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THE THEME OF THE CHILD IN THE FICTION OF NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

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THE THEME OF THE CHILD IN THE FICTION OF NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

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ABSTRACT

This thesis deals with the theme of the child in Nathaniel Hawthorne's fiction as a means to clarify his general attitude towards Puritanism on the one hand and Transcendentalism on the other. I take into account four of Hawthorne's works which focus on children: The Scarlet Letter, "The Gentle Boy," "The Artist of the Beautiful" and "The Snow Image." The first two works depict Puritan communities, whereas the third differs in that its setting is a later, more materialistic society. The fourth work also depicts a Puritan community; however, it differs from the others in relation to the home environment.

I employ an environmental approach in this thesis in order to explain the children's actions throughout the tales. My position admits that Hawthorne's children are often bad, depraved, or even that they repeat the sins of their ancestors, but I hold that their malice is not utterly determined by their own will. Their attitude is a response to the fact that the community in which they live molds their character based on that of their elders. My position thus allows me to argue both that Nathaniel Hawthorne sympathizes with the "natural self," but also sees it as largely determined by social conditions. Environment is emphasized through the negative influence society exerts on children, no matter whether this society is Puritan or not. Even as outsiders, children are conditioned by communities, although sometimes these communities fail to contain the individual, as is shown by Pearl and Warland, who escape society's oppression.

RESUMO

Esta tese descreve o tema da criança na ficção de Nathaniel Hawthorne de modo a esclarecer sua posição em relação ao Puritanismo por um lado e ao Transcendentalismo por outro. Minha proposta de análise fixa quatro das obras de Hawthorne que focaliza o elemento infantil: The Scarlet Letter, "The Gentle Boy," "The Artist of the Beautiful" e "The Snow Image." As duas primeiras retratam comunidades Puritanas, enquanto que a terceira focaliza uma sociedade materialista mais moderna. A quarta obra também retrata uma comunidade Puritana, entretanto ela difere das outras em relação ao meio ambiente.

Nesta tese eu aplico uma abordagem da influência do meio ambiente a fim de explicar as ações das crianças no desenvolvimento das obras. Minha posição admite que o elemento infantil seja mau, depravado, ou mesmo que ele repita os pecados de seus antecessores, mas eu defendo que sua malícia não é totalmente determinada por sua vontade própria. As atitudes das crianças são respostas à comunidade amoldadora de suas personalidades com base na personalidade de seus antecessores. Minha posição, entretanto, permite que eu argumente os dois pontos de vista assumidos por Hawthorne: a criança com personalidade inata e a criança como produto das condições sociais. O meio ambiente é enfatizado através da influência negativa que a sociedade exerce nas crianças, não importa se esta seja ou não Puritana. Mesmo marginalizadas essas crianças são condicionadas pelas comunidades, embora algumas vezes estas falhem em reter o indivíduo como é demonstrado por Pearl e Warland que escapam à opressão da sociedade.

À memória de meu pai,
À minha família e
À madrinha Joanita

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 - Statement of Problem

In this thesis I intend to focus on Nathaniel Hawthorne's view of children as an avenue to approach the problem of Hawthorne's relation to his Puritan heritage. There are chiefly three of Hawthorne's works which focus on children and their way of living, dealing with subjects such as the absence of parents, reincarnation and whether they represent original sin or inherit the sins of their parents--to cite only a few of the problems usually commented on.

In The Scarlet Letter, Hawthorne's masterpiece, there is Pearl, the child who is a product of Hester Prynne's adultery with Arthur Dimmesdale. Pearl lives with her mother and the lack of a father is a negative influence upon her. Now I ask: Is she negatively influenced because of her socially outcast condition? She is said to possess a strange character because of the way she reacts in different situations. Is she an imp of evil, if so, is she really or only in the mind of Puritan society? Is she the scarlet letter endowed with life? At the end of the story, does Pearl fulfil a Puritan or anti-Puritan view of children? Does she escape the Puritan community? These questions and the subsequent ones related to the other works are to be answered in the developed sequence of the chapters.

Some of Hawthorne's short stories develop circumstances similar to the one in The Scarlet Letter. In "The Gentle Boy" there is Ilbrahim, a boy from a Quaker family whose father was

killed over religious matters and whose mother abandoned him for religious fanaticism. Is this child a victim of Puritan persecution of his father, or is he a conscious martyr to his faithful Quakerism? This boy becomes part of Tobias Pearson's family, a Puritan couple whose children had died. They take care of Ilbrahim as if he were their son and have great problems concerning their religion. There is a scene in the tale where the children of the Puritans cruelly attack the Quaker boy. Are these children freed from the past or are they determined by it?

In "The Artist of the Beautiful" there is a baby whose actions seem the very reverse of innocence. Is this baby a reincarnation of his philistine grandfather? Owen Warland, the artist, who was always offended by the baby's grandfather's remarks upon his art, confirms his suspicion at the end of the tale when the baby destroys the art Owen Warland had spent his whole life creating. Is the baby's action an example of aggression or behavior "conditioned" by his society? And we may ask of the artist: Is his art artificial or based on nature?

In "The Snow Image," Violet and Peony live together with their parents in a supposed ideal home environment. But these children's fate is not in any way different from those in the other stories. They make a child completely of snow and their father does not admit it as true. Do the children believe the snow image is a real child or not? If they are pretending to believe that the snow image is real, do they know its limits? Their mother tries to convince the father not to take the snow image inside. Is she completely childish or is she simply influenced by her children's imagination? The father is said to be a common-sense man. Is he a materialist or does he pretend to believe that the snow image is real in order to punish his children?

1.2 - Review of Prior Criticism

The selected criticism I will present in this chapter relates to the order of priority of the works I will analyze later on. This priority, however, is not connected with the degree of importance of the stories, but rather with the "Puritan" principles each one depicts.

Now let us consider the critical views of Pearl in The Scarlet Letter. Some critics have a "Puritan" view of her as representing original sin, others, I shall call the "anti-Puritans," view her as an illegitimate child with a symbolic meaning, and some others see her as transcendental in the sense that she exceeds the limits of nature; romantic, in that she is devoid of evil principles; and realistic because she can escape the "Puritan" circle in which she lived. But among them, critics such as Julian Hawthorne is inconsistent because of the mutually contradictory views he takes by espousing both "Puritan" and "transcendental" interpretations of Pearl. He illustrates his conservative view when he states: "standing as the incarnation, instead of the victim, of a sin, Pearl affords a unique opportunity for throwing light upon the inner nature of the sin itself."[1] This is to say that Pearl is the embodiment of the Scarlet Letter and as such she tries to fulfil her mission--to be always reminding us of her mother's sin. Thus the critic tries to support the title he gave to his article by affirming that "the principle of her being is the freedom of a broken law."[2] So Pearl is the result of her mother's sin, and consequently was born poisonous. However, Julian Hawthorne contradicts himself later on stating that "like nature and animals, she is anterior to moral law, but unlike them, she is human too."[3] This time the critic holds that Pearl is natural like animals but at the same time she is human. At this point

he shows the liberal side of his interpretation of Pearl, for he connects her with nature, suggesting her being freed from moral principles. We notice the critic's inconsistency when he returns to his conservative line of thought commenting on Pearl's relationship with her mother, especially with reference to the scarlet badge. Pearl seemed to understand the significance of the letter by a "peculiar smile and an odd expression of the eyes." This kind of mocking behavior led her mother to think that she had brought a fiend into the world. This way Pearl could be called poisonous, but not natural or human, for she is playing the role of an imp, destroying Hester's short moments of peace. Julian Hawthorne then points out Pearl's depravity:

> The plan of her nature, though possibly possessing an order of its own, was incompatible with the scheme of the nest of the universe; the child could never, apparently, come into harmony with her surroundings unless the ruling destiny should, from divine, become diabolic.[4]

Here too he views Pearl as someone evil who could only live in a world that was also evil. If it were the opposite, that is, if the world were good, there would be no possibility for her adaptation to the environment, which is exactly what happens at the beginning of her life. He goes on by saying that:

> Pearl is like a beautiful but poisonous flower, rejoicing in its poison, and receiving it as the vital element of life. But the beauty makes the ugliness the more impressive. . . . It is the beauty which sin wears to the tempted--a beauty therefore, which has no real existence.[5]

Thus compared to a flower whose beauty is illusory, Julian Hawthorne consigns Pearl again to the evil category. Here she not only is herself evil, but tempts other people to fall into evil as well. In the story she does not tempt Hester because Hester has already sinned, but we could think that she tempts Dimmesdale to confess his sin, or rather, to admit her paternity, for

more than once she asks him to stay with her and Hester on the scaffold and he postpones this admission of her plan.

There is another point to which Julian Hawthorne calls our attention. He says that Pearl being a child, "she has not, as yet, what can in strictness be termed a character; she is without experience, and therefore devoid of either good or evil principles; she possesses a nature, and nothing more."[6] Here the author contradicts everything he stated before. He says she is amoral rather than evil or immoral. At the end of his article he concludes:

> . . . and the evil which came to her by inheritance would so have tinged and molded her natural traits that we should inevitably draw in the poison and the perfume at a single-breath, --ascribe to evil the charm which it derives from good, and pollute good with the lurid hues of evil.[7]

As if confirming his inconsistency in this statement, Julian Hawthorne returns to the Puritan interpretation of Pearl. This Puritan view generally finds nature and the natural child corrupt until redeemed by a grace that is outside nature. Julian Hawthorne simultaneously tries to reinforce the belief that this child is poisonous and to assert a contrary line of interpretation in which he divorces Pearl from both good and evil principles.

Next I want to discuss a group of "anti-Puritan" critics who see Pearl as a natural and vital force, and compare her to a bird, a flower, or a ray of sunlight. In his article "Hawthorne: A Critical Study," Hyatt Howe Waggoner bases his argument on the principle that Hawthorne created Pearl's character from his experience with a living person, his daughter Una. So Waggoner regards Pearl's behavior as being that of a normal child who, besides being beautiful, has her natural moments either of delight or of anger. He affirms that "she can reach

the patches of sunlight in moral neutrality as well as in brightness."[8] This is to say that Pearl identifies herself with natural things, as in the forest where she mirrors herself in the brook, puts some wild flowers around her head, plays with the ray of sunlight in such a natural way that it justifies Waggoner's anti-Puritan interpretation.

Randall Stewart in "Puritan Humanism Versus Romantic Naturalism," also sees Pearl as a natural and vital force and not as evil. So he illustrates her natural innocence in the forest: "for here little Pearl becomes a child of nature (in the romantic sense) and is recognized as such by the creatures of the forest."[9] He observes the analogy between the child and this setting, for Pearl is as natural as the forest, assuming all the natural attributes conferred upon it. However, he sets up Pearl not only as an innocent child of nature, but also as an agent of retribution because of her insisting that "Hester replace the scarlet letter on her dress after having cast it aside."[10] Here she moves from innocence to consciousness of her mother's sin which she seems to have comprehended.

In "Pearl as Regnerative Symbol," Darrel Abel takes a more conservative position. He states that Pearl is the embodiment of original sin, but observes that this sin has a regenerative effect: "Pearl, thus stands as a regenerative symbol--a phenomenal resurgence among the sullied members of adult society of the power of goodness which men can obscure but not extinguish in themselves."[11] He regards her as the embodiment of original sin, yet this fact still has a good effect for him. Her regenerative symbolism, he says, makes its appearance in two ways: it is both reincarnative and talismanic. In the reincarnative way "she is a reincarnation of the best human possibilities which, imperfectly realized in past generations, are

once more offered opportunity for a better realization in this germ and blossom of womanhood."[12] Darrel Abel's point of view is that original sin is embodied in Pearl with the task of improving past generations' imperfections. The critic regards this regenerative function as intrinsically more significant than the talismanic one:

> As a talismanic symbol, Pearl offers instinctive affiance to whatever is good in the persons around her--a trait which vividly reminds adults of the power of goodness still present in themselves, however obscured by the debasing practices of the world.[13]

It is another way of saying that Pearl is herself good and by means of this goodness she acts as a regenerative symbol.

Among the Puritan-leaning critics here mentioned there is Richard Harter Fogle who, in the article "Hawthorne's Fiction: The Light and the Dark," affirms that Pearl is "the living emblem of sin, a human embodiment of the scarlet letter."[14] He believes that it is her mission to keep Hester aware of her sin and prevent her from escaping the moral consequences of a broken law. In a way he agrees with Darrel Abel--Pearl is the embodiment of the scarlet letter--but he does not see her as a regenerative symbol. He says Pearl's speeches and actions are related to her mission, for when Hester throws away the letter in the forest, for example, she compels her to take it again by means of an uncontrollable rage. Therefore Fogle argues that Pearl's behavior is normal for a child who lives in circumstances similar to that in which she lives: "no single action of hers is ever incredible or inconsistent with the conceivable actions of any child under the same conditions."[15]

W. C. Brownell in "American Prose Masters" thoroughly agrees with Fogle's position that Pearl is the embodiment of her mother's sin as well as "the perverse incarnation of the

moral."[16] He says that her individuality is proposed by Hawthorne with so much of natural and artistic logic that her symbolism is "as incidental in appearance as it is seen to be inherent on reflection."[17]

Sydney Howard White, in his evaluation of Pearl, comments in A Simplified Approach to Hawthorne: The Scarlet Letter that up to a point, whatever is symbolic in her is due almost exclusively to the imaginations of Hester and the minister. He illustrates his thought by quoting Hester's words: "Her nature appeared to possess depth too, as well as variety; but--or else Hester's fears deceived her--it lacked reference and adaptation to the world in which she was born."[18] The critic leaves to Hester the apprehensions and doubts in order to astonish the reader with a mixture of opinions about Pearl: his, Hester's and that of the community. Thus Pearl's character is always regarded by the reader as uncertain. She is described as representing worry to Hester because she believes that Pearl understands the reason why Hester wears the scarlet letter. She is also described by the community as possessed by the forces of sin and so her child-enemies were a visionary throng created by her. This way Pearl stands as a static symbol for the community in the course of the book, yet appears realistic and changing to Hester, who evaluates her through her actions, especially at the end of the book. In the scene of Dimmesdale's confession, Pearl is presented both as a person and as a symbol. Now together with the others she feels a great sympathy for the minister in anguish and kisses the dying man. This action of hers is contrasted with that in the forest scene where she rejects the minister's kiss by washing her face in the brook.

