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HAWTHORNE'S HUMAN NATURE AND SIN: CRITICISMS OF PURITANISM AND PROGRESSIVISM

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A Thesis

by

OSCAR EDUARDO MARTINEZ II

Submitted to Texas A&M International University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

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Major Subject: English

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Approved as to style and content by

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ABSTRACT

Hawthorne's Human Nature and Sin: Criticisms of Puritanism and Progressivism (December 2022)

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One of America's greatest authors, Nathaniel Hawthorne lived in a time of rapid scientific, material, and intellectual advancement. However, unlike many of his peers who went all-in on utopian reform movements, Hawthorne took a cautious and reserved approach to progress even though he supported the idea abstractly. Using six tales written across Hawthorne's career, this work will examine what each has to say about Hawthorne's belief in human nature and why he takes such a skeptical position against movements aiming to fundamentally reshape people and society. The tales from the 1830s, "The Gentle Boy," "Young Goodman Brown," and "The Minister's Black Veil," establish Hawthorne's thoughts about the inherent evil of humanity in addition to laying out his solution to human evil. Hawthrone believes the best and only truly successful means of dealing with human evil was the practice of rational piety, a combination of individual self-reflection and the basic tenets of Christian belief. For Hawthorne, this general framework of living recognized the universal inherent evil of humankind and allowed every individual to constantly combat their inclination towards evil while embracing the best aspects of Christian morality resulting in a more tolerant, compassionate, and pious society. In the 1840s Hawthorne switched the focus of his tales from

the religious extremism of the seventeenth century to the more secular progressivism of the nineteenth century. The tales of "The Celestial Railroad," "Earth's Holocaust," and "The Birthmark" all serve as critiques by Hawthorne of the ways progressives in his era attempted to improve humanity through spiritual, intellectual, and scientific alternatives to rational piety, respectively. Though each tale depicts a different type of reform, the attempts in every tale end in failure due to the neglect or misunderstanding of the evil inherent in human nature by those attempting to enact change. The result is Hawthorne guiding his readers back to rational piety as the ultimate solution for the fallenness of humanity.

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I: INTRODUCTION

For all his progressive beliefs, Nathaniel Hawthorne is well known for invoking the ire of his contemporaries with his philosophical conservatism. Unlike many other authors during his era, Nathaniel Hawthorne had a firm view of human nature rooted in his studies of history, philosophy, and religion; so, rather than think of ways that human nature may be modified to make for a better world, Hawthorne's beliefs about reform always took into account a conception of human nature he considered to be intrinsic and immutable. Hawthorne dedicated his talents to writing fiction rather than treatises or essays and so his philosophical thoughts can be found in the many short stories written over the course of his life. In the 1830s, Hawthorne's tales focus primarily on the topic of Puritanism and in them he shares his insights into the nature of the human condition. This work begins by examining "The Gentle Boy" where Hawthorne lays out the consequences of the Puritan's mistaken view of human nature: tyranny and oppression justified by the separation of all people into two warring factions of good and evil. However, Hawthorne also provides the antidote to these ills through the concept of rational piety embodied by the tale's central family. By thinking and acting in a way which merges their religious convictions, self-reflection, and independent thought, Tobias and Dorothy are able to recognize the shared nature of humanity and thus treat others with compassion, tolerance, and basic human decency. The next tale examined is "Young Goodman Brown" in which Hawthorne expands upon the idea of human nature introduced briefly in "The Gentle Boy." In "Young Goodman Brown," Hawthorne uses Goodman Brown's traumatic demonic experience in the forest to show that the mistaken bifurcated view of the Puritans is incompatible with reality. For Hawthorne, the

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reality is that while capable of good, all people, regardless of their ideological convictions, have evil in their hearts by virtue of their humanity. Furthermore, Goodman Brown's experience also symbolizes the initiation into evil that Hawthorne believes is essential to become aware of this dual nature of humanity. Finally, chapter one ends by analyzing the tale of "The Minister's Black Veil." Whereas "Young Goodman Brown" depicts the failure to come out of the initiation into evil seeing the world for how it really is, "The Minister's Black Veil" is just the opposite. Changed by an unknown experience prior to the start of the tale, Mr. Hooper is able to see the reality of the existence of evil in the human heart and thus dedicates the rest of his life to attempting to get others to engage in critical self-reflection so that they may recognize this fact for themselves. In doing so, Mr. Hooper works to counteract the Puritan inclination to hide one's own evil in order to foster a more enlightened and pious community. Through the three tales of "The Gentle Boy," "Young Goodman Brown," and "The Gentle Boy," Hawthorne lays out his conception of a dual human nature stemming from the existence of evil within the human heart while also showing how the solution to the dogmatism, fanaticism, tyranny, and oppression that come as a result of such evil can be found in the practice of rational piety, individualistic self-reflection in accordance with religious calls for compassion and tolerance towards other human beings.

Chapter two analyzes the tales of "The Celestial Railroad," "Earth's Holocaust," and "The Birthmark," written by Hawthorne in the 1840s, to show the universality of the existence of evil in the human heart and the failure of solutions which fail to acknowledge it. By changing the focus of the tales from the Puritans to progressive reformers, Hawthorne aims to comment on his own contemporary society and point out where he believes they go wrong in their attempts to create a better world. In "The Celestial Railroad," Hawthorne uses a parody of John Bunyan's

The Pilgrim's Progress to serve as the means by which he critiques materialism, Unitarianism, and Transcendentalism. In Hawthorne's view, materialism, Unitarianism and Transcendentalism all fail as successful means of human and societal improvement because they neglect to acknowledge the existence of evil. As a result, while these worldviews may have a broader appeal, they ultimately lead people farther away from salvation and true spiritual development. In "Earth's Holocaust" Hawthorne uses the story of reformers destroying their society by destroying everything that it consists of into a massive bonfire to warn of how reformism that believes evil originates from sources external to the human person, such as societal institutions, are mistaken. Moreover, because the reformers begin from mistaken premises, their solutions not only fail to fix the problems they desire to solve but open the door to making them worse. So for Hawthorne, having a mistaken view of the existence of evil is just as bad as having no conception of the existence of evil. Finally, chapter two concludes by looking at the tale "The Birthmark." Whereas "Earth's Holocaust" portrayed materialistic reform on a global scale, "The Birthmark" shows the effects of the same type of reform on a more individual level by depicting the attempts of Aylmer, a brilliant but misguided scientist, to remove the birthmark on the face of his wife, Georgiana. Aylmer's mission to get rid of his wife's birthmark shows the folly of human beings' attempts to use their intellectual and material advancements to cure the existence of evil within the heart and transcend earthly limitations. Georgina's death upon Aylmer's successful removal of her birthmark represents the existential bond between humanity and evil and so readers are left with the message that the evil within the human heart is not something that can be separated or destroyed. The tales of the 1840s are ultimately those of the failure to acknowledge and solve the problem of the existence of evil. As a result, they serve to guide readers back to the solutions Hawthorne presents in the tales from the 1830s. Hawthorne saw that

evil within the human heart was a reality, one that could not be destroyed but merely combatted. Therefore, Hawthorne believed rational piety, which includes the recognition of humanity's dual nature and allows for the reconciliation of faith and reason, to be the antidote for the evil in the human heart and the dogmatism, fanaticism, and oppression that are its natural consequences.

II: HAWTHORNE AND HUMAN NATURE

Driven by his studies of history, philosophy, and religion, Nathaniel Hawthorne used his literary talent to craft tales in the 1830s which revolved around the concepts of sin and its connections to religious extremism. The end result of his efforts was the creation of timeless tales such as "The Gentle Boy," "Young Goodman Brown," and "The Minister's Black Veil." Through these tales, Hawthorne maps out his beliefs regarding the nature of human existence, diagnosing what he believes to be the fundamental problem of human beings, the existence of evil, and suggesting ways that people can better combat their sinister inclinations that come as a result of the presence of such evil within their hearts. In the tale of "The Gentle Boy" Hawthorne shows how, if left unchecked, the human capacity for evil eventually leads to prejudice, tyranny, and oppression through the suffering of a Quaker boy, Ilbrahim, at the hands of his Puritan neighbors. However, this tale also presents Hawthorne's ultimate counter to human evil, rational piety, the fusion of individual reason and religion. Through the characters of Tobias and Dorothy, Hawthorne demonstrates his belief in the transformative power of religion merged with reason which allows people to rationally embody the religious dictates of love and compassion. In the tale of "Young Goodman Brown" Hawthorne dives deeper into his philosophical beliefs regarding human beings. Holding a view similar to that of the abusive Puritans featured in "The Gentle Boy," in which all people are divided into the two camps of either good or evil, Young Goodman Brown serves as a stand-in for Puritans who practice a distorted version of Christianity. Because of his bifurcated view of humanity, Brown's faith in those he believes to be pious is shattered when he is exposed to the possibility of their sinfulness during his midnight journey into the forest. Through this horrific ordeal endured by Brown, Hawthorne reveals his own belief regarding the duality of human nature, that all people have the capacity to do evil

because evil, along with good, is an intrinsic component of the human heart. In response to his revelation, Brown doubles down on his distorted Puritan beliefs with the result being a lonely and miserable existence in which he believes himself to be the only true Puritan living in a world inhabited by the servants of Satan. Young Goodman Brown's mistaken religious worldview underlies the actions of the Puritans in “The Gentle Boy," and the two tales warn of how the black–and–white thinking of Brown can ultimately lead to the kind of oppression and tyranny that takes Ilbrahim’s life. In “The Minister’s Black Veil,” Hawthorne presents an alternative and inverted reaction to the reality of universal sin to that of “Young Goodman Brown.” Following his revelation of the inherent sinfulness of all humanity, Mr. Hooper dawns a black veil as a reminder to all who view it that they are hiding their sin from others and in many cases even themselves. However, rather than fall into despair like Young Goodman Brown, Mr. Hooper is animated to dedicate his life towards awakening people to the truth of the duality of human nature, seeing it as something to be confronted rather than denied. In doing so, Mr. Hooper does what he can to help set people on the path towards salvation rather than viewing them as lost causes like Brown or Ilbrahim. Consequently, Mr. Hooper serves as an example of how Hawthorne believes people should react to the reality of evil, that the revelation of the existence of universal evil should motivate them to educate others about this reality. In doing so, Hooper takes part in Hawthorne’s concept of rational piety which serves as the cure for the bi-polar world view of the Puritans by allowing one to recognize the universality of evil and fight against the evil inclinations of their own hearts. Through the characters of Mr. Hooper, Tobias, and Dorothy one finds a call to action by Hawthorne to guide others toward salvation, following the dictates of religion, in a thoughtful and compassionate way in accordance with one’s conscience.

Such a way of rational pietistic life is Hawthorne's general antidote to the threats posed by dogmatism and fanaticism.

Believing in the unwavering goodness of oneself and the group that one identifies with is not unique to any specific epoch of history. Each generation is home to people who feel as if they live alongside others who are irredeemable for one reason or another. However, the silver lining is that works which comment on this tendency of human nature never lose their relevance; therefore, readers have a vast pool of resources with which they can enlighten themselves. Included in this pool are those of the great American author Nathaniel Hawthorne. Having read extensively in the history of New England and its Puritan origins, Hawthorne familiarized himself with the extremism of Puritanism which led to the persecution of the Quakers and even "heretical" members of the sect itself during the Salem Witch Trials of 1692. Hawthorne wrote several short stories and novels which featured the Puritans and criticized what the author saw as the shortcoming of their ideology. One of the earliest of such tales is "The Gentle Boy " which tells the story of Ilbrahim, an orphaned Quaker adopted by a Puritan family, who, along with his parents, is subjected to alienation and persecution by the Puritan community in which he resides. Throughout the tale, Hawthorne depicts the Puritans as malicious fanatics treating anyone who does not conform to their beliefs with moral contempt and political violence. Consequently, the story of "The Gentle Boy" serves two purposes: first, it is a warning of how dogmatic fundamentalism can quickly lead to political fanaticism in the form of bigotry and violence, and secondly, it advocates for the pursuit of rational piety that merges reason and religion in order to nourish the heart through critical self-reflection along with emphasizing Christianity's calls to compassion, love, and toleration towards all people in order to form pious and reasonable individuals.

The acts of social and physical violence enacted on Ibrahim and his family stem from the fear and ignorance of the Puritan community that was ingrained into their psyche by their leaders. At the start of "The Gentle Boy," Hawthorne wastes no time in demonstrating the irrationality of the Puritan authority describing the unnamed Puritan governor, "a man of narrow mind and imperfect education, [whose] uncompromising bigotry was made hot and mischievous by violent and hasty passions" (69). His whole conduct, in respect of the Quakers, in particular "was marked by brutal cruelty" (ibid). This bigoted sentiment combining passion and ignorance is spread throughout the community from the top down. Hawthorne displays the dispersion of this negative Puritan mindset throughout the members of the community through the depiction of a Puritan church service. Describing the priest's sermon characterizing the Quakers, Hawthorne writes, "[i]ntroducing the often discussed subject of the Quakers, he gave a history of that sect, in which error predominated, and prejudice distorted the aspect of what was true" (80). Using his position of authority, the priest projects his own false view of reality onto his congregation. He goes on to add the warning that, "No man, without Heaven's especial warrant, should attempt their conversion, lest while he lent his hand to draw them from the slough, he should himself be precipitated into its lowest depths" (80). Rhetoric such as this keeps the people of the community in a state of fearful ignorance, and when paired with their respect and deference towards authority, this is the perfect recipe for preventing any of them from attempting to use their own reason and reflection in order to discover the truth. By having the Christian command to spread the Gospel essentially overridden and undermined by their authority figures, the Puritans are prevented from constructing any positive relationships between themselves and the Quakers. In their minds, Quakers are not people to be saved, but pitfalls of sin that must be avoided lest they doom anyone who crosses their path. As a result of this thinking, Puritans are not only blinded to

their own Christian hypocrisy, they actually believe themselves to be justified in targeting Quakers with acts of social and physical violence.

