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Completing The Circle: A Study of the Archetypal Male and Female in Nathaniel  
Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter

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A thesis  
presented to  
the faculty of the Department of English  
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree  
Master of Arts in English

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by  
Kathy H. Hallenbeck  
May 2002

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## ABSTRACT

Completing the Circle: A Study of the Archetypal Male and Female in Nathaniel Hawthorne's  
The Scarlet Letter

by

Kathy H. Hallenbeck

This thesis examines the works of Nathaniel Hawthorne and the archetypal images therein. The Scarlet Letter is discussed extensively with references made to The Blithedale Romance. Characters in the following short stories are referred to: "Rappaccini's Daughter," "Young Goodman Brown" and "The Birthmark." An overall analysis of feminine repression in both male and female characters is explored. Hester Prynne, Arthur Dimmesdale, and Pearl are the subjects of lengthy discussion. Journeys, both inward and outward are explored in the characters. The context is nineteenth-century culture of which Hawthorne is a product. The characters in The Scarlet Letter search for a complete existence, an integration of the unconscious and the conscious. Through a mythological study of Hawthorne's work, we draw closer to understanding this complex example of nineteenth-century literature.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

“The human Heart to be allegorized as a cavern; at the entrance there is sunshine, and flowers growing about it. You step within, but a short distance, and begin to find yourself surrounded with a terrible gloom, and monsters of divers kinds; it seems like Hell itself. You are bewildered, and wander long without hope. At last a light strikes upon you. You press towards it yon, and find yourself in a region that seems, in some sort, to reproduce the flowers and sunny beauty of the entrance, but all perfect. These are the depths of the heart, or of human nature, bright and peaceful; the gloom and terror may lie deep; but deeper still is this eternal beauty.”

Nathaniel Hawthorne     The American Notebooks (1835-1853)

This quote from one of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s journals, later edited and compiled into The American Notebooks, shows the author’s interest in the depths of human nature. The passage illustrates Hawthorne’s idea of layers and dark shadows that one might wander through in search of the eternal beauty within. Like the quote, Hawthorne’s writings are caverns that, at the beginning, may bewilder and overwhelm the reader but with study, embody an eternal truth.

Encompassed within the idea of a search and the human heart, Hawthorne writes much about the individual, both men and women, as well as the relationship between them. These individuals are on an inner quest, looking for answers to questions that they are hesitant to ask. The female characters that beckon from within the pages of Hawthorne’s writings are strong, powerful women not quite at home in the society to which they belong. The male characters, though sometimes more at home in their society, are not comfortable with themselves as individuals. The search for an identity within the pages of Hawthorne’s works mirrors the search

for an American identity that was prevalent in the nineteenth-century world in which Nathaniel Hawthorne lived.

Patriarchal culture and institutions are part of the fabric of life in nineteenth-century America. In Disorderly Conduct, feminist historian Carroll Smith-Rosenberg writes, “Nineteenth-century American society provided but one socially respectable, nondeviant role for women—that of loving wife and mother” (213). Attitudes toward women were changing from the previous century. Medical writers of the early 1800s acknowledge women’s sexual vibrancy but “By the 1860s and 1870s, however, their professional counterparts counseled husbands that frigidity was rooted in women’s very nature. Women’s only sexual desire, these doctors argued, was reproductive” (213). Women are now pushed into the role of motherhood exclusively of other feminine desires. The male desire to dictate and restrict the acceptable roles for women is prominent. Women who did not reproduce “endangered society—and herself” (23). This is the view of the male patriarchal culture toward women and it is significantly different than that held in the previous century. Ideas toward sexuality in general are undergoing tremendous change during this time.

Hawthorne plays with the idea of the feminine throughout his works. As a necessary entity of a human being, the feminine side of both males and females is an inevitable part of the human equation. Women’s roles in the nineteenth century were defined by family more than they had been in the past. There was movement toward a more equal and rational view of women and an acceptance of the feminine. Seneca Falls, a gathering of women that took place in 1848, marked the beginning of an idea that would move women into place beside, rather than behind, their male counterparts. But this would not be accomplished overnight. Women would not be allowed to vote until 72 years later.

This repression of the female gender is an outgrowth of a patriarchal movement that devalues the feminine side of all human beings, both men and women. As the patriarchal appreciation for logic and reason grows in society it is accompanied by a decline in appreciation of outward emotion and intuition. The need to ignore feelings becomes an over-riding concern. Institutional morals and societal roles are constructed to protect a rising middle class and a growing economy. The emphasis is on movement and economic growth as America carries the torch from the eastern shores in the 1600s to the western wilderness in the 1800s. There is little time or place for an appreciation of beauty and art.

Much goes into this molding of an individual that can withstand the change and movement of the time. In Hawthorne's Tragic Vision, Roy Male discusses the idea of transformation of the individual as one searches for an identity. A movement away from the past is a necessary step as we embark on a journey of personal development. Male writes, "Transformation occurs only when action and passion, head and heart are fused in the fiery crucible. [...] The heart is a foul cavern; but for the man it is the source of life, the great converter" (16). This reconciliation of the head and heart, the masculine and feminine, is a recurring theme throughout Hawthorne's writings. Hawthorne is intent on showing the need for an individual to achieve wholeness and connect with himself and others in a way that will accord itself with his society.

Male is quick to point out the "[...] romantic strain that runs through Hawthorne's fiction" (33). Hawthorne's way of dealing with the past is to bring it forward into his fiction but without the idealization that so often accompanies our backward glances. In The Scarlet Letter, Hawthorne exaggerates the Puritan qualities of sternness and rigidity, thus enhancing his ideas of



the Puritan influence on the lives of individuals living in that society. The characters in these settings experience difficulty in living as individuals searching for their own unity of wholeness.

Many of Hawthorne's works engage in a repression of the instincts and characteristics of the feminine in the society as a whole as well as in the lives of individuals. By closely examining these works, one can see Hawthorne's attempt to understand the paradoxes that occur in nature, both physical nature and man's inner consciousness. An archetypal view of these forces of opposites remind us of their role in society and in the individual. These paradoxes affect man's understanding of himself as well as his relationships with others in his culture. The ultimate search for truth, the journey within, and the final self-actualization that comes from completing the circle of wholeness is the subject of interest to this psychological novelist.

Acceptance of both sides of man's nature, as well as movement beyond the categories of the patriarchal culture that controls its members, will result in a complete human being. A study of Hawthorne's works reveals the author's knowledge of the difficulty of the search for identity. Hawthorne is aware of the impossibility of the denial of any part of man's nature. We can see the need for an interior journey to illuminate the interiors of darkness that reside within man. This darkness is real, forceful and connected with both joy and terror. To go beyond what is known, facing the terror, is the true test of strength and courage. To make new boundaries and categories while transcending those that already exist takes a holistic vision of life and an understanding of the interconnectedness of nature with all that is physical and spiritual.

Hawthorne acknowledges the need for feeling and emotion, linking life with death. The voice of Hawthorne's narrator is often detached, assuming the role of an outside observer of human nature. Yet there is also a definite interest in the development of the actions and the inner nature of the human soul. Hawthorne goes beyond the accepted explanations of his day. The

discrepancy between appearance and reality is evident as Hawthorne removes masks and veils, moves beyond walls, crosses thresholds, and finally goes beneath the outer coverings of individuals and institutions to the truth that resides underneath. This idea of truth is an overriding theme in Hawthorne's works. What we often think of as truth is a poor imitation at best and, more often than not, only a weak substitute for the real thing. To seek the truth, not from without but deep within individual unconsciousness, is a painful and terrifying task as Hawthorne shows us by the suffering his characters undergo. The truth lies in the world of causes beneath the effects that are the outwardly visible. Hawthorne engages his characters in the task of unification, looking for the wholeness, the completed circle, of man's existence.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE NATURE OF FEMININE REPRESSION

“The discovery of twoness means the splitting of the original undifferentiated One not only into man and world, but also into female and male.”

Edward C. Whitmont

The nineteenth century is a time of rapid change and development. Robert Spiller, in his monumental work The Literary History of the U.S. says of the nineteenth century:

Never has nature been so rapidly and extensively altered by the efforts of man in so brief a time. Never has a conquest resulted in a more vigorous development of initiative, individualism, self-reliance, and demands for freedom. Never have the defeats which preceded and accompanied this conquest of nature led to more surprising frustration, decadence, sterility, and dull standardization. (xix)

This aptly characterizes the changing landscape of the New World, both spiritually and physically. According to F. O. Matthiessen: “[...] the terminus to the agricultural era in our history falls somewhere between 1850 and 1865, since the railroad, the iron ship, the factory, and the national labor union all began to be dominant forces within those years, and forecast a new epoch” (ix).

With the extremes of change for the society at large, women’s roles are defined differently. The culture is becoming more materialistic. The subsequent rise of the middle class is accompanied by a fear of losing their economic security. Protecting the identity of the middle class causes a strengthening of societal structures, values are influenced by money, and there is a strict adherence along class lines to right and wrong, proper and improper. This patriarchal

culture emphasizes ideas and movement with political and business strength deemed praiseworthy. Scientific realities are respected rather than emotion and intuition.

Women, often seen as emotional and intuitive, are no longer part of the economic well-being of the family. They are separated from the world of men and viewed as mothers, not as sexual companions to men. Males endow females with virtues that relate to spiritual matters such as patience, kindness, loyalty, and piety. Women are considered the moral and spiritual guides of the home. Medical writers perpetuate the idea of women as mothers and not as possessing sexual desires or fleshly appetites. Sexual feelings are repressed and women disdained if they admit to experiencing these feelings. Females are revered only as child-bearers, causing women to lose their independence along with their ability to be economically self-sufficient as they are confined to home and hearth.

This loss of economic viability contributes to changing roles and continual submergence of feminine ideals and characteristics. The patriarchal culture represses those characteristics associated with the feminine such as emotion, intuition, and sexuality in favor of the more masculine characteristics such as logic, order, and control. In essence, the head is valued over the heart. Respect for intuition is a thing of the past.

In looking at the idea of the feminine in the works of Nathaniel Hawthorne, we must first define the term “feminine” for our purposes. When speaking of the feminine, we refer to the archetypally feminine, not to gender or sexual ideas of the feminine. Margaret Fuller, in her book Woman in the Nineteenth Century, said “Male and female represent the two sides of the great radical dualism. But, in fact, they are perpetually passing into one another. Fluid hardens to solid, solid rushes to fluid. There is no wholly masculine man, no purely feminine woman” (69). Fuller’s concept of the individual is one in which the two parts, masculine and feminine,

are no longer separate but integral parts of the whole. Margaret Fuller is considered “America’s first major female intellectual” (Reynolds ix). Her friends include Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, as well as Nathaniel Hawthorne. Published in 1845, Woman in the Nineteenth Century is a leading text of its time promoting the idea of women’s rights in the nineteenth century. Hawthorne is in the midst of the social and intellectual thought of his day and these cultural ideas are part of the realm in which he moves.

These ideas and the controversy that ensues are visible in Hawthorne’s works. Characters struggle between societal modes and expectations along with their own personal attempts to reconcile their inner life with the concerns of the outer world. We can look at the repression of the feminine in male characters or female characters in Hawthorne’s The Scarlet Letter, as well as in some of his short stories. Nature, beauty, art, and instinct are relegated by a patriarchal culture to the frivolous, unnecessary aspect of life.

As Fuller attempts to explain in her book, men and women share characteristics of the opposite sex. Men have feminine characteristics as well as male characteristics. Known as the anima, this femininity is not welcome in a male-dominated society. Females have male characteristics, referred to as the animus, as well as feminine characteristics. Edward Whitmont says in his book Return of the Goddess, “[...] we must deal with a repression of femininity in women and men” (127). Thus, the virtues of the archetypally feminine are repressed. This phenomenon affects the cultures in which it occurs. It is important to understand that, according to Whitmont:

Male and femaleness are archetypal forces. They constitute different ways of relating to life, to the world, and to the opposite sex. The repression of

femininity, therefore, affects mankind's relation to the cosmos no less than the relation of individual men and women to each other. (Return 123)

Hawthorne is aware of these forces at work in human nature. In his writing, he explores the individual's relations to natural instincts and rhythms while one continues to live and work in a particular society. This society enforces rules that may not be conducive to the growth of the individual. Hawthorne takes off the mask, so to speak, and watches the reaction of the individual who removes it as well as the reactions of those who witness the unveiling. It is this interplay that fascinates Hawthorne.

The idea of personal relationships between men and women also seems to intrigue this author. As Hawthorne views society, he is aware of the tendency to idolize women in one sense while at the same time devaluing the idea of the feminine. We see an example of this in "Rappaccini's Daughter." Beatrice Rappaccini is an idealized woman, radiant and beautiful. The story takes place in her father's beautiful garden. Beatrice's beauty and delicate nature attract the interest and arouse the emotions of Giovanni, a university student new to the town of Padua. In the midst of unfamiliar surroundings, Giovanni discovers Beatrice and her garden located below his living quarters. Hawthorne places Giovanni in unfamiliar surroundings to emphasize the unease Giovanni feels concerning his world. But, although Beatrice is beautiful, she has an aura of death surrounding her. Her breath kills insects that fly too closely to her. Intensely attracted by Beatrice's physical beauty, Giovanni is also repelled by her apparent ability to kill. Rather than the breath of life, Beatrice expels the breath of death.