At the end of the book Pearl leaves her mother's company. Michael T. Gilmore in The Middle Way: Puritanism and Ideology

in American Romantic Fiction comments on the Puritan sense of reality, relating it to Pearl's leaving Boston to settle abroad, "eventually to become the wife of an European nobleman."[19] He states that Pearl's flight is not like the one planned by Hester and Dimmesdale in the forest. Pearl does not break her ties to the past, instead she keeps them alive "by sending gifts and other tokens of a continual remembrance to her mother." Because of this, the critic continues, it would be a mistake to argue that "the effect of Pearl's departure is to belittle the Puritan sense of reality."[20]

In "Pearl and the Puritan Heritage," Chester E. Eisinger, like Gilmore, believes that Pearl is to be understood with reference to the Puritan theories of nature and liberty. Her life is a consequence, "virtually beyond the reach of divine salvation and is completely outside human society."[21] Eisinger thinks that holding the Puritan belief that each individual soul is precious, Hawthorne frees Pearl from her subjection to nature, provides her a place in human society, and transforms her into a consciously human creature. And this is possible by means of Dimmesdale's final revelation, recognizing her as his daughter. Before this event she was unable to obey civil and divine law. She can do so now if she wills to.

"The Gentle Boy" is analyzed by Agnes McNeill Donohue in "Hawthorne's Revision of the Gentle Boy." She tries to show how Hawthorne establishes his point of view through a perilous balance between Puritans and Quakers. The Quakers, Hawthorne says, are self-castigating. He points up their "deliberate choice of Massachusetts Bay as a most eligible place to invite martyrdom."[22] These feelings drive them into a thorough fanaticism for their religion. On the other hand, the Puritans' reaction to the Quakers is in the form of torture. And whenever Hawthorne speaks of the Puritan devices for physical and

mental torture it is with fascinated horror. He says that "the Puritans' justice was not abstract and its concrete manifestations were hardly moderate."[23] In the tale the Quakers are represented by Tobias and Dorothy Pearson. Tobias has found the Quaker child, Ilbrahim, sadly standing on his executed father's grave. So he takes Ilbrahim home and together with his wife decides to accept him as their own. But, in Donohue's opinion, the Pearsons "are in no way representatives of the Puritans in the tale; in fact, they are to be victims, not the perpetrators, of the "cold sect's persecutions."[24] By accepting a Quaker at home they are in a way rejecting their own religion because the people in the meeting-house disapprove of those "two parents linked together by the infant of their love."[25] However, it was not the Puritans of the meeting-house who offend Ilbrahim. It was the children of the Puritans who most hate him for "one day, completely trusting, Ilbrahim approaches a group of Puritan boys. But with the 'devil of their fathers' in their hearts the children attack him mercilessly."[26] This seems to illustrate the idea that these children possess an evil inheritance from their ancestors. Ilbrahim is deeply affected both physically and spiritually. As Donohue points out in her article, "the Puritan force in its most elemental state--the children--has done its work."[27] So a child is repelled by children of his own age the same way the Puritan adults rejected Ilbrahim's father before and continue to reject the couple who take care of the boy. They felt themselves holier than any other people just because they were Puritan:

> The feeling of the neighboring people, in regard to the Quaker infant and his protectors, had not undergone a favorable change . . . the scorn and bitterness, of which he was the object, were grievous to Ilbrahim, especially when any circumstance made him sensible, that the children, his equals in age, partook of the enmity of their parents.[28]

As for Tobias, he feels tortured as he understands his supposed son is going to die: "It is heavy! It is heavier than I can bear!"[29] says Tobias in despair. His later conversion "was not toward the dogma of the Quakers but away from the cruel inhumanity of the Puritans."[30] In the critic's opinion, the tragedy of Ilbrahim provokes the tragedy of Tobias. The tale, in brief, focuses the tragedy of an innocent child and a Christian adult caught up by a particular manifestation of evil of which the historical act of persecution is a sad reflection.

"The Artist of the Beautiful" shows us Owen Warland, the artist. He is a watchmaker who tries to incorporate the pure idea of the beautiful through an invention he himself created: an artificial butterfly strangely endowed by his imagination with a mysterious life of its own. In Richard H. Fogle's opinion, expressed in Hawthorne's Fiction: The Light and the Dark, Warland struggles against society that always misunderstands and condemns his purposes. This society is represented by three friendly enemies: Peter Hovenden, his old master; Hovenden's daughter, Annie, whom Warland loves; and Robert Danforth, a blacksmith with whom Annie gets married. In fact, the worst of the three was Hovenden, with whom Warland was always in conflict: "Owen never met this man without a shrinking of the heart"[31] because he often tried to take out Warland from his disinterested search for the beautiful. Hovenden thought society assumed a criterion of utility and self-interest whose value, in Hovenden's opinion, was not grasped by Warland. This was due to Warland's artistic idealism which contrasted with society's materialism.

After so many struggles against Hovenden's idea and his own, Warland enters a decline in which he temporarily loses his faith in the invisible, maybe in consequence of losing Annie to the vulgar Danforth. But later on he is able to become once more a being of thought, imagination, and keenest sensibility.

By the end of "The Artist of the Beautiful," there is a confrontation between the imaginative Warland and the materialistic society embodied in the figures of Hovenden, Annie, Danforth and the baby-child. Warland, happy at having succeeded with his invention, brings the marvellous butterfly as a gift to Annie. The mechanical creation becomes a living thing. This insect, inexplicably alive, "flutters from one person to another at the command of the artist."[32] Hovenden makes clear his enmity by his mocking disbelief: "I shall understand it better when once I have touched it."[33] But the butterfly, like Warland himself, is not at ease with Hovenden's presence and at his touch it loses animation. R. Fogle suggests that Warland and the butterfly are very much alike. They are too sensitive. So when Annie realizes the antipathy between the artist's contrivance and her father, she changes the course of the butterfly towards her child. This baby is ultimately, however, its worst enemy, for he is the incarnation of the spirit of his grandfather. Warland "was disturbed by the child's look, as imagining a resemblance between it and Peter Hovenden's habitual expression."[34] It does not surprise Warland when the baby, with his grandfather's sharp and shrewd expression in his face, suddenly captures the butterfly and crushes it into his hands. This child here indeed does not represent so much natural innocence or Puritan conditioning or innate depravity as the simple antipathy between the "healthy" practical world and the "sick" but sensitive world of the art spirit.

Donald A. Ringe, in "Hawthorne's Psychology of the Head and Heart," exemplifies Owen Warland as one of Hawthorne's artists who must live isolated from society in order to achieve his artistic ideal. Ringe states that this isolation is not easily accepted by Warland, for he is a "creature of both head and heart," and as such the pursuit of the beautiful is balancing

between these two points. Warland's love for Annie, representing his heart, is always in conflict with the idealism which represents his head. He tries to harmonize these two, but does not succeed. He sinks twice in this struggle for sentimental reasons, although both times he recovers because the ideal of beauty remains stronger in him than he could perceive.

Although temporarily losing his faith in the ideal to become like the people of the business world, Warland recovers his spiritual insight and again isolates himself from the mass of humanity. It is only this way, says Ringe, that Warland is "not only apart from but also in advance of mankind."[35] And because of this, Warland is not crushed like his butterfly was when Annie's child destroys it. Isolated from society, he had triumphed over it and had achieved the spiritual sublimity of his art.

1.3 - Statement of Purpose

As I have said, the purpose of this thesis is to examine Hawthorne's attitude towards Puritanism through the way he treats the theme of the child. From the body of his novels and short stories I will select the four which explicitly deal with children and the way they live, particularly in connection with Puritanism. These works are: The Scarlet Letter, "The Gentle Boy," "The Artist of the Beautiful" and "The Snow Image." In the first two works, Hawthorne is examining the child against the background of Puritanism, but in the third work this background seems less applicable because children are examined in the light of a later society and of another problem: art against material life. The fourth work, although dealing with Puritan principles, differs in that the children are put in an ideal home environment. However, children cannot escape from being oppressed.

In order to define Hawthorne's position in relation to these children, I shall take into consideration the varied opinions of critics. These critics, as I have previously stated, can be roughly divided into two categories: Puritan and anti-Puritan. This division is germane to my argument. The term "Puritan" here is not used to define strict followers of Calvinism. I will call "Puritan" those critics who are "conservative" to the point of regarding Hawthorne as committed to Puritan ideas of morality. They see Hawthorne as one who believes in the notion of original sin and sees children as its representatives. By "anti-Puritan," I mean those critics who see Hawthorne as more liberal, more transcendental, or even more "romantic" than the prior group. This group sees the children as devoid of any evil principles. These critics regard them as the constructive and innocent force of nature.

In relation to these extreme points of view, my position might be called "environmental." It mediates between Puritan determinism, which allows no escape by the individual from universal Calvinistic laws, and transcendental optimism that sees the individual free, self-reliant and able to act outside the community. Combining both views, my environmental position admits that the children are destructive. But, in fact, this is not because they represent original sin or because they inherit genetic evil, but is a consequence of the community where they live. This position is supported by critics such as Richard Fogle, who says, for example, that Pearl, in The Scarlet Letter, behaves in response to the environment in which she is obliged to live: "no single action of hers is ever incredible or inconsistent with the conceivable actions of any child under the same conditions."[36] In relation to "The Gentle Boy," Agnes McNeill Donohue presents the argument that the attack made by the Puritan boys on the Quaker child was due to the fact that their

hearts were full of "the devil of their fathers." So these children's action was a result of the environment which has trained them. They were acting as Puritans against a Quaker. Applied to Pearl, Hawthorne's "major" child, and to his "gentle boy," my view will stress the fact that children act as they do because even as outsiders they are products of their Puritan community. The influence of this community is therefore not as inflexible as a theological principle would be, since escape is possible, at least in The Scarlet Letter and in "The Artist of the Beautiful," from the "closed" circle of Puritanism. I will tend to see Hawthorne neither as a determinist who believes in the original sin of children nor as a romantic child-worshipper, but as a kind of proto-anthropologist who views them as a product of both nature and of social environment, and as determined by neither factor solely.

The inapplicability of this pattern to "The Artist of the Beautiful" I take as additional proof that Hawthorne was not a moralist invariably concerned with examining Calvinistic principles, but often an artist of his time examining the nature of his art. As a matter of fact, when I say that my view is "environmental," I am not saying that I or Hawthorne are simply scientific determinists, since I will show that Pearl and Warland do have the ability finally to get free of a "closed" Puritan ethic community. My approach is environmental in that I am examining the connection of individual and community which usually (but not invariably) conditions behavior.

"The Snow Image" presents children in a right home environment. They live together with their parents who apparently are worried about their children's welfare. But the "materialism" with which the father is involved puts an end to the children's fantasy of having a playmate made of snow as their companion for the whole winter. So this tale, although set in

a home environment different from those in the other works, repeats the oppression children usually suffer from Puritan society.

The inapplicability of this pattern to "The Artist of the Beautiful" I take as additional proof that Hawthorne was not a moralist invariably concerned with examining Calvinistic principles, but often an artist of his time examining the nature of his art. As a matter of fact, when I say that my view is "environmental," I am not saying that I or Hawthorne are simply scientific determinists, since I will show that Pearl and Warland do have the ability finally to get free of a "closed" Puritan ethic community. My approach is environmental in that I am examining the connection of individual and community which usually (but not invariably) conditions behavior.

Summing up the criticism of Pearl's character, I have come to the conclusion that this child lives in an environment not the best for her. Pearl is alone with her mother and lacks a father and consequently a normal family environment. This is a major reason why she early shows symptoms of strange or nervous behavior. Because of this, sometimes she is believable as a human child, whereas at other times she is not. Her strangeness is characterized by her speaking, acting and thinking like an elf. But as the story progresses and Pearl's actions too, there occurs a progressive change from strangeness to humanity--a response to the new environment in which she was put. This is the opinion of Chester E. Eisinger when he affirms that "It is through Dimmesdale's expiation that Pearl becomes a human being. Her fate as a woman in this life lies in her father's hands."[37]

The criticism concerning Ilbrahim and Tobias in "The Gentle Boy" ironically reveals that neither side triumphs, but the child's heart is broken. The physical violence Ilbrahim watched

on the occasion of his father's hanging, and the brutal attack made on him by the children affect him deeply. He feels betrayed and refuses to fight back. Although physically recovered, he is spiritually broken and waits for death. In his defenselessness and submission he becomes a little martyr faithful to Quakerism.

In "The Artist of the Beautiful," Hawthorne shows the artist giving up practical life and becoming opposed to family matters. The question is whether art grows out of nature or has a platonic origin beyond it. The child in this tale, still a baby, is seen as a symbol of the crude vitality of the material and biological world: here the child seems to contradict both the concerns of art and Puritan spirituality as well. Another aspect in the criticism of this tale reinforces Hawthorne's belief that everyone who tries to live out of reality in the pursuit of the ideal "be it philosophical or artistic truth," must be subjected to isolation. Though Warland is tempted to conform to the business-ethic around him, like Pearl, he at last succeeds in breaking out of the circle of the closed community.

The children's imagination in "The Snow Image" is similar to Owen Warland's, since they believe the object they have created has a life of its own. The fear Violet and Peony feel from their father is the same Warland felt from his old master. These two different persons, presuming upon their materialism, take advantage of it, oppressing those who were submissive to them.

NOTES

[1]Julian Hawthorne, "Problems of The Scarlet Letter," Atlantic Monthly, LVII (April, 1886), p. 475.

[2]Ibid., p. 475.

[3]Ibid., p. 475.

[4]Ibid., p. 476.

[5]Ibid., p. 476.

[6]Ibid., p. 476.

[7]Ibid., p. 477.

[8]Hyatt Howe Waggoner, "Hawthorne: A Critical Study" cited by Howard White in A Simplified Approach to Hawthorne: The Scarlet Letter (New York: Woodbury, Barron's Educational Series, 1967), p. 103.

[9]Randall Stewart, "Puritan Humanism Versus Romantic Naturalism," cited by Sculley Bradley et al. in Nathaniel Hawthorne: The Scarlet Letter--An Annotated Text Backgrounds and Sources Essays in Criticism (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1961), p. 34.

[10]Ibid., p. 34

[11]Darrel Abel, "Pearl as Regenerative Symbol" cited by Seymour L. Gross in A Scarlet Letter Handbook (San Francisco: Wadsworth, 1960), p. 91.

[12]Ibid., p. 91.

[13]Ibid., p. 91.

[14]Richard Harter Fogle, "Hawthorne's Fiction: The Light and the Dark," cited by Sidney H. White in A Simplified Approach to Hawthorne: The Scarlet Letter, p. 99.

[15]Ibid., p. 100.

