HAWTHORNE'S PORTRAYAL OF SIN

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An examination of Hawthorne's novels, short stories, and sketches reveals the fact that the thoughts of this New England moralist are centered in his doctrine of sin. His interest in sin, however, is not the theologian's but the psychologist's and the sociologist's. He is concerned not with the technical interpretation of formalized religion but with the effects of sin upon the sinner and upon the people connected with him.

The purpose of this study is to find out to what extent the tragic development of Hawthorne's characters is the result of the Puritan conception of sin. The discussion is divided into three parts: first, the Puritan backgrounds of Hawthorne's life; second, the tragic development of Hawthorne's characters as the result of sin; and third, the influence of the Puritan conception of sin upon Hawthorne's portrayal of it in his tragic characters.
Chapter I

THE PURITAN Backgrounds OF HAWTHORNE'S LIFE

Nathaniel Hawthorne was born of Puritan ancestors in a Puritan town. Records show that his great-great-grandfather came to Massachusetts Bay Colony with Governor Endicott in June, 1630. Hildegarde Hawthorne in her fascinating book, The Romantic Rebel, gives the following characterization of William Hawthorne:

Sure of himself, impatient of anyone that differed from him, an out and out Puritan, he had Quakers whipped in the good cause, and strangers who could not prove they had come lawfully under sanction of the Company driven out of the place. He was always ready to expound the scriptures, and in fact he did expound them frequently in the meeting house at Manchester, where a pastor was lacking. The idle and the vagabond feared him, for he liked nothing better than to clap them into the stocks, remarking with his own idea of humor that since they enjoyed being idle, why idle they should remain to their hearts' content.

Then came John Hawthorne, great-grandfather of the writer, who was Justice of the Supreme Court, and Puritan to the core. His best known contribution to the history of Massachusetts Bay Colony was the sending of several witches to the stake. Daniel and Nathaniel, Hawthorne's grandfather and father, were both strong in the faith, although their names are less familiar to the world. As for the

mother's family, they seem to have followed the same tradition. Miss Hawthorne says of them: "The Mannings had their share of the Puritan temperament, their grim reserves and decided opinions."¹

Gorman, along with other biographers, lays great stress upon the importance of Hawthorne's ancestry:

The frowning shadow of his ancestors permeated his youth and early manhood, and, indeed, haunted him to the end of his life. To understand him one must understand his ancestors. They were the dark shadowed spring of icy water out of which rose the coldly delicate flower of Hawthorne's mind.²

Nathaniel Hawthorne had a keen interest in family tradition and heritage. Part of his inheritance weighed heavily upon him, especially the cruelty of his Puritan ancestors. The belief that his family lay under an inherited curse pronounced by a woman convicted of witchcraft by Judge Hawthorne affected deeply this imaginative, sensitive man. Other stories of Puritan activities came down to him through family tradition. What he could not learn from stories handed down by word of mouth he got from books, for he read everything he could find of early New England, the conquest of the wilderness, and the subdued coloring of infant Salem and Boston."³ In Salem lingered grim Puritan memories. Rich in legends and old

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¹ Hildegarde Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 10.
³ Ibid., p. 48.
wives' tales, the old town was full of the romance to which a sensitive youth such as Hawthorne would quickly respond.

All about was a countryside where for generations men had built meeting houses, listened to sermons, made holy war on the savages, founded sober households, and searched their consciences that they might root out the half-concealed evil. Puritan warfare, the Puritan home, and the Puritan conscience—these were both warp and woof in the cultural pattern which Hawthorne inherited; and out of these somber materials his elicate art was compelled to take form. ¹

So definitely Puritan seems Hawthorne's inheritance and background that we must check ourselves lest we be too ready to pronounce him a typical Puritan and so consider the matter settled. Says Percy Boynton: "It may seem almost too easy to account for the man he was."²

It is necessary that we know Hawthorne's background, but let us beware of being willing too quickly to term him a typical Puritan. Nathaniel Hawthorne was a confirmed individualist and a great genius. Other elements entered into his life besides Puritanism. His writings as a whole are the results of all of these factors. That we are going to center our attention upon sin and Puritanism does not mean that we can be too sure at the beginning that Hawthorne was a confirmed Puritan. The effects that Puritanism had upon him can be determined only by an

examination of his work. Perhaps he went along with it in his portrayal of sin; it may be that he rebelled against it. These are the things we have set out to discover as we study Hawthorne's use of sin in the tragic development of his characters.
Chapter II

THE TRAGIC DEVELOPMENT OF HAWTHORNE'S CHARACTERS AS THE RESULT OF SIN

In studying Hawthorne's tragic characters, I have grouped them according to the sinful condition which brought about their downfall. I have tried to choose characters for analysis which are most representative and typical and which have not been studied extensively.

Characters Whose Tragic Development Is Due to Their Realization of the Inevitability of Sin

First of all, let us consider a group of characters whose tragic development is the result of their awakening to the fact that sin is inevitable, both on their own part and on the part of their associates. With these characters, the tragic development does not usually end in death. It is, generally speaking, a passing from a state of happiness to one of unhappiness. Their downfall, however, involves just as much misery as if sudden and violent death awaited them.

There are a number of characters in Hawthorne's stories which owe their tragic development to this realization of the sinful condition of man, but we can look at only a few which are most typical and most striking.

Mr. Smith in "Fancy's Show-Box"

Mr. Smith is hardly a character in the true sense of the word. Perhaps we should refer to him as the subject of a sketch rather than as the full-fledged character of a story.
He does almost no acting and shows very little development, except for the fact that he passes from a pleasant feeling of satisfaction and well-being to an unpleasant sense of guilt and frustration. He is an interesting character, though, due to the fact that he is a clear and simple example of the person who suffers tragic development as the result of the consciousness of sin. It seems almost as if Hawthorne were laying the foundation for his more complicated characters of this type.

Mr. Smith was a venerable old gentleman who was sitting in his easy chair thinking over his past life. He had not the dread of solitude common to many aged people. So good had been his life that he needed no one "to stand between him and his own soul." His acquaintances had long regarded him as a pattern of moral excellence, and he was contented and happy during the last years of a life well lived. As Mr. Smith sat drinking a glass of old Madeira, three figures entered the room. He recognized them as Fancy, Memory, and Conscience.

The three guests drew near the silver-haired old man, Memory stationing herself at his right hand, Conscience on the left near his heart, and Fancy in front of him with a magnifying glass held on a level with his eye. As soon as they had taken their places, Fancy opened her picture box,

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which she had placed on a table near-by, and at the pulling
of a string showed Mr. Smith scenes from his past life.

The first picture was of a girl prostrate at the feet
of a young man. She was "evidently sinking under a weight
of shame and anguish." The young man was the personifica­
tion of triumphant scorn. Upon his lips was a haughty smile,
and in his eye shone a gleam of triumph as he glanced down
at the kneeling girl. Mr. Smith was puzzled as he gazed upon
the scene. Why should his visitors show him a picture like
this? Then Memory turned the pages of a large book which
she held, and Mr. Smith recognized Martha Burroughs, his first
love, as the prostrate girl. His temper rose, and he ex­
claimed, "O vile and slanderous picture! When have I triumphed
over ruined innocence?" He was sure that Martha was married,
early in her life, to David Tomkins and lived happily and re­
spectably as his wife and widow. Again Memory turned the
pages of her book and read in Mr. Smith's ear the record of
sinful thought, which was never embodied in an act. While
Memory was reading, Conscience unveiled herself and stuck a
dagger into Mr. Smith's heart. It was not a death-blow, but
the torture was extreme.

Next was a scene in which there was a table set with
several bottles and half-filled glasses of wine. It was
midnight. A young man lay on the floor dead, with a ghastly

wound in his temple; and bending over him was the youthful likeness of Mr. Smith. Again anger welled in the old man's heart. Edward Spencer was his true friend for more than half a century. No one ever murdered him. But in Memory's book was the record of a quarrel that had "flashed up" between Mr. Smith and Spencer one night when they were drinking together; and Mr. Smith, in the heat of anger, had thrown a bottle at Spencer's head. It missed him, and the next morning they had shaken hands and laughed heartily about the whole matter. While Memory was reading, Conscience again inflicted Mr. Smith with a wound, the pain of which was excruciating.

One more scene unveiled itself for Mr. Smith. He was portrayed as "stripping the clothes off the backs of three half-starved children."¹ He was deeply incensed at this and called the artist a fool and a knave. But Memory revealed that at one time Mr. Smith in a legal quibble was tempted to begin a lawsuit against three orphan children who were joint-heirs to a considerable estate. Fortunately things worked themselved out in another way, and Mr. Smith had forgotten the matter. But now Conscience gave him such a severe prick that he cried out. When he looked around, his three guests were gone. "There he sat alone, a silver-haired and highly venerated old man, in the rich gloom of the crimson-curtained room. ... Yet his heart still seemed to fester with the venom of the dagger."²

¹. "Fancy's Show-Box," p. 254.
². Ibid., pp. 255-6.
Elinor and Arthur in "The Prophetic Pictures"

In this story, Hawthorne proves himself a true literary artist. Simply and without sentimentality the two main characters move from love and happiness to distrust and misery as the result of their knowledge of the presence of sin in their own and each other's lives.

Elinor and Arthur were deeply in love and were to be married shortly. In Boston was a very remarkable man, a portrait painter who was able to paint "not merely a man's features, but his mind and heart." People said of him, "He catches the secret sentiments and passions and throws them upon the canvas, like sunshine - or perhaps, in the portrait of dark souled men, like a gleam of infernal fire." The two lovers decided to have the artist paint their portraits in order that they might hang them upon the wall of their new home. The young couple fascinated the artist; so, although he was already rushed with orders, he consented to allow them to sit for their portraits.

