimmesdale's heart turn him into a fiend hopelessly alienated from his fellow man. Hawthorne found seventeenth-century Puritan New England congenial to the portrayal of the moral journeys and quests of his characters.

The Puritan experience in America Hawthorne interpreted as a recreation of the story of Adam.²¹ Three concepts in myth criticism are related to Hawthorne's concept of the American experience: the myth of Edenic Possibilities, the concept of the American Adam or the mythic New World Hero, and the American hero during and after the fall.²² The myth of Edenic Possibilities involves the desire of those settling in America to establish a second paradise in this New World of opportunity.²³ The American Adam is an independent, self-reliant individual who is not burdened by the

²⁰Ibid., pp. 22-23.

²¹R. W. B. Lewis, The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), p. iii.

²²Guerin, pp. 144-146.

²³Ibid., p. 144.

past and who is ready to confront any obstacle the New World presents;²⁴ he is Adam before the fall.²⁵ Hawthorne's concept was not of the American Adam before the fall. Instead, he saw the American hero during and after the fall, a hero who having once possessed Edenic innocence, loses his innocence during his initiation into experience as he comes to terms with a knowledge of evil.²⁶

Other traits characterize Hawthorne's American hero. Hugo McPherson, who views the quest narrative as the basis for interpreting Hawthorne's fiction, conceives of Hawthorne's heroes as being men of imagination who undertake night journeys, often forest journeys, for the purpose of exploring "the menacing darkness of [their] own identity."²⁷ The hero's experience, continues McPherson, is characterized by contrasting images of light and dark; his quest begins in the light of day but is carried out in the moonlit world, which Hawthorne associates with the imagination.²⁸ The goal of the quest is the brotherhood of man, a goal attained by the hero's self-exploration and self-understanding.²⁹ The hero may fail in his quest, as does Young Goodman Brown, if he

²⁴Lewis, p. 5.

²⁵Guerin, p. 145.

²⁶Ibid., p. 146.

²⁷McPherson, pp. 12, 16-17.

²⁸Ibid., p. 15.

²⁹Ibid., p. 20.

denies the values of the heart.³⁰ The feminine counterpart is the Dark Lady, who also undertakes a journey in the moonlit world and who like the hero passes from innocence to an awareness of evil.³¹

While delineating these characteristics of the hero's quest, McPherson develops his analysis of the quest narrative by examining Hawthorne's reworking of Greek myths in The Tanglewood Tales and A Wonder Book for Girls and Boys and briefly examining each of the four major romances. Although his focus is not upon Hawthorne's tales, much of his analysis of the theme of quest has significance when applied to the tales. In addition to McPherson, other critics have noted Hawthorne's use of the journey plot and the personal quests of his characters. Hyatt Waggoner and Mary Rohrberger call attention to the frequency of the archetypal journey-search plot in Hawthorne's fiction.³² Roy R. Male notes the theme of quest for a home, "a physical manifestation of a psychological and spiritual pilgrimage, directed toward finding an identity and an integrated religious experience."³³ Rudolphe

³⁰Ibid., p. 19.

³¹McPherson, p. 20.

³²Hyatt H. Waggoner, Hawthorne: A Critical Study (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955), p. 48, and Rohrberger, p. 26.

³³Roy R. Male, Hawthorne's Tragic Vision (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1957), pp. 10-11.

Von Abele analyzes Hawthorne's structural and metaphorical use of the journey in The Scarlet Letter, and Hugh N. MacLean examines three epic quests in The Scarlet Letter.³⁴ None of these studies, however, has traced Hawthorne's use of the journey and the related theme of quest throughout the tales and romances. This thesis will examine the journey plot and the theme of quest in two of Hawthorne's earlier tales, "Young Goodman Brown" and "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," in one of his later stories, "Ethan Brand," and finally in his romance The Scarlet Letter.

The focus of Chapter Two will be Young Goodman Brown's night journey into the forest in quest of the knowledge of evil. "Young Goodman Brown" presents Brown in the daylight world of his Salem village before his quest begins, during his forest journey as he goes deeper into the dark recesses of the forest, and after his night journey when he returns once again to the sunlit streets of Salem; Hawthorne's presentation of Brown's initiation to the existence of evil follows the three stages of the archetypal pattern of initiation: the separation, the transformation, and the return. Leaving him a changed man, Brown's search for the evil in

³⁴Rudolphe Von Abele, "The Scarlet Letter: A Reading," Accent, XI (Autumn, 1951), 211-227, and Hugh N. MacLean, "Hawthorne's Scarlet Letter: 'The Dark Problem of This Life'" American Literature, XXVII (March, 1955), 12-24.

mankind leads him to proclaim that "there is no good on earth"; because he sees only the evil side of his fellow man, his quest alienates him from mankind, and "his dying hour was gloom." The forest setting, an outward manifestation of Brown's tortured mind, his dramatic encounters in which those whom he considers pious are participating in the evil rites of the forest, and accompanying images of light, dark, and sound combine to convey Brown's symbolic inner journey from innocence to knowledge about evil.

Similar to "Young Goodman Brown" is "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," the focus of Chapter Three. Both tales involve young protagonists, uninitiated to the darker side of human nature, who set forth on journeys; both contain similar patterns of imagery associated with their quests; and both reveal the effects of the journeys upon the characters. Whereas Young Goodman Brown becomes entangled in the depths of the dark forest, Robin Molineux becomes entangled in the crooked and narrow streets of the city, which like Brown's forest is an outward manifestation of Robin's inner state. The confusion of Robin's quest for his kinsman is supported by his puzzling encounters with the townspeople, by contrasting visual images of light and dark, and by the dominant auditory image of mocking laughter. Discovering Major Molineux in "tar-and-feathery dignity," Robin learns

as a result of his quest that he must "rise in the world without the help of his kinsman, Major Molineux."

"Ethan Brand," the emphasis of Chapter Four, traces the effects of Brand's eighteen-year search for the Un-pardonable Sin, an absurd quest which compelled him to leave his New England limekiln, to travel extensively for the purpose of "looking into every heart save his own," and ultimately to return to New England having found the Un-pardonable Sin within his own bosom. Although "Ethan Brand" does not deal specifically with the protagonist's journey as do "Young Goodman Brown" and "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," the story focuses entirely upon the results of Brand's intellectual quest. The tale, divided into several dramatic encounters in which Brand confronts those whom he has used for his cold, psychological experiments, reveals the irony of Brand's quest which began in love for his fellow man but ended in isolation from mankind.

The Scarlet Letter, the subject of Chapter Five, traces the inner journeys and quests of the four main characters. Roger Chillingworth, by his own description, has been a "wanderer" in the vast forest, a wanderer "isolated from human interests," who upon his return to civilization finds his wife Hester the object of scorn and ignominy. He then sets forth upon a path of revenge, treading behind the

every step of Arthur Dimmesdale, delving into the heart of Dimmesdale for the purpose of exposing the minister's innermost secrets. Like Ethan Brand's search, Chillingworth's quest begins as a search for truth, but his inhuman desire for revenge turns him into a fiend, one who commits the Unpardonable Sin in violating the sanctity of the human heart. Dimmesdale, the object of Chillingworth's quest, has his own personal search, the quest for salvation.³⁵ In his attempts to grapple with his secret sin, Dimmesdale is consistently portrayed by Hawthorne as a wanderer "at a loss in the pathway of human existence." Like Young Goodman Brown, Dimmesdale undertakes a forest journey which transforms him and leads him in Hawthorne's words to "a knowledge of hidden mysteries which the simplicity of [his] former [self] never could have reached." As a result of his transformation in the forest, Dimmesdale summons the courage to undertake his final journey to the scaffold where he frees himself of the burden of his secret guilt.

Inhabiting the fallen world with Dimmesdale is Hester, the Dark Lady who has undergone her initiation into sin before the action of The Scarlet Letter begins. The seven-year quests of both Dimmesdale and Hester constitute the major theme of The Scarlet Letter: "the quest for truth,

³⁵Macleane, p. 14.

the revelation of secrets."³⁶ Beginning with her initial journey to the scaffold as she becomes in her Puritan world the "living sermon against sin," Hester's journey in life is consistently described by Hawthorne as a dismal and gloomy maze, a "dark labyrinth of mind" where Hester wanders. The paths of the two wanderers, Hester and Dimmesdale, converge in the forest, which Hester compares to the moral wilderness in which she has been journeying for the seven years since she donned the scarlet letter. Her quest for an understanding of the scarlet letter sets her against the rigid, legalistic Puritan community, which condemns her for her sin of passion and ostracizes her from society,³⁷ and she must search for a way out of the moral wilderness which engulfs her. A key to Hester's understanding of the scarlet letter is Pearl, whom Hawthorne consistently associates with the scarlet A. Hester recognizes Pearl's seemingly innate curiosity about the mysteries of the scarlet letter and defines Pearl's quest as a search for her heavenly father.³⁸ Not until Dimmesdale makes his public confession is Pearl absolved of her wild, demonic qualities and humanized by "the great scene of grief" which causes tears to fall on her father's cheek, her tears "the pledge that she would

³⁶Male, p. 93.

³⁷McPherson, p. 171.

³⁸MacLean, p. 14.

grow up amid human joy and sorrow" not to "do battle with the world, but be a woman in it."

Having examined the two earlier tales, a later tale, and a longer work, the thesis will attempt to reach conclusions about the use of the journey in Hawthorne's fiction: its significance in the development of the theme of quest, its relevance to the hero archetype of initiation, its importance in the characterization of Hawthorne's fallen American hero, and its pertinence to Hawthorne's concept of the American experience.

CHAPTER II

YOUNG GOODMAN BROWN'S DARK

FOREST JOURNEY

"Young Goodman Brown" portrays the fall from innocence and the initiation into the existence of evil of a young Puritan man in seventeenth-century New England. Young Goodman Brown's compulsion to undertake a journey in quest of the knowledge of good and evil leads him into the dark, moonlit world of the forest, an outward projection of Brown's interior world of imagination where he can reach an awareness of "the deep mystery of sin."¹ His quest and initiation involve a series of difficult and painful encounters in which he discovers the evil in those who he previously thought possessed only good. His failure to accept the coexistence of good and evil in man's nature is the tragedy of "Young Goodman Brown."² Because he is willing to accept only the evil in mankind, his quest produces disillusionment rather than revelation. Furthermore, in his

¹Nathaniel Hawthorne, Mosses from an Old Manse in The Complete Writings of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Old Manse Edition, IV (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1900), 121. All subsequent page references to this edition will appear in parentheses in the text.

²F. O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941), p. 180.

quest he does not "attain a tragic vision, a perspective broad enough and deep enough to see the dark night as an essential part of human experience, but a part that may preclude a new and richer dawn."³

Young Goodman Brown's journey begins at sunset in the streets of Salem and ends in the sunlight of his Salem village. Although the tale begins and ends in his Salem village, the protagonist of the tale undergoes a transformation as a result of his journey; Young Goodman Brown returns "a stern, a sad, a darkly meditative, a distrustful, if not a desperate man" (p. 124) after his night journey into the forest. The forest provides the setting for Brown's journey, a dark, gloomy setting through which Brown wanders in quest of the nature of evil. Structurally, "Young Goodman Brown" may be divided into four scenes,⁴ and the three stages of his initiation into the awareness of evil, the separation, the transformation, and the return correspond to the four scenes of the tale. In the first scene Brown converses in the streets of Salem with his wife Faith. In this scene Faith unsuccessfully pleads with Brown to postpone his journey,

³Roy R. Male, Hawthorne's Tragic Vision (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1957), pp. 79-80.

⁴Richard Harter Fogle, Hawthorne's Fiction: The Light and the Dark (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969), p. 28.

and Hawthorne establishes that Brown's journey is a quest for the knowledge of evil. Hawthorne pictures Brown's separation from the daylight world of security and faith and his determination to enter the night world of uncertainty and doubt.⁵ Scene two pictures Brown's entrance into the dark forest and his encounter with a fellow traveller, Satan. The forest serves not only as setting for Brown's quest but also as symbol to suggest that Brown's journey is an inward journey. As the gloomy imagery of the forest becomes even darker and the sounds of the forest grow increasingly bizarre and confusing in scene three, Brown witnesses a meeting of sinners and is initiated into the evil nature of mankind. Scenes two and three reveal Brown's inner struggle and subsequent transformation during his initiation as he loses his faith in the goodness of man, a transformation made clear in his return to Salem. Scene four pictures Brown's return to Salem and the effects of his quest in the forest.

Scene one of "Young Goodman Brown" establishes characteristics of the hero at the beginning of his quest. Young Goodman Brown begins his quest for a knowledge of evil in the daylight world of Salem. Young, inexperienced, he has not yet been initiated into the forces of darkness

⁵Ibid., p. 25.

in the world. [His last name "Brown," however, suggests the doubting, gloomy side of his nature, which compels him to undertake his journey into awareness of the dark side of man's nature.⁶ Brown realizes that his journey must be a night journey, that it "must needs be done 'twixt now and sunrise" (p. 102), for it is in the realm of night that Hawthorne's heroes conduct their searches for self-knowledge. Suspecting the evil side of human nature, Brown is aware of the evil purpose of his journey but resolves that "after this one night" he will "cling to [Faith's] skirts and follow her to heaven" (p. 103). His hesitancy to embark on his journey, caused both by his reluctance to perceive anything but good in man's nature and by his relationship to his wife Faith, reveals Brown's inner psychological conflict as he undertakes his journey.

In the first scene Hawthorne establishes the allegorical level of the tale when he indicates that Faith "was aptly named" and that she was Brown's "young wife" (p. 102). On the allegorical level Faith represents religious faith and faith in mankind.⁷ That she is Brown's "young wife" signifies

⁶Wilfred L. Guerin, et al., A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 59.

⁷Thomas F. Walsh, Jr., "The Bedevilling of Young Goodman Brown," Modern Language Quarterly, XIX (December, 1958), p. 332.

that Brown's faith is a new experience, and his recent marriage suggests his entry into the world of adulthood.⁸ Faith's pink ribbons, which Hawthorne emphasizes by repetition, connote innocence,⁹ and Brown's resolution to return to the bosom of Faith after his night journey reveals his desire to cling to his state of innocence. Yet his curiosity about the evil in man compels him to leave the daylight world of innocence and faith to enter the dark and uncertain world of the forest.

Realizing the necessity of his night journey, Brown enters the first stage of his initiation: the separation, which presents a moral dilemma for Brown, who must decide whether to leave Faith. Having listened to Faith's pleas to postpone his journey, Brown, nevertheless, parts with the daylight world of Salem. He does not, however, part without looking back to Faith and chastising himself for leaving her "on such an errand" (p. 103). The guilt and self-doubt Brown feels upon leaving her emphasize the inner turmoil caused by his separation.¹⁰ Conscious of the evil purpose of his quest,

⁸John Caldwell Stubbs, The Pursuit of Form: A Study of Hawthorne and the Romance (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1970), p. 71.