As a result of their uncompromising and unreflecting beliefs, the Puritans are driven to ostracize and violently persecute the Quakers in their midst. In fact, the story actually begins with a description of how the extremism of both the Puritans and Quakers eventually led to the martyrdom of two Quakers hanged by the Puritans. One of these men was the biological father of the story's protagonist, Ilbrahim. After witnessing the murder of his father at the hands of the Puritans, Ilbrahim is left by them to die alone in the forest. Even after he is found and adopted by Tobias and Dorothy, Ilbrahim's persecution does not end, but it is extended to his adoptive parents as well. Shortly after their adoption of Ilbrahim, "the couple [...] began to experience a most bitter species of persecution" which involved "the cold regards of many a friend whom they had valued," "hiss[ing] and hoot[ing]" insults, and even threats of being scourged with "the whip of nine cords" (77). Despite their status as Puritans, Tobias and Dorothy evoke the hostility of their community merely through their association with the young Quaker. When Ilbrahim accompanies his adoptive parents to mass, Hawthorne writes how "all the inhabitants of this miserable world closed up their impure hearts against him, drew back their earth-soiled garments from his touch, and said, 'We are holier than thou'" (79). The Puritans are so sure in their convictions that Ilbrahim is evil and that they are good, that they treat a young child as if he were some sort of infectious demon. Unfortunately for Ilbrahim, his persecution does not end simply with alienation, and the despicable behavior towards him is not limited to the adults. This all-encompassing prejudice is sadly displayed when Ilbrahim is savagely assaulted by the children from his neighborhood:

> [A]ll at once, the devil of their fathers entered into the unbreeched fanatics, and sending up a fierce, shrill cry, they rushed the poor Quaker child [...] lifted sticks against him, pelted him with stones, and displayed an instinct of destruction, far more loathsome than the bloodthirstiness of manhood. [...] His persecutors beat him down, trampled upon him, dragged him by his long, fair locks, and Ilbrahim was on the point of becoming as veritable a martyr as ever. (92)

Hawthorne believed that violent conduct towards one's fellow human beings would be the ultimate result of extremism, because he "understood that the demonization of one's enemies often constituted the cultural justification for inflicting violence on them" (Reynolds 24). As a result, Hawthorne was "deeply skeptical of fear mongering and demonizing, especially when practiced by self-righteous leaders and accepted without question by their gullible followers" (Reynolds 52). By following the teachings of their leaders without a second thought, the Puritans exemplify the blind acceptance Hawthorne fears. As a result, the Puritan community is led to view the Quakers as evil and made to believe that they possess a corrupting influence on those who attempt to help them and are, therefore, irredeemable. If the Puritans would have only used their reason to reflect upon their actions and beliefs, like Ilbrahim's adoptive parents did, then they would likely have been able to come to the realization that Quakers are human beings just like them and not the demons that their society makes them out to be.

In countering the dogmatic viewpoints of the Puritans, Hawthorne suggests that, instead of allowing authority figures to do their thinking for them, people should hold a worldview that makes space for individual enlightenment and self-reflection. This suggestion is presented in "The Gentle Boy," through the reasonableness and self-reflectiveness of Ilbrahim's adoptive parents, Tobias and Dorothy. Hawthorne uses Tobias and Dorothy to show the possibility of living with kindness, love, and tolerance when people allow reason and reflection to guide their thoughts and actions. Hawthorne's beliefs mirror those of the transcendentalist philosopher, Immanuel Kant, who in his essay "What is Enlightenment" (1784), also argues for people to rely

on their own reason. Kant believed that laziness and cowardice are why most people rely on others to think for them. As a result, Kant says that because of their laziness and cowardice people allow themselves to be led like livestock and told by their guardians "what dangers threaten them should they attempt to walk alone" in an attempt to keep them in a state of submissive dependence (41). The Puritan priest used exactly this kind of rhetoric in his sermon, the results of which are displayed earlier in the tale when Tobias shows a knee-jerk reaction of disgust after learning of Ilbrahim's Quaker origins upon his discovery of the distraught child in the woods. This instinctive reflex by Tobias reveals his partial internalization of the Puritan prejudice towards outsiders. However, Tobias overcomes his prejudice through the use of reason and reflection. As the narrator relates:

> The Puritan [Tobias], who had laid hold of little Ilbrahim's hand, relinquished it as if he were touching a loathsome reptile. But he possessed a compassionate heart, which not even religious prejudice could harden into stone. "God forbid that I should leave this child to perish, though he comes from that accursed sect [...] Do we not all spring from an evil root? Are we not all darkness till the light doth shine upon us?" (73)

Tobias arrived at the realization that all are sinners in need of guidance, correction, and compassion by thinking through his biases. Unlike the Puritans who neglected Ilbrahim, Tobias stays consistent with his Christian beliefs, by acting on the expectation to love both neighbor and enemy alike. When racked by the internal battle between his contempt for the Quaker doctrine and his love for Ilbrahim, Tobias once again relies on reflection and reason to find peace of mind. Of his spiritual conversion, Hawthorne writes, "In the course of much thought, [...] for the subject struggled irresistibly in his mind, the foolishness of the [Quaker] doctrine began to be less evident, and the points which had particularly offended his reason assumed another aspect, or vanished entirely away" (94). By practicing rational piety Tobias is able to develop a tolerance for the Quaker faith which he once abhorred. Hawthorne presents the concept of rational piety as

a way of thinking and acting which merges individual reason and conscience with religious belief. Rather than letting others think for them, regardless of their position within the community, Hawthorne believes that all people should use their own understanding and conscience to guide their thoughts and actions. When practicing rational piety, Tobias is able to acknowledge his religious belief in the universality of human fallenness and at the same time offer compassion to the Quaker Ilbrahim in defiance of the authorities of his Puritan community. Tobias further demonstrates rational piety in action when he reflects on his hatred of the Quaker doctrine in order to come to the realization that his belief is not founded on any reasons that can stand up to scrutiny. As a result Tobias's sober realization not only prevents him from remaining mired in the hate of Puritan extremism but also allows him to eventually convert to Quakerism by the tale's end.

While Tobias gradually goes through the process of adopting rational piety as the story progresses, Dorothy is introduced right off the bat as the embodiment of Hawthorne's ideal. Consequently, Dorothy is most consistent practitioner of rational religion in the story immediately caring for Ilbrahim without hesitation or any adverse reaction to his religion, unlike her husband. Though she does not adopt, nor follow, the Quaker religion herself, she never lets her ideological differences get in between her love and compassion for Ilbrahim, even when his presence in her life leads to "a most bitter species of persecution" (Hawthorne 77). Hawthorne most clear exhibits Dorothy's rational piety in the scene where she comes face to face with Ilbrahim's biological mother, Catherine. Catherine interrupts the Puritan church service to deliver a tirade against the Puritan authorities and their persecution of Quakers after which discusses with Dorothy the caretaking of Ilbrahim. Hawthorne writes, "Her [Dorothy's] very aspect proved that she was blameless, so far as a mortal could be so, in respect to God and man

[...] The two females, as they held each a hand of Ilbrahim, formed a practical allegory; it was rational piety and unbridled fanaticism, contending for the empire of a young heart" (85). Dorothy's rational adherence to religion fostered within her a love capable of transcending the boundaries of her tribe and reaching out to all, even those who hold opposing beliefs.

Hawthorne was against extremism of any kind and so, in staying true to his principles, he also included criticisms of Quaker fanaticism. Serving as the embodiment of this fanaticism is Ilbrahim's biological mother, Catherine. During the faceoff between Dorothy and Catherine, Hawthorne describes the Quaker woman as an "enthusiast" who had "evidently violated the duties of the present life and the future, by fixing her attention wholly on the latter" (85). In his essay, "Hawthorne's Revision of 'The Gentle Boy,'" Seymour L. Gross mentions how this unbridled fanaticism which fixated on the afterlife to the destruction of the duties of the present and the dissolution of bonds of natural affection was, for Hawthorne, "the deepest and most fundamental evil in Quakerism" (204). Catherine's mission to speak her beliefs no matter the cost has led to the abandonment of her duties as a mother, and her child to the mercy of a community filled with people who hate his religion. Hawthorne goes on to criticize both Puritan and Quaker alike by writing how Catherine's persecution gave her an excuse to wrap her hatred and revenge in "the garb of piety," and thus justified her moral indignation and intolerance of other points of view (81). This two-pronged attack points out, first, how the oppressors help to give justification to the oppressed when they decide to implement similar tactics, and second, how just because an individual or group is oppressed does not necessarily mean they are in the right. To further cement his message against religious dogmatism and political fanaticism in favor of the moderate concept of rational piety, Hawthorne has Catherine go through a change by the tale's end which sees "her fierce and vindictive nature [...] softened by the same griefs which

had once irritated it" (104). The result of this transformation is an increased sympathy for her on the part of the community which over time has itself adopted "a more Christian spirt [...] in regards to the persecuted sect" (104). With both sides having met in the middle, Catherine's eventual death is met with the sadness and tears of many of her former persecutors as she is laid to rest alongside Ilbrahim.

Being rightfully skeptical of dogmatic and extreme stances on social, political, and religious issues, Hawthorne weaved this skepticism into his works. The results are tales that serve to not only entertain but to foster reflection and perhaps even moral growth in their readers. Through his depictions of the horrors of religious persecution in the misguided pursuit of maintaining a religious utopia in the story of "The Gentle Boy," Hawthorne presents the political and historical consequences of unreflective and unreasonable extremism: violence and oppression. Moreover, his depiction of the Quaker woman, Catherine, shows how a similar outcome is inevitable when the oppressed adopt the same dogmatic and fanatical tactics as their oppressor. Between these two extremes lie the characters of the tale's central family: Tobias, Dorothy, and Ilbrahim. Rather than attempt to sell any new systematic sets of principles that readers should follow in order to avoid falling into extremism, Hawthorne uses the characters of Tobias, Dorothy, Ilbrahim and even, eventually, Catherine, to argue for the possibility and superiority of pursuing a path of moderation in life. Through this path of individual rational reflection, paired with one's religious beliefs, Hawthorne believed that community prejudices born of ignorance and fear could be overcome and thus allow for the creation of a more compassionate and tolerant society.

The journey Young Goodman Brown embarks upon at the start of the tale is the means through which Hawthorne shows both Brown and his readers the dual moral nature that all

people possess due to their inherent sinfulness, which makes them capable of both good and evil. The importance of this quest for Young Goodman Brown is highlighted by Jane Donahue Eberwein in her article "My Faith is Gone! 'Young Goodman Brown' and Puritan Conversion," when she writes how "Hawthorne [...] intends [the journey] to be a real spiritual trial, having definitive consequences for [Brown's] remaining life and probable bearing on his eschatological condition" (26). Because of his constrained view of the world, Young Goodman Brown is ignorant of the dual moral nature of humanity that is central to Hawthorne's philosophy, and consequently, he mistakenly believes himself capable of returning safely to his faith, both in a literal and metaphorical sense. The confidence in his own purity bred by his ignorance is shown when, besieged by his wife, Faith, to put off his errand until morning, Young Goodman Brown insists on pursuing his journey and walks off saying to himself, "[w]hat a wretch am I to leave her on such an errand! [...] she's a blessed angel on earth; and after this one night I'll cling to her skirts and follow her to heaven" (75). Young Goodman Brown's false and mistaken view of the world which allows him to make haste on his evil purpose without the slightest sense of his own sinfulness, despite acknowledging the fact that Faith would abhor it if she knew its true nature, is one in which existence can only be seen in dualistic extremes. Brown views himself and his ilk to be that faction of humanity that are pure and can do no wrong whereas others outside the faith are impure and therefore possess evil in their hearts.

For Young Goodman Brown there are the saved, the pious, and the good, of which he, his family, and his community are all members, and there are the damned, the sinful, and the evil who reside outside of his holy commonwealth. This conception of the world which separates people into saints and sinners closely mirrors and derives from the Calvinist view of human beings that served as a theological foundation of Puritan thought. According to the Calvinist

perspective of human beings, "God decided who would be saved or damned before the beginning of history—and [...] this decision would not be affected by how human beings behaved during their lives" (Heyrman). Taking these teachings to heart, Puritans engaged in lives highly dedicated to their faith. They were so dedicated that, according to Herbert Wallace Schnieder in his book, *The Puritan Mind,* Puritans saw their religion not as a department or phase of social life but the end and aim of all life to which all institutions were subordinated (23). As a result of this interconnectivity between church and state, challenges to the church necessarily translated as challenges to the government and therefore were considered to be existential threats to the Puritans who, because of their hostile surroundings, believed the failure of government would lead to certain death. Even success did not bring rest to the Puritan mind. In fact, it was actually interpreted by authority figures like Cotton Mather as opening the door to new threats. Through sermons, such as Mather's book, *The Wonders of the Invisible World,* published in 1693, defending the witchcraft trials in Salem in 1692, Puritans were introduced to the idea that "the devil [...] bethought himself of other methods of attack," which meant that the enemies of the community no longer only consisted of those outside it but those within it as well (Wallace 41). Consequently, the Puritans began to place a greater emphasis on external showings of piety in order to be able to tell the difference. For Hawthorne, this focus on the externalities of human beings helped to facilitate the Puritans' failure to consider the fact that sin is something that resides in the heart of all people, even if it never can be visible to onlookers. And it is this same focus on externalities that lead to the eventual shattering of Brown's faith. As Jane Donahue Eberwein writes," "[h]aving divided people too drastically into black and white moral categories, forgetting that good or bad behavior offer inconclusive evidence of salvation or reprobation, [Brown] readily succumbs to the temptation to reject prior spiritual models as hypocrites and to

accept [...] the devil's parade of their sinfulness" (27). Brown's bifurcated view of human beings cannot sufficiently comprehend the meaning of the events that he is witness to, whether they be real or not, and therefore swings like a pendulum from one fatal extreme to the other. Lost on Goodman Brown is the possibility that human beings can possess a dual nature capable of housing both sin and goodness.

Before Young Goodman Brown's faith in others is ultimately shattered, causing him to consider himself as the only true Puritan and plunging him into a feeling of despair that plagues him the rest of his life, it is first gradually weakened by Brown coming to believe that the figures he looks up to as paragons of Puritan virtue are not the saints that he initially thought they were. Brown places great trust in the community that has raised him and the individuals he comes to learn more about in the forest represent the various institutions that make up that community. That Young Goodman Brown thinks highly of his own family can be seen when he references them in his attempt to resist following the devil further into the forest saying, "[m]y father never went into the woods on such an errand, nor his father before him. We have been a race of honest men and good Christians since the days of the martyrs; and shall I be the first of the name of Brown that ever took this path and kept–" (76-77). Brown sees his father and grandfather as good, never even straying from the path for a moment. Unfortunately for him, this first pillar of faith comes tumbling down once he is told by the devil, "I helped your grandfather, the constable, when he lashed the Quaker woman [...] through the streets of Salem; and it was I who brought your father a pitch-pine knot, kindled at my own heath, to set fire to an Indian village in King Philip's war. They were my good friends, both" (77). Being the father of lies, the devil could simply be telling Young Goodman Brown a complete falsehood. However, the larger point is that while it could be very well true that Young Goodman Brown's father and grandfather

committed great acts of piety that could allow them to be seen as good Christians, the devil's words introduce to Brown the possibility that these men whom he considers to be good Christians could have suffered from the impurity of sin. While this alone is not enough to wreck the young man's faith, the fall of the other pillars soon follow.