As they left the studio, after having made arrangements with the artist for their first sitting, Walter said to Elinor: "The old women of Boston affirm that after he has once got possession of a person's face and figure, he may paint him in any act or situation whatever - and the picture will be prophetic. Do you believe it?"

2. Ibid.
Elinor smiled and answered, "Not quite. Yet if he has such magic, there is something so gentle in his manner that I am sure he will use it well."¹

At last the time came when the portraits were finished and the subjects were to look at them for the first time.

At the first glance, through the dim light and the distance, seeing themselves in precisely their natural attitudes, and with all the air they recognized so well, they uttered a simultaneous exclamation of delight.

But as each stood for a long time looking at the portrait of the other, they began to see things they had not seen at first. Walter noticed that Elinor's eyes were fixed on him with a strangely sad and anxious expression. Grief and terror were on that canvas. He turned to look at the real girl as she stood contemplating his portrait, and he saw that Elinor's face had assumed precisely the expression which had startled him so in the portrait.

And Elinor, looking at the painting of her beloved, saw in his face a dark passion which made her afraid. She turned to the artist. "That look!" she whispered, and shuddered. How came it there?"³

"Madam," said the painter, "in both the pictures, I have painted what I saw. Would that I might convince myself of error."⁴

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2. Ibid., p. 200.
4. Ibid.
Elinor and Walter were married, and the pictures hung upon the wall of their home, side by side, "appearing to eye each other constantly."\(^1\) Friends came in from time to time and commented upon them. They observed that day by day Elinor's face took on a deeper pensiveness, and that Walter became reserved and downcast. At last Elinor covered the pictures with a curtain of purple silk, saying that she wished to protect them from the dust.

The years went by, and again the artist came to Boston. He had never forgotten the lovers whom he had painted. All this time they had weighed upon his memory. Then one day he called at their home, asking if he might see the portraits once more. As he entered the house, Elinor and Walter were standing before the pictures. For the first time in years they had parted the curtains. "The pictures, concealed for months, gleamed forth again ... appearing to throw a somber light across the room."\(^2\) But the artist's eyes were fixed upon the two people rather than upon the portraits. Upon looking at Elinor, he perceived that

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\text{a pensiveness, and next a gentle sorrow, had successively dwelt upon her countenance, deepening, with the lapse of time, into a quiet anguish... Walter's face was moody and dull or animated only by fitful flashes, which left a heavier darkness for their momentary illumination.}\] \(^3\)

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2. Ibid., p. 208
3. Ibid.
Walter stood looking upon his own picture, apparently abandoning himself to the spell of evil influence that the painter had cast upon his features. Elinor watched him, and her face assumed a look of terror when she perceived his wild expression. The resemblance of both to their portraits was complete.

Walter could stand it no longer. Drawing a knife, he shouted to Elinor: "Our fate is upon us! Die."¹

But the painter rushed between them. "Hold, madman!"² cried he, sternly. Again he had taken the form of Destiny. He was the agent who had foreshadowed this evil. And now he had become the Fate which impeded its own decree.

Goodman Brown in "Young Goodman Brown"

In the story, "Young Goodman Brown," Hawthorne has developed the same theme as in "The Prophetic Pictures," only this time he has made it more inclusive. To me the story is less convincing because of the use of supernatural elements and of allegory which is not always clear. Literary critics, however, consider "Young Goodman Brown" one of Hawthorne's best short stories.

Goodman Brown was living happily with Faith, his pretty young wife. One night he was to be away from home, and the leave-taking was particularly affectionate. Faith had a premonition that all would not be well, but Goodman Brown attributed this feeling to a woman's timidity and to the

¹ "The Prophetic Pictures," p. 204.
² Ibid.
fact that Faith sometimes had bad dreams. So he kissed her good-bye and went down the street, turning often to look back at her.

Goodman Brown walked along a dreary road far into the forest. His conscience hurt him, for he was keeping an appointment with the Devil. At last he stopped and sat down upon a log, trying to decide whether to go on or to turn back. If he went on, he could never again meet the eye of the good old minister at Salem village. It would break his wife's heart if she knew about the evil mission on which he was bound. His father never went on such an errand nor any of his forefathers. He had come from a race of honest men and good Christians.

As he sat there thinking, he heard footsteps, and a bent old woman hobbled by, leaning on her cane. With amazement he recognized Goody Cloyse, who had taught him his catechism and who was noted in the village for her piety. Then came the sound of horses and riders, and soon he recognized the voices of the minister and Deacon Gookin. Soon another group rode by, and to his horror Goodman Brown heard the voice of Faith, protesting and pleading.

Nothing could keep him now. He pushed on through the dark forest until he came to its very center. Then suddenly he came upon a large group of people. They were all there: church members of the village, fair young girls, members of the council board of the province, consorting with "men of
dissolute lives and women of spotted fame, wretches given
over to all mean and filthy vice. ... It was strange to
see that the good shrank not from the wicked, nor were the
sinners abashed by the saints.¹ Deacon Gookin and the
minister were in the very center of things, and they all
welcomed Goody Cloyse and Faith as converts.

There was a sheet of flame. The Devil had arrived,
and a voice spoke to all of them in welcome:

There are all whom you have reverenced
from youth. Ye deemed them holier than
yourselves and shrank from your own sin,
contrasting it with their lives of
righteousness and prayerful aspirations
heavenward. Yet here are they all in
my worshipping assembly. This night it
shall be granted to you to know their
secret deeds. ... It shall be yours to
penetrate in every bosom, the deep mys­
tery of sin, the fountain of all wicked
arts. And now, my children, look upon
each other. They did so; and by the
blaze of the hell-kindled torches, the
wretched man beheld his Faith, and the
wife her husband, trembling before that
 unhallowed altar.²

The next morning Goodman Brown walked slowly into the
streets of Salem village. The minister was taking his
morning walk and offered his usual blessing, but Goodman
Brown shrank from him. The words of the household prayer
came from Deacon Gookin's window. Goodman Brown heard it
scornfully. Faith ran out of the house to greet him. He
looked at her sternly and sadly and went on without speaking

². *Ibid.*, pp. 103-4
"Had Goodman Brown fallen asleep in the forest and only dreamed a wild dream of a witch meeting?" It makes no difference what really happened to him. From that day on he was "a stern, sad, a darkly meditative, a distrustful, if not a desperate man." He could no longer join in singing a holy Psalm because neither he nor the congregation was worthy of it. The preaching of God's word was blasphemy to him, since he knew the preacher to be a vile sinner. He shrank from his wife, for had they not met each other when their sinful natures were exposed? When he was carried to his grave, an old, old man, no hopeful verse could be carved upon his tombstone. His living and his dying hours had been spent in the deepest gloom.

Parson Hooper in "The Minister's Black Veil"

In "The Minister's Black Veil," the tragic character is Parson Hooper, a Puritan minister. This does not mean, however, that Hawthorne concerns himself with the theological viewpoint concerning sin. He simply is not interested in that aspect of wrong doing. He treats the minister sympathetically but with no more reverence than he treats any good man who has a responsible position to fill. The use of allegory in the story is apparent and sometimes rather confusing, making the tale somewhat vague and difficult.

2. Ibid., p. 106.
Parson Hooper was a young man, loved by his congregation and accepted as a worthy member of his community. One Sunday morning attendants at church were startled by the appearance of their pastor.

Swathed about his forehead, and hanging down over his face, so low as to be shaken by his breath, Mr. Hooper had on a black veil. On a nearer view it seemed to consist of two folds of crape, which entirely concealed his features, except the mouth and chin, but probably did not intercept his sight, further than to give a darkened aspect to all living and inanimate things.

The congregation listened as if enthralled to his sermon on secret sin, "and those sad mysteries which we hide from our nearest and dearest, and would fain conceal from consciousness, even forgetting that the Omniscient can detect them." It seemed that the black veil breathed a subtle power into his words.

After the service, people gathered in small groups and spoke in hushed voices. Some ventured the opinion that the good pastor's eyes had become weakened from much study and required protection. Others admitted they could not fathom the mystery of the veil; while a few intimated, none too subtly, that the good parson's mind must be failing. When Mr. Hooper walked among them as usual, saluting one person, inquiring about the health of another, no one aspired to the honor of walking by his side; and for the first time during

2. Ibid., p. 55.
his ministry among these people, he was not invited to a member's home for Sunday dinner. As he entered the parsonage, he looked back and saw that the people were staring at him, and a sad smile played about his mouth as he entered his home alone.

People avoided Parson Hooper. Even those who had been his closest friends shuddered and walked the other way to keep from meeting him. Children were frightened and ran from him. This was a cruel blow, for the minister loved children and counted most of them his friends. His plighted wife begged him for an explanation and asked that he let her look upon his face once more. But he refused, saying, "This dismal shade must separate me from the world. Even you, Elizabeth, can never come behind it. ... If I hide my face for sorrow, there is cause enough, ... and if I cover it for secret sin, what mortal might not do the same?"1 With a shudder she bade him farewell, and Parson Hooper marvelled that only a material emblem should separate them when that "which it shadowed forth, must be drawn darkly between the fondest lovers."2

Parson Hooper stayed in the town for many years. His preaching became more and more powerful, and he led many sinners to repentance. With the black veil over his face, he seemed to exert an awful spell over evildoers. But the

2. Ibid., pp. 63-4
good man was lonely. When he appeared on the street, wearing his black veil, sensitive people turned aside to avoid meeting him. He had no intimate friends. No visitors came to his house except those in trouble, and he was never invited to the homes of those to whom he ministered.