Hawthorne does not condemn Beatrice for her ability to cause death. The author presents it as a part of Beatrice's character. Beatrice accepts the death of those things around her in a sad but matter-of-fact manner. Hawthorne's interest focuses on Giovanni's reaction to this

phenomenon in Beatrice and his inability to reconcile the two sides of her nature. Giovanni separates the unity of life and death as it exists in Beatrice, wanting desperately to accept the side of life while rejecting the side of death. The young man is torn between the emotions of the heart and the logic of the head. Unable to follow the longings of his heart, Giovanni attempts to rationalize the experience with his head. Beatrice begs him to listen to her words: "Forget whatever you may have fancied in regard to me. If true to the outward senses, still it may be false in its essence. But the words of Beatrice Rappaccini's lips are true from the depths of the heart outward. Those you may believe!" (405). But Giovanni cannot accept this and, finally, he gives an antidote to Beatrice as well as to himself in an attempt to cure Beatrice of the "evil" which possesses her. Giovanni attempts to take control.

Like the patriarchal culture of the nineteenth century, Giovanni is quite comfortable with Beatrice as beautiful, angelic, and spiritual. But the reality of the other side of her nature, the acceptance of both sides of woman, is not possible for him. The patriarchal culture has given Giovanni the need to control his environment, trying to perfect or change those things he does not understand. He cannot accept, on faith, anything that is out of the realm of the head. How typical of nineteenth century culture and how very interesting of Hawthorne to write a story where woman is victim to man's lack of understanding and his need to control. Hawthorne shows his readers the fear that constricts men in a world where they are required to face death.

As the archetypal feminine, Beatrice represents the complete circle of life and death. Giovanni recognizes in her a gentle, virginal beauty as well as a sexual allure, the combination of the two difficult for him to acknowledge. Giovanni's journey is not only physical, but psychological and moral as well. Feminine repression appears in "Rappaccini's Daughter" with Giovanni's refusal to accept the emotions of feeling rather than the logic of the head.

This refusal mirrors Giovanni's inability to accept both sides of himself. He, too, embodies life and death. Giovanni enters the story lonely and isolated, living in "a high and gloomy chamber of an old edifice" that "exhibited over its entrance the armorial bearings of a family long since extinct" (388). The garden below his window may represent the Garden of Eden, suggesting a correlation of this story to the story of Adam and Eve. With the rise of the patriarchal culture, the story of Woman's link to Man's fall from grace becomes an accepted phenomenon. An adherence to the one, all-knowing male god rises with the perpetuation of this thought along with the subsequent repression of the feminine. The paradoxes of life, good and evil, become separate entities rather than being part of a united whole. The idea that woman, who embodies the characteristics of the feminine side of nature, must be repressed or man will once again lose himself, begins the web of deception. Giovanni subscribes to the cultural idea that man must repress the dark side of his nature, those natural instincts, emotions, and feelings that are alive within him when he is near Beatrice. This is the energy of life. This is what Giovanni is searching for, yet unable to accept. Joseph Campbell says that woman, according to mythology, "represents the totality of what can be known. The hero is the one who comes to know [...]. The hero who can take her as she is, without undue commotion but with the kindness and assurance she requires, is potentially the king, the incarnate god, of her created world" (116). Giovanni has a chance to redeem himself as the New Adam, hero of the new Garden of Eden. To accept what his heart tells him, he must ignore all outward semblance of death and evil surrounding the flowers and Beatrice. But surrender is difficult. The male ideal of control makes this a task of monumental proportions. He denies those urges within the depths of his soul, the regions of the unconscious, and struggles with his intellect and his own ego against the pull of the anima, his feminine nature. Seeing the reflection of himself, Giovanni cannot accept



the whole person. Life and death are two parts of the whole. As the young man gazes into the mirror, the narrator tells us, “He did gaze, however, and said to himself, that his features had never before possessed so rich a grace, nor his eyes such vivacity, nor his cheeks so warm a hue of superabundant life” (414). Giovanni has obviously taken on Beatrice’s outward radiance but does not recognize the vision in the mirror. He denies that her poison has infiltrated his body. Then, he realizes the flowers he is holding have begun to droop and “Giovanni grew white as marble, and stood motionless before the mirror, staring at his own reflection there, as at the likeness of something frightful” (414). As Giovanni recognizes what has become part of him, “—he shuddered—shuddered at himself!” (414). Hawthorne shows us man’s struggle to see within and acknowledge what he finds. Both sides of man’s nature are necessary. This acceptance lessens the divisions of the self. If Giovanni can accept what is there, both sides of nature, life as well as death, then it becomes possible for man to become a unitary, undivided self. But this is not what Hawthorne shows us. Instead, we are given a vision of man’s failure to accept both sides of the feminine. With the death of Beatrice, Giovanni loses the opportunity to become whole.

“Rappaccini’s Daughter” is fascinating because it raises many questions concerning the “angelic” qualities ascribed to desirable women. Giovanni accepts these qualities in Beatrice. After their first meeting, Giovanni goes home and remembers Beatrice: “She was human: her nature was endowed with all gentle and feminine qualities; she was worthiest to be worshipped; she was capable, surely, on her part, of the height and heroism of love” (407). But these are not the qualities that attract Giovanni down from his apartment above the garden. It is the emotion that he feels within perpetuated by the power of the feminine that propels Giovanni down his stairs and through the hedge surrounding the garden. This power generated by Beatrice is

alluring but at the same time frightening. While the feminine serves to attract, Giovanni innately feels that the feminine aspect must be repressed. Hawthorne distinguishes between the two and writes the story of a man's failure to meet the challenge of acceptance.

Nineteenth-century patriarchal culture gives women a role and encourages repression of everything outside that realm. Therefore, women are left to embrace the spiritual and home-life relegated to them while the idea of intuition, sexuality, sensitivity and emotion is devalued in men as well as in women. Beauty and artistry are given a value in economic terms alone. Men often view women as objects – quiet, subservient, and dutiful – and see them in economic terms. In Hawthorne's story "The Birth-mark," we observe a beautiful woman and a scientist. This time the scientist is her husband rather than her father. Aylmer seeks physical perfection in his wife Georgiana, whose only flaw is a birth-mark on her cheek. Rather than accepting his wife as she is, Aylmer attempts to make Georgiana perfect. He decides this flaw must be removed and becomes convinced that he can remove it, thereby creating perfection. Aylmer wants to improve on nature. His power will reign above that of nature, a feminine entity perpetuated in the body and spirit of Georgiana.

Of course, this process kills Georgiana, who wants to be accepted as she is. She is happy with herself, accepting the flaw without undue consideration: "To tell you the truth, it has been so often called a charm, that I was simple enough to imagine it might be so" (260). However, Georgiana soon sees herself as her husband sees her, flawed and imperfect, and desires either perfection, which would insure Aylmer's acceptance, or death. The birth-mark is part of Georgiana's body, yet Aylmer treats her as though she were an object, dehumanizing Georgiana with his concern for his own desires and need for control. Hawthorne illustrates man's inability to accept a flaw in those around him. The natural flaw must be eradicated, nature's work

improved upon. Aylmer represses emotion for logic and the patriarchal culture is responsible for the death of woman because of man's insistence on control. Georgiana's changing view of herself characterizes many women's vision of themselves. Desperate to find a place in this patriarchal culture, women join in the devaluing of certain feminine or natural characteristics while at the same time claiming power where they are allowed, in the home or in the spiritual arena.

Though both men and women sometimes repress certain individual characteristics, this repression causes problems in the societies in which it appears. Undaunted by a task of enormous magnitude, Hawthorne struggles with nineteenth-century ideals of women as well as all things feminine, relationships between men and women, and man's dilemma with guilt and the culture's definition of sin. His writing reflects the times in which he lives by bringing the chaotic and rocky foundation of the New World to the level of the always rocky foundation of the individual as he or she seeks an identity. Society's views and values are changing and threaten to surge out of control, mirroring the feeling of the person caught in this web of turmoil who also, at times, feels out of control. The paradox that exists within these ideas holds a fascination for Hawthorne and he does not back away from presenting them as he sees them in the world at large. The author's air of detachment lends a puzzling ambiguity to his texts, making for rich and fertile ground for critics to work as they try to piece together the author's meaning.

In "The Custom-House," Hawthorne's introduction to The Scarlet Letter, we read these words:

Some authors, indeed, do far more than this, and indulge themselves in such confidential depths of revelation as could fittingly be

addressed, only and exclusively, to the one heart and mind of perfect sympathy; as if the printed book, thrown at large on the wide world, were certain to find out the divided segment of the writer's own nature and complete his circle of existence by bringing him into communion with it. (3-4)

Hawthorne writes about man's struggle to unite the two halves of himself. The idea of two sides means separation of male and female characteristics. These characteristics are fragmented into opposites, allowing one to oppose one side while valuing the other. This preference for one over the other becomes mutually exclusive rather than mutually inclusive and one side is avoided and ignored. We name them "good" or "bad" and pass moral judgments. This affects feelings and emotions and allows the world to take on more and more of a male, or patriarchal, consciousness. Now, rather than one combined reality, we make a choice between two sides, never accepting the reality that the two are part of one united whole.

We see the separation of opposites and fragmentation of the whole in The Scarlet Letter amplified to proportions it is hard to miss. Woman, as she exists in the archetypally feminine, is exiled. Now, "Women must be good, nice, nurturing, and receptive in the orderly, wishfully-thinking, androlatric world" (Whitmont, Return 61). When women break this mold, as in the case of Hester Prynne, the transgressor "[...] is excluded from the community in proportion to the severity of the nonconformism. A *cordon sanitaire* is erected against him in order to protect the group from infection, from the evil or danger he has stirred up" (Whitmont, Return 63). Whitmont continues by explaining that evil is merely a threat as perceived by the group. This threat involves change or disturbance of the normal order of the community. On a mythic level, this early "literal physical expulsion and banishment becomes at the later stages of moralistic

and ethical justification, social ostracism and shaming” (Whitmont, Return 63). Hester Prynne is excluded from Hawthorne’s Puritan community because her transgressions are not hidden and therefore force a confrontation within that community.

However, Arthur Dimmesdale’s transgressions are hidden, unknown to the society he inhabits. This split between the masculine and feminine, and the subsequent need to repress the feminine side of nature, does not affect only the female members of the world; this split touches each member of the community and the health and well-being, not to mention success, of the society. Dimmesdale’s anima, that side of himself that is associated with the dark and feeling side of life, comes forward with Hester Prynne. Hester’s feminine power, the energy from the instinctual side of nature, draws Dimmesdale like a magnet. When this power is not dealt with in an open, mindful way it will appear in a disruptive, chaotic, and potentially destructive way.

One cannot relegate these needs and desires to the realm of the unconscious. In his book Memories, Dreams, Reflections, Jung says: “For everything in the unconscious seeks outward manifestation, and the personality too desires to evolve out of its unconscious conditions and to experience itself as a whole” (3). Whitmont follows this thought with the idea of confrontation and our own borders: “When we confront the myth—the mythical (archetypal) core of our complexes—we confront the ultimate border line of our place in transcendental meaningfulness” (Return 84).

Dimmesdale’s feelings are manifested outwardly toward Hester but are then submerged. Consequently, as The Scarlet Letter continues, Dimmesdale’s life slowly disintegrates. The Puritan community, and other societies as well, often confuse discipline with repression. What is the difference? If we do not understand the nature of discipline, how can we understand the repression of the one from the impeding nature of the other? One must acknowledge the

presence of desire and understand it as a normal human function and as part of one's whole person, while repression involves an inability to acknowledge the need for discipline. To call upon the need for discipline, one admits the dark side of the human psyche, that side that we spend so much time trying to pretend is nonexistent. Whitmont explains that repression "is the act of shutting our eyes in order to avoid the suffering of discipline" (Return 133). He also says that "Repression will always call forth a compensatory counteractivity of the unconscious which will, through the backdoor, force upon us, the very thing we are trying to repress" (Return 133). Understanding this dynamic as an explanation for Dimmesdale's response to the situation in which he finds himself helps the reader see Dimmesdale's problems in a more sympathetic light than viewing them as a deliberate attempt to inflict pain and suffering on Hester. Dimmesdale is repressing the feminine side of his nature, feelings and desires that he, as a minister and respected member of the Puritan community, cannot admit he harbors.

Therefore, we will deal with the repression of the feminine in a way that shows the effects of this phenomenon on an entire culture rather than as simply the repression of women from a gender perspective. Feminine repression includes this aspect as well, but in its entirety it is a disturbance that infiltrates every aspect of the societal expectations of both sexes as well as the response to their personal lives and the rules and regulations they set for others to live by.

Everything is a combination of both male and female characteristics. This is not to be confused with the positive or negative connotations our culture may associate with one or the other of these traits. As symbolic images, they do not directly reflect men or women as such. Whitmont explains this idea by saying, "These basic principles are purely symbolic representations of energies which are inclusive of what we commonly call maleness and femaleness" (Symbolic 170). Therefore, they are not meant to describe individual human beings.

Female principles have been relegated to the dark unconscious world of instinct and feeling. Whitmont gives this description: “[...] it is not spirit but nature, the world of formation, the dark womb of nature that gives birth to drives, to urgings and instincts and sexuality; it is seen in the symbolism of earth and moon, darkness and space; it is negative, undifferentiated and collective”(Symbolic 171). The masculine is described as orderly, distant, free of emotion, logical, rational, and controlling. When looking at Arthur Dimmesdale in light of this knowledge, we can surmise the difficulty he encounters in his life as he attempts to fit into a culture that represses the feminine, finding only masculine attributes acceptable. This denial of an entire side of life and human nature is an inherent cause of the problems that ensue in The Scarlet Letter. Dimmesdale is living by the idea that “Subduing one’s spontaneous emotions and desires means subduing the realm of the feminine for the sake of the masculine ideal of self-control” (Whitmont, Return 65). This patriarchal culture’s survival depends on male control. The men wield the power, fearful of any who question the reality of the appearances they manifest outwardly. The minister’s self-control is in danger of complete disintegration, but he masks the effects of this repression as long as he can. The ensuing breakdown of the spirit leads to an enervation of Dimmesdale’s soul and physical condition. Gone is the energy and the strength that comes from within. Patriarchal cultures ignore the idea of a combined reality that insists on both sides of one’s self being acknowledged and dealt with. Society ignores the disorderly, chaotic realm and fears its appearance. The need to be in control of all things at all times makes a culture fearful of anything that lessens its ability to control.