As mentioned earlier, within Puritan society, community was inextricably linked to religion mainly due to the fact that this unity was seen as a means of survival for the group who were living in an untamed hostile wilderness. Puritans depended on community authority figures for guidance and revered them just as much as they did members of their own immediate family. Young Goodman Brown is no exception. Continuing on his journey through the forest he comes across three such authority figures who have played large roles in Young Goodman Brown's life: Goody Cloyse, "a very pious and exemplary dame [...] who taught him his catechism in his youth, and was still his moral and spiritual advisor," along with the minister and Deacon Gookin (78). Seeing these figures in such a high light, similarly to how he viewed his father and grandfather, it comes as a great shock to Young Goodman Brown when Goody Cloyse is seemingly a friend of the devil in addition to being a witch. After a short discussion between Goody Cloyse and the devil, replete with mentions of flying brooms and potions made with the fat of a new-born babe, the only thing Brown says is "[t]hat old woman taught me my catechism" (80). Brown can hardly comprehend how the woman who taught and raised him in his supposed life of piety can be not only a sinner, but a servant and friend of the devil himself. Despite this revelation, Brown remains defiant. Unfortunately for him, however, Goody Cloyse is not the only one who is also roaming the forest.

The aforementioned minister and Deacon Gookin would also have been very prominent figures in the Puritan community, which only increases the shocking effect that catching them in

the forest has on Young Goodman Brown. These leaders of the faith are the type of people that Puritans such as Brown would think, by virtue of their positions, are the most pious among them. However, in their midnight ramble through the forest, a place associated with hidden evil, their relationship with evil is revealed in the conversations overheard by Young Goodman Brown. Within earshot of Brown the deacon tells the minister, "I had rather miss an ordination dinner than to-night's meeting. They tell me that some of our community are to be here from Falmouth and beyond, and others from Connecticut and Rhode Island, besides several of the Indian powwows, who [...] know almost as much deviltry as the best of us" (81). What the deacon says is rather telling as it reveals that not only are there more people from Young Goodman Brown's community in on the evil conspiracy, there are several other communities of faith from other colonies who are also participating. Moreover, all these supposed men of faith are working in league with the natives who the Puritans characterized as "direct instruments of Satan [...] cooperating [...] in the service of the devil" (Schneider 40). The weight of this experience finally bears down on Young Goodman Brown, who "caught hold of a tree for support, being ready to sink down on the ground, faint and overburdened with the heavy sickness of his heart. [...] look[ing] up to the sky, doubting whether there really was a heaven above him" (82). As devastating as this supposed revelation is to Young Goodman Brown, his faith is not yet broken. There is still one final pillar left to crumble which precipitates Brown's plunge into despair.

With all the people he once treasured as exceptional examples of piety seemingly revealed as sinners working alongside the devil, Young Goodman Brown's idealistic illusion hangs by a single thread: his wife, Faith. Brown's belief that, despite all his heroes falling to secret sin, Faith remains pure alongside himself allows him to exclaim in the face of his prior revelations, "I will yet stand firm against the devil!" (82). Unfortunately for Young Goodman

Brown, Faith too is in the forest encouraged onward by saints and sinners alike. His worries were confirmed by the appearance of the same pink ribbon she was wearing at his departure. When he sees the ribbon fall from the sky, Young Goodman Brown's perception is completely shattered as he exclaims, "My faith is gone! [...] [t]here is no good on earth; and sin is but a name. Come, devil; for to thee the world is given!" (83). Once viewing himself and his community as infallible representatives of piety, Young Goodman Brown's perspective does a complete 180 after being exposed to the apparent sinfulness of those whom he considered to be purely good. As Paul J. Hurley puts it in his article "Young Goodman Brown's 'Heart of Darkness,'" "Goody Cloyse, the minister, Deacon Gookin, and his wife [...] represent an exceptional piety which makes their participation in evil dramatically more effective [...] [and] are the four people whose respectability must be destroyed before Goodman Brown can fully commit himself to a belief in the wickedness of the world," and consequently, lose faith in his fellow Puritans (417). Where once Brown saw figures of light in a sea of darkness, he now sees only servants of the devil who inhabit a world where darkness is the sole reality, and thus sees no other option but to despair of religious consolidation for the rest of his days.

Through his ordeal in the forest, Young Goodman Brown has been subjected to the initiation into evil. Hawthorne believed that it was crucial for his readers to understand the problem of evil if they hoped to better themselves and the world around them. He believed that sin is a fundamental reality of life and that evil is present in every person. G.A. Santangelo coins the phrase "initiation into evil" to describe the method of revelation that was important for Hawthorne and his characters:

> The state of innocence, Hawthorne believed, was a delusion with dangerous effects. No one can be innocent in this world because man has a propensity for evil that must be understood. Failure to recognize this human trait leads to a childish egoism and an unrealistic ethic which result in a sterile paganism. [...]

> The initiation into evil, however, is extremely difficult and dangerous: difficult because it can cause a trauma which dislocates the personality, and dangerous because the results could be the loss of a soul, insanity, or diabolism. Initiation can so shock the personality that never again can the self be found. [...] The initiation re-enacts the fall, but it is necessary for moral growth. (61)

A childish egoism as a result of a delusion of innocence is exactly what Young Goodman Brown suffers from before his expedition into the forest. As a result, he fails to see the world as it really is, inhabited by people who possess a dual nature that makes them capable of both good and evil. This is why Santangelo thought Hawthorne believed that this initiation into evil was so necessary because only through this exposure can people have the possibility of being disabused of their naive illusions. Young Goodman Brown however represents the danger mentioned by Santangelo of being unable to recognize and come to terms with the dual nature present in every person. As a result of not being able to transcend his bifurcated worldview, Goodman Brown becomes traumatized by his experience in the forest. As Richard H. Fogle puts it in his essay, "Ambiguity and Clarity in Hawthorne's 'Young Goodman Brown,'" "Goodman Brown, a simple and pious nature, is wrecked as a result of the disappearance of the fixed poles of his belief. His orderly cosmos dissolves into chaos as church and state, the twin pillars of his society, are hinted to be rotten, with their foundations undermined" (454). The consequences are devastating for Goodman Brown, whose fate serves as a representative warning for Hawthorne's readers about the dangers of simplistic thinking that divides humanity into good and evil camps and neglects to see that humans have a dual moral nature.

Because of his warped view of reality throughout the tale, Young Goodman Brown represents not mankind in general, but a specific faction of it. If Young Goodman Brown does not represent mankind in general, it is tempting to consider that he serves as a stand-in for Puritans writ large. However, even this view is off the mark as well, albeit slightly. According to Paul W. Miller, Young Goodman Brown serves as a stand-in for "those weaker members of

puritanical society who are traumatized, arrested in their spiritual development, and finally destroyed by the discovery that their society is full of 'whited sepulchres'" (262). In other words, Brown is reflective of those Puritans who have lost their faith in others and come to believe that all the people and places of worship in their society are frauds, painted over with a false holiness that they present to everyone else. However, Young Goodman Brown need not only stand in for radical Puritans. In fact, given Hawthorne's record of opposing extremism of all kinds through his work, it can be concluded that Goodman Brown may also serve as a stand-in for any group or individual that possesses a naïve moral view of the world that seeks to separate all people into good and evil. For Hawthorne, the tragic result of this extremist mindset and lack of humility, whether it be religious or secular in orientation, is death, both spiritually and even literally. Those who hold to dogmatic views cut themselves off from others, especially those who are not believed to be adhering to a certain orthodoxy, this is why Young Goodman Brown dies a spiritual death feeling forever isolated from the rest of the world because in his eyes everyone but him had failed to stay true to Puritanism. Dogmatism is also easily capable of morphing into political fanaticism which may lead to literal death through the oppression of those considered to be in the evil camp, like Ilbrahim in "The Gentle Boy."

In the tale of "The Minister's Black Veil," Hawthorne presents a story which serves as the philosophical inverse of Young Goodman Brown. In "Young Goodman Brown," readers bear witness to the gradual destruction of a man's already twisted worldview through his exposure to the possibility of evil in those he esteems most. After which, Hawthorne only provides a brief glimpse of the effects that follow from Goodman Brown's experience. On the other hand, Hawthorne does the opposite in "The Minister's Black Veil." Cutting out the world shattering experience completely, with only its effects as evidence it happened at all, Hawthorne instead

focuses on the fallout of such a revelation through the character of Mr. Hooper. It is in Hooper that Hawthorne presents a more positive alternative reaction to the initiation into evil compared to that of Goodman Brown. The character of Mr. Hooper shows readers that while not pleasant, the initiation into evil and the truth it brings with it need not always end in despair like in the case of Goodman Brown. In fact, through Hooper's attempts to get others to recognize what both he and Hawthorne see as the true, dual nature of humanity, he is presenting them a chance to take their first step away from the mindset which leads to violence and oppression and into the direction of rational piety.

Throughout "The Minister's Black Veil," it is never revealed exactly what experience led Mr. Hooper to dawn his titular black veil; however, the actual ordeal that caused the sudden shift in Mr. Hooper's life is not as important as its effects on the rest of his life. Upon his arrival to the church, Mr. Hooper meets his congregation wearing a black veil consisting of two folds of crape, which entirely concealed his features, except the mouth and chin, and gave a darkened aspect to his vision. Aside from this aesthetic addition to his person, Mr. Hooper has also changed his character. Hawthorne describes Hooper as having become "a very efficient clergyman," who by the aid of his mysterious emblem, "became a man of awful power, over souls that were in agony for sin" (49). This empowered quality is displayed in Hooper's first sermon delivered while wearing the black veil, which is described as "the most powerful effort that [his congregation] had ever heard from the pastor's lips" (40). With this seemingly spiritual empowerment, however, also comes a melancholy aspect to Hooper's personality along with his adamant refusal to remove his veil. Hooper even goes so far as to allow his fiancé, Elizabeth, to break off their engagement rather than lift the veil from his visage. It is clear through his change in character,

pointed out by the members of his community, that the minister has gone through a life altering ordeal that has fundamentally altered the way he perceives reality.

The experience Hooper has gone through, regardless of what it actually consisted of, is fundamentally the same experience that Young Goodman Brown endured during his journey into the forest. In the words of G.A. Santangelo, Hooper has gone through the initiation into evil, a dangerous but necessary shock to the personality that reveals to Hooper the true condition of himself and the rest of his fellow men (61, 64). The revelation that is received by Young Goodman Brown: sin is a fundamental reality of human existence. With this revelation comes the ability to see how human beings, especially those who subscribe to a Puritan ideology, consistently attempt to hide their sin and assure themselves of their own goodness, all the while pointing out the sins of others. This is why at the tale's end, Mr. Hooper chastises those attending him at his bedside exclaiming, "'[w]hy do you tremble at me alone? [...] '[t]remble also at each other! [...] 'I look around me and, and lo! on every visage a Black Veil!'" (52). Hooper's eyes have been opened, just as those of Goodman Brown were at the end of his tale. However, the crucial difference between Young Goodman Brown and Mr. Hooper lies not in what their experience of the initiation into evil consisted, but in their subsequent reaction and evolution.

Young Goodman Brown exits the forest where he encounters evil, a broken and spiritually dead man isolated from the rest of humanity. Mr. Hooper, on the other hand, returns from his initiation into evil spiritually renewed and determined to help others come to the same realization as himself. Following his nightmarish experience of the satanic mass, Young Goodman Brown returns home a stern, sad, darkly meditative, distrustful, if not desperate, man who can hear nothing but the anthem of sin instead of the holy psalm emanating from his church and who spends his final moments in gloom and despair. Having lost all faith in others,

Goodman Brown lives the rest of his sad life alienated from the world, convinced that there is no good on Earth, that the world is given to the devils, and that he alone remains the only true Puritan. Goodman Brown represents the negative outcome of one's initiation into evil, as described by G.A. Santangelo, where "[e]vil so permeates the soul that the individual can see the world only as black. He remains in isolation and can no longer accept his fellow men in love because they are blighted. Essentially he is an egoist, sinning against love, and actually, a type of fanatic" (61-62). Young Goodman Brown became an egotist and fanatic in the forest that night, and an egoist and fanatic he remained. For the rest of his life, the way in which he viewed the world was reversed by his encounter with evil, which convinced Young Goodman Brown that all were servants of Satan. All but him, of course.

Mr. Hooper presents the opposite and more optimistic side of the same coin. Like Goodman Brown, Mr. Hooper is shaken by his newfound knowledge. However, unlike Goodman Brown, Mr. Hooper sees sin not as *the* fundamental reality but as *a* fundamental reality of humanity, and thus conveys in his beliefs Hawthorne's own version of Christianity which, according to Martin Kevorkian, "offered an [...] insistence that man is a mixture of good and evil [...] capable of exercising his limited freedom in the pursuit of a certain degree of natural virtue" (106). Mr. Hooper believes human beings are capable of both good and evil and thus he is able to avoid falling into the same despair as Young Goodman Brown. Instead, he dedicates the rest of his life to "assuming the role of freak and inviting the horror and derision of his fellow men" to make them recognize their own spiritual fallenness (Santangelo 64). Where Goodman Brown retracts his hand from all, incapable of and unwilling to help them out of their destructive and pitiful state, Mr. Hooper dedicates himself to reaching out to others even at the risk of offending them. For Mr. Hooper, human beings still have a chance at salvation, but their first step towards

it must consist of recognizing the sin that is present in themselves and by extension all human beings. This is the primary reason for his dawning of the black veil. As W.B. Carnochan writes in his article, "'The Minister's Black Veil': Symbol, Meaning, and the Context of Hawthorne's Art," "[e]ach fictional symbol is attached to a fact in the real world" (184). So, in the case of "The Minister's Black Veil," the fictional Mr. Hooper's titular veil is supposed to be representative of the attempts of not only Puritans but those who are Puritanical in their beliefs to conceal their own sin, or faults, while highlighting those of others.

After his own sense of sin had been revealed to him, Mr. Hooper does what he can to break his community out of their false sense of innocence and goodness. He does this almost immediately in the story through the delivery of his first sermons, the subject of which "had reference to the secret sin, and those sad mysteries which we hide from our nearest and dearest, and would feign conceal from our own consciousness" (40). By reaching out to others in an attempt to shatter their dangerous egoistic illusions and to help them come to grips with the reality of evil, Mr. Hooper aims to better the members of his community and save them from becoming oppressors or falling into despair. However, as J. Hillis Miller writes in his article "Literature and History: The Example of Hawthorne's 'The Minister's Black Veil,'" "[t]he effects on the Milford community of the interruption brought about by Hooper's wearing of the black veil are catastrophic. The common forms of communal life are threatened or break down. Everything presupposed by the cheerful picture of social harmony sketched in the opening paragraph is jeopardized" (17). The effects of Mr. Hooper's attempts to shed his community of their false view of reality recall the point made earlier by Santangelo: the process of revealing humanity's dual nature to those who see the world in divisions of only good and evil is both painful and dangerous. This is why when Mr. Hooper delivers his first sermon while wearing the

black veil, "[e]ach member of the congregation, the most innocent girl, and the man of hardened breast, felt as if the preacher had crept upon them, behind his awful veil, and discovered their hoarded iniquity of deed or thought [...] with every tremor of his melancholy voice, the hearers quaked" (40). Having thought of themselves as good, a consequence of hiding their iniquitous deeds and thoughts from others and even from their own consciences, the members of Mr. Hooper's congregation cannot help but shudder at his attempts to reveal to them all that is hidden behind their own metaphorical veils.