So Parson Hooper came to the end of a long and lonely life. On his deathbed, when those about him would have him lift the veil from his face, he uttered the words which are the moral of the story:

Why do you tremble at me alone? ... Tremble also at each other. When the friend shows his inmost heart to his friend; the lover to his best beloved; when man does not vainly shrink from the eye of his Creator, loathsome; treasuring up the secret of his sin; then deem me a monster, for the symbol beneath which I have lived and die! I look around me, and 'lo! on every visage a black veil.¹

There are other characters in Hawthorne's stories which owe their tragic development to a consciousness of their sinful condition. I shall mention briefly a few of them, showing that their downfall is according to the same general plan of those discussed at greater length. In "Dr. Heidegger's Experiment," we have four melancholy old people: Mr. Medbourne, Colonel Killigrew, Mr. Gascoigne, and the Widow Wycherly. As Hawthorne puts it, they were people "who had been unfortunate in life, and whose greatest misfortune it

¹ "The Minister's Black Veil," p. 69.
was that they were not long ago in their graves. By a brief return to the days of their youth, made possible by a drink of the elixir of life, they had impressed upon them the fact that if they were permitted to live their lives over, they would commit practically the same sins because of their natural inclinations. Likewise, Feathertop, though only a scarecrow, came to a sorrowful realization of his true state when he looked at himself in a mirror. These characters show, I believe, that Hawthorne frequently uses the realization of the inevitability of sin as a cause for the tragic downfall of people in his stories.

Before passing to another group of characters, it might be well to stop for a moment and summarize the things observed about Hawthorne's portrayal of sin in characters whose tragic development is the result of a consciousness of the sinful condition of man. 1. The tragic development of each character in this group is merely the passing from a state of happiness to one of unhappiness. 2. The characters fall as the result of flaws for which they are not responsible. 3. There is little struggle on the part of each character against his tragic fate. He realizes that he has little control over the sinful nature of human beings and consequently can do nothing to avert the unhappiness that awaits him. 4. Often the sin portrayed is vague and in-

definite. Hawthorne is not concerned so much with the sin itself as with the effect upon the sinner. 5. Man may sin in thought as well as in action. 6. No person can know another person exactly as he is, no matter how close the relationship between them, because of the presence of secret sin within each human heart. 7. Hawthorne passes easily from the real to the unreal. 8. He uses allegory, sometimes effectively and sometimes to the detriment of the story. 9. Hawthorne is concerned with the moral of the story. The reader often feels that the downfall of the character is brought about for the purpose of teaching a lesson. 10. At other times, Hawthorne permits his characters to stand or fall regardless of moral teaching, thereby producing a more artistic effect.

Characters Whose Tragic Development Is Due to the Poisonous Effect of Hidden Sin

Arthur Dimmesdale in "The Scarlet Letter"

Arthur Dimmesdale's tragic downfall is the result of his consciousness of sin. He differs from the characters of the first group in that his state of unhappiness comes from remorse over a certain definite sin which he has actually committed and not from a realization of the depraved condition of mankind. Arthur Dimmesdale is one of Hawthorne's outstanding tragic characters. Since he appears in a novel, his development is portrayed in great detail; consequently it will be impossible to give a complete discussion of his
downfall in this thesis. Dimmesdale, moreover, is a familiar character to most people. He has been analyzed and reanalyzed so frequently that we may satisfy our needs with only a brief glance at him as one of Hawthorne's tragic figures.

Dimmesdale held a high position as the minister of a Puritan church. He was respected so greatly by his parishioners that he could not bear to destroy their confidence in him. For years he went on living the life of a hypocrite. So effective was the working of his Puritan conscience and so keen was his remorse over his sins of adultery and hypocrisy that his character deteriorated and his body lost its manly strength. Still he did not have the courage to confess his sin and endure the contempt and scorn of the people who loved him and honored him more than any other man in the community. At last, however, he became willing to do anything to relieve himself of the intense mental and spiritual suffering of which he had become the victim. There is a touch of nobility in this broken man as he stands before the great crowd that has gathered and confesses his sins. In Arthur Dimmesdale, Hawthorne has created a tragic character which takes a place among the great characters of the literature of the world.

Reuben Bourne in "Roger Malvin's Burial"

In "Roger Malvin's Burial," Hawthorne again develops the theme that the concealment of a sin is much more disastrous in its effect than the sin itself. Roger Malvin
was mortally wounded in a battle with Indians. Reuben Bourne, his companion, left him to die alone, at his own request. Gradually the idea formed in Reuben's mind that in abandoning Malvin to his death he had committed murder. Instead of discussing his guilt with his minister, as was the Puritan custom, he avoided anything that pertained to the matter until his whole existence was poisoned by his consciousness of guilt. Retribution came to him in a horrible manner. Reuben Bourne accidentally killed his own son on the exact spot where, long years before, Roger Malvin had died alone.

It is possible to make a few generalizations concerning this second group of characters. 1. Their tragic development is climaxed in each instance by a dramatic situation. 2. Remorse over definite sins is the force that drags down Dimmesdale and Bourne. 3. Hawthorne makes hiding the sin a worse evil than the sin itself. 4. As in the first group, the evil act itself has almost no part in the story. The entire emphasis is upon the effect of the sin upon the sinner, or perhaps with Dimmesdale and Bourne one should say the effect of hidden sin upon the sinner.

Characters Whose Tragic Development Is Due to Sins Resulting in Estrangement

The sin of estrangement is to Hawthorne the greatest sin of all. Any interest or action which removes a person from human sympathy is a deep, dark sin which must result in tragedy. The estrangement theme is present in most of Hawthorne's tales, but in a few of them it is the force which
brings about the tragic downfall of one or more of the characters. It is to these characters that we now turn our attention.

Ethan Brand in "Ethan Brand"

Ethan Brand was a lime-burner, "a simple and loving man, watching his fire and ever musing as it burned."¹ It was a lonely existence, this business of sitting day after day watching the fire, moving only to add fuel or to exercise cramping muscles. To a man inclined to meditation, this occupation was decidedly thought-provoking. And Ethan Brand was such a man.

As he sat day after day "listening to the crackling of the kindled wood, and looking at the little spirits of fire that issued through the chinks of the door,"² Ethan Brand thought more and more about man and the evils which beset him. Thus his interest in sin began with pity for the sinner. Hour after hour he contemplated the problem of evil, and gradually there developed in his mind a great curiosity concerning a sin for which there could be no forgiveness. "What is the unpardonable sin?" asked Ethan Brand, "and where is it to be found?"

At last his desire to find the answer to this question became so strong that he left his lime-kiln and went out into the world to discover the unpardonable sin. At first

2. Ibid., p. 494.
he "looked into the heart of man, viewing it as a temple originally divine, and, however desecrated, still to be held sacred by a brother." Sometimes an awful fear seized him because he realized that in his search he was violating the sacredness of human souls. Then he prayed that his pursuit might not be successful, that the unpardonable sin might never be revealed to him.

Still the insatiable desire to discover this most horrible of sins burned brighter and stronger within him. The idea completely possessed his life. Deeper and deeper he probed into the soul of each human being with whom he came in contact. With cold and remorseless purpose, he conducted psychological experiments which often "wasted, absorbed, and perhaps annihilated the soul in the process."

As time went on, he was no longer a brother-man, opening the chambers or the dungeons of our common nature by the key of holy sympathy, which gave him a right to share in all its secrets; he was now a cold observer, looking on mankind as the subject of his experiment, and at length, converting man and woman to be his puppets, and pulling the wires that moved them to such degrees of crime as were demanded for his study.

In the long search for the unpardonable sin, Ethan Brand developed from an unlettered laborer into a mental giant who stood alone in his intellectual eminence; but, asks Hawthorne,

2. Ibid., p. 489
3. Ibid., p. 495.
"Where was the heart? That, indeed had withered, - had contracted, - had hardened, - had perished! It had ceased to partake of the universal throb."¹ For a time Ethan Brand's quest seemed doomed to failure. Then he looked into his own heart and found there the unpardonable sin.

It is a sin that grew within my own breast, he explained, a sin that grew nowhere else! The sin of an intellect that triumphed over the sense of brotherhood with man and reverence for God, and sacrificed everything to its own mighty claims!²

And so Ethan Brand was changed from a loving, sympathetic man into a fiend. His moral nature had failed to keep pace with his intellect. He returned to his old home, now that his quest was over, and the solitary mountain-side was made a place of horror by the fearful peal of his laughter, in which there was neither happiness nor mirth,— only scorn and hatred. Then one night Ethan Brand climbed the hillock of earth to the top of the lime-kiln which he had once tended. His life's work was over. He had accomplished his purpose, and he was proud to think how well he had accomplished it. Still he shuddered to think of his immortal soul for which there was no hope of salvation. He bent forward over the kiln, in which there was a blasting body of fire. The heat was terrific. The blue flames played about his face. He stood erect and raised his arms.

¹ "Ethan Brand," p. 495.
² Ibid., p. 485.
O Mother Earth, cried he, who art no more my mother, and into whose bosom this frame shall never be resolved! O Mankind! whose brotherhood I have cast off, and trampled the great heart beneath my feet! O stars of heaven, that shone on me of old, as if to light me onward and upward! — farewell all, and forever. Come, deadly element of Fire — henceforth my familiar frame! Embrace me as I do thee.

The next morning when the lime-burner opened his kiln, he found a human skeleton, as white as the lime itself. Within the ribs was the shape of a human heart. He lifted his pole and let it fall upon the skeleton, and the bones of Ethan Brand crumbled into dust.