But one cannot control by repressing these opposites forever. They will not be kept apart. Dark and light, order and disorder, all of these polar entities are parts of the whole. The paradoxical nature of life is everywhere and, along with it, the energy of living. Dimmesdale

experiences this when he is with Hester. The experience of life and the experience of death each has an equally volatile quality. The idea of male-female polarity is one of a conflict of opposites and “[...] we experience it in terms of duality and conflict: conscious – unconscious, light – dark, spirit – nature, positive – negative and, for consideration here, male - female” (Whitmont, Symbolic 170). The world that Hawthorne gives us shows a repression of the feminine where “[...] its total absence means petrification, rigidity, and grim, joyless boredom” (Whitmont, Return 59). We see this in the Puritan culture that Hawthorne draws for us in The Scarlet Letter. Dimmesdale’s repressed nature will not be extinguished. His dark side is never absent from the picture, merely ignored. When this is no longer possible, it disrupts the community and the individual lives of several within. A lack of acknowledgement does not mean these feelings go away, nor can one refuse the inherent responsibility for their feelings. In The Symbolic Quest, we see that “[...]the anima consists of the man’s unconscious urges, his moods, emotional aspirations, anxieties, fears, inflations and depressions, as well as his potential for emotion and relationship” (Whitmont 189).

In The Scarlet Letter, human nature is linked to instinct. Both of these are considered evil and things one must repress. Hawthorne paints a picture of a world practically void of beauty, color, warmth, and laughter. If Hawthorne’s picture of the Puritans is exaggerated, it succeeds from the artist’s wish to emphasize the stark quality of life that exists when a society represses the feminine side of life. The Puritan society that Hawthorne portrays in The Scarlet Letter shows a culture’s inability to acknowledge sin and, while their outer lives are dark with decay, so their inner lives reflect this gloomy transmutation of life. No longer glorious and joyful, life itself has become a dimly lit candle that can only flicker in the midst of a repression so void of true compassion that the only life-giving energy present is that of hatred and



suspicion. Hawthorne is aware of the need for a society to accept both sides of nature, good and evil. The paradoxical unity exists and cannot be divided. His works show the effects of man's struggle to divide and conquer that which he cannot accept. Those characteristics considered dark, foreboding, and demanding repression are necessary and valid components of a conscious, independent, responsible human being. Hawthorne presents his ideas of man's relationship to his culture, his drive for individual wholeness, and the development of human consciousness.

## CHAPTER 3

### BOUNDARIES: AN ARCHETYPAL LOOK AT MOVEMENT IN HAWTHORNE'S WORKS

“The adventure is always and everywhere a passage beyond the veil of the known into the unknown; the powers that watch at the boundary are dangerous; to deal with them is risky; yet for anyone with competence and courage the danger fades.”

#### Joseph Campbell

Nathaniel Hawthorne draws the reader into his settings with the idea of boundaries. As we look closely at this theme, it is an inherent quality in many of Hawthorne's works. We come upon this idea in his short stories as well as his novels. Boundaries are physical, tangible lines drawn around places people live or the places where action takes place in a story. These exterior boundaries can mirror internal boundaries and indicate a movement from one level of consciousness to the unconscious.

In The Scarlet Letter, Hawthorne draws boundaries throughout the text. Hester lives on the outskirts of the township, at the edge of the forest and at the edge of the ocean. These boundaries accentuate Hester's isolation. She belongs not simply to one area but has the ability to move from one area to another. Hester is protected from the community by her sphere but the community is protected also by this same sphere. What Hester represents is dangerous to the structure of this society. They are not yet ready to face what lies beyond their own boundaries.

We see the societal boundaries between the prison and the rest of the community. The outer barrier is reminiscent of an inner barrier built and carried by Hawthorne's Puritans as they strive to control sin with legal sanctions against it. Their need to control and ultimately repress this side of human nature reflects their constant struggle to manipulate behavior with fear of isolation from the community. This isolation equates with death, as Hawthorne shows us by the

proximity of the graveyard to the jail. Boston is described by Hawthorne as “[...] this roughly hewn street of a little town, on the edge of the Western wilderness” (57). So Boston is its own civilization, maker of its own rules and morals. The wilderness, the unknown, lies on the edge of the town. Exterior boundaries separate this society from the wildness of nature and interior barriers of fear serve to imprison the inhabitants from within. This exemplifies boundaries that are external as well as internal. The Puritan townspeople imprison themselves in their iron will and determination to overcome the forces of sin and evil. The scaffold upon which Hester climbs stands “[...] at the western extremity of the market-place” (55).

But just outside the prison-door “[...] on one side of the portal, and rooted almost at the threshold, was a wild rose-bush, covered, in this month of June, with its delicate gems [...]” (48). This sign of nature, this “wild” beauty stubbornly grows within this stifling society. Nature invades the Puritan world of grim sternness. This sight of nature, not to be overwhelmed and subdued, is “[...] on the threshold of our narrative, which is now about to issue forth from that inauspicious portal” (48). And so enters the indomitable Hester Prynne. Nature does not observe these boundaries so carefully drawn and fearfully kept by the members of this community.

Hester crosses this boundary from the confinement of prison to the society that condemns her. Physically free, Hester crosses the threshold into the world of the community entering, once again, as a member of this society. But Hester wears the scarlet letter that will serve to enclose its wearer in a sphere and set up boundaries around her to keep her from participating fully in the life of the community. In the isolation that follows, Hester speculates freely on the “iron bars” that make up the society in which she finds herself. Pearl is her constant companion and her presence embodies the meaning of the scarlet letter. Hester is angry at the punishment forced on

her and the judgment of those she deems as unworthy as herself. Yet, Hester is unable to face her own guilt and see herself in light of the reality of her being. Her nature makes her a much feared member of this community. The Puritan civilization, “[...] so remote and so obscure[...],” (79), borders the western wilderness. But Hester chooses, as her home, a small cottage “[...] on the outskirts of the town, within the verge of the peninsula, but not in close vicinity to any other habitation[...],” (81). Hester’s cottage borders the town, the sea, and the forest but “[...] its comparative remoteness put it out of the sphere of that social activity which already marked the habits of the emigrants[...],” (81). She isolates herself by choosing a dwelling that borders both civilization and nature.

These boundaries between natural and man-made societies serve to keep the worlds within themselves and outsiders afraid to enter. Things change when one moves across the boundaries. The rules are different and the old laws may not apply. Hawthorne describes Hester’s existence: “[...] she was banished, and as much alone as if she inhabited another sphere, or communicated with the common nature by other organs and senses than the rest of human kind [...],” (84).

Hawthorne uses the idea of boundaries to show us different worlds and characters’ reactions to these differences. Boundaries confine the action of one area to that distinct place while the characters may move across boundaries. The differences become inherent in the characters themselves, allowing us a clearer vision of them. Thus, Miles Coverdale moves from the city to the country, a place where nature abounds and man generally stands in awe of nature’s power and essence. But Coverdale brings with him, as do other members of the group at Blithedale, many of the same restrictions and institutional attitudes they are hoping to escape. By separating civilization and nature in The Scarlet Letter, Hawthorne emphasizes their

differences, both within these outer worlds and by the character's identification with the characteristics of one world or the other. The author emphasizes the wild side of nature and the wilderness to the west of Boston. The town itself is bounded on all sides with rules and regulations, laws and morals in an attempt to separate itself from a nature which the Puritans consider evil and sinful – the dark side of human nature. This dark side of human nature is the symbolic meaning for the unconscious. It is the unknown, that which lies beyond, or death.

In The Blithedale Romance, we see Miles Coverdale's life within the confinements of the city. These confinements are physical, but they represent an inner confinement for Hawthorne's character. The institutions and societal proprieties of the nineteenth century require that certain standards of behavior and living be met. When in the city, Coverdale has comfortable rooms, comfortable friends, good food and drink and a satisfactory life all around. But our narrator feels he is missing something. Coverdale says, "The greater, surely, was my heroism, when, puffing out a final whiff of cigar-smoke, I quitted my cosy pair of bachelor-rooms—with a good fire burning in the grate, and a closet right at hand, where there was still a bottle or two in the champagne-basket, and a residuum of claret in a box, [...]" (10). He writes poetry but he wants to write better poetry. Upon his arrival at his new surroundings Coverdale replies to praise of his poetry, "I hope, on the contrary, now, to produce something that shall really deserve to be called poetry—true, strong, natural, and sweet, as is the life which we are going to lead [...]" (14). It is for this purpose, then, that he decides to leave his comfortable life with all its attending social restrictions to enter a world in the country. Coverdale "[...]—quitted, I say, these comfortable quarters, and plunged into the heart of the pitiless snow-storm, in quest of a better life" (10).

Therefore, we see another crossing of a boundary, both external and internal. Externally, Coverdale leaves the city and moves to a farm in the country. Internally, Coverdale hopes to

leave behind the constrictions of the persona he has adopted for city living and take up a new way of living in a society based on equality. Blithedale is a social experiment quite outside the realm of anything that might be possible within the boundaries of the city. The participants desire to reclaim a human connection to nature and to the land that is slipping away in the nineteenth century. The inhabitants of Blithedale Farm also desire a communal society where individuals share the tasks of day-to-day living, making them equal on a social scale. Coverdale wants to cast off his inhibitions as well as his inability to express true feeling and depth of emotion within his poetry: “[...] even to the extent of quitting a warm fireside, flinging away a freshly lighted cigar, and traveling far beyond the strike of city-clocks, through a drifting snow-storm” (11). He sees the city as representing his old life with all its restrictions, institutional obligations, and involvement. This old life paralyzes the poet within the man. Once at Blithedale Coverdale thinks of his life in the city and we read, “[...] I felt, so much the more, that we had transported ourselves a world-wide distance from the system of society that shackled us at breakfast-time” (13). Miles Coverdale desires a removal of the “shackles” of society.

Coverdale’s move across the boundary is heralded with a snowstorm, a demonstration of the power of nature. Leaving the walls of the city and life that is lived inside and protected, the travelers experience nature from the beginning: “[...] Air, that had not been breathed, once and again! Air, that had not been spoken into words of falsehood, formality, and error, like all the air of the dusky city!” (11). They leave the comforts they know to experience nature in all its raw strength, moving into the realm of the unknown and carrying their “shackles” with them. These internal restrictions are not physical objects that can easily be left behind, but deeply rooted ideals and expectations that cross the borders on the journey from the city to Blithedale farm. Once there, we encounter restrictions that the inhabitants had hoped to leave behind. The

farmhouse becomes the domestic sphere and the women are relegated to the household activities within while the male figures take on the outside components of maintaining a farm with all its incumbent hardships. Hawthorne shows us the difficulty in forging new paths when the old ones are deeply ingrained. Zenobia answers the question of assigned tasks by saying:

[...] ‘we women (there are four of us here, already) will take the domestic and indoor part of the business, as a matter of course. [...] these, I suppose, must be feminine occupations for the present. By-and-by, [...] it may be that some of us, who wear the petticoat, will go afield, and leave the weaker brethren to take our places in the kitchen!’ (16)

Old ideas come forth from within the inhabitants. Societal expectations are rooted deeply within individuals, even those who claim to want to “throw off the shackles” of their old world.

So what exactly are these boundaries? Boundaries serve either to enclose or to separate one thing from another. The known is separated from the unknown. That which is known is comfortable and safe. While one may feel stifled and bound by the expectations and rules of society, the unknown is a far more dangerous entity. Often there is a feeling of foreboding when one crosses the boundary from the known, even with its dimensions of good and bad, to the unknown. There is a pull that one who moves cannot resist. The expectation of an answer is a strong motivator. Coverdale crosses this boundary and enters an unknown world of nature. Hawthorne sets the stage:

The storm, in its evening aspect, was decidedly dreary. It seemed to have arisen for our especial behoof; a symbol of the cold, desolate, distrustful phantoms that invariably haunt the mind, on the eve of adventurous enterprises, to warn us back within the boundaries of ordinary life. (18)

Coverdale fails to realize that these institutions and societal expectations are within rather than without. He thinks, “We had left the rusty iron frame-work of society behind us. We had broken through many hindrances that are powerful enough to keep most people on the weary tread-mill of the established system, even while they feel its irksomeness almost as intolerable as we did” (19). Coverdale is eager but apprehensive as he begins his journey and crosses the boundaries of his known world.

We see a journey and an apprehensive boundary-crossing in “Young Goodman Brown.” Goodman Brown leaves his wife, Faith, to journey into the forest one evening. Hawthorne calls the forest a “heathen wilderness” (140). There is a marked difference between the forest and the town where Goodman Brown lives. Hawthorne writes of Brown, “He had taken a dreary road, darkened by all the gloomiest trees of the forest, which barely stood aside to let the narrow path creep through [...]” (134). Brown crosses the threshold between the two with foreboding. We read, “It was all as lonely as could be; and there is this peculiarity in such a solitude [...]”(134). The peculiarity is the discrepancy between what Brown sees and what he expects to see. Hawthorne’s intentions are clear as we observe Brown’s encounters on his journey and the shattering of his expectations.

Brown meets Satan in the form of an old man. Brown is introduced to the dark side of man, the shadow, or the hidden side that is repressed. Brown is frightened and then sickened at the sight. This is the opposite of what he has experienced as reality. This is not what Brown knows or what he wants to know. To see this in others, to see behind the mask or the veil, one must have an understanding that what one sees has been there all along, but we have not been conscious of its presence. This shadow, the unconscious, has been repressed, masked, or veiled but not eliminated. Brown does not want to accept what he sees either for himself or for the



others he recognizes. When Brown sees Faith's pink ribbon, he is horrified. As we assess Brown's reactions to the revelations of the forest, we see Hawthorne playing with the idea of man's naked inner self. Brown is afraid to journey into the forest, but he feels compelled to venture forth. Faith, too, is fearful of the unknown that lurks in the forest. The forest represents nature and embodies the world of the unknown, the feminine realm of the dark unconscious. When Brown sees Faith's pink ribbon he realizes that she, too, is part of this world of shadows and, though he has not been aware of it before, she belongs with the rest of mankind, bringing together within herself both sides of nature – good and evil.