[16]W. C. Brownell, "American Prose Masters," cited by Sidney H. White in A Simplified Approach, p. 94.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Norman Holmes Pearson, ed., The Complete Novels and Selected Tales of Nathaniel Hawthorne (New York: The Modern Library, 1937), p. 137.

[19]Michael T. Gilmore, The Middle Way: Puritanism and Ideology in American Romantic Fiction (New Jersey: Rutgers, 1977), p. 110.

[20]Ibid., pp. 110-11.

[21]Chester E. Eisinger, "Pearl and the Puritan Heritage," College English, XII (March, 1951), p. 323.

[22]Agnes McNeill Donohue, "Hawthorne's Revision of The Gentle Boy," cited in Casebook on the Hawthorne Question (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1963), p. 147.

[23]Ibid., p. 148.

[24]Ibid., p. 150.

[25]Ibid., p. 152.

[26]Ibid., pp. 154-55.

[27]Ibid., p. 155.

[28]Pearson, The Complete Novels, p. 903.

[29]Donohue, Casebook on the Hawthorne Question, p. 156.

[30]Ibid., p. 156.

[31]Richard Harter Fogle, Hawthorne's Fiction: The Light and the Dark (University of Oklahoma Press, 1952, 1964), p. 74.

[32]Ibid., p. 74.

[33]Ibid., p. 74.

[34]Ibid., p. 75.

[35]Donald A. Ringe, "Hawthorne's Psychology of the Head and Heart," Publications of the Modern Language Association, LXV (March, 1950), p. 122.

[36]Fogle, op. cit., p. 100.

[37]Eisinger, op. cit., p. 328.

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND

This chapter will be a general account of the problem of Nathaniel Hawthorne's relation to his Puritan background. I want to make it clear, however, that my main interest here is Hawthorne's concern with children, how he treats them in his fiction, for this is the "angle" from which I intend to approach the question of his own Puritanism.

The Puritanism used by Nathaniel Hawthorne as a setting and frame for his fiction was a religious movement that originated near the end of the sixteenth century. People who followed this belief were called Puritans because of their desire to purify their religion of the formal ceremonies practiced in the Church of England. They wanted freedom to follow their consciences in matters of religious observance and conduct of life. Their beliefs were based essentially on the Calvinist theology whose chief points were the absolute sovereignty of God, predestination, natural depravity, and the belief that God is revealed in the Bible. Using these ideas, the Puritans intended to establish an ideal commonwealth in America with colonists who presumably regarded God as extremely merciful: "A God who condescends to treat with fallen man as equal is indeed kindly and solicitous."[1]

The Puritans believed in a covenant made between God and men, the Covenant of Grace, a concession made by God to the children of Adam. It was known that when Adam sinned, all mankind sinned with him, but God with a great complacency had

chosen some to be gifted in heaven and others to be damned in hell. It was "a division of the elect and damned that ran throughout mankind."[2] This division is focused in The Scarlet Letter, where the community, feeling superior as if it were the elect, expresses its antipathy to Hester Prynne, for she has sinned, and also to Hester's daughter, Pearl, who, in the community's opinion, inherited the evil practiced by her mother. So it is by way of this child in the novel that Hawthorne tries to show some of the Puritan implications which serve as a means of labelling Pearl as "damned." This feeling of superiority the Puritan community used to experience is present in "The Gentle Boy" too. Here the Puritans, adults and children, feel holier than Ilbrahim, the Quaker boy, but mainly the children, through a striking violent physical attack, demonstrate their animosity against the boy, thus reinforcing their supposed holier condition.

The Puritans were sure of God's reward, although they were not certain who was going to be blessed by his grace. They thought that the signal given to those elect could only be felt in their souls. Because of this they conditioned themselves to a strict behavior, guiding their lives so that just what was known as right could be practiced. They had such a hard life in this sense that they "denounced 'novelty' as sin."[3] This preoccupation has been explored in Hawthorne's short story "The Artist of the Beautiful," where Owen Warland is seen by people as weak and ingenuous and even unable to invent anything new. But Warland did not give up his idea because there was a spiritual element in him which made him look for novelty in his art:

> . . . my purposes, my passion for the beautiful, my consciousness of power to create it, --a finer, more ethereal power . . .[4]

The same way Warland felt something different in his inner

self that made him achieve the beautiful, the Puritans also felt a strangeness in their souls, like a divine sign, that lifted them above that natural depravity. This feeling was God's grace in itself and not the result of any good work or behavior performed by them:

> The Calling of men doth not in any sort depend upon the dignity, honesty, industry, or any endeavor of the called, but upon election and predestination of God only.[5]

However, believing that their principles had salvation as their main aim, Puritans went continuously to church because sermons and services, they believed, could awaken them to the conviction of God's grace upon them.

The other covenant important to the Puritans was the Covenant of Works, which dealt with their deeds and duties. They had to obey moral law and later they were rewarded with salvation. It is said that God made this pact as soon as He created man:

> He proposed that if Adam would perform certain things, Adam and his posterity should be rewarded with eternal life, and He laid down the specific conditions in the moral law, which He implanted in Adam's heart.[6]

In order to gain glorification, the Puritans established a system of morality which had to be clearly performed through complete self-abnegation:

> This system of morality was one of the most durable contributions the middle-class Puritans made to the culture of the civilization they founded.[7]

Thus moral law was for them a requisite for sanctification as much as faith was. Because of this, perhaps, there was an emergent individualism:

> . . . Individualism had considerable play, for it was through self-expression that the believer achieved the identity that qualified him for membership and marked

him as different from those who remained in the world.[8]

This emphasis upon self-expression explains the emergent compulsion towards individualism, for it was through it that one achieved one's self reliance.

Puritan theology held that the relation between man and God was that of a group which agreed to a pact and assumed its duties:

> The aim of the theologians was writ large in their version of the doctrine of original sin. Traditional piety, following the teaching of Augustine and re-instructed by Calvin, held that the depravity of Adam was communicated to his descendents as an inherited taint.[9]

This is also true for Hawthorne, who seems to have felt that there is evil in every human heart and that sin is naturally implicit in man. We clearly notice these ideas in his short story "The Birthmark." Here, Aylmer points out that sin is naturally implicit in the mark his wife has on her cheek. So, in his opinion, she was a sinner by birth. He suggests the mark has to be taken out and his wife accepts his will. This pact between husband and wife worked as a covenant in which one had power over the other's obedience. Although Georgiana's obedience was voluntary in the same sense that the pact between man and God was, there was a difference because men achieved a reward from God, whereas Georgiana had nothing in exchange but death.

Puritans especially emphasized the doctrine of original sin and innate depravity. Even starting from the belief that "In Adam's fall we sinned all," one may observe that Adam's children, however, possessed the freedom of choice between good and evil. Indeed, nothing in man's personal power could atenuate the original sinfulness of his nature. The redemption of the individual then came only by regeneration, the work of the

spirit of God in man's soul:

> A being who brought such a destiny upon himself could hardly expect to find within himself the power to master it. The force of their conclusion gave the Puritan cry for deliverance through the grace of God its urgency and its poignance.[10]

This whole Puritan preoccupation with original sin is contrasted with the transcendentalists' as it appears in Emerson in order to show that he was not unaware of the existence of evil:

> Our young people are diseased with the theological problems of original sin, original evil, predestination and the like.[11]

But Emerson's consciousness of evil differed from the Puritans' in that he saw no problem for men since men could, in his opinion, easily transcend sin. Emerson declares:

> These never presented a practical difficulty to any man, --never darkened across any man's road who did not go out of his way to seek them. These are the soul's mumps and measles.[12]

He regards sin as normal in the life of an individual and says that "the terrors of sin have lost their force."[13]

Puritan Ethic had to do with economy, morality and all the traditional standards of life. Puritan culture took education seriously. "They followed in high degree the practice of putting their children to be governed in other families."[14] Puritans did so because they feared spoiling the children by too great affection. Edmund Morgan says that this practice existed in sixteenth-century England, where it was justified under the belief that a child learned better manners outside his home, and he concludes that "the Puritans in continuing the practice probably had the same end in view."[15] One could observe, therefore, that this practice fitted well with the Puritan view

of life, since they held that affections should be weaned. As an example, we have Richard Mather who,

> detecting the gratifying brilliance of his son Increase, deemed it wise that Increase be removed from the dangers of parental indulgence and placed him in another town under the guidance of John Norton.[16]

Since the seat of authority was the community, it was better assured if children were ruled by others rather than their own parents. Children were placed,

> out in other homes for training so that natural affection would neither corrupt their upbringing nor compromise the righteousness of their parents.[17]

There were, however, some interesting attempts to relate education to the needs of the time. One of them was the fact that the Puritan's ideal was intended to be true for their descendants too. So in 1559, Calvin founded his famous Academy. "Later he inaugurated an educational system for all boys that eventually sent out ministers and scholars to carry his ideas throughout Europe and to America."[18] The Puritans wanted their children to provide continuity to their life and therefore their institutions:

> But churches and nations do not die, or must not be allowed to; obligations accepted by one generation must be passed on to the next.[19]

They worked so hard because they believed they were insuring that Puritanism would not end as their generation passed. For this reason "Later generations were fed again and again from the devotional works the Puritans produced."[20] So they intended to be a living belief in the next generation, taken as an example of faith since they agreed with Thomas Hooker and Cotton Mather: "If God plant his Ordinances among you, feare not, he will maintain them."[24] Thus it was their aim to train children

so that they could make Puritanism endure: "Children must be inserted like replacements in a regiment, the cadre must be kept up to strength."[22] This implied the belief that by means of this kind of religious education their children would continue their faith. Schools were prime factors in inculcating their Protestant views. So the Puritan heritage "was stamped deep in the characters of the New Englanders and with the great migration westward."[23]

In contrast with this strict Puritan education, which is rigorous and primitive, we have Rousseau's philosophy about the matter. He believed in the superiority of the "noble savage" to civilized men. His view of education protested the need for a return to nature. For this reason he was "little inclined by nature to any but the emotional side of religion and utterly undisciplined in any other by education."[24] So he suggested that "the nature of the child should determine the means of education."[25] The child, he believed, should be allowed to express itself because its nature is pure. In his thought we find the beginnings of later theories of progressive education which transcendentalism found compatible with its picture of man.

The Puritans were sure that only their children were blessed by God, for they were born from true religious parents, therefore, ". . . baptism was bestowed, not on all children, but exclusively upon those whose parents had been professing Christians."[26] They did not allow baptism for children who were not familiar with their beliefs as stated:

> We do not believe Baptism doth make men Members of the Church, nor that it is to be Administered to them that are without the Church, as the way and meanes to bring them in, but to them that are within the Church, as a seale to confirme the Covenant of God unto them.[27]

This was a kind of confirmation to the theory of predestination which Puritans so far maintained and Hawthorne often treated in his works. We find in Hawthorne's "The Gentle Boy" an example of this theory. In the story there is a child who is not accepted by the Puritan community because he is a Quaker descendant. Quakerism was a form of religion that Puritans distrusted. There was,,then, a rejection both of the Puritan community and the children of the community as well. Here we see that the children were educated for the same purpose as their parents:

> The feelings of the neighboring people, in regard to the Quaker infant . . . had not undergone a favorable change. . . . The scorn and bitterness, of which he was the object, were very grievous to Ilbrahim, especially when any circumstances made him sensible, that the children his equals in age, partook of the enmity of their parents.[28]

The presence of a stranger in their community was not permitted, in the sense that baptism of non-Puritan children was forbidden within the community. Puritans felt themselves holier than any other people and, to a certain extent, this is implicit in the event in which the children themselves seek vengeance upon the Quaker boy. Strictly speaking, these children are not sinners, but they are subject to evil inheritance and predestination.

However, as Perry Miller states:

> Puritanism failed to hold later generations largely because their children were unable to face reality as unflinchingly as their forefathers.[29]

It seems that the reality to which Perry Miller refers is that the children of the Puritans did not follow their parents' principles through the years--for besides religion, Puritans strictly respected morality. For this reason, maybe, their

children refused to be faithful to them and to continue preserving their harsh beliefs.

The whole style of living of the Puritans led them to colonization earlier than they expected. Their establishment gained power in the century following the Reformation, which extended from the first years of the reign of Elizabeth I to 1660. Their settlement was the result of their ordered life, combined with a great deal of morality and a desire to unite church and state into a just way of life:

> The area of intersection between church and state, and therefore the area into which the state first entered in assuming total control, was that of individual responsibility for behavior. . . . The state needs good citizens and the state, therefore, is anxious to improve upon beliefs that maintain that civic behavior and piety are just but identical.[30]

Maybe this is the reason why the Puritans were a group of people that worked and prayed together for the same ideal and increasingly confined themselves, becoming an isolated community. They believed their communal efforts would be compensation for their work. But in everything they did, they had in mind their religious duty of praising God's will at a higher level of priority than theirs. But they were involved in a controversy. On one hand the Puritans thought they were right and supported this concept by doing good, practicing their religion piously. On the other hand, attracted by economy and trade, they were compelled to follow their reason instead of their piety. Because of this, perhaps, they began to worry, for they regarded this change as sin, the most stubborn fact of human existence:

> "Sin" was in effect a way of setting forth disharmony, of describing man's inability to live decently, his cruelties and his crimes, and also a way of accounting for the accidents, the diseases, and the sorrows which every day befell the good and the bad.[31]

Thus sin was what caused a separation between God and the soul. This separation was terrible for them, for it was exactly the opposite to their intention--the union and communion with God.

> For, looke what the Soule is to the body, the same is the Grace of Gods Spirit to the Soule. When the Soule is deprived of Gods Spirit, there followes a senselesse stupidnesse upon the heart of a man.[32]

So Puritans saw a sinner as someone removed from that good their religion could provide and, therefore, as one who must be punished. Sometimes this punishment was public, as in The Scarlet Letter and "The Gentle Boy"; and at other times punishment is only implicit as is the case of "The Birthmark," "Rappaccini's Daughter" and The Marble Faun.

