REFERENCES TO CLOTHING IN

HAWTHORNE'S MAJOR ROMANCES

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One very important as well as interesting aspect of Nathaniel Hawthorne's fictional technique is his recurrent and effective use of references to dress and accessories to reveal character, to develop theme, and to contribute to the structural unity of his works. Through a close study of Hawthorne's four major romances—The Scarlet Letter, The House of the Seven Gables, The Blithedale Romance, and The Marble Faun—this thesis singles out all significant references to apparel or accessories and evaluates the use he makes of them.

Chapter II deals specifically with The Scarlet Letter, Chapter III with The House of the Seven Gables, and Chapter IV with both The Blithedale Romance and The Marble Faun. Each novel is treated on an individual basis and in chronological order so that references to attire may be viewed not only as an aspect of a particular novel but also as an element of Hawthorne's entire mode of writing. Such a detailed survey of the novels leads to four generalizations about Hawthorne's use of selected articles of clothing. First of all, Hawthorne uses accessories or items of apparel as symbols of isolation; Hester's scarlet letter, for example, represents her moral

and physical isolation from the Puritan community. Second, Hawthorne uses articles of clothing as means of concealment, especially of disguising one's true nature; both Judge Pyncheon and Westervelt seek to hide their inner evil behind a front of handsome, fashionable attire. Third, Hawthorne uses references to dress as symbols of a character's dominant character traits; Hester's scarlet letter and Zenobia's tropical flower represent the basic natures of these two women. Fourth, Hawthorne uses descriptions of clothing as indicators of the mood or moral climate which he is trying to convey; thus, the dark drab clothing of the Puritans helps create a feeling of moral severity and harshness. Chapter V evaluates the effectiveness of Hawthorne's use of references to dress as one element in his overall technique of handling character to convey theme. The symbolism of clothing thus becomes important as an integral part of the story and helps to create a world in which his characters live and move, experience moral dilemmas, and exemplify Hawthorne's themes.

REFERENCES TO CLOTHING IN HAWTHORNE'S MAJOR ROMANCES

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I.	INTRODUCTION	1
II.	CLOTHING IN THE SCARLET LETTER	8
III.	CLOTHING IN THE HOUSE OF THE SEVEN GABLES	28
IV.	CLOTHING IN THE BLITHEDALE ROMANCE AND THE MARBLE FAUN	44
V.	CONCLUSION	59
BIBLIOGRAPHY		67

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Nathaniel Hawthorne, "the prophet of the symbolists,"[1] wrote and thought in symbols. His natural, artfully created symbols, taken from "commonplace sources and belonging to common knowledge,"[2] are seldom obtrusive or overdone. Almost every character is associated with some article of apparel which becomes symbolic of that character, such as Hester's scarlet A, Zenobia's exotic flower, or the Reverend Mr. Hooper's black veil. While many critics have commented generally on the clothing worn by Hawthorne's characters, no one has yet attempted a comprehensive and specific study of the subject. This thesis attempts to ascertain the extent and to evaluate the significance of Hawthorne's use of references to dress and accessories in revealing character, in symbolizing theme, and in contributing to structural unity.

The garb with which an author chooses to clothe his characters enables him in an indirect and subtle way to

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[1] Arlin Turner, Nathaniel Hawthorne: An Introduction and Interpretation (New York, 1961), p. 121.

[2] Ibid., p. 133.

convey various messages to his reader about these characters without his having to elaborate his point with direct commentary. By means of such a simple concrete detail as an article of dress, a writer can develop ironic contrasts between two characters or between what a character appears to be on the surface and what he really is. He can use clothing as a means of suggesting a character's inner personality traits. Clothing may also serve as a means of identifying various types of characters as well as indicating a particular historical period. By emphasizing certain details of apparel, an author continually offers his reader subtle clues about the actions and motives of his characters.

Considering himself more a writer of romances than of novels, Hawthorne was especially selective in the presentation of descriptive material, emphasizing only the most significant details.[3] Dealing usually with universal characters, the romance generally relies on vague, shadowy surroundings for its fictional setting. The deliberate limitation of concrete description prevents any single aspect of the romance—such as setting, characters, or action—from standing out sharply. The novel, on the other hand, builds up to its effect and impact accumulatively by adding detail upon factual detail, until the desired

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[3]Hyatt H. Waggoner, Hawthorne: A Critical Study (Cambridge, 1955), p. 153.

effect is achieved. With this distinction between romance and novel in mind, the reader of Hawthorne probably will tend to agree with Hawthorne's own estimate of himself as a writer of romances.

Since Hawthorne is highly selective in presenting concrete description, the conclusion follows that those details which he does choose to stress are especially important to the overall impression which he is trying to convey to the reader. As Roy Male has observed: "Hawthorne seldom, if ever, labors a point unless it has meaning."[4] Such a selective method of description is frequently found in his presentation of characters, especially concerning their clothing and accessories.

Hawthorne often deliberately limits his description of a character to arouse the curiosity of the reader and stimulate his desire for further details. He provides at first only enough detail to create a general impression and then throughout the narrative supplies additional details to give depth and substance to the character. Thus, the character emerges during the story, often from a shadowy figure at the beginning to a truly living one at the end. For instance, Hester Prynne develops from a rebellious, wilful adulteress into a compassionate, disciplined source

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[4]Roy R. Male, Jr., Hawthorne's Tragic Vision (Austin, 1957), p. 160.

of strength for the community; Hawthorne channels her passion and independent spirit from destructive into productive pathways.

Apparel also offers a means of identifying character types in Hawthorne's writing. Randall Stewart has suggested such a possible system of classification in his introduction to the American Notebooks.[5] One aspect of the present study of Hawthorne's references to clothing is the consideration of certain similarities in dress as well as in personality and actions among the various character types.

Since no studies exist concerned exclusively with Hawthorne's references to apparel, the most useful secondary accounts have proved to be either those which mention articles of dress while discussing other aspects of Hawthorne's writing or those which deal with topics which logically could also be related to clothing. The most helpful critical works in the preparation of this thesis have been Randall Stewart's discussion of character types in the introduction to the American Notebooks and four full-length studies which fairly consistently include Hawthorne's use of clothing in their discussion of his art: Jac Tharpe's Nathaniel Hawthorne: Identity and Knowledge, Arlin Turner's Nathaniel Hawthorne: An Introduction and Interpretation,

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[5]Randall Stewart, "Introduction," The American Notebooks, by Nathaniel Hawthorne, edited by Randall Stewart (New Haven, Connecticut, 1932), pp. xliv-lxi.

Roy Male's Hawthorne's Tragic Vision, and Richard Fogle's Hawthorne's Imagery: The Proper Light and Shadow in the Major Romances.

This thesis limits its investigation to the four major romances: The Scarlet Letter, The House of the Seven Gables, The Blithedale Romance, and The Marble Faun, because they best represent the writing of the mature Hawthorne, his techniques and approaches to the creative process having been fairly well established by the time of their composition. All references to the novels themselves are to the Modern Library edition of The Novels and Tales of Nathaniel Hawthorne, edited by Norman H. Pearson.

Each of the four novels has been carefully read for references to clothing and is treated on an individual basis. Chapter Two deals with The Scarlet Letter (1850), Chapter Three with The House of the Seven Gables (1851), and Chapter Four with both The Blithedale Romance (1852) and The Marble Faun (1860). The novels are thus also dealt with chronologically so that any changes in Hawthorne's techniques of using references to apparel in the four novels may be duly noted and considered. Chapter Five seeks to evaluate how successfully Hawthorne incorporates clothing into the symbolic and thematic patterns of his four major romances.

A close reading of these works leads to four generalizations about Hawthorne's references to clothing as a means to offer the reader clues about a character's thematic role in a story. First, Hawthorne uses articles of clothing as symbols of isolation. Hester's scarlet emblem and the Reverend Mr. Hooper's black veil are primarily outward symbols of inner isolation and search for identity.[6] Secondly, Hawthorne uses articles of dress as deliberate means of disguise and concealment. Old Moodie's eyepatch in The Blithedale Romance changes his appearance to conceal his true identity, and Judge Pyncheon's fine clothes in The House of the Seven Gables serve to disguise the corrupt personality beneath them.[7] Thirdly, Hawthorne singles out particular articles of clothing as symbolic of individual character traits. Hester's elaborately embroidered letter is as significant of her rich, bold nature as it is of her isolation from the rigid Puritan community; indeed, it is somewhat difficult to draw any sharp distinction between the two aspects of the letter. In the same manner, Zenobia's exotic hothouse flower and Priscilla's little silk purses are representative of the basic natures of these two women. And fourthly, Hawthorne makes effective

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[6]Jac Tharpe, Nathaniel Hawthorne: Identity and Knowledge (Carbondale, Illinois, 1967), p. 17.

[7]Ibid.

use of the apparel of his minor characters and of the community at large to suggest the moral climate or mood which he is trying to convey.

Thus, in conclusion, the purpose of this study is (1) to determine Hawthorne's techniques in revealing character by selective description of physical appearance, especially articles of apparel, (2) to explore his means of illustrating narrative themes through the use of dress and accessories as symbols, and (3) to evaluate the contribution to the structural unity of Hawthorne's writing made by recurrent references to clothing.

CHAPTER II

CLOTHING IN THE SCARLET LETTER

Set in Puritan New England in the 1640's,[1] Hawthorne's masterpiece, The Scarlet Letter, is a dark gloomy book, little relieved by any sort of light or brightness. Somber gray-clad Puritans move stonily and grimly through its pages. While the clothing of these personages is seldom described in elaborate detail, Hawthorne, as is customary with him, emphasizes those aspects of garb and specific articles of dress which best reveal the inner natures of certain individual characters.

An extremely important element of The Scarlet Letter, and one closely associated with clothing, is color imagery. Three colors—black, white, and red,[2] and gray, which is, of course, a mixture of black and white—predominate and are reflected repeatedly in the clothing of the characters. Hawthorne intends these colors to have an emotional impact upon the story, and their appropriateness must be recognized;[3]

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[1]Alfred S. Reid, The Yellow Ruff and The Scarlet Letter (Gainesville, 1955), p. 80.