This frightening work of nature serves to illuminate the other side of human beings, the side that is hidden behind the persona of the individual or the mask we wear to get through life within the strictures of our society. Brown becomes aware of the sin of others. Goodman Brown is unable to reconcile the discrepancies he finds in others. Brown lives the rest of his life with an angry attitude of hopelessness because he cannot accept the reality of what he sees in the forest. This desire to see man as one thing or the other, either good or evil, is shattered as he sees that his reality is only appearance. There is a failure to accept the inevitability of man. Nature, in the experience, represents reality versus appearance.

Nature takes on the role of a character in many of Hawthorne's works. Again, this reflects nineteenth-century attitudes of a culture that exhibits constant movement. Spiller says, "Everywhere bordering on New England is another land, whose geography human beings imagine but cannot chart" (Literary History 431). Everything is alive with the energy of a society that exhibits rapid growth and development. Hawthorne views nature in much the same way as many of his nineteenth-century colleagues. In describing the wilderness, Hawthorne gives to the Puritans the view of nature as dark and foreboding with a life and atmosphere all its

own. There are boundaries everywhere adamantly upheld by the community. The wilderness is both solitary and wild. It is not part of the Puritan society, and those who go there have extraordinary things happen once within the sphere of nature. Outside the walls of the town, everything is “beyond.” Those that venture forth do so with fear and trepidation.

Nature, through Hester, takes on a life of its own. It is in the forest that Hester comes alive, her innermost being drawn out of the shadows and allowed to pour forth through her physical body. Her feminine nature is at its most vivid and her archetypal consciousness comes alive. Hester moves through the forest, its character alive and communicative within her. Hester lives at the edge of the wilderness, but also at the edge of the community from which she has been ostracized. Hester is bounded on all sides by something from which she is separated, something from which she is not a part. She lives on the edge of the forest, the community, and the ocean. Yet Hester is isolated, with only Pearl by her side. Hester moves from one physical realm to another within a sphere of her own.

In “Rappaccini’s Daughter” Hawthorne once again delineates the world of the characters within boundaries while isolating the female character. Giovanni enters an unknown world and lives in rooms of a family that Hawthorne describes as “long since extinct” (388). Giovanni is “for the first time out of his native sphere” (388).

Giovanni crosses the threshold and enters a world that is different as well. Once he is aware of the nature of the garden and of Beatrice herself, Giovanni is torn between the desire to cross the boundaries of all that he knows and enter a place with unknown realities, rules, and possibilities and the desire to stay within the realm of safety and familiarity. With the help of an old woman, waiting just as he crosses the “threshold” to his lodgings, Giovanni is shown a secret entrance into the garden and, though filled with misgivings, he cannot keep himself outside the

realm of Beatrice's garden. Therefore, Giovanni crosses another boundary, moving into the unknown, where the world that awaits is very different from the world he knows.

As these characters move across boundaries, they begin a journey. The outward journey is reflective of the inward journey as they move from consciousness toward the dark unconscious labyrinth of the mind. Hawthorne's characters experience a sense of unease as they move across boundaries. Miles Coverdale is unsettled as he moves from the city to the country, anticipating an inward journey that will enable him to write with true depth of feeling, to translate his inner thoughts to the pages of poetry. Goodman Brown is uneasy as he journeys from the town to the forest. Giovanni feels isolated and lonely as he moves into his new rooms in an ancient city, and even more fearful of crossing the threshold of the garden below.

Boundaries may separate or enclose one and can serve as a barrier, both to wanted and to unwanted things. Hawthorne created different worlds within his works, and boundaries, when crossed, indicate a change, a movement within to the realm of the unknown or the unconscious.

There is fear as Hawthorne's characters face their boundaries. They move forward, on an imminent journey. Joseph Campbell says that a movement takes place when "A blunder – apparently the merest chance – reveals an unsuspected world, and the individual is drawn into a relationship with forces that are not rightly understood" (51). Campbell interprets these not as blunders of chance but as, "[...] the result of suppressed desires and conflicts" (51). The repression of the feminine in Hawthorne's characters surfaces, destroying the sense of order in the character's everyday world and demanding action. Though frightening, the draw is difficult to ignore. The powers that propel one forward are strong and hard to resist: "[...] for they carry keys that open the whole realm of the desired and feared adventure of the discovery of the self" (Campbell 8).

Hawthorne uses nature to represent the unknown or the dark unconscious. The repression of the feminine here is the unwillingness or inability to see the unconscious and the idea of nature. The shadow that is repressed is alive and well whether it is confronted or ignored. If left on its own too long, it may come forward at a most inopportune moment. But it will come forward. Energy that is repressed can not stay hidden nor does it disappear.

## CHAPTER 4

### HESTER PRYNNE: FEMININE POWER ENCOMPASSED WITHIN THE MAGIC

#### CIRCLE

“The life of a woman, who, by the old colony law, was condemned always to wear the letter A, sewed on her garment, in token of her having committed adultery.”

Nathaniel Hawthorne     The American Notebooks (Winter 1844-1845)

Hester’s isolation is apparent from the beginning of The Scarlet Letter. Hester has borne a child, yet she has no husband within the community. The Puritans physically separate themselves from Hester by putting her in prison to have her child. As the story opens, Hester emerges from this prison. The reader is struck by the paradoxical qualities immediately apparent between the crowd of onlookers and Hester Prynne.

The crowd that gathers is described in the first sentence as “A throng of bearded men, in sad-colored garments and gray, steeple-crowned hats, intermixed with women, some wearing hoods, and others bareheaded [...]” (47). The setting consists of a prison with a “beetle-browed and gloomy front” and around it “was a grass-plot, much overgrown with burdock, pig-weed, apple-peru, and such unsightly vegetation [...]” (48). The Puritan women are harsh in their judgment of Hester, anxious to keep her away from their society. Of the women, Hawthorne writes:

Morally, as well as materially, there was a coarser fibre in those wives and maidens of old English birth and breeding, than in their fair descendents [...].

There was moreover, a boldness and rotundity of speech among these matrons, as

most of them seemed to be, that would startle us at the present day, whether in respect to its purport or its volume of tone. (50-1)

These women, too, are responsible for the repression of the feminine in their lives and in the culture they inhabit. Anxious for acceptance in a world which relegates them little, if any, power they begin to see themselves in the same light that the patriarchal culture shines on all things feminine. They mirror the culture's disgust with emotion, beauty, and passion. They fear nature and the world of instinct and impulse.

From this dull, colorless world Hester emerges, sharply contrasting with her surroundings. She is bright and beautiful, her "[...] dark and abundant hair, so glossy that it threw off the sunshine with a gleam, and a face which, besides being beautiful from regularity of feature and richness of complexion, had the impressiveness belonging to a marked brow and deep black eyes" (53). Hester's feminine qualities shine from within, and she radiates a beauty and force that is breathtaking to those watching her as she walks to the scaffold. The contrast between Hester and her surroundings, both the physical setting and the people, is striking, and the Puritans are shocked by Hester's powerful radiance. Hawthorne writes, "Those who had before known her, and had expected to behold her dimmed and obscured by a disastrous cloud, were astonished, and even startled, to perceive how her beauty shone out, and made a halo of the misfortune and ignominy in which she was enveloped" (53). This is the first mention of the halo, but with it, we see the spiritual separation of Hester Prynne from the Puritan community. With this passage, the author tells us that the crowd has expected Hester's time in prison and the humiliation she has suffered to take its toll on her and wipe the shine from her features, vanquishing the light within.

None of these expectations are fulfilled; it is the very untoward events and humiliation that Hester has undergone that serve to wrap her in a halo and separate her even further from the crowd. Though no longer in prison, she is still within a sphere of her own. The scarlet letter, which she will wear on her bosom for the rest of her life, “[...] had the effect of a spell, taking her out of the ordinary relations with humanity, and inclosing her in a sphere by herself” (54).

From within this sphere, Hester is successfully cut off from the Puritan community. Hester’s isolation from the rest of society is important to the Puritans because of the danger they sense within her. Hawthorne’s Puritan community sets its rules and standards, and they identify with their definition of absolute good. In this crowd Hester has broken the code of moral law and the “Individual dissenter is, by definition, evil and a public enemy” (Whitmont, Return 91). Hawthorne tells us that her clothing “[...] seemed to express the attitude of her spirit, the desperate recklessness of her mood, by its wild and picturesque peculiarity” (53). Hester’s feminine spirit will not be tamed by her time in prison or her humiliation.

In this community, goodness involves self-denial and is an act of will. This puts control in the hands of the individual. Rather than acknowledge and deal with both sides of human nature, the Puritan world that Hawthorne describes acknowledges what it deems good and represses everything else. Since each includes the opposite, these two sides of man’s being cannot be successfully ignored or repressed. Good includes evil and evil includes good. These paradoxical qualities coexist in the nature of man. The repression of the dark qualities of nature, emotion, and beauty serves to emphasize the rigidity of this stern, cold world that Hawthorne creates for the reader.

The Puritan’s clothing is dull and colorless, matching the severity of their spiritual world within. The vivid, dynamic nature of someone like Hester Prynne is threatening to this tired, sad

group and they fear Hester. Inside and out, Hester represents a contrast as she exudes the feminine nature this patriarchal culture has tried to excise from their world, both the world within the individual and the outer world of nature. This society separates itself from its natural instincts. Hawthorne comments on a “wild rose-bush” that grows outside the door of the prison. As the author describes the scene outside the prison, this is the one spot of beauty and color in the entire picture. The fact that the rose bush is “wild” alludes to nature and the forces that are untamable, or ungovernable, even in this setting. As Hester’s wild nature refuses to be subjugated by her time in prison and the essence of the community itself so, too, this wild rose-bush stubbornly grows amidst the weeds and grim qualities of the Puritans. Since Hester cannot be controlled, she must be isolated.

Hester’s strong, earthy nature is enclosed by the magic sphere as she takes up her life in the community. But she is not completely alone. This magic sphere includes Pearl, the child Hester has born in prison. Contained within the circle, they move, always together, through their world. We read, “Never, since her release from prison, had Hester met the public gaze without her. In all her walks about the town, Pearl, too, was there [...]” (93). Further emphasizing their alienation from society and their bond within the circle, Hawthorne writes, “Mother and daughter stood together in the same circle of seclusion from human society [...]” (94). Pearl is isolated from the community, her nature as dangerous to the Puritan way of life as her mother’s nature: “Pearl was a born outcast of the infantile world. An imp of evil, emblem and product of sin, she had no right among christened infants” (93). Pearl is not an earthly creature. Encircled by the magic sphere with her mother, she is a constant reminder from the underworld of the darkness and the wild nature of the feminine.



Not part of the earthly world or civilization as the Puritans have defined it, Hester and Pearl live on the edge of the town, near the forest and the sea. The isolation of her dwelling is emphasized: “[...] its comparative remoteness put it out of the sphere of that social activity which already marked the habits of the emigrants” (81). Hester establishes herself physically, as well as spiritually, outside the town, reflecting her isolation from the human beings of this community. Hester’s cottage is “On the outskirts of the town, within the verge of the peninsula, but not in close vicinity to any other habitation [...]” (81). These boundaries of nature surround the Puritan settlement, enclosing and keeping them separated from the rest of the world. The town is described as “[...] on the edge of the Western wilderness” (57). Hester can cross these physical boundaries but in truth “[...] she was banished, and as much alone as if she inhabited another sphere [...]. She stood apart from mortal interests, yet close beside them, like a ghost that revisits the familiar fireside, and can no longer make itself seen or felt [...]” (84).

Life within this sphere allows Hester freedom of thought. Hawthorne tells us that Hester’s outward coldness is because “[...] her life had turned, in a great measure, from passion and feeling, to thought” (164). Isolated from the traditions and expectations of any community, Hester lives in a world of ideas and thoughts foreign to those who live within the confines of the structured existence of the Puritans. Hester dares to contemplate ideas that would never be acknowledged by someone whose identity depends on his or her acceptance within a community that teaches subservience and blind dedication to a patriarchal leadership. Hester’s situation and the humiliation that tests her also endows her with a knowledge that frightens her: “[...] she felt or fancied, then, that the scarlet letter had endowed her with a new sense. She shuddered to believe, yet could not help believing, that it gave her a sympathetic knowledge of the hidden sin in other hearts” (86). The sphere that surrounds and isolates Hester allows her to feel the pain of

others, a pain that is familiar. This is not a comfort for Hester. She is fearful and is in anguish to understand the meaning of these feelings. Hester does not wish to believe “[...] that the outward guise of purity was but a lie, and that, if truth were everywhere to be shown, a scarlet letter would blaze forth on many a bosom [...]” (86). Hawthorne tells us that, “In all her miserable experience, there was nothing else so awful and so loathsome as this sense” (86-7). From within the sphere, Hester can see across boundaries that transfix the rest of the world. Hester’s scarlet letter gives her the freedom while she is enclosed within her sphere to speculate on matters that others would not dare. Hester hovers between worlds, not able to be part of an earthly sphere or a heavenly realm. Hester has a vision that the Puritans do not possess. She has a sense of the plight of others whose hidden sins trap them in this repressive community. Hester begins to lose faith in those around her, and “Such loss of faith is ever one of the saddest results of sin” (87). The folly of the world in which she lives and those within its walls is Hester’s vision of the world as she moves through it alone.