Roger Chillingworth in "The Scarlet Letter"

Another character whose downfall comes as the result of pride of intellect is Roger Chillingworth. He was a man of great learning and keen mind. As Hester's husband, he used his learning and his intellect to discover her partner in sin. When he found him, he doled out vengeance upon him. And as he bent all his efforts to accomplish these two purposes, he changed from a reserved, scholarly gentleman to a miserable fiend. So we see that Ethan Brand and Roger Chillingworth were cut from the same pattern. Both had a great compelling purpose, the detection of sin. To this Chillingworth added the fiendish desire for revenge. Both analyzed human beings for evidence of the sins which they

were seeking to find. And as they analyzed, both became hard and no longer felt the sacredness of the individual soul which was being searched. Both became detached from their fellow-men because of the obsession which filled their lives. Both were successful in that they found the sins for which they were searching; but as a result of their merciless quests, both Ethan Brand and Roger Chillingworth emerged with hardened hearts and disintegrated personalities. Both had completely lost the human touch.

Lady Eleanor Rochcliffe in "Lady Eleanor's Mantle"

In "Lady Eleanor's Mantle," Hawthorne uses allegory more than in any other story, and it seems to me that he uses it more effectively. He is also greatly concerned with putting over the moral which he presents. Here we have also one of the most obvious uses of the estrangement theme. Lady Eleanor was already possessed of pride, her besetting sin, when she came into the story. It is with the tragic effect of this sin upon Lady Eleanor and the people of Massachusetts Bay Colony that the author deals.

Lady Eleanor Rochcliffe, a distant relative of the Governor of the colony, came from England to make her home at the Province House. Just as she was ready to alight from her carriage, a young man with wild eyes and disheveled hair rushed from the crowd and threw himself beside the coach, for Lady Eleanor to tread upon. She hesitated for a moment, as if she wondered if this person were worthy of
the honor of becoming her footstool; "then, though as lightly as a sunbeam on a cloud, she placed her foot upon the cowering form, and extended her hand to meet that of the Governor."¹ Hawthorne now inserts one of his moralizing passages: "Never, surely, was there an apter emblem of aristocracy and hereditary pride trampling on human sympathies and the kindred of nature, than these two figures presented at that moment."²

Shortly after Lady Eleanor's arrival, Governor Shute gave a ball in her honor. Only the highest in the land received invitations, and the scene was one of dazzling splendor. After the ceremonial greetings, Lady Eleanor stood apart from the mob of guests, insulating herself within a small and distinguished circle.... She beheld the spectacle not with vulgar ridicule, as disdaining to be pleased with the provincial mockery of a court festival, but with the deeper scorn of one whose spirit held itself too high to participate in the enjoyment of other human souls.³

She was very beautiful upon this occasion. Gossip had reported that much of her beauty was invested in an embroidered mantle which she wore about her shoulders. The mantle, according to a few superstitious women of the colony, had magic properties.

The circle around Lady Eleanor grew smaller and smaller, until only four gentlemen, all high officials and wealthy, remained in it. Champagne was served, but Lady Eleanor

² Ibid., p. 312.
disdained to wet her beautiful lips. Suddenly there burst into the crowd the same wild-eyed young man who had prostrated himself upon her arrival. He bore in his hand a silver goblet filled with wine. This he offered to Lady Eleanor as to a queen, "or rather with the awful devotion of a priest doing sacrifice to his idol." When she refused to drink, he pled with her:

> For your own earthly and heavenly welfare, I pray you to take one sip of this holy wine, and then to pass the goblet round among the guests. And this shall be a symbol that you have not sought to withdraw yourself from the chain of human sympathies - which whoso would shake off must keep company with fallen angels.¹

Lady Eleanor gave a laugh of scorn and drew the mantle more closely about her, and the wild young man was taken out in disgrace.

Nearby stood Dr. Clark, who had been watching Lady Eleanor intently. After a time, he asked the Governor to speak with him privately. The doctor's message seemed to worry the Governor intensely, and he announced that the ball must break up prematurely.

Conversation supplied by the great social event of the season was cut short by an epidemic of smallpox, that most dreaded scourge of colonial days. People of high social standing contracted it first; then it spread to all parts of the colony. The blood-red flag of pestilence was every-

where, even in front of the Province House; in fact, the course of the pestilence had been traced to the Governor's mansion, to the proudest of the proud. Dr. Clark, on the night of the ball, had seen that Lady Eleanor Rochcliffe was in the first stages of the dreaded disease, and had prevailed upon Governor Shute to send the guests home.

There remained no room for doubt that the contagion had lurked in that gorgeous mantle; ... its fantastic splendor had been conceived in the delirious brain of a woman on her death-bed, and was the last toil of her stiffening fingers, which had interwoven fate and misery with its golden threads.¹

When the pestilence was at its worst, Jervase Helwyse, the wild youth whom Lady Eleanor's scorn had driven mad, made his way to the Province House, up the stairs, and into her chamber. There he found a miserable creature whom he never would have recognized as the beautiful Eleanor Rochcliffe. It is from her lips that Hawthorne states the moral of the story:

The curse of Heaven hath stricken me, because I would not call man my brother, nor woman sister. I wrapped myself in pride as in a mantle, and scorned the sympathies of nature; and therefore has nature made this wretched body the medium of a dreadful sympathy. You are avenged - they are all avenged - Nature is avenged - for I am Eleanor Rochcliffe.²

That night a torch-light procession passed down the street bearing the effigy of a woman, enveloped in a richly

². Ibid., p. 325.
embroidered mantle. In advance of it, walked Jervase Helwyse, carrying the red flag of pestilence. Opposite the Province House the mob burned the effigy, and from the moment the wind blew away the ashes the pestilence abated.

Aylmer and Georgianna in "The Birthmark"

In the story "The Birthmark," both Aylmer and Georgianna are tragic characters. Aylmer is the one guilty of sin. His downfall is greater than Georgianna's because he has more to lose: his dream of flawless beauty, his faith in himself as a scientist, and his beautiful wife. Georgianna is merely Aylmer's tool. She is swept on to tragedy because of one tiny flaw in her beauty and because she has placed herself in a position to be subjected to whatever action Aylmer might decide upon. Her death is the least of her sufferings. Much more poignant is the sorrow of seeing herself repulsive to her husband.

Aylmer, a great scientist, married Georgianna, a beautiful young woman with whom he was very much in love. Shortly after their marriage, he noticed that there was a birthmark on her face, a tiny red hand, which changed hue with her varying moods. It was not that the birthmark was horrible to look upon; it was the fact that it was the one imperfection of her beauty that annoyed Aylmer. To him the crimson hand expressed the ineludible gripe in which mortality clutches the highest and purest of earthly mould, degrading them into kindred with the lowest
and even with the very brutes, like whom their visible frames return to dust. In this manner, selecting it as his wife's liability to sin, sorrow, decay, and death, Aylmer's solemn imagination was not long in rendering the birthmark a frightful object, causing him more trouble than ever Georgianna's beauty, whether of soul or sense, had given him delight.

Georgianna soon began to quake at her husband's gaze as they sat together in the evening. She knew that the tiny hand sickened him and made him shudder. Then one evening Aylmer asked her to let him remove it. He loved his wife; but in his heart was a desire for perfect beauty; and he longed to use his science to produce the perfection of beauty which was so nearly embodied in Georgianna. She willingly consented, even though she knew that such an attempt might mean a horrible blemish, intense suffering, and even death, for she felt that this tiny stain might go as deep as life itself. Still she would risk everything in order that she might not be repulsive to her husband, whom she loved so much.

So Aylmer set to work. He tried first one thing and then another, but everything failed. The small red hand was no surface blemish but went deep into his wife's body. It was a part of her very life. Still he went on experimenting and hoping, until only one thing was left for him to try.

Georgianna realized the danger, but she was resolute.

She felt how much more precious was such a sentiment than that meaner kind which would have borne with the imperfection for her sake, and have been guilty of treason to holy love by degrading its perfect idea to the level of the actual; and with her whole spirit she prayed that, for a single moment, she might satisfy his highest and deepest conception. Longer than one moment she well knew it could not be; for his spirit was ever on the march, ever ascending, and each instant required something that was beyond the scope of the instant before.

It is here that we find in Georgianna's tragic development a nobility which makes her death a triumphant thing. This tragic nobility is rare in Hawthorne's characters. Usually he lets the sin responsible for the downfall carry the character to the bitter end without any brightening effect of noble sentiment or action to sweeten the tragedy which has become inevitable.

And so Aylmer came to his last attempt at removing the birthmark from his wife's face, thereby attaining his ideal of the creation of perfect beauty. He approached the bed upon which Georgianna lay, bearing a crystal goblet containing a colorless liquid. "Aylmer was pale; but it seemed rather the consequence of a highly-wrought state of mind and tension of spirit than of fear or doubt."

"Give me the goblet," said Georgianna.

She quaffed the liquid and returned the goblet to his hand. Soon she sank into a deep sleep. Aylmer sat by her

2. Ibid., p. 68
side and watched. The emotions natural to a man in love were mingled with the keen observation of a man of science. He did not overlook the slightest symptom. There was a deeper flush of the cheek; then the crimson hand became more faintly outlined. Now it was almost gone. But Georgianna's face was too pale. Then she roused from her sleep, and the blood came back into her face. The hand was gone. For a moment Aylmer looked upon her perfect beauty. But it was only for a moment, for Georgianna lay dying. She looked at him lovingly and said: "My poor Aylmer, you have aimed nobly. Do not repent that with so high and pure a feeling, you have rejected the best the earth has to offer."¹

In this story Hawthorne brings about the tragic downfall of the two main characters by making the real triumph over the ideal. Aylmer's dream of perfection could never be achieved in the world in which he lived; still he thought about it constantly and used all his skill to bring it about, even though it meant the suffering and death of his beloved wife and his own estrangement from human kindness and sympathy.