⁹Darrel Abel, "Black Glove and Pink Ribbon: Hawthorne's Metonymic Symbols," New England Quarterly, XLII (June, 1969), p. 169.

¹⁰Walsh, p. 332.

he soothes his conscience by vowing to return to Faith "after this one night" (p. 102) in the forest.

The abrupt change of imagery and setting in scene two indicates Brown's entrance into the night world as he begins his quest. No longer does he share the companionship of Faith, for his night journey is necessarily a solitary quest. No longer does he inhabit the safe, secure world of Salem; instead his temporary abode is "a dreary road, darkened by all the gloomiest trees of the forest, which barely stood aside to let the narrow path creep through, and closed immediately behind" (p. 103). The gloom, the dreariness, the solitude, the narrow path to the forest which closes immediately after he enters--all of these suggest that Brown's journey into the forest is an inward journey into the world of dreams and imagination where Brown can creatively conduct his quest into the mysteries of sin and evil.¹¹ That Brown's journey is a journey into his consciousness is further substantiated by the evocative power of his suggestions. For example, when Brown says "what if the devil himself should be at my very elbow" (p. 104), Satan immediately appears; when Brown doubts that the spiritual leaders of the community ever journey into the

¹¹Paul J. Hurley, "Young Goodman Brown's 'Heart of Darkness,'" American Literature, XXXVII (January, 1966), 413.

forest, he soon discovers the pious Goody Cloyse interrupting her journey to converse with Satan; and when Brown reasserts the goodness of the minister and Deacon Cookin, he hears the voices of the two men and wonders why "these holy men [are] journeying so deep into the heathen wilderness" (p. 113). At the close of the tale Hawthorne himself emphasizes Brown's imaginative state when he describes Brown's night journey into the forest as "the night of that fearful dream" (p. 124). For Hawthorne the human heart is the equivalent of the modern term "subconscious."¹² In his subconscious state Brown has the opportunity to see the truth of the human heart revealed to him in the night world of dreams and imagination through encounters with Satan and the moral leaders of his Salem village.

The plots of Hawthorne's stories generally involve a series of outward encounters which reveal inner character and develop theme.¹³ Through his first encounter with Satan as the two journey into the forest, Young Goodman Brown receives through Satan's attacks on his simple faith knowledge about the nature of his fellow man. To Brown's fear that he will

¹²Mary Rohrberger, "Hawthorne's Literary Theory and the Nature of His Short Stories, Studies in Short Fiction, III (Fall, 1965), 26.

¹³Marjorie Elder, Nathaniel Hawthorne: Transcendental Symbolist (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1969), p. 116.

disgrace his respectable family name and his assertion that his father "never went into the woods on such an errand, nor his father before him" (p. 106), Satan subtly begins to destroy Brown's simplistic conception of the nature of man with this argument:

I have been as well acquainted with your family as with ever a one among the Puritans; and that's no trifle to say. I helped your grandfather, the constable, when he lashed the Quaker women so smartly through the streets of Salem; and it was I that brought your father a pitch-pine knot, kindled at my own hearth, to set fire to an Indian village, in King Philip's war. They were my good friends, both, and many a pleasant walk have we had along this path, and returned merrily after midnight. I would fain be friends with you for their sake.

(p. 106)

The revelation that his ancestors pursued similar journeys shocks the naive Brown. Having destroyed Brown's first objection to continuing the journey, Satan proceeds to Brown's next objection, that the people of New England are "people of prayer, and good works to boot" who "abide no such wickedness" (p. 106), casting doubt upon the morality of Puritan New England when he says, "I have a general acquaintance here in New England" (p. 107). To Brown's final objection that he will be unable to face his minister, Satan simply bursts into "a fit of irrepressible mirth" (p. 107), his laughter revealing his scorn at Brown's failure to comprehend the evil of others. Since Brown's journey is an inward journey, Satan functions symbolically to represent

part of Brown's mind, that part of his intellect which doubts the total goodness of man and suspects the evil in man's nature.¹⁴ Thus, Satan's arguments represent the subconscious thoughts of Brown that surface in his dreamlike state. Hawthorne supports such an interpretation when he says that Satan discourses "so aptly that his arguments seemed rather to spring up in the bosom of his auditor [Brown] than to be suggested by himself" (p. 110) and when he describes Brown's resemblance to Satan in appearance, gestures, and status in life. Brown's doubting nature and his innocent beliefs clash in an internal debate symbolized by Brown's argument with Satan.

His subconscious doubts about the essential goodness of man continue to surface as he encounters three of his moral and spiritual leaders, Goody Cloyse, the minister, and Deacon Gookin, all of whom are journeying into the wilderness. Brown's naive belief that his night journey is unique is destroyed with these three encounters, foreshadowed by the doubts Satan cast upon the piety of the moral and spiritual leaders of New England. First, Brown sees Goody Cloyse, who taught Brown his catechism, and expresses amazement that she too journeys into the wilderness at night. Brown still does not want to accept the duality of man's nature and attempts

¹⁴Walsh, p. 332.

to convince himself that Goody is chanting a prayer when actually her thoughts are upon her broomstick stolen, she imagines, by a fellow witch. Like Brown, Goody has an ignoble purpose for her journey into the forest: to see a young man taken into communion. This first painful encounter in Brown's quest for awareness does not fully convince him of the evil in all mankind, for he determines that he shall go no further on his journey, that he shall not quit his Faith just because "a wretched old woman" chooses "to go to the devil when I thought she was going to heaven" (p. 111). The second encounter in Brown's quest, however, presents a greater moral conflict than his meeting with Goody Cloyse.

The second encounter with his spiritual leaders, the minister and Deacon Gookin, further destroys Brown's concept of the exclusive goodness of man. As he hears the voices of the two men discussing the purpose of their journey, to see a young woman taken into communion, Brown experiences a devastating feeling, a sickness in his heart that these two holy men are journeying into the heathen forest "where no church had ever been gathered or solitary Christian prayed" (p. 113). This encounter inspires doubts as to the existence of heaven, but when Brown looks to the sky, the blue arch and the bright stars reassure him, the faint gleams of light

symbolizing the remnants of Brown's hope amidst the gloom.¹⁵ Although his hope is shaken by this encounter, he asserts his trust in "heaven above and Faith below" (p. 113).

Together these encounters represent two of the "excruciating ordeals" a hero experiences "in passing from ignorance and immaturity to social and spiritual adulthood"¹⁶ during his quest and initiation, but the most damaging and painful ordeal for Young Goodman Brown is the sight of Faith's pink ribbons. Hawthorne effectively uses both visual and auditory images to convey Brown's growing perplexity and to intensify the crucial incident of the falling pink ribbon. Visually, images of darkness overwhelm the previous gleams of light, symbolizing Brown's gradual acceptance of the darker, evil side of human nature. For example, "a black mass of cloud" conceals the light from the blue sky. Working with visual images which project darkness and gloom are auditory images which project bewilderment and despair. From the black cloud comes the "confused and doubtful sound" of Puritan villagers, "both pious and ungodly," voices "heard daily in the sunshine at Salem village, but never until now from a cloud of night" (p. 114). More damaging to Brown than these voices is the sound of a young woman's voice which causes Brown to cry out, "Faith! Faith!" Responding to

¹⁵Elder, p. 101.

¹⁶Guerin, p. 121.

Brown's cry of "grief, rage, and terror" (p. 114) are the mocking echoes of the forest and a fiendish gale of laughter. The increasing darkness of the sky, the intermingled voices of saints and sinners, the solitary voice of Faith, the scornful echoes of the forest, and the mocking laughter combine to convey Brown's psychological turmoil during the second phase of his initiation. However devastating these sights and sounds are to Brown, the sight of the pink ribbon causes him to proclaim, "My Faith is gone! . . . There is no good on earth; and sin is but a name. Come devil; for to thee is this world given" (p. 115). Since Brown associates the pink ribbon with innocence and faith, he cannot comprehend its appearance in the evil forest. Therefore, with the sight of the pink ribbon, he plunges into "the heart of the dark wilderness, still rushing onward with the instinct that guides mortal man to evil" (p. 115).

Scene three of "Young Goodman Brown" vividly portrays Brown's agony and despair as his quest for the knowledge of evil leads him to journey deeper into the heart of the dark wilderness. Here he observes a communion of sinners as they participate in an initiation ceremony resembling both a Black Mass and the Witches' Sabbath.¹⁷ His forest journey has wrought a visible transformation in Brown as shown by

¹⁷Male, p. 78.

his uncharacteristic gestures and actions. Nature seems in accord with Brown's turbulent moral state as the sights and sounds of the forest grow increasingly bizarre and confusing. Brown's observation of the initiation ceremony, a ceremony parodying a religious service,¹⁸ leads him to categorize all men as evil, a conclusion that leaves him a man forever changed.

Brown's uncharacteristic actions and gestures outwardly manifest his inner conversion as he continues to undergo the second phase of his initiation, the transformation. Previously Brown has shown hesitancy to continue his journey, expressing moral objections to Satan and periodically reasserting his allegiance to Faith; in contrast to his previous vacillation, Brown no longer hesitates to complete his journey. Instead, he seems "to fly along the forest-path rather than to walk or run" (p. 115). His "frenzied gestures" (p. 116) as he wildly waves his staff, his blasphemous utterings, and his demonic laughter are indicative of a man whose belief in the essential goodness of man has been replaced by the "instinct that guides mortal man to evil" (p. 115). Having previously been repelled by his kinship with the sinful, Brown during the ceremony feels

¹⁸Hurley, p. 417.

toward the congregation "a loathful brotherhood by the sympathy of all that was wicked in his heart" (p. 119).

Just as Hawthorne uses Faith's clothing and Brown's gestures symbolically,¹⁹ he also uses nature symbolically to scorn Brown's madness.²⁰ Indeed, nature seems attuned to the moral dilemma of Brown's quest. The already dismal forest setting of scene two grows bleaker in scene three, and the sights and sounds of the haunted forest serve as appropriate background for "the chief horror of the scene" (p. 115), Young Goodman Brown, racing toward a confrontation with evil. The road grows "wilder and drearier and more faintly traced, and vanished at length, leaving him in the heart of the dark wilderness" (p. 115). As he rushes onward among the black pines, Brown embodies characteristics of a "fiend" raging "in the breast of man" (p. 115): frantically waving his staff, shouting blasphemies, laughing diabolically. In addition to the demonic picture of Brown himself, Hawthorne's diction evokes a visual image of the haunted forest: "wild beasts," savage "Indians," "witch," "wizard," "frightful," "devil," "demons," "echoes," and "haunted." The frightful

¹⁹Arlin Turner, Nathaniel Hawthorne: An Introduction and Interpretation (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1961), p. 125.

²⁰Elder, p. 108.

sounds of the forest particularly correspond to Brown's madness. The sounds of nature, "the creaking of trees, the howling of beasts, and the yell of Indians" (p. 115), seem to mock Brown. In addition, the wind laughs at him, and "echoes of the forest" laugh "like demons around him" as though "all nature were laughing him to scorn" (pp. 115-116). Brown meets the scornful laugh of nature with his own fiendish laughter. Although the sights and sounds of the haunted forest are terrifying, they are less horrible than Brown himself; for, as Hawthorne indicates, "the fiend in his own shape is less hideous than when he rages in the breast of man" (p. 115). The journey continues as the demoniac Brown hastens onward until he observes a scene in the forest.

A red light and the sounds of a hymn halt the frantic pace of Brown's journey as he observes a communion of sinners in the forest. Through his observation of the sinners' ceremony, Brown has the opportunity to reach a spiritual awareness both of his own nature and of the nature of mankind. The mock religious ceremony, presided over by Satan, has all the elements of a church service: hymns, an altar, a minister, a congregation, converts, and a formal service including a sermon and a baptismal ceremony. When he hears the sounds of a hymn familiar to him from church

in Salem, Brown pauses, "in a lull of the tempest that had driven him onward" (p. 116). In contrast to the church hymn is a hymn expressing "all that our nature can conceive of sin" (p. 116). Next Brown observes in an open space enclosed by the dark wall of the forest a rock resembling an altar or pulpit, surrounded by four burning pines reminding Brown of the candles at an evening church service. The red light of the fire allows Brown to see the congregation composed of the wicked and sinful "irreverently consorting" with the pious and saintly. For Brown "it was strange to see that the good shrank not from the wicked, nor were the sinners abashed by the saints" (p. 118); Brown cannot comprehend that both evil and good are common to all men. Both the opposition of light and dark imagery and the mixture of the virtuous and depraved participating in the initiation ceremony suggest the contrast between good and evil,²¹ the implications of which Brown cannot grasp.

The next step in Brown's initiation to evil is his actual participation in the forest ritual. The minister presiding over the ceremony is Satan, who looks like "some grave divine of the New England churches" (p. 119). Ordering the converts brought forth, Satan and the congregation

²¹Hurley, p. 412.

welcome the proselytes "to the communion of your race" (p. 120). Led by the minister and Deacon Gookin, Brown has no power to discontinue his journey and steps forward in response to Satan's invitation "to penetrate, in every bosom, the deep mystery of sin" (p. 121). Brown's one hope has been that Faith was not among the congregation, but "by the blaze of the hell-kindled torches, the wretched man beheld his Faith" (p. 121). Again Satan welcomes the converts, Brown and Faith among them, to the communion of sinners and presents them with the revelation that "evil is the nature of mankind" (p. 122), that virtue is but a dream. As Brown and Faith stand "hesitating on the verge of wickedness in this dark world" (p. 122), Satan awaits to initiate the two into sin by the ritual of baptism, promising them that they will be "partakers of the mystery of sin, more conscious of the secret guilt of others, both in deed and thought, than they could now be on their own" (p. 122). Refusing Satan's invitation to the knowledge of evil,²² Brown also urges Faith to resist Satan's pleas. Because Brown suddenly awakens from his dreamlike state, he does not know whether Faith obeyed or not. Replacing the haunted sounds of the forest and the communion of sinners are the calmness

²²Walter J. Paulits, "Ambivalence in 'Young Goodman Brown,'" American Literature, XLI (January, 1970), 581-582.

and solitude of the night. A rock, once a blazing altar, is now "chill and damp," and a twig, once on fire, feels cold and wet to Brown's cheek. This sudden change in imagery signals the end of Brown's journey and the final stage of his initiation: the return.

Scene four of "Young Goodman Brown" pictures Brown's return to Salem and the inner transformation caused by his journey into the dark forest. Juxtaposed against the darkness of the forest is the sunlight of Salem, the light symbolizing Brown's awakening to the evil nature of his fellow man.²³ No fiendish sounds nor sights characterize the daylight world of Salem. Life in Salem is the same: the same people going about their usual routines--the minister contemplating his sermon, Deacon Gookin praying, Goody Cloyse catechizing a young girl.²⁴ The only change is within Young Goodman Brown, who shrinks from the minister's blessing, doubts the good intentions of the deacon's prayers, and snatches the child away from Goody Cloyse. Such is the transformation within Brown that he refuses to greet Faith, whose pink ribbons and joy at seeing her husband rate only a stern glance from Brown. Hawthorne

²³Q. D. Leavis, "Hawthorne as Poet," Sewanee Review, LIX (Spring and Summer, 1951), 197.