Mr. Hooper's sermons are not his only method for accomplishing his task of awakening his community to the hiddenness of their own sin. Mr. Hooper's mere presence serves to disrupt the normal day-to-day activities of his community in his effort to get people to truly become pious rather than going through the motions of piety. Miller depicts the consequences of Hooper assuming the role of Socratic gadfly for his community as "a series of episodes in which one by one the normal activities of the community are shown to be disabled, transformed, or suspended by Hooper's wearing of the black veil" (17). For example, during a funeral and wedding, Hooper generates feelings of discomfort for those in attendance signaled by their trembling and quivering in response to his presence, and his prayer in which he stated his hope that "they, and himself, and all of the mortal race, might be ready [...] for the dreadful hour that should snatch the veil from their faces" (42). These run of the mill Puritan services would likely have been seen by both Hawthorne and Hooper to be hollow external expressions of piety, lacking the internal subjective struggle crucial to one's spiritual journey and salvation. Consequently, the disturbances of these services help Hawthorne and Hooper deliver to their respective audiences the message that not only does sin exist in all of us, but also that it is something which must be acknowledged and combated rather than ignored.

The reactions to Hooper's ministry are a mixed bag. For some, the message is well received with Hawthorne describing these people as Hooper's "converts." These people in the community, Hawthorne writes, "always regarded him [Hooper] with a dread peculiar to themselves, affirming [...] that, before he brought them to celestial light, they had been with him behind the black veil" (49). Despite their dread of Hooper, brought on by his appearance and mannerisms, these Puritans have successfully and wholeheartedly embraced his saving message. Others, however, take Hooper's message the wrong way. After talking with the chief magistrate, council, and representatives of his community, Hooper successfully leaves an impression on them with his words. Unfortunately, their response is to crack down harder on sin through the passing of legislative measures "characterized by all the gloom and piety of our earliest ancestral ways" (49). By their responses, it is obvious that these listeners have missed Hooper's point entirely. A person's inner sin cannot be combated by others, whether through individual effort or external laws, but only by themselves. Moreover, the passing of these laws is not only unhelpful but counterproductive because it was the strict ancestral laws of the Puritans that helped their views evolve into the mistaken forms from which Hooper aims to free them. The two aforementioned groups are implied to be minorities when it comes to the different reactions to Mr. Hooper's ministry. Meanwhile, the majority of community members reside in somewhat of a middle ground. Afraid to completely do away with their previous worldview, but knowing that Hooper's words are true, these people neither embrace nor lash out as a response to Hooper's message. Instead, similarly to how people generally set aside that which makes them uncomfortable, many of the Puritans of Hooper's community have alienated him despite his noble attempts to help them; however, despite their ambivalent attitude towards Hooper, they are still noted as recognizing the truth of his claims and thus turn to him in their times of need. This

can be seen towards the tale's end where Hawthorne describes Hooper as "irreproachable in outward act, yet shrouded in dismal suspicions; kind and loving, though unloved, and dimly feared; a man apart from men, shunned in their health and joy, but ever summoned to their aid in mortal anguish" (49). All things considered, the people who inhabit this middle ground are still taking a step forward as Hooper intended by recognizing that there is a problem within them that needs solving rather than denying its existence altogether, or worse, projecting it onto others. With time, the result is a community which can hopefully see the shared good and evil in all of humanity.

Hawthorne had a habit of writing his tales with certain morals which for the most part related closely with one another whether they were written in the 1830s or 1840s. However, the subjects Hawthorne utilized to express his morals varied somewhat widely, especially from one decade to the next. In the 1830s Hawthorne dedicated most of his attention to what he believed to be the dangers of religious extremism by basing his tales on the Puritans of New England. One of the first of these tales, "The Gentle Boy," examines what lies at the end of the dangerous path of dogmatism and fanaticism: tyranny, oppression, and death. However, in so doing, Hawthorne also presents an antidote to such closed-minded and destructive sentiments through the concept of rational piety as practiced by the central family of the tale's titular character. Through this clash of dogmatism and fanaticism on the one hand and rational piety on the other hand, Hawthorne hopes to prove the superiority of rational piety and demonstrate that the combination of the use of one's own individual reason and religious faith, allows for a more tolerant, compassionate, free, and pious society. If "The Gentle Boy" looks at the results of a society run by religious extremists, then "Young Goodman Brown" provides a deeper dive into the philosophy that animates such extremism. Like many dogmatic Puritans who hold a distorted

view of the faith, Young Goodman Brown begins his tale by only being able to see people inhabiting two warring camps, good and evil, the good camp being populated by himself and those of his community, and the evil consisting of everyone else. However, his encounter with the devil during his journey through the forest challenges this view. In the forest, it is revealed to him that all possess the capacity for evil, a belief central to Hawthorne's own philosophy, but, instead of coming to the realization made by Tobias in "The Gentle Boy," that all people are fallen and in need of mercy and compassion, Young Goodman Brown doubles down on his mistaken beliefs. Upon exiting the forest, Young Goodman Brown believes that only he is good, that only he is the true Puritan, meanwhile everyone else is a servant of evil merely putting on a façade of goodness. The moral here is that human beings are impure mixtures of good and evil by nature and any view of reality that seeks to divide them neatly into black and white categories of good and evil is severely mistaken. Young Goodman Brown's unending misery at the tale's end further reveals how damaging such a worldview is not only to others but to oneself as well. In "The Minister's Black Veil," Hawthorne provides a counterexample to the tragic tale of Young Goodman Brown through the melancholy but ultimately melioristic tale of Revered Hooper. Hooper, like Brown, is shaken to his core through an unrevealed experience where he comes face to face with the reality of evil, another one of Hawthorne's central beliefs tied very closely with the dualistic nature of reality mentioned earlier. However, Hooper uses this experience as motivation to reach out to others rather than cut them off, and spends the rest of his life constantly attempting to get others to acknowledge and combat their hidden sin rather than ignore and hide it. Through the example of Hooper, Hawthorne adds a call to action component to the rational piety championed in "The Gentle Boy." Whereas Tobias and Dorothy served as examples of living one's life in accordance with rational piety, Hooper's story serves as a

reminder that those who have a better view of the path to salvation, i.e. those who view reality as seen by Hawthorne, can and should work to steer others onto that path as well. To not reach out in an attempt to help others see reality and human existence more accurately is to risk communities either becoming or remaining the way society is depicted in "The Gentle Boy." It is important to note, however, that Hawthorne's views regarding human nature are universal and inherent and therefore not applicable only to religious communities, though they make up the subject of a majority of his early tales. This is why in the 1840s Hawthrone switched his focus from New England's religious past to its more secular and progressive present. Despite the shifts in ideological belief, the problem of evil that plagues humanity remains unchanged, and Hawthorne aimed to make sure this fact was clear by penning tales that reflected his thoughts on the contemporary state of his society and its inhabitants.

III: HAWTHORNE AND PROGRESSIVE REFORM

In Nathaniel Hawthorne's tales from the 1830s we see an author extremely interested in the past both for himself personally and for his society more broadly. Taking a look at three of his most famous works from that era, "The Gentle Boy," "Young Goodman Brown," and "The Minister's Black Veil," it was concluded that Hawthorne viewed human beings as suffering from a certain core fault which, if left unchecked, could easily send people down the path of tyranny and oppression. This fault was the existence of evil within the human heart and the resulting dual nature of humanity, one which allowed people to commit acts of great good but also of great evil. However, despite the strong religious themes of his early tales, Hawthorne clearly believed that these insights he had gained and was trying to convey to his readers were not exclusive to religious groups and individuals. Given their universal nature, the faults that Hawthorne saw in humanity could, and did, impact people of any and all ideological backgrounds. This idea is made explicitly clear when in the 1840s Hawthorne altered the focus of his tales to more reflect his own time period as Evert Jan Leeuwen notes in his chapter of *Hawthorne in Context* titled "Utopianism" "[i]n a notebook entry from the mid-1840s, Hawthorne explicitly expresses his desire to record and publish his studies of American life: '[I had] a dream… that the world had become dissatisfied with the inaccurate manner in which facts are reported, and had employed me [...] to relate things of public importance, exactly as they happen.' [t]he satirical and topical nature of many of his 1840s tales suggests that Hawthorne was indeed working hard to realize this dream" (118). Nathaniel Hawthorne lived through a time of great progress where society was making large strides both scientifically and Intellectually. As a result, the ideal seemed to be within the grasp of those willing to put in the effort to make it into a reality. While sympathetic to the desire to bring the ideal into reality, which was shared

among many of his peers, Nathaniel Hawthorne was wary of the impact and consequences such utopian ideas and attempts would have in the real world. Viewing efforts to attain perfection in this life on Earth as fundamentally flawed attempts to fix the nature of humanity, Hawthorne believed the ultimate outcome of utopian projects would be doomed to failure. In "The Celestial Rail-road" Hawthorne depicts the spiritual death of those who foolishly believe their industrial and moral progress has allowed them to gain a ticket straight to the Celestial City free of the burdens of long and difficult effort on the part of the journeyman. In "Earth's Holocaust" Hawthorne shows the societal death that results from people's mistaken belief that they have reached a point of intellectual development that will allow them to create the perfect society from scratch and therefore remake human nature. Finally, in "The Birthmark " Hawthorne displays the folly of using science as a possible route to obtain perfection on Earth as the famous man of science, Aylmer, ultimately kills his wife in his attempt to remove the birthmark from her face which he views as the stamp of her Earthly imperfection. Overall, the tales serve not only as examples of how secular progressives are not immune to faults that are inherent to humanity but also as ways of showing Hawthorne's readers various dead ends when it comes to attempts to make positive lasting change that ultimately lead back to his general solutions given in "The Gentle Boy" and "The Minister's Black Veil."

Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Celestial Rail-road" was written in a time of great advancements both technologically and intellectually. America was a rising nation utilizing the latest technology to craft for itself a more prosperous society. Meanwhile, religion placed a larger emphasis on the role of reason compared to previous ages, with the Unitarian church being a prime example. This focus on reason would eventually inspire a rise in the romanticism movement that placed a greater emphasis on sentiment. At the intellectual center of this

ascendency of romanticism was the philosophy of American Transcendentalism which emerged out of the religion of Unitarianism. Experiencing these changing aspects of society and wanting to write tales that focused on his contemporary time, Hawthorne published "The Celestial Rail-road" in 1843. Utilizing the lore of the well-established seventeenth century book by John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, "The Celestial Rail-road" is an allegorical tale the events of which take place in the same world from Bunyan's original work. However, Hawthorne places his own dark twist on the world of the tale making important changes meant to reflect what he saw happening in his own world. "The Celestial Railroad" serves as Hawthorne's estimation of the material and intellectual progress of his time through which he warns of the dangers of society's increasing materialism along with the shortcomings of the popular spiritual philosophies of Unitarianism and Transcendentalism. "The Celestial Rail-road" sets the tone of cautiousness towards zealous secular materialist progress that will be found in the other tales analyzed in this chapter, "Earth's Holocaust" and "The Birthmark."

One dimension of Hawthorne's "The Celestial Rail-road " is its portrayal of the increasing materialism of the nineteenth century. The Industrial Revolution brought with it a wide variety of inventions which increased work productivity and the reach of goods bringing in more wealth to a larger amount of people than ever before. One such invention was that of the railroad, which takes center stage in Hawthorne's tale. Supposedly built between the City of Destruction and the Celestial City, a claim which will turn out to be a lie by the tale's end, the railroad in part symbolizes humankind's preoccupation with materialism, along with the belief, stated by Joseph C. Pattison in his article "The Celestial Rail-road as Dream Tale," that "human ingenuity would transform the celestial pilgrimage into an easy, sociable, even delightful trip" (228). This transformation is made apparent when the narrator, after having arrived at the train

station, points out how "the feelings of the community had undergone a very favorable change; in reference to the Celestial pilgrimage" (Hawthorne 188). The pilgrimage from Bunyan's original work was painstakingly long and riddled with difficulties and challenges aimed at preventing those who took the journey from ever reaching their destination. This is why so few chose to venture past the familiarity and comfort of their home city and many scornfully laugh at those foolish enough to attempt the pilgrimage. However, in Hawthorne's satirical reimagining of the tale, the railroad not only circumvents the long, slow, difficult, and individualistic journey one must take in order to arrive at the celestial city, but it also does so in a way which provides riders with the utmost comfort. As a result of this technological achievement the narrator states how:

> [i]nstead of a lonely and ragged man, with a huge burthen on his back, plodding along sorrowfully on foot, while the whole city hooted after him, here were parties of the first gentry and most respectable people in the neighborhood, setting forth towards the Celestial City, as cheerfully as if the pilgrimage were merely a summer tour. (188)

The vast increase of pilgrims, if they can even be called so anymore, speaks to the idea of how people living in an increasingly technological society began to place more emphasis on material comfort and enjoyment rather than spiritual salvation. After they are promised a quick journey of ease to the Celestial City, the masses decide to take the pilgrimage.

Adding to the idea that many of the passengers are fixated on material existence is the fact that most do not even make it to the Celestial City; rather, after the train makes a temporary stop at Vanity Fair, "many passengers stop to take their pleasure or make their profit in the Fair, instead of going onward to the Celestial City" (Hawthorne 197)Bustling with business and wonders, Vanity Fair is stated by the narrator to be "at the height of its prosperity" and exhibits "an epitome of whatever is brilliant, gay, and fascinating under the sun" (197). Vanity Fair represents the pinnacle of human achievement, and so it is no wonder then that the city feeds into

the materialistic inclinations of the passengers of the Celestial Railroad. The city is so good at tempting its residents that, according to the narrator, "people often affirm it to be the true and only heaven; stoutly contending that there is no other, that those who seek further are mere dreamers" (197). Part of the city's enticement is its implementation of the semblances of religion. However, these houses of worship are frauds that only seek to imitate their genuine counterparts in order to feed the human desire for the metaphysical while ultimately keeping them in Vanity Fair. This is made clear when the narrator points out how priests such as Rev. Mr. Shallow-deep, Rev. Mr. Stumble-at-truth, Rev. Mr. Clog-the-spirit, and Rev Mr. Wind-of-doctrine work to tell people what to think and in doing so "constitute a sort of machinery, by which thought and study are done to every person's hand, without his putting himself to the slightest inconvenience in the matter" (198). In addition, the narrator mentions how Vanity Fair also possesses another "species of machine" designed "for the wholesale manufacture of individual mortality" but does not go into further detail to describe or explain it (198). In Vanity Fair, the machines which provide earthly comfort and prosperity for humankind are not only technological in nature. The organization of human beings can serve as a sort of machine of their own, one that produces shadows such as a church or idols which allow people to feel as if they have a spiritual dimension while keeping them tethered to material reality.