Mircea Eliade says, “A boundary situation is one which man discovers in becoming conscious of his place in the universe [...]” (Neumann 77). Boundaries are drawn by us to shelter ourselves from the outside world and those things we cannot see. If we are to move beyond these boundaries and move deeper within our own consciousness, we must face our borders. In searching for the unity of opposites, one needs to confront one’s boundaries. Hawthorne’s characters cross boundaries as they move to establish a relationship or experience something outside their known world.

The power within the magic sphere not only allows Hester to cross boundaries and feel sympathy toward others, but it can strengthen and energize those outside the sphere. Nowhere is this more evident than during the forest scene where Hester meets Arthur Dimmesdale. Long

suffering under the code of banishment and loneliness inflicted upon her, she has managed to subdue some of the power that smolders within: “All the light and graceful foliage of her character had been withered up by this red-hot brand, and had long ago fallen away, leaving a bare and harsh outline [...]” (163). Hester represses feeling and replaces this feeling with thought as she wanders through her existence, looking for answers to questions that most people never ask. And so

The world’s law was no law for her mind.[...] She assumed a freedom of speculation, then common enough on the other side of the Atlantic, but which our forefathers, had they known of it, would have held to be a deadlier crime than that stigmatized by the scarlet letter. (164)

It is in Hester’s mind that these thoughts dwell in this Puritan community. Hester is already removed from the community and is free to entertain thoughts that would frighten a member of the society with their boldness. But Hester is no longer a member of the society in which she dwells. Her transgression, which has brought so much pain to Hester’s life, has also opened a door for ideas and speculation. Hester cannot be hurt further by the outcome of such bold, new ideas. She experiences an inner freedom though outwardly she is still constrained by the scarlet letter. Hawthorne is aware of the power and the strength of the feminine nature.

However, Hester Prynne wanders in her moral wilderness despite her power and strength. When she talks to Chillingworth, she cries, “There is no good for him,-- no good for me, -- no good for thee! There is no good for little Pearl! There is no path to guide us out of this dismal maze” (173). Hester is in a sphere, neither of the earthly world nor a part of the spiritual realm, which allows for the contemplative thoughts in which she engages. Pearl, too, stays within her mother’s sphere as her companion.

Hester and Pearl enter the forest together to await Dimmesdale. Again, Hawthorne emphasizes the moral wilderness of Hester Prynne. The narrow path into the forest “[...] imaged not amiss the moral wilderness in which she had so long been wandering” (183). The forest is dark and gloomy, a place in nature where anything can happen. The forest is outside the boundaries of Puritan society. In this romantic space, transformation can occur. One leaves behind what one knows to be reality. The categories of the society on the other side of the boundary do not fit into the world of the forest.

Hawthorne uses sunshine imagery with both Pearl and Hester throughout the Scarlet Letter but its importance is greatest in the chapters of the forest with Hester, Pearl, and Dimmesdale. When Hester and Pearl enter the forest, they see patches of sunlight amid the darkness of the shadows that prevail. Pearl laughs and says, “The sunshine does not love you” (183). Pearl runs after the sunshine and it allows her to stand in its glow. Pearl seems to “actually catch the sunshine” (183). Hawthorne says the sun delights in the energy of the child, reflecting as well her constant movement and sense of joy and play. Hester, too, reaches for the sunshine and, “[...] as she attempted to do so, the sunshine vanished” (184). Hester senses that the sun does not actually disappear but rather “[...] the child has absorbed it into herself” (184). Hawthorne connects Pearl to nature while showing Hester’s estrangement from the side of light that exists in nature. Hester contemplates Pearl’s dynamic personality: “There was no other attribute that so much impressed her with a sense of new and untransmitted vigor in Pearl’s nature as this never-failing vivacity of spirits; she had not the disease of sadness [...]” (184). Jung says that “Day and light are synonyms for consciousness, night and dark for the unconscious. [...] Hence the “child” distinguishes itself by deeds which point to the conquest of

the dark” (Essays on a Science of Mythology 86). Pearl is the bringer of light, the consciousness that can unite both Hester and Dimmesdale.

Hester has her moment in the sun when she and Dimmesdale make plans to leave together. In the forest, Hester removes the scarlet letter, takes off her cap and her wild nature, the feminine side that she has repressed for the past seven years, presents itself in full force. Hawthorne puts Hester into the realm of sunshine as he writes, “All at once, as with a sudden smile of heaven, forth burst the sunshine, pouring a very flood into the obscure forest, [...]” (202-3). Hester’s nature now matches that of the forest and nature itself. Hawthorne is intent on connecting the wild nature of man to the wild forces around him. We read, “Such was the sympathy of Nature—that wild heathen Nature of the forest, never subjugated by human law, nor illumined by higher truth—with the bliss of these two spirits! Love, whether newly born, or aroused from a deathlike slumber, must always create a sunshine [...]” (203). Nature’s laws operate in a world of their own. Man’s attempts to control nature, whether within himself or the outside forces that surround the world, will meet with failure. The unconscious within, the dark forces of man, seek the light.

Hester and Dimmesdale inhabit a sphere in the forest that does not include Pearl. As they clasped hands “They now felt themselves, at least, inhabitants of the same sphere” (190). After they make plans to run away together, Hester tries to bring Pearl back into their sphere. Pearl will not join her mother with Dimmesdale. Still bright with sun they call Pearl to join them, but “Hester felt herself, [...] estranged from Pearl; as if the child, in her lonely ramble through the forest, had strayed out of the sphere in which she and her mother dwelt together [...]” (208). Hawthorne puts the fault for the separation with Hester and writes:

[...] the child and the mother were estranged, but through Hester's fault, not Pearl's. [...] another inmate had been admitted within the circle of her mother's feelings and so modified the aspect of them all, that Pearl, the returning wanderer, could not find her wonted place, and hardly knew where she was. (208)

Hester has separated, mentally and physically, from Pearl by throwing off the scarlet letter and standing with Dimmesdale. Hester is invigorated with her sense of freedom from the consciousness of her actions and thinks she can bring Pearl back into her sphere. But Jung says, “[...] the conscious mind knows nothing beyond the opposites and, as a result, has no knowledge of the thing that unites them” (87). However, Hester's action of throwing off the scarlet letter is the same as casting off Pearl. Pearl and the scarlet letter are much the same as they represent wild nature in man. Pearl demands to be accepted, but with a conscious acceptance by Hester of her actions. Taking off the scarlet letter and refusing to wear it condemns her actions just as much as the rest of the town that insist she wear this symbol. Dimmesdale must enter the sphere with Hester and Pearl. He must join the two as only he can complete the circle. But he must join through an acknowledgement of his feminine side, the unconscious side that seeks the light. Pearl refuses to accept Dimmesdale when her mother asks her to love him and greet him. As Pearl looks at him, he still has his hand over his heart, unwilling to face his guilt, feeling ashamed of his part in the situation in which they find themselves. He is unable to acknowledge Pearl. Pearl awaits Dimmesdale's ability to openly accept her and her mother. When Dimmesdale departs, Pearl once again joins her mother in her sphere: “[...] -- now that the intrusive third person was gone, -- and taking her old place by her mother's side” (214).

The sphere which Hester inhabits encapsulates the power that lives within Hester. When Hester and Arthur meet and begin to talk in the forest, the reader finds that the feminine essence

within Hester has not been lost, only repressed. Hawthorne hints at this when he writes, “She who has once been woman, and ceased to be so, might at any moment become a woman again, if there were only the magic touch to effect the transformation” (164). Dimmesdale touches Hester. The power that is contained within the sphere is unleashed and its entire force engulfs Dimmesdale. The author writes, “Arthur Dimmesdale gazed into Hester’s face with a look in which hope and joy shone out, indeed, but with fear betwixt them, and a kind of horror at her boldness, who had spoken what he vaguely hinted at, but dared not speak” (199). The power does illicit fear. Hester takes off the scarlet letter, lets down her hair, and “Her sex, her youth, and the whole richness of her beauty, came back from what men call the irrevocable past, and clustered themselves, with her maiden hope, and a happiness before unknown, within the magic circle of this hour” (202). This is the force so feared by the Puritan community. The world will no longer be the same if this force is allowed freedom.

Dimmesdale gains strength from this feminine power, finding the courage to accept his need for the feminine. Dimmesdale looks at Hester and says:

‘Do I feel joy again? [...] Methought the germ of it was dead in me! O Hester, thou art my better angel! I seem to have flung myself—sick, sin-stained, and sorrow-blackened—down upon these forest-leaves, and to have risen up all made anew, and with new powers to glorify Him that hath been merciful? This is already the better life! Why did we not find it sooner?’ (201-2)

Now Dimmesdale can acknowledge the wild side of feminine nature that cannot be repressed forever.

But the Puritans were right about the ramifications of the disorder inherent in the feminine nature. Chaos ensues. Dimmesdale returns to the community a changed man. We

read, “The minister’s own will, and Hester’s will, and the fate that grew between them, had wrought this transformation. It was the same town as heretofore; but the same minister returned not from the forest” (217). The power within the sphere has done its work. The minister experiences a transformation as he is filled with the energy of life. Dimmesdale dares to acknowledge feelings that he would not typically allow himself to be conscious of. Tempted to wickedness throughout the next four days, Dimmesdale uses his strength to subdue his temptations. But Hawthorne writes, “That self was gone! Another man had returned out of the forest; a wiser one; with a knowledge of hidden mysteries which the simplicity of the former never could have reached” (223).

This wiser man is empowered by the strength of the feminine. He burns the old sermon he had been preparing, making way for a new sermon. This new speech touches the Puritan spirit. After giving this sermon, Dimmesdale climbs upon the scaffold to acknowledge his sin and Pearl as his daughter. With this confession, Dimmesdale joins Hester and Pearl within the sphere. Hawthorne writes, “Pearl kissed his lips. A spell was broken. [...] Towards her mother, too, Pearl’s errand as a messenger of anguish was all fulfilled” (256).

Hester Prynne’s power is real and dangerous to the Puritan way of life. Her magical sphere allows her to cross boundaries and enter into a special communion with others and with nature. Hester’s femininity represents everything the Puritans want to repress; therefore, Hester is isolated, her special radiance enclosed within the circle. The feminine side of nature, with its chaos and disorder, would disrupt the Puritan idea of order, severity and a joyless existence. In The Scarlet Letter, Hester is no longer part of the earthly world. The humiliation she endures, and the pain of her sin remove her from earthly society and cast her into a magical sphere. From within the circle, Hester is alienated from the world she knows and enters into a world of



contemplation and thought. This world is unreachable by those who claim a space within the Puritan society, closed to those whose identity is set. Hester is no longer part of the Puritan civilization. She transcends her old identity and searches for a new identity in the moral wilderness where she now resides.

The Puritans in The Scarlet Letter fear the path to individuation, the path to personal growth and self-knowledge. This basic fear of life denies one the joy that comes from wholeness and an acceptance of both sides of one's nature. Fear is a natural companion to the unknown and the loss of control that comes with accepting the call to the unconscious. In man's struggle for freedom, delving deeper and deeper into the unconscious is a necessary step. In The Symbolic Quest, we read, "Freedom seems to lie in the capacity for conscious choice" (Whitmont 90), and "Without consciousness of one's potentials, limitations and necessities, freedom is a fancy concept" (Whitmont 91). This is the struggle for man in the nineteenth century. Freedom will inevitably come to those who can accept themselves and complete the circle.

## CHAPTER 5

### PEARL: THE POTENTIAL FOR WHOLENESS

“The ‘child’ is all that is abandoned and exposed and at the same time divinely powerful; the insignificant, dubious beginning, and the triumphal end.”

C. G. Jung

Hawthorne gives us Pearl as a powerful symbol of nature in The Scarlet Letter. She is at once a child of darkness and a child of light. She is troubling from the beginning, springing from the reader’s knowledge of and identification with a normal, human child. Yet Hawthorne describes an elf-like creature who seems more at home in nature with the natural world as her playmate than in the Puritan world of human beings in which she lives. Pearl moves across the boundaries between the community and the forest freely, alone and isolated along with her mother. Both occupy a sphere, separated from others as they hover between worlds. Hester and Pearl are neither earthly creatures nor heavenly spirits; they are incomplete and searching for wholeness. Hawthorne tells us that “Pearl was a born outcast of the infantile world” (93).

Children in the nineteenth century are often thought of in the realm of innocence and light. Emerson and Thoreau write of children’s qualities and their childish innocence. In Walden, Thoreau says, “Children, who play life, discern its true law and relations more clearly than men, who fail to live it worthily, but who think that they are wiser by experience, that is, by failure” (Walden 65). These are traits they portrayed as valuable for human beings, and adults could do no better than to try to recapture these qualities. Children are the picture of hope and future, possessing an innate innocence and joy in the here and now that adults can only hope to imitate.

In The Scarlet Letter, children represent the future, but it is a future destined to be fraught with the same problems as the past. Hester “[...] saw the children of the settlement [...] disporting themselves in such grim fashion as the Puritanic nurture would permit; playing at going to church, perchance; or at scourging Quakers; or taking scalps in a sham-fight with the Indians” (94). The Puritan children mirror the fears and prejudices of their parents. Hawthorne calls the children “those somber little urchins” (90). The children mock both Hester and Pearl and, while Hester ignores their actions, Pearl is enraged and does not accept their behavior calmly. Hawthorne writes:

But Pearl, [...] after frowning, stamping her foot, and shaking her little hand with a variety of threatening gestures, suddenly made a rush at the knot of her enemies, and put them all to flight. She resembled, in her fierce pursuit of them, an infant pestilence,--the scarlet fever, or some such half-fledged angel of judgment,-- whose mission was to punish the sins of the rising generation. (102-3)

Pearl smiles after this scene as she continues to walk along the path with her mother. The difference is inherent here, as well as in Hawthorne’s other characters, between appearance and reality. Hawthorne makes the distinction quite clearly when he says “The truth was, that the little Puritans, [were] the most intolerant brood that ever lived,” (94). This picture of children, especially from a group so religious in its outward manifestation of Godliness and Christian charity, is completely at odds with Thoreau or Emerson’s view of the nature of the child. The nature of the Puritan child appears to be quite without sin, striving to be holy and accepted by God. The reality is that these children are judgmental, unfeeling and uncharitable in their actions, often mirroring the behavior of the adults that serve as their spiritual guides through life. Their feelings of superiority which their religion gives them, along with their closeness to God,

allows, in their minds, for such behavior as this. When the children see Hester and Pearl, they say, “Come, therefore, and let us fling mud at them!” (102). Pearl instinctively knows this behavior exhibited by the children is wrong and she fights back.