Nathaniel Hawthorne's long absorption in Puritan writings is pretty clear, but it is not clear whether Hawthorne actually believed in them. Hyatt H. Waggoner affirms that "he was both and neither Puritan and Transcendentalist,"[33] and that to classify him simply as one or the other "would omit most of the distinctiveness of his position."[34] He is said to be a nineteenth century New England liberal Protestant who had no church and never expressed his religious thoughts in precise doctrines, although his family had been Unitarian. However, Hawthorne's portrayal of Puritan manners was emotionally rooted in his character:

> He was temperamentally attuned to their meanings, and he generally felt himself closer to their view of life than he did to the views of his most liberal contemporaries, who did not, he felt, take the fact of moral experience seriously.[35]

Hawthorne believed, then, that there were truths connected with Puritan faith that, when suitably translated, were still viable. Because of his involvement with Puritanism, Hawthorne's

writings are said to be gloomy. But, Evert Augustus Duyckink states in his article "Nathaniel Hawthorne" that:

> Hawthorne is not a gloomy writer--his melancholy is fanciful, capricious--his spirit of love for all things, his delight in childhood, his reverence for woman, his sympathy with nature, are constant.[36]

In order to understand his writings, it is necessary to refer to the facts of his life:

> His father died while he was a child, his mother withdrew from the world, and his sisters treated him as the most important member of the family. A very handsome, sensitive boy, much petted by them and by his aunts and uncles, and invited into solitude both by the decline of the family fortunes and by his own illness, he seems to have drifted away from normal contacts into a dreamland of stories, totally unchallenged, unaroused, knowing no equals.[37]

And Austin Warren observes that for the proper comprehension of Hawthorne, one must remember the paragraph of "The Custom House" in which the author sees himself in the same light as his ancestors see him--an idler in the world of men:

> "What is he?" murmurs one gray shadow of my forefathers to the other. "A writer of story-books! What kind of business in life, --what mode of glorifying God, or being serviceable to mankind in his day and generation, --may that be? Why, the degenerate fellow might as well have been a fiddler!"[38]

This is how Hawthorne imagined he was viewed by his Puritan ancestors. Yet he comments, "let them scorn me as they will, strong traits of their nature have intertwined themselves with mine."[39] This is to say that Hawthorne felt deeply influenced by Puritan principles. However,

> in his long and patient brooding over the spiritual phenomena of Puritan life, it is apparent, to the least critical observer, that he has imbibed a deep personal antipathy to the Puritanic ideal of character; but it is no less apparent that his intellect and imagination have been strangely fascinated by the Puritanic perception of

> Law, without being warmed by the Puritanic faith in Grace.[40]

We notice here Hawthorne's established ambiguity towards Puritanism. This position is implicit throughout his works and we find out that "he likes the Puritans for their worst enormities, and hates them only for their redeeming merits."[41] This general problem of whether Hawthorne was or was not a "Puritan" underlies my specific purpose which is concerned with his view of children.

In the context of his fiction, then, we shall see whether children appear innocent or depraved at birth, whether they are corrupted or corrected by socialization, and whether they are able to live independent of the past and the strictures of community.

NOTES

[1]Perry Miller, The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century (New York: Beacon Press, 1961), p. 381.

[2]Larzer Ziff, Puritanism in America: New Culture in a New World (New York: The Viking Press, 1974), p. 27.

[3]Miller, Seventeenth Century, pp. 365-66.

[4]Norman Holmes Pearson, The Complete Novels and Selected Tales of Nathaniel Hawthorne (New York: The Modern Library, 1937), p. 1143.

[5]Miller, Seventeenth Century, p. 368.

[6]Ibid., p. 377.

[7]Ibid., p. 377.

[8]Ziff, Puritanism, p. 78.

[9]Miller, Seventeenth Century, p. 399.

[10]Ibid., p. 25.

[11]F. O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance (Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 181.

[12]Ibid., p. 181.

[13]Ibid., p. 181.

[14]Ziff, Puritanism, p. 44.

[15]Ibid., p. 44.

[16]Ibid., p. 44.

[17]Ibid., p. 116.

[18]Encyclopedia International (New York: Grolier Incorporated, 1969), Vol. 6, p. 251.

[19]Perry Miller, The New England Mind: From Colony to Province (New York: Beacon Press, 1961), p. 82.

[20]Encyclopaedia Britannica (U.S.A.: William Benton, Publisher, 1965), Vol. 18, p. 779.

[21]Miller, Colony to Province, p. 82.

[22]Ibid., p. 82.

[23]Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 18, p. 778.

[24]Ibid., Vol. 19, pp. 584-585.

[25]Ibid., Vol. 7, p. 970.

[26]Miller, Colony to Province, p. 83.

[27]Ibid., p. 87.

[28]Pearson, Complete Novels, p. 903.

[29]Miller, Seventeenth Century, p. 37.

[30]Ziff, Puritanism, p. 71.

[31]Miller, Seventeenth Century, p. 9.

[32]Ibid., p. 23.

[33]Hyatt H. Waggoner, Hawthorne: A Critical Study (The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1955), p. 14.

[34]Ibid., pp. 13-14.

[35]Ibid., p. 15.

[36]Evert Augustus Duyckink, "Nathaniel Hawthorne," cited by Bernard Cohen in The Recognition of Nathaniel Hawthorne (The University of Michigan Press, 1969), p. 334.

[37]Martin Green, Re-Appraisals: Some Commonsense Readings in American Literature, cited by Bernard Cohen in The Recognition, p. 176.

[38]Austin Warren, Nathaniel Hawthorne--Representative Selections, cited by Bernard Cohen in The Recognition, p. 176.

[39]Ibid., p. 176.

[40]Edwin Percy Whipple, "Nathaniel Hawthorne," Atlantic Monthly, Vol. 5 (May, 1860), cited by Cohen in The Recognition, p. 619.

[41]Arthur Cleveland Coxe, "The Writings of Hawthorne," Church Review, Vol. 3 (January 1851), cited by Cohen in The Recognition, p. 335.

CHAPTER III

THE SCARLET LETTER

3.1 - The Scarlet Letter

It is my concern in this chapter to analyze The Scarlet Letter and after that to discuss Pearl, the most important child among those in Hawthorne's works, thus regarded because she plays many varying roles in the same tale.

The Scarlet Letter is, in brief, a description of the life of a woman, Hester Prynne, who, by the community's law of the seventeenth century, is condemned to wear a letter "A" always on her bosom as a punishment for having committed adultery. She has sinned and her punishment has to be endured publicly on the scaffold, in the middle of the town, under the gaze of the whole community. The partner of her sin is a minister of the church, Arthur Dimmesdale, who hides this secret for personal reasons, as he is highly respected by his congregation. Hester's husband is Roger Chillingworth, who, having wandered away from her for a time, arrives in town on the very day of Hester's judgement. But nobody in Boston knows that they are husband and wife. Chillingworth decides to revenge his failed marriage on her and forces her to hide his identity. He plans his vengeance both on Hester and Dimmesdale because he knows the love that links those two. After several years Hester rebels at the sight of Dimmesdale whose suffering she cannot bear. Thus the two sinful lovers meet in the forest and plan an escape. But Chillingworth finds their plan out and since he cannot help

avoiding their flight, he decides to accompany them. However, Dimmesdale succumbs and dies before this could happen.

Hester is rejected by society and her daughter, Pearl, the innocent result of Hester's sin, becomes her only companion and the reason for her life. Pearl is an enigmatic character who has something of the supernatural about her, something devilish. Besides that, she is the sunshine in her mother's life, although her mockery and fury often induce despair in Hester.

Nathaniel Hawthorne defines The Scarlet Letter as a romance and not as a novel. This distinction is important if we notice the kinds of material he includes. Events are based on actual life and its narrative gives form to the complexity of the experiences. The story is set in the Boston of the seventeenth century where Puritan superstition is strong. The supernatural is suggested by scenes such as that where the "A" appears in the sky and also by the possibility of the same "A" existing on Dimmesdale's breast. We also see it in the sunlight that plays with Pearl but avoids Hester; and in the descent of Chillingworth into diabolism. Hawthorne carefully introduces the improbable by attributing it to others: he says that spectators testified to the appearance of the letter, for example, or that the fact was whispered by people who looked close at it. And what is most important is that he offers the reader a natural explanation for every supernatural device.

The structure of the book can be viewed in different lights, but the most striking is the way the changes in the characters follow as a result of the action: Hester changes from indignation to acquiescence; Chillingworth from humanity to diabolism; Dimmesdale from cowardice to courage, and Pearl from a symbol to living humanity. The characters in the book play out their actions against the oppressive and somber atmosphere of Puritanism. Maybe this is the reason why Hawthorne

calls the progression of his book "the darkening close of a tale of human frailty and sorrow."[1] But almost every image of the book has its symbolic function and no scene is superfluous: the weedy grassplot in front of the prison, the distorting reflection of Hester in a breastplate where the scarlet letter appears gigantic, the little brook in the forest, the ceremonial procession of the election; every one of these examples mean more than a single reader can perceive.

The intensity of the tale comes, in a way, fron the irony of the situations. The minister hides his sin and Chillingworth hides his identity. Here irony arises from their secrecy. In the same way, it appears when Hester is confronted with Dimmesdale, the partner of her sin, and he is publicly called upon to be her spiritual guide with the task of persuading her to reveal the name of her fellow-adulterer. Pearl's childish questions too are ironically fiendish, although she never ceases to perform her symbolic function. Irony is well illustrated by her looks, speeches and actions, often in relation to the letter on her mother's bosom. Pearl is always demanding truth and she seems to be right because she finally reaches it by bringing her father and mother together in the light of the day. The story ends thus after Dimmesdale's confession of his sin which suggests Hester's release from suffering and Pearl's happiness.

3.2 - The Evil Side of Pearl

Now I want to concentrate on Pearl, the strange girl of the novel who is said to behave like an elf, an evil spirit that represents original sin. However, it is worth noting that I do not ultimately accept this idea as true. I present it here to illustrate the arguments used by conservative critics to support their "Puritan" point of view. Critics such as Darrel Abel, Richard H. Fogle and W. C. Brownell, the so-called "Puritan"

critics, see Pearl as an incarnation of original sin, the scarlet letter personified. Born as a result of a sin, Pearl seems to be sin itself:

> 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; or with an order peculiar to themselves, amidst which the point of variety and arrangement was difficult or impossible to be discovered.[2]

This inscrutability is the main cause for the attributes which make her mother think that "she lacked reference and adaptation to the world in which she was born."[3] Pearl's behavior, then, makes Hester and the community believe that Pearl is possessed by the forces of sin, as a "demon offspring," therefore hostile to the world. The Puritan community did not respect Hester or Pearl, who, being Hester's daughter, was a continuation, a repetition of her mother's error:

> She inherited her mother's gift for devising drapery and costume. As the last touch to her mermaid garb, Pearl took some eel-grass, and imitated, as best she could, on her own bosom; the decoration with which she was so familiar on her mother's. A letter, --the letter A, -- but freshly green, instead of scarlet! The child bent her chin upon her breast, and contemplated this device with strange interest; even as if the one only thing for which she had been sent into the world was to make out its hidden import.[4]

The green letter on Pearl's bosom implies the repetition of her mother's as suggested above. Thus, she keeps Hester's sin always before her eyes: ". . . the child's whole appearance, that it irresistibly and inevitably reminded the beholder of the token which Hester Prynne was doomed to wear upon her bosom."[5] The more Hester contemplates her daughter, the more she becomes aware of Pearl's likeness to the scarlet letter:

> The mother herself . . . --had carefully wrought the similitude; lavishing many hours of morbid ingenuity to

> create an analogy between the object of her affection and the emblem of her guilt and torture. But, in truth, Pearl was the one, as well as the other; and only in consequence of that identity had Hester contrived so perfectly to represent the scarlet letter in her appearance.[6]

Thus Pearl's speeches and actions, together with her clothes and looks imply relation to the letter, and it seems that she fully understands its meaning.

It is quite difficult to grasp Pearl's real character, for sometimes "in this one child there were many children,"[7] whereas, at other times transcending heaven and earth, Pearl is worthy "to be the plaything of the angels." She "mixes with Indians and mariners who are conscious that her nature is wilder than theirs."[8] Maybe this is the reason why the reverend Mr. Wilson in the Governor's house, asks Pearl whether she is "a Christian child" or "one of those naughty elfs."[9] He is completely struck by the child's answer that she "had been plucked by her mother off the bush of wild roses that grew by the prison door."[10] Pearl's responses strongly imply her wildness, thus reinforcing, to the Puritan mind, her depravity. In fact, the Puritans saw nature as evil, depraved and even immoral. However, Pearl can be compared to the rosebush, since it is as wild as Pearl is said to be. The rosebush "is a throwback to the wilderness that existed before civil society in New England,"[11] a wilderness said to be the lair of the devil. Pearl is said to be anterior to moral law. But Hawthorne may also be implying Pearl's identification with nature in the sense that it is amoral rather than immoral, here symbolized by the rosebush. Pearl's answer to Mr. Wilson is another show of perversity because she knew which answer is expected of her, but she chooses this fanciful explanation which links her with the uncultivated plant. Pearl's crying for a red rose in Governor Bellingham's garden also reinforces this identification.

Pearl is passionate and ungovernable, says Hawthorne. He believes that "the child's own nature had something wrong in it which continually betokened she had been born amiss, --the effluence of her mother's lawless passion."[12] Similarly Chillingworth affirms: "There is no law nor reverence for authority, no regard for human ordinances or opinions, right or wrong, mixed up with that child's composition."[13] And Dimmesdale comments that the only principle of her being governed is "the freedom of a broken law." These observations are possible implications that nature asserts itself in Pearl, whose wildness is the result of a "broken law."

As we can see, many passages of The Scarlet Letter reveal a tint of strangeness in Pearl's character which conservative critics label as devilish. But as F. O. Matthiessen points out, Hawthorne based his view of Pearl on his observation of his daughter Una, whose "childish perversities had given some hints for Pearl."[14] Hawthorne attributed to Pearl his daughter's "special qualities of wildness, independence and imagination."[15] He compares Una's life to Pearl's "as full sometimes of ascerbity as an unripe apple, that may be perfected to a mellow deliciousness hereafter,"[16] for he remembers that Pearl "possessed affections too, though hitherto acrid and disagreeable, as are the richest flavors of unripe fruit."[17] At any rate, Pearl is Hawthorne's most interesting character in the book because she is spontaneous and contradicting.

The community's adverse view of Pearl seems to make sense since she is unable to find friends even with children of her own age. This is probably because "Pearl was a born outcast of the infantile world . . . she had no right among christened infants."[18] The community rejects Pearl because her behavior is contrary to that of normal people. The fact that the community believes in Pearl's strangeness makes its authorities

try to take her away from her mother in order to give her the appropriate education which, in their opinion, Pearl could not have at Hester's side. But they did not succeed and Pearl continued to be Hester's only companion. In relation to the children of the community, Pearl rejects them the same way they reject her and her mother:

> If the children gathered about her, as they sometimes did, Pearl would grow positively terrible in her puny wrath, snatching up stones to fling at them, with shrill, incoherent exclamations, that made her mother tremble because they had so much the sound of a witch's anathemas in some unknown tongue.[19]

It is possible that Pearl feels society's rejection and, as a consequence, she behaves contrary to social rules. So she directs her rage at the Puritan children of the community who, as is suggested, sense something "outlandish, unearthly" in Pearl and her mother who "stood together in the same circle of seclusion from human society."[20] Then, Pearl . . .