"The Celestial Rail-road" serves as a warning against the rising materialism in society which Hawthorne strongly criticized due to his more spiritual worldview. Once out of Vanity Fair the narrator continues on the Celestial Railroad until its final stop, the river of Death. As mentioned earlier, it is revealed that the railroad was never built to go directly to the Celestial City and from here on a ferry ride is required to cross the river. However, it is on this ferry that the narrator discovers that the entire operation was a fraud and that his guide, Mr. Smooth-it-

away, deceived him. Fortunately for the narrator, the cold water splashed on his face from the ferry awakens him from his nightmare after which he states, "with a shiver and a heartquake I awoke. Thank Heaven it was a Dream!" (206). The dream aspect of the story makes it all the more impactful. As Joseph C. Pattison writes, "[t]hose in [Hawthorne's] stories who dismiss or reject dream[s] usually do so at their peril" (227). Hawthorne desired his readers to take into consideration what was brought up in the dreams of his characters. Ted-Larry Pebworth mentions in his article, "'The Soul's Instinctive Perception': Dream, Actuality, and Reality in Four Tales from Hawthorne's 'Mosses from an Old Manse,'" how in Hawthorne's *Mosses* dreams point out a general evil or disaster" with the most clearly defined example of this type of dream being "The Celestial Rail-road" (21). What is the general evil or disaster featured in the "Celestial Railroad?" According to Pewborth, it is "one of the most important themes of nineteenth century Romanticism: the rise of science and the machine, with its adverse effects on the individual man, his way of life, and his very soul" (21). While science and technology can and did lead to great good for humanity, Hawthorne was wary of the negative effects that would accompany it. Tales such as "The Celestial Rail-road" help illuminate Hawthorne's fear that an increase in the focus on material existence would coincide with a decrease in the attention paid to the spiritual aspects of life.

As shown in the story, the rise of science and the machine reflects a growing materialism within society and with this growth in materialism comes a neglect, and the eventual abandonment, of the metaphysical, which is of central importance to Hawthorne's worldview. The people who remain stuck in Vanity Fair, for example, do so in part because they believe that material progress is capable of fixing their defects. The narrator states how "[i]f a customer wished to renew his stock of youth, the dealers offered him a set of false teeth and an auburn

wig; if he demanded peace of mind, they recommended opium or a brandy-bottle" (200). But for Hawthorne, physical ills, as real as they are, are only a fraction of true reality. According to Pebworth, reality for Hawthorne "included sin and guilt, companionship and isolation, nature and the machine, the scientist and the poet, the cold calculations of the intellect and the warm human dignity of the individual heart, all tied up in a complex scheme not easily explained nor worked out" (19). In other words, existence, and by extension the human being, consisted of a combination of both the spiritual and the material. Therefore, to view the world through a solely materialistic lens is to miss Hawthorne's central claim about the nature of reality and humanity first made in his tales from the 1830s: that sin is real and it exists in the hearts of every human being. The result of this reality is a duality in each and every person which allows them to be the source of both good and evil.

One of Hawthorne's warnings through the tale's dream is not to become too enamored with the comforts and achievements of this world to the point that one forgets that reality consists of more than just the physical. "The Celestial Railroad" contains comments regarding the metaphysical dimensions of Hawthorne's contemporary era with certain aspects of the story serving to symbolize Unitarian religion. Progress in the nineteenth century was not just limited to technological advancements; it also included the rise of more liberal and progressive forms of religion and spirituality. When interpreted allegorically, the tale's central railroad serves as a symbol of the liberal theology of Unitarianism. As mentioned earlier, the construction of the railroad led to a vast increase in people attempting the pilgrimage. This increase can be credited to the ease with which the journey could be taken both physically and intellectually. The heightened convenience is due to the increased ideological liberality of the pilgrimage which is pointed out by the narrator throughout the journey. The first instance of this theological liberality

is when the narrator mentions how the Station House "is erected on the site of the Little Wicked Gate, which [...] by its inconvenient narrowness, was a great obstruction to the traveler of liberal mind and expansive stomach" (Hawthorne 187-188). Where before the strictness of the religion resulted in the denial of passage for many for their refusal to give up certain beliefs or possessions, now, in the era of progress and liberality, the gate has been transformed into a station house allowing for the passage of many without the need for them to sacrifice anything. Furthermore, once on the train, riders need not worry about the preaching of offensive doctrines, as the narrator notes, "[t]here was much pleasant conversation about the news of the day, topics of business, politics, or the lighter matters of amusement; while religion [...] was thrown tastefully into the back-ground. Even an infidel would have heard little or nothing to shock his sensibility" (188-189). In this way, the journey is continually made open to all kinds of people without fear of them being challenged in their beliefs and made uncomfortable by pesky evangelism. However, the most damning of the changes made to the journey is that of allowing demons to operate the train. The narrator's guide, Mr. Smooth-it-away, explains, "Apollyon, Christian's old enemy [...] was the very fellow to manage the engine; and so we have reconciled him to the custom of going on pilgrimage, and engaged him as chief engineer" (190). The narrator reacts in celebration by saying, "Bravo! Bravo! [...] This shows the liberality of the age; this proves, if anything can, that all musty prejudices are in a fair way to be obliterated" (190). While seemingly more accepting and accessible, the version of religion characterized by the aforementioned examples was problematic for Hawthorne not despite these aspects but because of them. In his view, the theological pendulum had swung too far in the direction opposite that of Puritanism.

Disagreeing with the softness of Unitarianism, Hawthorne utilized "The Celestial Railroad" as a means of criticizing what he saw as the dangers of its more liberal theology. For all of his criticism of the Puritans, made clear in a wide variety of stories spanning his entire career, and his Unitarian upbringing, Hawthorne still found himself at odds with Unitarianism. This disagreement was because, despite Unitarianism's focus on rationality, mirroring Hawthorne's call for the practice of rational piety in tales such as "The Gentle Boy," Hawthorne believed it failed to adequately address the existence of sin and evil along with the necessary hardship that comes from the individual struggle against that sin and evil. According to Clifford A. Wood, in his article "Teaching Hawthorne's 'The Celestial Railroad,"

> Cradled and reared at the hearthstone of New England liberal intellectualism, Hawthorne refused to be hypnotized by the bright incandescence of Unitarianism and Transcendentalism. [...] Conceiving man as an amalgam of 'marble and mud,' he was able to steer between the Scylla and Charybdis of the Unitarian negation of evil and the Calvinist affirmation of total depravity. He was confirmed in the presence of a dark side of things [...] [but] he did see in the presence of sin the capacity for educative effects. (601)

Hawthorne's mediating stance between Unitarianism and Calvinism (more specifically in the form of Puritanism) is what allowed him, on the one hand, to highlight the dangers of the belief of total depravity in tales such as "Young Goodman Brown" and "The Gentle Boy," while on the other hand, rejecting the complete negation of evil in "The Celestial Railroad." This rejection of evil is made clear in the various scenes where the narrator notices the presence of beings or things usually considered or connected to evil, such as Apollyon the demon being in charge of the train engine, or the instance where the train passes by the entrance of hell, only for them to be glossed over or explained away by his guide, Mr. Smooth-it-away. Wood states in his article how, "In substituting Smooth-it-away for Evangelist, Hawthorne doubtlessly means to point up the Unitarian de-emphasis of Scripture and of hard-sell evangelism of their Puritan forebears. The very name Smooth-it-away is chosen to suggest the Unitarian propensity [...] to gloss over

some of the ugly truths of human existence" (602). Smooth-it-away tries his best to get the narrator to focus on the liberality and progress of the journey and not on the tradeoffs that have been made for their sake. Two such tradeoffs are the de-emphasis of scripture and hard-sell evangelism mentioned by Wood, which find their representation in the instance when the narrator mentions how religion has been relegated to the background of people's conversations to the joy of even the most irreligious traveler. Instances such as these back up the claim made by Richard Toby Widdicombe in his article, "Hawthorne's 'Celestial Rail-road' and Transcendentalism: Apologia or Caricature?", that "[o]f organized religion's social role, Hawthorne complains that opposing spiritual beliefs have been falsely reconciled in the interests of liberality and mass appeal" (6). Hawthorne wanted as many people as possible to find salvation but he did not believe it possible to obtain salvation without first taking heed of evil. Mr. Smooth-it-away provided people with a false promise that would only lead them further rather than closer to salvation.

Transcendentalism, an intellectual offspring of Unitarianism, is also a topic featured in "The Celestial Railroad" and subjected to criticisms of its own. Early on in the tale, prior to their arrival at the Station House, the narrator and Mr. Smooth-it-away come across the Slough of Despond where Christian, from Bunyan's original tale, sank under the weight of his sins before being freed and continuing on his journey. In Hawthorne's tale, the celestial train passes over the slough on a newly constructed bridge. Smooth-it-away explains how the foundation was constructed by:

> throwing into the slough some editions of books of morality, volumes of French philosophy and German rationalism, tracts, sermons, and essays of modern clergymen, extracts from Plato, Confucius, and various Hindoo sages, together with a few ingenious commentaries upon texts of Scripture - all of which, by some scientific process, have been converted into a mass like granite. The whole bog might be filled up with similar matter. (187)

Given the multifaceted nature of its foundation, the bridge reflects the vagueness of American Transcendentalism. Giving more weight to this view is Leland S. Pearson who writes in his book, *The Cambridge Introduction to Hawthorne*, "[p]art religious movement, part social movement, part aesthetic movement, Transcendentalism proves difficult to define" (21). This vagueness is doubled down on by Hawthorne with the explicit mention of Transcendentalism halfway through the tale. Where before the pilgrim must fear the two cruel giants of Pope and Pagan, now the giants have been replaced by the single terrible Giant Transcendentalist. In describing the giant, the narrator states, "as to his form, his features, his substance, and his nature generally, it is the chief peculiarity of this huge miscreant, that neither he nor himself, nor anybody for him, has ever been able to describe them" (197). This incomprehensibility comes from the fact, as shown with the bridge over the Slough of Despond, that American Transcendentalism was essentially a romantic philosophy that pulled from a variety of sources across the world and the centuries. This formlessness is what allows Emmerson in his essay "Transcendentalist" to say how "there is no such thing as a Transcendental *party* [...] no pure Transcendentalist [...] none but prophets and heralds of such a philosophy" (205). Transcendentalism is a philosophy that can derive from practically anywhere such as those materials that make up the Transcendentalist bridge, in the service of progressive, oftentimes even utopian, goals.

Hawthorne's criticisms of Transcendentalism are twofold. First, Transcendentalism was a vague belief system which made it difficult to comprehend. Hawthorne himself did not adhere to a strict system of philosophy or religion for he knew well the dangers of falling into a legalistic way of thinking. However, that is not to say that his personal beliefs were formless. As noted by Robert Milder in his book, *Hawthorne's Habitations*, "Hawthorne's religion had three essential

planks: he believed in the existence of God; he believed in an afterlife and eternal judgment; and he believed in the long-term Providential superintendence of history and the immanence of mortal law" (21). The incomprehensibility of Transcendentalism of "the Celestial Railroad" evokes feelings of uncertainty in the narrator Hawthorne. After the train passed the Giant Transcendentalist, "He shouted after us, but in so strange a phraseology that we knew not what he meant, nor whether to be encouraged or affrightened" (197). This uncertainty reflects what Pearson calls Hawthorne's "uncomfortable relationship with Transcendentalism" where he agreed with some but certainly not all of the Transcendentalists' view of idealism and critiques of materialism. Second, and perhaps more importantly for "the Celestial Railroad", similar to Unitarianism, Transcendentalism attempts to smooth over an issue Hawthorne viewed with the utmost importance: the evil that is present within people by virtue of their human nature. In "The Minister's Black Veil " Hawthorne displays the way he believes people should tackle the problem of sin. Through the character of Minister Hooper, the reader is shown how Hawthorne advocates for every individual to acknowledge their own sinfulness through constant, difficult, and painful self-reflection. All attempts of the narrator to confront his own sinfulness in "The Celestial Railroad" are dismissed or avoided with one method of avoidance being the bridge of Transcendentalism. This bridge allows pilgrims to ignore the Slough of Despond and hence to avoid acknowledging the sin in their hearts and in the world. Adding to the idea that Transcendentalism aims to smooth over the issue of evil is the character of Mr. Smooth-it-away himself. Jonathan Murphy, in his book chapter, "Hawthorne and the Transcendentalists," writes that "Mr. Smooth-it-away is clearly a caricature of Emerson" (299). When the narrator believes he spots something evil or just has the feeling that something is not right on his trip, Mr. Smooth-it-away is there to reassure him or direct his attention elsewhere. Ultimately, all the diversions on

the part of Mr. Smooth-it-away are revealed to have been to the narrator's detriment; however, this is not to say Hawthorne believed Emerson or the Transcendentalist movement was malicious, far from it. Hawthorne was personal friends with Emerson and he shared with the Transcendentalists the view that reality was not merely material but also spiritual in nature. However, in the words of Pearson, "[t]ranscendentalism itself seemed too dreamy and optimistic to Hawthorne" (21). For Hawthorne, the transcendentalists spent far too much time in the Hall of Fantasy, the realm of the ideal, and this gave them a divergent, and therefore mistaken, view of reality.

Hawthorne's "The Celestial Railroad" provides its readers with a tale built upon already established lore in the form of Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* to make for an effective allegorical warning. Understanding the symbolism of Bunyan's work, as many of Hawthorne's contemporary audience did, helps readers of the satirical sequel to better grasp the significance of the changes that he makes within the world of the tale. Moreover, through the changes made, Hawthorne presents his readers with a dual-pronged critique of his contemporary society. First is his attack on the rising materialism in nineteenth century America with its increasing dependence on machinery and technology as symbolized by the Celestial Railroad itself and the increasingly dangerous allure of Vanity Fair. For Hawthorne, to put one's faith in the material to the neglect and eventually abandonment of the spiritual is folly. Materialism ignores the existence of evil within the human heart and therefore offers no avenues that can truly address the issue. Consequently, those who adopt a materialist view of reality take themselves further away rather than closer to the Celestial City. Second is Hawthorne's critique of the spiritual movements that were abundant around him, Unitarianism and Transcendentalism. While agreeing with both philosophies on their belief in the spiritual and their critiques of materialism, Hawthorne found

himself at odds with their liberality, optimism, and lack of emphasis upon evil. His main issue with both Unitarianism and Transcendentalism was the way in which they attempted to smooth over, or in other words, ignore the issue of evil in the human heart. For Hawthorne, to disregard this crucial fact of life was to hold a skewed, and therefore, incorrect view of reality. Actions taken based on this incorrect perception of evil result in dangerous and damaging outcomes for all of humanity.