[2]Robert Spiller, editor, Literary History of the United States, rev. ed. (New York, 1963), p. 420.

[3]Hyatt H. Waggoner, Hawthorne: A Critical Study (Cambridge, 1955), p. 123.

for Hawthorne, color is more useful as an emotional element than as a descriptive one.[4] Much of the gloomy mood of The Scarlet Letter stems from the fact that black and red are both colors associated with hell and "no hue of heaven" is offered to counter their somber impact.[5]

The dominant symbol in The Scarlet Letter and by far the most significant article of clothing in the book is the scarlet letter worn by Hester Prynne. While by the end of the novel, the scarlet A does become symbolic of the tragic suffering of the characters, the letter itself is merely an historical artifact, "a Puritan mechanism,"[6] not an inherent part of the tragedy. Hawthorne's selection of the letter reveals his extensive knowledge of the customs and habits of Puritan New England,[7] for the use of a letter or phrase either worn upon the clothing of the sinner or

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[4]Leland Schubert, Hawthorne the Artist: Fine Art Devices in Fiction (Chapel Hill, 1944), p. 97.

[5]Richard H. Fogle, Hawthorne's Fiction: The Light and the Dark (Norman, 1964), p. 106.

[6]Spiller, p. 426.

[7]Hawthorne was familiar with many of the journals, histories, and religious collections of early New England. His readings included works by such men as William Bradford, John Winthrop, Samuel Sewall, the Mathers, and Thomas Hutchinson, as well as such collections as the Annals of Salem and the Massachusetts Historical Collections. Arlin Turner, Nathaniel Hawthorne: An Introduction and Interpretation (New York, 1961), p. 17, and G. Harrison Orians, "Hawthorne and Puritan Punishments," College English, XIII (1952), 427.

branded upon his flesh was a form of punishment practiced both in early America and in Europe.[8] Actually, Hawthorne makes Hester's letter somewhat of an historical anachronism. In 1704 the General Court of Massachusetts provided for standing on the gallows, being scourged, and wearing the letter A as the punishment for adultery[9]; the latter was the punishment suffered by Hester. However, in Hester's own time, the 1640's, adultery was a crime punishable by death, as provided by the Massachusetts Bay Codes of 1641 and 1648.[10] Another important deviation from actual historical fact is Hawthorne's making Hester's letter red and embroidered with gold thread to suggest her rich and independent nature, instead of the more usual black.[11]

Hawthorne uses Hester's clothing and her associations with clothing (i.e., her work as a seamstress) to reveal a two-fold aspect of her nature. The fine embroidery which she does for others and the ornate trim which she puts upon her own red letter reflect both her rebelliousness and her passionate nature. On the other hand, Hawthorne makes the coarse gray garb she customarily wears emblematic of her repentance, outwardly, at any rate, and her acceptance of the Puritan code and the punishment which it has inflicted upon her.

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[8] Turner, p. 126.

[9] Reid, p. 10.

[10] Orians, p. 430.

[11] Turner, p. 127.

Hester's scarlet letter is one of the "most notable symbols involving clothes in all Hawthorne's writing—and in all literature, for that matter,"[12] Arlin Turner feels; there are nearly one hundred and fifty references to it in the novel.[13] Her letter is symbolic of both her sin of adultery and her isolation from the Puritan community; as she wears it for the rest of her life, she is to serve the community as a symbol of guilt without redemption.[14] The Reverend Mr. Wilson delivers an elaborate sermon on sin on the day of Hester's public shame, and

> So forcibly did he dwell upon this symbol, for the hour or more during which his periods were rolling over the people's heads, that it assumed new terrors in their imagination, and seemed to derive its scarlet hue from the flames of the infernal pit.[15]

Even Hester appears to feel the same heat, for as Roger Chillingworth ministers to her after her three-hour exposure on the scaffold and touches the letter, it "forthwith seemed to scorch into Hester's breast, as if it had been red hot."[16]

When Hester visits Governor Bellingham, the reflection which she sees of her letter in his highly polished suit of armor magnifies and distorts her letter, changing her

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[12] Ibid., p. 126. [13] Schubert, p. 142.

[14] Daniel Hoffman, Form and Fable in American Fiction (New York, 1965), pp. 177-78.

[15] Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter in The Novels and Tales of Nathaniel Hawthorne, edited by Norman H. Pearson (New York, 1937), p. 125.

[16] Ibid., p. 127.

into what the harch Puritan punishment sought—not a real person, but "an abstraction, a walking sin!"[17]

> . . . owing to the peculiar effect of this convex mirror, the scarlet letter was represented in exaggerated and gigantic proportions, so as to be greatly the most prominent feature of her appearance. In truth she seemed absolutely hidden behind it.[18]

It is ironic that Governor Bellingham's bond servant fails to recognize Hester's letter as a symbol of isolation and guilt and

> . . . perhaps judging from the decision of her air, and the glittering symbol in her bosom, that she was a great lady in the land, offered no opposition.[19]

Despite its intent to make Hester a living example of human sin and, consequently, to isolate her from the community and from salvation, the letter fails to achieve this end. Hawthorne suggests that Hester, on the very day of her public humiliation, wearing rich robes and holding her baby, resembles "sinless motherhood."

> Had there been a Papist among the crowd of Puritans, he might have seen in the beautiful woman, so picturesque in her attire and mien, and with the infant at her bosom, an object to remind him of the image of Divine Maternity, which so many illustrious painters have vied with one another to represent.[20]

Even the Puritan community, so harsh in its initial judgment of Hester, eventually comes to view her as a "Sister of Mercy" to others, with her letter as "the

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[17]Waggoner, p. 140.
[18]The Scarlet Letter, p. 146.
[19]Ibid., p. 145.
[20]Ibid., p. 117.

symbol of her calling"; many people even refuse to believe in the original meaning of the letter and insist that it stands for "Able." As Hester becomes a strong figure of charity and goodwill to the townspeople, her letter becomes like the cross on a nun's chest, imparting "to the wearer a kind of sacredness, which enables her to walk securely amid all peril."[21]

Hawthorne also uses Hester's scarlet letter as a key to a true understanding of her nature. She is a richly vibrant, sensual, and intelligent woman, but she also has a certain amount of pride and vanity.[22] She is determined to endure her public shame without yielding, and her attire and manner reflect this determination.

> On the breast of her gown, in fine red cloth, surrounded with an elaborate embroidery and fantastic flourishes of gold thread, appeared the letter A. It was so artistically done, and with so much fertility and gorgeous luxuriance of fancy, that it had all the effect of a lasting and fitting decoration to the apparel which she wore; and which was of a splendor in accordance with the taste of the age, but greatly beyond what was allowed by the sumptuary regulations of the colony.[23]

> Her attire, which, indeed, she had wrought for the occasion, in person, and had modelled much after her own fancy, seemed to express the attitude of her spirit, the desperate recklessness of her mood, by its wild picturesque peculiarity. But the point which drew all eyes . . . was that SCARLET LETTER, so fantastically embroidered and illuminated upon her bosom. It had the effect of a spell, taking her out of the

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[21] Ibid., pp. 179-180. [22] Reid, p. 51.

[23] The Scarlet Letter, p. 115.

> ordinary relations with humanity, and enclosing her in a sphere by herself.[24]

According to Edward Wagenknecht, her "rich humanity is specifically rooted in her sexuality"[25] which results in her shame and her scarlet letter. While she outwardly suffers the punishment imposed upon her, it is doubtful that her nature has undergone any change or that she would not be willing to commit her sin again. If anything, the wearing of the letter drives her further from the accepted code of behavior into even more independent areas of thought; she acquires "a sympathetic knowledge of the hidden sin in other hearts . . . and that, if truth were everywhere to be shown, a scarlet letter would blaze forth on many a bosom besides Hester Prynne's."[26] Through her suffering and isolation Hester attains almost complete freedom of thought:

> For years past she had looked from this estranged point of view at human institutions, and whatever priests or legislators had established; criticizing all with hardly more reverence than the Indian would feel for the clerical band, the judicial robe, the pillory, the gallows, the fireside, or the church. The tendency of her fate and fortunes had been to set her free. The scarlet letter was her passport into regions where other woman dared not tread. Shame, Despair, Solitude! These had been her teachers — stern and wild ones, — and they had made her strong, but taught her much amiss.[27]

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[24] Ibid., p. 116.

[25] Edward Wagenknecht, Nathaniel Hawthorne (New York, 1961), p. 140.

[26] The Scarlet Letter, p. 135. [27] Ibid., p. 202.

In contrast to the brilliance of the letter, Hester's dresses are always of gray, coarse materials. Hawthorne uses the drab simplicity of her dress to suggest her tremendous self-discipline and control; she has learned to subject her passionate nature and to accept stoically her punishment. Her only personal adornment is the involuntary one which she wears upon her breast. Her appearance on the Election Day holiday is typical of her usual attire:

> . . . as on all other occasions, for seven years past, Hester was clad in a garment of coarse gray cloth. Not more by its hue than by some indescribable peculiarity in its fashion, it had the effect of making her fade personally out of sight and outline; while, again, the scarlet letter brought her back from this twilight indistinctness, and revealed her under the moral aspect of its own illumination.[28]

Even her luxurious long dark hair is "so completely hidden by a cap, that not a shining lock of it ever gushed into the sunshine."[29] Hawthorne also uses Hester's drab appearance with its one bright spot of color as an ironic foreshadowing of her own tombstone, the "ever-glowing point of light gloomier than the shadow:—'On a field, sable, the letter A, gules.'"[30] In death she is remembered by the gray and red of her tombstone just as she was marked by the gray and red of her clothing in life.

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[28] Ibid., p. 218.

[29] Ibid., p. 181.

[30] Ibid., p. 240.