²⁴Hurley, p. 419.

makes clear the effect of Brown's journey in the last paragraph of the tale. Rather than enlightenment, Brown's journey produces disillusionment. Rather than a movement from "ignorance and immaturity to social and spiritual adulthood" which should result from the hero's quest and initiation,²⁵ Brown receives only partial illumination in that his journey into the awareness of evil leaves him a man unable to perceive anything but evil in his fellow man. His initiation into evil causes him to lose faith in mankind; he shrinks from the bosom of Faith. Because he cannot accept the coexistence of evil and goodness in man's nature, the truth of the human heart revealed to him on his journey, he becomes an isolated individual, a man alienated from a loving sympathetic relationship with mankind, a man whose "dying hour was gloom."

²⁵Guerin, p. 121.

CHAPTER III

ROBIN MOLINEUX'S JOURNEY FROM CHILDHOOD TO ADULTHOOD

Like "Young Goodman Brown," "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" portrays the fall from innocence and the initiation into experience of a young protagonist who undertakes a journey into night. The quests for self-awareness of Robin Molineux and Young Goodman Brown are similar. Each tale adheres to the same pattern of action: a journey into the moonlit world of imagination, a frustrating search in pursuit of an elusive goal, and an initiation into the dark side of human nature.¹ Brown's movement away from Salem, the daylight world of innocence, faith, and security, to the forest, the dark world of experience, doubt, and wandering, is analogous to Robin's journey from the country to the city, a movement from the childhood world of innocence to the adult world of experience. Hawthorne juxtaposes the village and forest in "Young Goodman Brown" and the country and city in "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" so that he can remove the hero from his usual surroundings and place him in a new environment

¹Hoffman, Form and Fable in American Fiction (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 117.

where the hero faces the psychological ordeals of his initiation.² Just as Brown's entanglement in the depths of the dark forest suggests the interior world of Brown's imagination and his inner perplexity, Robin's entanglement in the crooked and narrow streets of the city projects the confusion of Robin's inner state. Both heroes conduct their quests in the moonlit world of dreams and imagination, and dream imagery characterizes both tales.

Other similarities characterize the journeys of Brown and Robin. Just as Brown undergoes a series of painfully illuminating encounters during his quest and initiation, so also is Robin exposed to humiliation, threats, and scorn during numerous confrontations with the townspeople. Similar patterns of imagery are typical of both quests; contrasting images of light and dark, the sounds of mocking laughter, the bewildering cries of forest and city all convey the difficulty of the hero's symbolic inner journey from innocence to knowledge.

One essential difference in the night journeys of the two protagonists lies in the results of their quests. Although both heroes participate in initiation ceremonies,

²Richard C. Carpenter, "Hawthorne's Polar Explorations: 'Young Goodman Brown' and 'My Kinsman, Major Molineux,'" Nineteenth-Century Fiction, XXIV (June, 1969), 49.

Robin's initiation results in greater illumination than Brown's. Whereas Brown's quest produces disillusionment, isolation from mankind, and spiritual death, Robin's quest has a more hopeful outcome. Robin's journey leads him away from ignorance and immaturity to knowledge and maturity; implied in his transformation after his initiation to reality is that he will assert his independence, take his place in adult society, and affirm the brotherhood of man.

"My Kinsman, Major Molineux" portrays Robin Molineux's symbolic journey from adolescence to maturity. On the literal level Robin, the second son of a poor clergyman, enters the city in quest of his kinsman, Major Molineux, who has previously expressed interest in establishing Robin in life. Robin's journey into the city leads him to wander aimlessly in a futile search for his kinsman, to become "entangled in a succession of crooked and narrow streets,"³ and to become the subject of mockery, rudeness, and humiliation in a series of puzzling encounters with the townspeople. Having crossed the river "near nine o'clock of a moonlit evening" (p. 294), Robin begins the ordeal of "his

³Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Snow Image and Other Twice-Told Tales in The Complete Writings of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Old Manse Edition, III (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1900), 298. All subsequent page references to this edition will appear in parentheses in the text.

first visit to town" (p. 294). His passage across the river from the daylight world of the country to the dark, moonlit world of the city suggests his entry into the creative world of sleep and dreams.⁴ In his dreamlike state Robin conducts his quest for self-knowledge symbolically represented by his search for his kinsman. As in "Young Goodman Brown," Hawthorne establishes characteristics of the hero at the beginning of his quest, and through a series of encounters the hero gradually moves toward a transformation. Through a flashback Hawthorne pictures the difficulty of Robin's separation from family and implies at the end of the tale the results of Robin's initiation to experience. Like "Young Goodman Brown," "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" emphasizes the second phase of the protagonist's initiation: the events during the hero's journey leading to his transformation. Hawthorne's use of setting, imagery, and structure aids in conveying Robin's symbolic inner journey from childhood to adulthood.

Having prefaced his tale with an historical introduction in which he establishes that the New England colonies want independence and the right to govern themselves,

⁴Mary Rohrberger, "Hawthorne's Literary Theory and the Nature of His Short Stories," Studies in Short Fiction, III (Fall, 1965), 29.

Hawthorne begins the account of a young man whose search for his kinsman symbolically represents his quest for independence. In the opening scene of "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," Hawthorne establishes characteristics of the hero at the beginning of his quest. Having crossed the river and entered the moonlit city, Robin is eager to begin his night journey, yet he is uncertain of the purpose and direction of his quest. Failing to anticipate the difficulties he will encounter during his journey, Robin optimistically and confidently begins his search for his kinsman.⁵ He walks toward the city "with as light a step as if his day's journey had not already exceeded thirty miles, and with as eager an eye as if he were entering London city, instead of the little metropolis of a New England colony" (p. 295). His hopefulness, optimism, and cheerfulness are further suggested by the connotations of the name "Robin"; the robin is traditionally associated with the joy and promise of a new season. Yet despite his outward confidence and his repeated insistence upon his own shrewdness, Robin's inner dilemma about the purpose and direction of his quest is first shown when Hawthorne notes that Robin knows "not whither to direct his steps" (p. 295).

⁵Arthur T. Broes, "Journey into Moral Darkness: 'My Kinsman, Major Molineux' as Allegory," Nineteenth-Century Fiction, XIX (September, 1964), 176.

Hawthorne establishes other characteristics of the hero at the beginning of his journey by giving a physical description of Robin as the ferryman observes him. Robin's "vigorous shoulders" and "well-shaped limbs" show him to be physically mature, but his later encounters with the townspeople reveal the inadequacy of mere physical maturity in dealing with adult society. That he carries an oak cudgel further suggests his aggressiveness and his primitive methods of dealing with complex situations.⁶ In addition to his reliance upon the physical, Robin exhibits other inadequate methods of coping with the dark forces of the city. After each of his encounters in the city, Robin attempts to justify and rationalize the humiliation he suffers by giving illogical explanations which minimize his faults and by constantly reasserting confidence in his own shrewdness.⁷ By consistent repetition of the epithet "shrewd," Hawthorne ironically suggests that Robin's reactions to his encounters are not as shrewd as Robin believes them to be. That he is "barely eighteen years," that he is "on his first visit to town," and that he is "evidently country-bred" establish his youth,

⁶Richard Harter Fogle, Hawthorne's Fiction: The Light and the Dark (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969), p. 109.

⁷Seymour Gross, "Hawthorne's 'My Kinsman, Major Molineux': History as Moral Adventure," Nineteenth-Century Fiction, XII (September, 1957), 102, 107.

inexperience, and innocence, which render him incapable of handling the forces of darkness characteristic of the city; through the frustrations of his initiation into adulthood, Robin gropes for an awareness of how to cope with these forces. Indicating that his journey to the city resulted from his desire "to begin in the world" (p. 317), Robin establishes the contradictory nature of his quest. "To begin in the world" necessarily involves cutting parental ties and depending entirely on one's own resources, but Robin's method for achieving independence is to seek the protection of his kinsman, Major Molineux.⁸ Seeking his kinsman, Robin journeys into the moonlit world of the city and begins his search for his own identity.

The city serves as symbolic setting for Robin's journey. Having crossed the river, Robin enters the moonlit streets of the city. Robin's movement from the country to the city symbolizes a movement away from innocence and security to experience and moral uncertainty.⁹ Here in a new environment, away from the security of family, Robin must undergo the psychological ordeals of his initiation into

⁸John Caldwell Stubbs, The Pursuit of Form: A Study of Hawthorne and the Romance (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1970), p. 67.

⁹Broes, p. 177.

maturity.¹⁰ As he journeys through the city, Robin becomes "entangled in a succession of crooked and narrow streets, which crossed each other, and meandered at no great distance from the water-side" (p. 298). As he roams "desperately, and at random, through the town" (p. 308), he believes that he is under the influence of a spell which mysteriously prevents him from finding the object of his search. Robin's entanglement in the web of city streets, the desolation of the streets, his desperate wandering, his search which is "so often and so strangely thwarted" (p. 313) are outward projections of Robin's confused inward state.¹¹ In addition to the setting, Hawthorne effectively uses the moonlight and dream imagery to communicate Robin's quest for maturity.

Robin's journey is conducted in an atmosphere of moonlight. Hawthorne repeatedly associates the moonlight with romance and "the imaginative power." In the "Custom House" essay Hawthorne equates moonlight with spirituality and the creative powers of the imagination when he comments that the moonlight makes "every object so minutely visible, yet so unlike a morning or noontide visibility," that ordinary objects and details are "so spiritualized by their

¹⁰William Bysshe Stein, "Teaching Hawthorne's 'My Kinsman, Major Molineux,'" College English, XX (November, 1958), 83.

¹¹Gross, p. 107.

unusual light, that they seem to lose their actual substance, and become things of intellect," and that the moonlight creates an atmosphere of "strangeness and remoteness" (VI, 49-50). Commenting on Hawthorne's use of moonlight to create an atmosphere of "strangeness and remoteness," Richard Harter Fogle notes the function of moonlight in "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" to alienate and isolate Robin "as a necessary part of his transformation and development."¹² Such was Hawthorne's belief in the appropriateness of the moonlight for his hero's journey of enlightenment that he interrupts the narrative of "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" to comment on the function of moonlight: "the moon, creating, like the imaginative power, a beautiful strangeness in familiar objects, gave something of a romance to a scene that might not have possessed it in the light of day" (p. 311). Hawthorne, the romance writer, believed that in an atmosphere of moonlight he could "dream strange things and make them like truth" (VI, 51). Thus, he placed his hero Robin Molineux in an atmosphere of moonlight, an appropriate setting for a journey toward self-discovery and revelation of truth.

Closely connected with the atmosphere of moonlight in Hawthorne's tales is his use of dream imagery. Both atmosphere and imagery characterize the hero's journey toward

¹²Fogle, p. 113.

self-awareness. Dream imagery in Hawthorne's tales of self-discovery reflects his belief that the truth of the human heart is more frequently revealed to a mind in the creative realm of sleep and dreams than in the waking, conscious world.¹³ Just as moonlight represents the creative realm of the imagination, sleep and dreams symbolize the imaginative realm in which moral truths are revealed.¹⁴ Franklin Newman points out Hawthorne's desire to "write a dream," with "its inconsistency, its strange transformations, . . . its eccentricities and aimlessness"; in addition to these traits in "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," Newman establishes other dreamlike qualities in the tale such as "the definite effect of condensation and acceleration" and "the rapid succession of images."¹⁵ In "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" Hawthorne comments upon the creative and relevatory power of dreaming, stating that when Robin's "thoughts had become visible and audible in a dream, the long, wide solitary street shone out before him" (p. 315). Although Robin's dreamlike state during his journey ultimately results in revelation, his psychological confusion

¹³Hyatt Waggoner, Hawthorne: A Critical Study (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955), p. 50.

¹⁴Fogle, p. 115.

¹⁵Franklin Newman, "'My Kinsman, Major Molineux': An Interpretation," University of Kansas City Review, XXI (March, 1955), 205.

is reflected in his inability to distinguish between the waking, conscious world and the sub-conscious dream world: "his mind kept vibrating between fancy and reality" (p. 315), and he asks himself whether he is awake or dreaming. Finally, when Robin witnesses the most crucial incident in his initiation, Major Molineux's disgrace, both the moonlight and dream imagery convey his moment of illumination. At this moment of recognition the moon shines out like day, and the procession has "a visionary air, as if a dream had broken forth from some feverish brain" (p. 321). His illusions of dependence destroyed, Robin learns that he must face the world without his kinsman's aid.

Structurally, "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" may be divided into seven encounters, each of which represents the progressive development of the hero's awareness during his night journey.¹⁶ Robin's experiences during his journey as he suffers humiliation, threats, and ridicule constitute the psychological ordeals a hero faces during his initiation. That he undergoes seven confrontations in his journey toward maturity is significant. The number seven is associated with attaining salvation, and each of Robin's encounters leads him closer to attaining independence and maturity.¹⁷ From his initial meeting with the ferryman Robin seeks guidance in

¹⁶Stein, p. 83.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 84.

finding his kinsman, revealing his adolescent dependence and insecurity. Although Robin asks for guidance, his haphazard methods of conducting his search suggest that he does not want to find his kinsman, subconsciously desiring freedom from paternal authority represented by Major Molineux.¹⁸ Each of Robin's confrontations illuminates Robin's desire for acceptance and his fear of failure; each time he suffers rejection, he rationalizes his failure.¹⁹ Characterizing Robin's journey are contrasting visual images of light and dark, symbolizing his journey from ignorance to knowledge,²⁰ and the dominant auditory image of laughter, a derisive laughter serving to mock Robin during his encounters.

Robin's first two meetings reveal his lack of preparation for the city and his need for guidance during his night journey. Having paid the ferryman for his passage across the river and being left with only a small amount of money, Robin neglects to seek directions from the ferryman to his kinsman's abode, admitting that "it would have been wise to inquire [his] way of the ferryman" (p. 296). Vowing

¹⁸Simon O. Lesser, Fiction and the Unconscious (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), p. 221.

¹⁹Frederick C. Crews, The Sins of the Fathers: Hawthorne's Psychological Themes (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 73-74.

²⁰Gross, p. 106.

to seek guidance from the next person he sees, Robin politely confronts a dignified gentleman and asks the whereabouts of Major Molineux's home. That he asks the question loudly indicates his pride in knowing the major, a pride indicating a dependence unappreciated by the citizens of the city. Answering "in a tone of excessive anger and annoyance" (p. 297), the gentleman rebukes Robin for his impertinence, saying, "I have--hem, hem--authority; and if this be the respect you show for your betters, your feet shall be brought acquainted with the stocks by daylight tomorrow morning!" (p. 297). The gentleman's rebuke and threatening remarks are the beginning of the humiliation and scorn Robin suffers. The "shrewd youth" rationalizes the gentleman's unwarranted scorn, dismissing him as "some country representative" unacquainted with Major Molineux and as a man of ill-breeding. Also contributing to Robin's humiliation is the "ill-mannered roar of laughter from the barber shop" (p. 297). Realizing the difficulty of his quest, Robin feels that he "will be wiser in time" (p. 298).