Fueled by the intellectual and material progress of the era, Mark Holloway notes in his book, *Heaven's on Earth: Utopian Communities in America,* that Nathaniel Hawthorne's America saw "the most crowded and excited phase of nineteenth-century experiments" in Utopianism (119). Hawthorne himself even took part in a utopian project when he spent a brief period at Brook Farm in 1841. Hawthorne was ultimately dissatisfied with the project and left because, according to Evert Jan van Leeuwen in his chapter on "Utopianism," "he realized that utopia, as a product of the imagination, existed in the 'realm of nowhere'" (115). Van Leeuwen notes how "[i]n the course of the 1840s, Hawthorne realized that a utopianism that sought to establish a new Eden in America via material means was doomed to fail because it did not recognize that utopia is located in the imagination, not reality" (122). In other words, despite his own idealism and desire to see the world around him improved, Hawthorne believed that there were certain aspects of reality that made it impossible to bring the utopian dream to fruition, and that those who worked to make it so had spent far too much time in the Hall of Fantasy. For Hawthorne, the problem of evil with humanity that he diagnosed in his tales from the 1830s was universal and unchanging. Therefore, any attempts to change humankind which glossed over this reality would end in failure whether they be religious or secular in nature.

In “Earth’s Holocaust,” Hawthorne shows how the human capacity for evil is something all people share regardless of their ideological convictions. People of any belief system can be blinded by their ambitions to make a better world through rapid and grand systemic change. Wanting to build a better world, the reformers of “Earth’s Holocaust” begin their revolution by doing away with all the hierarchal institutions of the past in order to have an egalitarian society. What starts as a simple desire to rid the world of superfluous objects quickly snowballs into a full blown revolution as the reformers use the opportunity to attain equality. At the beginning of the bonfire, the narrator observes, “some rough-looking men advanced to the verge of the bonfire and threw in [...] the crests and devices of illustrious families; pedigrees that extended back, like lines of light, into the mist of the dark ages [...] innumerable badges of knighthood [...] [and] patents of nobility” (382-383). These objects are soon followed by “the purple robes of royalty, and the crowns, globes, and sceptres of emperors and kings” (384). The masses are said to have given a joyous shout because they have finally achieved equality with those “creatures of the same clay and same spiritual infirmities” (383). The masses reaction to the reformers' actions reflect Hawthorne’s own feelings on similar ideas held by the progressive reformers of his own time. In the case of the reformer’s attempts to achieve equality through the abolition of hierarchy, the narrator’s words indicate an understanding by Hawthorne of the idea given his own beliefs in the universality of human fallenness. However, a bit later in the tale the narrator expresses concern for a move towards gender equality saying, “It somewhat startled me to overhear a number of ladies, highly respectable in appearance, proposing to fling their gowns and petticoats into the flames, and assume the garb, together with the manners, duties, offices, and responsibilities, of the opposite sex” (389). Here is an instance where the reformers push past the limits of Hawthorne’s approval. While Hawthorne is no stranger to writing stories with

feminist tones featuring strong and capable female characters such as Dorothy and Hester Prynne from "The Gentle Boy" and *The Scarlet Letter*, respectively, he is also shown in other tales to possess attitudes toward women that were commonly held for his time. For example, in "The New Adam and Eve," where the titular characters explore a deserted Earth filled with the remnants of contemporary society, Eve is depicted as having a natural inclination towards motherhood and cleaning when she is instinctively fascinated by the room made for a baby and a nearby broom. Returning to "Earth's Holocaust," it is clear that there is a tension between Hawthorne's support for the concept of total equality and his sentiment towards tradition, in this case, traditional gender roles. This tension mirrors the larger internal conflict displayed across the tale in its entirety with Hawthorne consistently being pulled back and forth between his support for the reformers' ideas in themselves and his repulsion and fear for their means of achieving them along with the unintended outcomes of those means.

As the reformers continue to destroy the remnants of the old society, the narrator still shows a certain level of support for the movement, but his reactions swing back and forth from joy to aversion as the reformers set their torches to what he considers to be valuable and even necessary aspects of society. For the reformers, an egalitarian society is not enough so their next step is to create a new world free of all the things they believe have held humanity back and contributed to its corruption. Alcohol is the first of the corruptive forces to be done away with, swiftly followed by "all the weapons and munitions of war" being tossed in the flames, with the exception of gunpowder which is disposed of in the ocean (389). The crowd once again sings their praise of the reformers' actions by beating drums and blasting trumpets, "as a prelude to the proclamation of universal and eternal peace," during which "it would henceforth be the contention of the human race, to work out the greatest mutual good," rather than engage in the

"horror and absurdity of war" (390). After seemingly eliminating man's means of making war, the reformers turn their attention to other means by which people exert violence on one another. After searching the globe, the reformers bring to the fire "the machinery by which the different nations were accustomed to inflict the punishment of death," or as the narrator describes them, "[t]hose old implements of cruelty--those horrible monsters of mechanisms--those inventions which it seemed to demand something worse than man's natural heart to contrive, and which had lurked in the dusty nooks of ancient prisons" (392). In response, the narrator gives his explicit approval exclaiming "[t]hat was well done!" reflecting Hawthorne's own anti-capital punishment sentiments.

Soon after the instruments of death are done away with, the narrator remarks how the reformers "proceeded to measures, in the full length of which I was hardly prepared to keep them company" (393-394). The first such measure occurs when the people turn their ire towards marriage certificates and money, burning them both in an attempt to free themselves from two different types of bondage, the institution of marriage and the institution of currency. In their place, the reformers confidently declare that a new type of higher and holier bond will tie human beings together and that "universal benevolence, uncoined and exhaustless, was to be the golden currency of the world" (394). From here, the reformers then take aim at "all written constitutions, set forms of government, legislative acts, [and] statute-books," with the bonfire eventually being fueled by "heaps of books and pamphlets," based on the reformers' hubristic belief that "the human race had now reached a stage of progress, so far beyond what the wisest and wittiest of men of former ages had ever dreamed of, that it would have been manifest absurdity to allow the earth to be any longer encumbered with their poor achievements in the literary line" (395). At this point, the author is filled with anxiety as the realization dawns on him that perhaps the

reformers have gone too far. Yet, in a display of the tension between Hawthorne's support for the reformer's ideals and his aversion to their methods, the author is seen cheering on the reformers yet again as they set their torches to the external symbols of religion. Being more concerned with the metaphysical truths of religion and not a churchman himself, it is not surprising that Hawthorne has his narrator say in response, "[t]he wood-paths shall be the aisles of our cathedral--the firmament itself shall be its ceiling! What needs an earthly roof between the Deity and his worshiper? Our faith can well afford to lose all the drapery that even the holiest of men have thrown around it, and be only the more sublime in its simplicity" (400). Here again we see how Hawthorne's ideals align with those of the reformers, thus showing that he held progressive views even if he was seen as more conservative than his peers. However, the pendulum swings back for a final time as the reformers set fire to the Holy Scriptures themselves and Hawthorne's narrator is awakened from his stupor to the horror of what is happening around him.

An inspection into the philosophical beliefs of the reformers is required in order to better understand their decision to pursue a course of radical change in a way that makes their behavior and mindset not much different from the Puritans who preceded them. The reformers' utopian assumptions about the nature of reality allow them to believe that the solution to the problem of human corruption and hardship lies in grand systemic change. Taking from the beliefs of philosophers such as Jean Jacques Rousseau and John Locke, the reformers of "Earth's Holocaust" believe that people are all malleable products of their environment. This hallmark of utopian thought is explained by Gorman Beauchamp in his essay, "Imperfect Men in Perfect Societies: Human Nature in Utopia." According to Beauchamp, "Utopists view man as a product of his social environment. Nothing innate in the psychic make-up of man--no inherent flaw in his nature, no inheritance of original sin--prevents his being perfected, or at least radically

ameliorated, once the social structure that shapes character can be properly reordered" (280). A view that sees human beings as clay shaped by external social factors implies that if the environment is changed then all the people who inhabit that environment will change as well. This is why the reformers are not content with merely ridding the world of some things while keeping others, but instead aim to destroy everything, even the very things that allowed them to reach their current state of civilization. The only way to cure all of humanity of its corruption at once is to completely tear down the existing society and start from scratch. For Hawthorne, this way of viewing human beings and society is both dangerous and destructive. As Larry Reynolds notes in his book, *Devils and Rebels: The Making of Hawthorne's Damned Politics,* one of the central tenets of Hawthorne's belief system is that:

> No human effort, on a grand scale, has ever yet resulted according to the purpose of its projectors. [...][The] efforts of impassioned individuals, groups, and nations to right wrongs and destroy evil, however well intentioned, cause unanticipated pain and suffering, which their own self-righteousness prevents them from foreseeing and acknowledging. (xv)

This belief of Hawthorne's stemmed from his more fundamental views of the reality of human nature, discovered through his studies of history, philosophy, and theology and laid out in his tales from the 1830s. However, it is in his tales from the 1840s, such as "Earth's Holocaust," where Hawthorne shows that his skepticism towards grand scale change fueled by feelings of self-righteousness is not reserved only for religious individuals, but includes all people.

In "Earth's Holocaust," Hawthorne shows that despite their progressive and secular worldview, the utopian reformers are not very different from the Puritans that preceded them. Even in his tales from the 1830s, with their strongly Puritan focus, Hawthorne reveals the universality of his conception of human fallenness. In "Nathaniel Hawthorne and Conservatism's 'Night of Ambiguity,'" Jonathan Mendilow points out how, "in 'Young Goodman Brown (1835), all the members of the community, his wife, Faith, no less than the religious and secular

leaders, worship both God and the devil" (136). For Hawthorne, a person is liable to fall into evil regardless of their ideological standing because the problem is not one of belief but of humanity's fundamental nature. In "The Gentle Boy," Hawthorne's Puritans attempt to establish, in the words of Mendilow, "an exemplary, unblemished community where human sin [would] be eradicated" (136). However, their utopian projects were rife with unreflective action fueled by ignorance and fear. Believing themselves to be doing God's work and eliminating evil, the Puritans of the tale are blind to their own cruelty, with the result being the violent social and physical oppression of those whose views do not align with Puritan orthodoxy, ultimately leading to the death of the titular character, Ilbrahim. Similarly, the reformers of "Earth's Holocaust" are so convinced that they are pursuing the good that they refuse to entertain any arguments or appeals to the contrary. After destroying all the symbols of earthly distinction, the reformers are confronted by a former nobleman who attempts to argue that they have made a terrible mistake. Rather than meet his argument with one of their own, there arose from the crowd "an outcry, sportive, contemptuous, and indignant, that altogether drowned the appeal of the fallen nobleman" with one figure shouting "[l]et him thank his stars that we have not flung him into the same fire!" (384). In another section a Toper laments at the destruction of the world's supply of alcohol to which the mob merely laughs. Later, as the reformers attempt to destroy all the gallows of the world they are met by an executioner who begs them to stop and argues that they are "misled by a false philanthropy," "know not what they do," and that "the gallows is a heaven-oriented instrument" (Hawthorne 392). His words fall on deaf ears as the mob continues on as if nothing had been said with one of the leaders of the reformers himself exclaiming "[o]nward, onward! [...] Into the flames with the accursed instrument of man's bloody policy!" (393). Though it may be of a secular nature, this same zealousness for justice is

the mirror image of the "Puritan religiosity intent on ridding the devil from the land" which caused a "failure of vision" (Reynolds xvii). The failure of vision described by Reynolds is one that is incapable of viewing reality as consisting of human beings with a dual nature; as a result, this causes people, whether they be secular progressive reformers or Puritans, to continue further down the path of tyranny and destruction. For the Puritans, this path ultimately led to the murder of innocents whose only crime was not following perfectly in line with the beliefs and standards of the community. Meanwhile, for the reformers, the path leads to the complete destruction of civilization. Unsurprisingly, neither solution is adequate to fix what it hopes to mend because, in Hawthorne's view, the premises of external corruption and the perfectibility of human beings that they are based on are both false.

The final paragraphs of "Earth's Holocaust" are where Hawthorne reveals the folly of the reformers' attempts to remake humanity by destroying all the remnants of the former society. Having finally thrown virtually every object of importance into the bonfire, the reformers celebrate their accomplishment to the sadness of a group of outcasts, the hangman, the last thief, the last murderer, and the last toper. The hangman suggests that they all hang themselves given that there is seemingly no more room for them in the new utopia. Before anyone can respond the group is interrupted by the appearance of "a dark-complexioned personage" whose "eyes glowed with a redder light than that of the bonfire" (Hawthorne 403). This figure is the devil himself who according to Mendilow is "presented as the personification of the worst forces in human nature" in Hawthorne's short stories (133). This conclusion can be drawn not only from the demonic appearance of the character but also from the fact that he takes delight in revealing the folly of the reformers' project, saying "[t]here is one thing that these wiseacres have forgotten to throw into the fire, and without which all the rest of the conflagration is just nothing at all--yes;

though they burn the earth itself to a cinder" (403). What is this one thing? In the words of the dark-visaged stranger, "[w]hat, but the human heart itself! [...] [a]nd unless they hit upon some method of purifying that foul cavern, forth from it will reissue all the shapes of wrong and misery--the same shapes or worse ones–which they have taken such a vast deal of trouble to consume to ashes"(403). Here is made explicit what is implied in Hawthorne's early tales "Young Goodman Brown" and "The Minister's Black Veil." The same revelation is made by the devil to Young Goodman Brown when the latter is met by a multitude of faces at the satanic mass. The idea that everyone's heart is occupied by sin regardless of who they are, what beliefs they hold, or what their environment is like, that plunges Goodman Brown into despair. Whether it be called fallenness, evil, or sin, Hawthorne believed that this aspect of humanity was real, unchanging, universal and internal so any attempt to root it out through external means was bound to fail. This is why at the end of "Earth's Holocaust" the narrator comes to the conclusion that "[m]an's age-long endeavor for perfection had served only to render him the mockery of the Evil Principle, from the fatal circumstances of an error at the very root of the matter!" (403). Projects, though they be undertaken with zeal and sincerity, are doomed to fail if built upon false premises, just as a building is doomed to fall if it is built upon weak foundations. Hawthorne recognizes this and hopes to influence his readers who, as mentioned in the previous section, live in a time focused on rationalism and materialism. Readers are left with the following advice from the narrator, "if we go no deeper than the intellect, and strive, with merely that feeble instrument, to discern and rectify what is wrong, our whole accomplishment will be a dream [...] it matters little whether the bonfire [...] were what we choose to call a real event [...] or [...] a parable of my own brain!" (404). This sendoff serves as a reminder of the importance of being able to

acknowledge the existence of evil in the human heart, especially in a society of increasing materialism.