The fact that Hester herself is relatively unchanged by her punishment, except perhaps to become even more independent, is best shown during the forest meeting with her partner in sin, Dimmesdale. When Hester removes her cap and her scarlet letter, she seems to recapture from an irrevocable past her youth and her womanly beauty; her beautiful hair, symbolic of her lost maidenhood and virginity,[31] again flows freely. But if she had not taken up her letter and again confined her hair beneath her cap, it would have cost her her salvation.[32]

> . . . she undid the clasp that fastened the scarlet letter, and taking it from her bosom, threw it to a distance among the withered leaves . . . there lay the embroidered letter, glittering like a lost jewel which some ill-fated wanderer might pick up, and thenceforth be haunted by strange phantoms of guilt, sinkings of the heart, and unaccountable misfortune.
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> The stigma gone, Hester heaved a long, deep sigh, in which the burden of shame and anguish departed from her spirit. Oh exquisite relief! She had not known the weight until she felt the freedom! By another impulse she took off the formal cap that confined her hair; and down it fell upon her shoulders, dark and rich, with at once a shadow and a light in its abundance, and imparting the charm of softness to her features. There played around her mouth, and beamed out of her eyes, a radiant and tender smile, that seemed gushing from the very heart of womanhood. A crimson flush was glowing on her cheek that had been so long pale. Her sex, her youth, and the whole richness of her beauty, came back . . . [33]

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[31] Reid, p. 38.

[32] Roy R. Male, Jr., Hawthorne's Tragic Vision (Austin, 1957), p. 112.

[33] The Scarlet Letter, p. 204.

But little Pearl refuses to acknowledge her mother in the reality of her youthful womanhood, and Hester is forced to again put on her sinful emblem and put up her hair:

> . . . she had drawn an hour's free breath—and here again was the scarlet misery, glittering on the old spot! . . . Hester next gathered up the heavy tresses of her hair, and confined them beneath her cap. As if there were a withering spell in the sad letter, her beauty, the warmth and richness of her womanhood, departed, like fading sunshine; and a gray shadow seemed to fall across her.[34]

Hawthorne draws attention to Hester's skills at sewing and embroidery as another means of revealing the richness of her nature; in her sewing she can give her fancy a free rein: "She had in her nature a rich voluptuous Oriental characteristic, —a taste for the gorgeously beautiful, which save in the exquisite productions of her needle, found nothing else, in all the possibilities of her life, to exercise itself upon."[35] Hawthorne suggests that her skills at sewing offer her both a means of contact with the rest of the community and a reminder of her isolation from it. Soon her artistry at needlework helps set the fashions of the age:

> By degrees, nor very slowly, her handiwork became what would now be termed the fashion . . . Vanity, it may be, chose to mortify itself, by putting on for ceremonials of pomp and state, the garments that had been wrought by her sinful hands. Her needlework was seen on the ruff of the Governor; military men wore it on their scarfs; and the minister on his band; it decked the baby's little

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[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid., p. 133.

> cap; it was shut up to be mildewed and moulder away in the coffins of the dead. But it is not recorded that, in a single instance, her skill was called in aid to embroider the white veil which was to cover the pure blushes of a bride. The exception indicated the ever-relentless rigor with which society frowned upon her sin.[36]

The second character in The Scarlet Letter whose clothing plays an important role is Pearl, the product of the adulterous union; in her attire of red and gold Hawthorne reflects the colors in her mother's letter. She is "the scarlet letter in another form; the scarlet letter endowed with life!"[37]

> Her mother, in contriving the child's garb, had allowed the gorgeous tendencies of her imagination their full play; arraying her in a crimson velvet tunic, of a peculiar cut, abundantly embroidered with fantasies and flourishes of gold-thread. So much strength of coloring which must have given a wan and pallid aspect to cheeks of a fainter bloom, was admirably adapted to Pearl's beauty, and made her the very brightest little jet of flame that ever danced upon the earth.[38]

Generally children were exempted from the Puritan insistence upon dark somber colors, so Hester was not overstepping the bounds of propriety in dressing Pearl so brightly.[39] Hawthorne uses Hester's art and skill in dressing her child to show that she is well aware that

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[36] Ibid., pp. 132-133. [37] Ibid., p. 143.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Jane Lundblad, Nathaniel Hawthorne and European Literary Tradition (Cambridge, 1947), p. 112.

Pearl is both a burden and a blessing; she loves her child, and yet in Pearl's very brightness and wildness, she is continually reminded of her own sin and punishment.[40]

Pearl's clothing is much more vivid than her mother's. Just as the scarlet letter glows on Hester's breast against the gray background, so does Pearl offer a constant color contrast to the gray-robed woman.

> It would have been impossible to guess that this bright and sunny apparition owed its existence to the shape of gloomy gray; or that a fancy, at once so gorgeous and so delicate as must have been requisite to contrive the child's apparel was the same that had achieved a task perhaps more difficult, in imparting so distinct a peculiarity to Hester's simple robe.[41]

A natural child herself, Pearl is also a child of nature and of the light and truth symbolized by nature.[42] She can not tolerate any sort of falseness and seems instinctively to recognize Dimmesdale's guilt. She wears sunlight and flowers,

> . . . violets, and anemones, and columbines, and some twigs of the freshest green, which the old trees held down before her eyes. With these she decorated her hair, and her young waist, and became a nymph-child, or an infant dryad, or whatever else was in closest sympathy with the antique wood.[43]

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[40]Male, p. 107.

[41]The Scarlet Letter, p. 219.

[42]Richard H. Fogle, Hawthorne's Imagery: The Proper Light and Shadow in the Major Romances (Norman, 1969), p. 42.

[43]The Scarlet Letter, p. 206.

On another occasion she adorns herself in seaweed, and, to her mother's horror, fashions a letter A, "but freshly green, instead of scarlet,"[44] upon her own little breast. Her fresh appearance is employed by Hawthorne to reveal her real nature, her loving and truthful spirit. Hawthorne suggests that the wild and uncontrollable child, like her mother, must learn to curb her passionate side; later, when Hester is seen "embroidering a baby-garment with . . . a lavish richness of golden fancy,"[45] Hawthorne implies that the mature Pearl, unlike her mother, has found release for her love and passion within the bounds of domesticity and marriage.

Hawthorne uses "the black garments of the priesthood,"[46] worn by the Reverend Dimmesdale, as a means of disguise and deliberate concealment. Reverend Dimmesdale wears "garments of mock holiness"; he has not yet repented of his sin and has not yet controlled the passionate side of his nature which produced that sin. His inability to achieve repentance causes him to experience a morbid, fruitless remorse within his soul.[47] He arrives at the midnight meeting with Hester and Pearl on the scaffold attired as

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[44] Ibid., p. 189.

[45] Ibid., p. 239.

[46] Ibid., p. 169.

[47] Frederick C. Crews, The Sins of the Fathers: Hawthorne's Psychological Themes (New York, 1965), p. 141.

if for public worship. His revelation partially begins, says Male, when "he has divested himself of part of his hollow armor—the black glove."[48] He has begun to put aside his disguise and to admit to his actual nature. When the sexton finds and returns the glove to Dimmesdale, he comments that "a pure hand needs no glove to cover it."[49] Although he intends to compliment the Reverend Dimmesdale, he strikes an ironic note of truth: Dimmesdale's hand is not pure, and, hence, he does indeed need the glove to cover it. Hawthorne employs Dimmesdale's gloves as symbols of concealment of his hidden sin and guilt.

In the forest meeting of Dimmesdale with Hester and Pearl, Hawthorne offers another suggestion of evil associated with Dimmesdale. As Dimmesdale approaches them, he leans upon a staff which he has cut for himself, and from a distance little Pearl thinks he is the Black Man. Throughout Hawthorne's writings, staffs and canes often represent either the Devil or a person associated with him, and the forest is the usual meeting place for the Devil and his followers.[50] Thus, Hawthorne still implies

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[48]Male, p. 108. [49]The Scarlet Letter, pp. 119-120.

[50]In addition to the instances cited in this thesis, Hawthorne uses the staff as a symbol of evil in a few short stories, including "Young Goodman Brown," "The White Old Maid," and "My Kinsman, Major Molineux."

a taint of evil upon Dimmesdale, despite his holy garb and mild, frail appearance.

On Election Day Dimmesdale finally is able to tear away his false covering of holiness and reveal his hidden, gnawing guilt. Dimmesdale's scarlet letter, unlike Hester's, lies beneath the false disguise of his clothing, perhaps etched into the flesh itself.[51] Once he is willing to put aside his protective clerical garb, he is at last able to find redemption and ascension.[52]

Hawthorne describes the fourth major character, Roger Chillingworth, only as being "clad in a strange disarray of civilized and savage costume . . . a heterogeneous garb."[53] This brief description is sufficient for Hawthorne to imply two things about Chillingworth: he is not a true member of the Puritan community, and he too carries with him a taint of evil — he comes from the black forest accompanied by a savage Indian. Both of these implications are later proved by his actions in the story.

With three significant minor characters in The Scarlet Letter — Governor Bellingham, Mistress Hibbins, and the Reverend Mr. Wilson — Hawthorne represents respectively the three realms of power in Puritan New England — civil, daimonic, and divine.[54] Governor Bellingham, as befits

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[51] Schubert, p. 146.

[52] Male, p. 102.

[53] The Scarlet Letter, pp. 119-120.

[54] Hoffman, p. 182.

a person of his rank and wealth, wears more elaborate dress than the ordinary townsmen do—"a dark feather in his hat, a border of embroidery on his cloak, and a velvet tunic" as well as a stiff King James ruff, embroidered gloves, and, on occasion, highly polished armor. Hawthorne uses Bellingham's clothing both as symbol and disguise: his gloves cover an impure hand; his imposing ruff separates his head and his heart, cutting him off from the "spontaneity of fruitful emotion"[55]; and his hollow armor reflects a distorted view of the world.

The clothing of Governor Bellingham's sister, Mistress Hibbins, on the other hand, is used by Hawthorne not to disguise her true nature but rather to point directly at it; Mistress Hibbins is a witch and is able as such to recognize the presence of evil, the Black Man's mark, in others.

> She made a very grand appearance; having on a high head-dress, a rich gown of velvet, and a ruff done up with the famous yellow starch, of which Anne Turner, her especial friend, had taught her the secret, before this last good lady had been hanged for Sir Thomas Overbury's murder.[56]

By associating her with a woman actually accused of and executed for practicing witchcraft, Hawthorne emphasizes that she really is intended to be taken as a witch; he symbolizes her witchcraft by her yellow ruff.[57] Like

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[55] Male, p. 106.