Beatrice in "Rappaccini's Daughter"

In this story Hawthorne again uses zeal for science as the cause of tragedy. Rappaccini is a villain from the beginning, by far, the most reading of "Rappaccini's Daughter" I have ever read. He sees Rappaccini as a villain and Baglioni as a "good old man," when it is quite clear that Rappaccini is a representation of God, the creator, and Baglioni is a modern Satan, jealous of Rappaccini's creation. It's Baglioni who kills Beatrice.
ginning. He has no human feeling at all. His pursuit of science has completely hardened him and has isolated him from all human contact or sympathy. Because there is no development in his character Rappaccini can hardly be considered a tragic figure. Beatrice, although a more complex person than Georgianna, is less human and appealing. She struggles vigorously against the conditions which surround her; but fate has ordained only tragedy for her, and she is entirely helpless. So completely has she become enmeshed in the evil that surrounds her that it has become part of herself; consequently death is a release for her.

The reader's sympathy goes out to Georgianna, but one can only breathe a sigh of relief that at last Beatrice is freed from the poisonous existence she has led.

Dr. Rappaccini was a true man of science. Of that there could be no doubt. He would hesitate at nothing if he considered it to be in the interest of science. Among his fellow-practitioners, he had the reputation of caring "infinitely more for science than for mankind." They knew that "he would sacrifice human life, his own among the rest, or whatever else was dearest to him, for the sake of adding so much as a grain of mustard seed to the great heap of his accumulated knowledge." Dr. Rappaccini was famous for his medical theory that "all medicinal virtues are comprised

2. Ibid.
within those substances which we term vegetable poisons.\textsuperscript{1}

It followed that the more poisons one could produce the more powerful would science become in bringing about cures. So the eminent doctor cultivated plants producing poison, and it was said that he produced many new varieties.

From the time that Beatrice Rappaccini was born, her father determined that she should be different from other women, that she should have a power which other people did not possess. At the time that this child came into the world, he had just brought to perfection a new kind of plant, the offspring of his science, containing the most deadly poison ever produced. With the growth of this new plant came the desire to find out what effect it would have upon human beings. Could its poisonous attributes be transferred to the human body so that contact with it would have the same effect as contact with the plant? So he put his child to tending it, made her feel a kinship with it. In time she seemed to resemble the gorgeous shrub, came to be imbued with its fragrance.

Beatrice grew to be a beautiful young woman and a brilliant scholar. She had no outside contacts. Her father saw to that. He managed to keep her fairly contented with the study of science and the care of the beautiful garden, for some of the most poisonous plants were the most lovely.

\textsuperscript{1} "Rappaccini's Daughter," p. 117.
But she was not to be contented forever with this isolation. One day a young man, a student at the University of Padua, took rooms overlooking the garden. He saw Beatrice and loved her for her beauty. They met one day in the garden, and his love was returned. All the rich experiences that she had missed came flooding in upon the girl, and she realized that she could no longer be happy shut away from human contacts. Whenever Giovanni was with her, he was conscious that there was something strange about Beatrice. A hauntingly sweet fragrance clung to her, and she strangely resembled the gorgeous plant which she tended so gently but would not let him touch. Then one day he brought her flowers from outside the garden. Beautiful, fresh, waxy blossoms they were. Beatrice clutched them eagerly, and they immediately began to wither and die. At another time, an insect fluttered about her head, grew faint, and fell dead at her feet.

Not long afterward, Giovanni became conscious of a burning, tingling sensation in his hand—

the very hand which Beatrice had grasped in her own when he was on the point of picking one of the gemlike flowers. On the back of the hand there was now a purple print like that of four small fingers, and the likeness of a slender thumb upon his wrist.¹

He touched a flower in a vase in the room, and the life went out of it. In one corner, a spider was spinning its

web. Giovanni walked over and breathed on it. It gripped convulsively at the web and hung there dead. Giovanni was conscious too that a familiar sweet fragrance was filling the room.

The young man was frantic. In desperation he sought a friend of his father, an old physician who knew Dr. Rappaccini and his work. The good old man looked very sad and gave Giovanni a vial of medicine which he said would act as an antidote to the poison. Giovanni immediately sought Beatrice in the garden. He fairly hated her now. She was the only creature whom his breath would not slay. "Poisonous thing!" repeated Giovanni, beside himself with passion. "Thou hast done it! Thou hast blasted me! Thou hast filled my veins with poison!"

I see it! I see it! shrieked Beatrice. It is my father's fatal science! No, no Giovanni, it was not I! Never! Never! I dreamed only to love thee and be with thee a little time, and so to let thee pass away, leaving but thine image in mine heart; for, Giovanni, believe it, though my body be nourished with poison, my spirit is God's creature, and craves love as its daily food. But my father, he has united us in this fearful sympathy.

Giovanni now became conscious of

a sense, mournful, and not without tenderness, of the intimate and peculiar relationship between Beatrice and himself. They stood, as it were, in an utter solitude, which would be made none the less solitary by the densest throng of human life.

2. Ibid.
Then he remembered the medicine, the antidote. There was still hope. They would drink together and be saved.

"Give it to me!" said Beatrice. "I will drink; but do thou await the result."\textsuperscript{1}

As she put the vial to her lips, Dr. Rappaccini appeared and seemed to view triumphantly the handsome youth and the beautiful maiden.

My daughter, said Rappaccini, thou art no longer lonely in the world. Pluck one of those precious gems from thy sister shrub and bid thy bridegroom wear it in his bosom. It will not harm him now. My science and the sympathy between thee and him have so wrought within his system that he now stands apart from common men, as thou dost, daughter of my pride and triumph, from ordinary women.\textsuperscript{2}

Beatrice drank the potion and sank to the ground.

As poison had been life, so the powerful antidote was death; and thus the poor victim of man's ingenuity and of thwarted nature, and of the fatality that attends all such efforts of perverted wisdom, perished there, at the feet of her father and Giovanni.\textsuperscript{3}

And thus Hawthorne ends the story with a warning against anything which tends to set one person apart from the great mass of human life.

Hollingsworth and Zenobia in "The Blithedale Romance"

Let us turn for a moment to two characters of The

\textsuperscript{1} "Rappaccini's Daughter," p. 146.
\textsuperscript{2} Ibid., pp. 146-7.
\textsuperscript{3} Ibid., p. 147
Blithedale Romance. Hollingsworth and Zenobia are developed throughout a full-length novel. They fit quite nicely into Hawthorne's estrangement pattern. For these two reasons, I shall discuss them only in a general way. They have also been analyzed so frequently by writers on Hawthorne that little remains to be said.

Hollingsworth was guilty of what might be called "the sin of philanthropy." It makes little difference, however, what name is applied. It may be ambition, zeal for science, or philanthropic scheme, - the result is the same: a person dominated by one fixed and absorbing purpose loses all sense of human connection, and estrangement results. For years Hollingsworth had had a scheme for reforming criminals. Before he came to Blithedale, he had pursued this one object so exclusively that he had shut out everything else. As a result, he found himself at odds with the world. Blithedale appealed to him, not because he was interested in an experiment in communistic living, but because by exploitation he saw in it an opportunity to bring about his purpose of establishing a colony for the reformation of criminals. That he could not accomplish this purpose and remain true to the movement he had pledged himself to support did not trouble him at all. So out of tune had he become with ordinary living that its cardinal principles no longer existed for him. When both Zenobia and Priscilla fell in love with him, he determined to choose the one who could help him most in furthering his project. He loved Priscilla,
but Zenobia was wealthy; so he turned to her, nearly breaking Priscilla's heart. Then when Zenobia lost her wealth, he turned again to Priscilla. His downfall came at Zenobia's death. He realized that he had caused her to commit suicide and that he was a murderer and himself a member of the criminal class which he had dreamed of aiding.

It was pride that caused Zenobia to lose the human touch. She was a beautiful woman, unusually endowed with personality and intellect. As a writer and an actress she had had some success. She should have accomplished much, but as a result of her pride she became disintegrated from society; and her life was a miserable failure. Hawthorne, with his love for symbolism, uses the fresh flower which Zenobia wears in her hair as the symbol of her pride. Her attitude toward Priscilla is also indicative of Zenobia's haughty spirit. She was flattered by Priscilla's admiration and devotion, but she was annoyed at having anyone depend upon her so completely. She accepted Priscilla because Hollingsworth wanted her to do so, but she could not resist turning against the girl and doing her actual harm when such an action seemed to contribute to her own welfare.

Zenobia was not contented to go along in the way of the normal woman. She considered herself intellectually superior and insisted upon competing with men in their activities. In this way, she brought on criticism and made enemies. Hawthorne, not having the twentieth-century viewpoint, does
not consider intellectual superiority woman's greatest asset; so he makes pride of intellect a part of the sinful condition contributing to Zenobia's estrangement.

When Zenobia met Hollingsworth, pride and selfishness came in contact with each other, with tragic results to both people. Zenobia loved Hollingsworth passionately; but although he had the innate capacity for love and tenderness, he had pursued one purpose for so long that he could not give these qualities a chance to save him from disaster. Zenobia and Hollingsworth were miserable together—her pride made it impossible for her to yield completely to him as he in his selfishness demanded her to do, and so they went on, destroying each other's happiness and power. When he turned against her for Priscilla, Zenobia, isolated as she was from mankind because of her proud and haughty spirit, committed suicide, probably partially with the idea of punishing Hollingsworth and Priscilla. It is with a touch of genius that Hawthorne expresses the opinion that had Zenobia known how ugly her torn and twisted body would be, she might not have drowned herself.