> . . . after frowning, stamping her foot, and shaking her little hand with a variety of threatening, suddenly make a rush at the knot of her enemies, and put them all to flight. She resembled, in her fierce pursuit of them, an infant pestilence, --the scarlet fever, or some such half-fledged angel of judgement--whose mission was to punish the sins of the rising generation. She screamed and shouted, too, with a terrific volume of sound, which, doubtless caused the hearts of the fugitives to quake within them.[21]

This way Pearl illustrates the belief that she is evil and possesses a very strange character. Together with her mother and apart from society, she rebels and manifests this rebellion with aggressiveness.

Despite the fact that Pearl is seen as a product of Hester's adultery with Dimmesdale, Hawthorne implies that, as time passes, Pearl seems to fulfil her mission: "she had been

offered to the world, these seven years past, as the living hieroglyfic, in which was revealed the secret they so darkly sought to hide. . . . And Pearl was the oneness of their being."[22] Pearl is the "connecting link" between Hester and Dimmesdale. It is probably because of this that she tries to understand the relationship between them by means of her constant naughty behavior. It is because of her odd actions that critics hold their belief in Pearl's devilish constitution. This attribute of hers is well illustrated when she watches minister Dimmesdale after his refusal to stay with her and her mother on the scaffold at noontide: "There was witchcraft in little Pearl's eyes, and her face, as she glanced upward at the minister, wore that naughty smile which made its expression frequently so elfish."[23] Grasping the meaning of the minister's rejection, Pearl seems to aggressively seek revenge upon him. This look was one of the strange things about her that Hester knew too well. It suggested understanding of the most secret subject, especially that connected with these two figures, her parents, although the minister did not want to admit this. Her mother:

> while Pearl was yet an infant, grew acquainted with a certain peculiar look, that warned her when it would be labor thrown away to insist, persuade or plead. It was a look so intelligent, yet inexplicable, so perverse, sometimes so mali ious, but generally accompanied by a wild flow of spirits, that Hester could not help questioning at such moments, whether Pearl were a human child.[24]

This situation is often repeated and is always followed by Hester's doubts. But, despite her behavior, it is clear that Pearl understood everything: "Pearl comprehends the full scope of opposite impressions because the truth of her is the saving relationship between them."[25] But more important than this, says Charles Feidelson, and Hawthorne reiterates, that Pearl

is the scarlet letter both physically and mentally. In the novel, her function is more than to symbolize Hester and Dimmesdale's passionate union. She really is a kind of commentary on the symbol itself, revealing what the letter is: "the psychophysical presence of 'adultery.'"[26]

Pearl bears something of the supernatural about her which makes one think she is the devil's child. She combines with her charm something sinister or even unpredictable. Her behavior in the forest when she insists that Hester cannot take off the scarlet badge, has more meaning than any other example. There when she sees her mother without the scarlet letter on her bosom, Pearl forces Hester to put it back again by means of an uncontrollable rage. Pointing her forefinger at her mother's breast, Pearl

> . . . now suddenly burst into a fit of passion, gesticulating violently and throwing her small figure into the most extravagant contortions. She accompanied this wild outbreak with piercing shrieks, which the woods reverberated on all sides.[27]

Here Pearl seems to support the idea that her mission is not fulfilled yet. She thinks Hester has no right to take off her badge of sin simply because she has talked to the minister:

> She fixed her bright, wild eyes on her mother, now on the minister, and now included them both in the same glance, as if to detect and explain to herself the relation which they bore to one another. . . . At length, assuming a singular air of authority, Pearl stretched out her hand with the small forefinger extended, and pointing evidently towards her mother's breast.[28]

This is the most striking of Pearl's attitudes towards her mother. As she is an extension of her mother's sin, maybe she sees that hour is not the appropriate one to dispense with that badge so long worn by her mother. She reinforces the idea that she must always be reminding Hester of her sin, not allowing her

to escape from moral punishment. It is only by the end of the book that Pearl seems to recognize the right moment to make herself free of that mission. When the minister publicly confesses his sin, having her and Hester by his side, there happens a change in Pearl's strangeness. She fully accepts the minister and cannot stop kissing him: "Pearl kissed his lips. . . . Towards her mother, too, Pearl's errand as a messenger of anguish was all fulfilled."[29]

3.3 - The Natural Side of Pearl

As I have stated before, Pearl plays different roles in the same tale. Here I will present Pearl as a natural and vital force that is free from the taint of evil, as seen by the more "liberal" critics, such as Michael Gilmore, Chester Eisinger and Hyatt Waggoner. They refer to Pearl in connection with theories of "nature" and "liberty."

Pearl's name itself has a natural connotation. A pearl is a precious silvery-white adorning and valued jewel. Hester named her daughter so "as being of great price . . . her mother's only treasure."[30] So Pearl is as precious and valued for her as a gem is. The child's naturalness is here endorsed by her mother's connecting her to something which has a natural formation. Hyatt Waggoner comments on Hester naming Pearl from the "pearl of great price" used in St. Matthew, implying the incomparable value of the hope of heaven. This hope may imply that Hester hoped Pearl's life would compensate for her own mistakes.

Hawthorne describes Pearl as innocent as nature, possessing a "rich and luxuriant beauty; a beauty that shone with deep and vivid tints; a bright complexion, eyes possessing intensity both of depth and glow."[31] It is a natural beauty which allows comparison with a flower, the rose of the first chapter of The

Scarlet Letter, whose beauty connotes a positive value. As Waggoner says: "Like the beauty of a healthy child or animal, it is the product not of a choice but of necessity, of the laws of its being, so that it can be admired but not judged."[32] Hawthorne talks about the rosebush in bloom beside the prison door. He hoped it might "relieve the darkening close" of his tale. This can be connected to Pearl who, at the end of the tale, fulfills her mission and can thus cease to be a "messenger of anguish" to her mother. Viewing her in this light, Pearl is positively good in her natural embodiment.

Hawthorne always associates Pearl not only with the Scarlet Letter, but with the red rose as well. Pearl is then the rose of love and beauty which has grown up by the side of the black-flower of society represented by her mother. The rose bears "delicate gems" and pearl is the red-clad "gem" of her mother's bosom. She decorates her hair with flowers which are said to be perfect on her; she is reflected in the pool all adorned with flowers; her "flower-girdled and sunny image" reveals the glory of a bright flower. Thus Pearl has both the naturalness and beauty of a rose, and like a rose she may be a symbol of love and promise. This is quite a contradictory view of Pearl if compared to the previous one which labels her as devilish. But as was pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, this is the way "liberal" critics discuss her character.

At Governor Bellingham's house, Pearl reinforces her relationship to the flower by crying for a red rose and refusing to be pacified. One may notice again a connection with the first chapter of the book when the single rose beside the prison was presented as wholly untypical of the place and time. Similar to this, Pearl is trying to suggest that she was also out of the moral plane too much valued by the Puritan community of

that time. Although the community sees her as a witch-baby, Hester, her mother, complains and holds that her daughter has the capacity for strong affection. When she hears the talk of the authorities of the town about taking the child away from her in order to become its guardian, Hester struggles to retain her child who is both her torture and happiness, the one thing that has kept her soul alive in her hard moments. So probably Pearl is neither good nor bad because she is not responsible. She is not a moral agent even when she asks her mother for truth. Here, as when she refuses to accept the minister unless he acknowledges them she is not bad, but she is natural in her lack of understanding of human situations.

Of course, when Hawthorne compares Pearl to the rosebush, he is trying to remind us of her association with nature. When Pearl, inspired by her mother's example, makes a letter out of eelgrass for her own breast, she is once again illustrating this association. In the more "liberal" view, nature is the symbol of freedom and Pearl characterizes this freedom as she is defined as "the freedom of a broken law." She is devoid of principles of right or wrong and therefore seen as a character close to being an abstraction. She is said to be far from the human level, for she acts as a creature of nature, most at home in the forest, for example. There she plays at the brookside, adorns herself with flowers, she is reflected in the brook in "all the brilliant picturesqueness of her beauty, in its adornment of flowers,"[33] catches the ray of sunlight or, rather, is caught by it. This means that nature is better seen by children than by adults, as Hawthorne suggests in the forest scene where Pearl can reach the patches of sunlight when Hester cannot. This way Hawthorne reinforces Pearl's naturalness being "first cousin to the sunlight in moral neutrality as well as in brightness."[34]

Possessing natural grace and skill, Pearl is sometimes compared to a bird, a flower or an angel. As Waggoner affirms, "she is a symbol of what the human being would be if his situation were simplified by his existing on the natural plane only as a creature."[35] So he implies that Pearl is natural and responds naturally to the callings of the world. Gilmore states that Pearl is natural in the double sense of being both illegitimate (her father does not recognize her) and unsocialized--she is lawless. Thus when Hester declares on the scaffold that Pearl "must seek a heavenly Father; she shall never know an earthly one,"[36] she denies her daughter a social existence. "And indeed Pearl literally acts out her mother's lawless speculations, giving vent in her solitary play to Hester's desire to overthrow the present constitution of society."[37] It is possible that Pearl's mother, having conceived the child in sin by giving way to natural passion, contributes in this way to forcing the child into a sympathetic relation with nature. Indeed, Pearl's fertile imagination helps her to find in the objects of nature the correspondence both of her affection and hostility, that is, she plays with the ray of sunlight, the flowers and the brook because they have positive values for her and stand for her friends. Whereas the pine trees and the "ugliest weeds of the garden" are respectively converted to Puritan elders and to the children "whom Pearl smote down and uprooted, most unmercifully."[38]

Maybe Puritan society does not recognize Pearl as one of its members because she belongs to nature and not to human society. In fact, while society thrusts her out, nature takes her in. "Like infancy, however, nature is a stage which man must pass through, whereas his destination is heaven."[39] Here infancy and nature are connected to Pearl in Dimmesdale's opinion. He feels that the relationship between Hester and Pearl

means that the mother's redemption of the child to heaven will in turn "effect her own." This is revealed in the scene where Hester wins Pearl's guard from the authorities of the town. Dimmesdale, who is talking in defense of Hester's interest in Pearl, affirms that Pearl has "come from the hands of God" to become Hester's blessing and retribution and to teach her that if "she bring the child to heaven, the child also will bring its parents thither."[40]

3.4 - Environmental View

Now I want to present my line of thought, the environmental position. It forms a bridge between the two approaches already discussed, for I accept Pearl at both evil and natural levels; however, her responses "good," "bad," or "natural" occur according to the moment, to the environment in which the situation arises. To a certain extent this position is more akin to the natural approach in the sense that Pearl responds naturally to a given situation, although she acts according to the conditions imposed when a new situation arises. For example, in the forest she acts naturally associating herself with objects of nature. Whereas when she sees her mother throwing away the scarlet letter, she rebels against her in such a way that one could say she was a true Puritan of the old times. This happens because the new situation she confronts stimulates her doubts about Hester's action.

I would say that, seen as evil by her mother and the community, Pearl's strange behavior nevertheless adjusts to its setting and causes her "evil." It is not her fault, it is her reaction to a certain situation. She becomes filled with scorn, for example, towards other children, not merely by chance, but because she feels their rejection of her and her mother:

The truth was that the little Puritans, being of the most

> intolerant brood that ever lived, had got a vague idea of something outlandish, unearthly, or at variance with ordinary fashions, in the mother and child; and therefore scorned them in their hearts and not infrequently reviled them with their tongues. Pearl felt the sentiment, and requited it with the bitterest hatred that can be supposed to rankle in a childish bosom.[41]

Contrary to this instance, Pearl is able to show gratitude, as in the scene at the Governor's mansion where the minister convinces the authorities to leave Pearl into Hester's keeping. At that hour:

> . . . while the shadow of his figure, which the sunlight cast upon the floor, was tremulous with the vehemence of his appeal. Pearl, that wild and flighty little elf, stole softly towards him, and taking his hand in the grasp of both her own, laid her cheek against it; a caress so tender . . .[42]

These examples indicate that environment is the main aspect to take into consideration when one is striken by some of Pearl's responses. In the novel, the environment in which she lives is completely distorted and unnatural. Richard Fogle confirms that "no single action of hers is ever incredible or inconsistent with the conceivable actions of any child under the same conditions."[43] These conditions above mentioned may be the reason why Pearl is sometimes seen as a "demon offspring." She lived in her mother's company only; her father did not assume her paternity, and she had no friends. So she rebelled and the way she had chosen to manifest her rebellion was by means of a reproachful aggressiveness. But her reactions are natural to a child who lived in such hostile surroundings. It is just after the minister's confession that Pearl is humanized. She accuses her father of not being bold, and not being true. The falsity and wrongness of her situation grew from the enforced separation of a loving couple by an inhuman society. Thus Pearl's

"return to normalcy" seems to be a consequence of the minister's acceptance of her as his daughter. This would imply that from then on she will live a life as normal as any member of human society. Recognized and accepted by her father, Pearl's natural wildness and perversity seem to disappear:

> 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 forever do battle with the world, but be a woman in it.[44]

Pearl feels transformed because her environment now is that of a normal human being who can share with the world its good and its bad as all people do. So her adaptation to society at last is due to the improved conditions presented to her. She ceases to be "fiendish" or "natural" to become only a human being, for Pearl leaves New England and marries abroad, outside Puritan society, thus escaping the closed circle of Puritanism.

NOTES

[1]Richard Harter Fogle, Hawthorne's Fiction: The Light and the Dark (Norman, 1964), p. 138.

[2]Norman Holmes Pearson, The Complete Novels and Selected Tales of Nathaniel Hawthorne (New York: The Modern Library, 1965), p. 137.

[3]Sidney Howard White, Barron's Simplified Approach to The Scarlet Letter--Nathaniel Hawthorne (Woodbury, New York: 1967), p. 48.

[4]Pearson, Complete Novels, p. 189.

[5]Ibid., p. 143.

[6]Ibid., pp. 143-44.

[7]Ibid., p. 137.

[8]Raymond Benoit, "Theology and Literature: The Scarlet Letter," Bucknell Review, XX (Spring, 1972), Number 1, p. 89.

[9]Pearson, Complete Novels, p. 148.

[10]Ibid., p. 150.