[56] The Scarlet Letter, p. 215.

[57] Reid, pp. 1-5.

other of Hawthorne's characters in league with the Devil, she also carries with her a form of staff, an elaborate gold-headed cane.

About the Reverend Mr. Wilson's clothing, Hawthorne says little except to note that he wears the usual clerical garb—the Geneva cloak, the band, the skull-cap. In Reverend Wilson, Hawthorne uses the outer appearance to reflect the inner reality of the man. He is pure, "a man of kind and genial spirit."[58]

Hawthorne portrays the remaining persons in the community generally as a crowd acting under strong emotions and not as individuals.[59] In the opening lines of The Scarlet Letter, he gives a brief glimpse of the Puritan people en masse and helps to set the gloomy, unrelieved mood of the entire narrative:

> A throng of bearded men, in sad-colored garments, and gray, steeple-crowned hats, intermixed with women, some wearing hood and other bareheaded, was assembled in front of a wooden edifice, the door of which was heavily timbered with oak, and studded with iron spikes.[60]

With this one sentence Hawthorne has captured the essence of New England Puritanism—its somberness, its hardness, and its piety—"the gray or sable tinge, which undoubtedly

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[58] The Scarlet Letter, p. 122.

[59] Constance Rourke, American Humor: A Study of the National Character (Garden City, New York, 1953), p. 152.

[60] The Scarlet Letter, p. 112.

characterized the mood and manner of the age."[61] Each time he mentions the crowd, Hawthorne emphasizes its black garments, its steeple-crowned hats, and its unrelenting, even boorish, interest in Hester's scarlet letter. The stocky Puritan women are swathed in "petticoat and farthingale" that well match their "boldness and rotundity of speech."[62] The town-beadle "like a black shadow . . . with a sword by his side, and his staff of office in his hand . . . prefigured and represented in his aspect the whole dismal severity of the Puritanic code of law . . . ."[63]

The two remaining groups — the Indians and the sailors — are not part of the Puritan community and thus are free to express complete individuality in their garb. Hawthorne uses the bright scarlet and gold colors of the Indians' apparel as a subtle echo of the scarlet and gold letter worn by Hester and of the natural passions which brought about her sin. In the vivid attire of the sailors, Hawthorne implies their completely wild and independent nature. Since they provide the necessary link between the new life in America and the old one in Europe, they are allowed complete impunity from the Puritan code.

> They were rough-looking desperadoes, with sun-blackened faces, and an immensity of beard; their wide, short trousers were confined about the waist

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[61] Ibid., p. 220.

[62] Ibid., pp. 113-114.

[63] Ibid., p. 115.

> by belts, often clasped with a rough plate of gold, and sustaining always a long knife, and, in some instances, a sword. From beneath their broad-brimmed hats of palm-leaf gleamed eyes which, even in good-nature and merriment, had a kind of animal ferocity.[64]

Their commander, the ship captain, was

> . . . by far the most showy and gallant figure, so far as apparel went, anywhere to be seen among the multitude. He wore a profusion of ribbons on his garment, and gold-lace on his hat, which was also encircled by a gold chain, and surmounted with a feather. There was a sword at his side, and a sword-cut on his forehead, which, by the arrangement of his hair, he seemed anxious rather to display than hide. A landsman could hardly have worn this garb and shown this face, and worn and shown them both with such a galliard air, without undergoing stern question before a magistrate, and probably incurring fine or imprisonment, or perhaps an exhibition in the stocks. As regarded the shipmaster, however, all was looked upon as pertaining to the character, as to a fish his glistening scales.[65]

The commander, in an attempt to catch her attention, offers the gold chain from his hat to Pearl, who immediately accepts and artistically drapes it around her neck and waist. In her taking the golden chain from a member of the outside, non-Puritan world, Hawthorne foreshadows her later flight from New England to a new and happy life and womanhood in Europe.

It seems evident, then, that in The Scarlet Letter, Hawthorne uses dress and accessories in at least four ways, often simultaneously: as signs of isolation, as symbols of

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[64] Ibid., p. 222. [65] Ibid., pp.222-223.

salient character traits, and as indicators, along with color imagery, of mood or tone. Dimmesdale's clerical garb, for example, conceals his true identity, which in turn serves to isolate him; Hester's letter and attire reflect both her isolation and her proud independence. Thus, in The Scarlet Letter Hawthorne effectively uses references to clothing to enhance the theme of the novel, to help portray vivid and lifelike characters, and to contribute to the unity of the whole work.

CHAPTER III

CLOTHING IN THE HOUSE OF THE SEVEN GABLES

In The House of the Seven Gables, Hawthorne makes fewer actual references to clothing than he does in The Scarlet Letter. Since The House of the Seven Gables is set in his own time, Hawthorne had less need to use attire to help evoke the mood and moral climate of the past—Puritan New England—than he had in The Scarlet Letter. His readers were already familiar with life in nineteenth-century America; they were not familiar with seventeenth and eighteenth-century New England life. Possibly, this is one of the reasons why there are more references to the apparel of the dead Pyncheons than of the living ones in the novel. Also, all other symbols in this book are overshadowed by the somber old house itself and the towering Pyncheon elm tree.

As has been previously mentioned, Hawthorne considered himself a writer of romances rather than of novels; The House of the Seven Gables is an attempt to bridge the gap which he felt existed between the two. Hawthorne moves from the shadowy past of Puritan New England to the commonplace reality of his own era. The characters in the book tend to be associated with either the romance or the novel;

Hepzibah, Clifford, and the early Pyncheons and Maules are characters of the romance, whereas Phoebe, Holgrave, and the people of the street belong to the novel. Judge Jaffrey Pyncheon and Uncle Venner serve as links between the two.[1]

In The House of the Seven Gables, Hawthorne merges past and present in the histories of the Pyncheons and the Maules; each of the characters in the novel serves to help express some aspect of the theme of the novel—the effects of inherited sin and guilt upon each succeeding generation of a family.[2] For the Pyncheon family, clothing serves largely as a means of concealing an inner sense of guilt beneath a facade of respectability and prosperity. The "huge, iron-bound trunks" in the attic of the house contain many items of apparel—"various articles of linen and wrought-lace, kerchiefs, caps, stockings, folded dresses, gloves . . ."[3]—waiting to be worn; in effect, they are a ready-made source of false impressions for the Pyncheons.

The central irony of much of Hawthorne's writing lies in "the difference between the sin that is actually committed

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[1]Arlin Turner, Nathaniel Hawthorne: An Introduction and Interpretation (New York, 1961), pp. 76-77.

[2]Ibid., p. 107.

[3]Nathaniel Hawthorne. The House of the Seven Gables in The Novels and Tales of Nathaniel Hawthorne, edited by Norman Pearson (New York, 1937), p. 325.

and the sin that the characters believe that they have committed."[4] Just as Dimmesdale's sin was more one of concealment than of the original adultery, so the Pyncheon sin is more one of pride than of the original crime against the Maules. It is the continued, haughty pride of the Pyncheons which results in their sense of innate depravity and social isolation.[5]

The fountainhead of Pyncheon pride and sin is the Puritan progenitor of the clan—grim, harsh Colonel Pyncheon, who sets the tone for the entire novel. His influence has extended through some two hundred years of life in the Pyncheon house; hanging on the wall of the parlor is

> . . . the portrait of old Colonel Pyncheon, at two-thirds length representing the stern features of a Puritanic-looking personage, in a skull-cap, with a laced band and a grizzly beard; holding a Bible with one hand, and in the other uplifting an iron sword-hilt.[6]

The iron of the sword gives a much more accurate picture of the cold hardness of his true nature than does the Bible, a symbol of his assumed religious fervor. Through the years the portrait has darkened, making both the sword and the

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[4]A. N. Kaul, "Introduction," Hawthorne: A Collection of Critical Essays, edited by A. N. Kaul (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1966), p. 8.

[5]F. O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance (London, 1941), p. 342.

[6]The House of the Seven Gables, p. 262.

harshness of the Colonel's features the most obvious aspects of the painting. Hawthorne was greatly interested in the portrait and the photograph, or daguerreotype, as a means of analyzing and revealing character.[7] Even in death Colonel Pyncheon continues to lead the Pyncheons.

> First comes the ancestor himself, in his black cloak, steeple-hat, and trunk breeches, girt about the waist with a leathern belt, in which hangs his steel-hilted sword; he has a long staff in his hand . . .[8]

By dressing the Colonel in dark-colored clothing and by having him carry the iron sword and staff, both items associated with evil and the Devil, Hawthorne indicates that the Colonel has neither changed nor repented of his original sin.

The patriarch of the present generation of the Pyncheons, Judge Jaffrey Pyncheon, is almost a reincarnation of the old Colonel. A creature of public lightness and private darkness,[9] he offers probably the best example of Hawthorne's use of clothing to disguise the true nature of the individual. His attire reflects his materialism and the false front which he presents to the world. He wears

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[7]Matthiessen, p. 299.

[8]The House of the Seven Gables, p. 411.

[9]Richard H. Fogle, Hawthorne's Imagery: The Proper Light and Shadow in the Major Romances (Norman, 1969), p. 59.

> . . . a black suit of some thin stuff, resembling broad-cloth as closely as possible. A gold-headed cane of rare Oriental wood, added materially to the high respectability of his aspect, as did also a neck-cloth of the utmost snowy purity, and the conscientious polish of his boots.[10]

His "proper face" is depicted by his rich and fashionable clothes which reflect an air of "studied propriety"[11] to those around him. He also wears glittering "gold-bowed spectacles,"[12] which enhance his image of respectable prosperity.

Judge Pyncheon's appearance offers a constant contrast to the truth of the inner man; his snowy-white linen hides the black soul within, much as the sepulchre, white on the outside, conceals the corpse within, and the bright shine upon his boots is as false as the benign smile with which he deceives those around him.[13] It is only in the symbolism of evil in his cane, which he constantly carries with him, that Hawthorne hints at his true nature, and even this token is dressed up in fine gold and polished wood. Hawthorne deliberately draws attention to the striking resemblance between Judge Pyncheon and his ancestor, Colonel Pyncheon. Perhaps the Puritan Colonel could merely have trimmed his beard and whiskers,

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[10] The House of the Seven Gables, p. 321.