Pearl, too, represents hope in The Scarlet Letter. It is through Pearl that Dimmesdale and Hester’s conflict can be resolved. Pearl is an ethereal presence, a symbol of what Hester and Dimmesdale lack. Hawthorne tells us that “[...] Pearl, herself a symbol, and the connecting link between those two” (154). She can unite the opposites.

Pearl is described by the author in various ways. Sometimes she is compared to a demon, an elf, or a witch-child. Almost always, she is other-worldly and not human. Pearl is a combination of Hester’s anger and Dimmesdale’s guilt.

The name “Pearl” reflects the idea that the child is a treasure, her mother’s jewel. We read, “But she named the infant ‘Pearl,’ as being of great price,--purchased with all she had,--her mother’s only treasure” (89). This reference to the Christian Bible and a passage in Matthew, reflects the dichotomy of the situation. Hawthorne goes on to explain that this beautiful gem is the gift of God for a sin committed by the mother. Pearl is Hester’s “sole treasure, whom she had bought so dear, and who was all her world” (97). The irony of the situation is that Pearl is the real treasure, a spiritual treasure, while Hester’s virtue is a treasure of merely human proportions.

Hester’s situation when Pearl is born is quite desperate. With Pearl in her arms, Hester climbs the scaffold steps to stand alone. Thinking of a time more pleasant than her current circumstance, Hester disassociates herself from the reality of the present and its torture on the scaffold. She thinks of her childhood: “Reminiscences, the most trifling and immaterial, passages of infancy and school-days, sports, childish quarrels, and the little domestic traits of her

maiden years, came swarming back upon her” (57). Hester returns to her childlike state of unconsciousness. Once here, Hester refuses to name the father of her child because of her unconscious repression of the reality of her situation. Hester retains the hope that she and Dimmesdale will unite, if not in this world then in the next, the reality of which is not possible. The present reality is too much for this young woman to bear. Hester has no spiritual guide to complete her circle of unity and help her to become whole. Pearl is incomplete without a father. Both Hester and Pearl are lost and alone.

When considering the child archetype, we discover a link to Pearl. The “child hero” is semi-divine, half human and half divine. The appearance of the child, the “third thing of an irrational nature” heralds the meeting of opposites. Jung says that “ [...] the ‘child’ distinguishes itself by deeds which point to the conquest of the dark.” (86). As the child enters the world in its unconscious realm:

Nothing in all the world welcomes this new birth, although it is the most precious fruit of Mother Nature herself, the most pregnant with the future, signifying a higher stage of self-realization. That is why Nature, the world of instincts, takes the “child” under its wing: it is nourished or protected by animals.  
(Jung 87)

Pearl is this “child” in The Scarlet Letter. She is at home in nature and with her mother, but not with the other inhabitants of this rude civilization.

Pearl as a symbol of nature is quite detailed throughout the story. Her wild, fiery nature is as unruly as her mother’s and the Puritans fear her as they fear Hester. Pearl’s radiance, too, indicates a strength that is inherent, even in a small child. Hawthorne writes, “[...] there was an absolute circle of radiance around her, on the darksome cottage-floor” (90). In the forest, Pearl

picks wild berries to eat and plays with the wild animals. The wildness in the child is nourished by the wildness in nature. Pearl adorns herself with the beautiful and colorful wildflowers and greenery of nature as she plays: “Pearl took some eel-grass, and imitated, as best she could, on her own bosom, the decoration with which she was so familiar on her mother’s. A letter, -the letter A, -but freshly green, instead of scarlet!” (178). Pearl visibly transforms the scarlet letter worn by her mother to a symbol of nature and, by wearing it on her own bosom, provides the connection for Hester to see. But Hester does not link the two. Pearl’s instincts govern her actions; she is not to be disciplined by outward notions or man’s world and its laws. Pearl gives way to a higher authority in her nature, ruled by instincts and an inner sense of a momentary judgment. Her high spirits are alien in Hawthorne’s depiction of a somber world ruled by a repression of all that is natural, instinctive and pleasurable.

Hester, therefore, questions Pearl’s organic, flesh and blood nature for she is acutely aware, at times, of the play of opposites within the child. Hester recalls a look that Pearl takes on that her mother finds troubling. We read that “It was a look so intelligent, yet inexplicable, so perverse, sometimes so malicious, but generally accompanied by a wild flow of spirits, that Hester can not help questioning, at such moments, whether Pearl was a human child” (92). Over and over Hawthorne refers to Pearl as “an airy sprite”; she often seems to be “hovering in the air.” She is “the little elf,” quite at home in the world of nature and its surroundings.

In Pearl, Hawthorne gives us a child with certain child-like attributes, then hints throughout the story that Pearl is no ordinary child. The author describes Pearl as beautiful, in a manner reminiscent of the way he describes Hester. Her beauty is dark, vivid, intense and “There was fire in her and throughout her; she seemed the unpremeditated offshoot of a passionate moment” (101). And that is, of course, exactly what Pearl was. Hawthorne goes on

to describe the way Hester views Pearl as she works diligently to “[...] create an analogy between the object of her affection, and the emblem of her guilt and torture” (102). He writes, “But, in truth, Pearl was the one, as well as the other” (102). Pearl is both guilt and affection for Hester.

Pearl is otherworldly. Hawthorne’s descriptions leave the reader unable to question this preternatural picture of Pearl. Pearl brings with her disorder and disruption of the natural order of things everywhere she goes. Her very wildness and adherence to her instinctive, natural desires is the Dionysian influence at work in The Scarlet Letter. The child is born from the disruption of the natural order of the Puritan community. Yet Pearl is also symbolic of the potential for wholeness or for completeness. The child is seen as the potential for the future. In speaking of the child, Jung writes, “As bringers of light, that is, enlargers of consciousness, they overcome darkness, which is to say that they overcome the earlier unconscious state” (Essays 88). Life moves toward a cycle of renewal and rebirth, constantly in flux as it changes to meet the demands of the individual. Pearl is symbolic of psychic wholeness. The child, says Jung “[...] is a personification of vital forces quite outside the limited range of our conscious mind; of ways and possibilities of which our one-sided conscious mind knows nothing; a wholeness which embraces the very depths of Nature” (89). The child is instinctual, as Hawthorne shows us in Pearl. Pearl obeys the laws of nature both without and within.

When humans are born, they enter into the world in a state of unconsciousness and move through life toward a state of consciousness. As one ages, one moves slowly back toward a state of child-like passivity, toward a state of unconsciousness once again. Therefore, the child is representative of both the pre-consciousness and the post-consciousness that exists within man

(Essays). This is the movement toward the completeness of the circle and Pearl is the answer for the completeness which Hester and Dimmesdale are missing in The Scarlet Letter.

Carl Jung says that “The sea is the favorite symbol for the unconscious, the mother of all that lives” (Essays 96). Pearl comes from the dark unconsciousness of the beginning, the origins of life. When Hester looks at Pearl, she sees the dark side of her nature staring her in the face. This is difficult for Hester to accept. When Pearl looks into the stream or pool of water, she can see her reflection: “[...] she came to a full stop, and peeped curiously into a pool, left by the retiring tide as a mirror for Pearl to see her face in” (168). Hawthorne writes of Pearl’s reflection as though a separate being looks out from beneath the pool of water. We read, “But the visionary little maid, on her part, beckoned likewise, as if to say, -- ‘This is a better place! Come thou into the pool!’” (168). Pearl joins her reflection in the water. Pearl is divided and we see her consciousness and unconsciousness reflected in the water. Again, at the brook in the forest, “[...] so smooth and quiet that it reflected a perfect image of her little figure, with all the brilliant picturesqueness of her beauty, in its adornment of flowers and wreathed foliage, but more refined and spiritualized than the reality” (208). In the brook beneath stood another child, - - another and the same,-- with likewise its ray of golden light” (208).

Hawthorne shows us this paradox throughout The Scarlet Letter as he illustrates the idea of the two sides of Pearl’s nature. The idea of another side to Pearl is revealed in the text. Hester, upon looking into her daughter’s eyes expecting to see her own image mirrored there, was surprised with a different image: “[...] she fancied that she beheld, not her own miniature portrait, but another face in the small black mirror of Pearl’s eye” (97). Pearl is a symbol of unity, but she is not whole. Hawthorne tells us, “[...] And Pearl was the oneness of their being” (206-7). Jung says, “Wholeness consists in the union of the conscious and the unconscious



personality” (Essays 94). Hester, however, cannot see her reflection because she is not united with her own unconscious. When Hester visits the Governor’s hall, she looks into a mirror, but does not see her own reflection: “[...] the scarlet letter was represented in exaggerated and gigantic proportions, so as to be greatly the most prominent feature of her appearance. In truth, she seemed absolutely hidden behind it” (106). Pearl once again seems to embody another spirit with a look reflected in the mirror of mischief at her mother’s puzzled expression. Hester feels that “[...] it could not be the image of her own child, but of an imp who was seeking to mould itself into Pearl’s shape” (106). The split in Pearl, her consciousness and her unconsciousness, is apparent to the reader.

Dimmesdale does not accept Pearl, for she is a product of his unconscious nature as well. This symbol of feminine wholeness, this disruptive, instinctual natural force is representative of the potential for wholeness, for “cyclic” completeness. To return to one’s origins, to accept both sides of oneself, is to achieve wholeness. This is both Dimmesdale’s and Hester’s struggle and they continue to repress this natural essence in their lives.

Pearl is Hester’s constant companion and a continual reminder of the wild nature that is part of them. Pearl demands acceptance as she is. She will not adhere to rules that are outside her realm and part of man’s world. Hester wants to accept Pearl as a human child but the forces of nature that are so much a part of Pearl’s character are frightening and do not seem human at all. The scarlet letter has been branded onto Hester as a symbol of her dark side, but Hester, the artist, remolds and reshapes the letter so that it does not look evil or hideous. Of this letter, Hawthorne writes, “It was so artistically done, and with so much fertility and gorgeous luxuriance of fancy, that it had all the effect of a last and fitting decoration to the apparel which she wore” (53). The scarlet letter is remade into a beautiful, vibrant accessory which adorns

Hester's breast as a symbol of artistry and life. Pearl is analogous with this symbol. Yet Hester cannot remold or reshape Pearl. She demands to be acknowledged by both Hester and Dimmesdale. Here we see that, "[...] the primordial idea has become a *symbol of the creative union of opposites*, a 'uniting symbol' in the literal sense" (Essays 93). In The Scarlet Letter, Pearl is the uniting symbol and, though a "mere child," is also divine. Thus we see the discrepancy in her character and the two sides, her reflection, in nature.

Dimmesdale finally acknowledges Pearl in the last scaffold scene just before he dies. This acknowledgement gives Pearl a human identity and allows her to complete the cycle of wholeness. Pearl can now live as a human being in the world. Therefore, there is no longer the sense of abandonment that Pearl has felt since birth. Dimmesdale's acceptance of this side of himself, as represented by Pearl, is a representation of the acceptance of the feminine side. The strength for this acceptance comes after his meeting in the forest with Hester. This is where he gets the strength for the last sermon, a sermon that bespeaks genuine emotion because it comes from the heart not from the head alone. This provokes genuine emotion in those who hear it. It is not the words from his lips that translate his message, but the feelings and emotions that accompany these words. This is why Hester can understand the sermon even though she cannot discern the words. It is an acknowledgement and acceptance of those things one cannot explain that make their mark on humanity and its culture. One side, alone, cannot properly govern the self. It is the balance of nature, the balance of opposites as recognized in the idea of man and woman, male and female, that is necessary for a successful life.

Pearl completes the circle. She is the origin and, as a recognition of this origin takes place, Pearl is made whole. The primordial child, the unconscious beginning, has united the opposites — Hester and Dimmesdale. The individuation process continues.

Not only is Pearl potential for Hester and Dimmesdale, she also represents potential for the Puritan community as a whole. As the “child,” Pearl emerges from the darkness, from the depths below. She moves from the sea to land and begins the search for consciousness. If she can be recognized and accepted, she can unite the dark with the light, consciousness with unconsciousness. Jung says, “The ‘child’ is born out of the womb of the unconscious, begotten out of the depths of human nature, or rather out of living Nature herself. It is a personification of vital forces quite outside the limited range of our conscious mind;...a wholeness which embraces the very depths of Nature” (Essays 89). Pearl’s wild nature is mentioned often by Hawthorne. When Pearl and Hester enter the “primeval forest” to wait for Dimmesdale, Hawthorne writes, “Pearl resembled the brook, inasmuch as the current of her life gushed from a well-spring as mysterious, and had flowed through scenes shadowed as heavily with gloom. But, unlike the little stream, she danced and sparkled, and prattled airily along her course” (186-7). Pearl’s life comes from below, and she is happy with this knowledge. She finds the forest alive, filled with her true playmates and it seems “[...] that the mother-forest, and these wild things which it nourished, all recognized a kindred wildness in the human child” (204-5). In reading about the primordial child, we learn from Jung that the Child that appears in this situation is an isolated being: “That is why nature, the world of the instincts, takes the ‘child’ under its wing: it is nourished or protected by animals” (Essays 87). Pearl’s nature is not of this world but from the world of instincts. Pearl is truly at home in this primeval wilderness. And, with Hester and Dimmesdale watching, Pearl approaches: “In her was visible the tie that united them” (206). Hawthorne makes it clear to the reader that Pearl is the answer for unity for both Hester and Dimmesdale.