[11]Chester Eisinger, "Pearl and the Puritan Heritage," College English, XII (March, 1951), p. 324.

[12]Ibid., p. 325.

[13]Ibid., p. 327.

[14]F. O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance (Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 362.

[15]Sculley Bradley et al., Nathaniel Hawthorne: The Scarlet Letter--A Norton Critical Edition (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1961), p. 193.

[16]Ibid., p. 193.

[17]Pearson, Complete Novels, p. 190.

[18]Ibid., p. 139.

[19]Ibid., p. 139.

[20]Ibid., p. 139.

[21]Ibid., p. 144.

[22]Ibid., p. 206.

[23]Ibid., p. 175.

[24]Ibid., p. 138.

[25]Benoit, "Theology and Literature," p. 89.

[26]Charles Feidelson, Jr., "Hawthorne as Symbolist" from Symbolism and American Literature by Charles Feidelson, Jr., cited in A. N. Kaul, Hawthorne: A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966), p. 67.

[27]Pearson, Complete Novels, p. 208.

[28]Ibid., p. 208.

[29]Ibid., p. 236.

[30]Ibid., p. 136.

[31]Ibid., p. 143.

[32]Hyatt H. Waggoner, Hawthorne: A Critical Study (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1971), p. 129.

[33]Pearson, Complete Novels, p. 207.

[34]Waggoner, A Critical Study, p. 152.

[35]Ibid., p. 152.

[36]Quoted by Michael Gilmore in The Middle Way: Puritanism and Ideology in American Fiction (The State University of New Jersey: Rutgers, 1977), p. 95.

[37]Ibid., 95.

[38]Quoted by Michael Gilmore in The Middle Way, p. 95.

[39]Fogle, The Light and the Dark, p. 138.

[40]Eisinger, "Pearl," p. 328.

[41]Pearson, Complete Novels, p. 139.

[42]Pearson, op. cit., p. 152.

[43]Fogle, op. cit., p. 100.

[44]Pearson, Complete Novels, p. 236.

CHAPTER IV

"THE GENTLE BOY"

"The Gentle Boy" is based on almost the same pattern as The Scarlet Letter, that is, it focuses the theme of Puritanism presented through the child's image. I will analyze the story and comment on the character of Ilbrahim, a Quaker boy, and his relationship to Tobias and Dorothy Pearson, the Puritan couple that takes care of him. I will also comment on his relationship to his true mother, Catharine, and to the children whom he met later on. It is also necessary to consider the way the Puritans treated the Quakers, for this is another aspect of the tale which is paramount.

As is stated in the introductory part of the tale, the Quakers appeared in New England in the course of the year 1656 This sect was formed by people whose enthusiasm for mystic principles was based on the acceptance of persecution as a way of leading them into martyrdom, which they regarded as a divine call. The already established Puritans, considering the Quakers intruders in their land and usurpers of their reputation, quickly wished to be freed from that race: "Their reputation, as holders of mystic and pernicious principles, having spread before them, the Puritans early endeavored to banish, and to prevent the further intrusion of the rising sect."[1]

The tale opens by describing the way in which a Quaker child is found by a Puritan man, near the grave of his executed father:

> It was a slender and light clad little boy, who leaned his face upon a hillock of fresh-turned and half-frozen earth, and wailed bitterly, yet in a suppressed tone, as if grief might receive the punishment of crime.[2]

His suffering was so great that it was difficult for Tobias to convince him to accept his help. The boy confesses: "My father was one of the people whom all men hate."[3] So Tobias was frightened because the boy did not belong to the same religion as him. However, Ilbrahim's innocent and unfortunate condition touches Tobias' heart with mercy and he deliberately decides to take the child under his care:

> The traveller took the child in his arms and wrapped his cloak about him, while his heart stirred with shame and anger against the gratuitous cruelty of the instruments in this persecution . . . at whatever risk, he would not forsake the poor little defenceless being whom Heaven had confined to his care.[4]

The consequence of Tobias' act is tragic both for him and the boy. They became victims of Puritan oppression: the former for having taken home a child whose religion was opposed to his own, and the latter because he showed signs (to the Puritans) of invincible depravity, as they felt unable to convert him to the beliefs of Calvinism. As Joseph Schwartz comments in "Three Aspects of Hawthorne's Puritanism,"

> When the Pearsons adopt Ilbrahim, the gentle Quaker boy, because he is alone in the world, their Christian motivation makes no impression on the rest of the community . . . the people avoid contact with little Ilbrahim because they fear contamination. As the chosen, the elect, they do not understand the gospel of love.[5]

Because of this, the whole Puritan community at the meeting-house coldly expresses its aversion to the boy:

> The wrinkled beldams involved themselves in their rusty cloaks as he passed by; even the mild-featured maidens seemed to dread contamination; and many a stern old man

> arose, and turned his repulsive and unheavenly countenance upon the gentle boy, as if the sanctuary were polluted by his presence.[6]

In this way, they demonstrated their feelings of superiority over the child. They felt holier than him, for Quakerism, they believed, was an increasing fanaticism which "destroyed the duties of the present life and broke the bonds of natural affection."[7] Ilbrahim's mother illustrates this thought. She leaves her son with the Pearsons in order to be free to follow her religious sect. And Ilbrahim, whose father had died in tragic circumstances, feels sad and partially loses his childish semblance. As time passes, then, it seems that he understands the difficult situation of his mother's life and submits to the new home which was destined for him. Little by little he feels at ease among his good adopted parents:

> The boy, also, after a week or two of mental disquiet, began to gratify his protectors by many inadvertent proofs that he considered them as parents, and their house as home. . . . Ilbrahim's demeanour lost a premature manliness, which had resulted from his earlier situation; he became more childlike, and his natural character displayed itself with freedom.[8]

But this calmness is only temporary, despite the successive events which make the child's life unhappier than before. The community does harm to Ilbrahim and he tries to overcome it the same way Tobias tried to overcome the strict rules of Puritanism, therefore, both intentions were not successfully accomplished:

> The feelings of the neighboring people, in regard to the Quaker infant and his protectors, had not undergone a favorable change, in spite of the momentary triumph which the desolate mother had obtained over their sympathies. The scorn and bitterness, of which he was the object, were very grievous to Ilbrahim.[9]

This way the state of mind of the community reinforces that Ilbrahim and the Pearsons are victimized by its hostility. The

community's aversion resembles the "holier than thou" attitude which Richard Digby holds in "The Man of Adamant" and to which Hawthorne makes special reference here. As Joseph Schwartz says:

> The author's concern is not with one person as symbol (as in the case of Digby) but with the whole community of Puritans and the atmosphere which they generate.[10]

In his attempt to friendship, Ilbrahim trusted the deformed Puritan boy who was injured in the neighborhood and was nursed in the Pearson's home for a short period of time. Perhaps Ilbrahim noticed a similarity between their wounded lives, but the boy, unalterable in his feelings and faithful to his Puritan principles, awaits the appropriate time.in which he can show his evil side. After the injured boy has returned to his home, Ilbrahim, one afternoon, attempts to join a group of children containing the invalid boy. The children turn on Ilbrahim and beat him brutally. The "friend" then, stands apart from the group and calls to him: "Fear not, Ilbrahim, come hither and take my hand."[11] Quite trusting, Ilbrahim attempts to obey him. But,

> after watching the victim's struggling approach with a calm smile and unabashed eye, the foul-hearted little villain lifted his staff and struck Ilbrahim on the mouth, so forcibly that the blood issued in a stream.[12]

Pretending to help, the invalid boy hurts Ilbrahim, and

> his persecutors beat him down, trampled upon him, dragged him by his long, fair locks, and Ilbrahim was on the point of becoming as veritable a martyr as ever entered bleeding into heaven.[13]

This is an additional support to the fact that the children of the Puritans followed the cruel inhumanity of their parents. In Schwartz's opinion, "Hawthorne uses the Puritan children as

operative symbols of the sharp cruelty which results from bigoted and fanatic exclusiveness."[14]

After this scene of uncivilized brutality, Ilbrahim loses pleasure for living, since he was hurt in body and heart:

> Ilbrahim's bodily harm was severe, . . . the injury done to his sensitive spirit was more serious, though not so visible. Its signs were principally of a negative character, and to be discovered only by those who had previously known him.[15]

The evil practiced by these children is an example of the Puritans' oppression over the Quakers. Ilbrahim is attacked by children of his own age, a vengeance somehow planned that achieves its objective--to banish from earth those who were contrary to their rules. "The injury done to his body was severe, but the injury to his spirit was worse."[16] Indeed, Ilbrahim's submissive suffering illustrates the idea of martyrdom so well accepted by the Quakers. Ilbrahim's Quaker descent is the key to the community's abusive methods of torture which reaches its highest point with the little invalid's betrayal of Ilbrahim's confidence on him. At that day:

> It was Ilbrahim, who came towards the children with a look of sweet confidence on his fair and spiritual face, as if, having manifested his love to one of them, he had no longer to fear a repulse from their society.[17]

However, rejection by the other boys made Ilbrahim's heart break, for he had demonstrated nothing but love, at least to his supposed friend. And it was this very boy who was the link between pretended love and declared hatred that drove Ilbrahim's soul into desolation. In this tale Hawthorne is openly critical of the Puritan community which commits evil in the name of virtue. Thus, while they feel the "gentle boy" is depraved, it is really they and their children who prove to be depraved. The sacrifice of the innocent victim is publicly performed:

> Ilbrahim is the human sacrifice demanded by youthful fiends under the direction of the twisted child who delivers the mortal blow with his devil's staff.[18]

One supposes, of course, that these Puritan children act this way not because they are innately depraved, but because they are conditioned by their community. However, as Schwartz points out: "Ilbrahim must die, of course, so that his gentle spirit can win in death what he could not attain in life."[19] Maybe the critic wants to show that since Ilbrahim wants to be faithful to his true parents' religion, his will is done through his death:

> In a moment his mother was kneeling by the bedside; she drew Ilbrahim to her bosom, and he nestled there, with no violence of joy, but contentedly, as if he were hushing himself to sleep. He looked into her face, and reading its agony, said, with feeble earnestness, "Mourn not, dearest mother. I am happy now." And with these words the gentle boy was dead.[20]

At that hour he is happy due to his true mother's presence as well as his death, which symbolizes his firm faith in Quakerism. Ilbrahim's mother's return is too late because now he is dead, but she

> . . . will stand up and give thanks that her son has been thus early an accepted sacrifice. The boy hath done his work, and she will feel that he is taken thence in kindness both to him and to her.[21]

However, after the death of the gentle boy, Catharine is more frenzied than ever, although Puritan persecution of the Quakers was soon to be abolished by decree.

The community is not satisfied with tormenting the boy; its members also do harm to his adopted father, Tobias, who is wounded by "his uneasy religious convictions, his loss of position and money."[22] Although despised by society, Tobias' relationship to Ilbrahim is one of a pious protector who does not

admit any harm to the boy. Tobias' religious sympathies have been more and more with the Quakers, but his spirit "has not grown rich and comforted in his new-found religion."[23] The Puritan community then points out that his sorrows increase after he had "adopted a child of 'the accursed sect.'"[24] But Tobias does not admit Ilbrahim is the instrument of his destruction. At the end of the tale Tobias

> . . . has only changed roles, not his heart; from the persecutor, he has become persecuted; from the hunter, the hunted, and Hawthorne ironically suggests that even though this is an apparent reversal, it is difficult to tell the two states apart.[25]

Tobias wants to escape from the Puritan community in the name of Quakerism. Although this is not accomplished at all, he, at least, does not stay put in the environment he was placed in, but opts for what seems to be a more Christian alternative for Hawthorne.

Applying the environmental view to "the gentle boy," I would say that his character is a result of the community's way of viewing him as evil, and treating him as pernicious to the welfare of society. The environment into which he was put is negative in all senses. Being abandoned by his mother after his father's death, Ilbrahim is adopted by a couple whose religious feelings contradicts his own. He was obliged to live in a community that repelled him and also expressed aversion for his adopted parents. So he feels himself deprived both of an original family of his own, and of the lack of friendship of people.

> All the inhabitants of this miserable world closed their hearts against him, drew back their earth-soiled garments from his touch, and said, "we are holier than thou."[26]

Although Ilbrahim tried to make a friend, this was impeded by the Puritan community's devotion to its strict rules which forbids the entrance of a stranger into its circle. In his attempt to overcome this circle, Ilbrahim talks to a boy, maybe believing that as being his equivalent in age, he could understand him better than adults. But, once again, the environment where he tries to create a friendship is inadequate. This boy is recovering from a wound in Ilbrahim's adopted home. While he was there he seems to accept Ilbrahim's company. But as soon as he escapes the Pearsons' protection, he demonstrates his aversion to Ilbrahim. Thus the influence of the community determined the pretended friendship between the wounded boy and Ilbrahim as well as his relation to the entire society.

However, there is a positive factor in Ilbrahim's sweet temperament at the Pearsons' home. Conscious of being loved there, the child changes from a disturbed boy to one who takes delight in life. This was due to the new environment where peace and love allowed Ilbrahim's return to normal infancy:

> Under the influence of kind treatment, and in the consciousness that he was loved . . . Ilbrahim would derive enjoyment from the most trifling events, and from every object about him; he seemed to discover rich treasures of happiness.[27]

This quotation reinforces my opinion that children's characters are molded by the environment in which they live. Ilbrahim is no more than a six-year-old boy whose character responds to every different situation. He can easily transform his feelings from pleasure to pain and if it happened he would hardly return to the former condition unless he was sure of sympathy:

> . . . the slightest word of real bitterness, which he was infallible in distinguishing from pretended anger, seemed to sink his heart and poison all his enjoyments, till he became sensible that he was entirely forgiven.[28]

On the occasion of the children's attack on him, Ilbrahim's acute sensitiveness could probably be less hurt had not he felt betrayed by one of the boys he supposed to be his friend. He "refuses to fight back . . . because the blows were delivered under the guise of love--although love betrayed."[29] In short, Ilbrahim is a product of the Puritan community's prejudices. He could not escape it because of his defenseless character and also because even the little ones who belonged to the community demanded submission to the Puritan laws under the pretence of friendship. Considered depraved by the outside world, Ilbrahim is, in fact, a junior martyr, the victim of the community's prejudice expressed particularly through children.

It is necessary to point out, however, that since some children appear depraved, as are the puritan children of the story, and some appear innocent martyrs, as Ilbrahim, we can conclude that, in themselves the children are neither guilty nor merely innocent, but reflect the world of their elders. In other words, they are products of their environment.