[11] Ibid., p. 382 [12] Ibid., p. 277.

[13] Roy R. Male, Jr., Hawthorne's Tragic Vision (Austin, 1957), p. 128.

> . . . then, patronizing a ready-made clothing establishment, he had exchanged his velvet doublet and sable cloak, with the richly worked band under his chin, for a white collar and cravat, coat, vest, and pantaloons; and lastly, putting aside his steel-hilted broadsword to take up a gold-headed cane, the Colonel Pyncheon of two centuries ago steps forward as the Judge of the passing moment![14]

Each is a false and self-centered individual who seeks to conceal his evil beneath a facade of respectable and stately garb. Each man carries in some form the staff of evil. Both have the feigned purity of snowy-white linens stained with blood; both choke upon the evil of their relentless greed. Just as the Colonel's portrait eventually comes to reveal the true nature of the man, so does Holgrave's daguerreotype depict the truth of the Judge. Each man is a walking lie.

The present resident of the Pyncheon mansion, Hepzibah Pyncheon, is a somber figure who seems to be

> . . . the east wind itself, grim and disconsolate, in a rusty black silk gown, and with a turban of cloud-wreaths on its head.[15]

With her habitual black scowl and her stiff, rustling, black silk gowns, she echoes the darkness and gloom of the house itself; both are shut off from the light of the common, everyday world.[16] In Hepzibah, Hawthorne makes a direct opposite to Judge Pyncheon; her dark exterior hides the

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[14] The House of the Seven Gables, p. 315.

[15] Ibid., p. 377.

[16] Fogle, p. 56.

light of a kind and affectionate heart within. Despite the tenderness which Hawthorne claims for her, she too is guilty of the family sin of excessive pride. Hawthorne uses her stiff, unyielding, old-fashioned garments to reveal her over-attachment to the past greatness of the family and to her position of ladylike gentility.[17]

There is an ironic contrast between Hepzibah's rustling black silks and the garments of a lady passing by on the street, wearing

> delicate and costly summer garb with a floating veil and gracefully swaying gown, and, altogether an etherial lightness that made you look at her beautifully slippered feet to see whether she trod on the dust or floated in the air. . . .[18]

Hepzibah condemns the purposelessness of this woman, even while she herself is hoping that "some harlequin trick of fortune" would adorn her with pearls, diamonds, and Oriental shawls and turbans, and make her the ultimate heiress of his unreckonable riches.[19] By stressing her habit of continually wearing "the odd uncouthness"[20] of a turban and by revealing her desire for riches from the Orient, Hawthorne implies that Hepzibah would like to live like some sort of Oriental

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[17]Edward Wagenknecht, Nathaniel Hawthorne (New York, 1961), p. 116.

[18]The House of the Seven Gables, p. 275.

[19]Ibid., p. 281.

[20]Ibid., p. 308.

princess, dwelling in wealth and luxury, far removed from the deprivations of her current state.[21]

Hawthorne also makes Hepzibah's turban emblematic of the current conditions of the Pyncheon fortunes. Phoebe, for example, sees a striking resemblance between the once famous Pyncheon chickens and her elderly cousin's turban:

> The distinguishing mark of the hens was a crest of lamentably scanty growth, in these latter days, but so oddly and wickedly analogous to Hepzibah's turban, that Phoebe—to the poignant distress of her conscience, but inevitably—was led to fancy a general resemblance betwixt these forlorn bipeds and her respectable relative.[22]

Indeed, Hepzibah and the fowl are both the products of a declining and decaying family.

Hepzibah's brother Clifford is a character whose nature is aptly summed up by a single article of clothing, much as Hester Prynne is associated with her scarlet letter; his damask dressing gown provides a fitting emblem for his life and his character.[23] As a young man he had felt a sensuous, deeply appreciative love for life and for all beautiful things, a quality clearly shown in the delicate miniature and by the silken garb which he wears. Almost too fragile for contact with the commonplace world, Clifford, after an

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[21]Jac Tharpe, Nathaniel Hawthorne: Identity and Knowledge (Carbondale, Illinois, 1967), p. 18.

[22]The House of the Seven Gables, p. 296.

[23]Fogle, p. 65.

unjust thirty-year imprisonment, is broken in spirit and worn in body, and the once beautiful dressing gown is faded and tattered, an observation which Phoebe makes at once:

> This old, faded garment, with all its pristine brilliancy extinct, seemed in some indescribable way to translate the wearer's untold misfortune, and make it perceptible to the beholder's eye. It was the better to be discerned, by this exterior type, how worn and old were the soul's more immediate garments . . . . It could the more adequately be known that the soul of the man must have suffered some miserable wrong, from its earthly experience.[24]

With great effectiveness Hawthorne uses the dressing gown to mirror the condition of its owner.

Hepzibah's black silks and Clifford's faded dressing gown indicate that these two old people are both creatures of the past and really have no place in the outside world. When they decide on a sudden whim to leave the protective gloom of the house and go to church, they " . . . 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. . . ."[25] Their sense of isolation from the world is shown again when they flee the

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[24]The House of the Seven Gables, p. 306.

[25]Ibid., p. 344.

house after the Judge's death in their "old-fashioned garments."[26] The only thing which helps them to enter the outside world relatively unnoticed is the cold, rainy day, which is almost as gloomy and despondent as they are.

The other surviving Pyncheon is Phoebe, a country cousin who has not grown up under the shadow of the old house. Her attire is an accurate reflection of her whole personality:

> . . . Fresh was Phoebe, moreover, and airy and sweet in her apparel; as if nothing that she wore—neither her gown, nor her small straw bonnet, nor her little kerchief, any more than her snowy stockings—had ever been put on before; or if worn, were all the fresher for it, and with a fragrance as if they had lain among the rosebuds.[27]

Hawthorne makes use of her fresh and neat outer appearance to mirror her wholesome and cheerful inner spirit. Somewhat reminiscent of little Pearl, she is often described by Hawthorne in terms of sunshine, light, and flowers; he uses Phoebe as a means of bringing the hope and bloom of youth into the somber old house.[28] In her youthful innocence and awe for all forms of order and respectability,[29] she is at first deceived by the Judge's appearance because she

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[26] Ibid., p. 391.

[27] Ibid., p. 343.

[28] Fogle, p. 63.

[29] Randall Stewart, "Introduction," The American Notebooks, by Nathaniel Hawthorne, edited by Randall Stewart (New Haven, Connecticut, 1932), p. lv.

does not immediately recognize that his fine clothing is not an accurate reflection of his nature.

Hawthorne uses the remaining Pyncheons as variously reflecting the qualities of greed and pride passed down from generation to generation. Gervayse Pyncheon—greedy enough to sacrifice his own daughter—wears clothes that clearly reveal his aristocratic pretensions: a flowing wig, a "coat of blue velvet, with lace on the borders and at the button-holes,"[30] and a waistcoat "flowered all over with gold."[31] His daughter Alice, "in her gossamer white dress and satin slippers,"[32] originally as proud and haughty as any of the Pyncheons, is humbled and purified through suffering. Her delicate white dress reflects her fragile beauty and her chastised, ethereal spirit. Like Hester, she is forced into an isolation which ultimately results in her salvation. The shop-keeper Pyncheon in his "faded velvet coat" carefully turns back his ruffles so that they will not be stained by his contact with the common, commercial world, and with "the blood of a petty huckster"[33] in his veins, checks each coin to be sure it is a good one. In the brief view he gives us of young Jaffrey

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[30] The House of the Seven Gables, p. 359.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid., p. 369.

[33] Ibid., p. 260.

Pyncheon, Hawthorne gives a strong implication that, had he lived past his dissipated and frivolous youth, he might have evolved into as substantial a figure of rich materialism and false respectability as his father. Like his father he wears the most fashionable clothes—"a dark frock coat, almost destitute of skirts, gray pantaloons, gaiter boots of patent leather, . . . a finely wrought gold chain across his breast, and a little silver-headed whalebone stick in his hand."[34] Each generation of Pyncheons has inherited the family sin of haughty pride and excessive greed.[35] The attire of almost all of them reveals an attempt to conceal their true nature from an unsuspecting world.

Hawthorne uses the appearance of the Maules, the victims of the Pyncheon greed, to indicate their lower station in life and to suggest the taint of evil which blemishes them. Old Matthew Maule, who uttered the original curse against Colonel Pyncheon—"'God will give him blood to drink!'"[36]—had cast his "mantle, or rather the ragged cloak" upon his children; they are said to inherit his "mysterious attributes; the family eye was said to

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[34]Ibid., p. 411.

[35]Hyatt H. Waggoner, Hawthorne: A Critical Study (Cambridge, 1955), p. 152.

[36]The House of the Seven Gables, p. 247.

possess strange power."[37] His son, Thomas, and his grandson, Matthew, are each carpenters with "coarse woolen tunic and leather breeches, and with a carpenter's rule sticking out of his side pocket."[38]

Holgrave, the last surviving Maule, has for the span of his young life been changing professions—and appearances—in an attempt to find self-realization.[39] "Putting off one exterior, and snatching up another, to be soon shifted for a third, —he had never violated the innermost man, but had carried his conscience along with him."[40] Despite the fact that he has inherited the mesmeric ability of the Maules, he has avoided taking advantage of it. His basic truth and honesty are revealed by the clothing he wears:

> As for his dress, it was of the simplest kind; a summer sack of cheap and ordinary material, thin checkered pantaloons, and a straw hat, by no means of the finest braid. Oak Hall might have supplied his entire equipment. He was chiefly marked as a gentleman—if such, indeed, he made any claim to be—by the rather remarkable whiteness and nicety of his clean linen.[41]

Holgrave is Hawthorne's representative of the democratic spirit of nineteenth-century America, and as such, he is

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[37] Ibid., p. 258.

[38] Ibid., p. 367.

[39] Tharpe, p. 18.