The first two encounters of his journey leave Robin bewildered. His inner confusion is reflected in his entanglement in the crooked, winding city streets. Hungry but lacking the money for food, Robin enters a dark tavern. His third encounter in the tavern is characterized by further

threats, mockery, and contempt. Surveying the scene, the bright-eyed Robin is attracted to a man who is to play a significant role in his initiation to evil. The grotesque features of the man impress Robin: his forehead, which "bulged out into a double prominence, with a vale between; the nose [which] came boldly forth in an irregular curve . . .; the eyebrows [which] were deep and shaggy, and the eyes [which] glowed beneath them like fire in a cave" (p. 300). In contrast to the diabolic figure is the courteous innkeeper, who welcomes the young man to the town. Jumping to the conclusion that the innkeeper's courtesy is due to his recognizing a kinsman of Major Molineux, Robin assumes a false air of confidence, admits to his empty pocket, and asks for guidance to his relative's home. Again Robin misconstrues the behavior of others when he interprets the "sudden and general movement in the room" (p. 301) at the mention of Molineux's name as "the eagerness of each individual to become his guide" (pp. 301-302). The tone of the innkeeper quickly changes as he reads a poster and implies that Robin is the run-away servant described by the poster. Robin's reaction is to assert himself physically, clutching his oak cudgel, but "a strange hostility in every countenance induced him to relinquish his purpose of breaking the courteous innkeeper's head" (p. 302). Two other reactions

disturb young Robin's ego: the "sneering glance" of the "bold-featured personage" and "a general laugh." The contempt his ego suffers Robin assesses as "the confession of an empty pocket" (p. 302) outweighing such a respected name as Molineux.

The result of these three encounters in Robin's journey is to make Robin hesitate to risk the humiliation of another. His reluctance to ask for further guidance and his haphazard methods of searching for his kinsman suggest that subconsciously Robin does not want to find Major Molineux.²¹ Lured by the attractions of the city, Robin, the naive country boy, forgets to ask the ferryman for directions and wanders aimlessly into a tavern. His ineffective method of searching is to walk up and down the streets, peering into each person's face and stopping to examine the merchandise in shop windows.²² His inefficient methods suggest a curious young man on his first visit to the city rather than a young man intent upon finding his kinsman. Because he subconsciously desires independence from the adult authority Major Molineux represents, Robin is easily diverted from the conscious purpose of his search. His quest for independence leaves Robin physically and emotionally drained; he feels a greater exhaustion from the

²¹Lesser, p. 218.

²²Ibid., p. 219.

experiences of his night journey in the city than from his journey of several days on the other side. Again his curiosity rather than his desire to find his kinsman leads Robin down "a street of mean appearance" where he is certain Major Molineux does not live.

In the fourth encounter of Robin's journey, Hawthorne employs a traditional device of initiation: the tempting of the hero.²³ Robin's experience with the seductive woman in the scarlet petticoat suggests that Robin's quest for maturity includes a desire for sexual adventure.²⁴ Robin doubts whether the woman in the scarlet petticoat speaks "Gospel truth" when she says that Major Molineux lives there, and he reads "in her eyes what he did not hear in her words" (p. 307). His desire for sexual adventure is shown by his "half-willing steps" and the ease with which the woman lures "the athletic country youth" inside. At this point Robin does not have to choose between staying with the seductive woman and continuing his search, for his fourth encounter is interrupted by the threatening remarks of the night watchman.

Robin's fifth confrontation, with the night watchman, is accompanied by threats and laughter. His previous encounters have convinced Robin of the difficulty of his night journey in the city. When the watchman threatens to set

²³Stein, p. 85.

²⁴Lesser, p. 220.

Robin in the stocks, Robin wishes that his painful ordeal in the city could be ended by such a fate. Feeling an "instinctive antipathy toward the guardian of the midnight hour" (p. 308), Robin hesitates to ask his usual question. Summoning the courage, Robin shouts "lustily" after the watchman for guidance to Molineux's home, but to his dismay he receives no answer. Hawthorne emphasizes Robin's isolation as Robin hears the sound of "drowsy laughter stealing along the solitary street" (p. 308). The watchman gone, Robin sees an arm beckoning him, but "Robin, being of the household of a New England clergyman, was a good youth, as well as a shrewd one; so he resisted temptation, and fled away" (p. 308).

The dark and desolate city streets and Robin's desperate wandering project Robin's bewildered state. Considering the absurdity of his search and the elusiveness of his goal, Robin is "ready to believe that a spell was on him, like that by which a wizard of his country had once kept three pursuers wandering, a whole winter night, within twenty paces of the cottage which they sought" (p. 308). Other incidents contribute to Robin's bewilderment. Residents of the town in outrageous clothing utter unintelligible remarks to Robin and curse him when he does not understand. His feelings of desperation are heightened by his isolation from the residents of the city.

Robin's desperation motivates him to demand physically the whereabouts of Major Molineux, and again he is met with threats. In his sixth meeting, with the "bulky stranger," Robin at last learns that he will be able to see Major Molineux. Blocking the stranger's passage with his oak cudgel, Robin demands knowledge of Major Molineux's whereabouts. Although he is threatened by the stranger, Robin repeats the question, thrusting the cudgel to the man's face. This time he receives an answer: Major Molineux will pass by in an hour. As the stranger gives his answer, he unmuffles his face, and Robin recognizes the man whose grotesque features had impressed him at the inn. His features have become more hideous than before. With one side of his face red and the other black and the mouth red or black in contrast to the color of the cheek, the stranger's face gives the effect of "two individual devils, a fiend of fire and a fiend of darkness" (pp. 310-311). Robin's separation from the activities of the city, first from citizens demanding a password that he could not supply and then from the grotesque-featured man so strangely disguised,²⁵ increases his feelings of isolation and rejection. Again Robin justifies the puzzling behavior of the

²⁵Q. D. Leavis, "Hawthorne as Poet," Sewanee Review, LIX (Spring and Summer, 1951), 202.

citizens "shrewdly, rationally, and satisfactorily" (p. 311).

His isolation from the townspeople motivates Robin to seek the solace of a church where he attempts to regain the security of the past.²⁶ Hawthorne communicates the difficulty of his hero's separation from family as Robin, inspired by the "low, dull, dreamy sound" of "the sleeping town" (p. 312) and the "trembling" moonbeams, returns to the ease of his former innocence in the country. Imagining how this "evening of ambiguity and weariness" (p. 313) is being spent by his family, Robin visualizes them praying, but when he tries to enter his home, he is excluded. His journey having led him to the threshold of maturity, Robin cannot return to his former innocence. The solitary ray on an open page of the Bible and "the awful radiance . . . hovering around the pulpit" also contribute to Robin's loneliness, a sensation "stronger than he had ever felt in the remotest depths of his native woods" (p. 313). Such are his feelings of dejection that he doubts the validity of his search when he asks, "What if the object of his search, which had been so often and so strangely thwarted, were all the time mouldering in his shroud?" (p. 313). Such are his feeling of desolation that he even questions his existence:²⁷ "Am

²⁶Gross, p. 103.

²⁷Ibid.

I here, or there?" (p. 315). When his "thoughts had become visible and audible in a dream (p. 315), he becomes psychologically prepared for his last encounter followed by his confrontation with Major Molineux.

The seventh encounter of Robin's journey is with a "gentleman in his prime, of open, intelligent, cheerful, and altogether prepossessing countenance" (p. 316), the person who acts as spiritual adviser during Robin's initiation. The gentleman represents the helper figure who appears when "the hero is on the brink of some great achievement or of some conquest of a fatal personal deficiency."²⁸ Rather than threatening the gentleman with his cudgel or demanding an answer, Robin converses with him on an adult level, explaining his situation and the purpose of his search. When Robin hears the sound of shouting and observes that a thousand voices made the one shout, the gentleman wisely observes that "a man [may] have several voices, Robin, as well as two complexions" (p. 319), indicating the complexity and duality of human nature. In addition to offering wise counsel, the gentleman reminds Robin of the purpose of his quest when Robin forgets about Major Molineux and wants to join what he mistakenly supposes is a celebration.²⁹

²⁸Stein, p. 85.

²⁹Lesser, p. 221.

Visual and auditory images conveying confusion provide the atmosphere for the entry of Major Molineux.

Having undergone the bewildering experiences of his night journey, Robin is psychologically prepared for his greatest disillusionment: the recognition scene in which Robin's illusions of support from Major Molineux are finally and completely destroyed.³⁰ Visual and auditory images communicate both Robin's bewilderment and his final illumination. Sounds of uproar precede the entry of Major Molineux: "eager voices . . . demanding the explanation, which not a soul could give," "the shouts, the laughter, and the tuneless bray, the antipodes of music," and the "shrill voices of mirth or terror" (pp. 320-321). Working with auditory images projecting the tumult of the scene are visual images conveying turmoil and horror. Central to the horror of the scene is the sight of a single horseman, appearing "like war personified; the red of one cheek was an emblem of fire and sword; the blackness of the other betokened the mourning that attends them" (p. 321); accompanying the leader are "wild figures in the Indian dress, and many fantastic shapes" (p. 321). Throughout the spectacle Robin has the "uncomfortable idea that he was himself to bear a part in the pageantry" (p. 322).

³⁰Stein, p. 83.

Visual images of light against the darkness of night symbolize Robin's moment of recognition. As in "Young Goodman Brown" a flash of bright red light precedes Robin's moment of illumination. Temporarily blinded by the lurid brightness of the light, Robin sees only an indistinct form. Suddenly the tumultuous sounds cease, the torches burn their brightest, and the moon shines out like day, revealing "in tar-and-feathery dignity" Major Molineux.

Like Young Goodman Brown upon seeing Faith in the forest, Robin suffers the most crucial incident of his initiation when he sees Major Molineux. Even in "the foul disgrace of a head grown gray in honor" (p. 322), Major Molineux is a proud, majestic man. The exchange of glances between Robin and Major Molineux, who instantly recognizes Robin, initially produces "a mixture of pity and terror" (p. 323) in Robin. Hawthorne vividly describes the reaction of Robin to his kinsman's disgrace:

Soon, however, a bewildering excitement began to seize upon his mind, the preceding adventures of the night, the unexpected appearance of the crowd, the torches, the confused din and the hush that followed, the spectre of his kinsman reviled by that great multitude,--all this, and, more than all, a perception of tremendous ridicule in the whole scene, affected him with a sort of mental inebriety.

(p. 323)

At this crucial moment in his initiation Robin hears a peal of laughter and then sees each of the persons he has encountered during his journey. This time, however, Robin is not isolated from the laughter of those who have derided him, for Robin's laughter is the loudest of all. His participation in the fiendish laughter of the crowd symbolizes his initiation into evil. Like Young Goodman Brown, whose diabolic laughter represents his perception of evil in mankind, Robin laughs hysterically as he perceives the evil in society³¹ when he observes the procession gathering "like fiends that throng in mockery around some dead potentate, . . . trampling on an old man's heart" (p. 325). His cruel laughter offers a psychological and emotional release for Robin whose illusions of dependence on his kinsman have been destroyed.³² A sudden change of imagery signifies Robin's awakening from his dreamlike state.

In contrast to the "counterfeited pomp," the "senseless uproar," and the "frenzied merriment" (p. 325) of Robin's initiation ceremony are the silence and solitude of the final scene of "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," which pictures Robin's return to consciousness and implies his

³¹Robert Dusenberry, "Hawthorne's Merry Company: The Anatomy of Laughter in the Tales and Short Stories," PMLA, LXXXII (May, 1967), 287.

³²Stubbs, p. 70.

transformation as a result of his night journey. Robin's physical appearance indicates his reaction to his initiation. His paleness and the absence of eagerness in his eyes symbolize the disillusionment resulting from his initiation into experience. Disturbed by the events of his night journey and his subsequent loss of innocence, Robin is "weary of a town life" (p. 326) and wants to return to the country. His transformation during his initiation, however, prevents him from returning to his former state of childhood simplicity. Having suffered rejection and humiliation during the difficult ordeals of his initiation, Robin emerges into adulthood.³³ As the wise gentleman implies, Robin is capable of rising "in the world without the help of [his] kinsman, Major Molineux" (p. 326) as a result of his night journey into the city.

The relationship between Hawthorne's historical introduction and the journey and initiation of a young man may be seen by reexamining Hawthorne's preface to "My Kinsman, Major Molineux." In his introduction to the tale Hawthorne establishes that the kings of Great Britain appointed colonial governors and that the colonists disapproved of these appointments. "The people," Hawthorne indicates, "looked with most jealous scrutiny to the

³³Waggoner, p. 52.

exercise of power which did not emanate from themselves" (p. 293). Rather than giving "a long and dry detail of colonial affairs" (p. 294), Hawthorne chose instead to create an allegory portraying America's quest for independence.³⁴ In Hawthorne's allegory Robin, with his religious background and with his dress of gray coat, blue stockings, and three cornered hat, symbolizes colonial America;³⁵ and Major Molineux, a representative of Great Britain in the colonies, symbolizes the oppression of British rule.³⁶ Just as Robin Molineux searches for independence and freedom from the domination of Major Molineux, from "the exercise of power which did not emanate" from himself, so also did the colonists in eighteenth-century America desire freedom from the domination of Great Britain. Hawthorne's interpretation of America's quest for independence, "a cultural-political experience of archetypal significance to our national identity,"³⁷ parallels the universal quest of Robin Molineux as he journeys toward independence and maturity.

³⁴Stubbs, p. 68.

³⁵Roy R. Male, Hawthorne's Tragic Vision (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1957), p. 52.

³⁶Leavis, p. 200.

³⁷Hoffman, p. 117.

CHAPTER IV

ETHAN BRAND'S JOURNEY IN SEARCH OF THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

Whereas "Young Goodman Brown" and "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" emphasize the events during the night journeys of Brown and Robin, "Ethan Brand" explores the transformation within Brand after his journey in quest of the Unpardonable Sin. Unlike "Young Goodman Brown" and "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," "Ethan Brand" concentrates on the final stage of the hero's initiation into experience: the return. Having conducted an eighteen-year search for the Unpardonable Sin, a quest which compelled him to leave his New England limekiln and to journey extensively for the purpose of "looking into every heart, save his own,"¹ Brand returns to New England having found the Unpardonable Sin within his own bosom. As Brand contemplates the results of his eighteen-year journey, Hawthorne pictures his protagonist before his quest began, establishing his motivations for undertaking his journey. Through his hero's meditations

¹Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Snow Image and Other Twice-Told Tales in The Complete Writings of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Old Manse Edition, III (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1900), 118. All subsequent page references to this edition will appear in parentheses in the text.

on the past, Hawthorne characterizes the quest, ironic since it began with love and reverence for mankind but ended in isolation from his fellow man. Upon his return to the limekiln Brand meets those whom he has used for his delvings into the human heart; these confrontations emphasize his alienation from his fellow man and heighten his realization of the absurdity of his search. As he considers this absurdity, Brand acknowledges his inner transformation as a result of his journey.