Hawthorne's Puritans consistently repress from their very being all aspects of the feminine in the form of nature and human instinct, resulting in a culture barren and void of feeling, warmth, and beauty. Their unmitigated fear of instinctual human nature has left the Puritans wandering and empty, avoiding all aspects of that which is part of an unknown world. The world these Puritans inhabit continues to be dominated by opposites which they cannot see as part of a whole. If they can accept Pearl and see, through her the unity of opposites as a possibility, their world can encompass the dark as well as the light, the feminine as well as the masculine, and a degree of consciousness never before approached. The repression of the feminine has caused a culture to be fragmented and broken, its members bereft of the energy of life. Hawthorne gives his reader the answer with Pearl.

## CHAPTER 6

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE FEMININE: DIMMESDALE AND HESTER ACHIEVE FULFILLMENT

“Identity does not make consciousness possible; it is only separation, detachment, and agonizing confrontation through opposition that produce consciousness and insight.”

C. G. Jung

When Arthur Dimmesdale leaves the forest, a transformation occurs. Hester has given him the strength to face the feminine side of himself that has been hidden for so long. Dimmesdale finds himself wanting to participate in deviant behavior. The desire to shock those who are still locked behind the doors of their institutions and imprisoned by their guilt are targets for the unseemly desires of this Puritan minister. He meets with a deacon and “ [...] it was only by the most careful self-control that the former could refrain from uttering certain blasphemous suggestions that rose into his mind, respecting the communion-supper” (218). Dimmesdale has a desire to “ [...] stop short in the road, and teach some very wicked words to a knot of little Puritan children who were playing there, and had but just begun to talk” (220). Upon encountering a ‘maid newly won’ to the church, Dimmesdale “ [...] felt potent to blight all the field of innocence with but one wicked look, and develop all its opposite with but a word” (220). The feelings that Dimmesdale has been repressing are working their way into his consciousness, forcing him to deal with unbidden desires. The Dionysian side of Dimmesdale’s consciousness appears at last, and along with it, the freedom to experience the feelings he has so long denied.

Experiencing these feelings brings about a realization of the possibilities of life. An ecstasy of emotion envelopes Dimmesdale as he slowly moves to acknowledge the unconscious

realm of his mind. Myth is about the borderline where we move from living unconsciously to living consciously. Dimmesdale is moving across that border. The breakdown of order as he knows it is taking place. The patriarchal order is being called into question as this repressed side moves to the front of his consciousness along with a disruption of the institutions that Dimmesdale is clinging to. Upon his arrival home, Dimmesdale looks around: “There was the Bible, in its rich old Hebrew, with Moses and the Prophets speaking to him, and God’s voice through all!” (223). Dionysus will not allow the word, the old order, to stand as before. This disruption of the accepted forms of Christianity by a Pagan culture has been accomplished. Things have changed. Dimmesdale burns the pages of the sermon he had written earlier and begins to write a sermon with “[...] an impulsive flow of thought and emotion [...]” (225). Dimmesdale’s power in the Puritan culture has come from his use of oratory. The word is a powerful tool in this society. Dimmesdale’s words have been coming from an intellectual side of himself that, though knowledgeable and impressive, is void of sincere feeling and emotion. This keeps him disconnected from his inner self and from those around him. The repression of the feminine was as much a part of Arthur Dimmesdale’s existence as it was the Puritan’s. Without the feminine element in his life, Dimmesdale is lost, wandering in a world that is false, void of feeling and void of life. Understanding and accepting the paradox of masculine and feminine forms as necessary leads to an understanding of the reality of living.

In the mythological world, Dionysus is the god of paradox. Born of a mortal mother, Semele, and an immortal father, Zeus, Dionysus is half human and half divine. Therefore, Dionysus is the god of tragic contrasts. He is the god of both joy and terror, life and death (Otto 186). This is the paradox of Dimmesdale’s life and his desire to repress rather than accept that side of himself that was not acceptable to society. When Dimmesdale and Hester sit in the forest

shade, they sit not only in the shade of nature but in the shade of the underworld. Dionysus is part of the wild, unconscious nature that is at once beautiful and deadly (Otto 186). Dimmesdale connects to this feminine underworld and is frightened at the feelings that ensue. He loses control, coming out of the sheltered world he has wrapped himself in for the last few years. As Dimmesdale opens up, he must face the forces that are not outside but within himself. Dionysus, the god of confrontations, insists on this awareness. Dionysus is not distant, as is Dimmesdale. All the old categories fall apart, making room for new ones. Good and bad merge into one and the minister begins putting himself back together again, but this time the pieces are in a different configuration, this time unifying both sides of himself.

Nineteenth-century America is not comfortable when dealing with Dionysus. Emerson and Thoreau are far more comfortable with the Apollonian side of man's nature where control, order, and distance are the categories that exist. Thoreau is not comfortable with the feminine side of himself, looking to nature for structure and balance rather than a wild, undiminished freedom. The freedoms gained by the New World begin to look for structure and the desire for control rears its ugly head. Hawthorne fictionalizes a patriarchal culture with somewhat exaggerated forms to make clear what is often hidden beneath the surface. Women are dangerous since they represent so many things this patriarchal culture hopes to conquer. Understanding Dionysus is about understanding the force of life and its inherent disruption of the control of the life this society so desperately desires. This connection to life, and the power inherent in it, is life at its very best. This is the experience of living with all the power at one's command. This power was determined to be an evil power at the beginning of a monotheistic culture. Dionysus, the dark twin of light, "[...] representing dissolution, transformation, the nonrational, and the destructively violent aspect of the Yang, is demonized, rejected, and

repressed. The Dionysian night side of existence—ecstasy, passion, death and rebirth—is gradually relegated to the sinister [...] (Whitmont, Return 61). But the dark side of man's nature, death and suffering, cannot be denied. To achieve wholeness one must be ready to accept all these things. That also means accepting the responsibility for dealing with them as part of the natural order of things. When Dimmesdale meets with Hester and Pearl in the forest the energy of their meeting, the power of the feminine reinvigorates him and fills him with the sense of being alive. He experiences both joy and terror, joy at his strength and forcefulness and terror of the emotions he must now acknowledge and accept responsibility for.

The old order and structure of the society that Dimmesdale has held sacred dissolves in the forest. The opposites, Hester and Dimmesdale, have come together and the energy this meeting creates infuses Dimmesdale's physical as well as mental state. Chaos reigns supreme and Dimmesdale accepts the wild impulses, so long denied, that take over his normally controlled self: "At every step he was incited to do some strange, wild, wicked thing or other, with a sense that it would be at once involuntary and intentional; in spite of himself yet growing out of a profounder self than that which opposed the impulse" (217). The minister meets his shadow, that part of himself he has been taught by his culture to repress. Dimmesdale finds himself in cloaca, a metaphor for the internal mythological world. In this messy, dark place, Dimmesdale feels helpless; yet this is where he must go if there is any hope for him in his search for truth. Dimmesdale must confront and learn to live with who he really is, not just who he thinks he is supposed to be. This confrontation includes dealing with his dark side, his shadow, and the things within himself that society has labeled evil. Dimmesdale submits his ego by leaving what he knows and what he is to submit to those things he thinks he is not or should not be. The minister goes beyond what has previously been his reality to a reality closer to the truth



of what actually is. Here, social order does not exist as Dimmesdale knows it, and all the old categories fall away. They do not fit the new ideas that spring up. Life reconfigures itself into a new pattern of consciousness.

This is what happens when the unconscious finally becomes aware of the other side of itself, the shadow that has developed into a sense of the twoness, or duality, of the individual. In The Symbolic Quest, Whitmont quotes Jung, “[...] everything in the unconscious seeks outward manifestation, and the personality too desires to evolve out of its unconscious conditions and to experience itself as a whole” (84). Dimmesdale can no longer feel as he once did. He has faced his unconsciousness and the two have merged into one: “He seemed to stand apart, and eye this former self with scornful, pitying, but half-envious curiosity. That self was gone! Another man had returned out of the forest; a wiser one; with a knowledge of hidden mysteries which the simplicity of the former never could have reached. A bitter kind of knowledge that!” (223). Yet, it *is* knowledge. Dimmesdale has reached a depth of understanding that his energy from the forest has allowed him to face and to comprehend. No longer paralyzed by the guilt that has been his constant companion for the last seven years, Dimmesdale proceeds to make conscious choices. The confrontational Dionysus was to be denied no longer! Whitmont says that often, “When we confront myth – the mythical (archetypal) core of our complexes – we confront the ultimate border line of our place in transcendental meaningfulness... . But the myth must be confronted with a full realization of its import in terms of personal impasses and problems; only then is there a channel for the new flow of life” (84). This channel is Dimmesdale’s oratory and the “new flow of life” is the energy that flows throughout his being as he is finally able to go beyond all the old ideas and societal regulations and connect to others purely through his emotions.

The hero's quest is about submission to a higher power, giving up control, and gaining a wholeness that allows one to experience life with all its incumbent joys and terrors. The comic vision, the acceptance that anything can happen at anytime, helps one get through the impending tragedies. It is the paradox and the contrasts that give us the energy to let one experience life rather than just "be alive." The difference may seem small, but it is significant. It is the difference between life and death. Dimmesdale experiences life when he leaves the forest. The rules have changed, old ones no longer apply. Dimmesdale is a new man, whole and complete in his final days.

To try to exclude the paradoxical nature of life is, in essence, to try to exclude death. The opposites exist as part of the whole and to understand this is to accept the dark side of nature and man's path toward self-actualization. Along with this acceptance comes a responsibility for one's actions. No longer can we blame someone else, plead ignorance, or put forth the familiar, "I don't know why I did that." To be fully conscious is to "know," to be fully awake and to take responsibility for all sides of one's nature. To be conscious is to live deliberately. To repress the feminine side of oneself is to insure an unbalanced approach to life and one that is, eventually, destructive.

As a new man, the forces of life stir frantically within Dimmesdale and he experiences a passion that he has seldom, if ever, known. Dimmesdale now eats "with ravenous appetite" (225). He begins another sermon, "[...] flinging the already written pages of the Election Sermon into the fire" (225). Everything about him, as well as the action he takes, is alive with energy and forcefulness. The physical movements of his body as well as the inner movements of his mind reflect this change. Dionysian energy flows throughout Dimmesdale's body, bringing his spirit to life where it has been so long repressed. Dimmesdale is free both in mind and body.

The iron bars of his religion that support him crumble and he stands, alone and frightened, but with an energy he has not possessed before.

In her book The Shape of Hawthorne's Career, Nina Baym successfully illuminates many relevant aspects of The Scarlet Letter. However, a shift of emphasis may help to further clarify some thoughts within the text. Baym writes that Dimmesdale, "[...] cannot sustain the posture of defiance once Hester's support has been removed and he is back in the community. He reverts—rather quickly—to the view that society has the right to judge and therefore that its judgment is right" (129). Dimmesdale does not lose his courage nor does he revert to his old ways of looking at the world. Indeed, he looks at himself as though he were a new man and looks at the old self with scorn. Rather than reverting, Dimmesdale moves forward and transcends the boundaries that have plagued his growth. The strength from Hester, from the feminine in the forest, is absorbed by Dimmesdale as this strength becomes his own. A light dawns on the dark unconscious and he is now aware of the possibility, as well as the necessity, of bringing this side of man's nature into the light. Life is no longer about guilt and repression, categorizing those things we do not understand. Dimmesdale is effectively able to move beyond these rusty ideas into a new realm of consciousness. He is not exhibiting a posture of defiance but one of acceptance and renewal which encompasses the dark side of man's nature. Baym later says that, "The aftermath of the forest scene breaks his will to resist, convincing him that he is as evil as he had feared" (140). The minister has a breakthrough at this point, able to acknowledge his desires and actually resisting temptation as he walks home. If Dimmesdale sees himself as evil, it is an evil that is a vital part of life, a vital part of the nature of man to the experience of living. By acknowledging the existence of these feelings, Dimmesdale participates

in life, and experiences the thrill of life. Rather than guilt and sin, Dimmesdale finds truth and reality. He will later aid Hester in her search for both.

As Dimmesdale works on his new sermon, he lets his impulses flow onto the paper and “he fancied himself inspired” (225). When Dimmesdale has written with a spiritual voice before, he has not been satisfied with the results. The minister is now truly inspired, not by what comes from above, but by the energy that comes from below, the energy that manifests itself in the forest through Hester Prynne. Hawthorne writes, “The night fled away, as if it were a winged steed, and he careering on it” (225). This image of the “winged steed” reminds the reader of Pegasus, the horse with wings that flies man toward the heavens. Man rides him, thus conquering or subduing the power of the horse. But this power that *careers* through the night, this wild, indomitable frenzy, is not the spirit of heaven, but the spirit from below. Dimmesdale *fancies* himself inspired by God. This Dionysian spirit “[...] is the world of embodied raw nature, of desire and of passion in its double aspect of rapture and suffering. It expresses the primacy of longing, lustfulness and joyous ecstasy which includes raging violence, destructiveness, and even the urge for self-annihilation” (Whitmont, Return 59). He writes at night, in the darkness, and then “morning came, and peeped blushing through the curtains; and at last sunrise threw a golden beam into the study, and laid it right across the minister’s bedazzled eyes” (225). The sun shines on the joy-filled existence and power that has infiltrated the study of the minister. Hawthorne’s choice of words “peeped blushing” makes one think of something that belongs to the night, not the day. The unconscious inhabits the nightly realm, and it is the consciousness of day that brings sunshine into the minister’s study. In his book Of Human Freedom, F. W. J. Schelling says that “In man there exists the whole power of the principle of

darkness and, in him too, the whole force of light” (38). These two forces converge in Arthur Dimmesdale and unite, becoming as one.