[40] The House of the Seven Gables, p. 349.

[41] Ibid., p. 268.

a fit person to marry Phoebe, the last Pyncheon, and thus bring the old curse to an end.

Through the clothing of the minor characters in the novel, Hawthorne reveals the social class to which they belong.[42] The servants of Colonel Pyncheon usher guests to the house into either the kitchen or one of the more formal rooms according to their attire.

> Velvet garments, sombre but rich, stiffly plaited ruffs and bands, embroidered gloves, venerable beards, the mien and countenance of authority, made it easy to distinguish the gentleman of worship, at that period, from the tradesman, with his plodding air, or the laborer, in his leathern jerkin, stealing awe-stricken into the house which he had perhaps helped to build.[43]

In the current generation of Pyncheons, Hepzibah, clinging to her ideas of gentility, is especially aware of the clothing of those around her; she notices the "blue cotton frock"[44] of the working man, "linen blouses and other such new-fangled and ill-fitting garments"[45] of Holgrave's companions, and even the rather shabby "blue apron, —very wide and short trousers, . . . and . . . chip-hat"[46] of little Ned Higgins. Hawthorne uses her observations to reveal that she does not consider herself a member of the

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[42] Turner, p. 45.

[43] The House of the Seven Gables, p. 249.

[44] Ibid., p. 279.

[45] Ibid., p. 294.

[46] Ibid., p. 272.

working class and that she would prefer to maintain a certain distance between herself and those she considers to be of a lower social class.

The empty vanity of fine clothing is perhaps best shown in Uncle Venner. A somewhat comic figure, he well depicts Hawthorne's ability to create brief but vivid sketches of characters.[47] For years he has plodded up and down Pyncheon Street, collecting an odd assortment of cast-off garments. He is

> . . . clad in an old blue coat, which had a fashionable air, and must have accrued to him from the cast-off wardrobe of some dashing clerk. As for his trousers, they were of tow-cloth, very short in the legs, and bagging down strangely in the rear, but yet having a suitableness to his figure which his other garments entirely lacked. His hat had relation to no other part of his dress, and but very little to the head that wore it. Thus Uncle Venner was a miscellaneous old gentleman, partly himself, but in good measure, somebody else; patched together, too, of different epochs; an epitome of times and fashions.[48]

Yet, Hawthorne does not reveal the sense of isolation in Uncle Venner's out-dated clothing that he does in Clifford's and Hepzibah's; their appearance remains static, whereas Uncle Venner's is in a state of constant change and development.

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[47] Constance Rourke, American Humor: A Study of the National Character (Garden City, New York, 1953), p. 150.

[48] The House of the Seven Gables, pp. 279-280.

In The House of the Seven Gables Hawthorne employs clothing in much the same way he used it in The Scarlet Letter. The dark portrait of the Colonel and the black silks of Hepzibah correspond to the gloomy mood of the old house and to the decaying state of the Pyncheon fortunes. The old-fashioned garments of Hepzibah and Clifford help to indicate their isolation from the rest of the world. Hawthorne reveals the dominant personality traits of several of the characters by means of their garb. Phoebe's little straw hat and green parasol indicate her fresh and brisk nature, and Clifford's faded dressing gown covers the faded romantic spirit within. However, it is as a means of concealment and disguise that Hawthorne primarily uses clothing in The House of the Seven Gables, whether to indicate the artificial constraints of social class or to cover a corrupt interior with an acceptable exterior, as in the case of Judge Pyncheon.

CHAPTER IV

CLOTHING IN THE BLITHEDALE ROMANCE AND THE MARBLE FAUN

Through references to clothing in The Blithedale Romance, Hawthorne emphasizes the theme of withdrawal and concealment which runs throughout the book. Almost every character in the novel is in some way masked, veiled, or disguised.[1] The characters have supposedly come to the Blithedale Farm in order to shed old pretensions and find a new brotherhood; ironically, they appear only to have exchanged one suit of clothes for another. New masks have been assumed to veil their real nature; despite their professed intent of finding self-realization, they move into even greater isolation from one another. Daniel Hoffman compares the Blithedale inhabitants to Arcadians; "each of the colonists, to dig new crops in Eden, has cast off his prior life like a worn-out cloak and becomes an Arcadian, tending the sheep, supervising the laundry. Their perpetual masquerade hides their true identities from one another."[2]

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[1]Hyatt H. Waggoner, Hawthorne: A Critical Study (Cambridge, 1955), p. 178.

[2]Daniel G. Hoffman, Form and Fable in American Fiction (New York, 1965), p. 215.

Zenobia, the dominant character of the novel, is one of Hawthorne's "women with an exotic richness in her soul."[3] She has a sensual Oriental-type beauty and displays strong intellectuality. Despite her vibrant beauty, she projects an air of falseness and appears to move from one role to another as easily as she has assumed a new name. Even as she arrives at Blithedale, supposedly to put aside the conventional restraints of class and rank, her very attire proves what a sham she is:

> . . . dressed as simple as possible, in an American print . . . but with a silken kerchief. . . . Her hair, which was dark, glossy, and of singular abundance, was put up rather soberly and primly, without curls, or other ornament, except a single flower . . . . So brilliant, so rare, so costly, as it must have been, and yet enduring only for a day, it was more indicative of the pride and pomp which had a luxuriant growth in Zenobia's character than if a great diamond had sparkled among her hair.[4]

Westervelt comments after her death that she should have been an actress, and her exotic flower forms an excellent theatrical property, deliberately assumed but still revealing her rich and passionate nature.[5] A crusader for

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[3]Randall Stewart, "Introduction," The American Notebooks, by Nathaniel Hawthorne, edited by Randall Stewart (New Haven, Connecticut, 1932), p. lix.

[4]Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Blithedale Romance in The Novels and Tales of Nathaniel Hawthorne, edited by Norman Pearson (New York, 1937), p. 447.

[5]Edward Wagenknecht, Nathaniel Hawthorne (New York, 1937), p. 142.

woman's rights, she feels contempt for the traditional feminine role, from which she gladly steps; her vivid flower indicates her pride and her willingness to compete with men.[6]

When Zenobia is tired of playing the rustic role, she returns to the city and attires herself in opulent splendor. Even her flower undergoes a transformation; she replaces the living one with a false one of gems:

> . . . her beauty was set off by all that dress and ornament could do for it. And they did much . . . those costly robes which she had on, those flaming jewels on her neck, served as lamps to display the personal advantages which required nothing less than such an illumination to be fully seen. Even her characteristic flower, though it seemed to be still there, had undergone a cold and bright transfiguration; it was a flower exquisitely imitated in jeweller's work, and imparting the last touch that transformed Zenobia into a work or art.[7]

Seen against the many gleaming lamps of her lavish drawing room, she appears to have become a glittering facade, the embodiment of her own pride. Hawthorne also implies that her flower, both living and jewelled, is symbolic of her sexual attractiveness; when the frail Priscilla wins the love of Hollingsworth, Zenobia gives the jewelled flower to her. In this action she appears to be somewhat

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[6]Roy R. Male, Jr., Hawthorne's Tragic Vision (Austin, 1957), p. 146.

[7]The Blithedale Romance, p. 535.

scornfully implying that Priscilla could never hope to match her passionate love and that Hollingsworth would regret his choice.

Zenobia's clothing is effectively used by Hawthorne to indicate her basic nature. Whether adopting the role of an Oriental princess at the masquerade in "a costume of fanciful magnificence, with her jewelled flower as the central ornament of what resembled a leafy crown or coronet"[8] or assuming the "homely simplicity"[9] of her Blithedale garb, she remains a figure of abundant self-pride. In her attire and accessories, especially her characteristic flower, Hawthorne reveals both this excessive pride and her deliberate assumption of imperial airs. Even in defeat, she announces her intention of putting on "the black veil"[10] of a nun, and when she instead chooses suicide, it is a fine French kid shoe that she leaves on the bank of the black pond, rather than a penitent heart.

Zenobia's sister, Priscilla, despite her role as the Veiled Lady, is the only character in the book who does not need, or deliberately choose, to wear a veil. In her role as the Veiled Lady, she is made to assume a white veil,

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[8] Ibid., p. 564.

[9] Ibid., p. 464.

[10] Ibid., p. 573.

> . . . with somewhat of a subdued silver sheen, like the sunny side of a cloud; and, falling over the wearer from head to foot, was supposed to insulate her from the material world, from time and space, and to endow her with many of the privileges of a disembodied spirit.[11]

Even in the role which Westervelt has forced her to assume, she has never violated her own conscience. Her veil makes her both powerful, in her prophetic abilities, and vulnerable, in her subjugation to Westervelt. It has preserved her sensitivity by isolating her from the harsh materialism of the world.[12]

Priscilla's attire, when she is not in the role of the Veiled Lady, is used by Hawthorne to reflect her essential purity and complete helplessness before a stronger personality. Priscilla wears "a poor but decent gown . . . without any regard to fashion or smartness"[13] when she joins the group at Blithedale; her simple garb offers a sharp contrast to her sister's luxuriant richness. After she has begun to recover at Blithedale, she—like Phoebe and Pearl—proves to be a child of sunlight and flowers; rather than the exotic blooms which Zenobia wears, she is adorned with native New England flowers. Says Coverdale:

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[11] Ibid., p. 441.

[12] Richard H. Fogle, Hawthorne's Fiction: The Light and the Dark (Norman, 1964), p. 159.

[13] The Blithedale Romance, p. 454.

> "She is the very picture of the New England spring; subdued in tint, and rather cool, but with a capacity of sunshine, and bringing us a few Alpine blossoms, as earnest of something richer, through hardly more beautiful, hereafter. The best type of her is one of those anemones."[14]

Hawthorne epitomizes Priscilla's nature in the little silk purses which she knits. Their fragile beauty and hidden openings are like Priscilla's own beauty and her mysterious veil:

> Their peculiar excellence, besides the great delicacy and beauty of the manufacture, lay in the almost impossibility that any uninitiated person should discover the aperture; although, to a practised touch, they would open as wide as charity or prodigality might wish . . . a symbol of Priscilla's own mystery.[15]

Under Zenobia's domination, just before her return to Westervelt, Priscilla is dressed in "pure white, set off with some kind of a gauzy fabric."[16] In her attire, reminiscent of her costume as the Veiled Lady, Hawthorne suggests her innocent helplessness before Zenobia—like a sacrificial victim before a goddess.[17] Even her marriage to Hollingsworth reflects only "a veiled happiness."[18]

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[14] Ibid., p. 473.