Through Brand's ruminations upon the inner change his search has wrought, Hawthorne establishes characteristics of Ethan Brand before he undertook his journey in quest of the Unpardonable Sin. Returning to the limekiln where he had first begun to think about the Unpardonable Sin, Brand finds Bartram, who occupies his own former position as lime-burner. In contrast to Bartram, who thinks only of his business, Brand had led a "solitary and meditative life" at the limekiln, where he threw "his dark thoughts into the intense glow of its furnace, and melted them, as it were, into the one thought that took possession of his life" (p. 113). Brand's return to the limekiln motivates him to consider the original purpose of his quest, to discover man's profoundest wickedness,² the

²Kermit Vanderbilt, "The Unity of Hawthorne's 'Ethan Brand'" College English, XXIV (March, 1963), 435.

one sin "for which Heaven could afford no mercy" (p. 120).

He recalls the reverence and love for mankind with which he began his search:

He remembered how the night dew had fallen upon him,--how the dark forest had whispered to him,--how the stars had gleamed upon him,--a simple and loving man, watching his fire in the years gone by, and ever musing as it burned. He remembered with what tenderness, with what love and sympathy for mankind, and what pity for human guilt and woe, he had first begun to contemplate those ideas which afterwards became the inspiration of his life; with what reverence he had looked into the heart of man, viewing it as a temple originally divine, and, however desecrated, still to be held sacred by a brother; with what awful fear he had deprecated the success of his pursuit, and prayed that the Unpardonable Sin might never be revealed to him.

(pp. 134-135)

Thus, the original aim of Brand's journey was a sympathetic probing into his fellow man's moral and psychological nature and a reverent examination of man's most serious defects.³ Beginning his search with a belief in the sanctity of the human heart, he undertook his journey with the noble goal of gaining a deeper insight into man's spiritual nature and thereby experiencing a greater awareness of the brotherhood of man. During his quest, however, he loses sight of his noble goals.

³A. N. Kaul, The American Vision: Actual and Ideal Society in Nineteenth-Century Fiction (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), pp. 161-162.

During his journey Brand looked into the hearts of his fellow man in search of "the one only crime for which Heaven could afford no mercy" (p. 120). A period of "vast intellectual development" (p. 135) characterized Brand's journey and "raised him from the level of an unlettered laborer to stand on a star-lit eminence, whither the philosophers of the earth, laden with the lore of universities, might vainly strive to clamber after him" (p. 135). Believing that man must strive for a balance between intellect and feeling,⁴ Hawthorne does not condemn Brand's intellectual development. Instead, Brand's downfall is allowing his intellect to disturb "the counterpoise between his mind and heart" (p. 135). His sin of excessive intellectual pride as he coldly uses his fellow man as the subjects of his psychological experiments severs his relationship with man and God.⁵ By the inhuman probings into the human heart which alienate him from his fellow man, Brand commits, according to Hawthorne, the worst of sins.⁶

⁴American Poetry and Prose, ed. by Norman Foerster (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1957), p. 665.

⁵John Caldwell Stubbs, The Pursuit of Form: A Study of Hawthorne and the Romance (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1970), pp. 92-93.

⁶Nina Baym, "The Head, the Heart, and the Unpardonable Sin," New England Quarterly, XL (March, 1967), pp. 31, 33.

During his return to the limekiln Brand contemplates the events during his journey which have led to his transformation.

The plot of "Ethan Brand" consists of several dramatic encounters,⁷ each of which heightens Brand's realization of his isolation from mankind. Back in New England after his eighteen-year journey, Brand meets Bartram, the lime-burner; the corrupt tavern crowd, former acquaintances of Brand; Esther's father; the curious young people; and the German Jew. Through these confrontations Brand is convinced of his separation from his fellow man. Symbolizing Brand's isolation is his fiendish laughter, that "awful laugh which, more than any other token, expressed the condition of his inward being" (p. 132). When he watches a dog chasing his own tail in headlong "pursuit of an object that could not possibly be attained" (p. 131), Brand perceives an analogy between his quest for the Unpardonable Sin and the dog's foolish pursuit of his own tail. As Brand considers his transformation as a result of his journey, Hawthorne emphasizes the irony of Brand's quest for the Unpardonable Sin.

Brand's first encounter with Bartram, the current lime-burner, and Bartram's son Joe reminds Brand of his reasons for undertaking his journey. Brand's conversations

⁷Vanderbilt, p. 453.

with Bartram define the Unpardonable Sin. Both a physical description of Brand and his mirthless laughter express his inward condition as a result of his quest. Hawthorne uses laughter to introduce his protagonist. Bartram and his son Joe hear Brand's laughter, "not mirthful, but slow, and even solemn" (p. 112), and the sensitive child recognizes that Brand "does not laugh like a man that is glad" (p. 113). In addition to his joyless laughter, Brand's "grizzled hair hanging wildly . . . , those deeply sunken eyes, which gleamed like fires within the entrance of a mysterious cavern" (p. 117), and his "gloomy voice" (p. 116) outwardly reflect the inner turmoil resulting from his absurd quest. Bartram provides contrast. Described as "obtuse," "torpid," and "dull," Bartram is Brand's intellectual opposite. Although both are lime-burners, Bartram spends his lonely hours at the kiln in "thoughts requisite to his business" (p. 115) whereas Brand had used his solitary profession to think upon man's spiritual nature. Having been announced by his joyless laughter, Brand announces to Bartram that he has completed his search and that he has found what he sought. When Bartram asks Brand where the Unpardonable Sin is, Brand points to his heart and breaks into scornful laughter, a mirthless laughter "moved by an involuntary recognition of the infinite absurdity of

seeking throughout the world for what was closest of all things to himself, and looking into every heart save his own, for what was hidden in no other breast" (p. 118).

Brand's laughter, emanating from his "disordered state of feeling" (p. 119) as he looks inward into his own heart, produces a feeling of horror within Bartram. Finally, Brand reveals to Bartram the nature of the Unpardonable Sin as "the sin of an intellect that triumphed over the sense of brotherhood with man and reverence for God" (p. 122). Ethan Brand's isolation from Bartram as revealed through Brand's solitary laughter and his superior intellect illuminates the ultimate effects of Brand's sin--alienation from humanity and an inability to have a loving, sympathetic relationship with mankind.

Brand's second encounter, with the tavern crowd, reminds him of how he once delved into their hearts in search of the Unpardonable Sin and how he discarded them when he found nothing for his purpose, having "wasted, absorbed, and perhaps annihilated [each] soul in the process" (p. 128). Brand meets three former acquaintances: the stage agent, "a wilted and smoke-dried man" (pp. 123-124) whose fame as a joker is dependent on brandy; Lawyer Giles, once a competent lawyer and now a soap boiler, his downfall due to excessive drink; and the village doctor, whom brandy possesses. His

encounter with these three men, who represent degraded, depraved humanity,⁸ causes Brand to doubt the validity of his quest and to feel revulsion toward their "low and vulgar modes of thought and feeling" (p. 126). Such is his feeling of separation from the three men as he contrasts his "intense and solitary meditation" (p. 126) to their superficial thoughts that he doubts whether he has found the Unpardonable Sin and wonders whether "the whole question on which he had exhausted life, and more than life" (p. 126) is a delusion. Although the three men are debased, Hawthorne emphasizes that Brand, who has violated the sanctity of the human heart in probing into the souls of men, has committed the greatest wrong in that he has lost his hold on humanity and his reverence for the human heart. When another member of the tavern crowd, Old Humphrey, asks him of the whereabouts of his daughter Esther, Brand recalls how he had used Esther in a psychological experiment, delving into her heart to satiate his intense curiosity, destroying her soul in the process; and he reaffirms his belief in the Unpardonable Sin.

Interrupting Brand's contemplations is the cheerful laughter of the youth of the village, an innocent gaiety in

⁸Richard Harter Fogle, Hawthorne's Fiction: The Light and the Dark (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969), p. 44.

which the corrupt Brand cannot share. Unimpressed with Brand's knowledge of the Unpardonable Sin, the youth turn their attention to a German Jew, who has a diorama on his back. The Jew persuades one of the youth to look into the box, and the boy, amused at what he sees, suddenly changes his expression of pleasure to an expression of horror upon seeing the eye of Brand. Persuaded by the Jew, who has witnessed Brand's obsessive search, to look into the box again, Brand sees an emptiness indicative of his dark spiritual condition.⁹

During each of his encounters Brand rejects the possible companionship of his fellow man. The final incident involving a dog chasing his own tail further emphasizes Brand's separation from humanity and symbolizes the absurdity of Brand's quest.¹⁰ The reactions of the crowd and of Brand to the dog's ridiculous pursuit differ. The crowd greets the absurd spectacle with "universal laughter" (p. 132), a joyous laughter which excludes Brand. Perceiving a "remote analogy" (p. 132) between his absurd search for the Unpardonable Sin and the dog's foolish pursuit of his tail, Brand breaks into an "awful laugh" (p. 132) which ends the high spirits of the

⁹Vanderbilt, p. 455.

¹⁰Cyril A. Reilly, "On the Dog's Chasing His Own Tail in 'Ethan Brand,'" PMLA, LXVIII (December, 1953), 978.

gathering. Left alone, he ponders the similarities between his search and the dog's chasing his own tail. Kermit Vanderbilt compares the two pursuits. The dog, who seems to be his own master, inexplicably leaves the crowd and begins to pursue his own tail; similarly, Brand, a lonely, meditative man, to the bewilderment of the villagers, left his limekiln to search for the Unpardonable Sin. After his exhibition the dog returns to the crowd; in contrast Brand isolates himself from the crowd after his search. The dog's "tremendous outbreak of growling, snarling, barking, and snapping" (p. 131) parallels the obsessive rage with which Brand conducts his search. "One end of the ridiculous brute's body" seems "at deadly and most unforgivable enmity with the other" (p. 131); similarly, characterizing Brand's quest is the enmity between head and heart, between intellect and feeling.¹¹ Just as the "self-pursuing cur" absurdly chases an object which cannot possibly be attained, Brand absurdly looks into the hearts of others while creating the Unpardonable Sin within his own heart.

As in the beginning of the tale, Brand finds himself alone with Bartram and little Joe at the limekiln. As he had done eighteen years before, Brand thoughtfully watches the fire. Motivated by his confrontations with the villagers

¹¹Vanderbilt, p. 454.

and the sight of the dog's absurd pursuit, Brand reviews the inner change his quest has wrought--a change which transformed him from a sympathetic, compassionate human being to a fiend, a cold observer who sees mankind as "subject of his experiment" (p. 135), as puppets to be manipulated. In a gruelling self-analysis Brand realizes that his vast intellectual development separates him from his fellow man and that his moral nature no longer keeps "the pace of improvement with his intellect" (p. 135). With the knowledge that his heart has "withered . . . contracted . . . hardened . . . perished" and has "ceased to partake of the universal throb" (p. 135), Brand throws himself into the fire, expressing regret to mankind whom he has cast off and whose heart he has trampled. Brand seeks in death final isolation from mankind, his final "fearful peal of laughter" (p. 137) representing his most drastic alienation from humanity.

Ethan Brand's journey in quest of the Unpardonable Sin does not result in an affirmation of the brotherhood of man because Brand disregards the values of the heart. Instead Brand's journey has as its result total alienation from mankind when Brand commits suicide. Hawthorne emphasizes the irony of Brand's search throughout the tale. Brand has traveled extensively, probing into the hearts of others, using and abusing them, only to find that his sin is within

his own bosom.¹² His search for the Unpardonable Sin, originally motivated by love and reverence for humanity, transforms him into an unsympathetic fiend who loses hold of "the magnetic chain of humanity."¹³ Brand leaves his lonely limekiln to experience a greater awareness of the brotherhood of man; ironically, as a result of his quest, he is "no longer a brother-man" (p. 135), and he seeks total alienation from mankind as he ends his quest in the fire where it was initiated.¹⁴

Ethan Brand's moral journey and quest show the hero after the fall as Brand loses his innocence and his reverence for the human heart. Setting his tale in New England, Hawthorne explores the individual's quest in America. A. N. Kaul provides insight into Hawthorne's concept of the individual's quest in America with the following comment:

Hawthorne was not only a critic of America, not merely a 'restless analyst,' he was also its visionary, albeit a refreshingly skeptical one. He shared something of the land-of-promise hope together with a great deal of doubt whether any lands of promise are to be ever discovered anywhere--unless it be in the altered hearts of men.¹⁵

Hawthorne believed that the individual's journey of self-exploration was necessary to his moral and spiritual development, but often his heroes, like Ethan Brand and Young Goodman

¹²Vanderbilt, p. 455.

¹³Ibid., pp. 455-456.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 455-456.

¹⁵Kaul, p. 154.

Brown, fail in their quests because they deny the values of the human heart. Through his portrayal of Ethan Brand, who is hopelessly cut off from "the magnetic chain of humanity," Hawthorne once again shows the individual's quest in America ending in isolation.

CHAPTER V

THE SPIRITUAL PILGRIMAGES OF THE FOUR CHARACTERS IN THE SCARLET LETTER

As "Young Goodman Brown," "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," and "Ethan Brand" illustrate, Hawthorne believed that the individual's journey of self-exploration was necessary to his moral and spiritual development. In The Scarlet Letter Hawthorne continues to explore the moral and spiritual conflicts of Puritan New England through the story of a fallen woman, Hester Prynne, the Dark Lady in Hawthorne's fiction, and the reaction of society to her sin of adultery. Whereas "Young Goodman Brown" and "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" portray the hero's fall from innocence and his initiation into the existence of evil during a night journey, The Scarlet Letter concentrates on the hero after the fall, as Hawthorne explores the effects upon Hester Prynne and Arthur Dimmesdale of their initiation into sin. Commenting on the necessity of the individual's night journey as a "prologue to self-discovery," Edward H. Davidson interprets the fall in The Scarlet Letter as being "in accord with that central drama of the Puritan quest for self-awareness through pain

and the darkness of the soul."¹ Through his structural, symbolic, and metaphoric use of the journey, Hawthorne portrays the individual quests of four characters: Hester Prynne, Arthur Dimmesdale, Roger Chillingworth, and Pearl.