Let us now glance briefly at other characters whose tragic development is the result of a sin which brings about estrangement and in some instances almost complete isolation. Richard Digby in "The Man of Adamant" is an excellent example. He built up within himself the belief that he alone worshipped God in the right way. And so to
remove himself from the polluting influences of the evil people about him. Richard Digby lived in a cave and worshiped alone. So hard and unfeeling did he become as a result that at last he turned into a stone. "The Man of Adamant" is one of Hawthorne's satirical sketches, and it is obvious that in it he gives play to his love of symbolism. Another example is that of Wakefield, who separated himself from his home and his wife simply because of a whim. The longer he stayed away the harder it was to go back. At last he found himself the unhappy victim of complete estrangement from that which he held most dear. Then there is Fanshawe, who recognized the fact that his sin estranged him from his beloved; so he gave her up to the man who could make her happy. Here is one of the noble gestures which we find occasionally in Hawthorne's stories. In addition, Parson Hooper, whom we have discussed with the first group, might also be included in this classification of characters who meet their downfall as the result of estrangement.

There are a number of characters in Hawthorne's stories and sketches whose development is not complete. We see them only in their last stages. Gathergold, Blood and Thunder, and Old Stony Phiz in "The Great Stone Face" are good examples. They are unable to attain true nobility because all their lives they have followed a single ambition and have become obsessed with a certain idea. As usual, these
obsessions contribute to their estrangement from human understanding and human sympathy. Peter Goldthwaite in "Peter Goldthwaite's Treasure" is another example of this type of character, although Peter is more fully developed than some of the others. Likewise in "The Great Carbuncle," Hawthorne presents more characters who have lost the common touch. The Seeker, Ichabod Pigsnort, Dr. Cacaphodel, the Poet, and Lord de Vere think only of the one great impulse which drives them on and on to find the jewel which they have sought for so long. In this story, Hawthorne again allows a gleam of light to penetrate the darkness of selfishness and sin in the young couple, Matthew and Hannah, who give up their search for the carbuncle, when they realize that they do not really want it at the price they will have to pay.

In The Marble Faun, Hawthorne reverses his usual theory and makes Donatello a part of the life about him, due to the fact that his commission of sin has educated him, giving him human understanding which he did not have before. At least he and Miriam come to understand each other as the result of sin. To me the novel is unconvincing. I feel that Hawthorne is merely playing with an idea which we cannot take seriously in considering his portrayal of sin.

In summarizing Hawthorne's use of sin resulting in estrangement, we observe several things. 1. The tragic development usually results in death. 2. Only occasionally
does Hawthorne make the tragic downfall beautiful because of a noble gesture on the part of the tragic character.

3. The downfall is the result of a character flaw which the person might have overcome in the very beginning; but by one false step, he becomes powerless to fight against it.

4. Sometimes the characters struggle to avert their downfall, but the decree of fate is inexorable, making their struggle useless.

6. The greatest of all sins are those which end in estrangement. Anything which cuts men off from sympathy with the rest of the world is a deadly sin. The sins of estrangement take various forms, as is illustrated by the characters portrayed.

7. The sins of estrangement are evident in most of Hawthorne's work, but in certain stories, he makes estrangement the outstanding theme.

We now turn to the last group of characters, those whose tragic development is the result of conditions outside themselves.

Characters Whose Tragic Downfall Is the Result of Sinful Conditions Outside Themselves

Hepzibah and Clifford in "The House of the Seven Gables"

The Pyncheon family had been hated for generations, at first because of the wickedness of that grim old Puritan, Colonel Pyncheon, and later because his traits of harshness and cruelty had established themselves permanently in the Pyncheon line. For generations the family had existed under an inherited curse, invoked by old Matthew Maule on the
scaffold. "God will give him blood to drink," shouted the wizard-like old man, pointing to Colonel Pyncheon, who was responsible for his death. And so succeeding generations had been forever conscious of that curse and had gone down under it. Physically the malediction had been carried out by the fact that death came to the Pyncheon heirs by apoplexy.

Hepzibah and Clifford were the most tragic victims of the evil heritage of the Pyncheon family, of which they were the last feeble vestiges. They were innocent sufferers, on the whole, the victims of the eternal presence of an evil past.

We meet Hepzibah for the first time on the morning when she was about to open a cent shop. She was seized with horror at this the beginning of a new adventure. In the first place, she felt that she was disgracing the Pyncheon name by earning her own living; and in the second place, she had remained shut up in the old house for so long, entirely apart from the world, that she shuddered at the idea of putting herself in the way of human contacts. Standing helplessly in her little shop, she was a true picture of ineffectual, decayed aristocracy. Hawthorne describes her with more sympathy than he usually feels for his characters:

> Nervously - in a sort of frenzy, we might almost say - she began to busy

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1. The House of the Seven Gables, p. 21.
herself in arranging some children's playthings, and other little wares, on the shelves and at the shop-window. In the aspect of this dark-arrayed, pale-faced, lady-like old figure, there was a deeply-tragic character, that contrasted irreconcilably with the ludicrous pettiness of her employment. It seemed a queer anomaly, that so gaunt and dismal a personage should take a toy in her hand; a miracle, that the toy did not vanish in her grasp; a miserably absurd idea, that she should go on perplexing her stiff and somber intellect with the question how to tempt little boys into her premises.

There is a ray of brightness in Hepzibah's character, however, in that she responded to Phoebe's need and gave her a home, partly because she realized that this charming girl with her abounding vitality could fill a need in her life. Hepzibah lived for her unfortunate brother. She longed to make up to him a little of that which he had missed during his long years of imprisonment. The tragedy of her life came when she proved ineffective in carrying out this purpose. Clifford could not endure the sight of her homely face. His feeble intellect could not grasp the fact that much of her homeliness had come because of long years of worry about his miserable condition. And so Hepzibah had to give over to another the task of which she had dreamed so long, that of nursing her beloved brother back to health. Hepzibah's tragedy is that of ineffectiveness, of incompleteness, the result of her Pyncheon inheritance.

Clifford is so terribly pathetic that he fails to win the sympathy of the reader. It seems to me that if Hawthorne ever became sentimental it was in creating Clifford Pyncheon. He was the victim of a terrible injustice, having been convicted of a murder of which he was innocent, and having spent what should have been the best years of his life in prison. When at last he was released, he was a physical and mental wreck. Most characteristic of him was a great love of beauty and a corresponding hatred of ugliness, which, in his weak mental state, caused him great suffering. If he saw something beautiful, it upset him emotionally; and if something ugly came within his vision, he recoiled from it. Even his sister Hepzibah's homely old face distressed him so that Phoebe had to assume the place that Hepzibah had dreamed of taking.

So the two Pyncheons lived in the House of the Seven Gables, longing for a happiness which they could never have. One of the most touching passages in Hawthorne's work is the description of Hepzibah and Clifford as they started to church one morning, the first time they attempted to make friendly contacts with the outside world:

So Hepzibah and her brother made themselves ready, — as ready as they could, in the best of their old-fashioned garments, which had hung on pegs, or been laid away in trunks, so long that the dampness and mouldy smell of the past was on them, — made themselves ready in their faded bettermost, to go to church. They descended the staircase together, — gaunt, sallow Hepzibah, and
pale, emaciated, age-stricken Clifford! They pulled open the front door, and stepped across the threshold, and felt, both of them, as if they were standing in the presence of the whole world, and with mankind's great and terrible eye on them alone. ... The warm sunny air of the street made them shiver. Their hearts quaked within them at the idea of taking one step further. ... They shrank back into the dusky passage-way, and closed the door. But, going up the staircase again, they found the whole interior of the house tenfold more dismal, and the air closer and heavier, for the glimpse and breath of freedom which they had just snatched.

Hawthorne ends the novel happily, contrary to his usual custom, that is, happily as far as the plot of the story is concerned. The curse of the Maule family upon the Pyncheon family is removed by the marriage of a Maule and a Pyncheon. So Holgrave and Phoebe bring together the two conflicting elements, but they could never make Hepzibah and Clifford normal, happy individuals.

Ilbrahim in "The Gentle Boy"

Ilbrahim was a little Quaker boy whose father had been killed and whose mother had been sent into exile by the Puritans during the Quaker persecutions. One evening shortly after this bloody event, Tobias Pearson, a Puritan, was returning home, when he saw a "slender and light-clad little boy" sitting on the hastily made grave in which the bodies of the martyrs had been carelessly buried. Pearson loved

1. The House of the Seven Gables, pp. 203-4.
children, and his heart had been rendered especially tender toward them by the death of his own babies while they were still quite young. This Quaker child was a beautiful little boy. "The pale, spiritual face, the eyes that seemed to mingle with the moonlight, the sweet airy voice ... almost made the Puritan believe that the boy was in truth a being which had sprung up out of the grave on which he sat."1

The child was cold and hungry, and worse than this, he was lonely and frightened. Pearson knew that all the doors of the land were closed to him because he was a Quaker. He could not bear to leave this child in his desolate state; so he took him to his home. Tobias knew that Dorothy, his wife, would welcome the boy, for the instinct of motherhood still burned in her heart.

As they entered the house, she asked: "What pale and bright-eyed little boy is this, Tobias? Is he one whom the wilderness folk have ravished from some Christian mother?"2

"No, Dorothy, this poor child is no captive from the wilderness," he replied. "The heathen savage would have given him to eat of his scanty morsel, and to drink of his birchen cup; but Christian men, alas! had cast him out to die."3

Dorothy took the boy into her home and into her heart, as Pearson knew she would do, and soon he was as happy as

2. Ibid., p. 92.
3. Ibid.
he could be away from his own mother. He was a lovable child and made their home bright with his sprightly gaiety. The Pearsons soon decided to keep him with them. They would rear him as a Puritan and make him a good man. But soon Tobias began to feel the antipathy of his Puritan brethren. The officials of the church met with him and expressed hearty disapproval of his harboring a member of the hated sect. Intimate friends became cold and openly condemned the Pearsons because they refused to send this child away. When they took him to the meeting-house, there were strange mutterings and hostile looks. But Dorothy drew the child closer to her and looked straight ahead.