NOTES

[1]Norman Holmes Pearson, Complete Novels, p. 890.

[2]Ibid., p. 892.

[3]Ibid., p. 893.

[4]Ibid., p. 893.

[5]Joseph Schwartz, "Three Aspects of Hawthorne's Puritanism," New England Quarterly, XXXVI (June, 1963), p. 196.

[6]Pearson, Complete Novels, p. 896.

[7]Seymour Gross, "Hawthorne's Revision of 'The Gentle Boy,'" American Literature, XXVI (May, 1954), p. 201.

[8]Pearson, Complete Novels, p. 902.

[9]See Chapter II, note 27.

[10]Schwartz, "Three Aspects," p. 201.

[11]Pearson, Complete Novels, p. 904.

[12]Ibid., p. 904.

[13]Ibid., p. 905.

[14]Schwartz, "Three Aspects, p. 201.

[15]Pearson, Complete Novels, p. 905.

[16]Quoted by Joseph Schwartz in "Three Aspects of Hawthorne's Puritanism," p. 202.

[17]Pearson, Complete Novels, p. 904.

[18]Agnes Donohue, Casebook on the Hawthorne Question (New York: Barat College, 1963), p. 165.

[19]Schwartz, "Three Aspects," p. 203.

[20]Pearson, Complete Novels, p. 911.

[21]Ibid., p. 909.

[22]Donohue, Casebook, p. 160.

[23]Ibid., p. 166.

[24]Schwartz, "Three Aspects," p. 203.

[25]Donohue, Casebook, p. 166.

[26]Quoted by Schwartz in "Three Aspects," p. 202.

[27]Pearson, Complete Novels, p. 902.

[28]Ibid., pp. 902-03.

[29]Donohue, Casebook, p. 165.

CHAPTER V

"THE ARTIST OF THE BEAUTIFUL"

"The Artist of the Beautiful," unlike the first two works previously analyzed, does not deal with a Puritan setting in order to examine its morality. This story reflects Hawthorne's romantic view of art, at the time of the tale's composition, in 1884.

Hawthorne sets his tale in a town filled with people who worship time, practicality and materialism. The town is not specifically set in New England, but is generically American. These townspeople reject the artist's imagination because they do not believe in anything which is not materially profitable. So they try to destroy the pursuit of the beautiful through constant pressuring of the artist, Owen Warland.

In the beginning of the story, Peter Hovenden visits his old watch-making shop to look in upon his apprentice who, in Hovenden's opinion, seems to waste his time working on gadgets. Hovenden's daughter, Annie, suggests that Warland has ingenuity enough to create something new, as opposed to the village blacksmith, Robert Danforth, who is seen as utilitarian, for "he spends his labor upon a reality."[1] Annie is Warland's inspiration, for he loves her. But the blacksmith wins her love and Warland fails. The tale, then, focuses on the struggle of the artist against these figures who seek to turn him from his purpose. The old watchmaker's practicality and materialism, his preoccupation with time and gold, places him in opposition to the abstract intellectual forms symbolized by Warland's

idealistic search for the beautiful. Hovenden's aversion to the artist is well expressed:

> I say again, it is a good and wholesome thing to depend upon main strength and reality, and to earn one's bread with bare and brawny arm of a blacksmith. A watchmaker gets his brain puzzled by his wheels within a wheel, or loses his health or the nicety of his eyesight, . . . So I say once again, give my strength for my money. And then, how it takes the nonsense out of a man! Did you ever hear of a blacksmith being such a fool as Owen Warland yonder?[2]

Thus Hovenden's predilection for the blacksmith suggests his interest in men who are basically like himself, interested in the business world. Because Warland refuses to conform to the norm of practical behavior, he loses all his customers. His adorning the practical, utilitarian clocks with his artistic touches:

> . . . quite destroyed the young watchmaker's credit with that steady and matter-of-fact class of people who hold the opinion that time is not to be trifled with, whether considered as the medium of advancement and prosperity in this world or preparation for the next."[3]

This attitude implies the rejection of a materialist society against idealism, as is discerned by Richard H. Fogle in Hawthorne's Fiction: The Light and the Dark. This is typical of the "Protestant ethic," that is, Puritanism gone commercial, since it turns certain Puritan "virtues" into materialistic asserts.

Donald A. Ringe in "Hawthorne's Psychology of the Head and Heart" states of Hawthorne's point of view that "if one wishes to rise above the common level of humanity, he must divorce himself from men and deliberately court the sin of isolation."[4] However, isolation is a difficult task for Warland, in Ringe's opinion, because he longs for a union with Annie. When he knows

she is to marry the blacksmith, Warland smashes the object of beauty he has been manufacturing for months. This action symbolizes the struggle between his spiritual mind and his physical condition as a member of the community, for in Hawthorne's works the community always exerts a negative influence upon man, and it appears here that women and children act as the representatives of this community, that is, that they represent conformity. At that time, Hawthorne "criticized the extreme to which the community took its particular way of perceiving reality because it sacrificed in emphasis and method any other aspect of personality."[5] This was true for Ilbrahim in "The Gentle Boy" and also for Hester in The Scarlet Letter, both victims of an adverse Puritan society. But now Hawthorne is criticizing a business community where there is no room for one who tries to behave contrary to its norms. Although Puritanism is far from being the setting of this tale, Hawthorne once more emphasizes his aversion to the way the community demands the conformity of an individual to its concerns of normal behavior.

Owen Warland represents the talented artist who pursues the sublimity of truth for the pleasure of his mind. He seems a Platonic artist transcending the created world by created beauty. He does not mock the useful. His only ambition is in his building of the mechanical butterfly, his work of art. Despite the pressures of the adverse community, Warland finds the strength to continue creating, although sometimes he feels weakened by that constant rejection here illustrated by the effect that Robert Danforth's presence causes on Warland:

> How strange it is, . . . that all my musing, my purposes, my passion for the beautiful, my consciousness of power to create it, --a finer, more ethereal power, of which this earthly giant can have no conception, --all, all look so vain and idle whenever my path is crossed by Robert Danforth![6]

This above quotation clearly reflects Warland's inability for creating when oppressed by opposing forces. Here Danforth personifies the community's rejection of art, causing Warland's temporary weakness. Danforth also causes Warland's loss of Annie's love. His marriage to Annie darkens Warland's life, making him alien to the spiritual world of art to which he has devoted himself. Although temporary, Warland's reversion to the material world may be compared to the "lapse" of a priest who desires physical love and procreation. Society seems to be warning Warland that if he wants to make objects of art, he must forget about family matters. Notwithstanding his "passion for the beautiful" and his "consciousness of power to create it," Warland cannot resist the pressure of public opinion symbolized both by Hovenden and Danforth which, at least temporarily, undermines the order of his art.

In the tale Hawthorne expresses his opinion about artistic ideals:

> It is requisite for the ideal artist to possess a force of character that seems hardly compatible with its delicacy; he must keep his faith in himself while the incredulous world assails him with its utter disbelief; he must stand up against mankind and be his own sole disciple, both as respects his genius and the objects to which it is directed.[7]

Here we see Hawthorne's position encouraging the artist to find strength in order to remain true to himself and his art. Hawthorne asserts his belief in artistic idealism as a struggle against opposing forces. In Warland's case, his surrender to the world of work, and his suffering the criticism of society makes him turn to nature and recover his sense of an ideal spiritual beauty. Thus far we might say Hawthorne's notion of art seems Emersonian or Transcendental.

Yet in this tale nature is ambiguous. Hawthorne seems to be simultaneously implying both a Platonic view of nature and

one more Aristotelian. Nature is itself natural in the sense that it is by watching butterflies and water insects in the woods that Warland recovers his artistic ability. On the other hand, nature implies spirituality, since it helps the artist to transcend his thought and achieve the sublime insight. We recall this ambiguity is very much like that implied through Hawthorne's treatment of Pearl, the "child of nature." In the woods Warland:

> . . . found amusement in chasing butterflies or watching the motions of water insects. There was something truly mysterious in the intentness with which he contemplated these living playthings as they sported on the breeze.[8]

When frustrated in life, Warland sometimes loses his faith in the ideal and falls to earthly pursuits, but his spirit reacts and once more he is rescued by nature:

> From this perilous state he was redeemed by an incident which more than one person witnessed, but of the shrewdest could not explain or conjecture the operation on Owen Warland's mind. . . . On one afternoon of spring, as the artist sat among his riotous companions with a glass of wine before him, a splendid butterfly flew in at the open window and fluttered about his head.[9]

This butterfly symbolizes nature and Warland's own creative soul. His soul is crushed probably because he feels Annie is not worthy of his dedication to her. However, he continues creating his masterpiece, connecting it with Annie's image, and when he finishes the object of supreme beauty, it is destroyed by Annie's child who symbolizes the same persons who have always rejected him. The mechanical butterfly Owen Warland creates is, then, a romantic assertion of the value of art. It is said to embody nature's essence and also represents "the intellect, the imagination, the sensibility, the soul of an Artist of the Beautiful."[10] So once again idealism is highly praised in contrast with materialism and mere utility. It is possible

that Hawthorne is endorsing a Platonic view of art when we are told that the object of art embodies nature's essence. But at the same time, it seems that Hawthorne is saying that art is simply copying nature because Warland's artistic object is an artificial butterfly.

Annie's child is not the prototype of innocence. Looking at the butterfly, this baby seems to understand it better than its parents do. In spite of that, Annie says: "I never saw such a look on a child's face."[11] The child does not accept the artist, and this is suggested by its crushing the butterfly in its hands. This action does not seem to reflect innocent animosity. This child is reflecting the community's aversion to spiritual art. It represents the community's judgement on man as in the prior stories, but here this is a business community of the 1850's, not a Puritan community of the seventeenth century. Even so, the artist offers his creation which contains himself, the representation of his vision of truth, "Nature's butterfly was here realized in all its perfection; . . ."[12] but the community destroys it. However, this does not surprise Warland, the artist, for he:

> . . . knew that the world, and Annie as the representative of the world, whatever praise might be bestowed, could never say the fitting word nor feel the fitting sentiment which should be the perfect recompense of an artist who, symbolizing a lofty moral by a material trifle, --converting what was earthly spiritual gold, --had won the beautiful into his handiwork.[13]

At this point, the community's refusal of the gift of the artist is unimportant because the process of creativity is more important to Warland than the object created. Hawthorne then superimposes romantic optimism upon the reality of the community:

> And as for Owen Warland, he looked placidly at what seemed the ruin of his life's labor, and which was

> yet no ruin. He had caught a far other butterfly than this.[14]

Warland has finally overcome society's pressures by the consciousness of his artistic creation, whereas society, now represented by the child, continues symbolizing the vitality of the material world which opposes the concerns of art. Warland

> . . . could have fancied that the old watchmaker was compressed into this baby's shape, and looking out of those baby eyes, and repeating, as he now did, the malicious question: "The beautiful, Owen! How comes the beautiful? Have you succeeded in creating the beautiful?[15]

The child, therefore, is implying that Warland's art will never be accepted by the utilitarian world.

As I said before, the environmental approach applied to the prior stories does not fit this tale, since its setting is not a Puritan one. Here the child is not a product of sin, a representative of original sin, evil inheritance, or any of the Puritan principles. But in another sense, the child motif does echo The Scarlet Letter: the baby implies the closed circle community, the materialist world. The actions of the baby imply no escape for Warland from the circle of the community, but Hawthorne's words later on suggest there is transcendence because Warland can escape, at least at the end of the story when he does not feel hurt at the child's destruction of his work.

Thus in this tale Hawthorne is not interested in the moral world of seventeenth-century Puritanism as before. He is rather concerned with a more contemporary problem, the romantic world of the artist in conflict with that of business and practicality. This conflict is well illustrated in the scene in which Owen Warland presents his object of art to Annie's family get together. Peter Hovenden, as is always his mood in relation to Warland, shows his disbelief towards the butterfly: "I shall understand it better once I have touched it."[16] But at the

touch of his finger "the insect drooped its wings and seemed on the point of falling to the floor."[17] So at Annie's cry of alarm, Warland explains:

> It has been delicately wrought. As I told you, it has imbibed a spiritual essence. . . . In an atmosphere of doubt and mockery its exquisite susceptibility suffers torture, as does the soul of him who instilled his own life into it.[18]

This explanation thoroughly reflects Warland's suffering with respect to the opposing way society views his art. Here, as it appears at the beginning of the tale, Hovenden is showing his aversion to the artist who struggles in order to achieve his ideal. But we see the artist's success over society at the end of the tale as Ringe asserts that Warland is "not only apart from but also in advance of mankind."[19] And this is only possible through complete isolation from society. The unique possibility of Warland's artistic realization is isolating himself from the community. When he understands it, he seems more confident and fully succeeds. Warland recognizes that as an artist he must never return to the world of ordinary people. This is reinforced by Hawthorne's conclusion:

> When the artist rose high enough to achieve the beautiful, the symbol by which he made it perceptible to mortal senses became of little value in his eyes while his spirit possessed itself in the enjoyment of the reality.[20]

So Warland's isolation from the community and even his unwilling renunciation of sex, marriage and children is positive because he feels in advance of society. This way he achieves the supreme triumph over the spirit of egoistic calculation which seemed to be winning the field in his own nineteenth century.

NOTES

[1]Norman H. Pearson, The Complete Novels and Selected Tales of Nathaniel Hawthorne (New York: The Modern Library, 1937), p. 1140.

[2]Ibid., p. 1140.

[3]Ibid., p. 1142.

[4]Donald Ringe, "Hawthorne's Psychology of the Head and Heart," Publications of Modern Language Association, LXV (March, 1950), p. 122.

[5]David Levin, In Defense of Historical Literature (New York: Hill & Wong, 1967), p. 65.

[6]Pearson, Complete Novels, p. 1143.

[7]Ibid., p. 1143.

[8]Ibid., p. 1145.

[9]Ibid., p. 1148.

[10]Richard H. Fogle, Hawthorne's Fiction: The Light and the Dark (Norman: Oklahoma University Press, 1952), p. 76.

[11]Pearson, Complete Novels, p. 1155.

[12]Ibid., p. 1152.

[13]Ibid., p. 1154.

[14]Ibid., p. 1156.

[15]Ibid., p. 1152.

[16]Ibid., p. 1155.

[17]Ibid., p. 1155.

[18]Ibid., p. 1155.

[19]Ringe, "Head and Heart," p. 124.

[20]Pearson, Complete Novels, p. 1156.