As Hawthorne explores the moral journeys and quests of his four major characters, he sets forth his interpretation of the Puritan's journey to America and the quest of the individual in seventeenth-century America. Interpreting the essence of the American experience as the separation of a group of people from Europe, their journey to America, and their quest for a better life in the New World,² Hawthorne viewed the Puritan past as a basis for interpreting nineteenth-century America. To explore the Puritan experience in America, Hawthorne used the romance, which he considered appropriate for conveying the inward, psychological conflicts of man, or in Hawthorne's words, "the truths of the human heart." In creating his imaginative romance, Hawthorne freed himself from the stifling atmosphere of the nineteenth-century custom house, an atmosphere "so little adapted . . . to the delicate

¹Edward H. Davidson, "Dimmesdale's Fall," New England Quarterly, XXVI (September, 1963), 364-365.

²A. N. Kaul, The American Vision: Actual and Ideal Society in Nineteenth-Century Fiction (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), p. 15.

harvest of fancy and sensibility"³ and returned to seventeenth-century Boston to explore the case of Hester Prynne whose scarlet letter he had discovered in records of the custom house. A. N. Kaul believes that Hester's adultery was "an appropriate test for seventeenth-century New England: the case of a fallen woman brought before the tribunal of a community which believes all humanity fallen,"⁴ and he comments on Hawthorne's imaginative return to seventeenth-century New England:

This suspenseful leave-taking was intended for a journey not into the land of fantasy, but only into that region of the imagination, where, free from the distractions of commonplace events, the artist could, among other things, come to terms with the essential meaning of the American experience; a region where, like a good democratic citizen, he would be free to evaluate his national inheritance and free to become its critic.⁵

As Hawthorne explores the moral journeys and quests of his characters, he comments upon the results of the Puritan's quest in America.

Throughout The Scarlet Letter the four major characters are described as wanderers, as characters searching, as characters in quest of self-understanding. For example,

³Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter in The Complete Writings of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Old Manse Edition, VI (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1900), 48. All subsequent page references to this edition will appear in parentheses in the text.

⁴Kaul, p. 177.

⁵Ibid., p. 146.

Hawthorne metaphorically describes Hester as wandering in a dark labyrinth of mind, and he entitles one of his chapters "The Minister in a Maze" to symbolize the spiritual wilderness through which Dimmesdale journeys. In addition to the metaphoric and symbolic use of the journey to reveal character, Hawthorne employs the journey as a structural device. The Scarlet Letter begins with Hester's initial journey to the scaffold, moves toward Dimmesdale's secret journey to the scaffold, and ends with Dimmesdale's final journey to the scaffold. Between these three structurally important journeys, Hawthorne develops the interrelated moral quests of his characters.

Hawthorne uses the journey metaphorically and symbolically to reflect the inner psychological conflicts of his characters. Describing his characters as wanderers, pilgrims, and wayfarers, Hawthorne uses the literal journeys of Hester, Chillingworth, and Dimmesdale to symbolize their spiritual dilemmas. Discussing the journey metaphor in The Scarlet Letter, Rudolphe Von Abele points out Hawthorne's figurative use of the journey as a "'wandering' in a labyrinth or maze."⁶ For example, the role of adulteress which the Puritan community assigns to Hester and the isolation which it imposes

⁶Rudolphe Von Abele, "The Scarlet Letter: A Reading," Accent, XI (Autumn, 1951), 220.

on her cause her to roam "without rule or guidance, in a moral wilderness" (p. 288), to journey "without clew in the dark labyrinth of mind" (p. 238). Hester's description of the confused inward journeys of herself, Chillingworth, and Dimmesdale reflects the interrelationship of the characters' quests:

I said, but now, that here could be no good event for him, or thee, or me, who are here wandering together in this gloomy maze of evil, and stumbling at every step over the guilt wherewith we have strewn our path.

(pp. 249-250)

Hawthorne also uses the journey metaphor to convey the inner conflicts and individual quests of both Dimmesdale and Chillingworth. Dimmesdale feels himself "quite astray and at a loss in the pathway of human existence" (p. 94), and the burden of his secret sin is reflected in Hawthorne's description of the minister as a "poor pilgrim, on his dreary and desert path, faint, sick, miserable" (p. 248). The journey metaphor also portrays the spiritual pilgrimage of Chillingworth. Chillingworth emerges from the wilderness "travel-worn" to discover Hester, in whom he had hoped to find warmth, set up as a symbol of sin. His course of revenge as he seeks the identity of Hester's lover is indicated in terms of a journey: "the intellect of Roger Chillingworth had now a sufficiently plain path before it. It was not, indeed, precisely that which he had laid out for himself to

tread" (p. 175). The path Chillingworth chooses as he follows the every step of Dimmesdale, probing the minister's secret thoughts, leads to his commission of the Unpardonable Sin in violating the sanctity of Dimmesdale's soul.

In addition to the metaphoric and symbolic use of the journey to reveal character, Hawthorne uses the journey as a structural device. The romance begins with Hester's journey to the scaffold as she dons the symbol of her sin and ends with Dimmesdale's final journey to the scaffold as he reveals the secret sin which has tormented him for seven years. Before Dimmesdale's final journey he undertakes a night journey to the scaffold, and in a dreamlike state acts out in secret the confession he must make public. These three important journeys, each leading to the scaffold, the center of the drama, provide structural unity for the romance.⁷ A fourth journey is crucial to the plot: the journey of Hester and Dimmesdale to the forest. The forest symbolizes the moral and spiritual wilderness through which Hester and Dimmesdale have been wandering for seven years. After his sojourn to the forest, Dimmesdale undergoes a transformation, a change which allows him to recognize and accept the duality of human nature and which gives him the spiritual strength to make his confession public. Other journeys aid in structuring the romance:

⁷Malcom Cowley, "Five Acts of The Scarlet Letter," in Twelve Original Essays on Great American Novels, ed. by Charles Shapiro (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1958), pp. 35, 37.

the daily journeys of Hester and Pearl, the journey of Hester and Pearl to the governor's palace, the excursions of Chillingworth and Dimmesdale, Hester's and Dimmesdale's planned journey to the Old World, and Dimmesdale's return from the forest.⁸ While these journeys serve to structure the romance, they are not merely structural devices. Each journey is related to a central theme in Hawthorne's fiction: the personal quests of the characters as they strive for self-awareness and revelation of truth. As the characters undertake their outward journeys, Hawthorne, concerned with confrontation and revelation of character, portrays their inward quests for self-awareness.⁹

Hester's first journey to the scaffold introduces the Puritan society of seventeenth-century Boston. While Hester is on the scaffold, the object of ridicule, the novel surveys the dominant attitude of the Puritan community and establishes a basic conflict in the romance: the lonely figure of Hester Prynne against the harsh, legalistic Puritan community.¹⁰ Two antithetical images, the rosebush and the prison door,

⁸Von Abele, p. 219.

⁹Jac Tharpe, Nathaniel Hawthorne: Identity and Knowledge (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1967), pp. 95, 99.

¹⁰R. W. B. Lewis, The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), p. 112.

symbolize the conflict between Hester and the harsh Puritan code of law. Representing "the dismal severity" of the Puritan character is the iron-clamped prison door, "the black flower of civilized society" (p. 66), and representing the warmth and compassion in human nature is the rosebush, symbol that "the deep heart of Nature could pity and be kind" (p. 66) to the sinner.¹¹ Although Hawthorne aligns a few voices with the mercy symbolized by the rosebush, he indicates that the main sympathy of the Puritan community lies with the black flower, the prison.¹² Also expressing the harshness of the Puritan character are images of grayness, darkness, rigidity, and gloom,¹³ images which reveal the Puritans "as stern enough to look upon her death, had that been the sentence, without a murmur at its severity" (p. 79). Three offenses the Puritans commit in punishing Hester receive Hawthorne's criticism. First, Hester's feeling that "her heart had been flung into the street for them all to spurn and trample upon" (p. 77) indicates their lack of reverence for the human heart or individual conscience. Second, the Puritan community asks Hester to relinquish her individuality when it makes her "the general symbol at which the preacher

¹¹John E. Becker, Hawthorne's Historical Allegory (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1971), p. 89.

¹²Ibid., p. 93.

¹³Hyatt Waggoner, Hawthorne: A Critical Study (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955), p. 119.

and moralist might point, and in which they might vivify and embody their images of woman's frailty and sinful passion" (p. 111). Third, the Puritan community wrongs Hester in morally alienating her, as shown when Hawthorne describes the scarlet letter as having "the effect of a spell, taking her out of the ordinary relations with humanity, and inclosing her in a sphere by herself" (p. 75). In making Hester "the living sermon against sin" (p. 88), the Puritans show their reluctance to accept the sinful side of human nature and their greater respect for law than for human nature.¹⁴ Tracing the moral quests of his characters through the three journeys to the scaffold, Hawthorne reinforces his initial comments on the Puritan experience in America.

During Hester's journey from the prison to the market place, Hawthorne establishes her attitude toward the role of adulteress assigned her by the Puritan community, and he defines her quest. Having introduced the external conflict of an individual versus society, Hawthorne, according to John Becker, introduces Hester's internal conflict as "the conflict between her awareness of herself and the Puritan reduction of

¹⁴Hugo McPherson, Hawthorne as Myth-Maker: A Study in Imagination (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), p. 171.

her to the role of adulteress."¹⁵ Hester's actions during her journey to the scaffold show her defiance of the role of adulteress and her refusal to give up her individuality. In repelling the beadle, the embodiment of "the whole dismal severity of the Puritanic code of law" (p. 72), Hester rejects the role of sinner which the community imposes on her.¹⁶ The villagers expect Hester's beauty to be dimmed by the effect of the scarlet letter; instead, her beauty makes "a halo of [her] misfortune and ignominy" (p. 74). Resisting an impulse to hide the scarlet letter, she boldly displays the elaborate and creative crimson and gold flourishes of the scarlet A. This contrast between the effect the community expects the scarlet letter to have on Hester and her defiance of their expectation foreshadows her later transformation of the letter into a badge of mercy as the community reinterprets the meaning of the symbol as "Able." Although in her outward journey Hester openly defies the legalistic Puritan community, from the moment of her journey to the scaffold, her life turns inward: "the scaffold of the pillory was a point of view that revealed to Hester Prynne the entire track along which she had been treading, since her happy infancy" (p. 81)--her poor but genteel home and family, her

¹⁵Becker, p. 104.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 94.

marriage to the "misshapen scholar," her hopes for a new life. Brought back to the harsh circumstances of the market place, Hester, realizing that the two realities for her are her child and the scarlet letter, begins her seven-year quest for an understanding of the scarlet letter.¹⁷

Her term of confinement ended, Hester's "unattended walk" from the prison marks the beginning of her quest for the meaning of the scarlet letter. Hester's hopes to learn from her pain and suffering and her desire to be near her lover lead her to remain "within the scene and pathway that had been so fatal" (p. 113). In many ways the journey from the prison is more difficult than her ignominious journey to the scaffold. For the journey to the scaffold, an isolated event, she could summon all the strength of her character to transform the ordeal into an expression of her defiance; in contrast, her journey from the prison marks the beginning of the daily torture of the scarlet letter.

Hawthorne's description of Hester's daily journeys as she walks back and forth "with those lonely footsteps, in the little world with which she was outwardly connected" (p. 122) stresses her isolation from the community and the inward nature of her quest. Having been morally alienated

¹⁷McPherson, p. 171.

by the community, she is also physically isolated when she moves to a cottage on the outskirts of town. Although Hester establishes an outward connection with society through her needlework, her role in society is ambivalent, as pointed out by Ernest Sandeen: "She is the shunned sinner, yet the Puritan community nevertheless desires and makes use of her creative talents which have their source in the same 'rich, voluptuous' qualities of her nature as her sinful passion."¹⁸ That in her daily journeys she is merely "outwardly connected" with society implies that no inward connection exists; in her relationship with society nothing made her feel that she belonged to it. Although she leads an exemplary outward life, her inner life lacks penitence.¹⁹ Although conforming to the external regulations of society, Hester assumes "a freedom of speculation," which the community would have considered "a deadlier crime than that stigmatized by the scarlet letter" (p. 236). Led to reflect on the meaning of the scarlet letter, Hester believes that the letter gives her a sympathetic insight into the hidden sin of others and reveals to her the universality of sin. Yet these revelations terrify her and cause her to lose faith. Like Young Goodman Brown, Hester

¹⁸Ernest Sandeen, "The Scarlet Letter as a Love Story," PMLA, LXXVII (Sept., 1962), 427.

¹⁹Becker, p. 105.

in believing that "the outward guise of purity is but a lie" (p. 122), is in danger of seeing only the sinful side of human nature.

The second structural journey to the scaffold, occurring seven years after Hester's journey to the same spot, illuminates the effects upon her of her quest for an understanding of the scarlet letter. In contrast to Dimmesdale, who has withdrawn from the brotherhood of man, is Hester, whose quest has led her "to acknowledge her sisterhood with the race of men" (p. 230). Hester has transformed the meaning of the scarlet letter.²⁰ Rather than a symbol of sin, the scarlet letter becomes "the taper of the sick-chamber" (p. 231), a symbol of Hester's charitable deeds:

Such helpfulness was found in her,--so much power to do, and power to sympathize,--that many people refused to interpret the scarlet A by its original signification. They said that it meant Able; so strong was Hester Prynne, with a woman's strength. (pp. 231-232)

Again there is a variance between Hester's outward conduct in society and the turmoil of her inner life. Although her outward relationship with society has improved, she undergoes an inner transformation. Hester's journey in life becomes a confused inward journey as she wanders "without a clew in the dark labyrinth of mind" (p. 238). The changes in her outward

²⁰Kaul, p. 179.

appearance signify the inward transformation. Once a woman who had in her nature "a rich, voluptuous Oriental characteristic,--a taste for the gorgeously beautiful" (p. 118), Hester now hides her luxurious hair beneath a cap and dresses austerely. Under the influence of the scarlet letter "the light and graceful foliage of her character" withers, "leaving a bare and harsh outline" (p. 234). When she allows her intellect to overrule her feelings, a "marble coldness" replaces her once warm feminine qualities,²¹ and "her heart had lost its regular and healthy throb" (p. 238). In losing her passionate nature, she loses an attribute "the permanence of which had been essential to keep her a woman" (p. 235). The sight of Dimmesdale at the scaffold provides for Hester the experience she needs to revive her warmth and passion.

Seeing the spiritual and physical deterioration of Dimmesdale during his night journey to the scaffold awakens Hester's deadened sympathies. Feeling a sense of responsibility for Dimmesdale's demise because of her bond of secrecy with Chillingworth, Hester takes decisive action, her decisiveness a contrast to Dimmesdale's inertia. First, she resolves to confront Chillingworth to beg him to release his hold on Dimmesdale's soul and to release her from her pledge

²¹McPherson, p. 178.

of secrecy not to reveal his identity. Second, she resolves to confront Dimmesdale with the identity of his tormentor. These two actions lead to a journey to the forest, an outward journey which reflects the inner conflicts of both Hester and Dimmesdale.