Another example of Hawthorne arguing for the importance of a metaphysical view of reality is the section where the narrator describes the burning of the Bible. Hawthorne was a Christian in a very loose sense as he did not attend church nor did he identify himself with any specific denomination. However, he certainly still believed in the existence of God, sin, and the afterlife. According to Evert Jan Van Leeuwen, "Hawthorne realized that a life lived only in mundane reality 'is but half a life' [and] [t]he problem with spiritual and material utopians [...] was that they mistook their subjective idealism for an objective reality" (119). Hawthorne makes this clear in "Earth's Holocaust" after the reformers have destroyed all of humanity's religious objects which are described as "falsehood[s] and worn-out truth[s]—things that the earth had never needed, or had ceased to need, or had grown childishly weary of" (Hawthorne 400-401). In their pride and blindness to the truth, the reformers believe themselves to have advanced to a state of being in which they no longer need religion, dismissing it as merely another relic of the past that they have outgrown. Hawthorne's appreciation for the Bible and what it symbolizes is displayed in the words of the narrator who, after witnessing the book tossed into the fire, says "a mighty wind came roaring across the plain, with a desolate howl, as if it were the angry lamentation of the Earth for the loss of Heaven's sunshine [...] '[t]his is terrible' said I, feeling that my cheek grew pale" (401). Following this reaction of horror, Hawthorne speaks again, this time through the narrator's companion, "[c]ome hither tomorrow morning [...] and you will find among the ashes everything really valuable that you have seen cast into the flames [...] [n]ot a Truth is destroyed--nor buried so deep among the ashes, but it will be raked up at last" (402).

Sure enough, immediately following this statement, the narrator notes how something miraculous is occurring before his eyes,

> I beheld, among the wallowing flames, a copy of the holy scriptures, the pages of which, instead of being blackened into tinder, only assumed a more dazzling whiteness, as the finger-marks of human imperfection were purified away. Certain marginal notes [...] yielded to the intensity of the fiery test, but without detriment to the smallest syllable that had flamed from the pen of inspiration. (402)

This entire scene testifies to Hawthorne's belief of the truth of things that transcend the material aspect of reality, as symbolized by the pure indestructibility of the scriptures. Just as how the scriptures cannot be destroyed, so too is the durability of evil within the human heart, something that cannot be destroyed but merely ignored at peril. However, the metaphysical rejection of the evil half of reality does not lead to advancement and prosperity. Rather, it leads to destruction, anarchy, and tyranny because, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, any project built upon false premises is doomed to failure.

By showing the disastrous results of focusing on the evil of society as a whole to the neglect of the evil within each individual member of that society, "Earth's Holocaust" serves to reinforce Hawthorne's idea of individual conversion first presented in the tales of "The Gentle Boy" and "The Minister's Black Veil." Reverend Hooper in "The Minister's Black Veil" represents what Hawthorne believes to be the proper reaction to the revelation of the reality and universality of evil within humankind. As opposed to Young Goodman Brown, whose reaction was a plunge into despair in which he viewed evil as being the complete reality of the world, Reverend Hooper understood that man is capable of both evil and good and so he dedicates his life to trying to guide others onto the path of good. Similarly, both Tobias and Dorothy from "The Gentle Boy "embody Hawthorne's individualistic approach to change by practicing what he calls rational piety. Dorothy and Tobias think for themselves rather than allowing the group to think for them. As a result, the couple is able to see how all human beings are in a state of

fallenness and that love and compassion should be extended to all regardless of ideological differences. While Hawthorne is not a systematic thinker, he does have a moral philosophy that involves thinking for oneself, working to help others to recognize their own inner evil, consistently grappling with one's inner evil through self-reflection, and improving society by first improving oneself as an individual. Hawthorne's individualistic philosophy is the complete opposite of the one presented in "Earth's Holocaust" where actions are incited and carried out by the mob, independent thinking is met negatively, and evil is seen as something external to humanity which can be purged by fire. These conclusions are supported by Larry Reynolds who notes how "[f]or Hawthorne, strong feelings not under the control of the intellect posed a grave threat not only to individuals but also to societies and nations" (15). "Earth's Holocaust" displays what Hawthorne believes the consequences could be if strong feelings even for the right goals are unchecked. The tale contains what Reynolds calls "a consistent Burkean conservatism" which is not surprising given that Reynolds also notes that in 1840, four years prior to the tale's publication, "Hawthorne described Burke as 'one of the wisest men and greatest orators that ever the world produced'" (15). Like Burke, Hawthorne believed that solutions to the problems faced by individuals and the society more broadly must be designed around certain basic truths about reality. Furthermore, progress is achieved not by not tearing down what past generations have erected, but by building upon solid foundations. However, people can and should reform those aspects of society that have proved to be deficient and exchange them for new constructions, but this can be done without destroying the entire artifice of society. Most importantly, the root problem of all the dystopian elements in society lies internal to the heart, and thus the true object of reform must be the evil nature of the heart.

Being a romantic author himself, Hawthorne was no stranger to idealism nor the pursuit of a better world. In fact, Van Leeuwen notes how despite his aversion to utopian projects, Hawthorne "never rejected the validity of utopian dreams" and "'the expression of the desire for a better way of being or of living, central to utopianism, is central to much of his work" (115). However, unlike many of his contemporaries, Hawthorne was able to realize that reality was constructed in such a way that made it incompatible with utopian projects. In the 1840s, Hawthorne dedicated his work to crafting tales that illustrated this idea of the inherent conflict between earthly utopia and the realities of human existence. Whereas the tales from the 1830s diagnosed the human condition in Puritan times, the tales from the 1840s, such as "Earth's Holocaust," showed how Hawthorne's diagnosis was not unique to religious individuals and groups but was instead universal and unchanging. The reformers in "Earth's Holocaust" are plagued by the same issues as the Puritans in "The Gentle Boy," "Young Goodman Brown," and "The Minister's Black Veil." They are so blinded by their sense of righteousness and zeal towards forming a better society that they continue to live and operate in a state of error which leads to disastrous consequences both for individuals and society as a whole. The story also serves as a warning in that it shows what happens when change is pursued in the way that focuses on the external features of humanity, its institutions and social conventions, rather than on the internal issues common to all people which are their vulnerability to evil and sin due to the dualistic nature of their being. Hawthorne's tales from 1830s, such as the "Gentle Boy" and "The Minister's Black Veil," advocated for the means by which Hawthorne believed people should conduct their attempts at change, on an individual level, by continually grappling with and reflecting on one's vulnerability to sin and using rational piety to care for others while trying to achieve one's goals. On the other hand, "Earth's Holocaust" is a lesson on what not to do and

ends with a clear reason as to why such grand systemic change should not be the means through which one's focus and desire for a better world should be channeled. For Hawthorne, if one wishes to create a better world, one must first focus on making a better self.

By allowing people to overcome the limits placed on them by nature, science has shown itself capable of producing miracles. In the mid 1800s, the miraculous power of science was on full display with advances in industrialization, for example, leading to a much more prosperous society than had been seen before. However, Nathaniel Hawthorne believed that, like with all other forms of progress, science had its limits and it was important to recognize those limits. To ignore the limits of science, or any means of progress more broadly, is to fool oneself into thinking that certain feats, such as bringing a perfect ideal into the Earthly realm, are capable even if they are not compatible with reality. Such pursuits characterize Hawthorne's tales from the 1840s in which secular progressive idealists aim to stamp out or overcome the flaws in humanity through their contemporary scientific and intellectual developments. In the tale of "Earth's Holocaust," for example, Hawthrone examines this issue on a macrocosmic scale through his depiction of a doomed worldwide societal revolution. However, in the tale of "The Birthmark" Hawthorne moves the action to a much more intimate down to Earth level with its depiction of one man's attempt to attain Earthly perfection. Aylmer, a brilliant scientist, aims to use his knowledge and skill to remove the birthmark from the cheek of his wife, Georgiana, after becoming fixated upon it and framing it as the symbol of her finitude. While Aylmer ultimately achieves his goal, the results of his pursuit are tragic and not at all what he intended. Through the tale of "The Birthmark," Nathaniel Hawthorne conveys the idea that science is insufficient to solve the problem of imperfection; as a result, the zealous pursuit to obtain perfection on Earth

through science is bound for failure, similarly to all other utopian attempts which neglect to consider the moral limitations of our human nature.

Similarly to the reformers of “Earth’s Holocaust,” Aylmer from “The Birthmark" begins an admirable quest which eventually becomes compromised. The reformers in “Earth’s Holocaust” aim to create a better more perfect world by using a massive bonfire in order to cleanse society of what they believe to be contributing to human suffering and corruption. In the minds of the reformers, humanity has reached a stage of intellectual and moral development where they no longer need the imperfect institutions of the past. Ridding the world of suffering and corruption in order to bring about a utopian society of reason and love is an admirable ideal and Hawthorne even voices his approval. However, by the tale’s end, the reformers are depicted not as saviors but destroyers as their actions have opened the world up to all the “shapes of wrong and misery [...] or worse ones--which they have taken such a vast deal of trouble to consume to ashes” (403). Whereas the reformers attempted to remove the imperfections of society at large, Aylmer hopes to remove the imperfections from a single individual person, his wife, Georgiana. Aylmer loves his wife, viewing her as nature’s fairest work. However, the birthmark on Georgiana’s face strikes Aylmer as “being the visible mark of earthly imperfection” and “the fatal flaw of humanity which Nature [...] stamps ineffably on all her products" and “the symbol of [Aylmer’s] wife’s liability to sin, sorrow, decay, and death” (39). In his article, “Speaking of the Unspeakable: Hawthorne’s ‘The Birthmark,’” Jules Zanger writes, “[m]ost criticism has accepted the rather forthright and explicit allegorical interpretation of Hawthorne’s ‘The Birthmark’ that regards the mark on Georgina’s Aylmer’s cheek as the external sign of her human, imperfect condition” (364). Given it aims at transcendence of the finite and imperfect condition of humanity, Aylmer’s quest to remove the mark can indeed be

seen as admirable. Unfortunately, the way in which Aylmer goes about attempting to bring about this elimination of imperfection is what compromises his quest and ultimately turns his tale into a warning against the impractical pursuit of ideals which are not compatible with reality.

The corruption of Aylmer's once admirable quest comes from his obsession over the one idea of his wife's birthmark and his by any means necessary approach to its removal. Hawthorne brings up the concept of monomaniacal obsession multiple times in his collection of *Mosses From an Old Manse,* such as in "The Old Manse" where he writes how so many people "adopt a pet idea [...] and fondle it in [their] embraces to the exclusion of all others" (29). The concept is brought up once again in the tale "The Hall of Fantasy" where Hawthorne writes how many reformers "had got possession of some crystal fragment of the truth, the brightness of which so dazzled them that they could see nothing else in the wide universe," such as "the abolitionist, brandishing his one idea like an iron flail" (180). Through these examples it is clear that Hawthorne was critical of the human tendency to fixate on a single goal or object to the exclusion of all else, even if the thing being focused on was something he considered to be worthy of pursuit or admirable in and of itself, such as abolition. The reason why Hawthorne held this skepticism is shown not only in the quote from "The Hall of Fantasy" mentioned above, in which the abolitionist depicted wields his admirable goal of freedom for the enslaved as a weapon, but through the tales of "Earth's Holocaust" and "The Birthmark" when seen in their entirety. Both "Earth's Holocaust" and "The Birthmark" serve as examples of the harm and tragedy that Hawthorne believes will occur if people, whether on a societal or individual level, are consumed by their zeal to achieve perfection in this world and allowed to operate with free reign. Aylmer's obsession with achieving perfection is made clear throughout "The Birthmark." Where at first Aylmer had barely noticed the mark, he eventually came to dwell on it more and

more, as Hawthorne writes, “[a]t all the seasons which should have been their happiest he invariably [...] reverted to this one disastrous topic” (39). Eventually, Hawthorne even goes so far as to explicitly acknowledge that Georgiana’s birthmark has become Aylmer’s monomaniacal obsession, writing “[u]ntil now he had not been aware of the tyrannizing influence acquired by one idea over his mind, and the lengths which he might find in his heart to go for the sake of giving himself peace” (40). Here it can be seen that Aylmer's quest which started with the admirable goal of making his wife perfect by removing the symbol of her imperfection has become corrupted by obsession to the point where its purpose is merely to give Aylmer a sense of peace rather than to achieve an objectively good and worthy goal. In his article, “Hawthorne as Champion of the Middle Way,” Chester E. Eisinger mentions how he believes Hawthorne conveyed through his tales that message that “[t]o avoid disaster, man must come to a realization that the god and the beast latent within him are analogous to the good and evil in the world,” and so “ [l]ife must be lived seriously and steadily on a plateau from which one looks down in horror at the depths below and up in wonder at the peaks; but to wander off the plateau, fascinated by either one is fatal” (29). Aylmer, and the reformers from “Earth’s Holocaust” serve as examples of people who in their fascination with the wonders above have made the fatal mistake of wandering off the plateau. So focused were they on what could, and in their opinions should be, that they paid no attention to the horrors of the depths which are also an inherent feature of humankind. Essentially, Aylmer's mistake is opposite that of the Puritans featured in Hawthrone’s early tales who focus solely on the horrors of the depths to disastrous effects. However, Hawthorne makes it clear that regardless of their vastly different worldviews and despite their intentions to the contrary, the reformers, Aylmer, and the Puritans all end up generating more harm than good.

The admirability of Aylmer's goal and the horror of the consequences which result from its pursuit reflects the same duality displayed in "Earth's Holocaust." "Earth's Holocaust" saw Hawthorne's narrator jumping between sympathy, skepticism, and rejection towards the actions of the reformers, symbolizing Hawthorne's own varying opinions on the actual progressives of his era. Hawthorne liked the ideas of freedom and equality that the reformers attempted to pursue but what he could not get behind was attempts to completely rid themselves of the institutions and advancements that had allowed them to reach such a point of progress to begin with. This is why the narrator rejoices with the crowd when they burn all the symbols of earthly distinction, the instruments of death and torture, and superfluous religious symbols, but voices his aversion to the burning of all currency, property and government documents, books, and the bible. It is only after they reach the point where nearly everything has been burned to ashes that the narrator realizes that the reformers have gone too far and views their quest as misguided and futile. Similarly, "The Birthmark" is filled with language which presents this same tension albeit on a more individual scale. Prior to beginning the procedures aimed at removing her birthmark, Georgiana looks through some of the books of her husband's study where she particularly admires one work written by his own hand. It is here the narrator states, "[t]he book [...] was both the history and emblem of [Aylmer's] ardent , ambitious, imaginative, yet practical and laborious life. He [...] redeemed himself from materialism by his strong and eager aspiration towards the infinite" (49). In response to discovering this life dedicated to the pursuit of the infinite, which would include his attempts to perfect her through the removal of her birthmark, "Georgiana [...] reverenced Aylmer and loved him more profoundly than ever," showing how at least the idea of this kind of life can be seen as admirable (49). However, Hawthorne also presents readers with language and descriptions which contrast the idealistic view of Aylmer's

pursuit with the much more grim reality such as when Georgiana enters Aylmer's laboratory for the first time, where "[t]he atmosphere felt oppressively close, and was tainted with gaseous odors which had been tormented forth by the process of science" (50). Here Georgiana's attention is drawn to her husband who "was pale as death, anxious and absorbed, and hung over the furnace as if it depended upon his utmost watchfulness whether the liquid which it was distilling should be the drought of immortal happiness or misery" (50). Aylmer's ideal quest is having a substantially negative impact on him in reality. Aylmer's pursuit has caused him to deteriorate both physically and mentally. Aylmer is unfortunately not the only one who suffers because of this quest. His concoction removes the birthmark from Georgiana's face and ends up killing her, fulfilling the prophetic dream Aylmer had earlier in the tale. As Georgiana dies from the drought, she uses her dying words not to malign Aylmer but to praise him saying, "[m]y poor Aylmer [...] you have aimed loftily; you have done nobly. Do not repent that, with so high and pure a feeling, you have rejected the best that earth could offer" (55). Here Georgiana still sees Aylmer's quest as admirable because she focuses on the idea itself and ignores the consequences that she has suffered. Although the idea of a utopia, whether it be the creation of a perfect society or a perfect person, may be admirable, the pursuit of that goal may lead to methods and consequences that evoke feelings of aversion and even horror.