Dimmesdale’s sermon at the end of the novel is vital to The Scarlet Letter. Dimmesdale no longer needs the words or the structure of language to communicate and touch the hearts of others. Hester listens outside the church, unable to distinguish the words, but “Like all other music, [the sermon] breathed passion and pathos, and emotions high or tender, in a tongue native to the human heart, wherever educated” (243). The crowd that listened to the sermon agreed that “[...] never had man spoken in so wise, so high, and so holy a spirit, as he that spake this day” (248). Dimmesdale transcends the old structures and finds the words that will be understood by those who listen on a level of feeling rather than purely intellectual ideals. In his article “Ahab’s Greatness: Prometheus as Narcissus,” Thomas Woodson discusses Ishmael’s and Ahab’s inability to find a language to convey their thoughts. Woodson writes:

And Ishmael’s desperate search for words is really parallel to Ahab’s ‘bold and nervous lofty language’ which, as we soon learn, has *not* brought him definite knowledge of nature’s secrets [...]. Ahab, addressing the captured whale’s head, senses the inadequacy of all human language to the problem he insists on solving.  
(ELH 342)

Ahab encounters frustration as he works to move beyond the confines of language and the structure that is naturally part of the system of language. Dimmesdale struggles with this difficulty along with Ahab and Ishmael, and it is Dimmesdale’s acceptance and incorporation of the feminine that occurs in the forest that allows this transcendence to take place. He moves the people by more than words. It is the rhythm and the music of the soul – genuine feelings normally repressed by this society – that touch the listeners. This patriarchal culture represses

emotions and feelings because it can not deal with the disorder and lack of control that would necessarily be brought about by their appearance. Man's nature is paradoxical, both good and evil.

Dimmesdale's confession at the end of the novel is the culminating scene. It is with this act that Hawthorne ties together the parts into a unitary whole. Dimmesdale walks through the streets after his sermon and, upon reaching the scaffold, he faces Hester and Pearl: "'Hester,' said he, 'come hither! Come, my little Pearl!' It was a ghastly look with which he regarded them; but there was something at once tender and strangely triumphant in it" (252). Dimmesdale proceeds to acknowledge his role in the tragedy that has caused Hester so much grief. His remorse for his actions is genuine and sincere and Dimmesdale joins Hester and Pearl in the magic sphere. The circle is complete and, with it, Dimmesdale's unity of spirit. At his request:

Pearl kissed his lips. A spell was broken. The great scene of grief, in which the wild infant bore a part, had developed all her sympathies; and as her tears fell upon her father's cheek, they were the pledge that she would grow up amid human joy and sorrow, nor forever do battle with the world, but be a woman in it. Towards her mother, too, Pearl's errand as a messenger of anguish was all fulfilled. (256)

With this passage, Hawthorne begins to complete his circle as well. Pearl can now live as a free woman. Her job is complete. Pearl brings Dimmesdale to the unconsciousness and makes it conscious. She is the link of truth between Hester and Dimmesdale.

Hester becomes whole after Dimmesdale's acknowledgement, an act that allows both Hester Prynne and Pearl to become complete. This final acceptance gives Hester the spiritual guidance she has needed to bring her out of the moral wilderness where she has wandered for so long. The scarlet letter allows her to contemplate a freedom of thought that few could imagine.

But Hester's thoughts and anger have "taught her much amiss" according to our author. Dimmesdale gives her the spiritual guidance she needs to become whole. Hester wants to believe that she and Dimmesdale can live together in their immortality: "'Shall we not meet again?' whispered she, bending her face down close to his. 'Shall we not spend our immortal life together? [...]" (256). This is the hope Hester has clung to throughout – a hope that she must accept will never come true. Dimmesdale tells her that they cannot be together for eternity: "The law we broke!—the sin here so awfully revealed!—let these alone be in thy thoughts! I fear! I fear! It may be, that, when we forgot our God,—when we violated our reverence each for the other's soul,—it was thenceforth vain to hope that we could meet hereafter, in an everlasting and pure reunion" (256). Hester must accept the unconscious side of herself represented by Pearl. Hester and Dimmesdale have represented what is missing in the other and Pearl brings the two parts together. It is in her that they are united and are one. Rather than guilt and sin, there is life, death, and rebirth. Hester can now go forth accepting the spiritual truth of a divided self that will not stay divided. Hester, too, must acknowledge and accept this wild nature within and the need for guidance and discipline it elicits. She must come to terms, as Dimmesdale did, with the reality of the scarlet letter. Campbell says that after one has come to terms with the inappropriateness of motives, be they conscious or unconscious, which lead to "self-aggrandizement," this person "[...] is competent, consequently, now to enact himself the role of the initiator, the guide, the sundoor, through whom one may pass from the infantile illusions of 'good' and 'evil' to an experience of the majesty of cosmic law, purged of hope and fear, and at peace in the understanding of the revelation of being" (137). Dimmesdale can now act as Hester's spiritual guide to wholeness.

Hester does succeed in her acceptance of the past and the scarlet letter. Hester and Pearl leave town, but years later Hester returns and places the red letter A on her breast. "She had returned, therefore, and resumed, -- of her own free will, for not the sternest magistrate of that iron period would have imposed it, -- resumed the symbol of which we have related so dark a tale" (263). This return, and her resumption of wearing the scarlet letter, marks Hester's final triumph. The scarlet letter has changed for Hester, as well as for those who see it. It no longer carries the meaning of the magistrates when they force her to wear it. Hester imbues it with her own meaning. It is part of Hester, her sadness and her life, but it has lost the significance it once had. The letter simply "is." It is part of Hester's past as well as her present. Hester has moved past the meaning given by the letter to its acceptance within herself. She is no longer separated from the community. It was to Hester that "[...] people brought all their sorrows and perplexities, and besought her counsel, as one who had herself gone through a mighty trouble" (263). Hawthorne tells us that Hester "comforted and counseled them, as best she might" (263). Hester moves freely with an understanding and an acceptance of her life and as a guide to others.

This completed circle of wholeness includes death as well as life. Dimmesdale dies on the scaffold after acknowledging his relationship to Hester and Pearl. With the acceptance of the feminine, Dimmesdale is able to accept both sides of himself, take off his mask, and submit to a higher power. This power is a culmination of the completed circle of Hester, Pearl, and Dimmesdale. The minister is able to integrate his shadow with his consciousness and experience life with genuine emotion.

Dimmesdale cannot exist as before. He experiences a complete dissolution of the categories of his society, blending both good and bad, and acknowledging the co-existence. This



completes the experience of life, including death and rebirth. Dimmesdale “has gone inward to be born again” (Campbell 91). He transcends the old order, moving to the richness of a complete existence, leading the way for Hester and Pearl to do the same.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

“Whatever we may do or attempt, despite the embrace and transports of love, the hunger of the lips, we are always alone.”

Guy de Maupassant

Just as one is afraid to enter the depths of the cavern, one is also afraid to contemplate the depths of the unconscious. Nathaniel Hawthorne shows us the reluctance of the individual to face the unknown, while at the same time displaying the pull or the magnetic force that propels one forward to this event. The unknown is a frightening thing that lends itself to the horrors of the imagination. However, Joseph Campbell these fears “[...] are fiendishly fascinating too, for they carry keys that open the whole realm of the desired and feared adventure of the discovery of the self” (Campbell 8). Probing the unconscious results in a breaking up of the old order that we have known and building a new world, or a new self. Hawthorne’s characters often find themselves in the midst of this drama.

Part of this dilemma of self-actualization involves the role of the feminine in the individual and in the cultures that make up the settings of Hawthorne’s stories. In both instances, the repression of the feminine sets the stage for problems that must be articulated and solved if one is to live a life of wholeness as a complete person. We see these problems in Hawthorne’s short stories that have been discussed as well as in his longer novels, especially The Scarlet Letter. Arthur Dimmesdale is in cloaca, the depths of despair, when this story opens because he cannot acknowledge the relevance of the feminine side of his nature. He has repressed that wild disruptive force that eventually demands freedom. The Puritans that Hawthorne would have us envision have also denied their need for laughter, beauty and art – things that stand in opposition

to the logic and distance they so value. The Puritans' freedom from the confines of other's rules and regulations results in fear which brings with it a stern determination to erect institutions of iron bars far stronger than any they left behind. Hawthorne uses Hester to show us the impossibility of such a task. The power of nature that manifests itself in the feminine is far stronger than any restrictions put on it by a patriarchal culture.

These patriarchal restrictions are an attempt to allay the forces one is uncomfortable with. Giovanni is not comfortable with Beatrice's sexual allure, but can only recognize her as an idealized version of woman. He attempts to control by "fixing" what he sees as Beatrice's problematic nature. Beatrice, of course, dies. Aylmer, too, attempts to make Georgiana his version of the "perfect woman" by attempting to remove what he perceives as a flaw in her beauty. She, too, dies because of Aylmer's need to control. A repression of the feminine is a repression of an entire side of one's self, of one's own personality. The paradox of opposites exist together, not as separate entities, but as a significant part of the complete unit of the human species. Aylmer and Giovanni cannot accept the side of themselves that they see manifested in the women they admire.

The works of Nathaniel Hawthorne are carefully contrived scenarios. As capable as an artist with a paintbrush, Hawthorne composes his portraits of man's and woman's inner struggles. His works are reminiscent of Vermeer, whose paintings carry with them a sense of inner drama. Vermeer's stark, severe figures are often engaged in a simple, everyday life that the observer senses is anything but simple and everyday. Hawthorne, too, shows us that outwardly simple affectations belie an inner course that may rock the foundations of those who eventually understand what has happened. With Hawthorne, as with Vermeer, there is that sense of expectancy – of an inner fire that just verges on the out-of-control. The mirrors in Vermeer's

paintings and the windows his subjects often stand beside, sometimes only half open, represent small movements on the outside but the inner core of humanity that is within the canvas swells with the depth of feeling that moves on forward through life. Hawthorne's figures often look in mirrors or through windows to see reflections of either who they think they are or who they want to be.

As they struggle to understand what they see in these reflections, the characters in Hawthorne's works continue the inner journey. This solitary excursion is not pleasant for it includes "[...] death, disintegration, dismemberment, and the crucifixion of our heart with the passing of the forms that we have loved" (Campbell 26). That is why one undertakes the journey and crosses the threshold into a world beyond the boundaries that surround us. This movement involves a "leaving behind" and may be undertaken physically or mentally. The knight gets on his horse and journeys to adventure or James Joyce leaves Ireland to write about his much-loved Dublin. It is from this new vantage point of freedom that one can see more clearly. The blinders of reality are cast aside and one moves to the idea of the subject, the only reality. This is truth. Sometimes the subject carries with it all the trappings of the culture that defines it – rather, it becomes a mere definition rather than a reality. This is not helpful in a search for truth.

Coverdale makes this journey in The Blithedale Romance. He leaves all that he knows for a new life. One can "journey" to new places with new ideas or with a reconsideration of old ideas. Leaving behind the vestiges of the society that determines right and wrong, acceptable and unacceptable, all the way to what is and what is not – sometimes allows one to see truth and reality without their mask or veil. All conscious ideas that have colored and shaped attitudes and feelings are removed. We are left with an entire world with few, if any, paths. There are no signs or markers telling one which way to go. A world of opposites comes into view leading one

into a sphere with no shape, form, or direction. The accompanying feeling is one of panic and disorientation. When Coverdale arrives at the farm, he becomes ill and goes to bed for several weeks. His world is shattered and the new forms are frightening. Coverdale needs to face a part of himself that he has not before recognized. He wants to write poetry with depth of feeling, yet he is not comfortable with his emotions. This time when the old order is abolished and one is moving through uncharted territory is a terror-filled journey. When there is complete and total destruction of all that is known and of all that holds the world in the form it is in – only when the last bond is broken – is there freedom to rewrite, remold, and reshape our conscious world. Joseph Campbell says that “Tragedy is the shattering of the forms and of our attachment to the forms; comedy, the wild and careless, inexhaustible joy of life invincible” (28).

This is what happens to Dimmesdale. In The Scarlet Letter, we see both “tragedy” and “comedy.” When the feminine can no longer be repressed and is, instead, accepted by Dimmesdale, his world takes on a new form. The old categories are surpassed and replaced with new ones. Dimmesdale is filled with the joy of living, but it is a Dionysian joy. This is the energy of life, the feminine energy from below. Dimmesdale is led by his emotions and is reborn into a new truth, a new life.

Dimmesdale, Pearl, and Hester complete the circle of unity at the end of The Scarlet Letter. Hawthorne closes the circle with Dimmesdale’s death, Pearl’s ability to “grow up amid human joy and sorrow, nor for ever do battle with the world, but be a woman in it,” and Hester’s remarkable transformation (256). Dimmesdale’s confession brings about both changes. Pearl now has a father and Hester has a spiritual guide. Pearl and Hester leave but, years later, Hester returns. Wearing the scarlet letter, Hester crosses the threshold of her old cottage and takes up her life in the community. But this time it is with the knowledge of the true meaning of the

scarlet letter. It is as much a part of Hester as if it had been branded on her breast. She serves as a counselor for those in need. Hawthorne says that Hester believes, “at some brighter period, when the world should have grown ripe for it, in Heaven’s own time, a new truth would be revealed, in order to establish the whole relation between man and woman on a surer ground of mutual happiness” (263). For Hester, the categories of “good” and “bad” no longer exist. With Dimmesdale and Pearl, as well as the scarlet letter, she transcends the boundaries that surround her. Though not the one intended by the Puritan magistrates who bestowed the punishment, the scarlet letter *has* done its office.

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