In Hawthorne's fiction, the physical setting of the forest has a moral significance. According to R. W. B. Lewis, the forest represents "the ambiguous setting of moral choice, the scene of reversal and discovery in his characteristic tragic drama."²² In contrast to the market place, where law and reason rule, the forest represents freedom from society's confining rules, a world where passions rule.²³ Hawthorne's description of the grayness, the solitude, the narrow path to the forest suggests that Hester's outward journey is simultaneously an inward journey. To Hester's mind the forest symbolizes the moral wilderness in which she has been wandering. In the forest Hester and Dimmesdale can admit their passions, their guilts, their hypocrisies. In this atmosphere of revelation Hester confronts Dimmesdale with the secret she feels has violated his soul, her bond of secrecy with Chillingworth.²⁴ Momentarily stunned by her

²²Lewis, p. 114.

²³Cowley, p. 41.

²⁴Becker, p. 122.

revelation, Dimmesdale forgives her and asks her to think for him. Hester's vitality and forcefulness contrast with Dimmesdale's indecisiveness and lack of energy. Her love and compassion for Dimmesdale prompt her to propose a journey to him, suggesting first the wilderness and finally deciding on a voyage to the Old World. Her emotions rekindled, Hester undergoes a transformation. She removes the scarlet letter and lets her hair down. The color returns to her cheek, and her expression is "a radiant and tender smile, that seemed gushing from the very heart of womanhood" (p. 293). The warmth and richness of her femininity return. The sunshine, once elusive for Hester, shines forth in celebration of their love, "aroused from a death-like slumber" (p. 294). Because Pearl will not accept her without the scarlet letter, Hester clasps it again to her bosom, feeling a sense of doom, and her warm feminine qualities depart.

The final scaffold scene establishes the ultimate effects of Hester's quest for an understanding of the scarlet letter. Her hope of escape with Dimmesdale from "their labyrinth of misery" (p. 299) destroyed when Dimmesdale confesses, Hester is once again a passionless, austere figure. Suppression of her passionate nature severs her sympathetic relationship with her fellow man. She is "actually dead, in respect to any claim of sympathy, and had departed out of the

world with which she still seemed to mingle" (pp. 277-278). Although in her seven-year quest Hester has learned to accept pain and suffering and although shame, despair, and solitude have taught her to be strong, she loses her passion and warmth, the positive qualities of her femininity.

Just as Hester's journeys dramatize her spiritual quest, the three journeys to the scaffold trace Roger Chillingworth's spiritual deterioration. The first journey to the scaffold reveals the human qualities of Chillingworth and defines his quest. By his own description, Roger Chillingworth has been a "wanderer" in the vast forest, a wanderer "isolated from human interests" (p. 108), who upon his return to civilization finds Hester the object of public scorn. Having emerged from the wilderness to the settlement of Christian men, Chillingworth is disillusioned to find that one of the pious Puritans has fathered his wife's child.²⁵ His hope of finding warmth and comfort in Hester destroyed, Chillingworth makes a choice that governs the rest of his life.²⁶ From the moment he sees Hester on the scaffold, he commits himself to his quest, the search for Hester's lover. Resolving "not to be pilloried beside her on her pedestal of

²⁵David W. Noble, The Eternal Adam and the New World Garden (New York: George Braziller, 1968), p. 28.

²⁶Becker, p. 100.

shame," he chooses "to withdraw his name from the role of mankind, and, as regarded his former ties and interest, to vanish out of life" (p. 168) as he enters a bond of secrecy with Hester concerning his identity and as he commits himself to an inhuman course of revenge.

Before he begins his quest for the identity of Hester's lover, Chillingworth shows sympathetic qualities as well as a tendency toward evil. He is intelligent, scholarly, a man "chiefly accustomed to look inward" (p. 85). Having given most of his life to the pursuit of knowledge, Chillingworth married Hester to bring warmth and companionship to his "lonely and chill" life. Although emerging from the wilderness in the hope of finding comfort in Hester, Chillingworth does not blame Hester for her infidelity, realizing that he wronged her in betraying her youth "into a false and unnatural relation with [his] decay" (p. 106). The name "Chillingworth" indicates both his coldness of heart and his worthiness.²⁷ As Chillingworth reminds Hester, in England he was a man "thoughtful for others, craving little for himself,--kind, true, just, and of constant, if not warm affections" (p. 248). Despite his sympathetic qualities, physical images describing Chillingworth foreshadow the evil nature his quest later assumes. Images of decay and darkness, which increase as he

²⁷Waggoner, p. 139.

conducts his quest, symbolize the growing evil in Chillingworth. His physical deformity, his stooped shoulder, signifies something amiss in his moral being. Likewise, serpent imagery signifies the potential evil of Chillingworth's quest;²⁸ when Chillingworth sees Hester, "a writhing horror twisted itself across his features, like a snake gliding swiftly over them" (p. 85). Hawthorne's consistent association of Chillingworth with weeds foreshadows the eventual outcome of his destructive quest when Hawthorne says that Chillingworth withers and dies like an uprooted weed wilting in the sun.

The second journey to the scaffold illuminates the inner transformation of Chillingworth from "a mortal man, with once a human heart" (p. 247) into a fiend, one who commits the Unpardonable Sin in violating the sanctity of the human heart. As Chillingworth begins to suspect Dimmesdale as Hester's lover, his quest assumes a different character. His quest becomes a deliberate quest for the soul of Dimmesdale,²⁹ and he devotes himself for seven years to the constant probing of Dimmesdale's tormented soul. Chillingworth's intimate walks with Dimmesdale in the forest

²⁸Waggoner, p. 144.

²⁹Hugh N. Maclean, "Hawthorne's Scarlet Letter: 'The Dark Problem of This Life,'" American Literature, XXVII (March, 1955), 14.

and along the seashore represent Chillingworth's method of revenge: "to burrow into the clergyman's intimacy, and plot against his soul" (p. 182). Having become Dimmesdale's physician, Chillingworth becomes the minister's confidant, his trusted friend, the recipient of his innermost thoughts. Hawthorne describes Chillingworth's method of revenge:

So Roger Chillingworth--the man of skill, the kind and friendly physician--strove to go deep into his patient's bosom, delving among his principles, prying into his recollections, and probing everything with a cautious touch, like a treasure-seeker in a dark cavern. Few secrets can escape an investigator, who has opportunity and license to undertake such a quest, and skill to follow it up. (p. 176)

Abusing his natural ability to read the human soul, Chillingworth commits the sin of spiritual pride as he insinuates himself into the minister's interior world.³⁰ Again physical imagery conveys the transformation. Chillingworth is darker, uglier, and more misshapen than during his first journey to the scaffold.

Chillingworth's final journey to the scaffold conveys the results of his quest for Dimmesdale's soul. As Dimmesdale confesses his sin, Chillingworth sorrowfully repeats, "Thou hast escaped me!" (p. 370). Chillingworth, having devoted his life to an obsessive quest for revenge, experiences such a loss of strength and intellectual force "that he positively

³⁰Alexander Evanoff, "Some Principal Themes in The Scarlet Letter," Discourse V (Summer, 1962), 275.

withered up, shrivelled away, and almost vanished from mortal sight, like an uprooted weed that lies wilting in the sun" (p. 376). Although his search began as a quest for truth, his inhuman path of revenge results in his spiritual deterioration and ultimate death.

Whereas Chillingworth represents a negative force working upon the soul of Dimmesdale, Pearl represents a positive force. Her regenerative influence is evident in each of the three journeys to the scaffold and in the journey to the forest.³¹ In the first scaffold scene Pearl raises her arms to Dimmesdale, "with a half-pleased, half-plaintive murmur" (p. 96), as though appealing to him to acknowledge her and thus to acknowledge his guilt.³² Although Hester defines Pearl's quest when she says that Pearl must seek a heavenly father,³³ Pearl, before she will acknowledge a heavenly father, must seek and be recognized by her earthly father.³⁴ The quest for a parent, or search for a home, according to Roy Male, is a consistent theme in American

³¹Anne Marie McNamara, "'The Character of Flame': The Function of Pearl in The Scarlet Letter," American Literature, XXVII (January, 1956), 537-538.

³²John Caldwell Stubbs, The Pursuit of Form: A Study of Hawthorne and the Romance (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1970), p. 89.

³³Maclean, p. 14.

³⁴Roy R. Male, Hawthorne's Tragic Vision (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1957), p. 106.

literature, representing "a physical manifestation of a psychological and spiritual pilgrimage, directed toward finding an identity and an integrated religious experience."³⁵ As she searches for a father, Pearl searches for an identity that will absolve her of her demonic qualities and transform the spirit child into a human child, capable of emotions. For her humanizing experience Pearl must wait seven years until Dimmesdale makes his final journey to the scaffold.

Not only does Pearl exert an influence on Dimmesdale, her relationship to Hester is related to Hester's quest for an understanding of the scarlet letter. Consistently associated with the scarlet letter, Pearl possesses a seemingly innate curiosity about the mysteries of the scarlet letter, intuitively relating Hester's wearing the letter with the minister's putting his hand over his heart and asking Hester whether the symbol is the Black Man's mark. While at Governor Bellingham's mansion, Hester begs to be allowed to keep Pearl, whom she can teach the lessons she learns from the scarlet letter, and Dimmesdale defines two of Pearl's functions in relation to Hester: first, "to keep her mother's soul alive, and to preserve her from blacker depths of sin" and second, "to remind her, at every moment, of her fall"

³⁵Ibid, pp. 10-11.

(p. 163). Not until the final scaffold scene is Pearl's role as "messenger of anguish" to her mother fulfilled.

Hawthorne's description of Pearl's wild, inhuman qualities illustrates her need for a humanizing experience. Isolated from other children as an "imp of evil" and product of sin, Pearl cannot develop a loving relationship with humanity. Her defiant mood and her dominant trait of passion are reflected in this description of Pearl:

The child could not be made amenable to rules. In giving her existence, a great law had been broken; and the result was a being, whose elements were perhaps beautiful and brilliant, but all in disorder.

(pp. 127-128)

Pearl's wildness and flightiness of temper are further illustrated by Hawthorne's association of her with wild birds and wild flowers. Described as an "airy sprite," Pearl laughs "like a thing incapable and unintelligent of human sorrow" (p. 131). Her wild, inhuman qualities stress her need for "a grief that should deeply touch her, and thus humanize and make her capable of sympathy" (p. 265).

Both in the forest and during Dimmesdale's second journey to the scaffold, Pearl serves as a regenerative influence on Dimmesdale. While on the scaffold, having taken Pearl's hand, Dimmesdale feels a "tumultuous rush of new life" flowing through his dying spirit. Pearl, in asking Dimmesdale to stand on the scaffold in the light of day with her and her

mother, points Dimmesdale toward his salvation through public acknowledgement of his guilt.³⁶ Just as Dimmesdale possesses "the tongue of flame" in his ability to communicate spiritual truth, Pearl as "the character of flame" speaks spiritual truth to Dimmesdale.³⁷ Again in the forest Pearl serves as a motivating force for Dimmesdale's confession, again asking him to acknowledge her publicly by standing with her on the scaffold. Refusing to accept her mother without the scarlet letter and defiantly washing off the minister's kiss, Pearl rejects Hester's plan of escape. In asking that the three return together to the village, Pearl asks that the truth of their relationship be revealed.³⁸

Pearl's transformation from a spirit child to a human child is evident in the last scene at the scaffold when Dimmesdale acknowledges her. Hawthorne describes Pearl's transformation as she responds to Dimmesdale's confession:

Pearl kissed his lips. A spell was broken. The great scene of grief, in which the wild infant bore a part, had developed all her sympathies; and as her tears fell upon her father's cheek, they were the pledge that she would grow up amid human joy and sorrow, nor for ever do battle with the world, but be a woman in it. Towards her mother, too, Pearl's errand as a messenger of anguish was all fulfilled.

(p. 371)

³⁶Grace Pleasant Wellborn, "The Symbolic Three in The Scarlet Letter," South Central Bulletin: Studies, XXIII (Winter, 1963), 12.

³⁷McNamara, p. 545.

³⁸Ibid., p. 541.

Her quest for a father accomplished, Pearl, purged of her demonic qualities, can take her place in society.

The quests of both Chillingworth and Pearl are related to the central struggle in the romance, Dimmesdale's quest for salvation.³⁹ The three journeys to the scaffold trace the spiritual growth of Arthur Dimmesdale and dramatize Hawthorne's themes of secret guilt and public confession.⁴⁰ Hawthorne establishes characteristics of Dimmesdale before he begins his quest for salvation. Dimmesdale's admirable traits gain him the respect of the community, but his pride in his reputation increases his fear of confession. He is a scholarly, introspective man, having studied in England, and he has brought his knowledge into the wilderness of New England. His eloquence and fervor have won him prominence in his position as a minister, but his pride in his position and in his reputation for holiness becomes more important to him than the revelation of truth, thus leading him to conceal his sin of adultery.⁴¹ Three images describing Dimmesdale are related to his secret guilt. First, Hawthorne stresses Dimmesdale's pallor, which contrasts with the "black secret

³⁹Maclean, p. 14.

⁴⁰Cowley, p. 25.

⁴¹Darrel Abel, "Hawthorne's Hester," College English, XIII (March, 1952), 305.

of his soul" (p. 206).⁴² Second, Hawthorne characterizes Dimmesdale with shadow imagery, connoting his hypocrisy as he shows himself in a false light.⁴³ Shadow imagery contributes to Hawthorne's portrayal of Dimmesdale as the "untrue man" in that "he shows himself in a false light, becomes a shadow, or, indeed, ceases to exist" (p. 209). Third, Dimmesdale's compulsive gesture of placing his hand over his heart implies a troubled soul. Just as the name "Chillingworth" indicates character, the name "Dimmesdale" is significant, "dim" suggesting weakness and impending darkness and "dale" suggesting a valley, or perhaps the heart.⁴⁴ Although hampered by his weakness, his moral cowardice, Dimmesdale searches for the light of revelation, for an escape from the dark secret of his heart.

Like Hester, Dimmesdale's tormented inner life contrasts with his outward life of holiness.⁴⁵ His exhortation to Hester at the scaffold shows his inner conflict, his need to reveal the truth to relieve the anguish of his soul versus his urge to conceal his sin to preserve his prominence in the community. Urging Hester to name her

⁴²Walter Blair, "Color, Light, and Shadow in Hawthorne's Fiction," New England Quarterly, XV (March, 1942), 86-87.

⁴³Ibid., p. 87.

⁴⁴Waggoner, p. 139.

⁴⁵Becker, p. 102.

fellow sinner if she feels the revelation will contribute to her soul's peace, Dimmesdale realizes that the compassionate Hester will respond to his impassioned plea by not revealing his identity. Knowing that he should confess his sin rather than hide his guilty heart, Dimmesdale cannot summon the moral courage to disclose his secret. Dimmesdale's quest for salvation as he attempts to alleviate the burden of his secret guilt leads him first to make a night journey to the scaffold in a vain attempt to expiate his sin and finally to journey to the scaffold in the light of day and the light of revelation.