Similarly as in "Earth's Holocaust," Hawthorne aimed to have "The Birthmark" serve as a reminder of how fallible people are incapable of bringing about infallible results, whether they be on a societal or individual level. As stated in the previous section, the last few paragraphs of "Earth's Holocaust" have Hawthorne revealing the insight he has gained through his reading of history to the narrator and readers through the character of the devil. It is the devil, who in Hawthorne's tales usually represents all the negative aspects of humanity, that informs the group

of outsiders who have been rejected by the progressive reformers that all of the efforts of the reformers are for naught. This is because the reformers have overlooked the fact that the source of human corruption is the heart itself and so, regardless of any external changes that are made, the heart will always attempt to push people down the path of evil and sin. Essentially, Hawthorne argues that because people are fallible, since they themselves are the sources of their own corruption and imperfection, they are incapable of making an infallible society. "The Birthmark" retains the message of futility conveyed by Hawthorne in "Earth's Holocaust" but uses a more localized scenario, that of a husband trying to perfect his wife, to show how it applies to all attempts at perfection regardless of their scope. As evidence for this claim it is worth noting that Hawthorne uses similar language in both tales to describe human beings. In "Earth's Holocaust" after the reformers have destroyed all the symbols of earthly distinction in their quest for equality, the narrator notes how, regardless of their socio-economic standing, all people are "creatures of the same clay and spiritual infirmiries" (383). In "The Birthmark" his narrator states that Nature, "in one way or another, stamps ineffably on all her productions [...] the fatal flaw of humanity" (38). Included as well is language related to the idea of humans being like clay, such as when Aylmer describes his wife as being "the highest and purest earthly mould," and then later references Pygmalion, "a [l]egendary Greek sculptor who carved an ivory statue of a maiden [and] fell in love with it" (156). In the words of Robert Milder, in his book *Hawthorne's Habitations,* "Aylmer must inevitably fail in [his attempt to perfect his wife] and other experiments, not merely because Georgiana is human clay but also because *he* is human clay" (84). Like the reformers from "Earth's Holocaust," Aylmer fails to recognize his own fallibility, through a combination of overconfidence and obsession, with disastrous results. The attempts of the progressive reformers and Aylmer failed due to their human nature being

incompatible with their lofty aims, which was only compounded by their blindness towards their own limitations.

In "The Birthmark," Hawthorne expands upon the critiques of technological and moral innovation and progress he had already addressed in "The Celestial Railroad" and "Earth's Holocaust," by turning his attention towards scientific achievement writ large and commenting on its inability to fix the condition of the human race. Just as the characters in "The Celestial Railroad" and "Earth's Holocaust" believed they had reached the point to where they could realize a state of perfection, symbolized by the celestial kingdom and earthly utopia, respectively, through the means of technological and moral development, Aylmer believes science has reached a point where it can allow him to achieve human perfection in the form of his wife. His belief is representative of the more general belief of the time which saw great potential in the realm of science, as Hawthorne's narrator states, "[i]n those days [...] the comparatively recent discovery of electricity and other kindred mysteries of Nature seemed to open paths into the region of miracle" (36). As a result, certain members of the scientific tribe believe that they could get their hands on "the secret of creative force and perhaps make new worlds for himself" (36). The narrator also says how "[w]e know not whether Aylmer possessed this degree of faith in man's ultimate control of Nature" (36). However, Aylmer's attempt to bring about the perfection of his wife, Georgiana, is a perfect example of how he does in fact possess this same degree of faith. Being described by the narrator as "a man of science" who "handled physical details as if there were nothing beyond them," it is Aylmer's materialistic worldview that results in him "elevating his wife into a scientific problem to be solved" (Zanger 366). However, it is exactly this kind of materialistic reframing of the issue that Hawthorne despises and actively speaks out against. This is another reason why Aylmer, who according to

Zanger is himself a realization of the "images of industrialism" presented in the form of his lab, failed so spectacularly. Not only is Aylmer himself, being an imperfect creation, incapable of successfully bringing forth perfection because of his nature, but the means by which he seeks to do so, science, is also incompatible with his goal because the problem was never one science could solve in the first place (367). In the words of Zanger, Aylmer's tale presents Hawthorne's readers with the "theme of futility of supernatural striving [...] made vivid by images taken from contemporary technology [which] in turn suggests Hawthorne's own skeptical perception of America's faith in technology and industrialization and especially in the machine as an instrument of transcendence" (367). In "The Birthmark," Hawthorne presents readers with yet another tale that aims to inform them how *not* to go about making successful change, this time from a secular or scientific perspective compared to the political and religious perspectives provided in his two previous tales discussed.

Mirroring "Earth's Holocaust," "The Birthmark's" moral is one which focuses on the importance of accepting reality, as seen by Hawthorne, thus implying that attempts at change must be based on and work around reality lest they doom themselves to failure. "Earth's Holocaust" ended with the moral that unless people find a way to change the human heart, the ultimate source of human evil and corruption, then all attempts to redeem society through external change is futile. While "The Birthmark" implies this moral as well, its final paragraph delivers a moral with a stronger emphasis on acceptance. Hawthorne writes:

> Thus ever does the gross fatality of earth exult in its invariable triumph over the immortal essence which, in this dim sphere of development, demands the completeness of a higher state. Yet, had Aylmer reached a profounder wisdom, he need not thus have flung away the happiness which would have woven his mortal life of the selfsame texture with the celestial. The momentary circumstance was too strong for him; he failed to look beyond the shadowy scope of time, and, living once for all eternity, to find the perfect future in the present. (56)

Here we see Hawthorne's belief that the earthly part of humanity, that which is associated with evil, sin, fallenness, and finitude, will always win over the divine or transcendent. In other words, achieving a full transcendence on Earth in which a person consists solely of their divine nature is impossible. However, this fact need not be a cause for despair as Hawthorne notes how those with profound wisdom embrace rather than toss away the happiness people can achieve in this limited realm. In Aylmer's case, he had a beautiful wife who loved him and who, even with her birthmark, served as a symbol of the transcendent inhabiting an earthly form alongside him. Aylmer's attempt to achieve total perfection, total transcendence causes him to push away the happiness he already had, because his pursuit of an impossible goal was incompatible with reality. In her article, "Science and Art in Hawthrone's 'The Birthmark.'" Mary E. Rucker supports this view by explaining how the tale expresses a central tenet of Hawthorne's ethics, which is that, "although humanity is bound to accept the essential conditions of existence, it is also bound to aspire to the conditions of eternity" (459). Rucker continues further by writing "[y]et the two realms are objectively immiscible. Hence Aylmer's loss and hence too the narrator's advice to radical idealists: be content with mere actuality according to the dictates of the ideal" (495). Aylmer's failure ultimately comes from both his denial of the constraints of reality and the inability of science to facilitate the transcendence desired by human beings, similar to how "The Celestial Railroad" and "Earth's Holocaust" showed the failure of industrialization and intellectual progress in achieving the same goal. Hawthorne presents readers of "The Birthmark" with yet another dead end in terms of the necessary limits within which lasting positive change can be achieved in accordance with the innate human desire to achieve a more perfect state of existence.

Nathaniel Hawthorne himself was an admirer and pursuer of the ideal and transcendent. However, unlike many of his peers, Hawthorne's utopian instincts, which pulled him in the direction of the ideal, were restrained by the insights involving human nature that he had gained through his study of history, religion, and philosophy. As a result, Hawthorne was a writer caught between the shining lure of the ideal and the dark horrors of humanity, which warned against any pursuit of the ideal that was not tailored to fit with reality. Though Aylmer's attempts to perfect his wife through the removal of her birthmark are reprehensible and the ultimate consequence is horrific, Hawthorne consistently includes language which paints the goal as in and of itself admirable. The ambivalence that results from the admirability of the goal and the reprehensible consequences reflect the tension within Hawthorne himself, a tension similarly displayed in "Earth's Holocaust" between the ideal and the actual world. Hawthorne's ultimate message is that fallible people are incapable of achieving infallible results. Because all human beings possess both good and evil in their hearts, they will always be vulnerable to being influenced by evil in their pursuit of the good. Hawthorne believed that neither intellectual progress nor scientific advancement were capable of allowing human beings to get around this issue to achieve the transcendence they craved.

IV: CONCLUSION

Nathaniel Hawthorne was a writer whose desire for the ideal and progressive inclinations were tempered by a metaphysical philosophy formed by his education and experience. Talented and passionate, Hawthorne dedicated his life to writing, sharing his ideas on various subjects ranging from religion to contemporary political issues through a wide variety of short stories and novels. By analyzing even just a handful of his works from the 1830s and 1840s, it is possible to map out Hawthorne's beliefs and show how he creates and advocates for a broad framework of thought and action predicated on certain ideas he took to be brute facts about reality. This work uses the tales of 1830s to establish what Hawthorne considered to be brute facts about reality, that is life is more than merely physical, with there being a metaphysical aspect of existence, and within the metaphysical aspect of existence exists evil, the origin of which comes from the human heart and is an inherent part of being human. The tales of "The Gentle Boy," "Young Goodman Brown," and "The Minister's Black Veil" all testify to the existence of evil. In "The Gentle Boy" Hawthorne shows the results of unchecked human inclination towards evil while also arguing that the cure to such evil can be found in the practice of what he calls rational piety. Achieved by combining one's religious beliefs with constant self-reflective individual thinking, rational piety allows a person to embrace the best of what Christianity has to offer and avoid falling into dogmatism and fanaticism that perverts the religion and allows it be used as a pretense for oppression and tyranny. In "Young Goodman Brown" Hawthorne makes it a point to show how the existence of evil is a truly universal problem in that it exists in every person regardless of their ideological convictions or of how pious one believes them to be. Finally, in "The Minister's Black Veil" Hawthorne advocates for a reaction to the existence of evil that is one of hope. Though shaken by his revelation of humanity's inherent sinfulness, Mr. Hooper

dedicates his life to waking others up to the same reality and informing them that they must consistently combat the evil within them rather than hide it away and ignore it. This is what Hawthorne wants his own readers to do because recognition of the existence of evil within the human heart is the crucial first step to living out a life of rational piety. For Hawthorne, rational piety provides people with a general framework of life that allows them to be individuals but at the same time keeps them wary of the danger of their own inherent sinfulness thus allowing for a more tolerant, compassionate, and pious society.

In the tales of the 1840s Hawthorne further develops his thought by applying the philosophy first introduced in his 1830s tales to more contemporary settings. By doing so, Hawthorne shows how his warnings against the existence of evil are truly universal and not exclusive to people who hold a religious worldview. Moreover, Hawthorne focuses on pointing out the dangers that can and will result from attempts to change the human condition or improve society that either do not take into account the existence of evil or hold a mistaken view of evil. In "The Celestial Railroad" Hawthrone critiques Unitarianism, Transcendentalism, and Materialism for neglecting the existence of evil in favor of a misguided optimism and faith in broadly appealing liberal sentiments paired with technological progress. Rather than bringing people closer to the Celestial City, Hawthorne believes these philosophies lead people astray by presenting highly attractive concepts while hiding a lack of understanding of the human condition underneath. Like Mr. Hooper in "The Minister's Black Veil," Hawthorne is warning his readers not to adopt or persist in belief systems which, whether intentionally or not, hide the existence of evil from one's consciousness because, as mentioned earlier, the first step towards true and lasting change is the recognition of one's own inner evil. In "Earth's Holocaust" the issue is not the neglect of evil but a mistaken view of its source and nature. For the reformers in

the story, evil is a product of people's social environment rather than a\n intrinsic aspect of their being. As a result, they believe the solution to the problem of evil to be found in systemic change that, in their theory, will fundamentally reshape the character of humanity. However, because the reformers' beliefs about evil are not aligned with reality their attempts to create lasting positive change are doomed to failure. For Hawthorne, simply doing away with all the past and current institutions of society is no replacement for the constant self-reflection of an individual's own sinfulness that he believes to be the only way to truly combat the evil present in the human heart. In other words, it is through the practice of rational piety rather than grand radical secular progressive reform that the human character can be effectively changed. Finally, "The Birthmark" sees the same secular striving for improvement pursued on a global stage brought down to the micro level. In this case, Aylmer, like the progressive reformers in "Earth's Holocaust," does not neglect the existence of evil, in fact, he sees it as a reality clear as day, especially whenever he views the birthmark on his wife's cheek. However, where Aylmer goes wrong is in his belief that by removing his wife's birthmark he can attain a transcendent form of humanity on Earth, one in which there is no evil present in the human being. The end result of such a mistaken belief is as deadly as that of the reformers is destructive and Aylmer becomes responsible for killing his wife. Once again Hawthorne critiques scientific and intellectual progress and, more specifically, the belief that they can be used to solve the problem of evil with some sort of new innovation. Essentially, Hawthorne used his tales from the 1840s to shoot down possible alternatives to his idea of rational piety as a means by which human beings could deal with the problem of evil. In a modern world fixated on systemic issues and in which secular materialism is far more widespread compared to the nineteenth century, Hawthorne's tales serve as a stark reminder that the problem truly lies within human nature itself. Moreover, rather than

ignore or try to stamp out this evil with different forms of political organization, technological innovations, or shallow spiritual philosophies, people must acknowledge the existence and permanence of such evil and then dedicate the rest of their lives to constant self-reflection while following the moral obligations handed down by the Christian tradition of treating others with tolerance, compassion, and basic human decency. For Hawthorne, to fail to acknowledge the existence of evil outright or ignore the road of reform characterized by the practice of rational piety in favor of either secular or more radical alternatives is to travel down a path that ultimately leads to oppression, tyranny, destruction and even death.

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