[15] Ibid., p. 459.

[16] Ibid., p. 539.

[17] Richard H. Fogle, Hawthorne's Imagery: The Proper Light and Shadow in the Major Romances (Norman, 1969), p. 115.

[18] The Blithedale Romance, p. 582.

Hawthorne's best use of clothing as a means of disguise occurs in the portrayal of the villainous Westervelt:

> His hair, as well as his beard and mustache, was coal-black; his eyes, too, were black and sparkling, and his teeth remarkably brilliant. He was rather carelessly but well and fashionably dressed, in a summer-morning costume. There was a gold chain, exquisitely wrought, across his vest. I never saw a smoother or whiter gloss than that upon his shirt-bosom, which had a pin in it, set with a gem that glimmered, in the leafy shadow where he stood, like a living tip of fire. He carried a stick with a wooden head, carved in vivid imitation of that of a serpent.[19]

His fine and fashionable apparel conceals a cold and corrupt interior; he appears to lack all human emotion.[20] The glittering handsomeness is a deliberate illusion created to deceive others about his evil intentions. He is completely false, even to his shining white teeth:

> In the excess of his delight, he opened his mouth and disclosed a gold band around the upper part of his teeth, thereby making it apparent that every one of his brilliant grinders and incisors was a sham.[21]

Through Coverdale's suspicions, Hawthorne identifies Westervelt's false teeth as a sign of his true nature; when Satan assumes human form, he can always be discovered by some physical imperfection:[22]

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[19] Ibid., p. 493.

[20] Jac Tharpe, Nathaniel Hawthorne: Identity and Knowledge (Carbondale, Illinois, 1967), p. 18.

[21] The Blithedale Romance, p. 495.

[22] Mark Van Doren, Nathaniel Hawthorne (New York, 1949), p. 190.

> Every human being when given over to the Devil, is sure to have the wizard mark upon him, in one form or another. I fancied that this smile, with its particular revelation, was the Devil's signet on the Professor.[23]

Hawthorne also uses Westervelt's walking stick with the carved head of the serpent upon it as a sign of the presence of the Devil.[24]

Westervelt's attire is as false as the man within. When he exploits Priscilla as the Veiled Lady, he assumes the mask of "a bearded personage in Oriental robes, looking like one of the enchanters of the Arabian Nights."[25]

There are several resemblances between Hawthorne's characterizations of Westervelt and Judge Pyncheon. Both are creatures of evil who use their clothing to conceal their true identities. Their garb is much alike—snowy white linens, gold watch chains, elaborate canes.[26] Hawthorne also places gold-rimmed spectacles upon each of them through which they see a one-sided view of the world.

In his portrayal of Old Moodie, Hawthorne uses clothing as a means of concealment. Though Moodie's disguise is

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[23]The Blithedale Romance, p. 495.

[24]William B. Stein, Hawthorne's Faust: A Study of the Devil Archetype (Gainesville, 1953), p. 127.

[25]The Blithedale Romance, p. 556.

[26]Fogle, Hawthorne's Imagery, p. 109.

initially one of necessity, it is later one of choice.[27] His rather shabby garments are of an out-dated style, a remnant of his Fauntleroy days.

> He was certainly the wretchedest old ghost in the world, with his crazy hat, the dingy handkerchief about his throat, his suit of threadbare gray, and especially that patch over his right eye, behind which he always seemed to be hiding himself.[28]

Hawthorne only briefly describes the clothing of Hollingsworth, the iron-willed reformer, but he uses this brief description to suggest Hollingswoth's true nature. He wears a "shaggy great-coat all covered with snow, so that he looked quite as much like a polar bear as a modern philanthropist."[29] Indeed, his personality is much like that of a polar bear—gruff, determined, and completely cold. Like the other residents of Blithedale, he puts on the garb of a laborer while he is there, but he seeks only the furtherance of his own ambitions and not the goal of common brotherhood.

Hawthorne uses the dress of Miles Coverdale, the narrator of the novel, to imply that Miles, like the other residents of Blithedale, is taking part in a masquerade. When he joins the communal group he too adapts the rustic garb of

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[27]Tharpe, p. 126.

[28]The Blithedale Romance, p. 544.

[29]Ibid., p. 453.

a common laborer, " . . . a linen blouse, with checked shirt and striped pantaloons, a chip hat. . . . "[30] But when he meets Westervelt, he forgets the ideas of the honest, simple life supposedly represented by his attire: "I hated him, partly, I do believe, from a comparison of my own homely garb with his well-ordered foppishness."[31] When he begins to tire of the work and strain of the pastoral life, he can simply change roles, put on " . . . a coat, . . . with a satin cravat, . . . a white vest, and several other things, . . . "[32] and spend a couple of weeks at the beach for his health. When Coverdale returns to the city and watches the young dandy through the open window, he could just as well be looking in the mirror at his own vain reflection:

> In one of the upper chambers I saw a young man in a dressing gown, standing before the glass and brushing his hair, for a quarter of an hour together. He then spent an equal space of time in the elaborate arrangement of his cravat, and finally made his appearance in a dress-coat, which I suspected to be newly come from the tailor's, and now first put on for a dinner-party.[33]

All of the group at Blithedale are guilty of using clothing as a means of disguise; all strive to do as Fauntleroy did and assume a new identity by merely assuming

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[30] Ibid., p. 492.
[31] Ibid., p. 493.
[32] Ibid., p. 520.
[33] Ibid., p. 528.

new garments.[34] Hawthorne uses their clothes to indicate the empty vanity of their social standing in the world outside Blithedale:

> . . . we all of us seemed to have come to Blithedale with the one thrifty and laudable idea of wearing out our old clothes. Such garments as had an airing, whenever we strode afield! Coats with high collars and with no collars, broad-skirted or swallow-tailed, and with the waist at every point between the hip and the arm-pit; pantaloons of a dozen successive epochs, and greatly defaced at the knees by the humiliation of the wearer before his lady-love, —in short, we were a living epitome of defunct fashions, and the very raggedest presentment of men who had seen better days . . . . every mother's son of us would have served admirably to stick up for a scarecrow.[35]

Even when they put aside their tattered gentility and put on the blue linen work smocks of the laborer, they are still presenting a false idea of equality.[36] Each one knows that he is there by choice and can leave by choice; thus, Zenobia can continue to wear her expensive flower, Miles can take a short vacation, and all can enjoy the rustic novelty of drinking their tea from earthen cups instead of their usual fine china. In the vivid costumes of the forest masquerade, Hawthorne reveals how easily they slip from one role into another and how artificial their attire really is:

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[34]Hoffman, p. 211.

[35]The Blithedale Romance, p. 476.

[36]Tharpe, p. 18.

> . . . an Indian chief, with blanket, feathers and warpaint, and uplifted tomahawk . . . the goddess Diana, with the crescent on her head . . . a Bavarian broom-girl, a negro of the Jim Crow order, one or two foresters of the Middle Ages, a Kentucky woodsman in his trimmed hunting shirt and deerskin leggings, and a Shaker elder, quaint, demure, broad-brimmed and square-skirted. Shepherds of Arcadia, and allegoric figures from the Faerie Queen, . . . grim Puritans, gay Cavaliers, and Revolutionary officers with three-cornered cocked hats, and queues longer than their swords. A . . . little gypsey, with a red shawl . . . and Moll Pitcher, the renowned old witch of Lynn, broomstick in hand . . . .[37]

Most of the images in The Blithedale Romance center around disguise and concealment, and the clothing of the characters offers constant evidence of this pattern. Hawthorne veils every character in the novel, except Silas Foster, in one manner or another.[38] Priscilla is the Veiled Lady; Moodie hides behind an eye patch and an alias; Zenobia, too, wears a false name and her theatrical flower. Silas alone, in his blue work shirt, knows who he is and offers a constant contrast to the artificiality of the rest. He was working in the fields before the optimistic Blithedale reformers arrived and will still be doing so after the last of them has departed.

In the last of his published romances, The Marble Faun, Hawthorne employs far less description of characters' apparel than in the earlier works. One possible explanation

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[37] The Blithedale Romance, pp. 562-563.

[38] Male, p. 144.

for its relative absence is that in The Marble Faun he makes use of references to art and various objects of art to reveal aspects of character. Thus Hawthorne reflects Donatello's simple nature in the statue of the Faun of Praxiteles and uses Hilda's painting of Beatrice Cenci to mirror Miriam's hidden grief. In a similar manner, he implies that the sculptor Kenyon's work in cold marble suggests the cool aloofness and detachment of his nature. Despite the gap of time between the composition of The Blithedale Romance and The Marble Faun, however, Hawthorne's technique and use of references to the apparel of his characters remain essentially the same in both novels.

An eerie, mysterious figure from Miriam's past, Miriam's model uses his attire as a disguise to conceal his true identity from all except Miriam:

> The stranger was of exceeding picturesque, and even melodramatic aspect. He was clad in a voluminous cloak, that seemed to be made of a buffalo's hide, and a pair of goat-skin breeches, with the hair outward, which are still commonly worn by the peasants of the Roman Capagna . . . and a broad-brimmed, conical hat . . . .[39]

The wildness of his dress is used by Hawthorne to reflect the insanity of his mind as well as to conceal his identity. In death he wears another veil, the hooded brown woolen robe

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[39]Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Marble Faun in The Novels and Tales of Nathaniel Hawthorne, edited by Norman Pearson (New York, 1937), p. 606.

of a Capuchin monk; the holiness suggested by the religious garb forms an ironic contrast to the mysterious evil of the living man.