CHAPTER VI

"THE SNOW IMAGE"

"The Snow Image" describes the way in which two little children, Violet and Peony, play during an afternoon of a cold winter, in the front garden of their house. These children, tired of playing with one another, decide to make a girl entirely of snow in order to have someone else to play with. Their mother watches them from the window of the house. She is very proud of her children's creativity and she says: "They do everything better than other children."[1] This woman's pride is so great that it leads her to supernatural beliefs:

> The mother, as she listened, thought how fit and delightful an incident it would be, if fairies, or still better, if angel-children were to come from paradise, and play invisibly with her own darlings and help them to make their snow image, giving it the features of celestial babyhood![2]

She believes her children are so pure that they would attract angels from the sky to play with them. Here we can observe a similarity to the Puritan concept that only the children of Puritans can be good children. Violet and Peony also follow their mother's "Puritan" attitude, for as soon as they begin to shape the snow image's bosom, they try to find a bit of the purest snow because that was a very special region:

> Bring me some of that fresh snow, Peony, from the very farthest corner, where we have not been trampling. I want it to shape our little-sister's bosom with. You know that part must be quite pure, just as it came out of the sky![3]

This preoccupation denotes Puritanism in the sense that the "elected" heart would be purer than any part of the body because it held the good everyone had to practice.

As they are busy at their work, Violet and Peony talk about the possible reactions both their mother and father would have in relation to the snow image: ". . . mamma will see how beautiful she is; but pappa will say, 'Tush! nonsense!--come out of the cold!'"[4] They trust their mother, but fear their father's opinion about the snow image which they call "our little snow-sister."[5] In their innocence, the children really think the snow image will come to life and become a playmate of theirs: "They seemed positively to think that the snow-child would run about and play with them."[6] Here there is a similarity between these children's and Owen Warland's fantasy. Owen, the artist, also thought that his mechanical butterfly was a living thing.

The children were happy because of the new companion for their hours of amusement, especially during the winter. Violet observes: "What a nice playmate she will be for us, all winter long!"[7] Their enthusiasm for the snow image increases in the same proportion as they fear their father's judgement about it: "I hope pappa will not be afraid of her giving us a cold!"[8] This fear is not demonstrated in relation to their mother in whom they had great confidence. Besides being proud of her children, the mother becomes as much involved in their work as the children themselves:

> What imaginative little beings my children are! thought the mother. . . . And it is strange too, that they make me almost as much a child as they themselves are! I can hardly help believing, now, that the snow-image has really come to life![9]

It is relevant to point out here that this attitude is a sign of her vanity. But, at the same time, this is not so typical of the repressive attitude held by many parents of that time. It seems to deny that the children have any stain of original sin.

Violet and Peony are really delighted with the snow-image's company and although they believed it alive, they did not care about its inappropriate "dressing" despite the cold of the afternoon:

> Nevertheless, airily as she [the snow image] was clad, the child seemed to feel not the slightest inconvenience from the cold, but danced so lightly over the snow that the tips of her toes left hardly a print in its surface; while Violet could but just keep pace with her, and Peony's short legs compelled him to lag behind.[10]

The snow-image is so realistically described that the reader cannot quite tell whether it is alive or not and shares the mother's confusion. It could be easily taken as a child:

> All this while, the mother stood on the threshold wondering how a little girl could look so much like a flying snow-drift, or how a snow-drift could look so very like a little girl.[11]

However, Violet and Peony's delight and happiness at the company of this little snow-child collapse with the sudden appearance of their common-sense father who was out of the home at the time the children began to play. He neither approves of the fact that his children are outside on such a cold day, nor believes the explanation given by them when he asks about the snow-image:

> "Poh, nonsense, children!" cried their good, honest father, who, as we have already intimated, had an exceedingly common-sensible way of looking at matters. "Do not tell me of making live figures out of snow."[12]

As he does not believe his children's words, he tries to find a way of stopping what he regards as their foolishness and he brings them all inside, including the snow-image:

> "Come wife; this little stranger must not stay out in the bleak air a moment longer. We will bring her into the parlor and you shall give her a supper of warm bread and milk, and make her as comfortable as you can. Meanwhile, I will inquire among the neighbors; or, if necessary, send the city-crier about the streets, to give notice of a lost child."[13]

It is difficult to tell whether he is mocking his excessively childish wife or whether he too believes the image is real. Nevertheless, I think Mr. Lindsey is somehow pretending to believe the snow-child is alive in order to punish his children for being outside on such a cold day and for indulging themselves in fantasy.

Mr. Lindsey is the prototype of a materialist who is not able to give credit to a fantasy even if it comes, as it were, from his own children. Unlike his wife, he is not influenced by Violet and Peony. Hawthorne seems to support that women are more imaginative and childlike than men, particularly Puritan fathers. Mr. Lindsey wanted his orders to be obeyed immediately. He did not hear either his children's and his wife's arguments against taking the snow-child inside. His wife makes another attempt to convince him. This time she sees the presence of the snow-child as a miracle:

> Husband! dear husband! said his wife, in a low voice, . . . --there is something very singular in all this. You will think me foolish, --but--may it not be that some invisible angel has been attracted by the simplicity and good faith with which our children set about their undertaking? May he not have spent an hour of his immortality in playing with those dear little souls? and so the result is what we call a miracle.[14]

His wife's way of speaking denotes her fear, her submission to Mr. Lindsey. He does not believe a word she is saying. He only replies that she is as much a child as the children. After that he enters the garden . . .

> breaking away from his two children, who still sent their shrill voices after him, beseeching him to let the snow-child stay and enjoy herself in the cold west-wind.[15]

It is hard to discern whether the children believe the snow-image is a real child or not. However, I believe they know that they are pretending but that pretending has its limits.

Mr. Lindsey's arrival in the garden makes all the previous enchanted atmosphere disintegrate. The same intrusion of practicality into an imaginative world occurred in "The Artist of the Beautiful," where the artist lost his strength at the appearance of Peter Hovenden, his old master.

> As he [Lindsey] approached, the snow-birds took flight. The little white damsel, also, fled backward, shaking her head, as if to say: "Pray, do not touch me!"[16]

No one can dissuade Mr. Lindsey from his purpose--he seems to believe the snow image is human after all. Once more, it is not clear whether Mr. Lindsey is realistic or more childish than his children. The fact that the snow child "fled back wards" could be only in his mind. Anyway, as I have said before, he seems to pretend that he believes the snow-child is alive because his pretending is very useful to him.

> As kind Mr. Lindsey led her up the steps of the door, Violet and Peony looked into his face,--their eyes full of tears, which froze before they could run down their cheeks,--and again entreated him not to bring their snow-image into the house.[17]

It is obvious that after taking the snow-child inside and having put it near the stove, Mr. Lindsey thaws it in a few minutes. No sooner does he leave home in order to look for the snow-child's parents, than his wife cries for him to come back. As he re-enters his children reproach him:

> "We told you so, father!" screamed Violet and Peony, as he re-entered the parlor. "You would bring her in; and now our poor-dear-beau-ti-ful little snow-sister is thawed!"[18]

This reproachful commentary is followed by others uttered by both Violet and Peony, thus denouncing the mischief their father had done. Even the stove, as if allied to the children "seemed to glare at Mr. Lindsey, like a red-eyed demon."[19]

But Mr. Lindsey seemed insensible to these remarks. His materialism triumphed over the imaginative minds of his children and nothing can make him think he was wrong. We notice a paradox here: on one hand it seems that Hawthorne suggests that an excess of materialism makes one childish, while on the other hand, it seems that Lindsey only pretends to believe the snow image is real. After all:

> there is no teaching anything to wise men of good Mr. Lindsey's stamp. They know everything--oh, to be sure! --everything that has been, and everything that is, and everything that, by any future possibility, can be. And, should some phenomenon of nature of providence transcend their system, they will not recognize it, even if it come to pass under their very noses.[20]

Mr. Lindsey was sure he had done right in attempting to warm the child and to look for its parents. But to the children this was the worst thing that could happen.

This tale shows us children in the home environment living together with their parents. However, children are once again tricked by adults. The practicality of their father ends their childish dream of playing with a snow-image. Mr. Lindsey seems to be ridiculous since he is not able to discern between what is real or unreal. His materialism is also present when he sees the pool into which the snow-image is transformed. Again we are led to think he is kidding, for his only words are:

> "Wife, . . . see what a quantity of snow the children have brought in on their feet! It has made quite a puddle here before the stove. Pray tell Dora to bring some towels and sop it up!"[21]

This tale focuses on children apparently out of society in the strict sense of the word. But society is here represented by Mr. Lindsey, the father of the children. In "The Snow Image," Violet and Peony can be placed among those children who, suffering from their father's action, undergo society's

oppression. Their fragility and submission clearly show their inability to resist especially their father's orders. The only time they strongly argue against him is when the snow-image is melting. Even so, it is an innocent reply: "Naughty father!" cried Peony. Or they both complain: "We told you how it would be!"[22] Under the label of a "common-sensible man," Mr. Lindsey's orders had to be respected and everybody must submit to him, including his wife. She knew the truth about the snow-image, but she becomes unable to defend her children from their father's obstinate will.

The home environment in which the children in this tale live is supposed to be an ideal one. It is different from those in the other works previously analyzed. However, children follow the same patterns presented before. They illustrate the Puritan view of children in the sense that they are pure and obedient. So, as a consequence, they become victims of the Puritan society illustrated in the image of their rigid father. We may come to the conclusion that the father is a materialist who only pretends to believe that the image is real in order to mock his wife and children, or rather, to punish them for their flights of fancy.

NOTES

[1]Norman H. Pearson, The Complete Novels and Selected Tales of Nathaniel Hawthorne (New York: The Modern Library, 1937), p. 1162.

[2]Ibid., p. 1161.

[3]Ibid., p. 1161.

[4]Ibid., p. 1162.

[5]Ibid., p. 1163.

[6]Ibid., p. 1163.

[7]Ibid., p. 1163.

[8]Ibid., p. 1163.

[9]Ibid., p. 1164.

[10]Ibid., p. 1164.

[11]Ibid., p. 1165.

[12]Ibid., p. 1166.

[13]Ibid., p. 1166.

[14]Ibid., p. 1167.

[15]Ibid., p. 1167.

[16]Ibid., p. 1167.

[17]Ibid., p. 1168.

[18]Ibid., p. 1169.

[19]Ibid., p. 1170.

[20]Ibid., p. 1170.

[21]Ibid., p. 1170.

[22]Ibid., p. 1170.

CONCLUSION

The theme of the child in the fiction of Nathaniel Hawthorne illustrates Hawthorne's view of the Puritan principles of predestination, original sin and evil inheritance.

After examining the selected works which focus on these subjects, I realized that each one portrays different conclusions in relation to its main characters, although they all converge on a common factor--environment.

In The Scarlet Letter Pearl escapes the Puritan community which oppresses her, leaving Boston to marry abroad. She thus breaks Puritan society's "closed" circle.

Presented in the novel as the scarlet letter embodied with life, Pearl fulfils a Puritan view of children in the sense that she is always, in her mother's opinion, throwing Hester's sin often before her eyes. However, this attitude is a reflection of the Puritan principles of the community which, by imposing punishment on Pearl's mother, determines Pearl's socially outcast condition. Her strange behavior throughout the novel, therefore, is seen by the community as a symptom of diabolism. But this interpretation lies only in the mind of the Puritan society of that time, for Pearl's changing behavior, I conclude, simply reflects this society's negative influence upon her.

I have emphasized that it is by means of the environmental aspect that Pearl is able to "save" her life from the Puritan oppression. Away from it, Pearl acts as normal as any human being, thus strengthening the idea that she responds to each situation according to the environment in which she is put.

Freed from the adverse and oppressive community, Pearl now is no more victimized by Puritan moral determinism.

"The Gentle Boy" shows us Ilbrahim, who, unlike Pearl, could not escape the Puritan "circle," for his submissive nature and defenseless condition lead him to death. The Quaker boy becomes both a victim of this Puritan persecution of his father, and a conscious martyr of his faithful Quakerism.

The attack which the Puritan children launch on Ilbrahim is a portrayal of their ancestors' beliefs. They repeat the old Puritan gesture of persecuting Quakers. These children are not freed from the past, but strongly determined by it. The Puritan environment in which they live influences them to the point of showing their aversion to the Quaker boy with too much violence, in the same way the Puritan adults of this community did to the boy's father. But, as I have said before, these children are not naturally bad, even as outsiders they are products of social environment.

In "The Artist of the Beautiful," the setting ceases to be that of a Puritan community and is instead one which shows a later society. The problem then is the struggle of art against the business world. Once again the community's prejudices exert a negative influence on the main character of the tale, although its objective is not achieved. Owen Warland, the artist, like Pearl, escapes the community's "circuit," thus condemning its weakness in relation to his great consciousness of art. Warland's mechanical butterfly, his art based on nature, is destroyed by a baby. It is in the grounds of nature that Warland finds the basis for his artistic creation. He always returns there in order to find inspiration to continue creating. It is also there that he finds out the power to free himself from society's oppression.

The baby that destroys Warland's creation is a reincarnation of his grandfather, Peter Hovenden, in the sense that the baby does what his grandfather would like to do in the course of the tale--to turn Warland from his sensitive art. But the baby's action does not ruin his artistic ideal because Warland is so involved in it that he feels "in advance" of mankind.

Acting as he did, however, the baby is not expressing natural aggression, but denoting behaviour "conditioned" by society. One may observe that even a baby can be influenced by his surroundings. Thus the baby does what the community wants, and reflects its strong determinism over him.

It has been my intention then, to emphasize that environment is the prime reason for the children of Hawthorne's fiction to act as they do. From the examples shown here I have come to the conclusion that the fate of these children converges to a common point--they are simply products of the communities in which they live. It is because of the power with which societies, Puritan or not, influence people that children become "corrupted," "conditioned," and "controlled" by them like mere "robots." In the works which I analyzed, children appear depraved, they show signs of evil inheritance and they repeat the sins of their forefathers but not of their own will. They are always subjected to a "closed" community ethic which usually conditions their behavior. Nathaniel Hawthorne's view of children then reveals him neither simply as a Puritan moralist nor as a Transcendental friend of the "noble savage," but as a man who sees the strong, but not inexorable, effect exerted by the community over the individual.

In "The Snow Image" the children are once more victims of their environment. Living with their parents and therefore submissive to them, Violet and Peony cannot escape their

oppression. Like the "gentle boy," these children are punished, but unlike the gentle boy's, their punishment is only implicit.

These children, suffering the oppression from their superior, are in the same level of inferiority as Warland in the sense that they become petrified with terror at their father's presence, the same way Warland was at Hovenden's.

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