With good food and warm clothing, Ilbrahim developed physically and became more beautiful than ever. Every night he said the prayer his Quaker mother had taught him. This surprised his foster parents, for it was very like their own prayers. In every way the child became more and more lovable, and the Pearsons were happier than they had been for many days, except for the persecution of their Puritan brothers. Gradually the hatred of his fellow-Puritans entered into the heart of Tobias and made him a hard and bitter man, except where Dorothy and Ilbrahim were concerned. To them, he was as gentle as ever.

One day a group of Puritan children called to Ilbrahim to join them in their play. This delighted him, for their former scorn of him had hurt him deeply, and he went to them
eagerly. As soon as he was in their midst, they "beat him down, trampled upon him, dragged him by his long, fair locks." The spirit of their elders was reflected in the youth of the Puritan colony. Neighbors rescued the child and took him to the Pearson's door. Ilbrahim was badly hurt, but his physical wounds were nothing when compared with his wounded spirit. Dorothy and Tobias tended him devotedly, but they could not comfort him. He wanted his mother. Fortunately the poor outcast heard of her little son's fate; and at great peril for her own life, she made her way to him. 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.

In this simple, appealing story, Hawthorne makes an innocent child the victim of religious intolerance. The Gentle Boy is probably the outstanding example of a character whose tragic downfall is completely the result of outside forces. Clifford and Hepzibah were helpless in the face of surrounding circumstances, but their inability to cope with the situation was due in part to weaknesses within themselves. Ilbrahim, however, is swept downward by the tide of Puritan persecution, with no chance at all of fighting back at the forces which were dragging him down.

2. Ibid., p. 125
Hester Prynne in "The Scarlet Letter"

Since Hester Prynne has been analyzed over and over again, I shall discuss her very briefly as a tragic character. Hester was a beautiful woman, possessed of great warmth of personality and keenness of intellect. Hers should have been a victorious life. She was guilty of a great sin, acknowledged it, and bore her punishment as best she could. The Puritan law decreed that she must be an outcast, because of the Scarlet Letter on her breast. In one sense, she rose triumphant above her punishment, since she did not become a broken wreck, but adjusted her life and went forth on her errands of mercy. But in a larger sense, Hester Prynne is a tragic figure because she lost her ability to react normally to the contacts of life. Puritan harshness dragged her down in spite of her valiant effort to withstand it. She never had a normal relationship with her child, and we see that she had lost her perspective when she suggested to Dimmesdale that they might live happily as fugitives in another land. The years passed, and a generation came on that knew nothing about Hester's sin. Everyone was conscious, however, that there was something different about this dignified, handsome woman, something which set her apart even more than did the Scarlet Letter which she refused to remove from her breast. The rigid discipline of the Puritan community in which she lived had exacted its toll by making the beautiful Hester Prynne a pathetically tragic character.
We can only mention other characters whose tragic downfall is the result of sinful conditions outside themselves. The young man in "The Ambitious Guest" is clearly a victim of fate. Possibly he does not even belong in this category. I mention him only because his death shows so clearly Hawthorne's fatalistic tendency. Turning to "The Shaker Bridal," we find that Martha and Adam are the victims of the fixed code of the Shaker religion. To Hawthorne it seems a false code of ethics imposed by a religious movement which has lost its spiritual beauty by becoming too fixed. And again, we may turn to "Edward Fane's Rosebud." Here Rose Grafton is the victim of arrogance on the part of the mother of her fiance. We might also call Little Pearl a tragic character because of her abnormal life and makeup. That she is the victim of her mother's sin and of Puritan harshness is obvious. So might Priscilla in The Blithedale Romance be thought of as having undergone tragic development, since she suffered greatly at the hands of Hollingsworth and Zenobia.

It is clear, then, it seems to me, that Hawthorne frequently makes his characters helpless and often innocent victims of the sins of society and of other individuals.)
Chapter III

INFLUENCE OF THE PURITAN CONCEPTION OF SIN
IN THE TRAGIC DEVELOPMENT OF
HAWTHORNE'S CHARACTERS

The term Puritanism has been used so frequently and so loosely that it has come to have a variety of connotations. Too often it is applied to anything which savors of moral restraint or inhibition. Even when the word is correctly used, it is a broad term. It includes numerous teachings in several countries and covers a period of about four hundred years. It is necessary, then, to clarify the term and to limit the use of it, if we are to be definite in our application and consistent in our viewpoint.

The Oxford Companion to English Literature defines a Puritan as "a member of that party of English Protestants who regarded the reformation of the Church under Elizabeth as incomplete, and called for its further 'purification' from what they considered to be unscriptural and corrupt forms and ceremonies retained from the unreformed church."¹ This definition is very good as far as it goes, but it is decidedly limited. There is much more in Puritanism than any short definition can even imply. It seems better, therefore, to give a brief explanation of this widespread movement, as it has functioned in life and in literature. Miller

and Johnson in their recent book The Puritans do this well:

It is true, the Puritans were Calvinists, if we mean that they were more or less agreed with the great theologian at Geneva. They held, that is, that men had fallen into a state of sin, that in order to be saved they must receive from God a special infusion of grace, that God gives the grace to some and not to others out of his own sovereign pleasure, and that therefore from the beginning of time certain souls were 'predestined' to heaven and the others sentenced to damnation.... But the theology of New England was not simply Calvinism, it was not a mere reduplication of the dogmas of the Institutes. What New Englanders believed was an outgrowth ... of their back­ground, which was humanistic and English, and it was conditioned by their particular controversy with the Church of England.... The emigrants went to New England to prove that a church erected on the principles for which they were agitating in England would be blessed by God and prosper. The source of the New England ideology is not Calvin, but England, or more accurately, the Bible as it was read in England, not in Geneva.

This brings us to the Massachusetts Bay Colony in the sixteen­hundreds when "Puritanism may perhaps best be described as that point of view, that philosophy of life, that code of values which was carried to New England by the first settlers in the early seventeenth century." 2

We shall base our discussion, therefore, upon

Puritanism in New England during the seventeenth century. This particular limitation fits into our study for several reasons. 1. In the seventeenth century, we find in their

2. Ibid., p. 1.
purest forms the basic principles of Puritanism as it was practiced in America. 2. Hawthorne was influenced by seventeenth century New England Puritanism, through his family, local tradition, and his own reading. It formed for him one of the chief interests of his life. 3. Hawthorne wrote about the Puritans during colonial days in America. He tried to portray the life that they lived and the things that they believed. 4. Changes which came about in Puritanism in later years resulted in new movements and new influences that are beyond the scope of this discussion.

Let us consider very briefly a few of the outstanding Puritan principles concerning the problem of evil. Sin, which plays a part in most theologies, was the central theme of Puritanism. The Puritans believed that man was sinful from two viewpoints: naturally, since he was born to sin; and actually, because he committed sinful acts. Since man inherited a depraved nature, his only chance of salvation was through God's grace by means of atonement. This salvation, however, was effective for only certain chosen ones. The Doctrine of Predestination is one of the best known Calvinistic teachings. The Puritans subscribed to it in varying degrees. Their great concern for their salvation led them to analyze themselves and others with the purpose of finding out who were the Elect and who were condemned to damnation. They were deeply concerned about the unpardonable sin. What evil act could be so terrible as never to
be forgiven? Each person repeatedly searched his mind and soul, trying to determine whether he had committed it. And then he turned upon his neighbor and asked the same question concerning him. Thus by analyzing themselves and others the Puritans turned their thoughts inward, away from things of the world to those of the spirit.

We shall now turn back to our study in Chapter Two for the purpose of finding traces of this Puritan conception of sin in Hawthorne's characters.

The first group of characters, those whose tragic development is due to their realization of the inevitability of sin, shows quite definitely the Puritan idea of total depravity. Step by step their downfall comes from an awakening to their own naturally sinful condition or to the sinfulness of people whom they have admired and trusted.

Mr. Smith, for example, is made to realize what a vile creature he really is. He has long been a respected member of his community. He has lived what he considers to be a worth-while life. Then the fact is revealed to him that in his thoughts he has been guilty of seducing a young girl, of murdering his best friend, of scheming to gain money dishonestly from three orphan children. So miserable does this realization make him that he changes from a happy and contented old gentleman to a miserable man whose remorse is almost more than he can bear. Here Hawthorne lays the foundation for his portrayal of man's depravity. He begins
"Fancy's Show-Box," the sketch in which Mr. Smith appears, with a statement of the problem he wishes to solve:

What is Guilt? A stain upon the soul. And it is a point of vast interest whether the soul may contract such sins, in all their depth and flagrancy, from deeds which may have been plotted and resolved upon, but which, physically, have never had existence. 1

He answers the question by showing the disastrous effect of the realization of his sinful condition upon Mr. Smith's attitudes and personality. Here Hawthorne makes a distinction between natural sin and actual sin. Man is inevitably sinful because he is born to sin. He cannot completely control his thoughts and impulses. In Mr. Smith's downfall, we discern clearly the result of the Puritan conception of natural sin.