Dimmesdale's seven-year quest for salvation is characterized by self-torture, mock confessions, and morbid introspection as the minister vainly tries to purify himself. Suffering bodily disease, which, as Chillingworth recognizes, is "a symptom of some ailment in the spiritual part" (p. 194), Dimmesdale grows paler and more emaciated, tortured by the "black trouble of his soul" (p. 202). In an attempt to relieve his troubled soul, he fasts, beats himself with a bloody scourge, and conducts all night vigils. His world is transformed into an insubstantial world of illusions. Becoming "morbidly self-contemplative," he has visions that haunt him, visions of fiendish shapes beckoning him, visions of Pearl pointing first at the scarlet letter, then at his own breast. The public veneration of him only heightens his

agony, leading him to make subtle confessions of his guilt which he knows his congregation will misinterpret and which cause them to revere him even more. Ironically, in speaking the truth to his congregation, Dimmesdale transforms it into falsehood. As a man who loves the truth, he comes to hate his hypocrisy, his lies, and finally himself. His life representing a falsehood, he questions his existence: "Then what was he?--a substance?--or the dimmest of all shadows?" (p. 205). The anguish of his soul is the only truth that gives Dimmesdale "a real existence on this earth" (p. 209).

Living in the insubstantial world of visions, Dimmesdale fails to realize a positive result of his sin, his gift of communication, metaphorically described as "the tongue of flame."⁴⁶ What makes Dimmesdale's sermons more powerful than those of purer and more learned ministers is his ability "to express the highest truths through the humblest medium of familiar words and images" (p. 203). His initiation into sin has united him with the sinful brotherhood of mankind and has provided him with a sympathetic insight into the sins of others. Yet the minister refuses to accept the sinful side of his nature or to recognize the common bond of sin which unites him with his fellow man. This revelation begins with Dimmesdale's night journey

⁴⁶Stubbs, p. 88.

to the scaffold and continues in his journey to and from the forest.

Dimmesdale's quest for salvation motivates him to undertake a night journey to the scaffold where Hester had stood seven years earlier. Like his self-torture and nightly vigils, Dimmesdale's second journey to the scaffold is a vain attempt to relieve the anguish of his soul. For Dimmesdale, the second journey to the scaffold is crucial, serving as a prelude to self-discovery. Like the night journeys of Goodman Brown and Robin Molineux, Dimmesdale's journey represents a quest for self-understanding. In the moonlight world, which Hawthorne associates with imaginative insight,⁴⁷ Dimmesdale has the opportunity to see the truth of the human heart revealed to him. Like the earlier heroes, Dimmesdale walks "in the shadow of a dream" under "a species of somnambulism" in "the dark gray of the midnight" (p. 210). In his dream-like state he acts out in secret the confession he must make public. His journey to the scaffold where he failed to confess his sin seven years earlier expresses his inner desire to expose his sin and thus relieve himself of the burden of his guilt. His actions at the scaffold express his subconscious desire to disclose his secret sin. He shrieks

⁴⁷L. Moffitt Cecil, "Hawthorne's Optical Device, American Quarterly, XV (Spring, 1963), 78.

aloud, "without any effort of his will, or power to restrain himself" (p. 212), but the town does not hear. The greeting that he imagines he makes to Father Wilson shows that his mind had made "an involuntary effort to relieve" (p. 216) itself of his guilt. He imagines that his legs, chilled by the night air, will be unable to descend the scaffold and that the morning light will reveal him on the platform of sinners. In his dreamlike state Dimmesdale's subconscious desires continue to surface when Hester and Pearl join him on the scaffold. As the three join hands, Hester and Pearl communicate "new life" and "vital warmth" to his dying spirit, new life which will be his, Pearl reminds him, when the three stand together on the scaffold at noon. Yet in Dimmesdale's interior struggle the dread of public exposure is still greater than his desire to acknowledge publicly their relationship. At this stage in his quest for salvation, Dimmesdale fails to alleviate the torment of his soul.⁴⁸ Knowing that there is no danger of being discovered, Dimmesdale experiences a "vain show of expiation," "the mockery of penitence" (p. 211). His moment of revelation is imminent, as symbolized by the light of the meteor. The light of the meteor seems to Dimmesdale "the light that is to reveal all

⁴⁸Sandeen, p. 428.

secrets, and the daybreak that shall unite all who belong to one another" (p. 221).

Dimmesdale's journey into the forest marks the beginning of his transformation. The forest provides an escape for Dimmesdale from his hypocritical relationship with the community. His listlessness, his feebleness, his despondency, never visible in the town but evident in the seclusion of the forest, betray the extent of his inner turmoil. In the atmosphere of revelation provided by the forest, Dimmesdale confesses to Hester the reality of what he has become:

Of penance I have had enough! Of penitence there has been none! Else, I should long ago have thrown off these garments of mock holiness, and have shown myself to mankind as they will see me at the judgment seat. Happy are you, Hester that wear the scarlet letter openly upon your bosom! Mine burns in secret! Thou little knowest what a relief it is, after the torment of a seven year's cheat, to look into an eye that recognizes me for what I am! Had I one friend--or were it my worst enemy!--to whom, when sickened with the praises of all other men, I could betake myself, and be known as the vilest of all sinners, methinks my soul might keep itself alive thereby. Even thus much of truth would save me! But, now, it is all falsehood!--all emptiness!--all death!

(p. 277)

Realizing the falsity of his argument that revelation must be postponed until judgment day and distinguishing between "penance" and "penitence,"⁴⁹ Dimmesdale realizes that he must divest himself of his "garments of mock holiness" and

⁴⁹Male, pp. 108-109.

show his sinfulness to his fellow man as it will be revealed on judgment day. Still morally weak, Dimmesdale asks Hester to think for him. For Dimmesdale, Hester's proposed journey to England offers hope for a new life, the possibility of regaining his former innocence.⁵⁰ Dimmesdale's feeling that he has thrown his "sin-stained and sorrow-blackened" self down upon the forest leaves "to have risen up all made anew" represents the beginning of his recognition of his "profounder self," the self of human emotions and passions.⁵¹ Yet, as Pearl reminds him, before he can begin a new life, he must come to terms with his past guilt.

Hawthorne entitles the chapter describing Dimmesdale's journey from the forest "The Minister in a Maze" to convey the spiritual dilemma of Dimmesdale: whether to escape with Hester, deliberating yielding himself "to what he knew was deadly sin" (p. 322) or to confess.⁵² As he pursues his physical journey from the moral wilderness of the forest, he simultaneously pursues an inward spiritual journey that leads him to salvation.⁵³ Comparing his journey from the forest with his earlier journey to the forest, Dimmesdale finds that "the pathway among the woods seemed wilder . . . less trodden by the foot of man than he remembered it on his outward

⁵⁰Noble, p. 32.

⁵¹Sandeen, p. 429.

⁵²Wellborn, p. 14.

⁵³McNamara, p. 549.

journey" (p. 314). His "unaccustomed physical energy" contrasts with his earlier lack of energy. The sight of the village suddenly looks strange and new, but the change is not in the town but within the minister. Inwardly he feels "other evidences of a revolution in the sphere of thought and feeling" (p. 315). Feeling the impulse to do wild, wicked things, an impulse arising from his "profounder self" (p. 315), he confronts a deacon, to whom he wants to utter blasphemies; an elderly widow, to whom he presents an argument against the immortality of the soul; an innocent girl, whom he is tempted to give a suggestive glance; Puritan children, whom he wants to teach naughty words; and a sailor, with whom he wants to exchange coarse stories. Each confrontation shows to Dimmesdale the sinful side of his nature, which he must recognize in order to gain self-understanding and understanding of his fellow man.⁵⁴ At last acknowledging his capacity for evil, Dimmesdale becomes a new man, recognizing not only his orthodox self but also his "profounder self," the self of emotions, both good and evil.⁵⁵ Returning to his study, he looks at the words written hypocritically by his orthodox self and realizes that "that self was gone! Another man had returned out of the forest; a wiser one; with a knowledge of hidden mysteries which the simplicity of the former self never

⁵⁴Stubbs, p. 90.

⁵⁵Sandeen, p. 433.

could have reached" (p. 323). As he throws the old sermon into the fire and composes a new and inspired sermon, he breaks with the hypocrisy of the past and prepares himself for his final journey to the scaffold.⁵⁶

Having undergone a transformation which allows him to recognize and accept the coexistence of good and evil in human nature, Dimmesdale makes a final journey to the scaffold where he discloses his secret sin. The final scaffold scene illustrates Hawthorne's exploration in his romances of the individual's affirmation of the brotherhood of man and of the necessity of the individual's joining the procession of life as a step toward self-realization.⁵⁷ Having become so obsessed with his personal sin that he loses hold of "the magnetic chain of humanity,"⁵⁸ Dimmesdale's need is to reaffirm the brotherhood of man. As he joins the procession on its way to the market-place, he symbolically reenters the procession of life. Through his public confession he reestablishes his relationship with society.⁵⁹ His renewed physical energy signifies his newness of spirit: his step is no longer feeble, his frame is not bent, and his hand no longer rests on his heart. As he calls Hester and Pearl to join him on the scaffold, he makes his triumphant confession,

⁵⁶McNamara, p. 550.

⁵⁷Stubbs, p. 78.

⁵⁸Kaul, p. 184.

⁵⁹Stubbs, p. 87.

"the complaint of a human heart, sorrow-laden, perchance guilty, telling its secret, whether of guilt or sorrow, to the great heart of mankind" (p. 353).

Through his analysis of the moral journeys of his four characters, Hawthorne comments upon the quest of the individual in seventeenth-century America. The results of the quests of his four characters illuminate Hawthorne's view of the Puritan experience in America. Three of Hawthorne's recurring themes are reflected in the quests of Hester, Chillingworth, and Dimmesdale: loss of sense of community, exploitative individualism, and obsession with self.⁶⁰ These three themes dramatize Hawthorne's concept of the fate of the individual in colonial society. Chillingworth, like the Puritans, has journeyed from the Old World to the New World in quest of a new life. Like the Puritans who "spurn and trample upon" Hester's heart in the scaffold ritual, Chillingworth violates the sanctity of the human heart as he probes Dimmesdale's innermost thoughts.⁶¹ To become a part of the Puritan community, Hester must live an outward life of virtue while inwardly she journeys in a moral wilderness. To become a part of the community, she

⁶⁰Kaul, p. 153.

⁶¹Hena Maes-Jelinek, "Roger Chillingworth: An Example of the Creative Process in The Scarlet Letter," English Studies XLIX (August, 1968), 348.

must suppress her passionate nature, and in doing so she loses the essence of her womanhood. Likewise, Dimmesdale is forced by the demands of Puritan society to live a pious and hypocritical outward life while his tortured inner life leads him to loathe himself. Pearl, the only one of the three characters born in New England, becomes a rich heiress and leaves Boston. Consistently associated with roses, symbol of love and beauty, Pearl cannot survive in New England, which Hawthorne aligns with black flowers.⁶² Like Pearl, Dimmesdale and Hester had planned to return to England in hopes of a new life. Ironically, their desire to return to the Old World for the purpose of attaining innocence and a new life is the same hope that motivated the Puritans to journey to the New World.

⁶²McPherson, p. 188.

CONCLUSION

As the three tales and The Scarlet Letter illustrate, the outward journeys of Hawthorne's characters convey their inner experiences. The journey in Hawthorne's fiction serves both structural and thematic functions. The plots of "Young Goodman Brown" and "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" depend entirely upon the structural framework of a young man's night journey; the plot of "Ethan Brand" consists of several dramatic encounters which clarify the results of Brand's eighteen-year journey; and the structural unity of The Scarlet Letter is provided by three journeys to the scaffold. The journey, however, is not merely a structural device but is related to a central theme in Hawthorne's fiction: the personal quest of a character striving for self-awareness. In addition to the structural and thematic function, the journey functions symbolically. The physical progress of the journey symbolizes the moral or spiritual development of the character, and stages of the journey are analogous to psychological states of the character. These symbolic journeys of self-awareness are related to Hawthorne's concept of the American experience. Hawthorne used the journeys and quests of his characters to recreate the moral dilemmas of Puritan New England. He believed that the Puritan's journey to America in quest of a

new life in the New World had failed to create the "Utopia of human virtue and happiness" (VI, p. 65) which they had intended. Rather than portraying the state of innocence of an Adam in his New World paradise, Hawthorne portrayed the American Adam during his fall from innocence or after his loss of innocence.

The journeys and quests of Hawthorne's characters have several common characteristics. During the hero's journey he undergoes an initiation into the reality of human nature and has the opportunity to progress from ignorance to knowledge, from immaturity to maturity. His initiation during his journey consists of three stages: the separation, the transformation, and the return. His journey usually occurs at night in the moonlight, and he is in a dreamlike state. The journey is characterized by contrasting images of light and dark. During the first stage of his journey, the separation, the hero leaves the daylight world of security and innocence and enters the night world of experience and uncertainty. The setting for the journey, most often the forest, is away from the protagonist's usual surroundings where he undergoes a series of difficult encounters, each of which enlightens him about human nature and leads to his transformation. The journey is conducted in an atmosphere of moonlight, which Hawthorne associates with

spirituality and the creative powers of the imagination. Hawthorne's use of dream imagery to characterize the hero's journey reflects his belief that moral truth is more frequently revealed to a mind in the creative realm of sleep and dreams than in the waking, conscious world. In his dreamlike state the character realizes his subconscious desires and feelings, and he can therefore achieve a greater awareness of himself. Ideally, the quest ends both in self-realization and in a realization of human brotherhood.

Rather than increased awareness of the brotherhood of man, the quests of Hawthorne's characters often end in alienation from their fellow man. Rather than enlightenment, the initiation into the reality of human nature often produces disillusionment and spiritual death. The results of the moral journeys of his characters reflect Hawthorne's view that the rigid Puritan theology hampered the spiritual growth of the individual. Of the quests analyzed, only one has a hopeful outcome: the quest of Robin Molineux, whose initiation into adulthood leads him to affirm his relationship with his fellow man. Of the other quests, Dimmesdale's quest for salvation ultimately leads him to reaffirm his kinship with his fellow man when he accepts the coexistence of good and evil in human nature, but, as his last journey to the scaffold reveals, his quest results in his physical

deterioration and death. Young Goodman Brown's journey in quest of the knowledge of good and evil ends in disillusionment and alienation from his fellow man as he refuses to accept the duality of human nature. The intellectual quests of both Ethan Brand and Roger Chillingworth cause them to lose hold of "the magnetic chain of humanity" and result in their physical and spiritual deaths. Having lost the warm and tender qualities of her nature, Hester loses her sympathetic relationship with her fellow man. Before a "Utopia of human virtue and happiness" could be achieved, Hawthorne felt that there must be a change in attitude: a greater respect for the individual conscience, an acceptance of the totality of human nature, and a belief in the brotherhood of man.

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