Linked by some horrible past event to the Spectre, Miriam seeks to conceal her secret from the world; immediately after meeting him she is found mending her gloves, thereby attempting to cover her imputed stain. In Miriam's portrayal, as in Dimmesdale's, Hawthorne uses gloves to suggest the concealing of guilt; the impure hand is covered. After her reconciliation with Donatello, Kenyon meets Miriam and notices a change in her:

> . . . it might be merely her dress, which, imperfect as the light was, he saw to be richer than the simple garb that she had usually worn. The effect, he fancied, was partly owing to a gem which she had on her bosom; not a diamond, but something that glimmered with a clear red lustre . . . . Somehow or other this colored light seemed an emanation of herself as if all that was passionate and glowing, in her native disposition, had crystallized upon her breast, and were just now scintillating more brilliantly than ever, in sympathy with some emotion of her heart.[40]

Hawthorne uses the gem to reflect both "the dark red carbuncle"[41] of her guilt and the utter hopelessness of the love she and Donatello have for one another. After Donatello's imprisonment, she assumes a new garb, hiding her guilt and her grief behind the veil of a masked penitent.

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[40] Ibid., p. 818. [41] Ibid., p. 664.

In Hilda, with her snowy white robes and her tower high above Rome surrounded by white doves, Hawthorne creates a symbol of heavenly innocence and purity.[42] After she witnesses Miriam and Donatello's crime, she shrinks from all contact with them for fear that the taint of sin will stain her white purity. A New England girl, she also wears a little straw hat much like the one worn by Phoebe in The House of the Seven Gables; like Hawthorne's other New England heroines, she is frequently associated with imagery of sunshine, flowers, and purity.

For the unfortunate Donatello, clothing becomes a means of expressing his terrible isolation as he, like Miriam, assumes the garb of a masked penitent. Through Donatello's spiritual isolation behind the penitential mask, Hawthorne foreshadows his later physical isolation in prison.

Hawthorne uses the costumes of the carnival masqueraders in Rome to echo in pictorial form the empty frivolity of earthly joys, a reminder that happiness and sorrow often walk hand-in-hand. Thus, though Hawthorne's references to clothing are not extensive in The Marble Faun, his usage is consistent with that in the other major novels.

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[42]Fogle, Hawthorne's Fiction, p. 169.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

One important measure of Nathaniel Hawthorne's accomplishment and reputation as an author lies in his extremely successful character portrayals. Critic Arlin Turner states that "probably no American author before or since Hawthorne has planted so many characters so securely in the literary firmament."[1] If they live in the reader's imagination, almost as actual people, it is because he was able to put down with a few words the salient aspects of these characters. One means by which he was able to create such lasting impressions was by presenting only enough of a character's appearance—such as a certain article of clothing—to enable the reader's own imagination to fill in the remainder of the details.

Hawthorne's use of apparel in character portrayal is thus significant as one element in his overall technique of developing character and conveying theme. As a mature writer, from the time of the composition of The Scarlet Letter to his last writings, Hawthorne reveals his

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[1] Arlin Turner, Nathaniel Hawthorne: An Introduction and Interpretation (New York, 1961), p. 140.

characters primarily through the dual devices of effictio and notatio. Effictio means describing one's physical appearance: his eyes, hair, clothing. Notatio refers to telling something about the character's personality.[2] These methods allow Hawthorne effectively to associate symbolic meanings with the clothing of his characters. For example, Hawthorne describes Hilda's white robes; he tells the reader about her purity of soul, and the two become merged in the reader's mind. The white robe has become a symbol of her purity.

Even when Hawthorne describes the clothing of his characters, he maintains a certain romantic indefiniteness rather than any sort of photographic accuracy of detail. Often he claims that some indescribable air of peculiarity sets one character's garb apart from the rest. Thus, the reader is made aware that Hester Prynne's dress is distinct from that of the other Puritan women without his ever being told in exact detail what her dress looks like. He often singles out a particular article of apparel, such as Zenobia's flower, or a certain color, such as the snowy whiteness of Judge Pyncheon's linen, and allows this aspect to dominate the appearance of the character.

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[2]Charles R. Metzger, "Effictio and Notatio: Hawthorne's Technique of Characterization," Western Humanities Review, XIV (1960), 224-226.

By similarities in dress, certain characters in the various novels can be grouped together according to general patterns. Three character types may readily be classified by their clothing: (1) the dark, exotic woman, (2) the New England heroine, and (3) the villain.[3] In the four romances here considered, three women may be identified as belonging to the first group of characters. Zenobia, Miriam, and Hester are all in one sense "scarlet women," and all wear some sort of highly emblematic scarlet token. Zenobia's flower, Miriam's gem, and Hester's letter all serve as outward signs of the inner passionate nature of the three women. In addition, each woman has dark, glossy hair and is set apart by either the cut or the uniqueness of her apparel. These women are rebels, in one way or another, against the status quo, whom—despite their beautiful, sensual appeal—Hawthorne feels compelled to destroy.[4]

The second character type in these four romances is the New England heroine. Phoebe, Hilda, and Priscilla, when she is not the Veiled Lady, are examples of this type.

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[3]For a more detailed consideration of character types in Hawthorne's writing see Randall Stewart, "Introduction," The American Notebooks, edited by Randall Stewart (New Haven, 1932).

[4]Philip Rahv, "The Dark Lady of Salem," Partisan Review, VIII (1941), 362-381.

Even Pearl in the woman she becomes, rather than the child she has been, is a potential member of this group. Their purity, wholesomeness, and domesticity are reflected in their simple, attractive attire, frequently white, and the prim and proper little straw hats which they often wear. They also share an affinity with nature and are often visualized as being adorned with sunlight and flowers—native New England ones, not tropical blooms. They are all fair and blonde, echoing the nineteenth-century symbolism of hair color[5]; dark hair reflects a woman of passion and experience, while blonde hair indicates the "snow-white maiden of New England"[6] who wins everything—love, husband, and exemption from sin and guilt.

Hawthorne's villains also show similarities in dress. None of them wishes his evil nature to be known; consequently, the clothing of each reflects an attempt at disguise. Judge Pyncheon and Westervelt hide behind a front of expensive, fashionable attire, and Miriam's model hides beneath his voluminous, tattered cloak. Hawthorne often hints that his villains are incarnated devils,[7] and most of them carry a cane or staff in token of their league with the Devil.

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[5]Frederick Carpenter, "Puritans Preferred Blondes," New England Quarterly, IX (1936), 253.

[6]Rahv, p. 367.

[7]Stewart, p. lv.

Hawthorne's use of clothing in the descriptions of his characters consistently falls into one or more of four general patterns. Clothing may function as a symbol of a person's dominant character traits; it may represent his sense of isolation from others; it may reflect a deliberate attempt at concealment or disguise; or it may serve to help express the mood of a narrative. The first three patterns are all related to the theme of man's search for identity.[8] In the man who has found, and is willing to admit to, his own personal reality, whether good or evil, apparel becomes an expression of the nature of the individual. The man and his clothing merge into one unified whole.

When the character either has not yet discovered or does not wish to reveal his true identity, his attire reflects his isolation and concealment. The use of dress as an indicator of social class is in effect a means of disguise; it seeks to reduce the individual within to the sum of his external covering and forms an artificial image of the true person. The man who deliberately hides behind his garments becomes little more than a living scarecrow. Apparel can also mark the isolation of one individual from another; the man who does not yet know himself can not know others. His garb thus becomes a barrier between him and the

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[8] Jac Tharpe, Nathaniel Hawthorne: Identity and Knowledge (Carbondale, 1967), p. 17.

rest of humanity. The clothing, no matter how fine, does not make the man; the man must make the clothes.

The fourth general pattern in Hawthorne's use of clothing, as an indicator of mood, is not thematically related to the first three, but it can serve to enhance the effect which they try to convey. Apparel, especially when associated with color imagery, adds another element to Hawthorne's description; it allows him to convey a certain mood or tone to his reader. Its use as a vehicle for expressing mood relies on acute visual images which leave an immediate impression upon the mind of the reader. Hawthorne often creates a tableau for the reader; by offering a glimpse of the frivolous costumes of a group of masqueraders or the dark, simple garments of a crowd of Puritans, Hawthorne aids the reader in perceiving the mood of a given work and in comprehending his theme or moral.

In each of the four romances here considered, the symbolism of clothing serves to add to the overall artistic effect and merit of the novel. The most effective and extensive use of references to attire is found in The Blithedale Romance. All four patterns are found here and all work together to help develop the theme of the book. The residents of Blithedale seek brotherhood but instead find that they are perpetually separated from one another by all sorts of veils and disguises. Instead of attaining

free and open communion with one another, they continue to exist in individual isolation.

In The Scarlet Letter, a single accessory becomes the dominant symbol of the entire book. Hester's letter ceases to be merely a scarlet piece of cloth on her breast and becomes a symbol of the enigma and tragedy of the whole story. The most effective instances of Hawthorne's use of attire are those which refer back to the central symbol of the letter. The colors—the red of the letter, the gray of the Puritan garb, the yellow of Mistress Hibbins' ruff—are especially important to the overall dramatic effect of The Scarlet Letter.

Hawthorne's use of clothing in The House of the Seven Gables is especially effective in delineating character. The two dominant symbols of the book are the house of the seven gables and the elm tree, and many of the clothing references relate to these two symbols. For instance, Hepzibah's black stiff silks echo the gloom and darkness of the old house.

Clothing in the fourth romance is subordinated to the many art images which pervade the book, but interestingly, Hawthorne uses the symbols derived from painting and sculpture in much the same way that he uses clothing in the other romances. Those references to dress which are found in The Marble Faun fit easily into the same four general

patterns he had earlier developed. Hawthorne had not ceased to utilize apparel as an effective symbol; his preoccupation with art and Rome caused him, in this particular work, to have an effective and very similar substitute at hand.

The repeated, effective use of references to clothing as a means of portraying character forms an important part of Hawthorne's overall technique and is a significant aspect of his style. Thus, the themes to which Hawthorne again and again returns—the isolation of the individual, the effects of sin and guilt, the influence of the past, the unpardonable sin—are enhanced by the symbolism of clothing. Rendered even more effective by its unobtrusiveness, it becomes an integral part of the whole, a fictional world in which Hawthorne's characters live and move, experience moral dilemmas, and exemplify his themes.

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