It is in "Fancy's Show-Box" that Hawthorne expresses most clearly the Puritan conception of salvation:

Man must not disclaim his brotherhood, even with the guiltiest, since, though his hands be clean, his heart has surely been polluted by the flitting phantoms of iniquity. He must feel that, when he shall knock at the gate of heaven, no semblance of an unspotted life can entitle him to entrance there. Penitence must kneel, and Mercy come from the footstool of the throne, or that golden gate will never open. 2

Although this belief in salvation by the intervening grace of God does not actually contribute to character

2. Ibid., p. 257.
development, it seems to me that we may refer to it briefly at this point, for it is an important principle of the Puritan religion. Then, too, repentance and salvation are always closely connected with any study of the problem of sin.

The happiness of Elinor and Walter in "The Prophetic Pictures" is changed to misery when each perceives the sins of the other. Elinor fears her husband, for she sees that he is the slave of passion. Walter becomes resentful and morose and gives way to his passionate nature because he knows that his wife fears him, that she does not have the perfect trust that a wife should have in her husband. They are only two more examples of the natural depravity of man, but they are not able to make allowances for each other and they become more and more miserable; consequently they are two more victims of the Puritan conception of sin. Goodman Brown has a similar tragic downfall, except that the bitterness which follows his realization of the depraved nature of his fellow men extends not only to his wife but to everybody around him. The good woman who taught him his catechism now seems a poisonous influence to the children. She instructs because he has had a glimpse of her as a sinful person. For the same reason, the minister's reading the Bible becomes blasphemy, and Brown has only sneers and contempt, when previously he had felt deep veneration for the good pastor. Goodman Brown comes to the realization that
there is no person in the world who is not a vile sinner, and he goes to his grave a miserable and bitter man.

In Parson Hooper, we find the same tragic downfall due to the consciousness of sin. The Parson wears the veil because he has come to realize more and more his sinful state. This realization develops as the result of intensive self-analysis, a tendency common among the Puritans, which grew out of their great interest in sin and the soul's salvation. Hooper is an educated man and is able to view his condition of natural depravity more objectively and consequently more philosophically than other characters. He does not become hard nor bitter; his tragic development comes from the fact that his wearing the veil makes people avoid him, and he becomes lonely and friendless.

Arthur Dimmesdale, although his unhappiness comes from remorse over a certain definite sin rather than from a generally sinful condition, is another example of the tragic effect of self-analysis. Puritan minister that he is, he naturally has the keen interest in sin which is typical of Puritanism. He examines himself almost constantly. Whether we say that his tragic development is the result of the consciousness of sin, of the operation of the Puritan conscience, or of excessive self-analysis, the conclusion is the same. (Arthur Dimmesdale's tragic downfall to a great degree is the result of the Puritan conception of sin.)
Most outstanding of Hawthorne's characters whose tragic development is due to their interest in sin and the consequent self-analysis is Ethan Brand. The reader is referred to the discussion of this character above.¹ The fascination which the discussion of the unpardonable sin held for Brand is but an outgrowth of his Puritan interest in sin. What is the unpardonable sin and who has committed it were two questions asked by all Puritans. Thus we see that Hawthorne was only following still further the leading of Puritanism when he chose the unpardonable sin as the subject of a story.

Hawthorne does not go into a theological discussion of the Doctrine of Predestination. Being neither Calvinist nor theologian, he probably did not subscribe to it in his own mind. The characters of his stories, however, are swept onward by forces which are beyond their control. One move in the wrong direction and they are victims of the fate to which their sins consign them. Hawthorne's fatalistic handling of his characters leads us to suspect the influence of the Doctrine of Predestination through Puritanism, which, as we have already seen, affected him so greatly in his portrayal of sin.

Once launched on their tragic course, the people in Hawthorne's stories make little or no effort to avert the

tragic outcome which they see awaiting them. Ethan Brand, for example, realizes that he has gone too far in his efforts to discover the unpardonable sin. He knows that he is hurting others and enslaving his own soul. He even prays that his quest may end in failure; still he goes on. Nothing can stop his activities, not even he himself. Goodman Brown, Elinor and Walter, Parson Hooper, all realize that since man is naturally vile and sinful, nothing can be done about it; so they make no effort to avert their tragic fate. Dimmesdale, too, although he struggles more than the others, realizes that his fate is inevitable. Hepzibah, Clifford, and Ilbrahim, victims of circumstance, do not "fight back," for they know there is no use. And anyway, they are not the stuff of which fighters are made. There is no need to say more. These characters and many others like them fall because they make no effort to keep from it. They make no effort to avert a tragic fate because they believe that, being naturally sinful, they must accept the consequences of sin, unless the Divine Will intervenes. Whether this intervention will be made in their behalf is not for them to determine; consequently any effort on their part would be useless. Thus we see that in many instances the tragic downfall of Hawthorne's characters is the result of the Puritan conception of sin.

So far we have found Hawthorne going along with Puritanism in his portrayal of sin. But he also rebels against it and shows its weaknesses so that the tragic
downfall of several of Hawthorne's characters reveals his protest against Puritanism. 

Hawthorne's chief objection to Puritanism is that too frequently religious zeal developed into intolerance and arrogance. In this way, the Puritan zeal itself may become a Puritan sin quite outside the Puritan's own conception of sin. Secure in his self-righteousness, the Puritan often set himself apart from his more sinful brethren. Richard Digby in "The Man of Adamant" is an outstanding example of spiritual pride. The sketch, of course, is satirical, and the character of Richard is intentionally overdrawn. Still we see in him the man who has become a religious radical to the extent that he believes that he alone has the right conception of God, that everyone else is wrong, and that for this reason he must get away from erring humanity to worship in his own true way. Richard Digby, then, is a representative of Puritan intolerance and arrogance. The Puritans did not usually withdraw completely from their fellows, but too often they condemned those who differed from them in any way.

To Hawthorne anything which contributed to the estrangement of one individual from his fellow-men, which caused him to lose his "hold on the magnetic chain of humanity," was a deadly sin. Ethan Brand, a worthy Puritan

in the beginning, becomes estranged from his fellows because of intellectual pride. With him the Puritan interest in sin develops into an obsession which results in his losing the common touch, thereby committing the unpardonable sin. Other kinds of zeal, like religious zeal good in themselves, may lead to tragedy when given too much rein. This overzealousness is, in a way, a Puritan sin. At least it lends itself in Hawthorne to the same kind of treatment. Aylmer and Rappaccini lose their human sympathy because of their supreme interest in science. This may be regarded, it seems to me, as just another form of intellectual pride. In like manner, Hollingsworth permits his interest in social reform to become an obsession. Hawthorne, of course, is supposed to have been thinking of Transcendentalism when he portrays Hollingsworth, but I wonder if he is not rebelling against any humanitarian impulse which has become too firmly crystallized. And it may well be, I think, that in his picture of the reformer he is going back to the hardness and the fastness which developed within the ranks of Puritanism.

Hawthorne often makes innocent people the victims of Puritan intolerance and harshness. Here it is the Puritan attitude toward sin which is the destructive force. The Puritan zeal itself again becomes a "sin". An outstanding example of a character whose tragic downfall is the result of intolerance is Ilbrahim, a lovely child whose only fault is that he is a Quaker. For this reason, he goes down under the despotic rule of Puritan fanaticism. It makes no
difference that a Puritan couple, imbued with the essence of human kindness, take the boy into their home to rear him as a Puritan. So strong is the antagonism against the Quakers that even the Puritan children taunt Ilbrahim and beat him cruelly.

Hester Prynne is another character who suffers from Puritan harshness and narrow-mindedness. Van Doren tells us that Hester's story "is a criticism of the Puritan attempt to bind life too tightly. In the midst of the drab circumstances of Salem, this woman of such radiance of beauty and magnificence of life rises up and cracks the stiff frame of the time." It is true that Hester has committed a great sin, but she is given no chance to rehabilitate herself. There is little sympathy and understanding in a Puritan community, only punishment and condemnation. As Mr. Van Doren points out, the fact that she has emerged victorious in a sense is the result of her unusual strength of character. And yet she has not risen completely above conditions which threatened to grind her down. The flinty hardness of the Puritan community in which she lived has caused her to develop abnormal tendencies and to lose the proper perspective upon life.

In our discussion of the tragic characters of The House of the Seven Gables, we saw that Hepzibah and Clifford were the victims of a long line of Puritan ancestors. We need only to refer to Hawthorne's own Puritan inheritance, discussed in Chapter One, to recognize the fact that in spirit,

at least, The House of the Seven Gables is autobiographical. The blasting effects of an inherited family curse, of witch-hanging ancestors, of Puritan arrogance and intolerance Hawthorne knew from experience. The effect of the author's Puritan background is so obvious that it does not require detailed discussion.

It seems quite clear, then, that Hawthorne's protest against Puritanism is responsible for the tragic development of a number of his characters.

Conclusion

In our study of Hawthorne's tragic characters, we have observed various Puritan elements: an intense interest in sin, a morbid curiosity concerning the unpardonable sin, the workings of the Puritan conscience, and the tendency to analyze one's self and others for the purpose of studying sin and its effects upon the sinner. Hawthorne accepts in general the Puritan belief in the natural depravity of man, in salvation by the grace of God, and in the Doctrine of Predestination to the extent that he conceives of man as the victim of fate. These Puritan tendencies and beliefs play an important part in the development of the people in his stories so that we can truthfully say that the tragic downfall of many of Hawthorne's characters is the result of the Puritan conception of sin.

Hawthorne transcends Puritanism by rebelling against the intolerance, the arrogance, and the harshness which de-
veloped within its ranks. We have seen that the tragic downfall of a number of his characters is the result of these Puritan vices, and consequently the result of Hawthorne's protest against Puritanism.

Thus we arrive at the general conclusion that Hawthorne was greatly influenced by Puritanism in his portrayal of sin.
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